

# AESL 3

## MATERIAL CULTURE AND IDENTITIES IN EGYPTOLOGY

TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS  
AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON MATERIAL CULTURE

**BETTINA BADER**



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BETTINA BADER

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Towards a Better Understanding  
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Michael Alram, Bert G. Fragner, Andre Gingrich, Hermann Hunger,  
Sigrid Jalkotzy-Deger, Renate Pillinger, Franz Rainer, Oliver Jens Schmitt,  
Danuta Shanzer, Peter Wiesinger, Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

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## PREFACE

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This book was developed from the ‘Rahmenschrift’ for the ‘cumulative habilitation’ thesis ‘Material Culture and Identities – Complexities of Identity Research in Archaeology as seen in a late Middle Kingdom settlement in Ancient Egypt. A Case Study’, approved in 2019, at the Institute for Egyptology, University of Vienna.

It is the result of an elongated period of research, first recording all the finds of a late Middle Kingdom settlement at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, then understanding the archaeology and finally researching on the meaning of material culture and its relation to the identities of people and what to make of things left behind in antiquity and found millennia later by archaeologists. While thinking about the complicated nature of this relationship filled many books in the past, the intention of this book was to bring the many thoughts on ‘things’ of daily use, how they were made and who used what and how into a fruitful relation with a large number of actual objects recovered from a settlement of the late Middle Kingdom. The choice of the settlement in Area A/II at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> in this period as a case study within the framework of several archaeological theories is strongly influenced by the fact that excavations here have brought to light many artefacts clearly related to the Syro-Palestinian milieu, which has resulted in somewhat dismissive references in the Egyptological literature to that settlement being classified as a settlement of strongly ‘Egyptianised’ (acculturated) immigrants from Syria-Palestine. Such a view does not take into account the multifaceted image that the site, the inhabitants and their material culture actually deserve.

In effect, the importance of this rather humble accumulation of houses, people and items found in Area A/II, lies in the stage it provides for the inhabitants living here in the late Middle Kingdom, with contacts to both Egypt and the Near East. The features and development of its material culture provide several opportunities to utilise various theoretical approaches to its studies, by far exceeding the simple historical narrative usually offered.

Several of the approaches to the archaeological processes visible at the site suffer from a lack of data, either through missing comparanda or due to the fact that certain scientific data could not be collected because the excavation took place a long time ago and scientific sampling of various materials was, at the time, impossible. While some scientific data might still become available in the future, in the meantime this book offers a guide to thinking about material culture in a liminal space, without claiming to provide the only correct approach. In many ways it was a thought experiment to see what happens if some assumptions are not taken as certainties but instead are questioned and allow the material culture to speak without cramming it into a preconceived and rigid taxonomy.

As for the structure of this book, Chapters 1 to 3.3 formed the introduction to the collection of thirteen articles and one book previously published/in press constituting the original “habilitation” thesis. These chapters were expanded and some discussions were adapted to be coherent without the published articles directly attached in the form of references. For better understanding a number of figures have been added. The chapter on results summarises many of the archaeological details, which were originally included in the habilitation thesis but have since appeared in print as ‘Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> XXIV. The Late Middle Kingdom Settlement of Area A/II. A Holistic Study of Non-élite Inhabitants at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>. Volume 1. The Archaeological Report. The Excavations from 1966 to 1969’. The second part of this report dealing with the excavations from 1975 to 1985 is in an advanced stage of preparation. Several articles also deal with aspects of material culture, archaeological theory, and certain object classes occurring in the late Middle Kingdom settlement at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>. This is the basis onto which the current volume builds.

I would like to thank a number of people and institutions making the completion of this work possible. First I would like to thank E. Christiana Köhler who hosted the Elise Richter Habilitation Project V147-G21 awarded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) ‘Foreigners in Egypt – The Archaeology of Culture Contact in an Egyptian Settlement’ at the Institute for Egyptology, University of Vienna. It all began with this project and much of the work to be found in the following chapters was undertaken in the years 2010–2014. Further, E.C. Köhler unconditionally supported the habilitation process at the University of Vienna and helped to obtain the necessary requirements in various other ways.

For encouraging me to actually contemplate my work already done and to structure it as a ‘cumulative habilitation’ thesis I cannot thank enough Brigitte Mazohl, who, with one glance at my bibliography, said with great conviction: “Your habilitation thesis is basically already there.” Invaluable help in the process was also provided by Katharina Rebay-Salisbury, Irmgard Hein and the Mentoring Programme of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

During my time at the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences with the START Project Y754-G19 ‘Beyond Politics – Material Culture in Second Intermediate Period Egypt and Nubia’, awarded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), and as leader of the research group ‘Material Culture in Egypt and Nubia’ I was always supported by the Director Barbara Horejs. My fellow members of ‘*A dialogue with things*’ (the ‘material culture reading group’), namely Natasha Ayers, Aaron de Souza, Lucia Hulková, Christian Knoblauch, Uroš Matić and Vera Müller, discussed a number of topics occurring in the following pages and always provided food for thought especially about our entangled identities. The same holds true for the attendees of the interdisciplinary study day ‘*Documenting Material Culture*’ which highlighted dramatically how conditioned the recording method of material culture is by one’s own discipline. Here I would like particularly to thank Hubert Feiglstorfer for attending this workshop. ‘The *Zentral-Café*’, a discussion group organised by Reinhard Jung, deals with topics connected to economic matters in the widest sense and I would like to thank him and the whole group for covering a lot of ground over the years and taking me on these travels.

Further I would like to express my thanks to the series editors and the publication committee of the Austrian Academy of Sciences for accepting the manuscript for publication. I would like to thank the Board of Trustees of the Holzhausen-Legat and OREA to award funds towards the editing and printing costs for this book.

I would like to thank the excavator of Tell el-Dab’a Manfred Bietak for allowing me to study and publish the late Middle Kingdom material from Area A/II, which provides the basis of this book. To Irene Forstner-Müller, Director of the Austrian Institute for Archaeology, Cairo Branch, I extend my thanks for institutional support.

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Vera Müller took on the task of assiduously reading part of this manuscript in an earlier version, and for that I am deeply grateful. Hazel Harrison undertook the task to copy edit the text and would I like to extend my warmest thanks for her efforts. David Aston read several revisions of this book and corrected the English, but, of course, I, alone, am responsible for any remaining errors. Most of all, I would like to thank him for his unstinting moral support over the years and for his putting up with prolonged absences on excavations and study trips to museums.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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In the recent past, questions concerning identity, and especially ethnic identity, have permeated Egyptological research and teaching themes more often than previously,<sup>1</sup> thus pulling Egyptology a bit closer into the archaeological mainstream, where a wider range of identities has been examined for quite some time.<sup>2</sup> But while sociologists and archaeological theorists were already asking whether ‘identity’ was a valid and useful category to research some time ago,<sup>3</sup> Egyptology did not embrace such ideas so quickly. Right from the beginning, the theoretical preconditions for Egypt differed because leading Egyptologists following a long tradition, which considered the Egyptian culture as a distinctly homogeneous and bounded society.<sup>4</sup> It was not deemed necessary even to contemplate a theoretical discussion of how permeable society, and culture, can and may be as well as how much external influence shaped the society located along the Nile. Instead, following a normative culture concept, the detailed level of information and source material necessary to research this topic – archaeological, pictorial and textual – was seen as a boon, ready to be used for discussion of the identity of ancient Egyptian people,<sup>5</sup> as ancient Egyptian sources categorise their neighbours by means of pictures and denominations of other countries and their inhabitants.<sup>6</sup>

This can perhaps be explained by the ancient Egyptian practice of stressing phenotypical differences between certain peoples (skin colour, hair styles, dress preferences) in pictorial sources, which appealed as it was very similar to modern western practices to categorise people, although they have to be scrutinised in connection with ancient ideology as they represent ethnic stereotypes.<sup>7</sup> Ancient Egyptian ideology also uses distinctively bounded cultural groups which appeals to the imagination of Egyptologists and this view is shared by many.<sup>8</sup>

Problems, such as the tentative connection between ‘culture’ and texts and ‘culture’ and archaeological remains, arose quickly in the earlier periods of Egyptian history as the nature of the evidence is more ambiguous and less frequent,<sup>9</sup> just as in the prehistory in other areas of the world, whilst methodological

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<sup>1</sup> A search in the Online Egyptological Bibliography resulted in 246 hits for ‘ethnic identity’. The distribution is as follows: between 1900 and 1960 there are 3; between 1961 and 1990 there are 55; between 1991 and 2000, 110 and between 2001 and 2017, 78 hits. In contrast the search for ‘national identity’ yielded 41 hits from 1991 onwards but none before. This result shows quite clearly that engagement with this topic in Egyptology rose steeply in the course of political developments in Europe during the 1990s when armed conflicts around ethnic identity broke out. Also, other historical disciplines began to engage with it because of political conflicts. Cf. also Halsall 2007, 45, for Late Antiquity; see Jones 1997, x–xi in general.

<sup>2</sup> Díaz-Andreu et al. 2005; Jones 1997. For a historical overview of anthropological and archaeological research into identity see Fowler 2010, 354–364, especially the development from the culture-historical, to processual and post-colonial theories. Not all of these steps were followed in Egyptology so that theoretical thinking is still not as developed as in global archaeology.

<sup>3</sup> See Hicks 2010 for personhood instead of identity and Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1–9, who argue that use and meaning of ‘identity’ as an analytical tool is either too ambiguous or too strong to be useful. I would like to thank Claus Jurman for drawing my attention to the latter work (pers.comm. winter 2018/19).

<sup>4</sup> Relatively recently the approach has changed but slowly: e.g. Baines 1996; Schneider 2003b.

<sup>5</sup> See Bader 2017b, for a thorough discussion of the relationship between these source groups in the ancient Egyptian Middle Kingdom.

<sup>6</sup> Moreno Garcia 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Loprieno 1988; Smith 2003, 4–5, 22; Liszka 2012, 72–76, 208–220; Bader 2017a.

<sup>8</sup> Smith 2003, 203; ironically it may be viable to say that the ancient Egyptians followed a culture-historical paradigm.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Campagno 2008 with a simplistic approach to Egyptian material culture found in the Levant, where according to this interpretation many finds in Egyptian style signify a presence while a lower number of artefacts represent only general contacts, e.g. commodity exchange.

difficulties were not perceived to exist due to the widely available sources in the later phases of Egyptian history.<sup>10</sup> Such sources are often not contemporary with the archaeological finds, for which they are cited as parallels, but are nevertheless used retrospectively extrapolating over thousands of years. Moreover, they were used in order to interpret archaeological finds, without much theoretical discussion. Some of these sources indeed report, about other peoples but, of course, only via ancient Egyptian perception, which is often hard to understand and is again filtered through modern interpretation. However one looks at it, an emic viewpoint can hardly ever be reached and thus the data being used are somewhat compromised. But that does not mean that simplistic reconstructions are to be preferred before a full discussion of the actual data, which are quite often ‘messy’ and so numerous as to be untamable.

Although recent scholarship aired reservations about ‘individual identity’ being a very recent western idea that did not exist in antiquity and warned about inventing identities, which have no basis due to difficulties with the nature of primary data, the theoretical debate with these questions is necessary because it needs to be made very clear that the past is equally as complex as the present but probably in a different way.<sup>11</sup>

The approaches to identity research in antiquity differ widely according to the type of source material, and this is not restricted to Egypt but includes Greek, Philistine, Roman as well as early medieval identity and many more. In the ancient Egyptian context, scholars concentrated on the one hand on stelae and papyri<sup>12</sup> and the personal names they contained as well as assignations to social or geographically defined groups. Egyptian loan words as well as languages spoken were scrutinised.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand the interpretations of material culture as a passive reflection of ‘culture’ were derived from mortuary archaeology and its *possible* meaning for the identity of ancient people were taken at face value all too often. The archaeological approach can be distinguished between the realm of the living (settlements) and that of the dead (single burials or more complete cemeteries) with early classification of ‘races’<sup>14</sup> through analyses of human skeletal remains.<sup>15</sup> Those two are further distinguished by the intentionality of the contexts versus post-depositional history. The division and tension between textual and archaeological sources influenced the approaches and research avenues as well as the results the respective areas provided. Often it is hard or even impossible to reconcile them.<sup>16</sup> Textual sources and material culture underlie mutual misconceptions concerning their ability to solve problems beyond dispute: first that a text is the solution to all problems<sup>17</sup> and second that only texts allow several interpretations, while material objects and landscape are delivering unambiguous messages.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Egyptian archaeology is still heavily biased towards mortuary data.<sup>19</sup>

It is important to not only stress single features (such as isolated ‘ethnic markers’ that might change their meanings over time anyway) but also to consider all areas of evidence in context: architecture, material culture and social and ritual practices.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Goudriaan 1988; Johnson 1999. Säve-Söderbergh 1951, 57, had already warned against using the distribution of Tell el-Yahudieh ware as a delimitation for the territory of the Hyksos. However, Ksiezak 2019 does exactly that, ignoring previous research.

<sup>11</sup> Insoll 2007, 13–15.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. for Egypt see Mathieson et al. 1995; Schneider 2003a; Vittmann 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson 1999; Schneider 2003a.

<sup>14</sup> That race is a purely social construct has been established for some time; see Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 5–6. Cf. Bhabha 1994, esp. 236–256; Malik 2008; Rutherford 2016, 214–267; Raulwing 2012, for the ancient Near East, 262–264, with bibliography; Zakrzewski et al. 2016, 219; Smith 2018, 118, for the non-existent biological basis for any ‘race’ constructs.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Schiestl 2009, 200, for a critical opinion on assessment of race; Priglinger 2018, 28–29; Maaranen et al. 2019a, 340, for a critical assessment of ‘race’ based on biological criteria. See also Evison 2000, 280: “It is not possible to devise a racial taxonomy of humans.” Also Raue 2018, 10–11.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. discussion Hall 1997, 142; Jones 1997, 40–45; Jones 1999a; Hall 2002; Antonaccio 2010; Hodder 1978 for historical archaeology.

<sup>17</sup> Brather 2004, 570, 579–580, sees no realistic chance of researching emic symbols of significance for identity constructions without textual sources. Critique by Curta 2006 on this point. See Dietler 2010, 20, exposing “the tyranny of the text”.

<sup>18</sup> Sommer 2017, 181–182.

<sup>19</sup> As is Late Antiquity in Europe, cf. Halsall 2007, 27–28.

<sup>20</sup> Smith 2003, 8, 36, 136–187.



The identification of identities (especially ethnicity) continues to be revisited in various disciplines because researchers are often convinced their particular research fields would provide more stringent and unequivocal data for the discussion to solve it and prove one point of view once and for all. However, from the start it seems unlikely that one set of data can be used to prove a single underlying structure for a phenomenon with so many different outcomes in an unequivocal way and to formulate a single ‘law’ for all of them.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst it is impossible to present a complete overview of identity research from all interdisciplinary viewpoints,<sup>22</sup> the historical development and some aspects which are important in order to be able to grasp the current debate in Archaeology and Egyptology are presented and discussed below.

This book aims to summarise the critical application of modern concepts derived from culture studies and other research fields which serves to deconstruct long-lived, static culture-historical paradigms in mainstream Egyptology that are still implicitly at work today and need if not deconstruction at least realisation and visualisation. The same holds true for the colonial origin of Archaeology as a discipline,<sup>23</sup> which lasted much longer in Egypt. While the current work clearly shows how interpretations of archaeological and textual research influence each other, the differential consideration of both leads to a more informed understanding of the reconstruction of the past instead of using archaeology and material culture specifically to illustrate a history or a narrative, to use a modern buzz word, that probably never existed. It is clear that some eras in the long Egyptian history provide more information than others which allow highlighting identities of the past to a differential degree. However, the dangers and pitfalls of using simplified concepts to explain the relationship between material culture and the people using it need to be highlighted.

The case study I have chosen, namely the late Middle Kingdom settlement excavation in Area A/II at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, provides an example of archaeological data conventionally used to illustrate the immigration of ‘Asiatics’<sup>24</sup>, who subsequently dominated and took over the settlement. The data set is exclusively derived from archaeology, but the interpretation of the material culture outside the culture-historical paradigm leads to a far more diverse and interesting reconstruction of ancient lives in a liminal zone between Egypt and the Near East. Because the settlement excavation did not yield any textual information itself, the same restrictions and limitations apply as for prehistoric archaeology, which lacks any written evidence.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the long history of the site (from the early Middle Kingdom, c. 2000 BC, to the late New Kingdom, c. 1100 BC and on to the Late Period, 664 BC) adds information and data that allow a deep insight into the workings and long-term impact of contacts between social groups with different cultural traditions meeting, impressing each other and, finally, mixing (or not). It must not be forgotten that the basis of the historical interpretation, for which the archaeological finds at Tell el Dab<sup>a</sup> are used as illustrative materials, is not particularly substantial.<sup>26</sup>

The cautious approach to and use of the purely archaeological data from a late Middle Kingdom settlement (Area A/II) in the liminal zone of the north-eastern delta site Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>/Avaris reveal the complex and fascinating processes taking place at the very start of a cultural contact situation between (at least) two social groups of people with differential traditions, material culture and identities.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hicks 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Halsall 2007, 35–38, n. 1 as well as Fowler 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Dietler 2010, 3.

<sup>24</sup> The generic term ‘Asiatic’ for ancient inhabitants of the modern area of Syria-Palestine and the deserts between modern Egypt and Syria-Palestine is not intended as a racial term, but is derived historically from the translation tradition of hieroglyphic writing in Egyptology for the ancient Egyptian word *ʿ3m/ʿ3mw*. Although it would be a milestone to change this tradition, for example, to inhabitants of northern/eastern lands, there is currently not much hope to achieve such a change for this shortcut, which is widely conceived as convenient.

<sup>25</sup> Written sources are not per se ‘better’ but require different approaches and questions (e.g. for whom was the text written? What was its purpose? Who wrote the text? When was it written, etc.). Such questions are often as equally ambiguous as archaeological sources. Cf. the comprehensive discussion in Moers 2013a, with bibliography.

<sup>26</sup> Bourriau 2000 is the best overview using textual and archaeological evidence to advantage. Traditional narratives are Wilkinson 2010, 182–198 and Van de Mieroop 2011, 126–143. See Schneider 2018 for an overview of common narratives on the ‘Hyksos’ and deconstructing them.



Simplistic reconstructions and the use of traditional and partly colonial culture contact models are based on the current reconstruction of a historical background derived from texts that are not directly related to the site and the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>. They provide a kind of background picture, which currently almost obscures the actually preserved archaeological data and does not leave enough space for interpretations deviating from the currently accepted narrative. Much the same can be said for an uncritical and non-quantitative interpretation of the material culture, mainly derived from mortuary data. This approach is based on the assumption that the items of material culture<sup>27</sup> found passively reflect the identity of the makers/owners/users *directly*, which is very likely not the case (see below).

Thus, the current historical narrative of events in the late Middle Kingdom and the early Second Intermediate Period (c. 1800 to 1750 BC) in the Egyptian Nile Delta<sup>28</sup> proposes a steady (and probably repeated) immigration of ‘Asiatics’, who are identifiable by means of their mortuary customs and material culture as coming from the wider area of Syria-Palestine, although their exact place of origin remains unknown. It also remains not known whether they all came from the same place, which is not necessarily the case.<sup>29</sup> These immigrants settled in Egypt, probably due to their special skills (according to administrative texts unrelated to the site), underwent a degree of acculturation in a different and unknown place than Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, to which they came later and then – strengthened – overthrew a weakened Egyptian centralised administration during the later Second Intermediate Period.<sup>30</sup> This common place reconstruction falls short of understanding the complexities of this alleged process especially of its beginning, which should be represented in the three earliest phases of the settlement Area A/II at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> (H, G/4 and G/3–1). The present case study intends to open the reader’s mind to scrutiny of the material culture in its own right and let it speak. While it does not seem likely that the outcome of this particular case study will prove any *side* right or wrong, it will provide an example of insights gained by careful analysis of material culture available in the unparalleled richness and diversity from a hitherto unique site. Current research in the Wadi Tumilat and at other delta sites suggests a number of obvious differences, e.g. the choice of tomb architecture or cooking pottery.<sup>31</sup>

This case study will provide building blocks for a theory of the process of material culture change and also cultural mixing manifesting in material culture. Moreover, it will demonstrate the complexity of interpretations and prove that the questions asked could be more interesting than “was this pot made by an ‘Asiatic’?” and question what this information would tell us anyway. As an example, it may be mentioned that not all the graves found unequivocally follow Syro-Palestinian mortuary practices in the settlement Area A/II in Phase G/3–1. Instead, various cultural traits known from Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions are used in an intricate mix or even interplay.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, we must bear in mind that the burial practices of people are nowhere homogeneous and exactly the same in every

<sup>27</sup> See Hicks 2010 for a thorough discussion of the field of material culture studies and its current developments.

<sup>28</sup> Usually such a sequence of events is not only reconstructed for the site of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> but the finds are generalised for at least the whole of the eastern delta and the Wadi Tumilat, although, only recently, detailed comparative studies of material culture are under way, e.g. by the Polish-Slovak mission to Tell el-Retaba and especially by Lucia Hlusková.

<sup>29</sup> Current theories favour the northern Levant due to previous proven contacts and by imported pottery: cf. Mourad 2015. Name patterns of the personal names of non-Egyptians known from all over Egypt in the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period point to a diversity in origin of immigrants in Egypt quite apart from those people coming from Punt, the desert or from Nubia: cf. Schneider 2003a, esp. 112–115, 339–340.

<sup>30</sup> This paradigm can be found in Van Seters 1964 and is with adjustments still in use: see Bietak 2010. Cf. for a different way of looking at the historiographic tradition, see Bader 2017b. The later Second Intermediate Period is currently equated to Phases E/2–D/2 in the Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> stratigraphy.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. preliminary reports of the Polish-Slovak mission at Tell el-Retaba and the research project of Hlusková within the framework of the START project ‘Beyond Politics: Material Culture in Second Intermediate Period Egypt and Nubia’, led by the author. See also; Nour el-Din et al. 2013; Rzepka et al. 2014; Rzepka et al. 2015; Nour el-Din et al. 2016; Rzepka et al. 2016; Rzepka et al. 2017a; Rzepka et al. 2017b; Hudec et al. 2018.

<sup>32</sup> See Bader 2011a; Bader 2015b; Bader 2020 for overviews of settlement areas and the primary data. In Phase H no burials were found in that area; in G/4 only one burial of an infant was discovered in a small mud brick structure.

little detail as the normative culture-historical paradigm leads us to expect.<sup>33</sup> Particularly noteworthy is the non-élite status of the settlement in Area A/II in contrast to the earlier phases in other areas of the site<sup>34</sup> and contemporary areas of different layout and with a higher number of tombs (in Areas F/I<sup>35</sup> and A/IV<sup>36</sup>).

From an intra-site perspective it became clear that not even all contemporary settlement areas within Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> develop in the same way<sup>37</sup> and, thus, too broad generalisations, which do not even do justice to one site alone, must be avoided, even if that complicates matters and the way the material culture at the site is summarised. The material culture of all categories has to be presented in all its diversity to avoid its simplified appropriation to fit hypothetical reconstructions of events, which remain largely unprovable.<sup>38</sup>

To achieve this goal, this detailed discussion of the enormous complexity of the related themes covers critical reviews of culture concepts and how these influence the Egyptological interpretation of textual, pictorial and archaeological sources in order to write history. The text frequently refers to the detailed presentation of the archaeological sources and primary data covering the three earliest settlement phases of the late Middle Kingdom in Area A/II at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>,<sup>39</sup> while previous work<sup>40</sup> explored the role and potential of material culture in the interpretation of identity and also looked at the methodologies available to obtain it.<sup>41</sup> This is particularly important because much of the interpretational value of material culture, if used for identity research depends on the quality and detail of the recording and analysis of the ‘things’ people were surrounded with and chose to use themselves.<sup>42</sup> Only relatively recently did the inclusion of the ‘context’ of objects gain more importance in certain parts of Egyptian archaeology, which is a necessary pre-requisite to achieve a more informed consideration of the material remains at one’s disposal for ancient individuals. The division into object types (beads, metal tools, stone vessels, pottery, etc.), the specialisation of analysts to their respective artefact type, and the subsequent isolated interpretation of these finds are some of the less advantageous legacies of Flinders Petrie’s method of publishing his finds,<sup>43</sup> which has as yet to be completely overcome to remedy the lack of context in archaeological presentations. The extent and degree of variation in shape, material and manufacturing technologies within many object types still remain largely unknown due to the habit of publishing typological corpora with ‘typical examples’ rather than full contexts. But knowledge of context(s) is paramount to the informed interpretation of finds.<sup>44</sup> This should serve as a warning against forcing objects and material culture in general into too broad sub-typologies without acknowledging those that do not really fit. Such a procedure may eliminate categories which might represent the very essence of the material development we are researching.<sup>45</sup> The identification of raw materials and quantification of objects in a given context also fall into this category<sup>46</sup> even if scientific methodology is not always available.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Gramsch 2015. Cf. the publication of the tombs at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>: see Bietak 1991b; Forstner-Müller 2008; Schiestl 2009 where there are many minor variations in the burial customs and they cannot be considered uniform. The same is the case for cemeteries in the Nile Valley; cf. Seidlmayer 1990 for tomb architecture, etc. Unfortunately, to date there is no single research publication highlighting the subtle differences in burial customs in Egypt.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. the mansion in Area F/I: cf. Eigner 1985; Eigner 1996. For the cemeteries in its vicinity, cf. Schiestl 2009.

<sup>35</sup> See Müller 2012.

<sup>36</sup> See Bietak/Hein 1994.

<sup>37</sup> See Bader 2011a for a summary of the comparison between two contemporary excavation areas.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Burke 2019 and the selective choice of certain patterns of cultural behaviour used to support his arguments, while ignoring others.

<sup>39</sup> Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-d.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Bader 2010; Bader 2013a; Bader 2016; Bader 2018a.

<sup>41</sup> Bader 2010; Bader 2015a; Bader 2015b; Bader 2015c; Bader 2016; Bader 2018a; Bader forthcoming-a.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Hicks 2010; Hahn 2005.

<sup>43</sup> In a culture-historical approach, one example of each ‘type’ is sufficient to gain all knowledge to be retrieved from material culture, due to the normative expectation concerning all other constituents of a type: cf. Van Oyen 2017.

<sup>44</sup> See Bader forthcoming-b on copying, imitating and transposition of objects and their differential interpretations as well as their pitfalls.

<sup>45</sup> See Langin-Hooper 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Bader 2010; Bader 2015b; Bader 2016.

Nevertheless the objects still need to be studied in depth. Besides, it is absolutely crucial to know the frequency of certain phenomena in these contexts (e.g. local copies, foreign imports, etc.), otherwise singular finds may appear more frequent than they are due to their objective or subjective importance and create a distorted picture.<sup>47</sup> Classic research methodology using parallels to features of material culture, e.g. certain ground plans of houses in a larger perspective is also instructive, but a ‘deeper’ look into the technological intricacies of production and manufacture (e.g. *chaîne opératoire*, metrological considerations) becomes more and more important as similarities in shape or type may be superficial,<sup>48</sup> and on closer inspection might turn out not to be as similar as previously thought. Such problems were encountered in researching domestic architecture, when it was realised that, not even in very recent publications, was there sufficient detail available on building materials, methods and measurements to answer pertinent questions. Despite technological advances in photography and 3D modelling, personal engagement and experience with the object is, in my opinion, vital to fully understand it and build a semblance of a personal relationship.

Various concepts of mixed culture and mixing culture seem promising in understanding the way in which groups of people sharing cultural traits interact.<sup>49</sup> Although most of the current theoretical approaches are derived from language-centred post-colonial research and, for one reason or another, have problematic often biologicistic baggage which impedes their unaltered one-to-one application to ancient situations in broadly speaking historical research, some concepts are currently developed from this body of thought, such as Philipp Stockhammer’s entanglement theory<sup>50</sup> or Richard White’s “middle ground”,<sup>51</sup> which offer the opportunity to describe a variety of influences on objects as well as on contexts. The thought process of what ‘cultures’ actually are and how to describe them and their ‘properties’ continues and, thus, the debate about similar questions concerning historical cultures is unlikely to be finalised in the near future, all the more so since it is unlikely to find only one single ‘process’ or underlying ‘structure’ causing developments culminating in cultural mixing. This is, in a way, frustrating but also provides the possibility of developing entirely new research avenues.

A concise overview of the results of the work on the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II finishes this essay and points to further areas of research that can be usefully pursued in order to enhance knowledge about the way material culture should be viewed and analysed in order to inform about ancient identities.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Bader 2016. As an example one type of cooking pot was frequently referred to in academic works and used as proof for ‘Asiatics’ settling at Tell el-Dab’a despite its relatively low frequency. Cf. Yasur-Landau 2010; Burke 2019. Bader forthcoming-a; Bader forthcoming-d will provide a quantitative as well as a qualitative presentation of this phenomenon as seen in Area A/II.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Bader 2018a; Bader forthcoming-b.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Insoll 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Stockhammer 2012; Stockhammer 2013. This approach differs strongly from Hodder’s much more universal human–thing relationship concept: cf. Hodder 2012.

<sup>51</sup> White 1991; White 2011. See Lumsden 2008 for using parts of this approach in an Old Assyrian Context, and below for the more problematic aspects of this approach.

## 2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION OF IDENTITIES AND MATERIAL CULTURE

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### 2.1. FORMATION OF THE ASPECTS OF IDENTITIES

“... while a rich Goth acted the Roman, the poor Roman aped the Goth ...”  
(Halsall 2007, 335 ascribed to Theodoric)

Consideration of research literature dealing with medieval,<sup>52</sup> historical,<sup>53</sup> classical<sup>54</sup> and pre-historic archaeology,<sup>55</sup> social anthropology,<sup>56</sup> ethnography<sup>57</sup> and sociology<sup>58</sup> widens a narrow understanding of the character of identity. Traditionally, the research focus in archaeology lies almost exclusively on ethnicity, which dominates the debate, although it is but one aspect of identity of a person.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, it is probably the aspect of least relevance for the lives of ancient people.<sup>60</sup> That this focus represents a drastic simplification of multiple and complex processes derived from complex cultural developments within groups that might frequently change has been one important outcome of long discussions and numerous case studies.<sup>61</sup> Including and giving greater attention to the social nature and multiplicity of gender, age, status, class, sex, profession, region, religion as well as previous personal experiences in order to provide a more complete picture of identity, namely the sum of social experiences which moulds personal identity and keeps it fluid and temporarily changing, has frequently been proposed and sometimes appears in case studies.<sup>62</sup> Personhood was the latest addition to these aspects.<sup>63</sup> These aspects can also be understood as forms of social division and, thus, confirm these phenomena as social.<sup>64</sup> Thus, they have to be considered within the context of social groupings. Moreover, the active role of the proponent(s) in construction and intermittent change of various aspects of identity has been put forward. These changes may very well overlap or occur concurrently due to concomitant memberships

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<sup>52</sup> Pohl 1998; Pohl 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Orser 1991; Jones 1999a.

<sup>54</sup> Jones 1997, 29–39, 131–135; Webster 2001; Fahlander 2007, 20–21; Halsall 2007; MacSweeney 2017; Van Oyen 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Veit 1989; Jones 1997; Jones 1998; Brather 2004; Gramsch 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Barth 1969; Bentley 1987; Barth 1996 [1969]; Jones 1999b, 152–157; Hahn 2005; Fahlander 2007, 20, and older references going back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>57</sup> Jones 1997 for many examples with bibliography as well as Fahlander 2007, 20.

<sup>58</sup> E.g. Bourdieu 1977; Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Hirschauer 2014. More recently Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 14–19, critically review the heterogeneity of identity and its meaning and propose to replace it by identification and self-understanding. These, however, are unlikely to be isolated in archaeological sources. For the building of a national identity *inter alia* by means of constructed history see El-Haj 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Brather 2004, 616; see Brubaker and Cooper 2000 for the problematic side and use of this concept.

<sup>60</sup> Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Trigger 1977, 21–22; Jones 1997, 101–105; Johnson 1999; Schneider 2003a, 321–322, 334; Lucy 2005, 100, 109; Hakenbeck 2007; Liszka 2012, 239; Moers 2015. In contrast Halsall 2007, 38–39, thinks ethnic identity is more significant than other aspects of identity. Such a view depends certainly on the density and nature of the source material.

<sup>61</sup> Shennan 1989, 20; MacSweeney 2009; Pohl 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Daim 1998; Díaz-Andreu et al. 2005; Halsall 2007, 38–39.

<sup>63</sup> See Fowler 2010, 365–385, for an overview.

<sup>64</sup> DeMarrais 2004, 15.

in different social groups<sup>65</sup> or even be cultivated by the individuals themselves for reasons of status, individuality or social strategy.<sup>66</sup>

Further, this process, or rather processes are firmly connected to human organisation into social groups – large or small – and their fluid idiosyncrasy of self-conscious identification with people belonging to one particular group and comparison with other groups. This constitutes a subjective and (self-) ascribed approach as described by Fredrik Barth.<sup>67</sup> Only in distinguishing the self-conscious group of members from the group of outsiders can an (ethnic) identity<sup>68</sup> be constructed, which is basically a testing of boundary against counter boundary by respective groups, thus constituting a mutual negotiation process. These “boundaries” should not be imagined as solid but rather as distinctiveness or differences.<sup>69</sup> Only this two- or multi-way process and the following recognition<sup>70</sup> of a group with different qualities provide differentiation of groups and the assignation of a range of qualities, which also differ between groups and which are usually chosen by the groups themselves.<sup>71</sup> A good example for such a differentiation is language, not only through different languages, but also by different pronunciations, accents, choice of specific words or dialects within the same language referring to smaller regionally and sometimes socially defined differentiations.<sup>72</sup> Egyptologists working in archaeology in Egypt, just as classicists working in Greece, may be described as a social group which is not influenced by language, social background, (modern) nationality or gender (at least in more recent years) but solely by a common interest cutting across nationalities as well as social classes. The behaviour connected to this identity includes travelling to Egypt regularly, visiting the same places and doing essentially the same things but perhaps differing in applications of archaeological methodology, according to which university the Egyptologists attended. According to social anthropological approaches this would constitute an equally viable identity to be constructed by members of such a group (not based on ethnic considerations).<sup>73</sup> It has to be borne in mind, though, that any boundaries mentioned are permeable and not completely fixed but fluid and dynamic, while individual group members are also part of multiple groups at the same time.<sup>74</sup>

To complicate matters, not only individuals of homogenous origin and/or language may form groups, but also other individuals who find sufficient cultural or other similarities amongst themselves to create a common ‘myth of origin’ in the broadest sense to stress their real or conceived similarity either in terms

<sup>65</sup> Wiessner 1989, 56–57; Daim 1998, 76–79; Lucy 2005, 97.

<sup>66</sup> Barth 1969; Barth 1996 [1969]; Jones 1996, 67.

<sup>67</sup> Smith 2003, 16–17; Liszka 2012, 52–53.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Barth 1996 [1969], especially for ethnic groups, 299–300. This also seems to be valid for other aspects of identity, Barth 1996 [1969], 302. See also Glazer and Moynihan (1975, 3–5) who wanted to define and illustrate the phenomenon “ethnicity”, which they conceived as new. But this is denied by Emberling 1997; Smith 2003, 11–12, 15, 20–22. See also Jones 1997, 95–96; Daim 1998; Brather 2004, 97, 100; Lucy 2005, 95; Antonaccio 2010, 46–47; Liszka 2012, 52.

<sup>69</sup> Emberling 1997, 300; Jones 1997, 74.

<sup>70</sup> “Identity is fundamentally a question of recognition” Graves-Brown 1996, 92.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Barth 1996 [1969], 296; Brather 2004; Lucy 2005, 95–96; Hirschauer 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Good examples of these are to be found in Austria as well as in the United Kingdom with their many different dialects, and habitual uses of certain words in certain contexts. It even becomes immediately apparent if a person was socialised in a different region within Austria/UK at the first moment a person starts to speak. However, that says nothing about the ethnic background of an individual. This is the first step in being assessed by the opposite groups as a member or an outsider. But also note that it is possible to adapt to such language patterns more or less easily, depending on individual talent, in order to “fit into the group”. Again this is a conscious choice and strategy: see Brather 2004, 619–620, with similar thoughts; cf. Hall 2002, *passim* for the use of language in identifying ethnic identity in antiquity, totally denying that archaeology can add any knowledge. Cf. Barth 1996 [1969], 299 and 319. But also note that language alone is not equivalent to ethnicity, cf. Renfrew 1996, 128–129; Brather 2004, 90. At the same time, such features do not exist in order to express identity; they developed due to social and cultural conditions and, thus, may express identity: cf. Graves-Brown 1996, 90–91. See Fox 2004 for certain behaviours in modern English society.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Daim 1998; specialists in Egyptian pottery studies might be recognised as a group by finding profile gauges among their material possessions, but plumbers and specialists in Roman pottery might also have examples of these. Only further equipment and the possession of certain books would provide a more detailed picture of the occupation held.

<sup>74</sup> Jones 1996, 66; Smith 2003, 4–6; Lucy 2005, 95.



of origin,<sup>75</sup> common fate or even a prolonged time of common experience (e.g. a prolonged migration of individuals of different cultural background, or working in Egypt). What is important is the *conceived* sameness of individuals and real or assumed cultural difference to others,<sup>76</sup> whether it is strictly speaking ‘true’ or not.<sup>77</sup>

The most important aspect here is a multiplicity of aspects of identity that makes a description of individuals more difficult to contemplate and describe than “individual is A” or “individual is not A”. A shift away from binary constructions (e.g. Egyptian/non-Egyptian) to a more fluid and overlapping concept seems to be called for<sup>78</sup> and not only in terms of identity.<sup>79</sup> The introduction of more and more fluid categories solves this problem and gives justice to cultural contacts, which have an impact on both “parties” and leave behind two slightly changed entities,<sup>80</sup> whether this is in any way noticeable in everyday life, let alone in archaeology, or not, or if is only cognitive.

Using these observations for focussing on ethnic identity, it has been described as “[...] that aspect of a person’s self-conceptualisation, which results from identification with a broader group in opposition to others on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent”.<sup>81</sup> But this is also true of some other aspects of identity. The distinction of, or the need to subscribe to ethnic identities is often brought about by conflicts – when it becomes necessary to define and delimit one’s social group from another in greater detail.<sup>82</sup> This also stresses the arbitrary and socially induced nature of the phenomenon,<sup>83</sup> which is described as reactive by some,<sup>84</sup> and is often the product of (colonial) history and its identifications.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, it needs to be stressed again that “biological ethnicity” or “descent” does not influence the social and cultural behaviour of a person much<sup>86</sup> because both can be changed e.g. if advantages within the social environments are desired.<sup>87</sup> In other words “One does not possess an ethnic identity but creates

<sup>75</sup> Emberling and Yoffee 1999, 274, for Mesopotamia; Brather 2004, 104–107 for prehistory; Halsall 2007, 458–459, for Late Antiquity; Antonaccio 2010, 33, for the descent from a common ancestry and identification of original home territory in a Greek context; see also Dietler 2010, 84; Riggs and Baines 2012; Sommer 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Jones 1996, 66–67; Renfrew 1996, 130; Emberling 1997, 302–303; Schneider 2003a, 317–318; Smith 2003, 6; Halsall 2007, 458; Smith 2007, 220–221; Antonaccio 2010, 33; Riggs and Baines 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Bentley 1987, 27, 45–46; Emberling 1997, 303; Halsall 2007, 45; Antonaccio 2010, 33, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Brace et al. 1993, 25–26, for a modern Egyptian example of identity; Halsall 2007; Pohl 2010, 10–11.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Bader 2013a and below. See Lumsden 2008 for other binary categories such as subject/object; mind/body; material/social and Renfrew 2004, 23, and Dietler 2010, 20, 49, for literate/non-literate; colonisers/colonised; dynamic/static, etc.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Lumsden 2008, 42, who also observed a transformation of all participants for Karum Kanesh in Anatolia.

<sup>81</sup> Renfrew 1996, 130; Jones 1997, xiii, discussed in detail in 84–105.

<sup>82</sup> Jones 1997; Smith 2003 also brought about by colonial situations externally; Smith 2007, 231; Dietler 2010, 84; Liszka 2012, 53–56.

<sup>83</sup> Jones 1997, 136–144; Emberling and Yoffee 1999, 274; Smith 2007, 339.

<sup>84</sup> Smith 2003, 20.

<sup>85</sup> Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 21–24.

<sup>86</sup> Barth 1969, 10–11; Hodder 1978, 12; Emberling 1997, 298, 302, with bibliography; Emberling and Yoffee 1999, 273–274; Jones 1999b; Schneider 2003a, 317–318; Brather 2004, 84–87; Lucy 2005, 93: “... unfounded assumption of a link between ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ groups and genetic variation”; Halsall 2007, 466; Smith 2007, 220–221; Fazioli 2014, 24, with bibliography; Welte 2016, 173–175, for a sceptical view on ethnic groups from a biological angle. Renfrew (1996) included genetic relationship in his definition, see 130. But there are also scholars relying on distinction of ethnic groups by means of skeletal remains, e.g. Buzon 2006. Such interpretations are contested by Graves-Brown 1996. Brace et al. (1993) argue with the similarity of craniofacial measurements representing spatial closeness and, thus, rejecting the concept of “race” as their Egyptian sample is very homogeneous compared to their other data from all over the world. However, the fact that one skull is different (21–22) they explain in a culture-historical way and ascribe a Germanic derivation to it. The basic interpretation of these measurements as a measure of similarity of people, who are indigenous Egyptians, remains the same as other methods of physical anthropology. See also Liszka 2012, 465–479, with bibliography, for problems arising from craniometric skeletal studies of supposed Nubian individuals.

<sup>87</sup> In the instrumental view of the concept which most scholars followed. Cf. Barth 1969, 15–16; Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Jones 1997, 72–79, for definition and critique of this approach; Jones 1998, 38; Schneider 2003a, 316–318; Smith 2003, 17, 204–205; Halsall 2007, 470–482.

one,”<sup>88</sup> comparable to a self performance.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, “an ethnic identity is not derived from a ‘natural order’”<sup>90</sup> but the result of historical processes.<sup>91</sup> Halsall summarises it as a cognitive, performative, dynamic, situational<sup>92</sup> and multi-layered<sup>93</sup> phenomenon.<sup>94</sup> This instrumentalist view stands in stark contrast to a essentialist/primordialist interpretation of ethnic identity, in which a person is born into an identity that can neither be changed nor changes of its own accord. This view has been largely abandoned in archaeological considerations<sup>95</sup> and has to be named for what it is: racism.

From a post-structuralist viewpoint, identity is seen as continuously defined, inter-referential and contextual in a relational construction.<sup>96</sup> To close this section with Siân Jones’ words “ethnicity is a multidimensional phenomenon constituted in different ways in different social domains.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, it is “rather a classification than a property inherent in a group.”<sup>98</sup>

## 2.2. IDENTITY AND CULTURE CONCEPTS

A necessarily brief consideration of the understanding and definition of ‘culture’ deeply exemplifies how differences in this understanding impact the interpretation of the process of interaction, contacts and conflicts<sup>99</sup> between cultural groups and how acceptance, appropriation<sup>100</sup> and rejection<sup>101</sup> of cultural traits are viewed to have functioned, namely whether cultures are homogeneous, impermeable, monolithic and isolated through the existence of a firm boundary and take on no influences or if they are open for inclusion of “external” cultural traits (Fig. 1).<sup>102</sup> According to Michael Dietler’s definition, culture is also “the ceaseless process of construction through fusion”.<sup>103</sup> The development of the meaning of the term “culture” from its roots in the Latin concepts of *natio*, *gens* and *populus* up to the narrow meaning of “Kultur” in German philosophy plays a role in how the term is conceived in the modern world and continues to change within the contexts in which it is used.<sup>104</sup> In culture history a normative culture concept dominates which represents a set of shared ideas. Within the concept the material remains also express these norms (e.g. identical burial customs) and are thought of as quite unchanging with

<sup>88</sup> Jones 1997, 90; Smith 2003, 188; Lucy 2005, 95; Burmeister 2016, 48. See also Bentley 1987 for an example.

<sup>89</sup> Hicks 2010, 365.

<sup>90</sup> Jones 1997, 65–72; Jones 1999b, 152; Schneider 2003a, 316–318; Smith 2003, 11, 16, contra a primordialist understanding; Brather 2004, 110; Lucy 2005, 97; Liszka 2012, 46–57. Interestingly, Smith 2018, 116, states that “ethnicity is constructed as an essential category at birth” but is “still mutable and socially contingent”.

<sup>91</sup> Brather 2004, 111.

<sup>92</sup> Bentley 1987, 35; Emberling 1997, 307; Jones 1997, 91; Smith 2003, xv, 188; Brather 2004, 110, 290, 616; Liszka 2012, 50–51.

<sup>93</sup> Brather 2004, 110.

<sup>94</sup> Graves-Brown 1996, 91; Jones 1997, 100; Smith 2003, 6; Brather 2004, 110–111; Halsall 2007, 40, 42, 466; Smith 2007, 232.

<sup>95</sup> See Lumsden 2008, 29, and works there quoted; For Nubian-Egyptian relations, see Raue 2018, 10–11.

<sup>96</sup> Fowler 2010, 362.

<sup>97</sup> Jones 1997, 100.

<sup>98</sup> Dietler 2010, 81.

<sup>99</sup> Jones 1998, 48; Fahlander 2007; Lohwasser 2017, not in the sense of a violent event.

<sup>100</sup> This term is not used with its negative modern English connotation but as a technical term to describe the accepting of some cultural features as defined by Hahn 2005, 99–107.

<sup>101</sup> Dietler 2010, 70, about rejection as an important part of (colonial) encounters.

<sup>102</sup> Some aspects of this with regard to Egyptian cultural traditions and references are more extensively discussed in Bader 2012; Bader 2013a; Bader 2017b. For other areas and fields, see Bhabha 1994; Fahlander 2007; Gramsch 2015 and numerous others. But also see Sahlins (1999) highlighting a line of thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which saw ‘culture’ neither as uniform nor unchangeable.

<sup>103</sup> Dietler 2010, 54–55, 57–59.

<sup>104</sup> Díaz-Andreu 1996; Brather 2004, 618–620; DeMarrais 2004, 12–14.

an expected outcome,<sup>105</sup> although Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* theory avoids such a view (see below for details).<sup>106</sup>

After having described some of the pre-conditions and problems in researching ancient identities, it is worth looking at the (e)motion which initiated this research avenue towards post-colonial theory concepts, which attracted criticism.<sup>107</sup> One outcome is Homi Bhabha's view of culture as a specific temporal constellation, composed of various elements, many of which are shared with other such social collectives.<sup>108</sup>

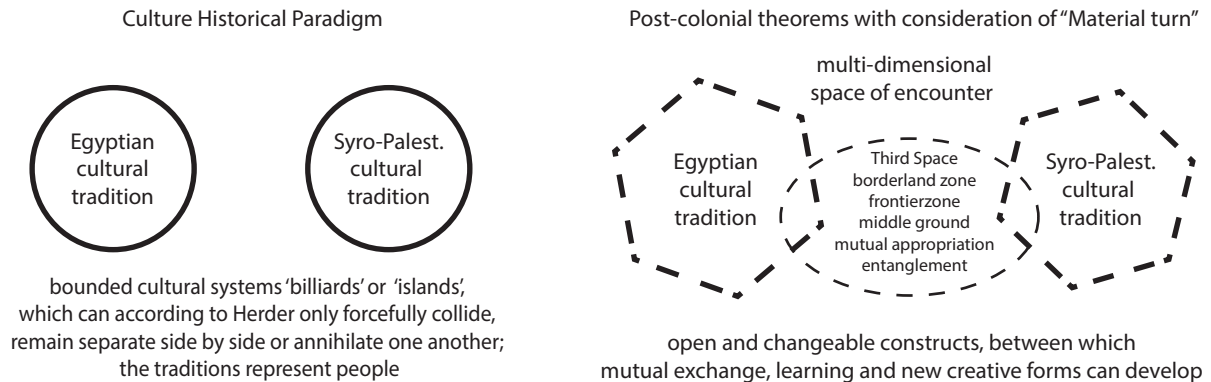


Fig. 1 Scheme of cultures in culture historical paradigm and post-colonial theory (B. Bader)

The trigger for this direction of research may be seen in various political developments such as the end of European colonial rule and conflicts evoked by “ethnic issues”,<sup>109</sup> ever more rapid globalisation, mass migration and cultural mixture, phenomena that increasingly influence the life of every single person on the planet and the question of who we ourselves are in contrast to individuals who arrived from elsewhere.<sup>110</sup> Another side of the same question is as follows: in which ways do either the arrival of people from elsewhere, information about other regions of the world, or the use and consumption of objects and/or products<sup>111</sup> change us and our traditional ways of life? On the other hand, one must also ask, does it really always need an external impetus to change culture and the “way of doing things” or can change be the answer to local developments within a society as well? Bhabha also sees culture as something that can only be described by way of differentiation from others,<sup>112</sup> which is in fact very similar to the construction of identity (see above). For the younger generation a world in which one does not receive news or objects from the other side of the world or from even remote places in an instant seems unimaginable.<sup>113</sup> With this development in mind, a search for diachronic and depoliticised examples and historical case studies, where external influences seem to change ‘the way of doing things’, is instructive. Also informative is studying how people coped with changes and what exactly provoked such changes.

<sup>105</sup> Jones 1997, 24–25, 84, 131; Jones 1999b, 161; Johnson 2010, 15–21; Liszka 2012, 42–46. Hicks 2010, 34: “... identification of particular artefact types with particular narrative ethnic/cultural groups in order to trace migration/diffusion ...”; Gramsch 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Bourdieu 1977; Jones 1997, 88–89.

<sup>107</sup> Sahlins 1999.

<sup>108</sup> Bhabha 1994, 35–37; Fahlander 2007, 22–26.

<sup>109</sup> Barth 1996 [1969], 318; Glazer and Moynihan 1975, 5–6; Bentley 1987, 47; Shennan 1989, 29–30; Veit 1989; Renfrew 1996, 125–127, 134–135; Chapman 1997; Jones 1997, 1–6, 102–105, 141–144; Jones 1999b, 163–164; For deconstructing previous racist use of archaeology see Jones 1999b, 155–156. See also Dittmann 2001, 291; Brather 2004, 615–616; Lucy 2005, 87, 98–99; Halsall 2007, 35–36; Antonaccio 2010, 35.

<sup>110</sup> See Barth 1995 for highlighting the political use of culture and counter strategies.

<sup>111</sup> Miller 2002.

<sup>112</sup> Fahlander 2007, 25, explaining Bhabha.

<sup>113</sup> There were times, not so long ago, when letters were the only reasonably cheap and quick means of communication.



Nevertheless, the nature of change often remains sketchy and not well enough described. However, the search for a development implies a teleological<sup>114</sup> and/or even Darwinian train of thought,<sup>115</sup> which is an imposition, as such processes cannot be directed towards a defined goal because such a goal would only be obvious in retrospect. Thus, this would imply the imagined development towards a preconceived goal cannot be intentional and therefore is not ancient at all. Therefore, theories using a predefined point of a development as ‘natural’ and inevitable result are almost certainly artificial constructs with little relation to the past. Of crucial importance for understanding cultural change is, in contrast, the way in which ‘culture’ is perceived as a concept and this is by no means a question on which scholars unanimously agree. In this chapter it is impossible to even sketch all the different opinions and definitions of what this term comprises today<sup>116</sup> or to give an overview of how it was conceived by present and past philosophers or sociologists<sup>117</sup> and early archaeologists, whose thinking implicitly persists until the present. It should also not be forgotten that the life experiences of researchers and scholars have an immediate impact on the nature of their interpretations.<sup>118</sup> At an early stage, archaeology, originally conceived as an auxiliary science to ancient history, was used in a modernistic way to illustrate then current socio-economic processes such as migrations, general upheaval as well as territorial questions connected with the formation of nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>119</sup> Scholars of the humanities still struggle to break free from the inherent need to neatly classify correlates of human behaviour in an empiricist tradition derived from connections to early science.<sup>120</sup> However, it is notoriously difficult to avoid generalising the ‘untidy’ issues (such as variations in cultural practice, objects not fitting pre-conceived typologies derived from normative expectation), which would advance research into strict classifications where material is made to fit categories and then disappears from analysis. Such disappearance becomes greater, the more numerous an artefact type is.

Rather, the way forward would seem to be to consider ‘culture’ as an active and dynamic process, during which course numerous subtle and radical alterations, continuities and discontinuities happen due to different social actors in many different contexts. It is crucial to consider the active role of material culture beyond just being created and used as this is necessary to gain an understanding of the ancient world which has an active part in human relations and social and cultural structures.<sup>121</sup>

### 2.3. PAST IDENTITY AND MATERIAL CULTURE: HOW TO GET FROM AN IDEA TO ‘THINGS’

A longstanding tradition in ancient history is to investigate the identities of past peoples whom we look back upon. Whilst textual sources provide one type of evidence, material culture has been used to illustrate, and complement our understanding of history as correlates of social practices.<sup>122</sup> In order to connect the identity debate with archaeology, it is necessary to discuss briefly the connection of identity with material culture and the problems in the interpretation derived from it.

<sup>114</sup> Graves-Brown 1996; Jones 1996, 65.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Haaland 1977, 3; Graves-Brown 1996; Hicks 2010, 30–31.

<sup>116</sup> E.g. Stefan Hirschauer, termed it “temporäre Stabilisierung von Hybridisierungserscheinungen” [temporary stabilisation of features of hybridisation] in his lecture ‘Un/doing Differences. Humandifferenzierung in der vergleichenden Forschung’ given at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, First Lecture on Gender & Diversity, 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2016.

<sup>117</sup> For a necessarily selective overview see Bader 2017b. See also Hicks 2010 and Priglinger 2018, 22–24, for a historical overview of the concepts of cultural change and migration theory, and Sahlins 1999.

<sup>118</sup> Chapman 1997; Breyer 2010, 494. On a meta-level, archaeological works tell us as much about the researchers and their life circumstances as about the researched subject.

<sup>119</sup> Smith 2003; Lucy 2005, 88.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Jones 1997, 110; Hicks 2010, 25–38.

<sup>121</sup> Hicks 2010, 345–346; Gramsch 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Jones 1998, 35; Smith 2003; Hicks 2010; Meskell 2002 for mentioning the problem but without going into detail. Bader 2017b for an Egyptian example.

Material culture encompasses all things individuals surround themselves with and it provides the framework that contains the actions undertaken by members of past social groups or societies.<sup>123</sup> As such it provides correlates left behind by a social group in their specific way of doing things, representing the complex clues to unravel the complementary picture not reflected by textual evidence. A personal connection to things exists at the earliest developmental stage of humans, before the ability to speak is learnt by infants. Material culture represents numerous relationships between people and things, as well as between things, and thus networks,<sup>124</sup> which means that there is no one-to-one relationship between culture and its material manifestations.<sup>125</sup> “Ethnic groups are not neatly packaged territorially bound culture bearing units in the present, nor are they likely to have been in the past.”<sup>126</sup>

There are doubts that material culture can be utilised for explanatory models concerning (ethnic) identity because some scholars insist that written categorisation needs to have been used by an (ancient) administration in the form of lists of various peoples, for example, in order to ascertain the existence of an ethnic identity concept.<sup>127</sup> This, of course, would rule out purely archaeological finds, where textual evidence and prosopographic information or a “myth of common descent” cannot be obtained, but such restriction would severely neglect the traces of the lives of the non-élite and the illiterate<sup>128</sup> even if they cannot be taken as direct evidence.<sup>129</sup>

The use of material culture as a passive interpretative tool for ethnic identity that can be read like a text began with a culture-historical approach. The culture-historical school of thought connected a set of recurring objects and/or archaeological traits with groups of people or societies in the broadest sense with the same identity, usually ethnic identity, and equated them with ‘archaeological cultures’. This means archaeological records and objects were equated with ethnic groups.<sup>130</sup> Taking this concept further, single objects have been used to assign individuals to ethnic groups on the grounds that the very visible and conscious use of said objects displays a belonging to a certain social (and ethnic) group. This approach was developed from the thought that manufacture of any object underlies the intrinsic rules of the social group to which the maker and the user belong<sup>131</sup> and therefore ethnic connotations are subconsciously inherent in that object, and may thus be directly identified.<sup>132</sup>

This concept continues to be used as a quite recent example shows. Fredrik Barth, who laid the foundations for instrumental identity research, was quoted by Henriette Hafsaas<sup>133</sup> to have written that “material culture”<sup>134</sup> would be an expression of ethnic identity. Henriette Hafsaas then used her interpretation

<sup>123</sup> For a more encompassing view including environment, animals, and other aspects, research moved to the concept of materiality. Cf. DeMarrais et al. 2004; Hicks 2010.

<sup>124</sup> Halsall 2007, 30–31; Antonaccio 2010, 38–39, 46; Hicks 2010.

<sup>125</sup> Haaland 1977, 27; Liszka 2012, 58.

<sup>126</sup> Jones 1997, 104.

<sup>127</sup> Emberling and Yoffee 1999; Johnson 1999; Brather 2004, 231, 326–328: to a certain extent.

<sup>128</sup> Jones 1999a, 229–230; Smith 2003, 5; Antonaccio 2010, 37.

<sup>129</sup> See Bader 2011a; Bader 2015b; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-d for primary data of such a community.

<sup>130</sup> Veit 1989 on the historical development of this school of thought since Gustaf Kossinna established it in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and before. Haaland 1977, 2–3; Anthony 1990, 896–897; Jones 1996, 63–64; Jones 1997, 2–8, 15–26, 45–51, 106–108; Smith 2003, 14–15, 31–33; Brather 2004; Halsall 2007, 25–26; see also Hakenbeck 2008; Van Oyen 2017. For Egypt see, e.g., Baines 1996, 376. See also a recent historiographic treatise by Rebay-Salisbury (2011). I would like to thank the author for pointing this work out to me (K. Rebay-Salisbury, pers. comm. 19 March 2018) and providing a copy of her article. See Hicks 2010; Gramsch 2015; more general and based on British archaeology.

<sup>131</sup> Note that the maker and the user of an object do not have to belong to the same social group.

<sup>132</sup> Brather 2004, 283–290, for criticism and a fibulae example, also 299, 359–369. Wobst 1977; Sackett 1986; Sackett 1990; Fazioli 2014, 22. Similar concepts were still used 2016 in Egyptology: Bietak 2016, 270–272, although many of the objects he discusses were not even found in primary archaeological contexts, see below. Cf. Haaland 1977, 14, which utters criticism and thinks that lithics, amongst others, are unsuitable for ethnic identification because they lack decoration; Jones 1999b, 162–163; Lucy 2005, 91, for criticism. Liszka 2012, 64–65, 417–512, uses part of this concept, namely ‘emblemic’ markers in order to get to the *habitus* of the Medjay.

<sup>133</sup> Hafsaas 2006–2007, 170.

<sup>134</sup> Barth 1996 [1969] did not use this term in 1969, because the concept had not yet been developed to the meaning that it has now.

of Barth's idea for a culture-historical pots = people approach, largely neglecting context. In contrast, the actual citation from Fredrik Barth's publication maintains that there is "no simple one to one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences." He continues that only some cultural features are used by the actors whilst others are ignored, the choice of which are up to the group members. As "overt signals or signs", which might be used, Barth mentioned "dress, language, house forms or general style of life", but he did not use the collective notion of general "material culture" – this collective term was not yet used in its current form when Barth formulated his thoughts in 1969. Moreover, he did not mention pottery,<sup>135</sup> which is the main object type group Henriette Hafsaas solely concentrates upon.<sup>136</sup> Objects belonging to ethnic groups might have been used in the sense Fredrik Barth proposed but not necessarily in every case, nor necessarily in a regular manner, or over time always in the same way. This means that Barth was one of the first to establish ethnicity as a social category, which therefore can only indirectly be connected with any material interpretation and its archaeological correlates. Janet Johnson argues similarly and divides the social aspect from the cultural because "not all cultural traits are relevant" and, moreover, they may change.<sup>137</sup> Some commentators used decoration on pottery for this purpose,<sup>138</sup> but it proved to be more complicated than a one-to-one correlation between ethnicity and certain types of material culture.<sup>139</sup>

This example shows that criticism of the use of the archaeological record and objects for identification of ethnic groups since the 1960s<sup>140</sup> has not filtered through to all fields of archaeology but is still implicitly used even if in a more theoretically embedded way. In the end, the assumed presence of certain groups of people is still tied to the appearance of certain types of objects and among these, often pottery<sup>141</sup> without enough attention being given to either the objects or to specific contexts in which this material appears. This dilemma arises because in "archaeological cultures" without writing or ethno-archaeological parallels, no distinct self-designation is known, and cannot be known from an emic point of view.<sup>142</sup> Thus, only material culture is available to describe the identities of past individuals and their social behaviour – perhaps we just have to abandon the illusion of being able to reach an individual level of detail since we are only able to reconstruct a group of people living together using a range of objects in conjunction with one another, but we cannot know (from this method of research without further sources) whether their geographic and ethnic origin was homogeneous. While Alice Stevenson proposed looking at differences in the use of material culture rather than at differential typology in order to discern ethnic differences in multiple categories,<sup>143</sup> some scholars go even further suggesting that the choice of

<sup>135</sup> Barth [1969], 299; Jones 1997, 62–63. Also criticised by Liszka 2012, 84–85.

<sup>136</sup> See Bader 2011b; Bader 2013a for arguing that pottery does not automatically represent ethnic identity.

<sup>137</sup> Johnson 1999, 211–222; see also below for foodways.

<sup>138</sup> Haaland 1977, 14; Sackett 1977, 377–379; Fazioli 2014, 26.

<sup>139</sup> E.g. Hodder 1978; Jones 1997, 110–126, for critique and bibliography; Dietler and Herbich 1998, 548–550; Gosselain 2000; Smith 2003, 31; Brather 2004; Halsall 2007, 466–468; Stevenson 2008; Liszka 2012, 58; Fazioli 2014, 28–29.

<sup>140</sup> For modification by Childe and critical discussion since, see Hodder 1978; Shennan 1989, esp. 11–14; Veit 1989; Jones 1998, n. 30, for more in-depth bibliography; Jones 1999b; Brather 2004; Hahn 2005, 152–157; Lucy 2005, 88.

<sup>141</sup> E.g. Redmount 1995; Killebrew 2005, 2–15; Hafsaas 2006–2007, 163–171. See critique in Bader 2012; Bader 2013a. For a very much more theoretically embedded opinion, see Antonaccio 2010, 46, 50: "not all material culture expresses necessarily ethnicity," while certain forms of pottery for example may be demonstrated as indigenous and reflective of original ethnicity [or other traits of identity?] as Antonaccio shows on p. 49–50, but the ethnicity of the user cannot be pinned down easily if at all, especially in a settlement. Also Emberling 1997, 320–324; Emberling and Yoffee 1999, 275–276: "it seems most closely connected with ethnic identity" because the political context makes it likely. Liszka 2012, 81–88: "we must take a leap of faith" because in effect there is no positive proof that certain people used certain pots without ethnography. Even with the aid of ethnography this would provide only an analogy but no proof. Raue 2018, 26–30, 214, 252–257, uses Nubian pottery as an intentional way of differentiating Nubians from Egyptians. Burke 2019, 79, uses similar arguments, concentrating on a minor component within cooking pottery. Also cf. Lumsden 2008, 37.

<sup>142</sup> This is the main point of Brather 2004, 579–580, who argues that the lack of written sources in prehistory does not allow ethnic identification but see Curta 2006 for a critique of this point because often written sources if not written in demonstrable congruence with archaeological sources do not solve any problems either. Cf. also Liszka 2012, 51–58, 96, 104; Moers 2013a.

<sup>143</sup> Lucy 2005, 88; Hakenbeck 2007; Stevenson 2008.

archaeological traits used for ethnic identification depends largely on the personal view of the respective researchers<sup>144</sup> by overly generalising object types and type catalogues or by omitting traits that are not always present in all contexts.<sup>145</sup> At least part of the solution lies in observing minute details of objects as proposed by Paul Graves-Brown.<sup>146</sup> Objects may resemble each other superficially in shape, perhaps, and even material, but only scrutiny of the *chaîne opératoire* (see below) will provide firmer evidence about the context of manufacture and therefore a possible common origin of objects.<sup>147</sup> Such an approach may also be of use in other research areas.<sup>148</sup>

These thoughts developed in areas where archaeological cultures were situated in close proximity to one another. It is perhaps due to Egypt's previously perceived 'insular' geographical situation that such observations only touched upon Egyptian material culture peripherally.<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, the culture-historical concept (simplified pots = people approach)<sup>150</sup> with or without theoretical modifications has to maintain a concept of very impermeable and fixed boundaries because otherwise it would not be possible to identify the user/maker of the object in terms of ethnic identity. This view precludes the appreciation of liminal spaces, contact zones and contact situations, where various social groups might meet due to topographical or social overlaps and encounter influences in some kind of give and take which may lead to material culture becoming the manifestation of cultural mixture,<sup>151</sup> in 'in-between' situations that may be described as cultural entanglements, meeting grounds, virtual spaces of encounter or interstitial spaces (see below). Bernhard Knapp's brief treatise on the material culture of Cyprus at the end of the Late Bronze Age shows very well the differences in theoretical approach to the same data, where the introduction of such a virtual space would be advantageous for the interpretation.<sup>152</sup>

Following the static concept of firmly bounded cultural entities and a normative culture, the contact between two such constructs would have to be imagined as a "clash" without any ability to accommodate flexibility or human creativity.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, culture and also material culture would and could not change without a forceful external influence to cause it as the boundaries are inflexible and firm. Accordingly, gradual change would be ascribed to slight adaptations to, e.g., environmental changes by a social group whilst more drastic changes would be brought about through (often violent) external

<sup>144</sup> Mitchell 1974, 24–25, for ethnic construct by ethnographers; Haaland 1977, 3, 27, for examples; Brather 2004, 75, 206, 304–305, 331, 579–580, 618–620, 623. Cf. Hicks 2010, 69–71, for positionality.

<sup>145</sup> Jones 1997, 108–109, 130–131, with examples.

<sup>146</sup> 1996, 91. This is in contrast to the oft-criticised "fetishism of the object" which is studied for its own sake rather than as a means to a reconstruction/explanation, cf. Hicks 2010, 59–64. Nevertheless, researchers of material culture must also know their study objects intimately and have all the details of the objects they study literally at their fingertips. This is time-consuming, sometimes boring, but necessary to be able to discuss material culture.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Bader 2011b; Bader 2013b; Bader forthcoming-b for a more general view regarding purely Egyptian contexts. Cf. also Gosselain 2000.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Knapp 2009 for a treatise of the situation in Cyprus at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The necessary detail for such a generalisation does not seem to be available.

<sup>149</sup> Bader 2015a, 1–3.

<sup>150</sup> Hodder 1978, 20–21, warns by means of ethnographic examples; Jones 1996, 74; criticised by Fazioli 2014, 38; Van Oyen 2017. See Gosselain 2000 for possible strategies to prevent this. Gramsch 2015, 343: "Rather than pots and people, today, haplo-groups are migrating through Europe, supposedly related to Neolithization or the expansion of cultures, such as the Bell Beaker culture." Dietler 2010, 97, uses Etruscan cooking pottery and disposition of house layout as evidence for an Etruscan presence; see also 81.

<sup>151</sup> Bader 2012; Bader 2013a; Bader 2017b, for a description of the underlying concept and discussion to use it on a settlement in Egypt. See Naum (2010) for an appreciation of special conditions in borderlands in the widest sense.

<sup>152</sup> Knapp (2009) uses hybridity to explain certain features in material culture. However, it does not allow for the "in-between" situation described, nor does it really explain why the concept of cultural hybridity is advantageous and what it really means to him.

<sup>153</sup> Lucy 2005, 88, which is a connection to the concept of a culture. This step had not yet been completed by Lucy. Cf. also Schiestl 2009, 200.

influences such as conquest and mass migration (see below).<sup>154</sup> According to this rigid model, no other cultural interaction (external environmental changes excepted) would influence the appearance of material culture and thus change for other reasons is impossible. One of the major problems in abandoning the culture-historical pots = people approach is that moving objects are no longer equated with moving people;<sup>155</sup> thus, commodity exchange may also have increasing importance as a conceptual model.<sup>156</sup> Applying a more permeable view that no culture is an inaccessible island,<sup>157</sup> there are plentiful examples where such influences are quite clear and lead to a variety of creative features in material culture, which may be described as “imitations”, “copies” or other types of appropriation.<sup>158</sup> Their meaning depends on contextual circumstances (manufacture/use) and may not always be the same in each case. To view these products as derived from the desire to simply pass them off as being second best, is certainly falling short.<sup>159</sup> These terms remain largely undertheorised and are used with great carelessness. Moreover, the active role of material culture remains entirely neglected (see above), which had been explored since the ‘material’<sup>160</sup> or ‘material-cultural’ turn, which highlight event and effect in ‘things’.<sup>161</sup>

### 2.3.1. Practice Theory

“... people make themselves in making things ...” (Lumsden 2008, 22)  
 “... things ... can be understood ... as effects of material practice ...” (Hicks 2010, 87)

In order to give material culture its rightful place in the interpretation of the past it must be considered as an active agent connected to past social actions<sup>162</sup> (“way of doing things”) as only events and effects can be connected to the social actors who left them behind.<sup>163</sup> Pierre Bourdieu formulated, in his *habitus* theory that “durable, often subliminal dispositions<sup>164</sup> towards certain perceptions and practices such as those relating to the sexual division of labour, tastes etc.” lead to “an individual’s sense of self at an early age,” which is influenced “by the conditions making up particular social environments, such as modes of production or access to certain resources”.<sup>165</sup> In this way “culture” is not ruled by abstract norms but rather by dispositions, which are “structuring structures and structured structures”, shaped by social practice. These dispositions also often form unconscious constraints within which people act,<sup>166</sup> and, moreover, they pass them on unconsciously to later generations.<sup>167</sup> Crucial for such considerations is the inclusion of the contexts of use and manufacture.<sup>168</sup> It is clear that such an approach cannot be achieved by looking at distributions of certain fibulae or pot types in isolation from their contexts and the way they were used, but that the manifestations of ethnic and other identities in material culture “involves the objectification of cultural differences and the embodiment of those differences within the shared

<sup>154</sup> Cf. as an example for application Jones 1996, 63–65; Parzinger 2001; Dergachev 2002. Definitions and case studies are not very specific in their definition of gradual and drastic change, except for the introduction of the wheel in western Europe, for example. See Burmeister (2000) for a critical assessment and Burmeister (2004) on the spread of carts and the wheel. Cf. also Jones 1999b, 159, going back to Gordon V. Childe; Burmeister 2013; Gramsch 2015.

<sup>155</sup> Van Oyen 2017.

<sup>156</sup> Dietler 2010, 131–156.

<sup>157</sup> Bhabha 1994; Sahlins 1999, 411; Schortman and Urban 1998, 109; Bader 2013a.

<sup>158</sup> Bader forthcoming-b for a definition and discussion of these often synonymously used terms.

<sup>159</sup> Dietler 2010, 221, for a cross-cultural product in France and the motivation of its creation.

<sup>160</sup> Bräunlein 2014; Van Oyen 2017.

<sup>161</sup> Hicks 2010, 25–98.

<sup>162</sup> In the post-processual view, material culture in social relationships is meaningfully and deliberately constituted, cf. Halsall 2007. Hicks 2010, 64, designated it as material-cultural turn; see also Van Oyen 2017.

<sup>163</sup> Hicks 2010.

<sup>164</sup> Einteilung, Naturell, Anordnung, Geistesart as German equivalents [arrangement, temperament, order, mentality].

<sup>165</sup> Bourdieu 1977, 78–93; Jones 1996, 68; Jones 1997, 87–92.

<sup>166</sup> Bourdieu 1977, 72; Jones 1997, 88–89.

<sup>167</sup> Bentley 1987; Shennan 1989, 15–16; Jones 1998, 42; Schortman and Urban 1998, 109; Jones 1999a, 226.

<sup>168</sup> Emberling 1997, 311–312, thinks this is possible; Lucy 2005, 102–105; Halsall 2007, 394–399; Liszka 2012, 62–64.



dispositions of the *habitus*. They are more or less clear and they are more or less variable”.<sup>169</sup> Bourdieu’s theory is now implicitly used by most recent studies devoted to material culture.<sup>170</sup>

Leaving aside the new scientific methodology for the moment (see below), theorists<sup>171</sup> agreed that they were unlikely to find a one-to-one relationship between expressions of a particular ethnic group and a certain assemblage of material culture because such groups are not formed in social and physical isolation but include a ‘consciousness of difference’ remodelled in continuous interaction. Thus, the configuration of the assemblage of material culture might differ between various social contexts (tomb/settlement/temple).<sup>172</sup> Also, there is certainly no direct congruence between Bourdieu’s *habitus* and ethnicity<sup>173</sup> because there are multiple overlapping boundaries constructed by representations of cultural differences. Such a correlate may perhaps be visible in the archaeological record and material culture, but it does not have to be.<sup>174</sup> Complex patterns of material culture distributions overlap, so that frequently occurring and widely distributed objects may mean different things in variable social contexts.<sup>175</sup> The inclusion of materiality of artefacts (and objects, which have not been worked or manipulated but collected for their very materiality) into an interdisciplinary framework of explanation also has an input into the potential meaning of an object, quite independent from other factors.<sup>176</sup> The fact is, we cannot expect any underlying universal rules across global archaeology and therefore all existing societies<sup>177</sup> but have to judge each case study separately by building a multitude of models based on a multitude of data.

While some archaeologists negate the possibility of getting closer to the ethnic identity of people<sup>178</sup> or question the existence of ethnic groups as entities producing a unified and homogenous culture,<sup>179</sup> others concentrate on those social practices that determine the shared “ways of doing things”<sup>180</sup> created by “symbolic resources” such as language, beliefs (including ritual) and material culture,<sup>181</sup> e.g. the material remains of certain cooking or food habits, but also of cosmetic items. This includes specific pottery used for cooking and serving food as well as types of foods that were consumed.<sup>182</sup> A key point for such recognition is the “context of social interaction between people of differing cultural traditions.”<sup>183</sup> Stuart Smith insists that evidence for ethnic identity must be present in all archaeological categories: household (ritual installations and assemblages, e.g. ancestor cult), temple (religious architecture associated with ritual assemblages) and tombs (architecture and burial practices, e.g. burial position and grave goods), in order to argue possible differences in ethnic identity reasonably.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Jones 1997, 97.

<sup>170</sup> Giddens’ theory of practice focusing on structuration, which proposes constitutive relationships between ‘agency’ and ‘structure’ was not as widely applied in archaeology. Cf. Giddens 1979; Giddens 1984.

<sup>171</sup> Shennan 1989; Jones 1996; Jones 1997; Jones 1998, esp. 38–40; Johnson 1999; Hakenbeck 2007; Liszka 2012, 58.

<sup>172</sup> Jones 1997, 123–124; Jones 1998, 40–41.

<sup>173</sup> Sackett’s style has some similar traits it seems, although the direct connection of an object’s style with ethnic identity is, of course, incompatible with Bourdieu’s concept. See Bentley 1987 for the connection of ethnicity and Bourdieu’s theory of practice. See also Jones 1997, 122; Jones 1998, 43; Jones 1999a, 226; Smith 2003, 18–19; Liszka 2012, 60–65.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Lumsden 2008, 37, “... shared material culture does not necessarily reflect a shared identity” is the reverse view.

<sup>175</sup> Jones 1996, 67, 71–72; Jones 1997, 123–124.

<sup>176</sup> Malafouris 2008; Hicks 2010, 73–79; Fazioli 2014, 26, with bibliography.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Hicks 2010, 44–46.

<sup>178</sup> Jones 1997, 124, with examples; Smith 2003, 30, with examples; Brather 2004, 317–318.

<sup>179</sup> Jones 1997, 126.

<sup>180</sup> Jones 1998, 42; Smith 2003, 30–32; Antonaccio 2010, 34 and n. 10.

<sup>181</sup> Jones 1997, 124–126; Jones 1998, 42–43; Jones 1999a, 226; Halsall 2007, 60–62, includes ceramic coarse wares because they do not transport well and are not widely distributed and, thus, are local; for other object classes such as weapons and fine wares he is much more careful; Curta 2014.

<sup>182</sup> Smith 2003, 7–8, 113–118; Brather 2004, 428–431; Lucy 2005, 105; Smith 2007, 233–234; Burmeister 2017a. But see Berry 2005, 699–700, for (modern) acculturation models, which also adapt food preferences.

<sup>183</sup> Jones 1998, 43.

<sup>184</sup> Smith 2003, 8, 36, 167–187, also keeping foodways as passive resistance against colonisers in colonial situations. Liszka 2012, 76–90 uses “ethnic markers” in a similar definition. NB. in very few cases are all these spheres represented contemporaneously at one and the same site.

Furthermore, closer scrutiny of technological choices as a means of construction and reproduction of social relationships with the help of the *chaîne opératoire*<sup>185</sup> concept has also been proposed, e.g. for pottery<sup>186</sup> and other object types and, to a certain extent, already applied on Egyptian material.<sup>187</sup> This proposal includes craft learning from an early age onwards as part of *habitus* as well as the acquisition of psychomotor skills that are deeply embedded in, and motivated by complicated cognitive processes.<sup>188</sup> These processes may influence features during the making of objects, which are correlated to social groupings, but still that does not mean such a possible “social” identity would have to be an ethnic one. There are many possibilities, which need to be carefully weighed against one another.

Modern examples spectacularly show that groups of people will willingly change their ethnic identification if it is favourable to their socio-economic circumstances,<sup>189</sup> thus, a restricted viewpoint is reflected in following this complex process in archaeology – usually – using the burial as a fossilised expression of social relationships of the living, which has many other implications.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, we must bear in mind that from such (staged) evidence it is highly unlikely that we see the complete picture, but rather one that was arranged in order to be seen in a certain way as regards social standing, affiliation and other aspects. This partial picture is all we have at our disposal.

Whilst these are some of the latest positions in research concerning this particular topic, the improvement of scientific methods (stable isotope analysis, ancient DNA analysis) means that some of the previously out-dated theories have come back into fashion in current research agendas.<sup>191</sup>

### 2.3.2. Modern Analytical Methods and Culture

“Genes provide the code for cell surface proteins ... but not stiff upper lips”  
(Evison 2000, 280)

Modern analytical methods for tracing mobility comprise various stable isotope studies which may be powerful enough to shed light on the first-generation movements of individuals, without the possibility of unequivocally pinpointing origin.<sup>192</sup> This promising research avenue has not been tapped sufficiently for ancient Egypt to provide good results as yet, although a start has been made in Nubia.<sup>193</sup> However, a lot of basic research for using any of these trace element analysis methods needs to be undertaken for Egypt, while a good start has been made in the Nile Delta.<sup>194</sup> However, natural strontium levels for the Egyptian Nile Valley are still not available. Analyses located in a European context showed that the debated opinion of certain objects as ‘ethnic markers’ cannot be uncritically maintained. In the past, certain objects with high visibility were interpreted as conscious expressions of various aspects of identity and, among them, also ethnic identity. Personal adornments and dress provided examples of single objects regarded as ‘ethnic markers’,<sup>195</sup> although they may also signify other aspects of identity such as gender

<sup>185</sup> Graves-Brown 1996, 91; Gosselain 2000.

<sup>186</sup> Budden and Sofaer 2009; Gosselain 2000; Fazioli 2014, 27–29, 29–32.

<sup>187</sup> Bader 2011b; Bader forthcoming-b.

<sup>188</sup> Malafouris 2008; Budden and Sofaer 2009. See also the ethno-archaeological study by Calvo Trias et al. 2015 which discusses early childhood learning through the repetition of psychomotor routines, as well as adult learning and the reasons for changing such habits.

<sup>189</sup> Barth 1969; Emberling and Yoffee 1999, 229–230; Smith 2003, 17; Lucy 2005, 97–98.

<sup>190</sup> Parker Pearson 1999 for a convenient and fairly recent treatise.

<sup>191</sup> Gramsch 2015, 342–343 migrationism; see also Burmeister 2013 with an underlying culture-historical paradigm.

<sup>192</sup> Price et al. 2002. Taken up by Halsall 2007, 450, for individually interesting results. Candelora 2018, 60–62.

<sup>193</sup> Buzon et al. 2007; Buzon and Bowen 2010. See Zakrzewski et al. 2016, 179–181, 202–203, 208, for an overview of a limited amount of work in Egypt, referring to Nubia and Roman Egypt.

<sup>194</sup> Welte 2016, 39. Maaranen et al. 2019a for surveys of methods and possibilities to be followed; Maaranen et al. 2019b; Stantis and Schutkowski 2019. Stantis et al. 2020a and Stantis et al. 2020b for first results of stable strontium isotope analysis.

<sup>195</sup> Bietak (2016) propagates such ethnic markers in an Egyptian example; see fn. 132. Such practices are criticised by Parker Pearson 1999, 7–10. For a group choosing their own ethnic markers see Brather 2004, 616–617, 621; Lucy 2005, 97. Liszka 2012, 58–62, employs ethnic markers but in a more cautious way than Mourad 2015, 15.

and status.<sup>196</sup> Importantly, the inclusion of the physical human body in the scientific analyses in recent research led to differential results which require attention. According to isotope analyses, the origin of some of these human bodies did not fit the origin ascribed to certain ‘ethnic markers’ found with these bodies, although such markers were hitherto thought to securely indicate the ethnic identity of the owners.<sup>197</sup> Thus, several scenarios are possible: (1) the origin of an individual is congruent with that of the object considered to mark this same origin (2) the origin of the person wearing a certain object does not overlap with that indicated by the isotopic (or aDNA) analyses or (3) the scientific result remains inconclusive. The result is that social reasons to wear such objects must be more diverse than hitherto thought and that ‘ethnic markers’ therefore lose their signalling effect, at least to a certain extent. Again, this example amply demonstrates that the unequivocal interpretation as a one-to-one correlation between individual persons and certain objects is not tenable but ambiguous at best and probably unlikely to have ever existed.

Recent prehistoric<sup>198</sup> and historic<sup>199</sup> research in Europe has concentrated on probabilistic analyses of ancient DNA<sup>200</sup> in order to find evidence of whether people sharing the same material culture have the same composition of ancient DNA. Whether such congruence or co-incidence can be proven in detail remains to be demonstrated on a larger scale.<sup>201</sup> Preliminary results show a highly ambivalent picture that does not allow for sweeping generalisations either.<sup>202</sup> As always, the archaeological context is crucial for the interpretation of the finds, but, unfortunately, amongst other problems archaeological “data will always support more than one interpretation, so the choice of one rather than another will also be based on other factors”<sup>203</sup>.

Only the combination of stable isotopic analyses (first generation immigrants without knowing from where exactly), archaeo-genetics (proof of mobility without exact dating possibility) and archaeology (explanatory models) with their differential foci will enable a thorough understanding of ancient mobility and further clarify possible correlations between social groups and material culture.<sup>204</sup> At the same time, it is unlikely that all evidence types will be available for many case studies in order to bring light onto that issue, so that the heuristic nature of case studies will prevail. However, before putting too much hope on aDNA analysis for distinguishing ethnic or national groups in this way, it must be clear that “... the range of genetic variation within an ethnic group is larger than the net genetic difference between

<sup>196</sup> Parker Pearson 1999, 72–94, 95–123; Hakenbeck 2007.

<sup>197</sup> Burmeister 2016, 51. Such studies are not rare; cf. O’Sullivan et al. 2018, 3: “previous studies have shown that the genetic affiliation of ancient people often do not match putative geographic origins of their culture.” The recent comparative study of DNA of Vikings also yielded unexpected results, namely a much greater genetic heterogeneity than expected, cf. Margaryan et al. 2020. But there are studies attesting to the contrary as well, for example, in two cemeteries used by the Langobards. These seem to be constituted from at least two genetically different groups, one of which had specific connections to certain items of material culture (certain brooches, specific pottery). Cf. Amorim et al. 2018.

<sup>198</sup> The recent aDNA study of finds related to the “bell beaker culture” sheds new light on the distribution of this archaeological assemblage. The results suggest migration in some instances but a different kind of transfer of knowledge in others, cf. Olalde et al. 2018. Halsall 2007, 451–452, expresses a very critical view of such analyses in Late Antiquity and doubts they can answer historical questions: “ethnicity is a matter of belief”. Burmeister 2019 provides a well formulated critique on inferences based on very small sample sizes of aDNA and unscrupulous connections of biology and culture (e.g. Indo-European language and its distribution via archaeology).

<sup>199</sup> O’Sullivan et al. 2018, esp. 3, for a study of objects ascribed to ‘external cultural traditions’ buried with a group of local people at Niederstotzingen. Cf. also the results of the Viking study, Margaryan et al. 2020.

<sup>200</sup> Rutherford 2016, 108–109, 155.

<sup>201</sup> Amorim et al. 2018 tested cemeteries in their entirety to gain a fuller picture. The large scale project coordinated by W. Pohl entitled ‘HistoGenes – Integrating genetic, archaeological and historical perspectives on Eastern Central Europe, 400–900AD’ begun in 2019 will provide more information on the relationship between genetic diversity and material culture in general.

<sup>202</sup> Amorim et al. 2018; O’Sullivan et al. 2018.

<sup>203</sup> Shennan 1989, 2.

<sup>204</sup> Jones 1997, 136–144; Burmeister 2017a, 63–68. Amorim et al. 2018 is following such a research path for the Langobards.



ethnic groups. There are no genetic variants which are exclusive to any ethnic group and possessed by all members of that group.”<sup>205</sup>

The complicated nature of the data set derived from DNA can be exemplified by the deconstruction of an explanatory example frequently offered by DNA specialists for the interested lay public. As an example one could quote Adam Rutherford’s study that indicates that the DNA of modern Cornish people is different to that of people from Scotland, thus proving that certain subgroups of modern DNA cluster according to modern language borders. This is illustrated with a distribution map. The following step is to ascertain that in this way every person can be grouped according to their DNA into the ‘correct’ area of origin.<sup>206</sup> And then the same is assumed for the past. The problem of this approach, of course, lies in the unique history of the British Isles, where for a long time people were not so mobile, so that the neat grouping of the DNA with the language areas is a result of less mobility and therefore the distribution of certain elements of the DNA groups accordingly. But such an approach cannot be used in reverse as Adam Rutherford also acknowledges.<sup>207</sup> Much care must be taken not to be trapped in a racial construct, which remains the result of a purely social process.<sup>208</sup>

In summary, it can be said that also isotopic and genetic data may be congruent with certain uses of material culture but they do not have to be. While a larger amount of more diverse types of data are surely moving research on, the solution cannot be expected to come from scientific analyses alone.

## 2.4. ETHNIC IDENTITY AND THE MIGRATION CONCEPT IN ARCHAEOLOGY

The stress on ethnic identity and the suggested ability to tie in certain traits of material culture with a given ethnic group are necessary pre-requisites to propose and prove migrations in the first place and, thus, this led to a close connection of the two<sup>209</sup> and to a severe neglect of other aspects of identity (gender, status, etc., see above).

In the course of research into culture change, two major ideas of diffusionism (1 and 2) and one of evolutionism (3) were brought forward: (1) this was caused by migrating or perhaps, more rarely, ‘colonising’ people bringing their ideas with them and spreading them in various ways; (2) ideas travelled without the necessity of large numbers of people actually transporting them, e.g. via trade or transfer of knowledge, and (3) ideas developed independently in various areas.<sup>210</sup>

The first possibility found overwhelming support in early archaeology and is still a key concept in archaeological work today.<sup>211</sup> Taken as support for this model are distribution patterns of certain objects and object types,<sup>212</sup> “sudden” changes of local objects in archaeological terms as well as the sudden appearance of non-local architecture, burial customs, conceptual layouts of, e.g., religious buildings and similar features.<sup>213</sup> The search, however, for a true proof of migration was made more difficult by the conceptual change from the culture-historical paradigm to a more dynamic model. If the connection between ethnic identity and certain types of material culture as ‘ethnic markers’ cannot be made from an etic perspective with certainty or is broken, migration could not be proven from the archaeological

<sup>205</sup> Evison 2000, 280; Evison 2014.

<sup>206</sup> Rutherford 2016, 109–117. Unsurprisingly he follows a culture-historical paradigm.

<sup>207</sup> Rutherford 2016, 113–114.

<sup>208</sup> See above, fn. 14.

<sup>209</sup> Jones 1998; also Smith 2003, 31–32, gives a history of ethnicity research and stresses the close ties between the concept and migration theories; Burmeister 2016, 46–48.

<sup>210</sup> For a concise overview with older bibliography see Haaland 1977, 2. Lucy 2005, 87–91; Hakenbeck 2008; Gramsch 2015.

<sup>211</sup> Examples in Haaland 1977, 2–3; Anthony 1990, 896–897; Jones 1997, 15–26; Smith 2003, 13–15; Brather 2004, 205, 239–249, 551–559; Halsall 2007, 386–387; Fahlander 2007, 35–37; Gramsch 2015 on European prehistory; Burmeister 2016, 42; Priglinger 2018, 26–28.

<sup>212</sup> Halsall 2007, 394–397, with more circumspect consideration of other factors.

<sup>213</sup> For Cyprus, Knapp 2009 contrasts very aptly the colonisation narrative with the post-colonial concept of hybridisation.

record without additional evidence.<sup>214</sup> Whilst it becomes clear that such connections cannot be used uncritically in the proposed manner<sup>215</sup> and, thus, not for proving migrations, this approach is nevertheless enduring in areas where historiographic traditions also exist in addition to archaeology,<sup>216</sup> such as in biblical narratives<sup>217</sup> or in Egypt. All too easily, peoples known from texts are identified with archaeological remains, which do not provide independent means for such connections.<sup>218</sup>

In Egypt the concept of migrations or “races” coming into the Nile Valley and causing cultural change also has a long tradition (e.g. Petrie<sup>219</sup>), which implicitly still influences research.<sup>220</sup> Either more integrated frameworks and interdisciplinary approaches need to be developed,<sup>221</sup> or research has to totally rely on scientific analyses without the critical cross-check of interpretation of the context within the framework of the humanities.<sup>222</sup>

In general it is very difficult to abandon totally the culture-historical concept in the verbal expression and discussion of archaeological records even in places with comparatively dense historical information.<sup>223</sup> The difficulties become more apparent in attempts to make the academic research accessible to non-academics and better understood by a wider audience, where language has to be simplified to be understood. How to relate in simple language that ‘Egyptian’ actually does not signify a nationalistic construct but rather someone who lived in the area of modern Egypt and may be the recipient of a multitude of cultural influences, which do not reflect an ethnic identity?

Only if the structure and process of migration itself were visible, quite apart from the culture-historical interpretations of material culture, could it be used as a viable concept in archaeology.<sup>224</sup> But so far this approach also suffers from insufficient archaeological proof.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, sudden and radical innovations found in archaeology were almost exclusively explained by migrations of skilled people;<sup>225</sup> it appears that the abandonment of the migration concept as an explanatory model is unlikely as mobility seems to be an inherent trait in humankind.<sup>226</sup> A more balanced view is necessary including more theoretical work on definitions of different forms of migration and mobility, not least the view of migration as a large-scale phenomenon.<sup>227</sup>

The visibility of migrants in the archaeological record also depends on the number of people on the move. The larger the group, the more likely it is to be able to find evidence for differential use of material culture that may be connected to migration.<sup>228</sup> In this respect it is important to know how high the

<sup>214</sup> Burmeister 2000; Dittmann 2001; Burmeister 2013, 292, expresses this opinion; Halsall 2007, 387, for examples of migrations from textual sources without archaeological traces.

<sup>215</sup> Burmeister 2016, 48, 53–54, illustrates this with examples, where certain objects and the origin attested by isotope analysis or aDNA do not coincide with the current academic opinion, e.g. certain brooch types. See also Jones 1999a, esp. 220–221; Halsall 2007, 392–395.

<sup>216</sup> Jones 1999a; Halsall 2007.

<sup>217</sup> The archaeological record connected with the Philistines may serve as an example, e.g. Jones 1998 for a critical review of Jewish identity; Lehmann 2001; Rahmstorf 2017.

<sup>218</sup> For a critique see Liszka 2015.

<sup>219</sup> See Matic 2018; Priglinger 2018, 28–29, with references.

<sup>220</sup> See Trigger 1977, 21; Emberling and Yoffee 1999, 273, for this tradition in Mesopotamia; Jones 1999b, 159; Smith 2003, 14, with bibliography.

<sup>221</sup> E.g. Yasur-Landau 2010; Yasur-Landau 2017 is making a start. For him migrations must be followed by an acculturation strategy. This, in turn, only works with ‘natives’ present to provide behavioural role models as well as a normative culture concept.

<sup>222</sup> See Burmeister 2019 for the dangers and pitfalls.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Smith 2003, who has to stick to ‘Nubian’ and ‘Egyptian’ traditions for a lack of better stylistic solutions. See Bader 2012; Bader 2017b for the same difficulty.

<sup>224</sup> Anthony 1990; note that on p. 904 he also follows the pots = people approach. Halsall 2007, 419, bemoans the fact that ‘migration theory’ has not been proven and he therefore seems to doubt its viability. Gramsch 2015, 343, sees migration as “... not a ‘prime mover’ but [it] is one part of a web of changes of processes resulting from changes within groups in their relationships to other groups and resulting in new dynamics.”

<sup>225</sup> Cf. the articles of Lightfoot 2008, for illustrating this trend and criticising it.

<sup>226</sup> Halsall 2007, 455; Stevenson 2008, 551; Hahn 2015; Burmeister 2016, 43–44; Burmeister 2017b, 3–18; Lohwasser 2017.

<sup>227</sup> Hakenbeck 2008, 17–18; Lightfoot 2008, 1–2.

<sup>228</sup> Bader 2013a, 275, for a discussion of this topic. Not necessarily so, see Burmeister 2013, 44.

proportion of the phenomena (unusual non-local features in a place) encountered is: the amount of imports, ‘imitations’ and locally produced copies, for example, in order to weight the spread and therefore the importance of that particular feature.<sup>229</sup>

The combination of various factors besides culture change brought the migration concept back into discussion, as a change in demography, namely a diminishing number of people’s burials from the area where people migrated from and an increasing number of people in the area where people migrated to, as well as a number of other factors should also be taken into consideration in addition to unusual cultural features.<sup>230</sup> Whilst scrutiny of demographic changes in the past is a valid point, it has become increasingly clear that not everyone in the past had a visible burial from a diachronic point of view and precise dating is often difficult<sup>231</sup> so that this line of argument is not always very strong.

In another archaeological approach, Stefan Burmeister proposed looking very closely at two different spheres of people’s lives, preferably in a settlement where no posthumous ideological or status-related problems were inherent and could not be ruled out. He sketched the internal sphere as opposed to the external sphere taking care of the thought that immigrants were perhaps strictly controlled in their way of living, at least in that part that is visible to the host community of a social unit. Thus, the internal or intimate sphere is more likely to show differences to the local *habitus*, if any. This approach, based on historical archaeological case studies,<sup>232</sup> was used in the project “Foreigners in ancient Egypt – Culture contact in a late Middle Kingdom settlement”<sup>233</sup> which looked at the three earliest settlement layers in Area A/II at Tell el-Dab’a to determine whether any archaeological traits unequivocally traceable to the physical presence of social groups from the Syro-Palestinian cultural sphere within this area might be detected. The material evidence was evaluated to see whether migration of people with a non-Egyptian cultural background in the archaeological record of this earlier settlement in Area A/II can be proposed as opposed to trade relations or other types of cultural contacts, for instance colonialism.<sup>234</sup> To this end a concept of a ‘secondary culture’ that may be visible in the ‘internal’ or ‘private’ domain of migrants was adopted. Manifestations may include objects of daily use, not available or generally used in the host-culture, traces of religious rites or habits, arrangements of spaces such as kitchens, fireplaces or workshops. Also the use of a vernacular (mixed?) language would belong here, but the wet soil conditions of the delta preclude finds of written documents of a temporary nature on organic media. Beside the eight burials in Area A/II, only three of which contained features of the Middle Bronze Age culture (weapons, toggle pins, body position), little hard evidence can be cited for the presence of non-Egyptians at this time in Area A/II. Very small percentages of Syro-Palestinian cooking pottery and imitations of previously imported ceramic material provide the only clues as no kitchens or workshops were unearthed in Area A/II (or elsewhere at the site) that would hint at a different way of cooking or different working materials or manufacturing techniques. The overall evidence for farming or other labour intensive activities is scarce, and so are finds of tools other than grinders and querns.<sup>235</sup> The imitations or copies of previously imported material with local materials seem to follow very exactly the original *chaîne opératoire* and current opinion maintains that such precision can only be reached by transfer of knowledge on a first hand basis, i.e. by potters from Syria-Palestine or people trained by them.<sup>236</sup> Research revealed that the definition and application of terminology such as ‘imitation’ or ‘copy’ is often too imprecise and cursory

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Bader 2010; Bader 2016.

<sup>230</sup> Anthony 1990, 899–905, 908. The examples Anthony gives still suggest he predominantly uses material culture as proof, whilst the materials he refers to might be equally derived from trade, although he does not really want to identify normative culture with peoples.

<sup>231</sup> E.g. Parker Pearson 1999, 5; Graham Philip’s project ‘The invisible dead’, Bradbury and Philip 2016, 315–316.

<sup>232</sup> Burmeister 2000; Burmeister 2013.

<sup>233</sup> Led by Bader and funded by the Austrian Science Fund, Elise Richter Programme, project number V147-G21.

<sup>234</sup> Van Dommelen 1997.

<sup>235</sup> For results, see Chapter 4 and Bader 2013a.

<sup>236</sup> Gosselain 2000; Calvo Trias et al. 2015. See Dietler 2010, 221, for a possible counter example.

to be useful. More rigour is needed here also in descriptive approaches as researchers base far-reaching conclusions on their observations.<sup>237</sup>

In recent studies the use of migration as a sole explanatory model for culture change is still considered as axiomatic and the process in itself understudied.<sup>238</sup> While the often repeated opinion that an actual influx of physical individuals is necessary to initiate culture change either by an overwhelming conquest (a common model in prehistory<sup>239</sup>), infiltration, colonisation<sup>240</sup> or another conceptual model,<sup>241</sup> it stands against the notion that culture change may have been a strategy to cope with changes in socio-economic circumstances in whichever way induced.<sup>242</sup> Again, such views are inextricably intertwined with a static normative culture concept. Susanne Hakenbeck's proposal to use the more open concept of mobility in order to gain a more diverse picture of possibilities in a bottom-up approach appears to be the way forward especially when combined with the aid of ancient DNA and stable isotope analyses.<sup>243</sup>

Whilst, *inter alia*, migration is used as an explanatory model for culture change in continental Europe, the change in the material culture at Tell el-Dab'a/Avaris was used to argue for the immigration of social groups from Syria-Palestine.<sup>244</sup> It does not seem to be generally understood in this enormously complex archaeological data set that at the beginning of the archaeological history of the site exclusively "Egyptian" objects and material culture existed. Only later did "Syro-Palestinian" material culture start to co-occur, mainly due to trade but also due to other cultural contacts. This leads very slowly to the development of entangled material culture (relational and material) and also only in some cases. Nevertheless, even after those materially entangled objects began to emerge (see Chapter 3.6, Tab. 1), objects clearly recognisable as belonging to either the "Egyptian" or the "Syro-Palestinian" cultural tradition continued to be produced and used. Neither of those traditions disappeared completely; they continued alongside the occurrence of materially entangled objects. It is much harder to ascertain, whether those 'things' were used differently than before.

In summary, it needs to be stressed again that singular "ethnic markers" identified by modern archaeologists are almost always ambiguous<sup>245</sup> and that pottery by itself is never enough so suggest the physical presence of an immigrant because other cultural exchange processes such as commodity exchange or other forms of culture contacts may have taken place and are not easy to distinguish in the archaeological record. Consideration of the complete context and the several types of evidence<sup>246</sup> of these finds and the way they are used are crucial for a reasonable interpretation. In addition, scientific methods might help to build a multi-tiered model in the future.

The considerations described above are not practical and perhaps not even logical beyond the culture-historical paradigm for a liminal area such as the north-eastern delta/Sinai/southern Levant region,

<sup>237</sup> Bader forthcoming-b.

<sup>238</sup> E.g. Hakenbeck 2008, 21; Burmeister 2013; Gramsch 2015; Burmeister 2016.

<sup>239</sup> See fn. 127; Lucy 2005, 88.

<sup>240</sup> Van Dommelen 1997; Dietler 2010.

<sup>241</sup> Levy and Van den Brink 2002; Gramsch 2015, 343–344.

<sup>242</sup> Jones 1997, 139–142, criticises the functionalist approach advocated for example by Haaland 1977; See also Hakenbeck 2008; Burmeister 2016, 42–64.

<sup>243</sup> Hakenbeck 2008, 19. For a cursory overview of mobility in ancient Egypt, mostly based on textual evidence, see Koepp-Junk 2016. NB, as usual Heidi Koepp-Junk refers to the "delta Asiatics" in one sentence as if they belonged to one monolithic block and were not a feature of the long development of cultural interaction that passed before. For definitions see Burmeister 2013. For mobility and the use of a dynamic view of material culture see Van Oyen 2017.

<sup>244</sup> Schneider 2010, 147, 152–153. Similarly, Thomas Schneider reconstructs the presence of Nubians in Memphis based on the presence of ceramic sherds in Nubian style. Also John Baines takes the foreign culture existing in the Delta for granted. Baines 1996, 376; Lucy 2005, 86.

<sup>245</sup> Indeed, especially if ethnic identity/ethnicity is a quite modern construct, the conceived correlation between certain artefact types and the origin of an individual would only be subliminal and indirect, cf. Glazer and Moynihan 1975, 18. Smith 2003, 5–6, argues with Herodotus' writings and the origin of ethos for an early appearance of the phenomenon. Halsall 2007, 60–62, contemplates handmade coarse wares for that purpose but admits that "basic types of pottery or ceramic decoration do not differ enormously from one Kulturgruppe to another." Brather 2004, 302–304; Schiestl 2009, 200; Liszka 2012, 58–42.

<sup>246</sup> Jones 1997; Smith 2003; Lucy 2005, 87; Stevenson 2008, 552; Liszka 2012, 83.

which serves as the main example in this current study. The manifold results of contacts between people with different cultural expressions of identity and changes and interconnecting influences are noticeable in material culture and have been observed in that area since predynastic times.<sup>247</sup> The spatial closeness of different social groupings and their own traditions seems to have led to a cultural ‘atmosphere’ or ‘milieu’, where individuals were able to choose from a range of cultural traits to tackle their everyday chores, be they developed within an ‘Egyptian’ or ‘Syro-Palestinian’ context/environment. This cultural atmosphere does not necessarily reflect any biological background, but a *habitus* structuring and being structured by closely interwoven cultural traits from both traditions, which over time also underwent multiple and complicated developments. Short-lived objects of local manufacture, such as pottery, are a good indicator for such developments, although it must be kept in mind that no meaningful one-to-one-correlation between the ethnic identity of the maker and the ceramic product can be construed. What can be demonstrated is a creative environment through interaction using some, at first, non-local traditions and influences; however, as to who was the creator from an ethnic point of view remains in darkness. Something similar, but in a different way and frequency, might have happened in the colonial contexts bordering ancient Nubian territory, where Egyptian and Nubian spheres overlapped and a larger cultural repertoire was available and where, moreover, the situational character of identity is very present.<sup>248</sup>

## 2.5. CULTURES IN CONTACT

Intercultural contacts can be described as an encounter between two or more social groups of people of different identity which are negotiated in a mutual dynamic process.<sup>249</sup> However, negotiation on and between fundamental concepts of culture and their conceptualisation within cultural studies is likely to continue for much longer so that no final résumé can or should be attempted within this framework.<sup>250</sup> Due to the fact that some aspects of the study of cultural contacts pertinent to the current discussion were repeatedly connected with the identity of people forming social groups, they must be briefly mentioned.<sup>251</sup>

Intermittently, and not always explicitly, a hierarchical view divided ‘cultures’<sup>252</sup> into ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ ones<sup>253</sup> or ‘non-dominant’ and ‘dominant’ ones. Usually the former was shown to completely submit to the latter either actively, giving up all individualities and idiosyncrasies, or somehow losing them and, importantly, without having any influence on the ‘dominant’ culture. Such dominance may be based on possession of (colonial) power, writing systems, military might, a higher number of people or superiority in achievements. The lower/simpler/non-dominant culture is thought to have disappeared without a trace in a development of certain stages, to which a wide range of research literature testifies<sup>254</sup> (see Chapter 2.5.1).

In the course of post-colonial cultural studies such concepts were deconstructed and the result was that the existence of ‘pure’ culture as a primordial stage was refuted.<sup>255</sup> This development is again

<sup>247</sup> Bader 2015a for an overview with specialised bibliography. Some of the case studies suffer from a lack of illustration and demonstration of these similarities, especially in the Early Bronze Age.

<sup>248</sup> Smith 2003, esp. xv, 188–206. Cf. especially the formation of culturally mixed material culture at Elephantine: Raue 2012, 54; Raue 2018.

<sup>249</sup> Lohwasser 2017.

<sup>250</sup> But see Bader 2012; Bader 2017b with bibliography.

<sup>251</sup> Schortman and Urban 1998, 102.

<sup>252</sup> Better terms would be ‘societies’ or ‘social units’, in order to avoid a subjectification similar to archaeological culture and its baggage.

<sup>253</sup> E.g. Assmann 1992 on the grounds of possessing the ability to record cultural memory through writing.

<sup>254</sup> Cusick 1998; Schortman and Urban 1998; Schneider 2003a, 318–321, with many more references; Berry 2005; Riggs and Baines 2012. Also in Middle Nubian material culture: cf. De Souza 2019. For a colonial angle see Van Dommelen 1997, 306–308.

<sup>255</sup> Bhabha 1994; Fahlander 2007, 19–20; Stockhammer 2012, 48; Bader 2013a; Stockhammer 2013. For Egypt, but largely ignored: Baines 1996, 362–363; Schneider 2003b, 158.



closely connected to how the permeability and structure of culture opposite other cultures is perceived (see Chapter 2.2). The most important result of this research is the realisation that “no culture can exist in isolation”.<sup>256</sup> As a result, different concepts of inter- or transcultural “mixing” or “blending”<sup>257</sup> were proposed and consequently explored in modern and ancient case studies (see Chapter 2.5.2).

For both strands of research any modernistic expectations have proven to be of disadvantage.<sup>258</sup> The material outcome of cultural contacts within material culture in archaeology is more often discussed rather theoretically than explained in detail, and, in practice, what exactly constitutes the similarities/differences and changes is not illustrated. Here the current practice of line of argumentation should change in order to provide criteria that can be rationally retraced rather than a model that is based on subjective criteria.<sup>259</sup> One of the major drawbacks in the archaeology of cultural encounters is the inability to measure in some objective way the degrees of difference of objects belonging to different cultural traditions and, in consequence, to trace objects with traits of more than one such tradition. Descriptions of influences on objects are necessarily very subjective and vary from one student of material culture to the next. This makes consideration of degrees of external influences the weakest point in the study of material culture.<sup>260</sup> In some ways this problem can be compared to the practical work of a ceramicist: with increasing experience of various bodies of material the possibilities of identification of incomplete sherds is greatly enhanced. Similarly, the ability to identify pots from sherdage differs between ceramicists with differential work experience.

### 2.5.1. Acculturation Theories

Because identity and self-definition are involved in contact situations with the abstract ‘the other’ and often happen because of migration processes, another branch of research connected to cultural contacts needs to be mentioned here, at least briefly. The closely related concept of ‘Egyptianisation’ is overwhelmingly present in research literature mostly without proper theoretical underpinning.<sup>261</sup> Some 50 years ago Barth used the terms ‘adaptation’, ‘assimilation’, and ‘adoption’ as stages of the acculturation process in order to describe individuals consciously changing from one social (ethnic) group to another, if such a change was advantageous in any way.<sup>262</sup> While he did not explain his specific use of those terms as many scholars still do not, research at this point had already undergone several decades of development. So, no uniform field of culture contact research developed but rather a disparate collection of different far from unified acculturation theories proliferated.<sup>263</sup> It would take too long to go into

<sup>256</sup> Schortman and Urban 1998, 109.

<sup>257</sup> Smith 2003, 165–166; Lohwasser 2017. Note that a different view on the culture concept makes a transculturation model impossible, cf. Fowler 2010.

<sup>258</sup> Schortman and Urban 1998; Sahlin 1999, 411.

<sup>259</sup> See Bader 2011a; Bader 2015a; Bader 2020.

<sup>260</sup> This paragraph owes much to conversations on this topic with A. de Souza (pers. comm. 12 June 2019) and H. Feiglstorfer (pers. comm. 12 June 2019). See also Jung 2009.

<sup>261</sup> E. S. Cohen 1992: I would like to thank Elisa Priglinger for drawing my attention to this work and providing a copy of it (pers. comm. 15 July 2018). “Egyptianisation refers to a change among non-Egyptian archaeological remains in which ancient Egyptian goods, styles and traditions are added to or replace non-Egyptian objects and practices.” (E. S. Cohen 1992, 1). See there for a history of the term and the concept. Although the author is following a culture-historical view of Egyptian and Nubian cultures, he criticises much of this tradition and reasonably argues that Egyptian burials with Kerma objects rather belong to Egyptians, who were given Nubian objects, rather than to Egyptianised people with Kerma identity (cf. E. S. Cohen 1992, 54, also 58). He also draws a very detailed picture of acculturation in Nubia in the Second Intermediate Period. See also Liszka 2012; De Souza 2013; Van Pelt 2013 for criticism of the concept of Egyptianisation as colonial. Ultimately the interesting part in such situations is the appropriation of the other and why, and not who ‘Egyptianised’ and who ‘Nubianised’. Interestingly scholars, whose research focus is Egypt, tend to support the former because they believe Egyptian culture is somehow superior, while Nubian archaeologists think the ‘Nubian’ achievements are underestimated and should be stressed more. This is a direct result of the colonial research history of Nubia since George A. Reisner, cf. Reisner 1923; Trigger 1989; Schiestl 2009, 202–203; cf. Hicks 2010, 69–71 for positionality.

<sup>262</sup> Barth 1969; Barth 1996 [1969].

<sup>263</sup> Cusick 1998; Schneider 2003a, 318–322.

detail here and to present and discuss the vast amount of research literature and case studies, many of which are set in a European colonial context and are not directly applicable to ancient Egypt. Initially, the ‘Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation’<sup>264</sup> did not judge on direction or superiority of given social groups in contact and culture change and scholars still use these definitions,<sup>265</sup> although many models involve ‘dominance due to complexity, military power or number of people’. Over time, several directions of theory developed, many of which were distinctly colonial, centred on western thinking and philosophy, and included asymmetrical power relations and conflicts.<sup>266</sup> They draw on the reactions of people, often in inferior social positions and/or smaller social groups, who were ‘swallowed’ by larger ones.<sup>267</sup> Much of this research, derived from anthropology and sociology, could not be directly applied to archaeological contact situations as only the material outcome would be visible in material culture, but not immaterial contacts and consequences (such as linguistic features or behaviours leaving no material traces) or the motivation behind it. Often indirectly connected, e.g. textual, sources are used in a culture-historical way.<sup>268</sup> There is a big difference between (prestige) objects obtained via élite exchange networks, which were then appropriated or emulated, and material culture used and distributed in power structured contacts with certain aims in mind such as cultural colonisation. Either new items are used in a traditional way taken over by individuals who were labelled as socially inferior as a way to cope with the situation or new meanings were assigned to non-local or ‘foreign’ objects.<sup>269</sup>

The ‘trait list approach’ derived from such considerations, detailing which material items represent the cultural essence of certain social groups<sup>270</sup> raises the same problems of assuming a direct connection between certain object types and the identity of certain individuals.<sup>271</sup> After prolonged research such a connection between certain objects and certain social groups cannot be maintained (see Chapter 2.3). Nevertheless, the observation of culture contacts in archaeology is important because it may be possible to observe the role of the contact in socio-cultural change. Moreover, there are positive and negative sides to contacts as well as to the question of culture contact and hierarchical power. James Cusick stresses the location of culture contact in liminal situations, namely in areas of ‘borders’ and ‘frontiers’ in the widest sense, where interactions and ‘blending’ are almost bound to happen.<sup>272</sup> Such a situation can be paralleled in the close proximity of the Egyptian delta, the Sinai and the southern Levant, but it remains doubtful whether the acculturation model is the best one for this case for the following reasons (see also Chapter 4 for a more thorough discussion). Although the psychological process is now much better researched and the once proposed and quite fixed linearity of acculturation, the gradual process of social and cultural change and adaptation of, and to, another culture, by means of objects, successfully refuted, some aspects remain problematic. This is because the prerogative is a dominant element in this relationship. The possibility that the non-dominant group may change the dominant group as well is often neglected, and especially acculturation in Egypt is seen as a fast process that implicitly leaves no trace of the ‘original’ culture,<sup>273</sup> which would be equivalent to total assimilation of the ‘newcomers’. According to Kate Liszka this does not apply to the Hyksos<sup>274</sup> (seemingly used as an ethnic term in

<sup>264</sup> Based on ethnographic studies: Redfield et al. 1936. Cited, e.g., by Berry 2005, 701, and by Schiestl 2009, 202–203.

<sup>265</sup> E.g. Berry 2005.

<sup>266</sup> See Bader 2013a; Bader forthcoming-c for a discussion of some of these concepts from an Egyptological viewpoint.

<sup>267</sup> Cusick 1998, 132–136. See Schiestl 2009, 202–203, for a critique.

<sup>268</sup> See Bader 2017b for an attempt to sketch possible approaches. See Dietler 2010, 45–47, deconstructing Hellenisation as implicitly present in most interpretations of colonialism due to a conceived natural superiority of Greek culture.

<sup>269</sup> E.g. Liszka 2012, 78.

<sup>270</sup> See Liszka 2012, 89–90, with a position against it and replacing it conceptually with an “ethnic marker” list, which is not per se an advance. The table of developmental stages below is intended to provide an overview for quick reference rather than a trait list.

<sup>271</sup> Cusick 1998, 135–136. See Burke 2019 for a recent application of a similar concept on the Tell el-Dab’a case study stressing certain traits hidden in the overwhelming amount of data but neglecting other equally important ones. Cf. also Naum 2010 but in a post-colonial conceptual framework.

<sup>272</sup> Cusick 1998, 137, mentions them as not per se directed in contrast to conquest and invasion.

<sup>273</sup> Berry 2005; Liszka 2012, 103–114.

<sup>274</sup> Liszka 2012, 109–110: “The Hyksos is one of the only groups of non-Egyptians in Egypt who take longer to acculturate, but that is probably due to the fact that they were the dominant group in the delta during the SIP.”

this context) because their material culture does not ‘acculturate’ until after a very long development. Moreover, detailed study of the material culture at Tell el-Dab’a has shown that something new is created drawing from both Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions,<sup>275</sup> whether this outcome is called ‘hybrid’, ‘creole’ or ‘entangled’ or ‘appropriated’ culture or something else. This outcome, that is quite visible but incommensurable,<sup>276</sup> especially within the material culture, does not seem to be given any ‘space’ in the acculturation schemes as proposed, since the ‘different’ material culture is supposed to disappear (more or less quickly) so that it is not noticeable any more. However, such a process also suggests a cultural homogeneity (Fig. 2), which is in general disputed. It has to be said, though, that any assessment of homo- or heterogeneity of material culture is derived from subjective points of view and normative expectations, and depends on the level of detail with which such assessments are made. For example, the form of an object may be very similar and even identical but the technologies to achieve this form may differ, quite radically. Such considerations depend, moreover, on how ‘differences’ are conceived and defined in particular cases as well as knowledge of the extent of variety within artefact types.<sup>277</sup>

The use of concepts such as acculturation<sup>278</sup> and assimilation<sup>279</sup> allows too much implicit (colonial) baggage in describing the outcomes of contact situations. Again *culture change* remains vague and is often assigned to external influences. For example, assimilation was often falsely assumed due to changes in cultural assemblages.<sup>280</sup> Equally mistaken was the assumption that multi-culturalism must lead to an inevitable assimilation and homogenisation of culture, which did not happen, but a number of variations were observed instead.<sup>281</sup> Such perceived homogeneity of culture cannot be observed in antiquity either.<sup>282</sup> The same train of thought was followed with regard to the disappearance of material culture previously identified as marking the ‘Kerma’, ‘Pan-Grave’ and ‘C-group’ cultures in Nubia in the New

<sup>275</sup> See Bader 2011a; Bader 2013a; Bader 2015a; Bader 2017b; Bader 2020 for raw data and discussions of various aspects of such studies.

<sup>276</sup> This is the major point of critique by H. Feiglstorfer (pers. comm. 12 June 2019).

<sup>277</sup> Observation of the development of material culture in the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, the Second Intermediate Period and the New Kingdom in my studies over the years suggests that homogeneity of material culture throughout Egypt is rather an exception than the norm. Cf. lecture at the Annual Meeting of American Schools for Oriental Studies in Boston 2017: Bader, ‘Technological and Morphological Differences in Pottery Production in Egypt in the Second Intermediate Period (1700–1550 BC): Signs of Changing Regional Connectivity?’ Session: Connectivities in the Near East: Social Impact of Shifting Networks, 16 November 2017. Nevertheless, the material culture of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (esp. pottery) is in many general works referred to as homogeneous from north to south. Cf. Arnold 1988; Bourriau 1991, 7–9; Schiestl 2009, 173–174, and many others. While Robert Schiestl and Anne Seiler (2012) attempt to give a coherent overview of the pottery production in the Middle Kingdom, in my view it becomes clear that the material is not as uniform as previously suggested. However, detailed studies of singular pottery types as well as the shape repertoires across Egypt are needed in order to obtain more stringent evidence.

<sup>278</sup> “Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.” Berry 2005, 698.

<sup>279</sup> Schneider 2006, 206, “vollständige Akkulturation” [completed acculturation]; Berry 2005, 701, “maybe at times a phase of acculturation.” Definitions for this important term are not unified. Often acculturation is meant to mark the total disappearance of the cultural tradition of the minority group or the group considered of lower standing aka inferior culture. Schiestl 2009, 214, suggests a desire to assimilate ‘Asiatics’ by the Egyptian administration to exploit economic opportunities for stratum d/1 (~general Phase G/4). This also suggests that he works on the assumption that everyone living there in this period is an ethnic ‘Asiatic’. But who would then be their Egyptian role model?

<sup>280</sup> Jones 1999a, 221, example; Breyer 2010, 496–497: we need to abandon the rigid normative culture concept for a more fluid and receptive model as proposed by Schneider 2003b; Breyer 2010, 496–497; Bader 2015a. Breyer (2010) follows the concept of *Kulturelle Aneignung*/appropriation after Paul Ricoeur and Michel de Certeau, but see also Hahn 2005.

<sup>281</sup> Jones 1997, 53–55.

<sup>282</sup> For example, considerable variety in Pan-Grave vessel types and assemblages is ascribed to the fact that they were hand-made, but this heterogeneity makes categorisation difficult, Liszka 2012, 393–394. See De Souza 2019. Particularly in the Second Intermediate Period, the material culture of the various Egyptian regions is not as homogeneous as previously conceived. The development and materiality of these differences and possible reasons are currently the subject of a comprehensive material culture project in Egyptian archaeology: ‘Beyond Politics: Material Culture in Second Intermediate Period Egypt and Nubia’, funded by the Austrian Science Fund, Y754–G19 and led by the author.



### Overview of the development of the shapes of pottery vessels from the First Intermediate Period to the early New Kingdom

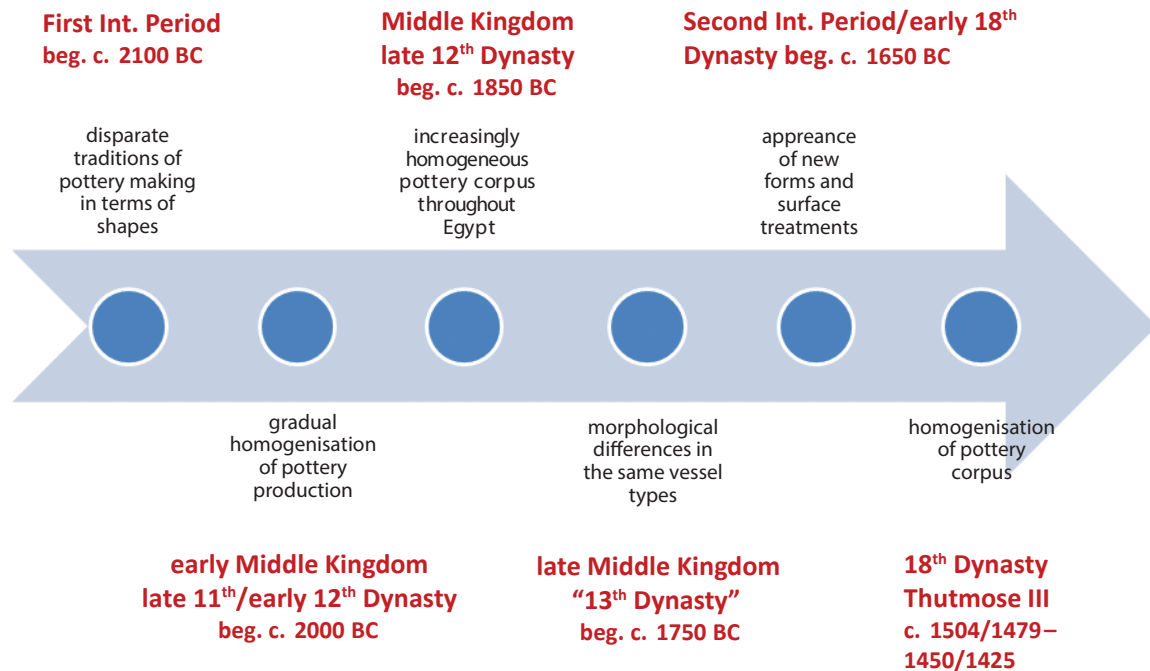


Fig. 2 Overview of the development of pottery morphology (B. Bader)

Kingdom, which was seen as a direct consequence of acculturation.<sup>283</sup> Such thoughts are again based on an understanding of culture and material culture as bounded units produced by a certain circumscribed and unequivocal group of people, very similar to concepts discussed before.<sup>284</sup>

The outcome of the contact was predicted on the grounds of inflexible models, which saw it as a reaction to circumstances forced on groups by social elements considered superior. Material culture as such was never considered to have anything to contribute to the discussion other than passively proving such models.<sup>285</sup> The development of theory moves towards types of interaction systems also on a macroscale<sup>286</sup> and mutual change of both participants in the contact situation through the active choice of acculturation strategy.<sup>287</sup> The extent of individual choice in ancient social contexts, however, remains very hard to estimate.

<sup>283</sup> E.g. Riggs and Baines 2012, 3; Liszka 2012, 239–240; but see Cohen 1992, 182, seeing the disappearance rather in the military action of Egyptian and Kerma rulers than acculturation towards Egyptian culture. A new project is devoted to the problem that homogeneity seems to be rather the exception than the norm: 'InBetween', IEF grant no. 796050 is conducted by Aaron de Souza and co-ordinated by Bettina Bader.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. billiard ball model – Cusick 1998, 131, with further bibliography.

<sup>285</sup> Claudia Theune's work on material culture expressing life situations of victims in Nazi concentration camps provides an impressive example of how careful analysis provides an additional source hitherto entirely neglected directly relating to the hardships of life situations and how individuals coped with them, e.g. personalised cutlery made with the very simplest of means. Cf. Lecture 'Welche Aussage hat materielle Kultur in zeitgeschichtlichen Kontexten?' [Which information does material culture provide in modern history?] 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017, as part of the Forschungsschwerpunkt Materielle Kultur of Vienna University.

<sup>286</sup> Schortman and Urban 1998.

<sup>287</sup> Berry 2005.

### 2.5.2. Cultural Mixing

Scholars of post-colonial studies engaged deeply with the nature of culture and how the encounter of different cultures would have to be conceptualised and developed, especially from a linguistic point of view.<sup>288</sup> Other scholars have equated some of these concepts with previous ones, which was not always helpful.<sup>289</sup> Again, this is a very active and changing field of research, some aspects of which have reached global archaeology in general and Mediterranean archaeology in particular.<sup>290</sup> In this case, the impact on material culture was discussed in a variety of concepts appropriated from other fields (often biology), such as hybridity,<sup>291</sup> creolisation,<sup>292</sup> syncretism,<sup>293</sup> rhizome, etc.<sup>294</sup> Even in the use of general concepts of cultural mixing, where the relationship of two or more cultural traditions in various contact situations is analysed, culture-historical thought models were not totally excluded,<sup>295</sup> as there is an immediate need to label social groups in some way for a better understanding. Of course, this makes the debate more complicated. A more individualistic view of social groups reflected in the language describing them is of advantage in order to prevent a subconscious relapse into culture-historical paradigms. An alternative may be to use regional/geographical terms instead of looking, e.g., for the Pan-grave people. In a very similar way the ‘Hyksos’ may only be used for members of the ruling élite because ‘Hyksos’ is the Greek rendering of the Egyptian title *ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt*. This latter term should not be applied to all inhabitants of Tell el-Dab’a as if they belonged to an *ethnikon* [demonym], which they do not. The homogeneity of the inhabitants over the history of the site has not so far been proven. Thus, it is only a title but not an ethnic

<sup>288</sup> E.g. Bhabha 1994; Weißköppel 1995.

<sup>289</sup> Sahlins 1999, 411, equates hybridity (“Bhabha’s idea as de-constructed in-betweenness”) with acculturation, which has so many different meanings and connotations itself as to be unusable as an analytical term.

<sup>290</sup> Knapp (2009) contrasts the concept of hybridity with the common interpretation of colonisation of Cyprus at the end of the Late Bronze Age but does not explain the advantages of the model he chose.

<sup>291</sup> Fahlander 2007; Silliman 2015 for a recent critique on delimiting and ‘measuring’ hybridity. In conversations with H. Feiglstorfer (pers. comm. 12 June 2019) and A. de Souza (pers. comm. 12 June 2019), the difficulty of how to measure hybridity, how to ascertain where exactly it starts and how much of each trait has to be present to make any object hybrid also arises. A similar argument has been made in Jung 2009, 82, and refuted in Stockhammer 2012, 54. However, the lack of ability to measure this phenomenon makes it an ill-suited concept to use (Bader 2013a, 261). Cf. Insoll 2007, 9, quoting Cashmore 1994, 69: “nobody is quite sure where whiteness ends and blackness begins”. Cf. Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 29, for an American example. This difficulty is prevalent in one way or another in several concepts derived from biology. Bhabha 1994, 89: “almost the same but not white”; Ingold’s direct critique of hybridisation concentrates on the existence of the presupposition of two previously existing and distinct forms prior to mixing, cf. Ingold 2008, 211. Further criticised by Dietler 2010, 51–53: “If every colonial situation can be reduced to a process of hybridity then the term loses its specific analytical content and ceases to explain anything. It loses its power to inform us about the diversity of the processes clustered under the rubric of colonialism [...]”; Smith 2015, 774–777; Smith argues for the use of cultural entanglement as a concept but also retains Egyptianisation (775) and seemingly equates hybridity with a truly entangled practice (775–776). In my view, they should be kept separate; otherwise a differentiation between the various concepts becomes blurred and meaningless to the point of mere synonyms.

<sup>292</sup> Bader 2010; Staubli 2016 attempts the use of this concept with a view to Egyptian long-term developments of material culture. One trait he neglects is the asymmetrical power balance, quoted frequently in other examples using that concept: Bader 2013a, 262; Bader forthcoming-c. Staubli also makes the common mistake of inferring from the presence of Levantine Painted Ware, a sought-after exchange commodity, the presence of foreign people. It has to be stressed yet again that this is not necessarily the case.

<sup>293</sup> Stewart 2011.

<sup>294</sup> Bader 2013a for definitions, and application and modification of some of these concepts to Egyptian data and references. Cf. also Fahlander 2007. The concept of ‘interference’ derived from literary translation studies/linguistics was considered for a storm god at Tell el-Dab’a as case study but did not lead to a better explanation of the circumstances. Also, Egyptians would have necessarily to be present at that site which is disputed by some, cf. Mourad 2019.

<sup>295</sup> Antonaccio 2010, 47–48, advocates a hybridity concept, but then assigns the culture-historical Sikels in eastern Sicily to a certain type of cultural expression, lacking contemporary textual evidence, which would identify this social group without doubt. She then assigned material culture to a certain culture without the possibility of cross-checking.

affiliation.<sup>296</sup> But, of course, I appreciate it is difficult to change the language of discourse used for such descriptions quickly and sustainably.

The use of post-colonial theory with regard to the features of material culture found at Tell el-Dab'a has briefly been discussed in as far as the archaeological record was detailed enough (see below for details) to isolate evidence for the application of those concepts, whether the evidence fitted the frameworks of those models or not, or whether the concepts were problematic in other ways or not.<sup>297</sup> Using yet another post-colonial model, it is noteworthy that Uroš Matić<sup>298</sup> applies post-colonial terminology such as mimicry<sup>299</sup> combined with that known from acculturation theories ('assimilation').<sup>300</sup> Further, in the wider field of theories of cultural encounters, this concept – mimicry – is equally problematic because there is a certain subversive resistance against the coloniser intrinsic to it ('mockery'); moreover, again no space is left for the 'in-between' material objects that fit neither one nor the other but are the result of a creative process. Whether any resistance against colonisers intrinsic in material culture is easily recognisable also remains debatable, as well as an opinion when an object is just enough (dis)similar to constitute an incidence of mimicry.<sup>301</sup> Such a position denies the individual creator of material objects the creativity to make something that is influenced by other traditions/ideas but is not the same, and was, perhaps, not meant to be the same. Here again the scrutiny of the objects in terms of manufacture, use and deposition is vital in order to interpret whether they are just of the same shape or if they were really made in exactly the same way (*chaîne opératoire*). It is also implicitly suggested that mimicry is somehow qualitatively less attractive,<sup>302</sup> which seems to be a problematic point of view to take for material culture or behaviours in retrospect, as who is the judge of this – a modern scholar from an etic perspective?

A possible alternative can be seen in the post-colonial concept of the "Third Space"<sup>303</sup> (also called "in-between", interstices, interstitial passage or intersubjective realms) as a virtual location for a multi-dimensional and ambivalent place of encounter that seems to be largely free of ideological baggage.<sup>304</sup> The same holds true for the concepts of the "middle ground",<sup>305</sup> cultural (relational and material)

<sup>296</sup> Van Seters 1966, 3, 191; Candelora 2018. Unfortunately, the conceptual difference between the Egyptian title and an ethnic group remains muddled even in 2019; cf. Ksiezak 2019, a study with many problems, and by physical anthropologists: cf. Maaranen et al. (2019b) who also disregard the fact that the title Hekau Chasut [*ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt*] for rulers of Egypt only existed in the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Bader 2013a.

<sup>298</sup> Matić 2017, 99–100.

<sup>299</sup> Definition of mimicry: Jiménez 2010, 38–40: a (more or less superficial) similarity of objects (or organisms) that are not necessarily related. As many of these concepts adopted from biology, so is this one. Bhabha (1994) and Fahlander (2007), among others, developed this concept further to include subversive strategies in using similarities tactically. Fahlander 2007, 26–29, concentrates on subversive mockery, also mentioned in Dietler 2010, 64–65. In the current case study, it is hard to see how such a proposition could be supported by real evidence.

<sup>300</sup> Also Dietler (2010) combines post-colonial terms with those from acculturation theories, e.g. 53.

<sup>301</sup> Naum 2010, 124–125 for an example.

<sup>302</sup> Fahlander 2007, 27; Matić 2017.

<sup>303</sup> Gramsch 2015, 346–347, uses Bhabha's concept including hybridity as a general concept in the sense that no pure culture exists. He also asks different questions in his quest to view material culture as a process, namely, who benefits from a change?

<sup>304</sup> Bhabha 1994; Matić 2017, 104–105.

<sup>305</sup> The basic text book for this concept is White 1991; White 2011. In White 1991, 50, Indian women, who married French men, and their children are crucial for the formation of a social group, literate in both manners and customs and languages, to form a link between the two groups and negotiate their behaviour. This could be a metaphor for life at Tell el-Dab'a at least in some Phases, where a similar situation in terms of marriage has been suspected due to sexual dimorphism: Bietak 1996a, 35–36; Maaranen et al. 2019a, 346. But in contrast to Canada, no textual evidence documents the daily relationships between locals and incomers. Moreover, in the edition of 2011, xiii, White states "the creation, in part through creative misunderstanding of a set of practices, rituals, offices, beliefs that although comprised of elements of the group in contact is as a whole separate from the practices and beliefs of all these groups." White 2006, 10, asserts that very specific preconditions are necessary for the application of his concept which include a rough power balance, a mutual need for what the other group possesses, mobility to compel the other side to change in a process of mutual invention. These preconditions are not proved at Tell el-Dab'a. Lumsden 2008, 29–32 adapted both aspects to material culture, namely the Old Assyrian Period seals. See also Fahlander 2007, 31–35.

entanglement,<sup>306</sup> and cultural appropriation.<sup>307</sup> All of those concepts retain elements of eclectic choice and self-determination as well as creativity and are therefore very attractive alternatives to the concepts mentioned above (see Chapter 4 for final remarks). The materialisation of the ‘Third Space’ as a concept was formulated in areas close to borders/frontiers, where “two or more groups come into contact [...], where people of different cultural backgrounds occupy the same territory and where the space between them grows intimate.”<sup>308</sup> There develops a physical “place ‘in-between’, [which] enforces dialogue and translation not only to facilitate communication but also to allow negotiation, making individual agency and corporate acting clearly visible” (Fig. 1).<sup>309</sup> This description both fits uncannily the situation in the north-eastern Nile Delta as well as within Naum’s rendering of the concept; whether colonial settings can be proven or not does not deter from its applicability.<sup>310</sup>

## 2.6. WHICH KIND OF IDENTITIES CAN BE GLEANED FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD?

A question of major importance is how closely we can expect to be able to research the identities of an individual from archaeological evidence and, more precisely in this case, in a settlement? The degree and precision of information relating to individuals in a settlement are certainly less direct than in the case of a tomb, where the remains of the actual individual are – theoretically – available to conduct scientific analysis in terms of physical anthropology, stable isotope analyses and, if available, genetic information. These analyses clarify the biological sex, the approximate age as well as family relationships in the broader sense and certain pathologies visible in the skeleton. This type of information is missing in a settlement without tombs. The remains of nine individuals buried in the latest Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II have only been partly available for scientific study up to now (see below). Thus, mainly the objects buried with the individuals are able to inform us about the social circumstances of inhumations but also not directly because there is the fact to consider that “[...] The dead do not bury themselves but are treated and disposed of by the living. [...]”<sup>311</sup> As stressed many times before, there is no one-to-one correlation between objects and individuals, but archaeology retrieves fragments of the media which were manipulated in the course of conveying certain aspects of their identity or rather personhood.<sup>312</sup>

Thus, where the analysis of identities is carried out in a settlement, it cannot be expected to achieve a very intimate personal level. In certain areas, complex contextual information concerning objects and/or installations may provide evidence of work/life environments with gender and/or age connotation as well as ideas about professional tasks conducted in certain places. Anyone who expects to know the ethnic identity of those who used a cooking installation discovered in the liminal area of the Egyptian Nile Delta which contained fragments of locally made ‘Egyptian’ style and locally produced ‘Syro-Palestinian’ style cooking pots must be disappointed: from such a context neither the ethnic identity of the maker of the pots nor of their users can be ascertained to any degree of certainty,<sup>313</sup> even more so

<sup>306</sup> Stockhammer 2012; Stockhammer 2013; Van Pelt 2013. Silliman 2015, 291, criticised Stockhammer’s entanglement as still being heuristic and a metaphor but a more suitable one than hybridity. Budka (2018) subscribes to the term material entanglement without considering any of the other theoretical basics for getting closer to the identity of people, namely *habitus* to avoid a one-to-one correlation of objects and identity. Furthermore, the scrutiny of chaînes opératoires could be used as a tool to detect similarities and differences in the production of certain types of pottery, for example. Thus, the culture-historical paradigm is still in action as well as the term ‘hybrid’ without definition. See Bader 2013a for consideration of this concept with a view to the settlement remains of Area A/II.

<sup>307</sup> Schneider 2003b; Hahn 2005, 100–107, called “Aneignung” in German. Without the negative connotation of its meaning in the modern English language used in the modern UK, (pers. comm. Pamela Rose, September 2019).

<sup>308</sup> Naum 2010, 101.

<sup>309</sup> Naum 2010, 124.

<sup>310</sup> Naum 2010, 126.

<sup>311</sup> Parker Pearson 1999, 3. Moreover, not everyone may have been buried properly or in a way that archaeology may trace remains.

<sup>312</sup> Fowler 2010, 362.

<sup>313</sup> Contra Burke 2019, 79.

when the quantitative consideration is much in favour of the ‘Egyptian’ style type. The only certainty is that a local potter somewhere in Egypt (perhaps at the site: no pottery workshop has been found at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>) knew how to make Syro-Palestinian style cooking pots (if the locally produced pot is in every respect (e.g. *chaîne opératoire*) like those made in Syria-Palestine<sup>314</sup>). Whether the user knew what exactly to cook in that pot and how, or not, remains unknown as well as whether the user (group) was the same as for the ‘Egyptian’ style cooking pots.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Bader forthcoming-a for a detailed analysis of this question.

<sup>315</sup> See Bader forthcoming-a.



### 3. A CASE STUDY FROM ANCIENT EGYPT

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While the development of material culture in Egypt and Nubia (Fig. 3) shows certain parallels and is instructive to the current case study, the currently available sources for the Egypto-Nubian cultural contacts are predominantly mortuary in nature and therefore only of limited value as an analogy to the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom in the north-eastern Nile Delta.<sup>316</sup> The contextual information from handmade pottery made according to the Nubian cultural tradition and found in the fortresses and their surroundings suggests a more colonial nature of these co-occurrences and their further development, which does not seem to apply to the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom in the north-eastern Nile Delta (Area A/II). There some social stratification can be noticed but certainly not any unequivocal evidence for an asymmetrical power balance as there is no evidence for fortifications of any kind or buildings that might be interpreted as prisons, communal sleeping quarters or barracks in the widest sense of the word.

Comparison with other contemporary settlements of the late Middle Kingdom<sup>317</sup> exemplifies the unique character of this settlement in Area A/II, which is the only hitherto preserved self-organised settlement in this period as opposed to those confined by topographical circumstances such as Elephantine or the pre-planned settlement type in other parts of Egypt. The latter mostly show orthogonal layouts built for specific purposes presumably commissioned by the central administration of the pharaoh (e.g. Lahun, Qasr el Sagha). This is not to say that no other self-organised settlements existed (e.g. on the river banks of the Nile), but there is a genuine blank in the archaeological evidence because such areas close to the Nile were covered either by metres of sediments and/or by modern settlements so that archaeological research is extremely difficult and can currently only be explored by augering/coring if at all.

The frequent allusions to, and discussions of, burials of Nubian and/or ‘Asiatic’ individuals within Egypt are not followed up here in detail (e.g. the burial of a woman in the Asasif,<sup>318</sup> frequently referred to as Nubian, because the grave goods also contained Nubian style pottery<sup>319</sup>) because the above discussion already highlighted the problematic nature of such evidence and would go beyond the scope of this work.

#### 3.1. TEXTUAL AND PICTORIAL SOURCES

The distinction between ancient Egyptian people and the abstract ‘the other’ was most effectively achieved by showing phenotypical differences expressed as fossilised ‘ethnic markers’ in the form of artistic conventions (icons) such as certain hairstyles, dress and skin colour in pictorial evidence and

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<sup>316</sup> Work at Elephantine provides an interesting glimpse on the ‘Nubian’ pottery component of the settlement assemblage, but the overall frequency was on average 1% of the assemblages: Raue 2018, 226. Thus, it will be interesting to see how this component influenced the practice in the settlement. That “Hybridprodukte” [hybrid products] existed has been stated in Raue 2012; Raue 2018. The types of entanglement as well as frequency and distribution are interesting research subjects.

<sup>317</sup> Bader 2015b.

<sup>318</sup> Petrie 1909; Bourriau 1981. See also Roehrig 2005, 16, reporting that recent scientific determination led to the result that the woman had spent her childhood in Egypt.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. Roehrig 2005 for a recent discussion of this burial.

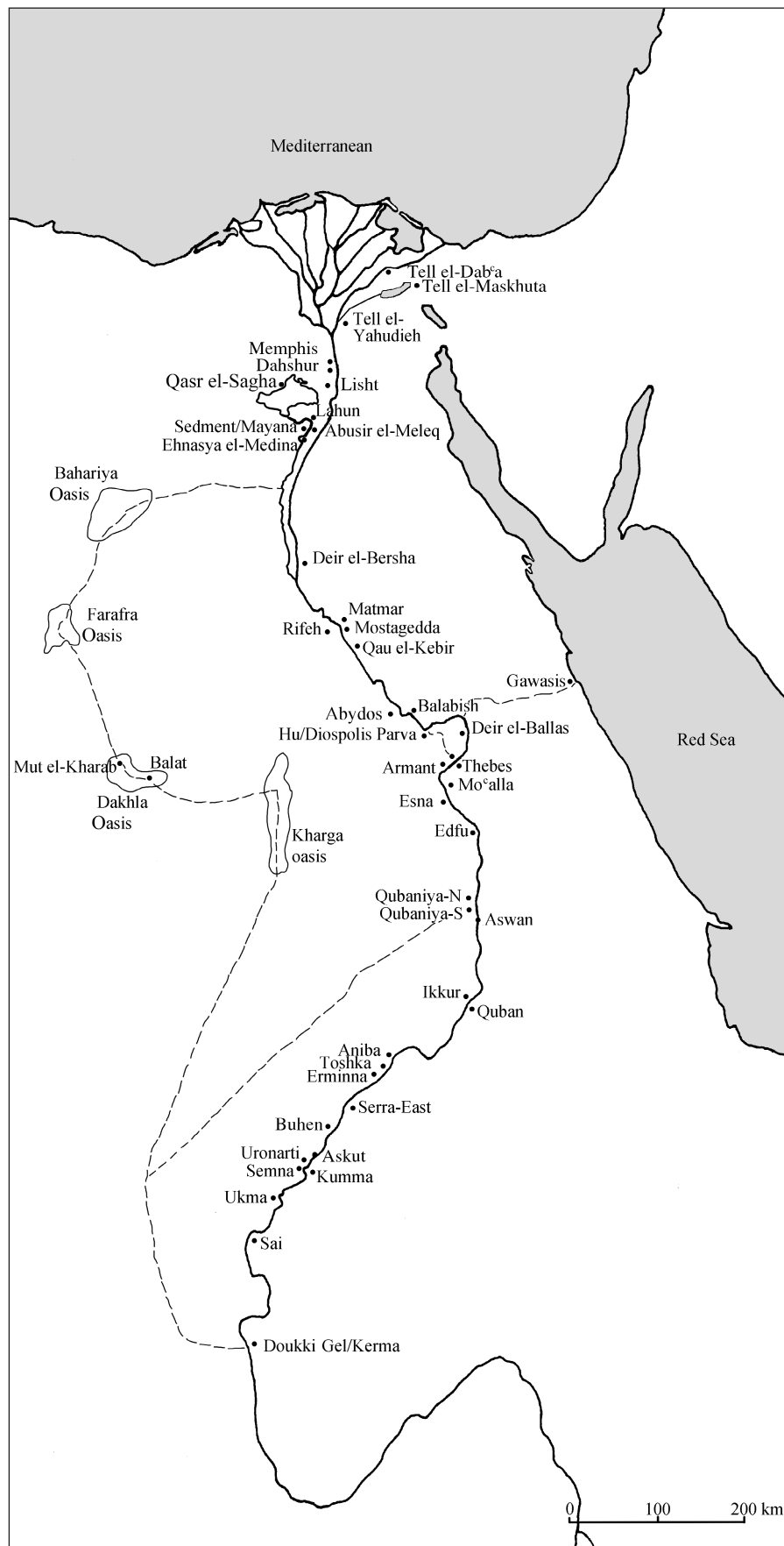


Fig. 3 Map of Ancient Egypt (drawn by B. Bader, after Baines and Málek 1980, 41)

certain epithets in texts mentioning non-Egyptians.<sup>320</sup> Thus, the Egyptian world view created ethnic stereotypes in a very striking way in pictures as well as in texts.<sup>321</sup> Initially, the Egyptian world order (topos) comprised the opposition between the pharaoh (*Maat* – justice) and his enemies (*Isfet* – sin).<sup>322</sup> Although Egyptians from Upper and Lower Egypt<sup>323</sup> were included in this system for some time, the development in the topical sphere of the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ idea led to a more visible position of ‘foreigners’ in certain parts of Egyptian art. Recent analyses of ancient Egyptian texts in search of the identity of Egyptians resulted in a more balanced view towards local identities (towns),<sup>324</sup> instead of an Egyptian one in a ‘national’ sense, as well as a more differentiated view of enemies who were also considered to be human.<sup>325</sup> It is necessary to recognise that all of these points are opinions/views of the Egyptian side through Egyptian eyes and there is no independent statement of counter opinion available during this time, which would be necessary for a self-definition of a non-Egyptian identity as explained above.<sup>326</sup> This is the reason why there is no certainty as to whether these ascriptions are driven by the need to create an antithetic identity to the Egyptian people for political, ideological or religious reasons. However, the possibility exists that the Egyptian administration defined identities in a top-down manner in order to classify its subjects of Egypt’s practiced colonial rule as has been done in modern colonial situations.<sup>327</sup> The most famous pictorial source for ‘Asiatics’ is a scene of a group of 37 ‘Asiatic’ individuals<sup>328</sup> from the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan (Tomb no 3, reign of Senwosret II), which was often taken out of the larger context of the composition of the depiction on the wall. This particular wall of the tomb shows the activities of the tomb owner which included the reception of this group of people, which most probably relates to his office as administrator of the Eastern Desert.<sup>329</sup> For a long time this depiction was mistakenly used by past and current scholarship as a stereotypical illustration of a wide variety of identities as shown recently by Susan Cohen, who ably deconstructs the use of this source in past scholarship, e.g. as a biblical picture book, and warns of uncritical interpretation.<sup>330</sup> The title *ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt* appears here accompanying the leader of the group. The meaning of it very likely differed from its later use in the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, when it was combined with the Egyptian royal titulary to designate the rulers of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>331</sup>

Texts used to explain the archaeological situation found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, namely the presence of ‘acculturated Asiatics’ in the north-eastern Nile Delta, include the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty report-like and administrative texts. These mention bringing back prisoners of war (annals of Amenemhet II, stela of Khusobek, inscription of Ahmose son of Ibana [18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty]) and include lists of ‘Asiatic’ servants and workers assigned to the estates of Egyptian members of the elite (the Lahun papyri, p. Brooklyn 35.1446),<sup>332</sup> as well as individuals and their professions shown to be of non-Egyptian descent. This latter group only includes individuals with known names, which seems to constitute a percentage of 10% in the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period in ancient Egypt. Moreover, as Thomas Schneider pointed out,<sup>333</sup> individuals too far removed from their

<sup>320</sup> Bader 2012; Bader 2017a.

<sup>321</sup> Smith 2003; Smith 2007; Smith 2015.

<sup>322</sup> Loprieno 1988; Smith 2007; Smith 2015.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Bader 2017a with bibliography.

<sup>324</sup> Schneider 2003a, 322; Moers 2015.

<sup>325</sup> See Moers 2005, esp. 264.

<sup>326</sup> See Grimal (1981) for an example of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

<sup>327</sup> Jones 1996, 69–70; Jones 1999a, 224–225; Smith 2007; Liszka 2012, 72–76. But it is unlikely to be manifest in Egyptian literature as used by Burke 2019, 72–74, who ignores Antonio Loprieno’s and Stuart Smith’s fundamental work.

<sup>328</sup> These are mentioned in the inscription; only 13 women, men and children are actually shown.

<sup>329</sup> See Kamrin 2013.

<sup>330</sup> Cohen 2015. See also discussion in Bader 2017b.

<sup>331</sup> Candelora 2017.

<sup>332</sup> See Bader 2015a, 4, for examples and bibliography; see also Bader 2017b.

<sup>333</sup> Schneider 2003a, 322–325, 335. But note that Schneider uses Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> as an example of an environment where acculturation was not necessary because the infrastructure catered for the ethnic Syro-Palestinians in the form of Syrian temples. This singular feature is part of a more complex development which also includes Egyptian temple traditions, for example. Cf. Bader 2013a; Bader 2015a and cf. below the summary of cultural features at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> in the Stage table (Tab. 1).

original descent are not recognisable as of non-Egyptian descent any more.<sup>334</sup> Thus, this body of evidence for the late Middle Kingdom is not complete and mostly pre-dates/or is contemporary with the settlement under discussion, which covers the very late 12<sup>th</sup> and early to mid-13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (as seen from a Memphite standpoint, where the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty may have lasted the longest). While the sources mentioned above provide a background for the discussion of the late Middle Kingdom settlement, they do not help in interpreting the current archaeological evidence, especially as the socio-economic status of the majority of the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> remains largely unknown, and pressures to adapt to the Egyptian way of life are suggested, especially for those aspiring to higher social status.<sup>335</sup> However, a differentiated discussion of social status would exceed the scope of this work by far and social status can therefore only be discussed for Area A/II (see below).

The mimetic view on non-Egyptian people is less well represented in the textual evidence but it was demonstrated in Nubia that in daily life non-Egyptian<sup>336</sup> people were probably not considered as “wretched” enemies in contrast to the stereotyped ‘foreigners’ as shown on temple walls.<sup>337</sup>

The use of ‘literary’ texts<sup>338</sup>, such as the Admonitions of Ipuwer, and the Prophecies of Neferti<sup>339</sup> to achieve an informed view of the real-life situation of Egyptian and non-Egyptian people suffers from a basic dating problem and deficiencies in clarity.<sup>340</sup> Conventional, older translations in wide distribution<sup>341</sup> have been replaced by others, which highlight the uncertainties and semantic problems of those texts more than was done previously.<sup>342</sup> Moreover, the older translations, deeply rooted in the culture-historical paradigm, were influenced consciously or unconsciously by the then current historical narratives.<sup>343</sup> These may also be seen as part of a belated *topos*.<sup>344</sup>

### 3.2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

The only other settlement connected with ‘Asiatic foreigners’ in (late) Middle Kingdom Egypt is the planned orthogonal complex at Lahun (see Fig. 3). The idea that ‘foreigners’ of ‘Asiatic’ origin lived there is derived from finds of papyri mentioning lists of workers’ names. Unfortunately the contextual information of isolated finds of material culture used in the identification of the inhabitants is lacking due to the early excavation of the site by Petrie at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, ‘Asiatics’ were

<sup>334</sup> The same, of course, holds true for those people who were not covered by any lists. Thus, the estimated number of unreported people is likely to be higher. Still, as there are few estimates of the overall population of Egypt at that time are readily available it remains hard to qualify such a statement. Trigger, Kemp et al. 1983, 62 estimate the overall population in Egypt to about 1 to 1.5 million people. Considering such a number the known instances of foreign people would not appear very high.

<sup>335</sup> Schneider 2003a, 323. Examples of such would be those individuals inhabiting the large mansion and occupying the elite cemetery in Area F/I in Phase G/4, cf. Schiestl 2009.

<sup>336</sup> The inclusion of non-Egyptian people in social constructs was researched by diachronic analysis of texts: cf. Moers 2004; Moers 2005.

<sup>337</sup> Smith 2007, 230–233.

<sup>338</sup> About the problems with the term ‘literary’ see Moers (2013a), and the entire volume edited by Moers.

<sup>339</sup> Quirke 2004, 135–139. For the Teaching of Merikare see Quirke 2004, 112–120.

<sup>340</sup> Moers 2013a.

<sup>341</sup> Such as the translation used by Burke 2019.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. Quirke 2004.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Lichtheim (1973) with the translations of Quirke (2004).

<sup>344</sup> Neglected by Burke (2019) who compares the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> to Assyrian merchants present in Anatolian Kanesh. Indeed, the relationship of merchants to their hosts would be a very interesting case study. What seems striking in the Kanesh case is that the presence of foreign merchants was not at all visible in the material culture of the host city according to the current scholarly opinion. Cf. Burke 2019. Lumsden 2008 was kindly made available to me by the author (pers. comm. 2 April 2020). It seems that a detailed study of material culture of that site has been neglected, so that the statement that the material culture does not reflect the presence of the Old Assyrian merchants in the archaeological record can currently not be exactly qualified.

suspected to have lived there due to these texts and the finds of a torque,<sup>345</sup> and one wooden tool probably for weaving (part of a horizontal loom?) with five incised marks previously suspected to be proto-Sinaitic that is probably an inscription of sorts but not proto-Sinaitic.<sup>346</sup> Minoans were also supposed to have been present at Lahun because some products classified as Minoan-style pottery have been found there.<sup>347</sup> That these finds can only be taken as hints for contact situations that can now only be fragmentarily reconstructed due to the general lack of information has been exemplified in detail elsewhere.<sup>348</sup>

### 3.3. THE CHOICE OF THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LATE MIDDLE KINGDOM IN AREA A/II AS A CASE STUDY

The settlement in Area A/II at Tell el-Dab'a (Fig. 4) dating to the late Middle Kingdom was chosen to test the strength of purely archaeological evidence (without any inscribed finds) to support the arguments and ideas derived from historiographic traditions, briefly described above, which are currently adhered to. These ideas implicitly direct research and the site was also chosen to see if the application of theoretical frameworks can actually contribute to a better understanding of the identities, life realities and deaths of ancient individuals, c. 3800 years ago. Moreover, no self-organised (not orthogonal), sufficiently published settlement of the late Middle Kingdom is currently available to achieve a 'calibration' of a north-eastern delta settlement with another one somewhere else in the delta or the Nile Valley<sup>349</sup> in order to pinpoint any differences or similarities in layout, architecture, foodways, subsistence strategies as well as type range, quantity, frequency distributions and use of material culture. We simply do not know how to define a 'normal settlement' and what it contains in the late Middle Kingdom.

Furthermore, it appeared to be a good opportunity to illustrate the problems of separately relating 'culture', general historical texts and migration to archaeology and to point out the non-straightforward connection between historical texts and ethnic identity as well as that between ethnic identity and material culture. All of these connections can be considered as problematic as they are only indirect and these problems are hardly ever highlighted in great detail. In addition, the archaeological evidence at Tell el-Dab'a is usually not seen as a long-lasting regional development of cultural expressions in a liminal area/borderland but is often conceived, it seems, as a monolithic proven enclave of 'Asiatics' that can

<sup>345</sup> The Lahun torque was made of bronze with an atypically high amount of tin: cf. Gilmore 1986, 451. While G.H. Gilmore resists the temptation to assign it therefore to a non-Egyptian production place taking into account little comparable data, Anna-Latifa Mourad jumps to conclusions: cf. Mourad 2015, 70; see also Sparks 2004. Nevertheless, even if the torque had been made outside of Egypt, this does not have to mean that the owner must have come from the same place as the metal. Note further that similar jewellery, among other things, was also found at Mostagedda, tomb 3120 cf. Brunton 1937, 116, pl. LXXIV. There, the owner was thought to be Nubian. Such torques need to be scrutinised for their *chaîne opératoire* in order to appreciate whether differences in the way they are made would justify the assumption that they are either imported or have some other meaning in this context. The same holds true for the bone inlays of small wooden boxes with concentric circles. Such items have been found in Qubbaniya in southern Egypt, Sedment and the Levant. Thus, it seems very rash to assign any ethnic identity to owners of such items. The intriguing question would be to which ethnic identity?

<sup>346</sup> See Gallorini 1998, 241–249, 253–254, for this find and recent discussion. Sass 1988, 104, does not interpret these marks as Proto-Sinaitic, as Dijkstra 1990 and Petrik 2011 do, both of whom neither refer to nor refute Benjamin Sass. Moreover, Meindert Dijkstra refers to possibly contemporaneous potmarks of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty but also does not rule out an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty date. Gallorini 1998 covers all of this terrain and rejects a connection of these marks on the heddle jack to the potmarks. The fact that non-native wood was used for this object does not necessarily prove that this was an implement taken from abroad to Egypt with the intent to use it for a craft there. It could have been made of previously imported wood fallen out of use: cf. Cartwright et al. 1998.

<sup>347</sup> Alessandro Sanavia, a specialist in Minoan pottery, denies a direct connection of most of these pot sherds to Minoan pottery. For him, they are recognisably non-Minoan: cf. Bader 2017b, n. 67. Cf. also Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 57–77, for the actual Minoan imports at Lahun. Fitton et al. 1998 analysed the Minoan and Minoan-style pottery found at Lahun. Petrik 2011 follows an untenable pots = people approach covering all imports into Lahun.

<sup>348</sup> Bader 2017b for examples and bibliography.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Bader 2009 for a comparison of material culture in settlements of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period with the small section at Memphis, which lacks complete house layouts. For a brief comparison of the late Middle Kingdom house layouts as well as settlement features at Kom Rabi'a and Tell el-Dab'a, see Bader 2018a; Bader 2018b.



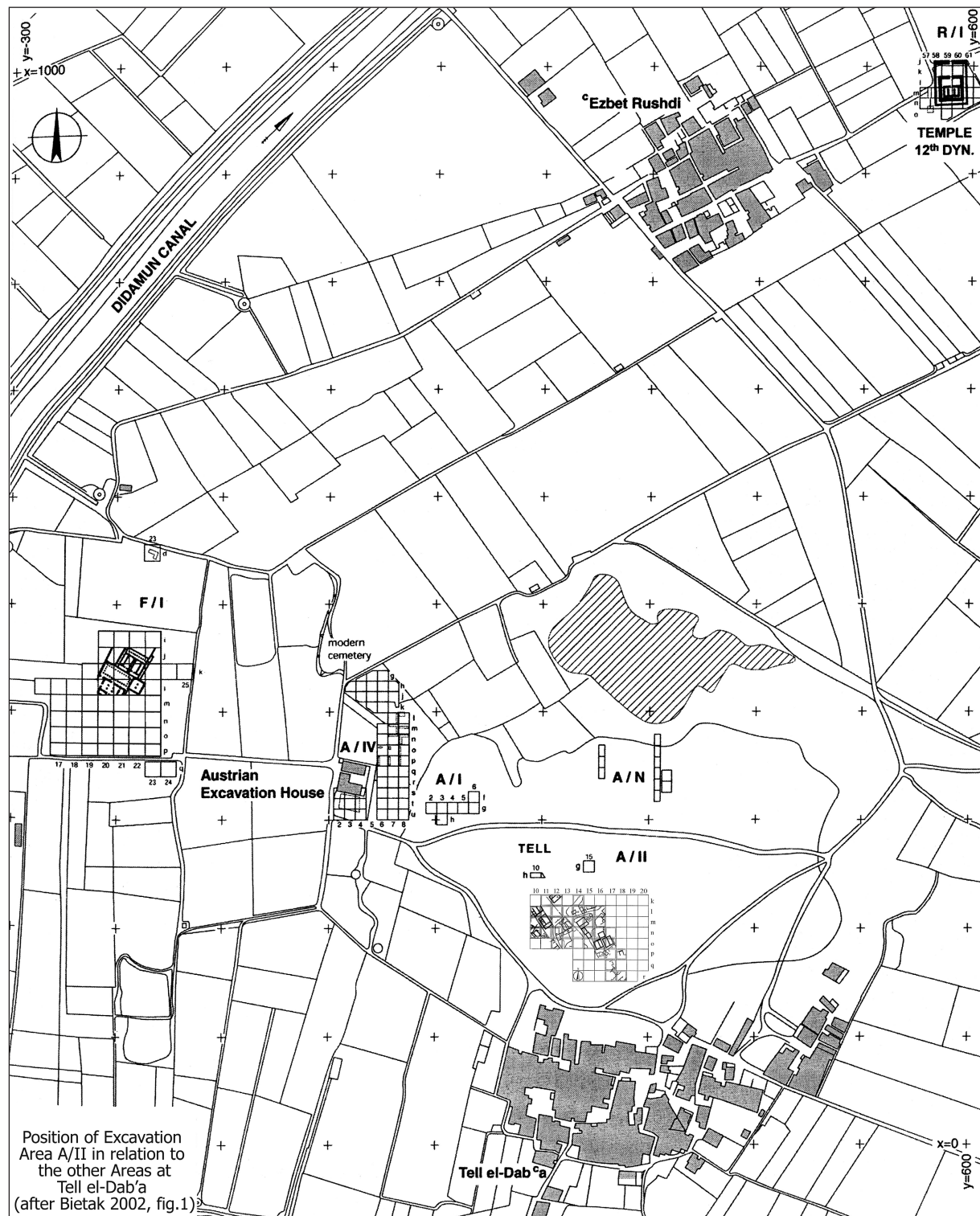


Fig. 4 Position of excavation Area A/II in relation to the site (after Bietak 2002, fig. 1)

be used as an illustration for a narrative that needs no questioning. However, the careful approach to the archaeological finds in their contextual environment shows that there are many lacunae. Some questions can simply not be answered from the evidence available.<sup>350</sup> The oft repeated phrase “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” needs to be constantly kept in mind. Thus, the limitations need to be addressed in a clear way, so that more integrated research between textual, pictorial and archaeological evidence can be undertaken.

### 3.4. DATA FORMING THE BASIS FOR RESEARCH

In some sectors of global archaeology, research on the material culture used by ancient people has already ceased to draw much interest, mainly because bio-archaeological remains, among other things, ancient DNA analyses offer other – scientific – research avenues in order to obtain more general information on the origins, kin relations, movements and mobility of ancient people as do certain branches of isotope analysis of individual’s teeth and environmental samples.<sup>351</sup> While it would be, of course, an asset, to be able to fall back on data from material culture and scientific analysis, both these scientific methods mentioned before are not at the disposal of this study due to a lack of abundant human remains and can hence only be achieved perhaps at a later stage and on a limited scale (see below).

Whilst Area A/II only included the remains of nine individuals in the latest Phase G/3–I<sup>352</sup> (three of which were small children, whose bones could not even be measured), there are other contemporary excavation sectors with more interments<sup>353</sup> as well as other archaeological differences (see below).<sup>354</sup>

Settlement remains and tombs in Area A/II were excavated from 1966 to 1985<sup>355</sup> and the final results of the physical anthropological analysis were published in 1991.<sup>356</sup> Human remains found at Tell el-Dab’a are, in general, in a bad state of preservation due to the wet soil conditions of the site. In order to keep the skeletons articulated, the bones had habitually to be prepared by means of gypsum plaster

<sup>350</sup> While Candelora (2017) is probably right in her opinion that the title *ḥkꜣ ḥꜣswt* is a self-ascribed one, it needs to be explicitly ascertained that the identification as Hyksos cannot be transferred to the individuals in the settlement of Tell el-Dab’a of Phases H, G/4 and G/3–I because they lived several generations earlier (approx. 100 to 150 years earlier according to current chronologies of the site) than the first attestation of this title at the site itself (out of context) and there is no indication for elevated status situations in the settlement Area A/II dating to the late Middle Kingdom.

<sup>351</sup> E.g. Buzon et al. 2007.

<sup>352</sup> Bietak 1991b; Forstner-Müller 2008.

<sup>353</sup> Hein 1992; Kopetzky 1993; Müller 2015a; Müller 2015b.

<sup>354</sup> Bader 2011a.

<sup>355</sup> Bader 2011a; Bader 2015b; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-d.

<sup>356</sup> Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 43–44, 56–57, 63, 67, 74, tab. in app. I for osteometric measurements. Only three individuals from Phase G/3–I were sufficiently preserved for measurements to be taken at all. In one case a skull was described as squashed and deformed but nevertheless included in the craniometric study. These three individuals were then used as a representative sample together with those from all the other Phases (F to D/2 – in total 35 individuals with sufficient measurements of 257 individuals found) to represent the characteristic inhabitants of the site, assuming a priori that they were of homogeneous origin. Renewed work on the anthropological material promises to look into this question, cf. Maaranen et al. 2019a, 346. Since the 1980s many other individuals have been found at Tell el-Dab’a and it would be very interesting to combine data from these with the data from earlier remains and to investigate this data to see how consistent a clustering would result within the site. Unfortunately, the human remains from Areas F/I, H/VI (Ramesside) and the more recent excavations in R/IV remain unpublished, so that no comparative study is yet possible. A personal communication of physical anthropologist J. Gresky, which was cited in Matić 2017, n. 29, expressed doubt about the usefulness of craniometry as the skulls are generally in a bad state of preservation at the site “and it would make no sense”. Note that in British Archaeology the connection of ethnic identity with physical “races” has been firmly refuted, cf. Halsall 2007, 450, with further references. Also criticised by Brather 2004, 190, n. 270: “Schädelmessungen haben als rassenklassifikatorisches Mittel längst ausgedient.” [Craniometry is considered to be an outdated method to classify ‘races’.] Cf. Schiestl 2009, 200, n. 1929; Evison 2014 for a history and critique of using anthropomorphic measurements. Evison 2000, 279–280, 287–288, is critical of the validity of measurements for the differentiation of ‘races’. He also states on 289 that “variation in culture is a character one and not genetically encoded”. Nevertheless, metric methods are still used but as a descriptive tool rather than for race determination, cf. Zakrzewski et al. 2016, 209–210.



Fig. 5 Plan of Area A/II in Phase G/3–1 (after Bader 2018a, fig. 1)

and some chemical treatment before lifting out of the ground. Without such treatment, the human bones would immediately start to crumble when extracted from the surrounding ground.<sup>357</sup> After the human remains in question had been analysed using the methods current at the time, most of them were reburied at the site.<sup>358</sup> Renewed study<sup>359</sup> of the remaining material yielded some new insights also for Phase G/3–1 (see below).

Nevertheless, this study is based on the enormous number of archaeological records and finds covering three strata of settlement in Area A/II (Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1, see Fig. 5) relating to the late Middle Kingdom (c. 1800–1700 BC).

Whilst we have seen that the circumstances of social conditions influence social behaviour and neither ethnic identity (not primeval) nor genetics do that, the interpretation of the archaeological remains of Area A/II at Tell el-Dab'a is at our disposal mainly to provide an insight into the social environment in the late Middle Kingdom.<sup>360</sup> Overall, the great majority of the archaeological records and materials found during these excavations were available for renewed study and c. 90% of the archaeological objects were indeed re-recorded and re-analysed by the author, which included re-drawing, photographing and at least macroscopic identification of raw materials.<sup>361</sup> Archaeofauna was to a certain extent collected

<sup>357</sup> Engelmayer and Jungwirth 1968; Satzinger 1969.

<sup>358</sup> Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 13, 16.

<sup>359</sup> Maaranen et al. 2019a, 346; Maaranen et al. 2019b, 316, overviews and methodological considerations have been published so far. The latest isotopic study in Stantis et al. 2020a, tab. S1, includes the list of samples with five from Area A/II, Phase G/3–1, see below page 83.

<sup>360</sup> See Bader 2011a.

<sup>361</sup> Bader 2013b; Bader 2015b; Bader 2015c; Bader 2016; Bader 2018a; Bader 2018b; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-d, for some results.

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE PHASES	DATE B.C.	EGYPT RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY	TELL EL - DAB <sup>C</sup> A GENERAL PHASES
	1410	Dyn.	
LB I	1440	AII	
	1470	XVIII H TIII	C / 2
	1500	TII ITI AI	C / 3
MB II C	1530	AHMOSE	D / 1
	1560	XVII HYKSOS	D / 2
	1590		D / 3
MB II B	1620	XVI XV	E / 1
	1650	KING DOM AVARIS NEHESI	E / 2
	1680		E / 3
MB II A-B	1710		F
MB II A	1740	XIII	G/3-1
	1770		G / 4
	1800	So IA IV	H
	1830	A III	I
	1860	XII IS II S III	K
	1890	A II	L
?	1920		M
	1950	SI	N/1
MB I	1980	AI	N / 2-3
	2000	XI	
	2050	X	

© modified after Bietak (2011) and adapted by Czerny (2015)  
absolute dates for the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty after Kitchen, 2000

Fig. 6 Chronological chart of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> (adapted from Bader 2009, fig. 397)

in the earlier years of the excavation and analysed and published by Joachim Boessneck and Angela von den Driesch<sup>362</sup> and their results were incorporated into the study as far as possible to highlight eating habits at this time, which may show cultural peculiarities between different housing units that, in turn, might relate to social units in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II.<sup>363</sup>

Whilst Egyptian archaeology is often revered for its “better” sources, by which the interplay of archaeological and textual sources is meant, the delta settlement of the late Middle Kingdom is left without material of this kind, with the exception of several scarabs with names and a few mud sealings,<sup>364</sup> as organic materials (including papyrus) or clay tablets<sup>365</sup> are not preserved.

Missing from the basic data set in the present case are seal impressions as a whole object group because, due to the *communis opinio* during the period Area A/II was excavated, it was not thought possible to recover unfired mud sealings from the wet subsoil. Only many years later, after various trials of careful drying and sieving of the excavated spoil, did it transpire that this much more labour-intensive procedure enabled mud sealings to be recovered even from the wet delta soil.<sup>366</sup> While this, certainly, is a loss of information on the mode of administration of the settlement and its supply routes and sources, such seals relate less securely to individuals at the receiving end of such supplies than to the institutions which provided them with such commodities. It would have been very interesting to see if there actually were any seal impressions attesting to the continued reception of commodities from anywhere, as it is thought that exactly during the time span covered by the settlement in Area A/II such supplies ceased and finally stopped. A further point of comparison would have been the nature of sealings from the self-organised settlement at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> with those from planned, rectangular settlements on the one hand and with those from fortresses, for example, in Lower Nubia to see if a difference in architectural layout and town planning is connected to the administrative

<sup>362</sup> Boessneck 1976; Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Smith 2003, 113–121; Smith 2007, 233–234.

<sup>364</sup> Bader 2017b.

<sup>365</sup> For the entirely different situation at Kanesh II and Ib see Lumsden 2008. In his interpretation he relies on texts as the material culture seems still understudied.

<sup>366</sup> Sartori 2009; Reali 2012–2013.



organisation of the supply of these settlement units and would be reflected in the sealings.<sup>367</sup> Whether an inner-A/II settlement supply system would also have used clay sealings is a point that cannot now be considered as neither sealings nor seals have been found (excepting the tombs of Area A/II, see below). However, in general, very little information is available about places where commodities were opened and what happened to the seals removed and discarded in secondary or even tertiary refuse deposits (?) and places where commodities were sealed, and in which spatial relationship they were situated. Evidence from Abydos and Edfu, for example, shows that a great number of sealings from opening objects (not doors) may be found at a site (probably in refuse deposits), while no or few seals came to light in connection with it.<sup>368</sup> Thus, one might conclude that places where packages/commodities were opened were not close to public/administrative places where commodities were sealed. Moreover, more infrastructure, such as prepared/processed sealing clay and an area to process it, should be preserved in order to assign an excavated space to such an activity, as well as special ground plans of buildings different from domestic housing.<sup>369</sup> Another point of discussion would be the following: to what extent might a self-organised settlement, probably housing a medium to lower stratum of social status, have yielded seal impressions in the settlement detritus.<sup>370</sup>

### 3.5. SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE LATE MIDDLE KINGDOM SETTLEMENT IN AREA A/II (PHASES H, G/4, G/3–1)

“... history consists of action ... and how unimportant beside this is the question of writing or not writing, how wholly immaterial beside the facts of doing and making, is the word that describes them.”  
(Ratzel 1896, 5)<sup>371</sup>

Before outlining the results of the case study for the identity debate as well as the conclusions and the outlook for further research derived from a Middle Bronze Age settlement in ancient Egypt, the limitations of the findings must be clearly addressed:

1. The archaeological sources in the delta are heavily biased against organic materials because they are just not preserved due to the waterlogged soil conditions. No written sources on organic materials (papyri, wood, textiles, baskets, mats, leather objects, etc.) are available or can ever be expected.
2. Settlement excavations are in general scarce in Egypt (Delta and Nile Valley), especially non-urban and self-organised sites.
3. ‘Rural’ non-urban settlement excavations are also scarce in the ancient Near East, especially in the Middle Bronze Age IIA period and immediately before which would provide immediate comparanda for the Area A/II settlement at Tell el-Dab’a under discussion here.
4. Most of the archaeological finds were available for re-study but not every single object. Those available were studied at first hand.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. Smith 2004.

<sup>368</sup> Josef Wegner for Abydos, and Nadine Moeller for Edfu, (both pers. comm. during the Metropolitan Museum’s scholar’s day in January 2016).

<sup>369</sup> Bader 2018a.

<sup>370</sup> It is noteworthy that in the settlement of Kom Rabi’a RAT in the Memphite ruin field, several seal impressions were found but only accidentally burnt ones. Among these were very old ones and fewer contemporary finds, not all of which bore inscriptions. Cf. Giddy 2016, 163–191. See also the review of this book: Bader 2018b.

<sup>371</sup> Ratzel 1896.



5. Some samples of the human remains found in the tombs in the settlement have been available for re-study in a new strontium isotope analysis.<sup>372</sup> Whether different and additional analyses will be possible and how current technology may cope with the bad state of preservation of these remains and the chemical treatments (white glue, gypsum) they received in order to be removed from the earth,<sup>373</sup> remains to be seen. However, the majority were reported to have been re-buried by the anthropologists.
6. The excavation was conducted over a period from 1966–1969 and 1975–1985, therefore inevitably the procedures changed and some information was lost.
7. Archival material and a few participants of the excavation could be consulted, but the author did not take part in the excavation and therefore has to rely on archival records.

Whilst the first volume of the publication containing the primary data derived from the excavation of the settlement (1966–69) appeared in print,<sup>374</sup> the second volume (1975–85) has been taken into account as a database exists. The final publication of Volume 2 is currently in preparation.

Continuous settlement activity over time and gradual abandonment have obscured the spatial distribution of activity areas due to the post-depositional history of the site. Since no disastrous destruction ended life at any point during the settlement's history that would be visible in the archaeological record (although historical tradition mentions the total destruction of Avaris at the end of the Second Intermediate Period, thus much later, which has hitherto not been found at Tell el-Dab'a), we have no direct account of activities and activity areas available for interpretation, only much vaguer evidence from an archaeological record that was partly destroyed by later and subsequent activities in the same place. A sudden destruction would have 'fossilised' one moment of activity in the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom, but the unbroken continuation of settlement activities during this time made sure that very few *in situ* assemblages were left to analyse. An exception is the possible collapse of the roof of a building with the *in situ* deposition of numerous archaeological finds in one room of Compound 1.<sup>375</sup>

### 3.5.1. Architecture

Phases H and G/4 are unfortunately not particularly well known due to adverse circumstances during excavation seasons in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>376</sup> Mostly the high water table prevented systematic excavation to lower levels and exploration of the earliest settlement layers of the original tell Area A/II dating roughly to the late 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Fig. 6).<sup>377</sup> Thus, the considerations below refer in essence to Phase G/3–1 (Fig. 5), which is the best explored of the three phases comprising the largest exposure.

1. Building in Area A/II began in Phase H with very flimsy structures and apparently very simple one-room housing (interpreted as animal pens or stables by Bietak<sup>378</sup>).
2. A simple building scheme continued through Phase G/4, again with simple one-room housing.
3. Mud brick architecture with very few stone (exclusively limestone) elements as door sockets and one (!) column base only in Phase G/1–2 (in the largest Compound 11).

<sup>372</sup> Stantis et al. 2020a; see below page 83.

<sup>373</sup> Engelmayer and Jungwirth 1968; Satzinger 1969.

<sup>374</sup> Bader 2020.

<sup>375</sup> Bader 2015b; Bader 2016 for an overview.

<sup>376</sup> Bader 2020 for details.

<sup>377</sup> Bietak 1991b, 25. Only in 1997, was it possible to make a small sounding down to the Gezira level (one square of 10 by 10 m), cf. Forstner-Müller 2001; Forstner-Müller 2007.

<sup>378</sup> Bietak 1991a, 32. But no specific faunal remains were found to support this claim.

4. Irregular layout of housing compounds of differing sizes and with differential widths of walls.<sup>379</sup>
5. Walls mostly 1½ brick's width wide, sometimes 1 brick's width, rarely ½ a brick's width.
6. Overall, very simple architecture: one- and two-room houses, one more complicated (Compound 11<sup>380</sup>).
7. The layout and orientation of the compounds are laid down during Phase G/3–1. They differ in some points from the earlier layout, but the major thoroughfare in a north-west to south-east direction was already in place (Alley,<sup>381</sup> see Fig. 5).
8. The orientation of the buildings does not change up to the later phases of the late Second Intermediate Period, but the use and layout of buildings does already in Phase F.<sup>382</sup>
9. Some of the walls founded in Phase G/3–1 were continuously renewed up to Phase E/2–E/1 but not all.<sup>383</sup>
10. During the transition from Phase G/1–2 to F, evidence for two horseshoe-shaped ovens was uncovered, probably for industrial activities of an undetectable nature (two stone moulds for tools which were found neither in situ nor close to the ovens might indicate metalwork) because no unequivocal finds were reported, not even large amounts of ashy refuse.<sup>384</sup>
11. No specifically assigned areas for craft activities and/or craft production (such as pottery workshops or other production areas, except that mentioned under 10) were found. However, a pottery workshop, for example, would be hard to identify in the archaeological record once the turning device (as simple as a bowl and a mat) had been removed and the kilns taken down.<sup>385</sup>
12. Evidence for substantial local storage facilities (rounded silos, Fig. 5) as well as evidence for commodities received from the Egyptian Nile Valley (Marl C storage jars (Fig. 11<sup>386</sup>).
13. Seeming use of Egyptian metrological system (not conclusively proven by finds such as brick moulds or cubit rods but calculations fit well<sup>387</sup>) in brick sizes and house layouts.<sup>388</sup>

### 3.5.2. Burials in the Settlement of Area A/II in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1

Tombs of people interred in the settlement<sup>389</sup> are still taken as proof for the inhabitants being Syro-Palestinian immigrants,<sup>390</sup> regardless of the fact that burial customs in the Egyptian Nile Delta are still largely

<sup>379</sup> Bader 2018a.

<sup>380</sup> Bader 2018a; Bader 2020.

<sup>381</sup> Bader 2018a.

<sup>382</sup> Bietak 1991b, 25.

<sup>383</sup> See Bader 2020 for details.

<sup>384</sup> See Bader 2020, fig. 2.26–27, industrial ovens [M165], [M166]. Kilns/ovens of similar shape and date were found at Elephantine, presumed to be for pottery: cf. Kopp et al. 2010, fig. 5; Kopp 2016, 204–205, fig. 207.

<sup>385</sup> I would like to thank Vera and Ludwig Albustin for repeated and intensive sharing of their practical knowledge and huge experience of pottery making. They also kindly drew attention (pers. comm. 14 June 2020) to ethnographic films of pottery production such as Fuchs 1971 and Luz, Lenser and Dauer 1978.

<sup>386</sup> This is only valid if the hypothesis of the central production place for those jars in the Memphis-Fayoum region is tenable. Scientific analysis of Marl C-samples only included such jars from northern sites, never, for example, from southern sites (e.g. Elephantine). Therefore, I consider this question unresolved until such analysis has been conducted, although quantitative considerations certainly point to a Memphis-Fayoum origin of the fabric. See Bader 2001, 35; Bader 2009, 646.

<sup>387</sup> Bader 2018a; Bader 2020, 30–31, app. 1.

<sup>388</sup> Bader 2018a.

<sup>389</sup> Based on the publications of Bietak 1991a; Bietak 1991b; Forstner-Müller 2008.

<sup>390</sup> E.g. Bietak 2018.

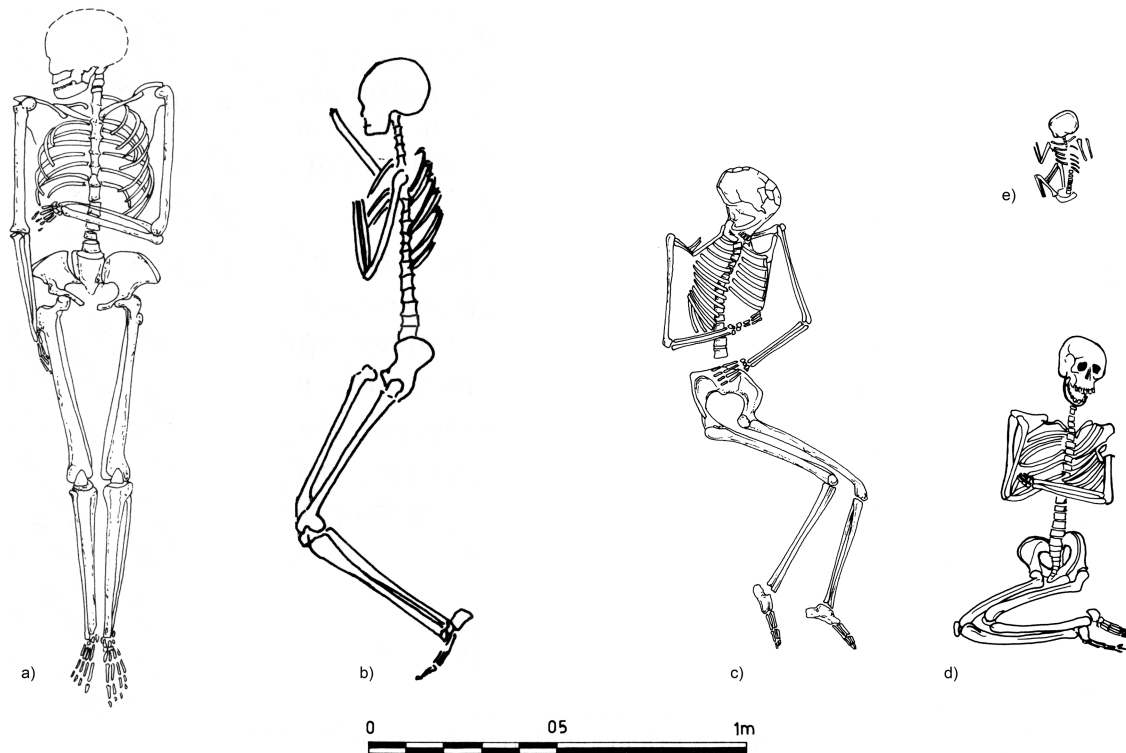


Fig. 7 Burial positions (adapted from Bietak 1991b and Forstner-Müller 2008)

unknown<sup>391</sup> and that children are buried in Middle Kingdom settlements throughout the Nile Valley and that even adults are sometimes buried in settlements (e.g. Elephantine<sup>392</sup>). In any case, the actual number of tombs in the early phases of the settlement in Area A/II is remarkably low, probably not mirroring the overall number of inhabitants of this ‘neighbourhood’ (if we may call it that because it is artificially created by the excavators rather than by the ancient people, see Fig. 4). In total, eight contemporary tombs were excavated in Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II (3800 m<sup>2</sup>), whereas Area F/I with a slightly smaller square metre exposure (3600 m<sup>2</sup>)<sup>393</sup> yielded 98 for the same phase.<sup>394</sup> It remains doubtful that this small number of interments in Area A/II is a representative sample of the people inhabiting that area during their lifetime. Furthermore, it remains unknown where the other inhabitants of this area were buried and why. It seems unlikely that any physical space restrictions in Area A/II could have been the reason for burying individuals in the nearby Area F/I or elsewhere because comparing the spatial situation of the two areas, there would be enough space in the courtyards and other places to bury people as the plan shows (Fig. 5). Any symbolic or cultic reason can, of course, not be ruled out but remains unknown.

The Area A/II interments may be summarised as follows:

1. six single burials, one group burial (kinship group?)
2. most of the tombs intact<sup>395</sup>
3. chamber tombs and pit burials, one in a stone sarcophagus

<sup>391</sup> Schiestl 2002, 329–330.

<sup>392</sup> Von Pilgrim 1996, 81–82.

<sup>393</sup> Müller 2012, 14, and plan 12.

<sup>394</sup> Kopetzky 1993; Bader 2011a.

<sup>395</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 84–85.

4. one child burial without any grave goods in Phase G/3–1 in a pit
5. one child burial in a house of Phase G/4 (hitherto unpublished, Compound 1, Room 2 A/II–n/15) without burial goods and covered with heavily sand-tempered bricks
6. no children buried in amphorae in the three phases in Area A/II
7. no tombs at all in Phase H in Area A/II
8. seven female individuals, one male individual (+ three children, see above)
9. orientation and burial position not unified for all burials (Fig. 7)<sup>396</sup>
10. two (three?) corpses of women extended supine, one in a limestone sarcophagus with lid
11. three (four?) corpses of women supine with legs flexed to one side, i.e. both shoulders on the ground)
12. male individual with Syro-Palestinian weapons and belt, flexed position, shoulders not preserved
13. number of grave goods varies from none to thirteen items
14. contradicting ‘cultural’ affiliation: e.g. ‘Egyptian’ kohl pot with flexed burial
15. no paired equid burials in Area A/II in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 only later in this area. In F/I already earlier<sup>397</sup>
16. imported pottery vessels and local Egyptian pottery vessels occur together in the same tomb in roughly similar proportions
17. meat offerings consist of sheep (tomb m/15–9) and sheep and goat (n/16–2)
18. not all burials contain meat offerings
19. architecture of the tombs follows the Egyptian tradition<sup>398</sup>

### 3.5.3. Archaeological Finds in Area A/II (Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1)

Results and observations concerning the archaeological finds yielded and analysed will be listed very briefly below divided into different object categories. Assemblages are mentioned where this is deemed of importance for the interpretation of the spatial use of an area (e.g. the assemblage of Room/Space 3 of Compound 1<sup>399</sup>). As settlement excavations are still rather rare, no comprehensive corpus of settlement finds in context for each historical period is readily available in Egypt. Here, only those settlements are mentioned that belong to a general late Middle Kingdom temporal horizon. Other periods are not included at this stage.

#### 3.5.3.1. Pottery

Pottery is the single most frequent object category found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II at Tell el-Dabʿa as at most other settlements in Egypt. Again the material of Phase G/3–1 is best explored due to the extensive exposure of this phase. The material found consisted almost entirely

<sup>396</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 36–37.

<sup>397</sup> Schiestl 2009, 179–182.

<sup>398</sup> Bietak 1991a, 32, 34; Schiestl 2002, 331; Schiestl 2009; Hulková forthcoming.

<sup>399</sup> Bader 2015b; Bader 2016 for a discussion of this context; Bader forthcoming-d.

of sherds and complete vessels were very rare. Therefore, an assessment of application of differential levels of skill or nondiscursive knowledge within the material yielded only very limited results.<sup>400</sup> The following gives an extremely brief overview of pertinent points for the identity debate. Details and contexts have appeared in print or are forthcoming.<sup>401</sup>

1. The repertoire of vessels is quite restricted compared to Area F/I and A/IV. A reason for this difference may be seen in the different functions of, or activities in, these ‘neighbourhoods’ or perhaps different status levels. It consists of fine hemispherical cups for drinking, sometimes in high frequencies (Fig. 8a–c); larger and smaller plates made from Nile B2/C1 and C2 (Fig. 8d–f) used for consumption of foods (medium to small frequencies); so-called beer jars made from Nile C2 for the storage of liquid or small-grained dry-goods (Figs. 8j–r, 9), such as grain or legumes; three different types of storage jars made from Marl C, probably derived from the Memphis-Fayoum region, namely medium ovoid/globular jars;<sup>402</sup> large ovoid jars with corrugated necks<sup>403</sup> and, most frequently, large storage jars with wide open mouths (Fig. 11); cooking pots – restricted bowls with folded rims (marked by sooting and smoke blackening, Fig. 10) in large quantities; small quantities of imported fine wares (Fig. 13), such as burnished juglets and jars; dipper juglets; Levantine Painted Ware; Cypriot imports (very few) as well as large quantities of imported transport containers (for some examples of amphorae see Fig. 14); and a few, perhaps imported, flat-based cooking pots (Fig. 12a). Rarer occurrences are small dishes, footed bowls (‘offering stands’) and ring stands (Fig. 8g–i).<sup>404</sup>
2. The pottery repertoire can be divided by the raw material of which they were made as follows: a) locally-produced material (Figs. 8–10); b) imports from Syria-Palestine (Figs. 13–14); c) imports from the Memphis-Fayoum region (Fig. 11);<sup>405</sup> d) imports from southern Egypt (very few, often only body sherds).
3. A special trait in pottery production is the local high quality copying of imported pottery vessels, e.g. dipper juglets and pattern burnished dishes with in-turned lips, which may imply first-hand knowledge of the *chaîne opératoire*.<sup>406</sup> The proportion of copied material is very low and only seems to appear in Phase G/3–1 and not before.<sup>407</sup>
4. The vast majority of cooking pottery, here referred to as Type 1, by fabric and vessel shape appears to be rooted in the ‘Egyptian’ cultural tradition<sup>408</sup> as exemplified by its occurrence in the early levels of Ezbet Rushdi in an entirely Egyptian context.<sup>409</sup> The shape is restricted with a usually rather massive lip folded outwards and pressed onto the shoulder (see Fig. 10 for a variety of examples). They have a white slip on the top and are of variable depth.<sup>410</sup> They were usually made

<sup>400</sup> Budden and Sofaer 2009.

<sup>401</sup> E.g. Bader 2011b; Bader 2015b; Bader 2016; Bader 2020.

<sup>402</sup> Bader 2002, fig. 14, types 36a and 36b.

<sup>403</sup> Bader 2002, fig. 14, type 46.

<sup>404</sup> See Bader 2011a; Bader 2016; Bader 2020.

<sup>405</sup> See fn. 386.

<sup>406</sup> It is noteworthy that such dishes do occur earlier also in the Egyptian tradition. I would like to thank V. Müller for drawing my attention to that fact (pers. comm. September 2018). Cf. also Bader 2011b; Bader forthcoming-b.

<sup>407</sup> The database contains 46 entries of dipper juglet sherds from the relevant levels: 14 are made of local Nile clay fabrics, which amounts to roughly 30% in a simple sherd count. The more accurate calculation with random sampling, which only takes the rim fragments into consideration, amounts to 0%; cf. Bader 2009; Bader 2010; Bader 2016 for a thorough discussion of quantifying methods. The overall number of relevant sherds in the three Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 is c. 68,000 sherds (rims, bases, body fragments, handle fragments), while there are c. 4000 diagnostic rim fragments used for the quantitative analysis.

<sup>408</sup> Bader forthcoming-a for a very detailed treatise of the research history, interpretation and quantification of this pottery type as well as parallels for each cooking pot type in Egypt and Syria-Palestine.

<sup>409</sup> Czerny 2002, 138, fig. 23, leaving no doubt about the Egyptian style of this pottery type.

<sup>410</sup> See Bader 2011a, fig. 11b (right); Bader 2013b, figs. 4a, 6; Bader 2016, figs. 1, 9e.



from Nile E2, a fabric very heavily tempered with mineral grains and fired to a dark brown colour. Technologically the lower part was coiled and turned on a turning device with the coils quite visible and obvious when examined. The rim was then added on last, probably, and also turned on a turning device/slow wheel. The connection between body and rim is usually quite visible.<sup>411</sup> Unfortunately, very few vessels are represented by anything other than just a portion of the rim.<sup>412</sup> The general form, at least, if not the fabric, can be traced back into the late Old Kingdom.<sup>413</sup> This cooking pot type is called a restricted bowl with folded lip. The second type of cooking pot found in Area A/II comprises very few examples of flat-based, straight-sided cooking pots (Fig. 12a),<sup>414</sup> which are influenced by a Syro-Palestinian tradition.<sup>415</sup> These were found in all three phases and their proportion in all three phases together amounts to only ~5.0–6.0% taking into account only the grand total of cooking pots as 100%, not the overall sum of pottery fragments.<sup>416</sup> The third type consists of “holemouth” cooking pots<sup>417</sup> with upright or ‘gutter’ rims (Fig. 12b–c), probably inspired by Syro-Palestinian examples (but these did not occur in the Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 in the settlement of Area A/II.<sup>418</sup>) A fourth and extremely rare type of cooking pot is one with at least one horizontal handle and red slip and burnishing on the interior (Fig. 12d). Its identification as a cooking pot is derived from the general appearance of the ware rather than from observation of the sooting or smoke blackening.<sup>419</sup> Unfortunately, some confusion remains among scholars about which cooking pots are similar to Syro-Palestinian types. This is particularly problematic as they are frequently taken as proof for immigration from Syria-Palestine at Tell el-Dab’a. For example, Asaf Yasur-Landau overemphasises the flat bottom pots, which are only a very minor component in the repertoire.<sup>420</sup> To sum up:

- a) Egyptian-style cooking pots, restricted bowls with folded lip – common;
- b) flat based and straight-sided ones inspired or influenced by Syro-Palestinian examples – very rare;
- c) locally-made gutter rim, hole mouth cooking pots – Syro-Palestinian (they do not yet occur much in the phases discussed for this settlement<sup>421</sup>);
- d) handled cooking pots – extremely rare: only 2 examples in 68000 sherds.

### 3.5.3.1.1. Tools Made from Reused Pottery

Re-shaped and re-cut fragments of pottery vessels did occur. In addition, such tools included scrapers, sherd discs, spindle whorls and net sinkers and probably other implements such as lids, etc. were also made of disused imported vessels, such as a mortarboard (?) made from the handle of an amphora

<sup>411</sup> Cf. Bader 2009, fig. 232.D65. Kopetzky 2010 does not include technological details in the drawings in her publications; the descriptions in the typological analysis of the pottery in the text are often insufficient.

<sup>412</sup> Aston 2004, vol. 2, pl. 178–180, group 158b–c.

<sup>413</sup> Rzeuska 2006, pl. 2 (bottom row, centre vessel). See also 130–140 for the form in Nile B1 and pl. 141 for Nile E with a red slip. The technology is described as wheel thrown with body coiled.

<sup>414</sup> See Bader 2011a, fig. 11c (left); Bader 2015b, fig. 7b.

<sup>415</sup> See Klassen 2015 for the variety within this cooking pottery.

<sup>416</sup> The quantitative analysis of the whole settlement in all three phases is not yet finalised, thus this result must be considered preliminary. However, the absolute number of fragments will not change.

<sup>417</sup> Ultimate certainty on the body shape of this vessel type cannot be provided from the specimens found in Area A/II, Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1.

<sup>418</sup> Cf. Bader 2009, types 96, 97, 100b and 103 on pages 394–411 for some examples. These are the cooking pots Bietak was referring to in Bietak 1991b, cf. Bader forthcoming-a.

<sup>419</sup> Bader 2009, 398–401, type 99a; represented in the settlement in K465.

<sup>420</sup> Yasur-Landau 2010, 21–22.

<sup>421</sup> Some can be found in Area F/I in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 but in quantities below 1% of all pottery, cf. type 451 in Kopetzky 2010, vol. 2, 366–367.

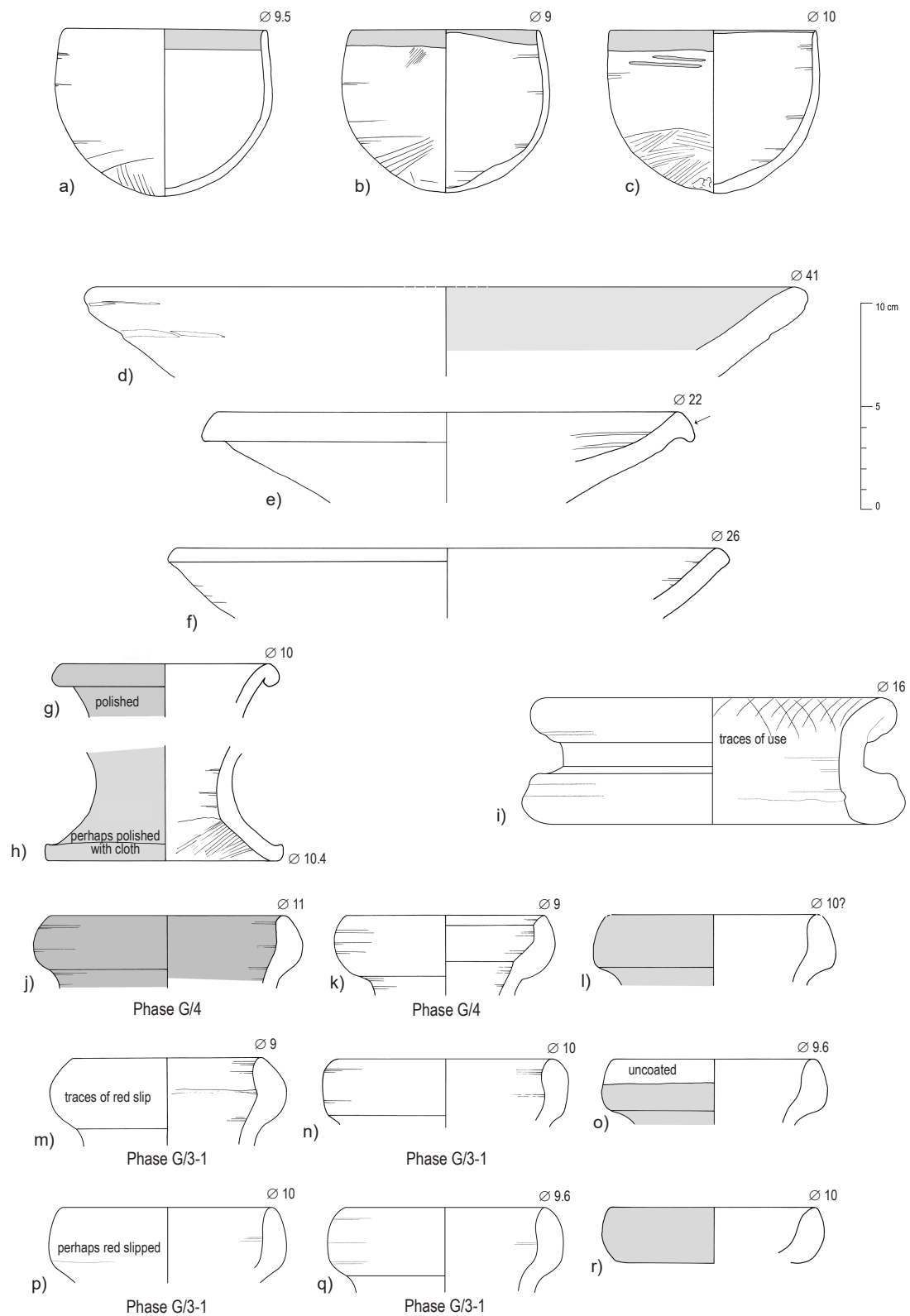


Fig. 8 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3-1 (drawn by B. Bader)

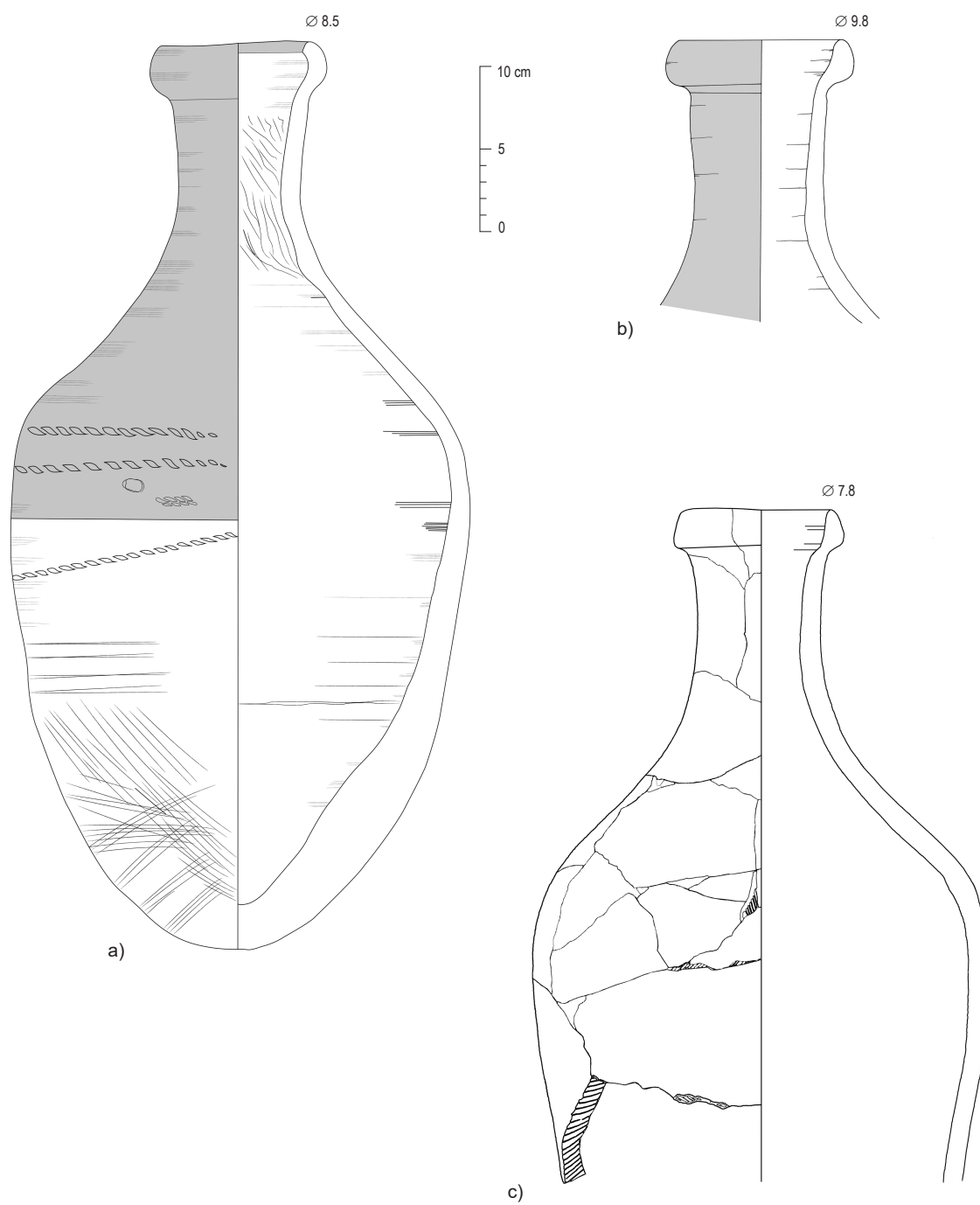


Fig. 9 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3–1, storage/‘beer’ jars (drawn by B. Bader)

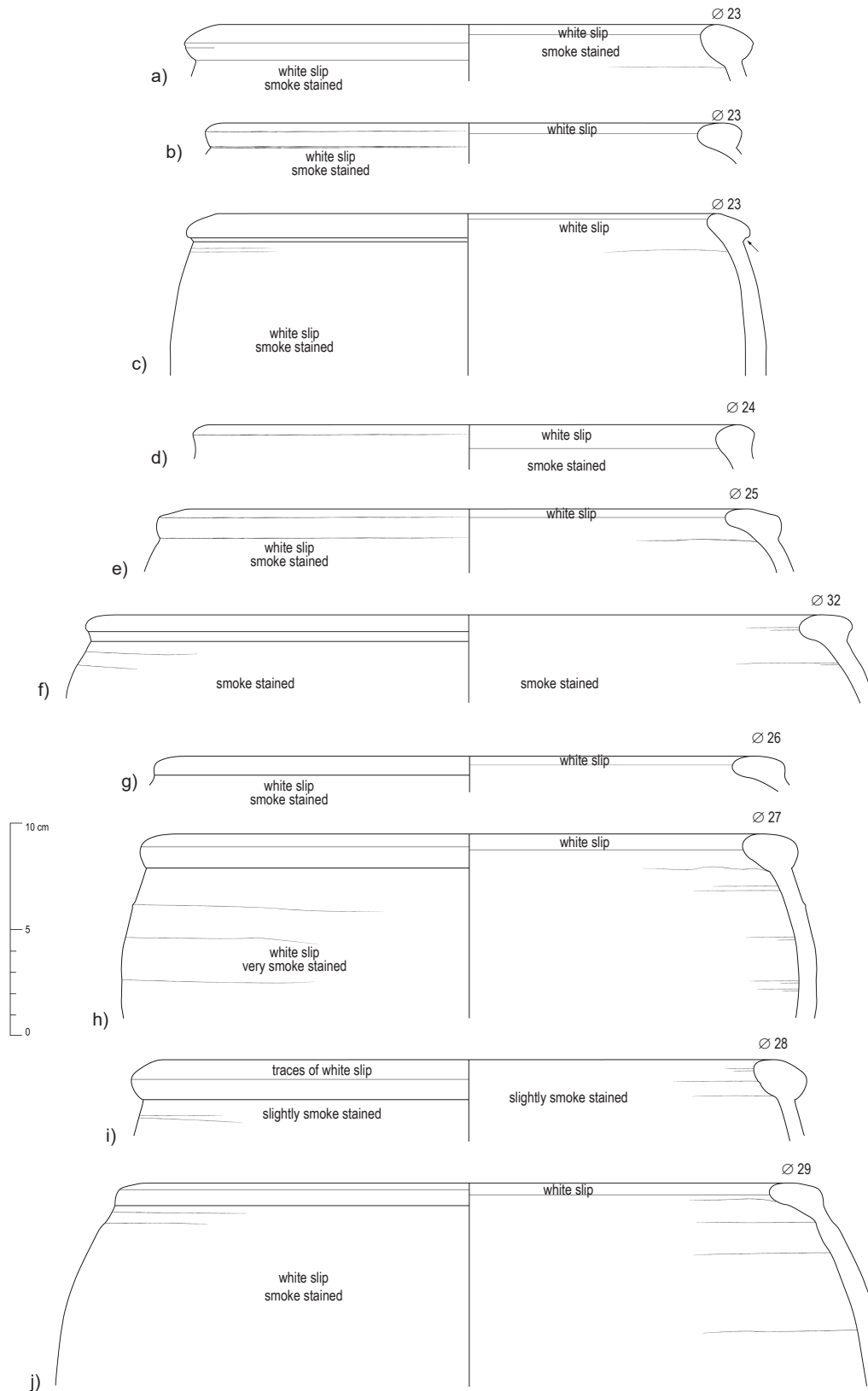


Fig. 10 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3–1, restricted bowls with folded rim (drawn by B. Bader)

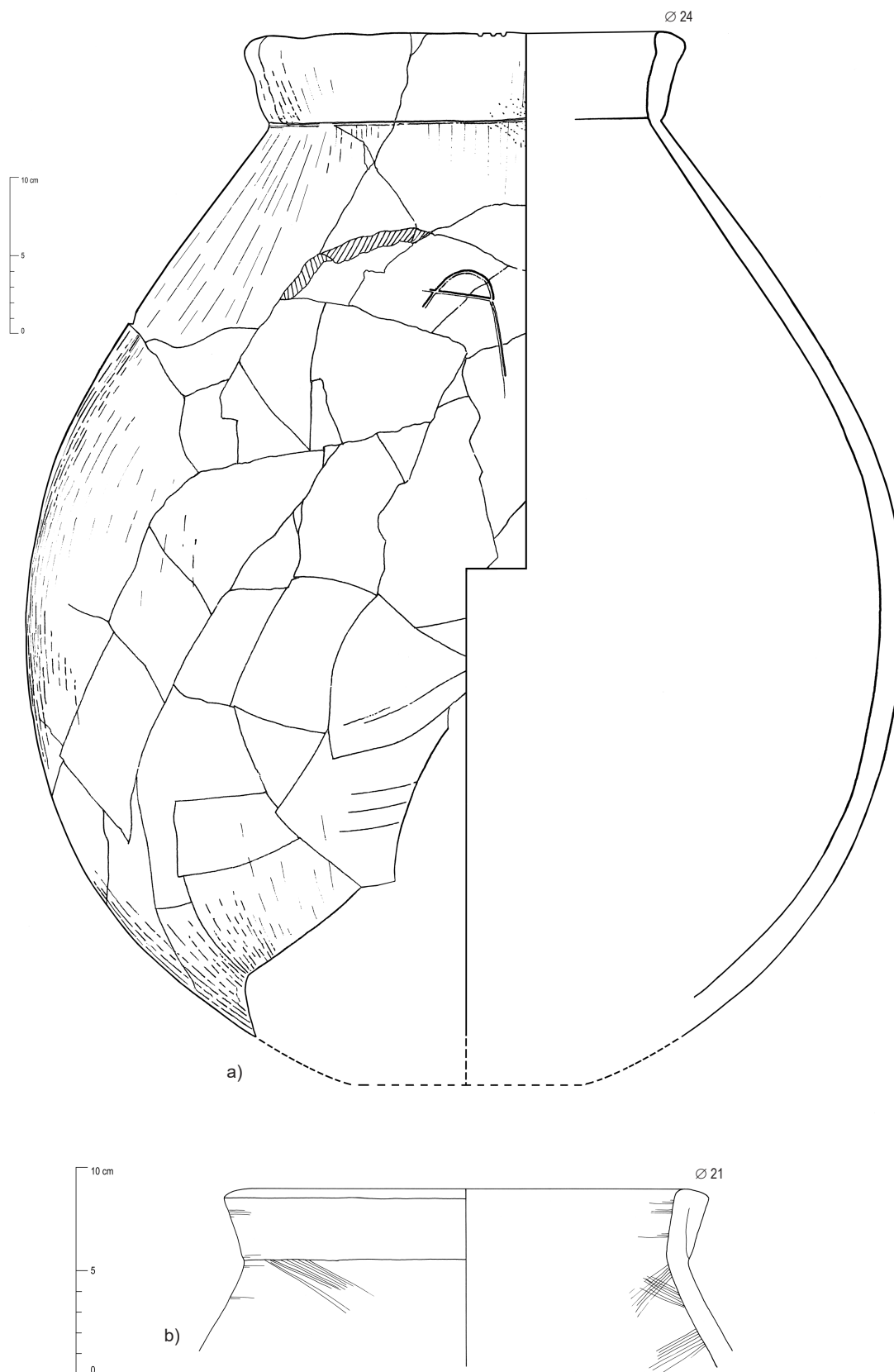


Fig. 11 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3–1: storage jars with wide mouth (drawn by B. Bader)

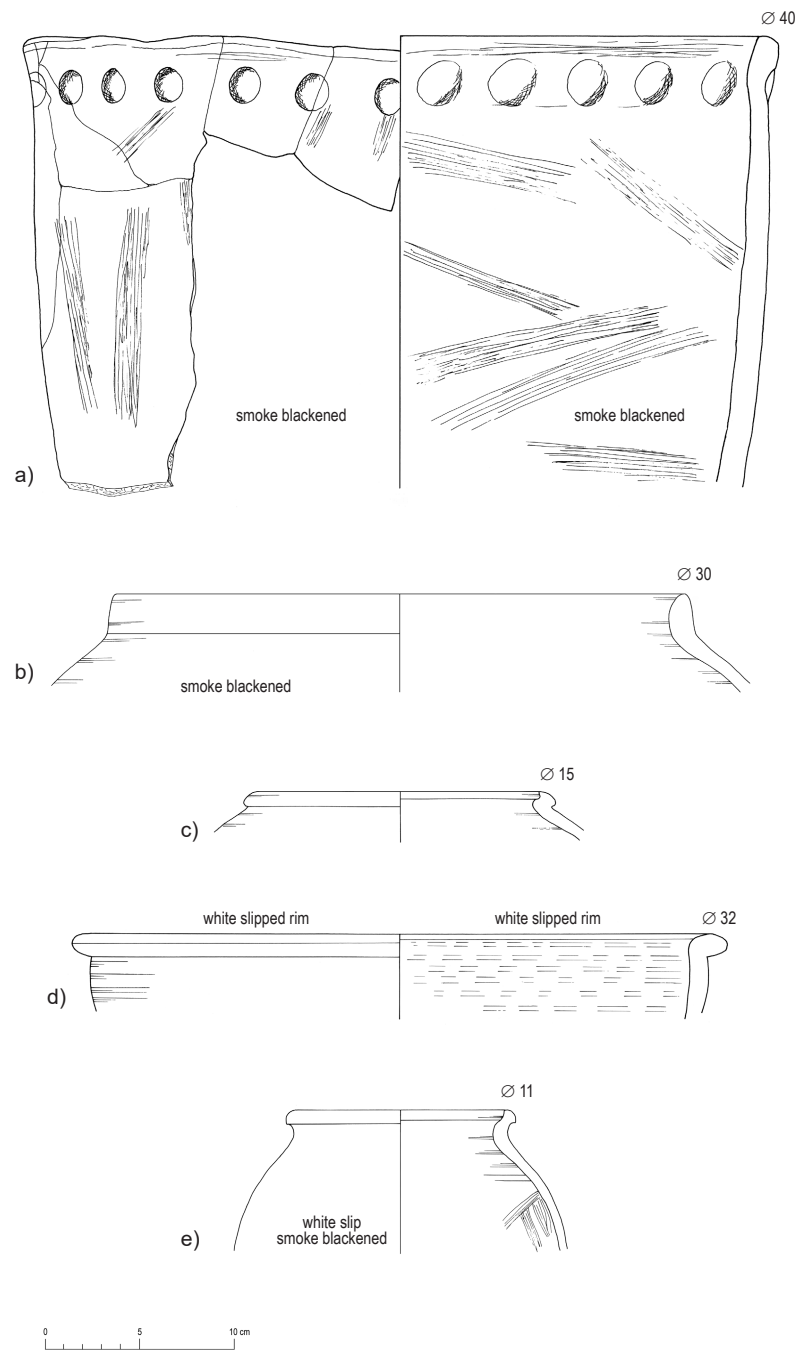


Fig. 12 Selection of cooking pottery of various phases (after Bader 2009)



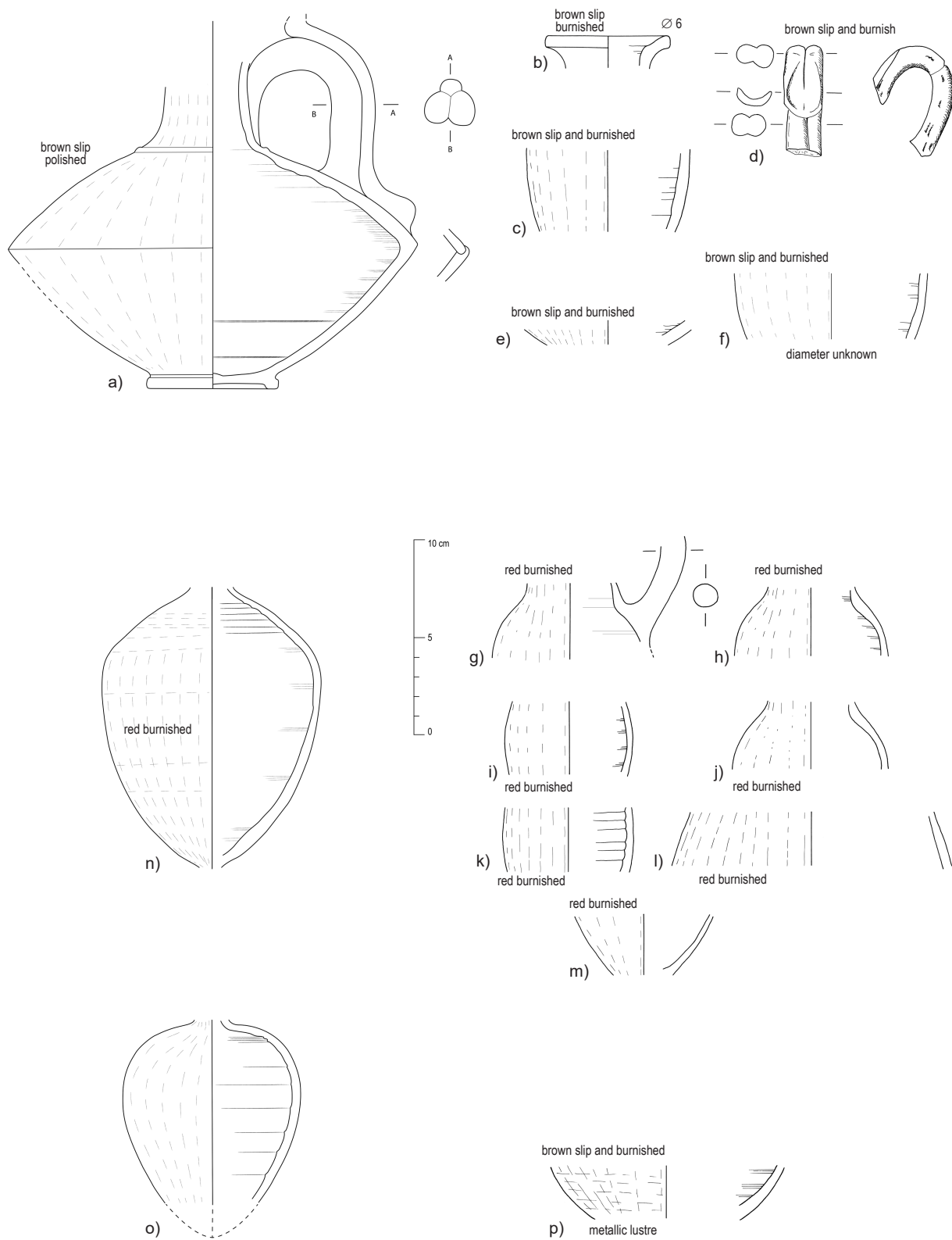


Fig. 13 Selection of imported fine wares (drawn by B. Bader)

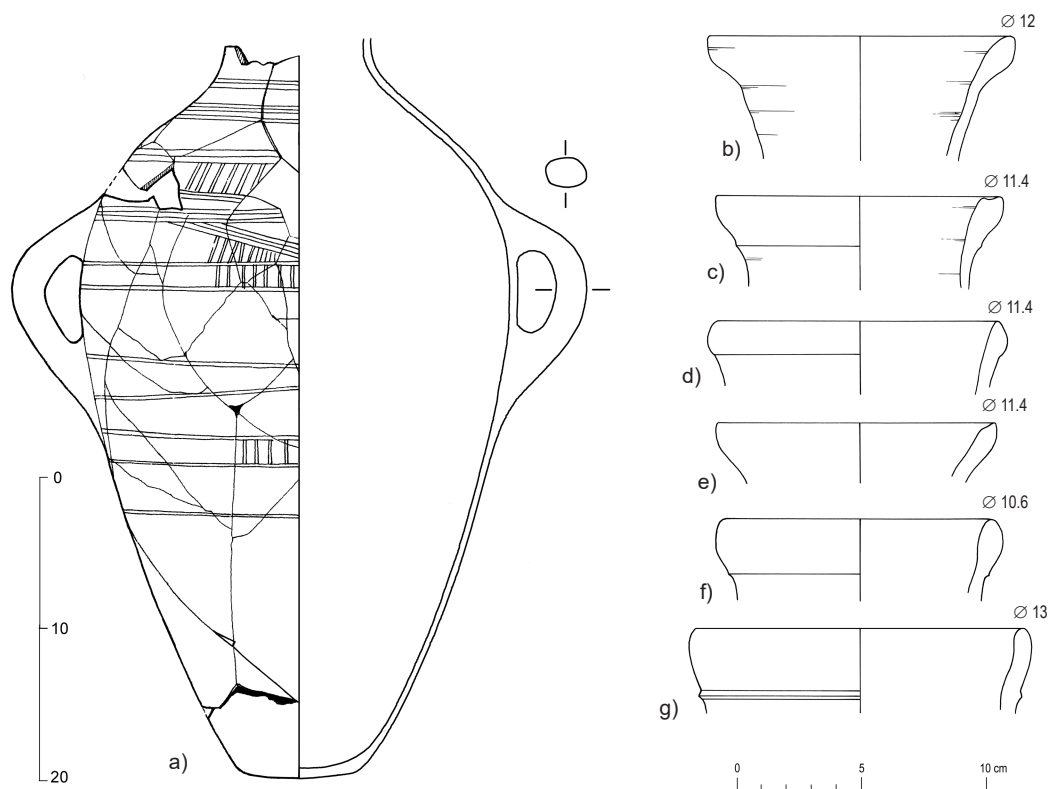


Fig. 14 Selection of imported transport amphorae (drawn by B. Bader)

(K2030-60837). As this happened after the vessels broke, it is clear that the disused materials were used by the individuals who lived at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>. The re-use of broken pottery as tools has not been published much from Syro-Palestinian sites, but recently more evidence for this habit has been appearing in publications<sup>422</sup> because the habit of recycling materials is a deeply entrenched human trait. Reused pottery fragments are certainly also recorded at roughly contemporary Egyptian sites such as Memphis<sup>423</sup> and specialised implements such as net-sinkers at Elephantine.<sup>424</sup> Personal experience at sites of the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom as well as at cemeteries and temple sites suggest that this kind of material is more widespread than hitherto acknowledged.

### 3.5.3.2. Chipped Stone Tools

Chipped stone tools were not found in great quantities. The 35 pieces or so came mostly from refuse or floor deposits, none of them *in situ*. The range of forms includes sickle blades with silica sheen

<sup>422</sup> E.g. Falconer and Fall 2006, fig. 7.17 and app., small finds with descriptions; Bidmead 2013, 1095–1096, spindle whorls “often made from reworked sherds or lids”; Blockman and Sass 2013, 872–875, reworked sherds, interpreted as lids, not illustrated. Sherd discs found at Hazor, Intermediate Bronze Age: Ben-Tor et al. 2017, 186–187, fig. 6.13.12; Middle and Late Bronze Age: fig. 7.25.1–3, sherd discs interpreted as stoppers in Stratum XVII – MBIIb, also fig. 7.78.9, a rectangular reused sherd interpreted as a burnisher LBA; also in Yokne’am in the MBA: Ben-Tor et al. 2005, fig. II.2.42–44, sherd discs; fig. II.9.26, sherd disc; fig. II.16.12–14, sherd discs; fig. II.19.17–19, sherd disc; fig. II.19.20, base possibly reused as loom weight; and in most following later strata at this site.

<sup>423</sup> Giddy 2016, 114–118, 207–211.

<sup>424</sup> Von Pilgrim 1996, 278.

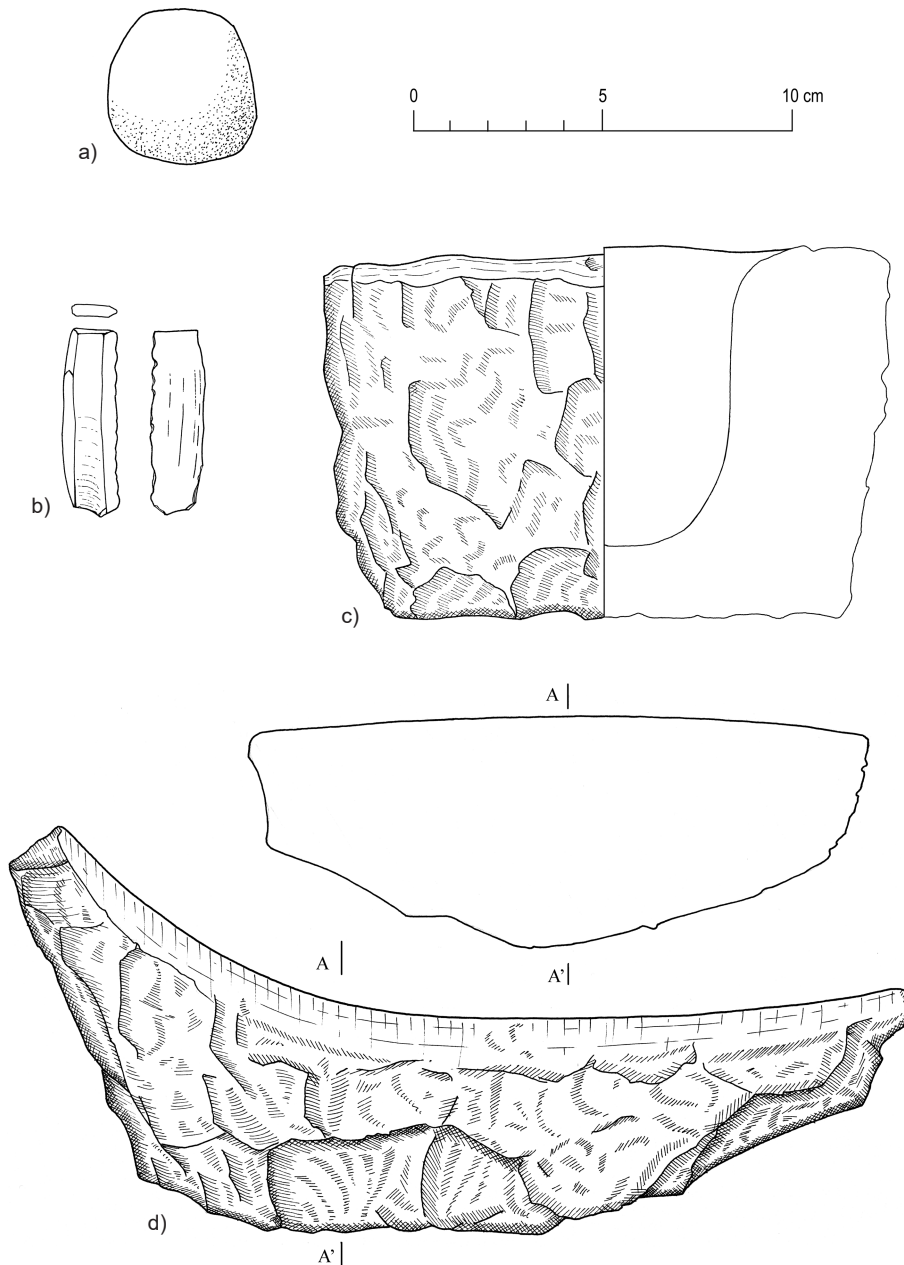


Fig. 15 Selection of objects made from stone (after Bader 2015b, fig. 8)

(Fig. 15.b), pointed tools, perhaps knives, as well as broken implements and also a few flint flakes or debitage, which seems to show that at least some of the tools were made directly at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> and not just received as ready-made items. One bi-facially worked larger knife<sup>425</sup> was found built into a wall and has been interpreted as a possible foundation offering. Apart from this very remarkable piece, with much labour invested, the other tools are just that, everyday tools and fragments thereof. They exemplify a probably limited activity in the agricultural sphere as well as possible use in leather making, basketry or woodwork. As a relatively rare object class, possession of such an item might mark social elevation,

<sup>425</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 6.49 with discussion.

craft specialisation or, at the other end of the spectrum, show a limited necessity for such tools although its rareness might also be related to a certain method of waste management.

### 3.5.3.3. Grinders/Pounders, Querns and Mortars

Grinders/pounders (Fig. 15a), which are very difficult to differentiate,<sup>426</sup> were found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in addition to a few querns: simple stone implements with a concave surface (Fig. 15d), which are seemingly universal in Egypt and Syria-Palestine. Comparable, roughly contemporary items have been found in Memphis<sup>427</sup> but also at Tell el-Hayyat.<sup>428</sup> In essence they all look very similar although the raw materials seem to differ depending on local availability. Two mortars (Fig. 15c) made of limestone were also found in Compound 1.<sup>429</sup>

### 3.5.3.4. Animal Bones

The animal bones, found in large numbers in the settlement's refuse, were analysed by Joachim Boessneck and Angela von den Driesch.<sup>430</sup> Due to access to the original documentation kindly provided by Angela von den Driesch (†)<sup>431</sup>, it was possible to assign the animal bones to the various contexts of the material discovered from 1975 to 1985. While the occurrence and frequency of the various species in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 are already published,<sup>432</sup> it is now possible to add information on the spatial distribution and quantity of the various species to the find contexts.<sup>433</sup>

The distribution and relative proportions of the single species are relatively similar across the settlement, without much deviation in the single contexts. Recurring are cattle, sheep/goat and pig, and cattle and sheep/goat usually dominate in turns. This pattern may be status-related. Pig is constantly present, but in small quantities. There are very few contexts in the settlement, however, where no pig bones appear at all. Fish, birds, tortoises, river mussels and equids appear infrequently and so far no clear pattern is discernible. A few of these bones bore marks of being prepared to be used as tools such as awls while others were transformed into a number of astragali, frequently suspected to have been used for playing games.<sup>434</sup> Unfortunately, the find circumstances of these latter objects do not add substantial insights into who made or used them.

### 3.5.3.5. Archaeo-Botanic Remains<sup>435</sup>

Due to the waterlogged soil conditions the number of preserved archaeo-botanic remains is quite low. They were only preserved if charred by fire.<sup>436</sup> The relevant work was conducted in 1984/85 in three seasons and is therefore only informative on a few archaeological features and for a more general, albeit limited, glimpse into the general environmental circumstances of the site. Three samples relate to the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II from squares A/II-m/18 and A/II-p/21.<sup>437</sup> The species

<sup>426</sup> Giddy 2016, 99–108.

<sup>427</sup> Giddy 2016, 95–99.

<sup>428</sup> Falconer and Fall 2006, e.g. 121, fig. 7.6, lower row.

<sup>429</sup> See Bader 2015b for examples of querns, mortars and grinders in fig. 8a, c–d; Bader 2020, fig. 8.5–6.

<sup>430</sup> Boessneck 1976; Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992.

<sup>431</sup> A. von den Driesch (pers. comm. 15 August 2009).

<sup>432</sup> Boessneck 1976; Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992. In Area A/II, a total of 25166 mammals, birds, fish, reptiles bones and molluscs were analysed for the 9 phases in total. The species include cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys, and dogs in quite high proportions, while cats, gazelles, African grass rats, hippopotami and rabbits were very rare. Cf. Boessneck, von den Driesch 1992, 67–68, 72–74. There were also tortoises, cf. 134, tab. 80, and molluscs: Aspatharia, cf. 135, tab. 82.

<sup>433</sup> See Bader 2020 for details.

<sup>434</sup> See Bader 2015b, fig. 5, as an example.

<sup>435</sup> Thanheiser 1987.

<sup>436</sup> Thanheiser 1987, 1.

<sup>437</sup> Thanheiser 1987, 31, tab. 5, samples T3, T7 and T8.

identified by Ursula Thanheiser are the following:<sup>438</sup> *Triticum monococcum/dicoccum* – emmer wheat (ein/zweikorn); *Triticum cf. aestivum* – common wheat; *Triticum* sp. – wheat, spelt; *Hordeum sativum* – barley; other grain; *Vicia ervilia* – ervil; *Lens culinaris* – lentil; *Lathyrus sativus* – chickling pea; *Pisum sativum ssp. elatius* – pea; *viciae* indet. – vetch; *Vitis vinifera* – vine; *Phoenix dactylifera* – date palm; *Chenopodium album/murale* – white goosefoot/nettle-leaved goosefoot; *Polygonum/Rumex* sp. – knotweed/dock; *Rumex* sp. – dock/sorrel; *Trifolium* type – clover; *viciae* – Gunn’s 2<sup>nd</sup> category-vetch; *Fabaceae* indet. – clover of various kinds; *Geranium/Erodium* sp. – cranesbill, storksbill; *Sinapis/Raphanus* sp. – mustard, runch; *Malva* sp. – mallow; *Hyacinthaceae* indet. – e.g. grape hyacinth; *Cyperus* sp. – flat sedge; *Schoenoplectus* sp. – triangular club-rush; *Scirpus* sp. – variant of sedge family; *Carex* sp. – sedge; *Cyperaceae* indet. – variants of sedge family; *Lolium* sp.; *lolium* type – variants of rye grass; *Bromus diandrus/squarrosus* – great brome; *Phalaris* sp. – canary grass; *Crypsis* sp. – foxtail pricklegrass; *Poaceae* indet. – grass family.

Species occurring more often comprise *Triticum monococcum/dicoccum* – emmer; *Triticum* sp. – wheat, spelt; *Trifolium* type – clover; *Cyperaceae* indet. – flat sedge; *Lolium* type; *Phalaris* sp. – canary grass, *Poaceae* indet. – grass family. This selection gives evidence about the use of grain as a foodstuff in the settlement as well as the general weeds und grass types growing in the delta at the time of the settlement in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1, which may well have been used for the production of ropes, mats, and basketry.

### 3.5.3.6. A Group of Green Siltstone Objects

Although the collection of various green siltstone objects made of the same, or macroscopically very similar looking, material were neither found together as a single assemblage nor in their original use context but in refuse deposits,<sup>439</sup> it seems worth mentioning them here because this stone type does not occur naturally in the delta.<sup>440</sup> The raw material for the seemingly odd collection of objects (trapezoidal palettes; grinders; a tapering cylindrical object; a fragment of an open stone vessel and a cuboid weight) must have come from outside the delta.<sup>441</sup> While the Middle Kingdom settlement of Lahun contains a similar range of objects, it remains unclear whether they were made from the same raw material. Interestingly the contemporary layers of the settlement at Memphis did not yield comparable finds.<sup>442</sup> These objects hint at a more complicated structure of procurement of more high status objects and social stratification, but it remains difficult to bring this in accord with the remainder of the archaeological record and the layout of the houses under discussion. Due to the sturdy nature of the finds, the level of damage to some of these objects and the fact that they would probably have been continuously reused, it cannot be dismissed that objects such as these might have belonged to the earlier mansion of Phase d/1 in Area F/I and been later dispersed. Against such a hypothesis stands the fact that such finds in Area F/I are even rarer and only occur in later phases.<sup>443</sup>

### 3.5.3.7. Stone Vessels

The settlement in area A/II contained very few fragments of stone vessels; those which do exist come almost exclusively from rubbish/dumps or floor deposits, representing vessels and fragments fallen out of use. The repertoire includes a few kohl pots and fragments thereof as well as a fragment of a ‘calcite-

<sup>438</sup> Thanheiser 1987, 31–32, discussion 24–66.

<sup>439</sup> See Bader 2015c for details.

<sup>440</sup> There is no natural stone resource in the delta in general.

<sup>441</sup> One of the sites known is the Wadi Hammamat and the eastern desert, cf. Aston et al. 2000, 13, 57–58.

<sup>442</sup> Giddy 2016.

<sup>443</sup> Müller 2012, 33, trapezoidal palette “Grünstein” [greenstone], str. c; 172, muller/grinder str. b/3; 178, small unidentified object with inscription str. b/3; 287, open stone vessel fragment str. b/2; 246 palette made of “Schiefer” [slate], str. b/2.

alabaster' vase with corrugated neck, which is quite common in Middle Kingdom Egypt.<sup>444</sup> Also, one stone lid of 'calcite-alabaster' was found.<sup>445</sup> Whether the heavy tripod of igneous, dark greenish rock<sup>446</sup> should be considered a vessel or rather an implement for producing something cannot be ascertained from the find context.

### 3.5.3.8. *Stone Implements*

The only other stone implements found comprise triangular stones with holes in the apex which were usually interpreted as loom weights<sup>447</sup> but appear, in part, to be too heavy for weighing down warp threads (709 g and 93.4 g, respectively). Moreover the vertical loom is not attested in Egypt until quite some time later.<sup>448</sup>

### 3.5.3.9. *Items of Personal Adornment*

Items of personal adornment in Area A/II are very rare. Except in the tombs (see below), there are only a few singular beads of spherical<sup>449</sup> and tubular shape<sup>450</sup> made of faience. It is possible that due to the waterlogged soil such items were too frail to survive in larger numbers. A pear-shaped pendant made from shell with a perforation at the apex<sup>451</sup> was found as well as a small faience ring with a diameter of 7.7 cm. This latter object could have been a bracelet for a child.<sup>452</sup> These objects were found on the floors of houses. It is particularly noteworthy that no toggle pins or fragments thereof were discovered in the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II. Only one tomb contained a pin with an eye,<sup>453</sup> but incomplete and very corroded. Also scarabs were not found in the settlement but in some of the tombs. Some of those were interpreted as having been made in a local workshop,<sup>454</sup> which may be the indication of the beginning of a regionalisation process at this site. Another item of personal adornment whose appearance is noteworthy is the gold shell pendant in one of the tombs,<sup>455</sup> which occurs in many Egyptian cemeteries in the Nile Valley.<sup>456</sup> The scarcity of such finds gives the impression that jewellery was a rare item in the late Middle Kingdom settlement, carefully looked after and taken to the tomb with the deceased as a prized possession or handed down to surviving relatives.

### 3.5.3.10. *Artistic Production Made from Various Materials*

Objects that can be assigned to 'artistic' production in the most inclusive sense of the word are very rare and they were generally not found in particularly well-defined contexts. The modelled head of a clay statue with a finished base of the neck represents a very crude rendering of a human head.<sup>457</sup> The head

<sup>444</sup> See a thorough discussion of all occurrences in Egypt, Nubia and the Levant as well as an interpretation of the vessel type: Bader 2011c. The fragment found in the late MK settlement in Area A/II can be found in Bader 2011c, fig. 2d.

<sup>445</sup> Cf. Bader 2020, fig. 6.44.

<sup>446</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 4.21–22.

<sup>447</sup> Bader 2020, figs. 3.8a, 3.9a, 8.5a.

<sup>448</sup> See discussion and references in Bader 2020, 72–75.

<sup>449</sup> Bader 2020, figs. 6.23–24 (reg.no 1703); 6.17 (reg. no 1104).

<sup>450</sup> Bader 2020, 253.

<sup>451</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 6.32–33.

<sup>452</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 6.21–22.

<sup>453</sup> Bader 2011a.

<sup>454</sup> Mlinar 2004, 113–122, figs. 4.1, 6a.1–3.

<sup>455</sup> Bader 2011a, n. 6.

<sup>456</sup> E.g. Dubiel 2008, 154–157. See also Oppenheim et al. 2015, 240–241, cat. no 271 B, from the tomb of Senebtisi at Lisht.

<sup>457</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 3.32–33. Incidentally, because it was found at Tell el-Dab'a, it was initially classified as the head of an 'Asiatic', although no parallels exist, and the workmanship is not detailed enough to compare it to other depictions of 'Asiatics' known from ancient Egyptian artistic production.



of an animal figure is probably represented by a white faience fragment from the fill of a room.<sup>458</sup> The rectangular base of a small statuette made of limestone with a hieroglyphic inscription represents the only inscribed find from the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom.<sup>459</sup> The preserved name of a female individual may be read as Te(t)j or Tjj. Most probably the statuette was intended for a tomb and ended up in a refuse deposit in a silo, either due to being broken or being robbed. Finally, at least two statues of monkeys or baboons were found in rubbish deposits of the settlement: a small and damaged one in the fill of a room and a larger one, broken into two fragments.<sup>460</sup> The baboon/monkey statues do not include any receptacle/dish on top of their heads, as they are known from crude human figures for example from the site of Lahun.<sup>461</sup> Another figure without its head was also found, which is probably to be reconstructed as a crude human figure (and perhaps with a ‘dish’). It was found beside a silo, seemingly abandoned there. These three sculptures seem to belong to the settlement layers of the late Middle Kingdom, even if they were not found in situ. Three more statues or stands (one monkey/baboon and two crude humans) were found in later phases (F and F–E/3, and one in the later Second Intermediate Period) in Area A/II, also out of context.<sup>462</sup> Two of these comprise a flattened and a hollowed out top, respectively. While Irene Forstner-Müller assumed that these statues were offering stands and belonged to Phase F and the contemporary temple or the tombs (although they could not be assigned to a single tomb),<sup>463</sup> it is still possible that all those crude statues/stands should actually be assigned to the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II as several similar ‘dwarf’ statues were discovered in domestic contexts in the roughly contemporary settlements at Lahun,<sup>464</sup> Lisht<sup>465</sup> and Memphis.<sup>466</sup> These items might have been evidence for popular (Egyptian) household cults, which became dispersed after the settlement ceased to be inhabited and the function of the area changed fundamentally. The crude human statues, mostly interpreted as dwarfs, might have a link to the Egyptian god Bes, while the baboons were at first connected to ancestor cults, then related to border area symbolism and finally to the sun and the Egyptian god Thoth.<sup>467</sup> Which of these aspects is relevant here is difficult to ascertain without written sources, but there seems to be a connection between the two.<sup>468</sup>

### 3.5.3.11. Balance Weights

Within refuse deposits of the late Middle Kingdom settlement in area A/II four balance weights have been found, three in a rectangular shape<sup>469</sup> and one in the form of an almost perfect sphere.<sup>470</sup> The material is a greenish, very dense stone or limestone and the balance weights are 29 g, 195.6 g, 215 g and 404 g without inscriptions. The latter 404 g balance weight must be given as current weight, as obvious damage to the object due to reuse resulted in it being less than its original weight, which remains unknown. The 29 g weight fits approximately to Jean Vercoutter’s copper standard of 27.5 g<sup>471</sup> as does

<sup>458</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 3.13.

<sup>459</sup> Bader 2020, figs. 8.7e–8.8b.

<sup>460</sup> The larger statues will appear in the second volume of the excavation report, forthcoming. For the smaller one, see Bader 2020, fig. 2.13.

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Oppenheim et al. 2015, 205–206, cat no. 139.

<sup>462</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 117–119, pl. 22d, 23.

<sup>463</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 117–119, pl. 22d, 23.

<sup>464</sup> Cf. Petrie 1890, 26, ‘dwarfs’ – the exact location of the find is not noted; Petrie 1891, 11, pl. 6.9, ‘dwarfs’.

<sup>465</sup> Mace 1921, 12, fig. 3; both dwarfs and monkeys/baboons were interpreted as household gods. Unfortunately, the find positions and dating are not unequivocal.

<sup>466</sup> Jeffreys 2012, 6.

<sup>467</sup> For an overview with bibliography Winter 2006; Larcher 2016.

<sup>468</sup> Dasen 1993, 124–125, 133, 156–159.

<sup>469</sup> See Bader 2015c, reg. no 3258c: figs. 3e, 4c–i, 34–38, cuboid oblong weight with domed top made from siltstone; Bader 2020, reg. no 2396a–b: fig. 8.14a–b, cuboid, made of limestone.

<sup>470</sup> Bader 2015b, K875, figs. 3b, 4a, 33–34, spherical polished object, made from siltstone. Whether this is indeed a weight as suspected cannot be proved to date.

<sup>471</sup> Vercoutter 1977; Bader 2015c, 34–38, for discussion and more bibliography.

the one weighing 195.6 g (7.1 times). The others are perhaps too damaged to be able to be calculated as multiple of the copper standard of 27.5 g. However, the existence of these weights, without going too deeply into the topic here,<sup>472</sup> provides evidence for some economic activity carried out in the settlement involving the proportioning of a relatively precious commodity, perhaps metal such as copper. Parallels for such weights are plentiful in Egypt in the Middle Kingdom. Pictorial scenes from the Old Kingdom also show that weighing metals in connection with metal/bronze/gold or of (semi)precious stone working were both known already at that time.<sup>473</sup>

The exact dating of the activity in connection with weighing cannot be ascertained as the ending up of the (reused) weights in refuse deposits provides a *terminus ante quem*. It is, thus, unlikely that they were used as weights in the phase in which they were found. It cannot be ruled out that they were used in the context of the high-status mansion of the earlier Phase G/4, but it is also possible that activities carried out in the settlement in that period were ordered from there. Several barrel- and cylindrical-shaped small balance weights of hematite came to light in a deposit close to a door in a wall in Phase G/4 in the eastern part of the settlement. This seems to be a special and unique deposit as it not only contained balance weights but also selected pebbles and very rounded, hard stone objects. Whether these objects were used for weighing or have another meaning assembled in this unusual context remains unclear.<sup>474</sup> A possible affinity to the ancient Near Eastern weighing systems cannot be ruled out.<sup>475</sup>

### 3.5.3.12. What Was not Found

As already mentioned previously, no organic materials were preserved, except sometimes as a discolouration of the soil; thus, wooden coffins and reed mats could be seen and documented but were never recovered. Seal impressions were also not recovered (if they existed in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II as no obvious administrative building was excavated) because it was not realised that drying and sieving the spoil would yield even unfired items (see Chapter 3.4). Apart from these artefact classes, very little faience could be recovered,<sup>476</sup> which might also be explained by the waterlogging of the soil. If faience is encountered, it is either completely without glaze or so frail that it crumbles away. Metal implements do not exist in the find lists, not even in the form of small fragments (in contrast to Memphis,<sup>477</sup> for example). This may be rooted in part in the early excavation techniques, at least in the beginning, but is more likely due to a general reuse of metal items as a valuable raw material for new objects (also in connection with the two ovens found in Area A/II).<sup>478</sup> It should be mentioned that some metal objects (belt and dagger) were only preserved in one of the tombs.

### 3.5.4. Summary

The case study of a sizeable part of the late Middle Kingdom settlement Area A/II and even a superficial comparison shows without a doubt that an overall generalisation should not be made even in contemporary neighbourhoods at the same site without a careful analysis of similarities and differences.<sup>479</sup> Taking into account that overviews become more specific and complicated, they also open up the possibility of allowing for a comprehensive and ‘untidy’ picture of diverging activities and a wider spectrum of inhabitants. Without minutely differentiating between areas of settlements, I would like to repeat that the differentiation in the case of Tell el-Dab’a (Areas A/II, F/I, A/IV) is entirely due to modern excavation

<sup>472</sup> A more detailed discussion will be presented in Bader forthcoming-d.

<sup>473</sup> Klebs 1915, 84–85, fig. 68.

<sup>474</sup> Bader forthcoming-d for a detailed discussion of this topic.

<sup>475</sup> Cf. Rahmstorf 2010.

<sup>476</sup> Bader 2020, 255–256.

<sup>477</sup> Giddy 2016, 77–89.

<sup>478</sup> See Bader 2020, 85–101.

<sup>479</sup> Bader 2011a.

choices and nomenclature. Based on archaeological evidence the full variety of activities and remains cannot be entirely grasped and is generalised, but more details are provided than usually.

General tasks that were carried out in the settlement in Area A/II can be summarised as follows:

- involvement in movement of contents from imported transport amphorae due to the high percentage of such vessels in many contexts recovered (on average between 10 and 25% of the pottery in many contexts though not all, in others up to 45%)
- grain probably cultivated (sickle blades with silica sheen), but it remains unknown if that was the only way of provisioning or if grain was also delivered there in containers such as the Marl C-storage jars
- production of flour/bread due to presence of grinders and querns
- available meat included cattle, sheep/goat, pigs, fish, birds, etc; thus, rearing cattle, sheep/goat and pigs, and catching the other animals was part of the daily routine
- reeds are attested in the floral remains: production of baskets, mats, sandals, ropes, etc. therefore likely
- industrial kilns and limestone moulds hint at small-scale metal tool production (more evidence in Area F/I)
- some activities with weighing of metal or (semi)precious stones but unclear if contemporary or perhaps in an earlier phase
- building most likely carried out by local inhabitants rather than by specialised work forces sent by a central administration, although all over Egypt the general proportions of housing units are congruent<sup>480</sup>

What remains unclear:

- No fragments of the typical Middle Kingdom bread moulds found in their thousands at Memphis were recorded in Area A/II, Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1. Whether this happened due to procedures during the excavation (the author never saw the body fragments that were recorded by fabric and count only) or due to the sheer non-existence of this vessel type, therefore marking a crucial socio-economic difference to other late Middle Kingdom settlements, must remain unclear. However, if body sherds had been present, the odd rim fragment would also have been preserved, thus the latter option seems more likely. Sadly, this point cannot be proven in retrospect. If the bread moulds were indeed absent, it is possible to think that bread was baked in another form, perhaps in the form of some kind of flat bread that did not require any ceramic mould. It is also possible that, for some reason, the long tubular bread mould known from contemporary tomb scenes and contemporary settlement sites (e.g. Kom Rabi'a/Memphis) were not required in this settlement area. Perhaps the resulting type of bread is to be connected to some cultic activity that did not take place in Area A/II or it was produced elsewhere, if it was required, for cultic reasons or not.
- Textile production is not proven but is likely due to the presence of some pierced sherd discs, probably spindle whorls (the so-called loom weights appear in part to be too heavy to be practical and might actually be tethering stones for small animals, or devices to stretch cords or something similar) – the vertical loom was not proven to have been used in Egypt until the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

<sup>480</sup> Bader 2018a.

- Where did pottery production take place? In part it seems to have been local, in part vessels were imported from the Memphis-Fayoum region and Upper Egypt, probably for the sake of the content rather than the vessels. No workshops were found; industrial ovens in A/II seem too small for large-scale pottery production. Moreover, pottery production and firing are to be expected on the outskirts of the settlement, due to the emission of smoke and bad smells.
- The evidence from the chipped stone tools is not clear: too little debitage was recorded to theorise about entirely local production.<sup>481</sup> Whether this is because of differential collection modes during the excavation must remain unclear.

### 3.6. DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIAL CULTURE AT TELL EL-DAB<sup>a</sup>

In the following table a step by step sketch of the development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> is presented (Tab. 1). The table is an attempt to visualise the slight changes in material culture over time, and to divide the changes into stages. This endeavour is being made to illustrate the subtlety of change over time in a clearer way than hitherto, although expansive illustrative material cannot be provided due to space restrictions.<sup>482</sup> Items with ambiguous cultural affiliations are omitted (e.g. earrings, diadems<sup>483</sup>) without clear parallels in either Egypt or Syria-Palestine.

This table also bears witness to the fact that deep cultural influences and cultural traits impinge upon Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> from the Syro-Palestinian area to the north. These influences have been reconstructed as a more or less constant flow of Syro-Palestinian migrants coming from the northern Levant, who then settled at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> and monopolised it.<sup>484</sup> While there is not much doubt about the influence and the presence of ‘Asiatics’ at the site (as a harbour), the modalities of cultural negotiation of the inhabitants remain one-dimensional (see discussion of identities in Chapters 1–2) as all changes in material culture are assigned to the immigration or forced settlement of ‘Asiatics’, which is not necessarily the case. As a border area between Egypt and Syria-Palestine the delta site provides the ideal circumstances to test the frontier concept with its actually materialised ‘Third Space’ in between the two geographical areas.

Aided by this Table, I would like to highlight and equate certain developmental stages to some of the concepts discussed above in order to make differences and similarities as clear as possible and to obtain another viewpoint on the people living at the site and using the material culture (see below).

Due to the preliminary state of research and publication in some areas, only Areas F/I, R/I, A/II and A/V can be included in full but not the others (F/II, R/II, R/III, R/IV). However, singular aspects could be included in as far they have been published. The dating and position of the harbour<sup>485</sup> is not yet completely clear and more research is necessary to gain a better understanding of its circumstances and its influence on the social fabric of the site. Its existence is not doubted here, although it cannot be taken

<sup>481</sup> The extent of the information missed was fully realised during collaboration at Elephantine with Michael Brandl (pers. comm. 24 February 2020), head of the Raw Material Lab of the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, who has developed a Multi-Layered-Chert-Sourcing-Approach in order to obtain more information pertaining to a deeper insight into procurement processes. In this approach, not only the actually recognisable tools are analysed, but also the debitage and cores, which are often also used as tools in antiquity. Moreover, they prove the presence of various techniques of chert knapping.

<sup>482</sup> Frequent misrepresentation, in part due to the still somewhat erratic state of publication of various areas and phases at the site, floats through the research literature, e.g. Staubli 2016, 53–57, which is full of wrong factual information about the admittedly very complex situation of the finds. Moreover, Thomas Staubli speaks of a definite Levantine presence in Rifeh and Mostagedda without references and without stating what he bases this assumption on.

<sup>483</sup> According to Philip 2006, 220, headbands are not so unequivocally Near Eastern as a variety of headbands are also known from Egypt; however, for Schiestl 2009, 93, the simple ones are Near Eastern, while those with additional elements are Egyptian. Interesting questions are raised by special items such as the Salhiya treasure. Cf. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 68.136.1. Arnold 1995, 15, no. 9.

<sup>484</sup> Cf. Schneider 2018 for bibliography.

<sup>485</sup> Tronchère et al. 2008.

into full account due to a current lack of data. Considering that the previous excavations brought to light many different types of contexts in various phases, it seems acceptable to rely on this information. Of course, later amendments will have to be made, when more data are published in due course. The publications which contain all the details necessary for the production of this table are Bietak 1991b; Hein 1992; Kopetzky 1993; Bietak 1996a; Eigner 1996; Czerny 1999; Bietak, et al. 2001; Mlinar 2001; Aston 2002; Schiestl 2002; Aston 2004; Hein and János 2004; Mlinar 2004; Forstner-Müller 2008; Müller 2008; Bader 2009; Bietak and Forstner-Müller 2009; Schiestl 2009; Bietak 2010; Kopetzky 2010; Müller 2012; Czerny 2015; Forstner-Müller, et al. 2015; Bader 2018a; Bietak 2019; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-a; Bader forthcoming-d.

The designation as ‘Egyptian’ or ‘Syro-Palestinian’ is not intended to assign a label of ethnic identification to any of the objects listed below or the people who used them. The label is supposed to note the geographical area in which most of the physical parallels were found.

Although this looks like a “trait list” approach, I argue that it is not one<sup>486</sup> but a descriptive summary of appearance and change observable in the material culture from an archaeological point of view.

Some singular traditions are kept throughout the various stages of development derived from both cultural traditions, for example kohl pots of stone are used throughout as well as Middle Bronze Age weaponry; the habit of being buried in coffins/sarcophagi as well as supine extended (albeit rarely) (Fig. 7a) occurs sometimes even as late as in stage VII. On the other hand the supine burial position, fully on the back with both shoulders on the ground and legs semi bent and turned to one side (Fig. 7c–d) also occurs in most of the stages. Such a burial position is known, e.g., from Ashkelon<sup>487</sup> and Jericho.<sup>488</sup> Also truly contracted positions are found in most phases for children and young adults (Fig. 7e). Moreover, there are at least eight variations of burial positions.<sup>489</sup> This observation alone exemplifies that a normative expectation of all burials being the same cannot be fulfilled.<sup>490</sup>

As for the presence or absence of mummification, which can unfortunately not be proven due to the soil conditions of the site, Schiestl says “Ein Fehlen der Mummifizierung ist nicht unägyptisch.”<sup>491</sup>

Other traditions such as the so-called “servant” burials of young adult women only exist in Phase F and are then abandoned.<sup>492</sup> An intricate mix of cultural traditions and use of objects developing over time is known locally and makes the material culture of the area of the north-eastern Nile Delta unique in its composition in the Second Intermediate Period, while some elements of material culture, of course, occur in the Nile Valley, but not those that are the result of material entanglements with northern traditions. This does not mean to say that local developments, even drastic ones, did not take place in other parts of the Nile Valley during the Second Intermediate Period (due to new, as yet unpublished, results of the current project ‘Beyond Politics’, which is led by the author).

All preserved kings’ names and titularies at the site are combined from Egyptian elements and the Epithet *ḥk3 ḥ3swt*. However, they were all found out of context.<sup>493</sup>

The changes in the percentages of imported pottery, local pottery and locally-produced pottery following the Middle Bronze Age corpus during the phases is not repeated in the table above as specialised studies covering this theme have been conducted.<sup>494</sup> However, the actually imported material is mostly dominant, while the proportion of locally-produced Middle Bronze Age pottery types is much lower. For Phase G/3–1 it was found that only around ~5% were local copies of the MBA corpus and the other 23% true imports consisting of a majority of transport amphorae attesting to a considerable

<sup>486</sup> Cf. above, 34.

<sup>487</sup> Baker 2006.

<sup>488</sup> Kenyon 1965, fig. 94, tomb B 48; fig. 105, tomb M11; fig. 124, tomb J54 as examples.

<sup>489</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 38–39.

<sup>490</sup> See also Bader 2011a for a chart with burial positions in Phase G/3–1.

<sup>491</sup> [A lack of mummification is not un-Egyptian] Schiestl 2009, 75.

<sup>492</sup> Bietak 1989.

<sup>493</sup> Bietak et al. 2001, 55–59; Candelora 2017.

<sup>494</sup> Bader 2009, fig. 395; Kopetzky 2010, 175.



Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
I	Planned settlement (F/I) stratum 'e'	Not found	Not found	N/1–3	Late 11 <sup>th</sup> / early 12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	No trace of non-Egyptian material culture (no commodity exchange with Syro-Pal. attested)
Ia	Planned settlement (R/I)	Not found	Egyptian Temple (R/I)	M-I	12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty (end unclear)	Some commodity exchange (imported pottery) starts; otherwise no non-Egyptian material culture
II	Small one-room houses of low status with precinct walls (A/II); one larger house reconstructed to a Syro-Pal. middle room house; one Egyptian bi-partite house; otherwise not many structures preserved (F/I); perhaps settlement started in A/IV	No tombs in current exposure in A/II; Tomb clusters south of 'settlement' in separate cemetery, much robbed in F/I: tombs with equid, sheep, goat in pit in front; mostly single and double burials, few of more individuals; no amphora burials of children. Egyptian: tomb architecture, backing bricks (Schiestl tomb type 5b exists since OK in Egypt) layout of cemetery in F/I with tree pits and internal measurements of tombs in Egyptian cubits, sarcophagus, wooden coffins, 'Pitzkopf'-statue, scarabs, use of hieroglyphs, jewellery, play things, cosmetic items (tweezers), cattle as food offering, chipped stone knives, sand bricks 33.5–35cm long (~2/3 of Egyptian cubit of 52.5cm); supine extended burial position. Syro-Pal.: weapons (tin bronze), metal belt, toggle pin?, sheep and goat as food offering, contracted burial position pottery of both	No sacred architecture found; no temples	H	Late 12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Settlement: pottery includes both local Egyptian and Syro-Pal. imported pottery, straight-walled cooking pots in v. minor quantities local and imported; Egyptian cooking pots in majority; imported pottery (commodities) in increasing quantity. In tombs: Egyptian and Syro-Pal. items are used – material culture of both traditions; these items were perhaps used differently, but they keep the traditional forms of both areas of influence; relational entanglement in equid pits with chipped stone knives; the depiction of the man with mushroom coiffure is an 'Asiatic' topic by means of Egyptian artistic canon
IIa	Small one-room houses of low status with precinct walls (A/II); high-status mansion following Egyptian plan and measured in Egyptian cubits; now houses in between the rows of tombs (F/I); settlement with bipartite houses (A/IV)	One tomb of a child in A/II in bricked pit; high status burials south of mansion in 4 rows (often robbed), with equid burials + sheep and goat, single and double burials, a few multiple burials (F/I); no amphora burials of children. Egyptian: tomb architecture, wooden coffins, sand bricks mostly 36–39 cm (~2/3 of Egyptian cubit of 52.5 cm) long; amulets, scarab with Egyptian title, cosmetic items (kohl pots), jewellery, statuette, uninscribed stela, food offerings cattle, extended supine burial position. Syro-Pal.: weapons, contracted burial position, food offerings sheep/goat; pottery of both	One very small broad room temple "Gebäude. 19" (F/I); chapel over tomb (F/I); small offering pits at tombs (F/I)	G/4	Early 13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Settlement pottery includes both local Egyptian and Syro-Pal. imported pottery, local straight-walled cooking pots in v. minor quantities, Egyptian cooking pots in majority. In tombs: Egyptian and Syro-Pal. items are used – material culture of both traditions: used perhaps differently, but they keep the traditional forms of both areas of influence; superstructures of the tombs are reconstructed after Egyptian models, other tomb architecture has overwhelmingly Egyptian parallels; Egyptian administrative title on amethyst scarab; stray find of hematite cylinder seals: entangled object of Egyptian manufacture with 'Asiatic' motif (Baal)

Tab. 1 Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab'a

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
III	Domestic architecture differentiated in size; possible use of Egyptian cubit system (A/II); reuse of large mansion for simple dwellings (F/I); settlement (A/IV); all areas include bipartite house ground plans and simple one-room houses	Few tombs of one man, women and children in A/II; continued use of Eg. and Syro-Pal. tradition in the same tombs (A/II, F/I); many more tombs in F/I – 1 equid burial; no amphora burials of children (A/II); 4 amphora burials of children (F/I); single, double and multiple burials. Egyptian: amulets, kohl pots, cosmetic items (tweezers), beads, stone vessels, jewellery; stone sarcophagus; extended supine burial position. Syro-Pal.: weapons (tin bronze), belt, toggle pins; contracted burial position; pottery of both	No temples; perhaps “Totenhaus” tradition starts (F/I); offering place L123 (A/II); small offering pit (A/II)	G/3–1	Early to first third of 13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Settlement pottery includes both local Egyptian and Syro-Pal. imported pottery, straight-walled cooking pots in v. minor quantities, Egyptian cooking pots in majority, Egyptian settlement pottery starts to develop regional differences (e.g. beer jars, hemispherical cups); sporadic local production of Syro-Pal.-style pottery begins: e.g. dipper juglets, dishes with internal lip. In tombs: Egyptian and Syro-Pal. items are used – material culture of both traditions: used perhaps differently, but they keep the traditional forms of both areas of influence; Egyptian scarabs (Type I); early local scarab workshop starts to be active (Types II and III)
III	Egyptian domestic architecture in various sizes, no evidence for ‘epidemic’ (A/II); reuse of mansion for simple dwellings (F/I)	Pit tombs with victims of ‘epidemic’ (F/I); perhaps 2 such tombs in a silo (A/II), no evidence in other areas so far	No sacred architecture found; no temples	End G/1	Towards mid-13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Most of these burials were not given any grave goods; they were seemingly buried quickly; hence ascribed to an infectious disease
IV	A/II not used as settlement area; settlement with increasingly different house sizes and Egyptian domestic architecture (bipartite ground plan) (A/IV, F/I)	Area A/II (Aam scarab); A/IV; F/I Some individuals buried in rectangular wooden coffins; one in stone sarcophagus without lid; some of them had equid burials in front of tombs; single, double and multiple burials; no amphora burials of children in A/II; 6 amphora burials in F/I. Egyptian: amulets, beads, stone vessels, kohl pots, cosmetic items (mirror, tweezers); faience objects; jewellery; rectangular coffin – wood; extended supine burial position probable; Syro-Pal.: weapons (tin bronze), belt, toggle pins; metal headband – simple strip; contracted burial position; beginning of locally-produced juglets; pottery of both	Temple III with Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II); “Totenhäuser” (F/I); servant burials (A/II, F/I)	F	Early SIP (= mid-13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty)	Settlement pottery develops Egyptian local pottery corpus with obvious predecessors, regional changes happen (beer jars, hemispherical cups, use of different types), last appearance of few straight-walled cooking pots, first appearance of locally-produced gutter rim (Syro-Pal.) and (unparalleled) cooking pots in slightly higher percentage; in majority always Egyptian cooking pots; (2 imported gutter rims known at Tell el-Dab’a), imports continue (juglets, amphorae); local ceramic production of previous imports increases in types, but some imports still come in (dipper juglets, dishes with internal lips, Tell el-Yahudieh juglets, burnished juglets). In tombs: items of material culture remain true to cultural sphere: Egyptian amulets; kohl pots; beads; pottery; gold shell pendants; stone vessels; Syro-Pal.: weapons, toggle pins, some pottery still imported (juglets, amphorae), most juglets still imported, some locally made; Egyptian group of scarabs (Type I) and early local scarab workshop is active (Types II and III)

Tab. 1 continued Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab’a

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
V	Settlement with increasingly different house sizes (F/I) and Egyptian domestic architecture (bipartite ground plan), A/IV, F/I)	Area A/II; A/IV; F/I Amphora burials of children (A/II, F/I); equid burials in front of tombs; single, double and multiple burials. Egyptian: amulets, kohl pots, jewellery, clappers; pottery offering table; faience objects and vessels; copper mirror; extended supine burial position probable. Syro-Pal.: weapons (copper); belt; toggle pins; contracted burial position; increase in locally-produced juglets; pottery of both	Temples with Egyptian (A/II; temples I, V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II; temples II and III); offering pits (A/II, F/I); “Totenhäuser” (F/I)	E/3	Early SIP (= mid to late 13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty)	Settlement pottery develops Egyptian local pottery corpus with obvious predecessors, regional changes happen (beer jars, hemi. cups, etc.), gutter rim cooking pots continue in low quantities, Egyptian cooking pots continue to be in the majority as in all levels; imports continue (mainly juglets, amphorae); local repertoire continues (dipper jugs, dish with intumed lip, more juglets are now locally produced). In tombs: items of material culture listed (left) remain true to cultural sphere (locally-made juglets increase; amphorae); almost no dipper juglets are from now on imported; early local scarab workshop is still active (Types II and III)
VI	Settlement with different house sizes, some so-called villas (F/I); Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plan (A/IV, F/I)	Area A/II; A/IV; F/I equid burials in front of tombs; amphora burials of children (A/II); single, double and multiple burials. Egyptian: beads, pottery (only hemi. cups, medium jars, odd ‘beer’ jars); extended supine burial position probable (legs slightly bent). Syro-Pal.: toggle pins, some imported juglets still there (A/II); contracted burial position; local weapon production of bronze (moulds found in this phase)	Temples with Egyptian (A/II; temples I, V) and Syro-Pal. ground plans (A/II; temples II, III); Temple in F/I too badly preserved to judge ground plan; offering pits (A/II, F/I)	E/2	Middle SIP (= 15 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery now starts to change more obviously; a wide range of new forms (straight based cups, range of jars, range of dishes); falling out of use of known MK types (‘beer’ jars, large Nile C dishes, most Marl C-pottery, etc.), vessel shape and surface treatments are increasingly ‘mixed’ without exact parallels in Egypt or in Syro-Pal., esp. various juglets; gutter rim cooking pots continue but rare; Egyptian cooking pots dominate by far but were made from slightly finer material – overall raw material for pottery changes, also firing technology; drop in imported pottery vessels (therefore commodities), locally produced amphorae. In tombs: items of material culture listed (left) remain true to cultural sphere; locally-made juglets further increase; Palestinian scarabs were imported (Type IV)
VIIa	Palace in F/II (unclear when it started exactly) – plan with Syro-Pal. + Egyptian influences; settlement (A/V) – Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plan	Area A/II; A/IV; F/I equid burials in front of tombs (A/II); amphora burials of children; single, double, multiple burials. Egyptian: kohl pots, stone vessels, beads, pottery (only hemi. cups); faience objects, extended supine burials. Syro-Pal.: local weapons (copper), toggle pins, headbands metal – simple strips; contracted burial position; little pottery still imported (juglets, amphorae)	Temples with Egyptian (A/II; temples I, V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II; III); Temple (F/I-badly preserved); L81 (F/II); offering pits (A/II, A/V?, F/I, F/II?)	E/1	Middle SIP (= 15 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery repertoire consolidates new forms from previous phase, no more MK types (except some Marl C-storage jars), only Egyptian cooking pots continue in finer raw material; low percentage of imported pottery continues (therefore commodities), locally-produced amphorae; appearance of Marl F pottery (probably locally produced) – vessel types similar to local new repertoire. In tombs: items listed (left) of material culture remain true to cultural sphere, juglets; most are locally made now; local pottery repertoire used; late local workshop of scarabs (Types VIa+b) active; some Palestinian scarabs imported

Tab. 1 continued Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab'a

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
VIIb	Palace (F/II) (unclear when started exactly) – plan with Syro-Pal. (non-axial agglutinating plan) + Egyptian (long magazines) influences; settlement (A/II; A/V) with Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plans; settlement R/III – higher density of buildings (more urban)	Few tombs (A/II); amphora burials of children (A/II; A/V); single and double burials. Egyptian: amulets, pottery (only hemi. cups), beads; supine extended burial position. Syro-Pal.: pins; local weapons (copper), metal headbands – simple strip; all juglets locally produced except Cypriot ones (rare); amphorae only for children's burials; contracted burial position	L81 (F/II); temple (F/I badly pres.); temples with Egyptian (A/II; temple V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II; temple III); offering pits (A/II, A/V, F/I)	D/3	Late SIP (= 15 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery repertoire consolidates new forms from previous phase, no more MK types (except some Marl C-storage jars), only Egyptian cooking pots continue; locally produced amphorae, low percentage of imported pottery continues (therefore commodities); more Marl F pottery (probably locally produced) – vessel types similar to local new repertoire (badly preserved). In tombs: pottery repertoire comprehensively local with few exceptions; the few non-ceramic items still adhere to their original cultural sphere listed (left); increase in local juglets; scarabs imported from Syro-Pal., Egyptian scarabs (old?); late local workshop of scarabs (Types VIa+b) with active use of Syro-Pal. motifs
VIIb	Settlement (A/II; A/V) – Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plans; R/III – higher density of buildings (more urban)	Singular tombs with one or more bodies (A/II, A/V); Amphora burials of children (some A/II, A/V). Egyptian: beads, stone vessels, kohl pots, pottery (only hemi. cups); supine extended burial position; one use of limestone sarcophagus without lid. Syro-Pal.: weapons, pins, very rare imports: juglets and amphorae; contracted burial position	Offering pits (A/II, A/V); temples with Egyptian (A/II; temple V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II; temple III)	D/2	Late SIP (= 15 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery repertoire consolidates new forms from previous phase, no more MK types (except some Marl C-storage jars), only Egyptian cooking pots continue; locally-produced amphorae, low percentage of imported pottery continues (therefore commodities); more Marl F pottery (probably locally produced) – vessel types similar to local new repertoire (badly preserved). In tombs: pottery repertoire comprehensively local with few exceptions; the few non-ceramic items still adhere to their original cultural sphere listed (left); further increase in local juglets; late local workshop of scarabs (Types VIa+b)

Tab. 1 continued Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab'a

trade volume.<sup>495</sup> As such, this cannot be taken as evidence for a community of ‘Asiatics’ present at the site. From the late Second Intermediate Period the locally-produced and materially-entangled pottery is dominant. It should be noted that this pottery was then called “Hyksos pottery”, a term which I now would like to avoid with utmost care because it evokes the wrong associations as ‘Hyksos’ is not an ethnic assignation! The types that were calculated for the Middle Bronze Age corpus at that time no longer included the ‘restricted bowls with folded rim’ cooking pots in recognition of their Egyptian cultural background,<sup>496</sup> which is why the percentages put forward by Bietak were much higher, namely 20 to 40% of the overall assemblage.<sup>497</sup> This rough estimate needs to be seen in context with subsequent studies of settlement pottery which updated this statement.<sup>498</sup> However, the following quote continues to be repeated in the literature in various versions to demonstrate or even prove ‘Asiatic’ immigration into Tell el-Dab’a: “the rise in Levantine Middle Bronze Age pottery at Avaris (Tell el-Dab’a) from about 20 to 40% of the ceramic assemblage as the Hyksos cemented power in the eastern delta”.<sup>499</sup>

Often this (or similar quotes) were taken out of context and do not specify which pottery was involved (the largest amount is derived from imported transport vessels up to the late Second Intermediate Period) and in which time frame. Thus, a quick reference to the situation at Tell el-Dab’a does not justify the complicated diachronic developments at that site and should therefore be avoided.

After characterising the development of the material culture in the liminal area/borderland between territories with two different cultural traditions and various social groups the question arises as to which ‘culture contact model’ would be the most suitable to apply to the circumstances described above. The comprehensive presentation of developments covering all phases of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period precludes an isolated view of the late Middle Kingdom settlement, its material culture and its further development.

This is even more important as the in-depth study of material culture of the internal sphere as opposed to the external sphere<sup>500</sup> of the inhabitants of this settlement<sup>501</sup> showed that in the settlement itself no characteristics of a ‘retained identity’ of immigrants could be traced except in the very minor component of flat-based cooking pots (see above). There is currently no other evidence for the presence of Syro-Palestinian cultural traits in the settlement of the Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 in Area A/II,<sup>502</sup> excepting a few of the tombs found in Area A/II<sup>503</sup> which contain some items of Syro-Palestinian influence and probably even origin. Considered on its own, the settlement area could be used to say, following the culture-historical paradigm, that the inhabitants were very well ‘acculturated’ to Egyptian lifestyles, with a few individuals keeping to their Syro-Palestinian funerary traditions. But this only holds true if it is assumed that they are all Syro-Palestinian immigrants in the first place according to the historiographic tradition. And if they were ‘acculturated’ already, a ‘deep change’ would have had to take place to explain the more radical developments of the later stages (VI–VII) in the late Second Intermediate Period (see below).

<sup>495</sup> Bader 2009, 683–685, fig. 395, calculated from the overall pottery repertoire of that phase. Kopetzky 2010, 175, arrives at a percentage of ~20% for Phase G/3–1, again ~5% constituted of locally copied material. See also Bader forthcoming-a.

<sup>496</sup> Bader 2009, 683–686; Kopetzky 2010, 175.

<sup>497</sup> Bietak 1991a, 38; Bietak 1997, 31.

<sup>498</sup> Aston 2002, 43: “Despite the fact that Bietak ... clearly wrote MB IIA [pottery] types, this has entered secondary literature as of Canaanite origin, which has unfortunately led to some confusion, helped perhaps by Bietak’s later assertion that 20% of settlement material consisted of imports.”

<sup>499</sup> E.g. Smith 2018, 135, quoting Bietak 1996, but without page number. This is not a singular occurrence, just an example. And Phase G/3–1, to which Smith refers here, has in effect nothing to do with ‘the Hyksos’ because they only come to power as 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty several archaeological phases after Phase G/3–1.

<sup>500</sup> Burmeister 2000; cf. Chapter 1.

<sup>501</sup> Project V 147-G21 ‘Foreigners in Ancient Egypt – The Archaeology of Culture Contact’, funded by the Austrian Science Fund from 2010–2014 and led by the author.

<sup>502</sup> The lack of well-excavated and published contemporary settlements in Egypt and Syria-Palestine has been pointed out several times. Most probably the picture will change with more research.

<sup>503</sup> Bader 2011a.



One of the conceptual problems in this reconstruction is the culture-historical paradigm which identifies the material culture and its cultural tradition with the individual using it. If it is accepted that culture is not a closed, ‘pure’ system but permeable and fluid, it starts to matter less from our etic point of view whether an individual should be considered as an ‘Egyptian’ or a ‘Syro-Palestinian’, an opinion that person might not have personally held. A variety of cultural traditions were known at the site and they were used variably by the people living there over time, very much in the way of a reed mat woven of different (cultural) strands and coming out in ever different patterns, which could be very individual and even unique so that no two of them match each other exactly. Such ‘mats’ are the product of creativity deeply inherent in human nature and may again bring to mind the stress on the local identity from Egyptian texts pointed out by means of textual sources.<sup>504</sup>

Thus, the use of the depoliticised concept of relational entanglement would seem suitable here for items of material culture used together in a context, while it remains difficult to ascertain if the use pattern or purpose would have been any different than in the cultural tradition, where most parallels are to be found. For example, the use of kohl pots as cosmetic containers is widely attested in the tombs of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, but it is not possible to judge at this point whether different products were contained or the use of the product or the vessel was any different to the use attested at sites in the Nile Valley. Whether the pigment contained in the cosmetic vessels might have been used to paint different parts of the body than those attested by contemporary tomb scenes found in Upper Egypt, cannot be assessed with the currently available evidence. Here more research needs to be undertaken.

The use of the concept of material entanglement is proposed for the material culture consisting of elements derived from both spheres of influence at the site of Tell el-Dab’a, namely and most obviously in the pottery corpus developing in stages VI–VII, but also in some respects for scarab production.

With regard to the spatial proximity of the two territories of what constitutes today Egypt and the southern Levant, the concept of borderlands in the widest sense of the word, without it meaning necessarily an actual frontier/physical obstacle, as a “zone of interaction” is attractive.<sup>505</sup> Magdalena Naum describes it as “an area located between two political and cultural units that may be cut by the border. It is a zone of separation and junction helping to define the identities of places and people on either site of the imaginary or real border through the negotiations that take place at the frontier. ‘Frontier’ in such an understanding always involves at least two groups or nations that interact with each other.”<sup>506</sup>

### 3.7. SOCIAL IDENTITIES IN THE SETTLEMENT

Based on the briefly listed results (see above 3.5.), the possibilities of assessing the aspects of identities as outlined in the chapters above are discussed here.

#### 3.7.1. Sex and Gender

The only unequivocal evidence for the *presence of both sexes* in the settlement is derived from the burials of male and female individuals from Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom. While there were seven female individuals buried, there was only a single male burial. Whether it is possible from this evidence to assume kinship groups inhabiting the single compounds of the settlement remains unclear, even more so as not each compound actually includes a group burial. The male burial contained a high-status weapon as well as a metal belt derived from the Syro-Palestinian cultural tradition. As the only male it

<sup>504</sup> Moers 2015.

<sup>505</sup> Naum 2010. Please note that although it is known in principle that in all probability there was a border of some kind (“The walls of the ruler” in the Story of Sinuhe set in the time of the early Middle Kingdom), the actual form of such a construction (“fortress”) is not at all well known.

<sup>506</sup> Naum 2010, 103.

is possible that he was the head of the household in Compound 1,<sup>507</sup> but the lack of other male burials would either put women forward as the heads of the other households (particularly the woman found in the stone sarcophagus in Compound 12)<sup>508</sup> or this traditional/patriarchal approach cannot be applied, which is, in fact, likely. It is even less likely that the male individual has to be considered the founder of the whole neighbourhood of A/II because for such a status the tomb does not seem significant enough (especially compared to high status burials of earlier phases, e.g. G/4). However, it should be noted that the large Temple II was built on top of Compound 1 and in the same orientation, after a hiatus in a later phase.<sup>509</sup> Although no real evidence exists, a foundation myth for Temple II could be proposed in connection to the male burial and Compound 1 in Phase G/3–1. This is, of course, mere speculation because Compound 1 is not even the largest house precinct in Area A/II.

The data collected for the case study do not provide additional clues for archaeological correlates of a gender-specific division of labour or other evidence which would allow such a division to be reconstructed, namely the production of agricultural surplus and full-time craft specialisation (unequivocal evidence for agricultural activity is very minor; presence of purpose-built workshops not proven but presence of kilns/furnaces). Some pottery types, esp. the cooking pottery – restricted bowls with folded rim – are so diverse in minute morphological details that a part-time manufacturing mode per household is conceivable, while the gender of the makers remains elusive. Consequently, a collaborative effort in the division of labour, perhaps on a household level, can be suspected which may not be divided strictly by gender/sex but perhaps by availability.<sup>510</sup> After all, the rather high rate of imported goods would probably require a certain quantity of workers, if not full-time at least part-time, whatever the type of work would have been like: such as (un)loading ships, distributing cargo, manipulating contents, etc.

The archaeological record of the settlement also does not give explicit information on particular uses of space for tasks considered in Egyptological circles as gender specific such as weaving, cooking and baking or similar activities, which are traditionally viewed to have been done by women in Egyptology. This opinion is influenced mainly by pictorial evidence from tomb scenes in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, where men are conducting craft production, and building, while women are often shown fulfilling household tasks. Whether this is a true mirror of life's daily reality, or if it only concerns craft production on a near industrial level, to which remuneration is attached, remains unclear. However, gender-specific division of labour has come under scrutiny and general critique as many of these ideas are derived from traditional views and limited ethnographic data, which may or may not be applicable to the current ancient Egyptian case study.<sup>511</sup> Moreover, recent research reminds us that such a model of labour division, i.e. that unpaid (productive) work connected to the domestic sphere is assigned to women, has increased in importance only since the Industrial Revolution, when unpaid domestic work was devalued by the increasing importance of the capitalist system.<sup>512</sup> Such a situation need not to be suspected for the past.

The gender dimorphism found in that settlement area has led to a supposition that indigenous women married men who had immigrated (see above). But such a hypothesis is hard to prove currently without textual evidence.<sup>513</sup>

<sup>507</sup> See Bader 2011a; Bader 2015b.

<sup>508</sup> Bietak 1991b, 33–34; Bader 2020, 194–199.

<sup>509</sup> Bietak 1996a, fig. 30.

<sup>510</sup> Wright 2016. I would like to thank the discussion group Zentral-Café and esp. R. Jung, E. Weiss-Krejci and V. Müller, for inspiring hours on this topic.

<sup>511</sup> Gosselain 2016.

<sup>512</sup> Kovacevich 2016, 301–303. I would like to thank Reinhard Jung for providing and discussing this paper in the framework of the Zentral-Café in the OREA Institute (pers. comm summer 2018).

<sup>513</sup> Cf. Dietler 2010, 112–113, who uses textual evidence for highlighting the possible roles of native women without the possibility of verifying any of them through archaeological finds on the part of the writer.

### 3.7.2. Children

The presence of children in the settlement could only be ascertained by the presence of three burials of small children: one under the floor of a room (Phase G/4 – unpublished) and two in courtyards (Phase G/3–1). No obvious toys (perhaps one clay figurine of an animal?)<sup>514</sup> or specialised pottery for feeding children (spouted cups of any kind) were found. No objects that could be considered to have been made by children such as unfired mud vessels or objects of smaller size were found. For Egypt in general it remains uncertain whether the objects so often referred to as toys in excavation reports are really to be identified as such because comparative studies of household contents and children's burials are still to be undertaken. Frequently 'dolls' and similar items are with reason interpreted as ritual items.<sup>515</sup> More research is necessary, however, to get a clearer idea of how children passed their leisure time.

As an integral part of kinship-groups, children would have been part of any household production of crafts such as foraging, potting, weaving, cooking, etc. as well as the potential translators and transmitters of cultural traditions in a possible 'middle ground', although some conditions required for this concept are absent, such as the "creative misunderstanding" crucial for the creation of something unparalleled.

### 3.7.3. 'Profession'

Agriculture and food processing are represented by finds of rubbing stones and querns, chipped stone tools with a silica sheen and a selection of animal bones and botanical remains. Foraging activities such as some fishing, hunting and collecting of local resources, in addition to probably collecting reeds for weaving mats, and sandals may be assumed, although, none of these, of course, are preserved nor are the localities where these items may have been made or used. The same holds true for craft production using leather and animal hides, for example. The existence of workshops cannot be proved due to the unspecific nature of finds in such an area. The most likely location for craftwork seems to be the courtyard areas in the vicinity of the rather small housing units (e.g. the triangular space east of Compound 1; the space east of Compound 11 also partly enclosed by a precinct wall; the northern and southern area in Compound 12, Fig. 5).<sup>516</sup>

Some evidence for industrial activity can be found at the very end of the settlement phase (Phase G/1 to F) because two horseshoe-shaped ovens were identified. Nevertheless, it remains unclear what exactly was produced there because neither any wasters nor other slag remains were found, not even much ash. Small-scale copper smelting might have been carried out there. There is the possibility that the discarded scrap metal was re-smelted as no metal finds were made at all and two moulds of limestone found within the settlement debris.

Local pottery production must have taken place at Tell el-Dab'a in the late Middle Kingdom judging from the enormous number of finds recovered. While these can be divided into imported (Syria-Palestine, Nile Valley) and locally-produced, no obvious locality of production was discovered during the 60 years of excavation. This leaves two possibilities: (a) the pottery was either made in a specific workshop or workshops on the outskirts of the settlement (not excavated) and fired there to prevent pollution of the living space by smoke and smell or (b) the pottery was made in smaller units (i.e. the households) in multipurpose areas around the compounds by members of the extended household, including children, and then fired in a communal kiln, which has not been identified although two smallish kilns/furnaces mentioned above are a possibility. These two would have been in the middle of the settlement, unless they were only used in the latest phase, when much of the area was not used for habitation anymore (Phase G–F).<sup>517</sup> Again, the subtle variations of the restricted bowls with folded rims may be mentioned here as non-direct evidence.

<sup>514</sup> Cf. Quirke 1998 for the difficulty in the identification and assessment of toys. Cf. Bader 2020, 185–187, fig. 6.15.

<sup>515</sup> Quirke 1998.

<sup>516</sup> Bader 2016; Bader 2018a; Bader 2020.

<sup>517</sup> Bader 2020, 97–101.

As the material is so fragmentary, it is very difficult to assess whether the skill levels involved are very different, in an apprentice master division, for example.<sup>518</sup> Much the same can be said about the ubiquitous “beer”/storage jars (Figs. 8j–r, 9). Most demanding in terms of skill would have been to produce the thin-walled hemispherical cups (Fig. 8.a–c), which appeared throughout of good quality in relation to the raw clay preparation, the making and the firing of the type. Only in the application of the red rim band, habitually between 3 and 9 mm width around the rim of the vessel, could it be observed that this slipped rim has not been added in a particularly straight or even way. Thus, the work process might have included a less skilled person/child/apprentice (?) in the decoration of the hemispherical cups. However, this is an etic observation, the interpretation of which is western and Eurocentric and whether this can be taken as evidence for such a supposition, remains uncertain.

### 3.7.4. Religion

Apart from tombs in the settlement, which hint at a close relationship of the living with the dead, nothing in the settlement specifically points to religious, magical or ritual activities. There are no traces of any cult activities close to, or on top of, the tombs be it offerings on stands or *hes*-vases, or visible tokens of remembrance of the dead. Perhaps the physical closeness of the dead and the living in everyday life was enough to achieve that. The burial customs are derived from the Egyptian religious sphere as well as the Syro-Palestinian one (see Chapter 3.6, tombs).

In this instance the displaced statues of baboons/monkeys and dwarfs need to be mentioned (see above) although they cannot be quoted as proven evidence for religious activities. Amulets, well-known from the Egyptian cultural tradition from the Nile Valley, were only found in the tombs and the domestic architecture was not well enough preserved to provide evidence about niches for private cults. The only exception to this rather sober picture of a delta settlement of the late Middle Kingdom is the suspected ‘altar’ or cultic installation in Compound 12, L [123], found with two small jars, a hemispherical cup and some animal bones.<sup>519</sup> This installation is without parallel in Egypt as well as Syria-Palestine; only a later installation at Tell el-Dab’a itself can be quoted in support of the assumption that L [123] is a cultic installation.<sup>520</sup> While religious/magic practices and domestic life are always seen as closely intertwined at least in the Egyptian cultural tradition,<sup>521</sup> there is not much supporting physical evidence for ritual practices on this occasion. Note that the occurrence of offering pits is only known in later phases.

### 3.7.5. Status

Social stratification among ancient social groups may be expressed and observed in archaeology in several ways. Is there a diversity of various types of burials and in the value of the grave goods?<sup>522</sup> Are the house sizes in a settlement all the same or diverse with smaller and larger ones?<sup>523</sup> For Egypt the thickness of the walls used for building domestic dwellings was also used to determine the social status of the owner of the house.<sup>524</sup> In the settlement in Area A/II in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1, houses of different sizes have been found<sup>525</sup> which allow some inferences on the variability of social standing

<sup>518</sup> Budden and Sofaer 2009.

<sup>519</sup> Müller 2008, 316–317, but note that the hemispherical cup is not of smaller size according to the archival photos and, thus, does not point to a use as magic medium for everlasting provision. Cf. Bader 2020, chap. 6, fig. 6.10.

<sup>520</sup> See square A/II–o/13 in Friedhofsbezirk IX, Bietak 1991b, 154, and plan 5, Phase E/2; one phase later an installation on the same spot in the next Phase E/1 (see plan 6) is larger and rectangular and therefore less similar. Both are lacking the small surrounding wall. The given parallel in Temple III could not be identified by means of the published plans – the altar in front of the temple is quite large and rectangular without a wall. All of these examples are later than L [123].

<sup>521</sup> Müller 2008, 367–375, for overview; Deir el-Medina: Weiss 2015; unfortunately not much information exists: cf. also David 1986.

<sup>522</sup> Richards 2005.

<sup>523</sup> Bietak 1996b; Tietze 1985 for social stratification depending on house size.

<sup>524</sup> Tietze 1985, 59–60.

<sup>525</sup> See Bader 2018a for details appendix; Bader 2020.

of the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> in that area at that time. This is in stark contrast to the contemporary but simpler dwellings in Area F/I.<sup>526</sup> Also, there are three different widths of walls being used for the construction of the buildings: the best and thickest walls in the settlement G/3–1 have a width of one and a half bricks, which is equivalent to c. 1 cubit (= 0.525 m). This is by far the most frequently used construction type for the main buildings of the compounds, often consisting of bipartite ground plans or variations thereof. While this width was also used for one-room dwellings, it was more usual to build those with walls with a width of one brick. The same holds true for Phases H and G/4.<sup>527</sup> The equivalent measurement in Egyptian cubits is two thirds (= 0.30–0.40 m). Finally the half-brick width is only used very rarely for subordinate buildings and features such as silos and similar installations.<sup>528</sup> Contrary to these habits, some walls of the palace of Phase G/4 (roughly in the early 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) in Area F/I, had in some places a width of up to five bricks, with many of them having a width of between two and three and a half bricks<sup>529</sup> and reflect, thus, the relatively lowly nature of these contemporary buildings in Area A/II.

Concerning the finds discovered within the houses, not much can be said because it must be assumed that the most valuable and still usable things were always kept by the inhabitants as no sudden destruction took place. Thus, only the broken and no longer useful things were left behind. Noteworthy perhaps is a large Tell el-Yahudieh jug that was found broken in the largest building, in Compound 11.<sup>530</sup> On the other hand, the rather high quality, hard stone objects made from green siltstone were not discovered in situ but in fills of rooms and walls,<sup>531</sup> for example, so that it is not possible to speculate too closely about where they actually belonged.<sup>532</sup>

The distribution pattern of pottery types and animal bones did not reveal any particular peaks of certain materials of foodstuffs such as certain fine wares or meat types in certain compounds of Area A/II.

### 3.7.6. Age

For determination of the age groups of the inhabitants, the only evidence comes from the anthropological study of the burials found in Area A/II in Phases G/3–1.<sup>533</sup> Apart from three young children (infants 7 to 8 years old and ‘not determined’), who could not be sexed, seven females and one male individual belonged mostly to the age bracket of 19/20 to 25 years, although one woman was late adult (31–40 years) and another woman late adult/early mature (35–45 years). One woman could not be determined. The only male individual in this area in this phase was early adult (19–25 years). No finds made in the settlement could be related to these age brackets (baby feeding pottery, orthopaedic devices, sticks, etc, even if such items would have been ambiguous).

### 3.7.7. Regional Diversity of Inhabitants

As discussed at length above the most challenging task an archaeologist can ever face is to prove the presence of regional diversity among people in any one place by archaeological means, especially if the culture-historical approach to objects and the one-to-one correlation between them and their uses is rejected (see Chapters 1, 2.1–4). The distinction between objects obtained during commodity exchange and items brought or locally made by immigrants (at least for longer periods of time) is at the core of the problem. The recent notion for Egypt that pottery imports (and to a certain extent technological traits

<sup>526</sup> Müller 2012, plan 2.

<sup>527</sup> Bader 2020, chaps. 5, 9.

<sup>528</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 1.2.

<sup>529</sup> Eigner 1996, 73.

<sup>530</sup> Bader 2020, fig. 3.42. The shape of the parallel given in Bietak 2010, pl. 18, from Ebla is superficially similar, but details such as the single incised dots and the shape of the fields differ (probably also the attachment of the handle). Thus, it is speculative to assume production in the vicinity. Whether the fabric is similar, cannot currently be ascertained.

<sup>531</sup> Bader 2015c.

<sup>532</sup> Bader 2015c.

<sup>533</sup> Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 43, 57, 63, 67, 74.



locally used) must signify the physical presence of, for example, Cypriots, Nubians and Syro-Palestinians must be considered as a return to Kossinna's simplistic and racist 'Kulturkreistheorie' ['culture area theory']. In the same light are attempts to assign cultural labels (e.g. "ethnic markers") to individuals, where the amount of change in cultural developments, including material culture, was seen as an indicator of the influence of 'foreign' people on 'indigenous' social systems. Influence of post-colonial thought also changed the concepts of ancient history and archaeology, although Egyptology as a discipline is still much of a "shrew" in need of "taming" in some respects. While in the past the migration concept including the rapid acculturation of immigrants to Egyptian culture has been repeatedly sketched and only recently critically assessed,<sup>534</sup> it seems worthwhile to take a look at the material evidence and the changes set out in the stages above (Chapter 3.6) from a different viewpoint in a multi-scalar manner, rather than overly generalising in search of a "process" that is universally valid.

Especially informative for the case study presented here are the first results of a study on strontium ratios ( $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ) of five individuals buried in Area A/II, Phase G/3–1, in order to assess whether these individuals grew up locally or moved to the delta after childhood from another location (Tab. 2).<sup>535</sup>

Tomb	Strontium level	Sex
A/II-l/12-no. 4	0.707782	Female
A/II-m/15-no. 9, burial 2	0.707772	Undetermined
A/II-m/15-no. 11	0.707996	Female
A/II-n/16-no. 2	0.707857	Female
A/II-r/18-no. 2	0.707998	Female

Tab. 2 ( $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ) strontium isotope ratio in tombs of Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II

While the assessment of the local strontium ratios at Tell el-Dab'a has begun with six animal bone samples without exact provenance within the site,<sup>536</sup> there are no comparative measurements for the Egyptian Nile Valley yet available. The result of this study suggests that human tissue with a ( $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ) strontium isotope ratio of between 0.70761 and 0.70780, which is derived from the animal baseline and a value of  $\pm 2$  standard deviations, should be considered to be derived from people who were raised locally.<sup>537</sup> Regarding these five samples, the individuals in tombs A/II-m/15-no 11<sup>538</sup> and A/II-r/18-no 2<sup>539</sup> (marked in red in the table above) are thought to have moved from elsewhere to Tell el-Dab'a.<sup>540</sup> While this is a highly interesting result, it does not entirely explain the cultural behaviour observed at the site.

### 3.7.7.1. Deep Change

Yasur-Landau in a recent treatise on the Philistines collected evidence for the migration of larger numbers of people and proposed a search for 'deep change' in all spheres of life of social groups in order to be more confident about identifying it in archaeology and avoiding a 'trait-list approach'. This is even more important as it becomes obvious with more aDNA and isotope analyses that a change in material culture, indeed, might, but does not have to, mean a group of people immigrated to an area from

<sup>534</sup> See Bader 2017b; Priglinger 2018.

<sup>535</sup> Stantis et al. 2020a, tab. S1.

<sup>536</sup> Stantis and Schutkowski 2019.

<sup>537</sup> Stantis et al. 2020a, 5–7.

<sup>538</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 134–137.

<sup>539</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 139–140.

<sup>540</sup> The result of the study of 75 individuals from Tell el-Dab'a spreading over all the nine phases is particularly interesting because the strontium ratios show a continuum rather than one or more clusters. This may suggest that the respective areas, from which immigrants (roughly 50% of all tested samples) came, may be quite widely spread.



somewhere else (with differential material culture and a different “way of doing things”) and this also seriously undermines the meaningfulness of “ethnic markers” (see Chapters 2.3.2, 2.4.). The definition of ‘deep change’ in turn is not straightforward: “The more intense the interactions are and the longer the time span of the interaction is, the deeper the change that will occur in behavioural patterns of the interacting cultures and the more numerous are the influences on material culture assemblages.”<sup>541</sup> For a better definition, Yasur-Landau uses ‘interaction factors’ in order to qualify possible changes and what they might look like. These factors include the number of people involved, the duration of the interaction, the cultural distance between the cultural/social groups involved, the segment of the population involved, the power balance between the cultures involved and the level of pluralism and tolerance within the interacting societies (see also Chapter 3.7.7.1.4.).<sup>542</sup>

This ‘deep change’ should be visible in all possible spheres of social life which are detectable in the archaeological record, namely the domestic, ritual and funerary sphere in order to demonstrate migration with convincing arguments, but still it retains a component of arbitrariness: when is a change ‘deep’?<sup>543</sup> A particularly good way of distinguishing between objects that look superficially similar is to observe in the smallest detail the production process in the *chaîne opératoire* framework. If that process is very different, the likelihood that different *habitus* and traditions are at work increases, and influences can be understood better.<sup>544</sup> We shall concentrate on whether ‘deep changes’ might be identified in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II.

### 3.7.7.1.1. Domestic Sphere

Within the domestic sphere, foodways are considered to be extremely meaningful in highlighting migration<sup>545</sup> because food can be seen as a marker of difference.<sup>546</sup> However, migrants, especially in borderlands, are entangled in a network of relations by means of food practices, and the relationship between the group and those practices does not remain static but develops. Migrants shape their food practices as well as being shaped by them,<sup>547</sup> much in the way Bourdieu’s *habitus* is described. Recent research also emphasises that food practices not only convey ethnic identity but also have repercussions at other transects with identities, such as gender and age.<sup>548</sup> The archaeological correlates of food practices are the species of consumed animals and the distribution patterns of their remains, which are important as food taboos are considered to be culturally driven. For an in-depth analysis, data are lacking from contemporary settlements in both Egypt (e.g. Memphis) and Syria-Palestine. The presence or absence and frequency of pig bones were used as an indicator for immigration from Syria-Palestine.<sup>549</sup> Thus, the distribution shall be briefly summarised by means of available data. Pig bones are known and frequent from the early 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty settlement in Area F/I<sup>550</sup> as well as for the later 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty settlement in R/I.<sup>551</sup> Whether the lower frequency of pig bones in the settlement of Area A/II<sup>552</sup> bears witness to a social habit reflecting ethnic origin must remain unclear. As pigs continued to exist (and were presumably eaten),

<sup>541</sup> Yasur-Landau 2010, 14.

<sup>542</sup> Yasur-Landau 2010, 10–13.

<sup>543</sup> One of Yasur-Landau’s example is the presence of non-Egyptian cooking pots, which I cannot assess as ‘deep’ from my current point of view, set out above. Cf. Yasur-Landau 2010, 21–22.

<sup>544</sup> For example, among the imported and locally-made dipper juglets.

<sup>545</sup> Yasur-Landau 2010, 19, he also maintains that the domestic sphere reflects the acculturation strategy. Cf. Burmeister 2000; Smith 2003.

<sup>546</sup> Abbots 2016.

<sup>547</sup> Abbots 2016, 128–129.

<sup>548</sup> Abbots 2016, 117–120.

<sup>549</sup> E.g. Bietak 1996a, 36 argues that the absence of pig bones in a cultic environment possibly indicated ‘that Canaanite settlers already had some sort of taboo concerning the consumption of pig meat, at least as a temple offering’.

<sup>550</sup> Czerny 1999, 310–311, the animal bones are only treated in bulk and were not divided into contexts. Thus, it cannot be ascertained if there are clusters within that settlement.

<sup>551</sup> Von den Driesch 2015.

<sup>552</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992, 68, 72–74, tabs. 2, 6–8.

they were not burdened with a general food taboo. Moreover, pig consumption continued throughout the later phases in Area A/II<sup>553</sup> as well as in Area F/I<sup>554</sup> although in lower percentages.<sup>555</sup>

Cooking pots as archaeological correlates, have been discussed above and the use of a small amount of cooking pots following non-Egyptian traditions can, from our perspective, not be called a ‘deep change’ as it does not coincide with a new type of hearth, for example, or special cooking installations not known from other settlements in Egypt, although it has to be admitted that the current state of knowledge about settlements in general leaves a lot to be desired.

Also relevant are subsistence patterns, namely, the existence of imported storage jars (Marl C from the Memphis-Fayoum region and foreign imports, Figs. 11, 14) shows some commodity deliveries from other parts of Egypt and Syria-Palestine,<sup>556</sup> while round silos and finds of some tools (sickles with silica sheen) attest to a local production of foodstuffs and storage. Here, again, it remains unclear as to whether the imported materials in imported storage jars from outside of Egypt were consumed at the site (probably not in their entirety) or were transported on to other sites (although it seems not in the original containers because the sheer amount of fragments of imported transport amphorae at Tell el-Dab’a exceeds all other contemporary settlements as far as can be seen to date<sup>557</sup>).

Architecture, as a main expression of the material culture of the domestic sphere and main influencer of *habitus*, has been analysed extensively and the line of development currently hints to prototypes of entirely Egyptian traditions<sup>558</sup> (but this may change if contemporary rural settlements in Syria-Palestine are published in greater detail).

The gender roles of women and men also remain unclear from the archaeological record of the settlement; the only evidence provided is the number of burials in Area A/II and the higher number of women compared to the one man and three children found there. This could be a hint towards the marriage patterns of immigrant men with local women although their burial customs followed varied/combined Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions, which is to a certain extent supported by the isotope ratio study which suggested two women came from outside the delta.<sup>559</sup> If that were so, the small number of non-Egyptian cooking pots may be explained and also the strict adherence to Egyptian traditions (or so it seems) in the domestic sphere in almost all respects, as far as we know. The sample of burials is very small and therefore not representative; moreover other areas of the site differ.<sup>560</sup> Under the application of the culture-historical paradigm it might be hypothesised that this hints at Egyptian predominance in Area A/II with most inhabitants buried extra-murally, while Areas F/I and A/IV were more “Levan-tinised”, but this interpretation does not do justice to the rich assemblage left to us.

The assessment of pottery technology, only possible by the traces of production remaining on products (*chaîne opératoire*), as no pottery workshop was found at Tell el-Dab’a, remains the last point of reference to ‘deep change’ in the domestic sphere. The pottery repertoires of Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions remain quite distinct in the settlement of Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom (Stage III). An emerging local development can be observed at this time but well within the bounds of what can be considered slight (or with a view to the low number of people involved). Moreover, imported materials continue to be present and remain as they were. The only point of change at this level is the beginning of the use of local copies of Syro-Palestinian pottery types in the settlement of Area A/II (Stage III). A ‘deep change’ in the pottery repertoire generally can be found in Stage VII, when many “new” vessel types start to be used and others fall out of use ‘quite suddenly, in archaeological terms’.<sup>561</sup> Still

<sup>553</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992, 75–82.

<sup>554</sup> Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992, 69–70, 84–92.

<sup>555</sup> See also Redding 2015 for a more thorough discussion of the presence of pigs in the Ancient Near East.

<sup>556</sup> Bader 2018a, fig. 4.

<sup>557</sup> Arnold et al. 1995; Bader 2009, 653–662.

<sup>558</sup> See Bader 2018a for bibliography.

<sup>559</sup> Although the Nile Valley is expected to yield similar (<sup>87</sup>Sr/<sup>86</sup>Sr) strontium isotope ratios to the delta (after Stantis et al. 2020a), the possibility that some individuals with different values came from there cannot yet be entirely excluded.

<sup>560</sup> Bader 2011a.

<sup>561</sup> Bourriau 1997.

as this ‘new style’ of Stage VII is deeply rooted in local traditions and not exactly congruent with any other known pottery tradition from abroad or from the Egyptian Nile Valley, it seems inappropriate and illogical to assign this change to migration. It should rather be seen as a (north-eastern delta) ‘regional turn’ (Stages VI–VII) in which the pottery assemblage as a whole changes towards a very local repertoire, very diversified with a lot of different open and closed vessel shapes but quite uniform in terms of fabrics, surface treatment, and manufacturing and firing technology. Very few imports from Cyprus and the Levant reach the north-eastern delta at this stage and some traits have a long history (e.g. string cut bases) and others (such as very dark red rims on open vessels) a shorter one. There are few points of contact with the rest of Egypt or the Syro-Palestinian area.<sup>562</sup> Research on regional developments of pottery production in the southern regions of Egypt shows that the ‘regional turn’ is not a phenomenon isolated in the delta, even if it is particularly obvious there, but that it can be observed in most regions (Memphis-Fayoum, Abydos and Thebes). While this development has been interpreted as an expression of political fragmentation, it is more likely to be a phenomenon linked to socio-economic developments. Even more so, if it is considered that other types of objects (often less frequently found, and sometimes made of materials of higher value) are still quite uniform over the whole of Egypt.<sup>563</sup>

### 3.7.7.1.2. Funerary Sphere

Whether the existence of some tombs in the settlement constitutes a real ‘deep change’ in the funerary sphere remains unclear, because it is possible that this feature is actually connected to the stoneless nature of the delta landscape. In the earlier settlements at Tell el-Dab’a (F/I stratum “e” and R/I), no contemporary tombs were laid-out within them except children under the floor.<sup>564</sup> Again, there is the possibility that this feature might be rooted in the fact that the earlier settlements were strictly planned orthogonally and no space was available for burials except for small children under house floors. As the average size of a property is larger in Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom, it is possible that the additional space and lack of desert edge led to a very local tradition. However, an unprovable possibility exists that due to this lack of ‘desert edge’, higher lying areas outside the settlement were used as cemeteries, which have by now been destroyed by later activity. Another possibility is that this is a delta practice not well known as there is no contemporary delta settlement from the late Middle Kingdom site known or fully explored to date. While burials in settlements are known from Syria-Palestine, these are usually denser, the tombs built in a different way and usually used over longer periods and often for numerous individuals.<sup>565</sup> Moreover, the typical Syro-Palestinian tomb could not be reproduced due to the lack of stone and cliffs.<sup>566</sup>

Whether the relative invisibility of the superstructures of the tombs in the late Middle Kingdom settlement is the result of a ‘deep change’ must also remain unclear as there is no clear line of development in the delta with which to compare it. That not all tombs in the late Middle Kingdom in the Nile Valley were visible above ground has been observed before; after all there are many shaft tombs known from that period.<sup>567</sup>

<sup>562</sup> Bader 2009.

<sup>563</sup> These are results from the current research project ‘Beyond Politics’, FWF Y754-G19, led by the author. It remains to be researched more closely whether objects made from readily available and ubiquitous and cheap materials such as silex a similar development can be traced. Then the control and procurement of raw materials would be the/a crucial point of departure in the regionalisation of material culture.

<sup>564</sup> Cf. in F/I: Czerny 1999, 29–31; missing in R/I; Czerny 2015.

<sup>565</sup> For a brief diachronic overview see Campbell and Green 1995.

<sup>566</sup> Cf. Baker 2006.

<sup>567</sup> Dodson and Ikram 2008, 186–208. The statement that the mud brick construction technique for single chamber tombs at Avaris “is more usually found in Mesopotamia” is without references and devoid of any basis, cf. Grajetzki 2003; Schiestl 2009; Hulková forthcoming. For the late Old Kingdom to early Middle Kingdom cf. Seidlmayer 1990, 398–412.

Finally, mummification, has so far not been attested at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> in any of the phases due to the bad conservation of human remains in the wet soil conditions.<sup>568</sup> While neither the textiles used for bandages or any discolouration of the bones from the use of resins could be detected in these circumstances, at least one body was found (tomb A/II-l/12 tomb 4<sup>569</sup>) which might have been wrapped in something judging from the position of the bones, perhaps just mats,<sup>570</sup> but narrow linen strips cannot be ruled out entirely, nor leather skins. To qualify this statement properly is not currently possible as the absence of evidence does not prove the absence. Once again Schiestl's quote should be remembered "Das Fehlen von Mummifizierung ist nicht unägyptisch".<sup>571</sup>

### 3.7.7.1.3. Ritual Sphere

To the ritual sphere belongs everything that goes beyond the here and now and the direct pursuits of daily life. In short, the ritual sphere comprises funerary customs and, for example, acts performed at the grave of a relative or before meals, acts performed in order to safeguard loved ones or one's livelihood (animals, on which one is dependent for food, transport, etc.). Furthermore, included in this definition are the spaces in which ritual activities take place such as temples, chapels and similar buildings, and niches and specific rooms in domestic dwellings, where rituals took place and which housed items of importance for conducting rituals, including stelae, statues etc. The various view points of these structures ["modes of visibility"] provide some clues as to whether knowledge about them was socially restricted or not.<sup>572</sup>

While the presence of the eight tombs in the settlement of Area A/II in itself provides a ritual space in this domestic area, no other traces of ritual activity beyond burial were reliably identified there outside of the actual tomb. There are only two exceptions, where in each case a single pottery vessel, one of which may have been a libation vessel,<sup>573</sup> was found very close to the sarcophagus L [138]<sup>574</sup> and to A/II-m/15-tomb 9.<sup>575</sup> While it is possible to classify this first vessel as an offering connected to a tomb, it is also an atypical feature for Area A/II Phase G/3–1 and should perhaps be considered under a different angle than the more frequent but later occurring offering pits. These pits contain either the remains of a meal or votive offerings and are a frequent feature in the Second Intermediate Period at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> in various contexts (close to temples, tombs and in houses). This practice fits well within the Egyptian cultic and ritual landscape.<sup>576</sup> Due to the fact that this occurrence is isolated and different from later occurrences and that there is no more evidence until Phase E/3 for similar features, it may be an example of funerary cult and remembrance. No other objects such as offering stands (food offerings, burnt offerings) or any pottery that could be considered to have been used exclusively in a ritual capacity (as known from other sites or context types) were found around the existing tombs, nor were remnants of other cultic activities found which could be assigned to such activity with any certainty (*hes* vases for libations, for example). However, the buried dead so closely enmeshed in the living community gives some evidence of the mindset of the ancient people living there. In what way the dead would have been ritually involved in daily life must remain unclear, even more so as it is doubtful that the tombs were even marked on the surface. No evidence for superstructures or markings has been found, although the robbing of said tombs

<sup>568</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 40.

<sup>569</sup> Bietak 1991b, figs. 10–12; Bader 2020, fig. 4.6.

<sup>570</sup> The use of mats for the deposition of bodies is attested in Phases E/2 and E/1, cf. Bietak 1991b, 117, 180–181.

<sup>571</sup> Schiestl 2009, 75.

<sup>572</sup> Barrett 1991. For a discussion of what might be entailed see Frood and Raja 2014.

<sup>573</sup> Müller 2008, vol. 1, 299; vol. 2, 239–240.

<sup>574</sup> Bader 2020, chap. 6, fig. 6.29.

<sup>575</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, 129–130, it is not entirely certain that the small carinated bowl was intentionally deposited at the south-western corner of that tomb as it was not complete.

<sup>576</sup> Müller 2008. More recently large accumulations of pottery, in content very similar to offering pits, are being found by the Djehuty Project directed by J.-M. Galán, who kindly invited me to work on some of this material in 2017. Publications of this material are in preparation.

soon after interment was quite unerring. Thus, the living would have had to know where exactly the dead were buried, which as such would have been restricted knowledge.

If, indeed, the baboon/monkey and dwarf statues found out of context in Area A/II belong to the late Middle Kingdom settlement, this is evidence connecting the inhabitants to the Egyptian ritual sphere. The same holds true for the dislocated statue base found in a rubbish deposit (see above).

A very specific feature at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, the ‘Totenhaus’ [‘house of the dead’], which was built adjacent to, or close to, domestic houses and which contained burials, only appears as separate buildings in Phase F in Area F/I, whilst dwellings or parts of dwellings from earlier Phases (G/3–1) were repurposed as a ‘Totenhaus’ later (also Area F/I).<sup>577</sup> No parallels have yet been found in either Egypt or Syria-Palestine for this ritual connection between the dead and the living. However, no such ‘Totenhaus’ has been found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement phases of Area A/II. The only similarity can perhaps be seen in tomb A/II-n/12-no 4 (L [138]), which was dug into the floor/ground of a room behind a screen wall.<sup>578</sup> Similar features are known from contemporary Elephantine which makes an immigration context unlikely. No formal sacred buildings solely devoted to ritual activities have been found in Area A/II for the late Middle Kingdom phases (Stages II and III). The same holds true for the entire site (at least to date). Thus, it is difficult to locate a more public or encompassing ritual sphere during this time. If such sacred spaces were located in the domestic houses themselves, such as the suspected altar [L 123],<sup>579</sup> there are no other instances preserved. And even for L [123], there are no immediate parallels known to date in either cultural tradition. In the current state of our knowledge, no ‘deep change’ can be detected in the ritual sphere as it was hitherto explored archaeologically in Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom. However, this might change in the future.

#### 3.7.7.1.4. Overview of Factors Influencing Migration in the Late Middle Kingdom

Many of the push and pull factors usually cited<sup>580</sup> as influences for movement and mobility cannot be addressed because too little published evidence exists, e.g. on demography in the delta and Syria-Palestine in general<sup>581</sup> or because such questions go beyond the possibilities the ancient sources can support. Nevertheless, an overview with questions that more modern migrations evoked helps to assess our state of knowledge for the (late) Middle Kingdom. An application of some of these factors to the case study follows below (Tab. 3). The sources are mostly well known and appear with references in the chapters above. Thus, only those that have not been used before<sup>582</sup> are referenced to make the table as compact as possible. Textual evidence, of course, can only be provided from the Egyptian side, albeit from an Egyptian viewpoint. The time frame considered includes the Middle Kingdom and the early Second Intermediate Period, here understood to include the period of time between the end of the Middle Kingdom, tentatively suspected to be sometime in the earlier part of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the delta. The difficulty remains that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty most probably did not end at the same time all over the country, while the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty can only be conjectured at the delta site of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> but not in the Nile Valley. The connection to the archaeological record is also, however, always problematic.

#### 3.7.7.2 Models of Cultural Contacts

To recapitulate, over time a number of models for the process and results of cultural contacts have been proposed. Before the ‘post-colonial turn’, acculturation models based on ethnographic studies (see

<sup>577</sup> Bietak 1994, 41; Müller 2008, vol. 2, 253; Müller 2012, 80–83; Kopetzky 2014, 124, 127.

<sup>578</sup> Bietak 1991b, 33–34; Bader 2020, 194–198.

<sup>579</sup> Bietak 1991b, 32; Bader 2020, 178–179, 185–189.

<sup>580</sup> Charsley 1974; Anthony 1990; Yasur-Landau 2010.

<sup>581</sup> This assumption relies on the fact that everyone had a burial, which does not have to have been the case, cf. Chapter 2.4., fn. 231.

<sup>582</sup> Most are to be found Schneider 2003a, cat. 19–81, mostly evidence dating from the late 12<sup>th</sup> to the early 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.



Factors to consider	Remarks	Archaeology	Texts and pictorial evidence
Existing interaction	Yes, e.g. Byblos and other Syro-Pal. sites	Egyptian finds in the Levant	References about Lebanese cedars from Old Kingdom onwards, etc. 'Asiatics' on Egyptian ships (OK), execration texts; biographies, <sup>I</sup> administrative texts, <sup>II</sup> expeditions <sup>III</sup>
Presumed commodity exchange	Egyptian and Syro-Pal. products in each other's area	Egyptian artefacts in Syro-Pal.; Syro-Pal. artefacts in Egypt and Delta	Egypt: gold, stone vessels, animal skins, Egyptian linen, etc.; Syro-Pal.: copper, people, LPW <sup>IV</sup> & contents; amphorae & contents (oil, resin, wine?), wood, textiles <sup>V</sup>
Information flow (relatives, 'successful scouts' who went before)	Probably yes, Byblos, e.g., goes both ways	Egyptian objects in Levant; Syro-Pal. objects in Egypt	Beni Hasan group indicates that Syro-Pal. and Egyptians knew about each other; also different names for inhabitants of different areas, execration texts, etc.
Involuntary/voluntary migration	Yes, but possibility of propagandistic over-emphasis	No evidence	Stelae and inscriptions listing prisoners of war taken by Egyptians: <sup>VI</sup> e.g. Annals of Amenemhet II, Khu-sobek and others; 'Asiatics' in Beni Hasan, execration texts
Who migrates?	Unclear	In current case study unclear	No texts relating to current case study; the only info from the textual sources is that men, women and children migrate
Kinship groups	Unclear	Family burials possible but not proven	Some of the known individuals are related to each other <sup>VII</sup>
Inclusion into the social system of host-country	Unclear if these individuals were 'free' or not	No evidence <sup>VIII</sup>	Lists of names of non-Egyptians in Lahun and Thebes; <sup>IX</sup> Menunefer libates for Ameni-Senbu in Hawara <sup>X</sup>
Ideological reasons	Unclear, but the topos of the 'smiting of the enemies' has existed since pre-dynastic times and has continued for a very long time	No clear evidence	Egyptian pharaohs conquering areas abroad to show their prowess and expand territory and increase income; expeditions for goods, including workers, needed in Egypt <sup>XI</sup>
Age/sex structure: most likely young men migrate first	Unclear, but possible	A/II: 1 young adult male individual only F/I: 10 men (of 98) –demographic data incomplete at Tell el-Dab <sup>a</sup> , Delta & Levant	Texts mention women and men (p. Brooklyn 35.1446, Lahun texts mention men, women and children), <sup>XII</sup> Beni Hasan caravan shows kinship group

<sup>I</sup> Allen 2008.

<sup>II</sup> Luft 1993; Collier and Quirke 2006.

<sup>III</sup> Černý 1935; Gardiner et al. 1952–1955, 114, pl. XXXVII; Seyfried 1981, 157.

<sup>IV</sup> Levantine Painted Ware.

<sup>V</sup> After Schiestl 2009, 208–211.

<sup>VI</sup> Schneider 2003a, 60–61, 174, 195–197.

<sup>VII</sup> Schneider 2003a, 291–315.

<sup>VIII</sup> Schiestl 2009, 213, proposed the theory that the members of the social group buried in Stratum d/1 (= G/4) were 'Asiatics', who either sought integration or were forced to integrate by higher powers into the Egyptian structure of administrative officials. From the archaeological record this cannot be proved but remains one possibility of interpretation.

<sup>IX</sup> Schneider 2003a, 60–61, 174.

<sup>X</sup> Posener 1957, 155.

<sup>XI</sup> Schneider 2003a, 199–200. Note that in most cases only the addition of the qualifying <sup>c</sup>3m to the by then Egyptian names signifies the foreign descent of 'Asiatics'. Their original name is very rarely preserved. This also includes 'Asiatic' parents, to whom children were born in Egypt.

<sup>XII</sup> Schneider 2003a, 195–200.

Tab. 3 Overview of factors influencing migration in the late Middle Kingdom



Factors to consider	Remarks	Archaeology	Texts and pictorial evidence
Population density: were there too many people to be supported by opportunities and environment in Syro-Pal.?	Cannot be determined from current state of knowledge	Difficult to discern; demographic data incomplete	Sinuhe story? (E.g. literary text)
Better economic opportunities	Cannot be determined from current state of knowledge	No evidence	Beni Hasan group? Commodity exchange, expeditions
Environmental circum-stances influencing conditions of food production: better growth? More water?	Possible but not enough data for period in question	No unequivocal evidence	No evidence
Distance	Short/long?	Interactions with Nubia, Levant, eastern and western desert, oases, Red Sea, Sinai	Sinuhe story, execration texts, Annals of Amenemhet II, expedition records
“Leap frogging” – distances between visible “stations” or islands	Unclear if Egyptian material can be interpreted that way because often it is pottery and may signify just commodity exchange	Gaps between traces of archaeological contacts: Tell Arqa, Byblos, Sidon; Egyptian sealings in Ashkelon, <sup>xiii</sup> in Egypt almost exclusively in the Delta	No evidence in Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period
Migration stream: well defined and known routes	Unclear	Overland W. Tumulat, but little attestation for MBIIA; <sup>xiv</sup> did the harbour exist at Tell el-Dab <sup>a</sup> already so early?	Connection to Byblos is well known for trade of timber; Inscription of Khnumhotep III/Dahshur
Cost and duration of transport: land vs boat	Cannot be determined from current state of knowledge	Both possible; equids known; harbour at Tell el-Dab <sup>a</sup>	Beni Hasan group with equids
High status families in the new place provide housing opportunities, etc. for kin	Not proven for case study	Domestic housing has mainly Egyptian parallels	No evidence in Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period
Power structure and social complexity	Stelae mention involvement of ‘Asiatic’ individuals in many social strata from high to very low and in many different professions	A/II: man with MB Age weapons suggests high/er social rank, but his actual role in the settlement remains unclear	Titles and relations to almost all high and low offices in Egyptian society: specialists in mining, weaving, food production, administration, ship crews, scribes, metal workers, domestic servants, priests, musicians, tutors, expedition members, etc.
Return migration	Difficult to prove	Egyptian objects in Syro-Pal.? Rather traded?	For the return from Syro-Pal. Sinuhe story

<sup>xiii</sup> Ben-Tor and Bell 2018.<sup>xiv</sup> Middle Bronze Age IIA.Tab. 3 *continued* Overview of factors influencing migration in the late Middle Kingdom

Factors to consider	Remarks	Archaeology	Texts and pictorial evidence
Secondary flows are attracted by kinship lineages, dependence or reduction of obstacles	Unlikely to be possible to prove	No evidence	No evidence
Chain migration: successful migrants draw more individuals <sup>xv</sup>	Unlikely to be possible to prove	No evidence	No evidence

<sup>xv</sup> Charsley 1974, 356.

Tab. 3 *continued* Overview of factors influencing migration in the late Middle Kingdom

Chapter 2.5.1) were the ones most commonly used, while later this was thought to be too one-sided and, in essence, colonial. It also seems the importance of acculturation theories was derived from stressing ethnic identity over the other aspects of social identity (see Chapter 2.1–2). Subsequently, a variety of contact models derived from biological, linguistic and religious backgrounds began to be adapted to describe cultural developments (see Chapter 2.5.2 for discussion of some of these concepts with reference on applicability to the current Egyptian case study<sup>583</sup>). The one model mostly used to date is ‘hybridity’ but often without much informed discussion of the historical and biologicistic baggage of this concept.<sup>584</sup> While underlying hybridity as a foundation for ‘non-pureness’ of culture is essential in the discussion, the political use, the inability to measure the phenomenon and its subjectivity from scholar to scholar makes it less attractive. Most recently and most promisingly, models are being developed which take more factors into account such as materiality, agency, power relations and context applicable to a wider range of cultural phenomena, although I see a shortage of ‘new’ and ‘unencumbered’ terminology, which makes it difficult to clearly express differences between the newer models and those used in earlier scholarship. ‘Entanglement’, for example, is already used for at least two different concepts,<sup>585</sup> while ‘appropriation’ is currently considered derogatory in the English language (see Chapter 2.5). The scholarly discussion is still active and a surge in scientific fields making contributions can be observed. In the following passages it is not intended to discuss all possible models in detail and their possible applicability to the case study, but an overview is given to point out some weaknesses in existing models and to attempt improvement. My aim with this work is to open minds and stop cultural phenomena being put into tightly defined “boxes” whereby the creative achievement and the people who created such a rich heritage are then forgotten about.

### 3.7.7.2.1. Acculturation

Initially, the definition of acculturation allowed for both cultural and/or social units in a contact situation changing and surviving after ‘meeting’ in whatever way (either of ideas only or of ideas that materialised in objects), but this is not usually reflected in case studies and practical applications of this concept. Often ‘assimilation’ is seen as a result of acculturation which is understood as the complete disappearance of cultural traits, even more so in an asymmetrical power balance, although acculturation strategies such as segregation/separation or assimilation or marginalisation might be pursued not least because

<sup>583</sup> See also Bader 2012; Bader 2013a.

<sup>584</sup> Lumsden 2008, 36, uses hybridity without critique as the basis of the potentially useful ‘middle ground’ model, which he describes as “the creation of a shared cultural milieu”; see also Stockhammer 2012, 1–3; Silliman 2015.

<sup>585</sup> Hodder 2012; Stockhammer 2013.

they also fitted colonial expectations.<sup>586</sup> In archaeological research, complete assimilation was often the chosen outcome<sup>587</sup> and sometimes seen as an inevitable outcome of contact of social groups with the Egyptian ‘high culture’ using writing systems. This way of using the acculturation concept, including ‘Egyptianisation’, does not make it appealing as a model for the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II because it does not really match the development of material culture in the stages presented above (Chapter 3.6). Moreover, it is only possible to apply such an acculturation model usefully in a culture-historical framework and when it is assumed that “Egyptians” were at Tell el-Dab’a first and then “Asiatic immigrants” (for whatever reason, forced or not) came and these latter individuals took on “Egyptian” ways of life and “doing things”, while at the same time keeping some of their own more conservative customs, namely in the realm of the dead. But, if the culture-historical paradigm is avoided and with it the prevalence and interpretational dogma of ‘ethnic markers’ in the form of things conceived as so personal they could not be used by a person not adhering to the same set of traditional values, the situation is not so clear cut and it would be difficult to decide who was there first and who acculturated towards which culture. Liszka’s comprehensive study of textual and archaeological etc evidence again highlights one dilemma: the problem does not lie in individual “ethnic markers” but in the generalisation of the concept over wide areas and diachronically.<sup>588</sup> This would lead to non-tenable views such as “all people with a toggle pin as a burial gift must be ethnically Syro-Palestinian, because no Egyptian would wear the respective clothes to need it”. From a different viewpoint in a liminal, fluid situation such as in the borderland of the north-eastern Nile Delta, it may be possible for individuals who are exposed to varied cultural influences to even use this kind of pin for different types of clothes or for something completely different.<sup>589</sup> The same holds true for ethnic assignments of cooking pots in a settlement in which a diverse population lives together: neither the person who made that pot nor the one who used it needs to belong to the social group initially connected to that type of food for which that specific pot was originally necessary. The crux of the matter lies to a certain extent in avoiding generalisations which easily lead down the slippery slope to culture-historical reconstructions of the past.

Other obstacles for applying acculturation models are the rejection of the notion that any cultural tradition may at any point be ‘pure’ and the doubt about cultural homogeneity not only in borderland situations, but also for example across Egypt in the Middle Kingdom as a whole. Such homogeneity (cf. Fig. 2) is often proposed but has not yet been demonstrated stringently due to insufficient data. For example, the variety of pottery assigned to the ‘Pan-grave culture’ which is repeatedly described as difficult to classify due to its heterogeneity<sup>590</sup> does not fit the description of unified material culture in the first place as a starting point. This was sometimes blamed on the fact that the pottery was handmade and not standardised but is instead a problem of the way ‘culture’ is defined.

### 3.7.7.2.2. Cultural Mixing

More fluid concepts of cultural mixing possibly useful for language studies and material culture seem better suited to accommodate the creative production of objects which lie between typologies and are neither one nor the other entirely. Influences from various different social and geographical environments intertwine by means of agency, materiality, and consideration of power relationships but without a strict processual rule of what the outcome should look like. The depoliticised ‘relational’ and ‘material entanglement’ described by Philip Stockhammer seems to be a very useful concept because it accommodates single material objects in a variety of ‘mixed’ stages as well as contexts in which objects of various traditions might be found.<sup>591</sup> Also ‘appropriation’, which in its German form of ‘Aneignung’ does not

<sup>586</sup> Berry 2005.

<sup>587</sup> Liszka 2012, 239–240.

<sup>588</sup> Liszka 2012, 391, 453–455. Here it should be noted that it did not become entirely clear whether Liszka thinks Nerita shells are always ethnic markers or only in certain circumstances.

<sup>589</sup> Stockhammer 2012.

<sup>590</sup> Liszka 2012, 393–394. See also De Souza 2019 and his more current work.

<sup>591</sup> Stockhammer 2012; Stockhammer 2013.

implicitly convey any negative connotation, can be used to express the creative process of ‘borrowing’ and using creatively cultural traits mutually and with potentially new unparalleled outcomes.<sup>592</sup> Other cultural mixture concepts such as mimicry, creolisation and hybridisation carry historical and biological baggage somewhat tainting the more useful aspects of these and are unfortunately implicitly also embedded in potentially useful metaphors such as the “middle ground”. Although that concept is very specifically defined, again certain aspects may be useful to consider in the late Middle Kingdom case study at Tell el-Dab’a, in particular that ambivalent space/place – physical or virtual – where cultures and people meet in social encounters.<sup>593</sup> Considering the fluidity in measuring where such phenomena start and where they end, it seems wiser to look for other conceptual backgrounds. Here, the borderland/frontier approach seems even more applicable because a colonial situation may be present but is not a necessary precondition.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Hahn 2005, 99–107.

<sup>593</sup> Lumsden 2008, 31–32.

<sup>594</sup> Naum 2010.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

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Abandoning a normative expectation of ‘culture’ and giving material culture its rightful active place in the interpretation of the past leads to a multi-scalar view, which not only aims to illustrate culture-historical narratives by means of single examples of selected finds (because in the culture-historical view a single example a type comprises the essence of all other specimens of that type and can therefore be used as representative) but gets closer to the lived reality of the ancient people, be it by means of their finger prints on pottery or seals or through remnants of their social behaviour, namely assemblages preserved to us. While their message is never as clear as we would like it to be, the multitude, variation and combination of the things found need to be recorded meticulously to provide a means of interpretation that is crucial to the progress of the field and the increase of knowledge through study.

In the current case this means an abandonment of a too simplistic generalisation and paying more attention to the ‘untidy’ that does not fit into preconceived categories as the ancient people had their own motivations and creativity induced by social conditions rather than biological ones.

Research in borderland situations, where there is a border/frontier between two territories with two or more different social groups coming into contact and interaction with one another, whether under colonial conditions or not and whether with textual sources or not, provides good parallels for creative mutual appropriation. The latter concept can be found in the current case study, if mainstream Egyptology is prepared to open up to approaches from other fields. Such approaches can be used to understand better the past sources, especially archaeology. To make better use of the data collected and to obtain a more differentiated view on these, exposure to post-colonial thinking is a worthwhile exercise. Thinking about how and why ‘the way of doing things’ implements changes, is untidy and actively involves things in daily routine is instructive in the attempt to look at things found in excavations and brings us closer to the ancient makers and users of these things.

Instead of considering ‘culture’ as bounded and impermeable with rigid borders, the view of open situational ‘systems’ with the ability of mutual negotiation provides a more realistic means to accommodate the material culture created in ‘in-between’ situations neither exactly one nor the other, defeating ‘cultural taxonomy’, as it embodies creation not natural growth. The virtual ‘space’ between has been aptly characterised as ‘relational’ or ‘material entanglement’ or appropriation, concepts that may be developed further over time. In this way no creator of ‘culture’ has to surrender their creative potential to a ‘better’ ‘culture’ in whatever way defined (acculturation, ‘Egyptianisation’), and interpretation can be improved. These considerations in combination with practice theory may provide a differentiated view on the variety of social identities, discussed above.

It is also worth looking at the archaeological record for its own merit without immediately using the backdrop of historical narrative, giving other social identities some more room although the ethnic identity still dominates and I argue that this should be re-considered.

The conceived similarity of the view of the ancient Egyptians towards non-local people, as far as is known, combined with the existence of ethnic stereotypes and phenotypes led scholarship in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to apply nationalist, modernistic ideas to the ancient people. In many ways parts of this thought construct are inherent in the culture-historical thought model, which is also very much a construct of that time, and should therefore continue to be questioned.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> Loprieno 1988; Baines 1996; Schneider 2003b; Smith 2003; Smith 2007; Moers 2015.



These constructs have been extrapolated from textual and pictorial sources to archaeology, which is still often used as mere illustration of historical events narrated by textual sources rather than as a source type to be interpreted according to its nature with the critique it demands. After all, the things that people use are an expression of their engagement with their environment as well as correlates of social behaviour. Material culture plays a much more active role than hitherto appreciated in Egyptology.

The almost total absence of textual and pictorial evidence in the current case study of Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 in Area A/II allows only very general assumptions derived from these sources to apply to those archaeological remains in the late Middle Kingdom. The previously advocated identification of the *Aamu* from tomb paintings at Beni Hasan with tomb inventories at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup><sup>596</sup> is of limited use for Area A/II because the tombs found there, dating to the late Middle Kingdom, did *not* contain such items and it thus follows that those individuals must be Egyptians.<sup>597</sup> The gender divide in grave goods also has to be mentioned because this conclusion is based mainly on weaponry carried by men in the tomb painting. A generalisation, namely, to say all of the inhabitants buried at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> are ‘Asiatics’ seems therefore extremely doubtful,<sup>598</sup> albeit the sample of the eight graves in Area A/II is statistically insignificant. I would like to continue to keep the excavation areas A/II and F/I separate for interpretational purposes because the differences between them in Phase G/3–1 and local phase c (for F/I), respectively, are so striking. However, archaeological research in combination with theoretical approaches showed that a one-to-one correlation of objects and identities of the makers, owners and users of the objects must be rejected because such cannot be sufficiently proven. This means that the settlement of Area A/II can be seen as a *stage* for two different cultural traditions (minimum hypothesis, but who belonged to which tradition – all Syro-Palestinian or all Egyptian? – remains impossible to say). The recent finding that two women buried in Area A/II most likely grew up in another place outside the delta corroborates the assumption that people from several areas lived together there, even if those areas cannot yet be identified.

The greatest problem for comparative research is the lack of settlement excavations in Egypt in the Middle Kingdom and in Syria-Palestine in the early Middle Bronze Age (MBIIA) to know what may be ‘normal’ for an Egyptian settlement in the Middle Kingdom, if such a thing, indeed, exists. Having established this drawback it may be more likely that each settlement mirrors the practice/*habitus* of its inhabitants, depending on the individuals living there and their tasks and purposes as well as environmental circumstances in the widest sense. That means that any differences *per se* need/should not be connected to ethnic identity but to varieties in practice carried out by various groups of people fulfilling their social and economic fates. Thus, variation must be expected beforehand, even without ethnic variability.<sup>599</sup>

The following will assess various influential factors concerning the current case study:<sup>600</sup>

- The time frame over which the sketched out changes (Stages I to VII) take place is very wide and it takes approximately 450 years from the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (Stage I) to the latter part of the Second Intermediate Period (Stages VI–VII): except the comprehensive change dubbed ‘regional turn’ involving material culture having undergone a process of ‘material

<sup>596</sup> Bietak 1996a, 14, specifies them “as part of the population”.

<sup>597</sup> The positivistic approach is the problem here.

<sup>598</sup> Burke 2019 puts forward an Amorite identity for part of the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> identified as Avaris in the Middle Kingdom. This is a hypothesis, valid in the greater scheme of the early Second Millennium BC, but it cannot be proven by any archaeological evidence from Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>. He argues that the Amorite merchants in Karum Kanesh are not visible in the archaeological record there, although they are attested by a text type found at that site. While such texts do not exist for or at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, the non-local influence noticed in material culture does not prove a presence of Assyrian merchants either as at Karum Kanesh such influence was not observed. Thus, in any case, it would not be possible to prove this hypothesis by anything found at the site, cf. Lumsden 2008, 37, “obviously shared material culture does not necessarily reflect a shared identity”, but this sentence could be used in two ways: for the presence as well as for the absence of two differential social groups and, thus, reflects a dilemma rooted in positivism. Moreover, if “Amorite identity” as Burke seems to see it, is something that is of differential meaning in different places, it becomes a catch all and ultimately meaningless.

<sup>599</sup> Bourdieu 1977.

<sup>600</sup> Many of the factors used are inspired by Berry 1997; Yasur-Landau 2010.

entanglement',<sup>601</sup> none of the other developments happens particularly suddenly and rapidly in archaeological terms. Moreover, the archaeological sample is very well explored in comparison to other sites but, sadly, not complete.

- It takes a relatively long time (assuming the chronology is correct) to see the creative use of various traits from both ceramic repertoires forming a new body of material with neither completely subscribing to one or the other cultural tradition in the Stage model (see Tab. 1). A similar but not as obvious development can be seen in scarab production. In contrast, other artefact types remain totally unchanged: the “Egyptian” stone vessels are always recognisable as such (a lack of local stone or access to the usual procurement channels might explain this) and these stone vessels might have been reused to a considerable extent from earlier phases. Probably also reused were the small amount of jewellery and toggle pins. There is some evidence for using pottery items instead of stone for cosmetic vessels, for example,<sup>602</sup> but also the weapons of Syro-Palestinian cultural tradition do not enter a creative relationship with a similar artefact group derived from Egyptian cultural traditions, although there is a change from tin-bronze imported to the site to a local copper production in the later stages of the site (D/3–2).<sup>603</sup> Whether the unchanged objects were used in any way differently than according to their respective traditions or in different contexts cannot be ascertained to date, but the use of things derived from both cultural traditions in the same contexts, such as the tombs, makes relational entanglement seem likely in some instances.
- Cultural practices known from Syria-Palestine and Egypt are also attested unchanged throughout Phases H to E/1, namely the burial of complete equids and sometimes other animals in front of tombs. While never common, the custom was costly and attests to some status differences between those who have such burials and those who do not. Also, temples existed with the respective ground plans giving away their cultural backgrounds. Again, nothing can be said about religious practices executed within them to date.<sup>604</sup>
- The visibility of immigrants and other social groups in general in the archaeological record importantly depends on their numbers: in the earlier history of the site (Stages II, III and IV) there cannot be much doubt that at least single non-Egyptian individuals were present at the site of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> from the late 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or Phase H onwards because they are attested by one name<sup>605</sup> and one statue with a mushroom hairstyle (destroyed), while previously (Areas F/I, stratum “e”; R/I) no evidence exists to suspect the physical presence of non-Egyptian people. Perhaps a temporary residence for the exchange/procurement of commodities (expedition/harbour) should be suspected. In so far as this included at least a seasonal presence of non-local people must remain unknown. About the exact number of immigrants and their descendants in later phases nothing can be said – unless one suspects that no “Egyptian” individuals lived there at all. The high level of cultural traits known from other sites in southern Egypt makes a total absence of “Egyptians” after Phase H unlikely, unless one follows Bietak’s unproven hypothesis that the ‘Asiatics’ were previously exposed to Egyptian cultural traditions and ‘acculturated’ in a very short time at an unidentified other place in Egypt.<sup>606</sup> But thereafter the dilemma of ethnic identification of

<sup>601</sup> A similar feature can be observed in other regions of Egypt roughly in the same time frame as at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, and there is no evidence that any non-Egyptian behaviour was involved.

<sup>602</sup> Bietak 1991b, 176–178, fig. 137.9, Phase E/1 black burnished, see a photo in Bietak and Hein 1994, 189, cat. no 160. Pottery kohl pots are also known from southern Egypt, probably from the late Middle Kingdom or the early Second Intermediate Period, cf. Bader and Seco Álvarez 2016, 205, fig. 223e–f.

<sup>603</sup> Cf. Philip 2006, 242.

<sup>604</sup> Bietak and Vera Müller are conducting a detailed study on preserved temple inventories in Area A/II.

<sup>605</sup> Schneider 2003a, 7–9, the hieroglyphic signs of the boomerang and the owl should be read as ‘Aam’ according to Schneider.

<sup>606</sup> Bietak 2010, 139, this includes every subsequent wave of immigrating settlers from Syria-Palestine.

individuals by means of the objects present appears again. If one does not want to use arbitrary and potentially changeable ‘ethnic markers’,<sup>607</sup> it has to suffice to know that members of both social groups were present and formed an intertwined/interwoven community with members of both parties (or more? harbour?) mutually negotiating their social relationship in the local conditions in something like a borderland or ‘Third Space’. This would include people who lived there for some time as well as possible newcomers from other parts of the delta, the Nile Valley and Syria-Palestine and descendants of mixed ‘marriages’.

- The evidence from the human osteological material from the tombs in Area A/II dating to the late Middle Kingdom remains inconclusive and debateable: there were only ten individuals, three of them small children.<sup>608</sup> For the craniometric study, only three crania were used which were described in the individual entries of the anthropological study as broken and severely deformed by post-depositional processes.<sup>609</sup> Moreover, it was assumed that all preserved crania from all tombs of all phases in Area A/II were ‘Asiatics’<sup>610</sup> without exploring a local variability of the data from phase to phase and then comparing it to other anthropological populations derived in the same way. This is a serious methodological difficulty since it anticipates the result, leaving no room for the possibility that the social group living there was heterogeneous in the first place, in other words ‘Egyptians’ may have been among the inhabitants of the site or that the population might have changed in composition in the course of the phases G to D/2 (approx. 200 years). However, it is currently unknown how this data is distributed, but current scholarship uses such measurements descriptively rather than analytically. Unfortunately, to date no other larger collections of human remains are published from Tell el-Dab’a in order to see if there might be a high degree of variation or not. Apart from this shortcoming, the notion that culture and human behaviour should be induced by biology is not tenable and must be rejected in accord with all modern genetic scientists (see Chapter 2.3.2).
- The cultural distance between Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions would have been immense due to the fact that the Egyptian cultural tradition used writing, even if only a fraction of the population could read and write.<sup>611</sup> How many people we can expect to have been capable of doing so in the settlement of the late MK in Area A/II remains unclear. Other differences may be seen in mastering metalwork; some evidence allows the inference that at least minor metalwork was carried out at the site, but no moulds for Syro-Palestinian style metalwork have been found in Area A/II in the late MK, while this is known to have happened in other areas (see above). In terms of local pottery production, the Syro-Palestinian corpus shows more complicated forms (Tell el-Yahudieh juglets, dipper juglets) and a greater diversity of surface treatments and complex decoration schemes. The most complicated pottery type of the Egyptian tradition with profuse decoration is fish dishes, which seem to have been imported from the Memphis-Fayoum

<sup>607</sup> The propagated abandonment of trait-list approaches (i.e. ethnic markers) called for long ago is still not achieved in Egyptian archaeology, cf. Kamp and Yoffee 1980. The very recent inclusion of Tell el-Yahudieh juglets as presumed markers of the physical presence of ‘Asiatics’ has to be rejected outright, even more so as no theoretical discussion even tries to justify such a hypothesis cf. Ksiezak 2019. Ksiezak’s study with an extremely restricted focus proposes ‘Asiatic’ presence at each site with such pottery, disregarding occurrences outside the delta and Wadi Tumilat and as if this could not be due to commodity exchange!

<sup>608</sup> One child’s grave from Phase G/4 remains unpublished.

<sup>609</sup> Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 43, no remark, 57, ‘ohne Hinterhaupt’ [without back of skull], 63, ‘Reste des Schädels’ [remains of skull], 67, ‘Cranium verdrückt und deformiert’ [cranium squashed and deformed], 74, ‘vollständiges Skelett, stark zerbrochen und deformiert’ [complete skeleton, badly broken and deformed].

<sup>610</sup> Not only the male ones found with weapons, for example, which may be a way to test this hypothesis. The overall number is too small for statistically relevant inferences. Cf. Zakrzewski et al. 2016 for a more modern research design.

<sup>611</sup> According to estimates not more than 1% of the population was literate, cf. Baines 1983, 584. Quirke 2004, 37–38, in contrast estimates up to 15% of the inhabitants of Lahun were literate given the special circumstances of the papyrus finds in that settlement.

region. Thus, two differential traditions meet at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, but the inspired material entanglement occurs a long time later.

- Status of the population segment: those people we know more about (Aam from scarab, owner of statue with mushroom hairstyle, both not Phase G/3–1) most probably took an elevated place in social stratification, but from the evidence in Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II no inference can be made. Whether the owner of Compound 11, the largest compound in all excavated areas (including F/I and A/IV, see Fig. 4), should be considered of the highest social stratum seems likely but remains unproven. Another question with relevance to status could also be asked, i.e., whether the owner of Compound 11 (tomb not found) was of a higher status than the one man buried with weapons in the settlement in the courtyard of Compound 1 (see tomb A/II-m/15-no<sup>o</sup>9, Fig. 5). Moreover, how the highest local status would compare to other places in the Nile Valley and Syria Palestine is equally unclear.
- A variation in status/power balance may be deduced from the differential sizes of the houses in Area A/II although the differences are not huge.
- With reference to the post-colonial concepts mentioned above, the role of violence and warfare in the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II will be assessed because it has direct implications for the theoretical approach to the contact situation we are trying to reconstruct.<sup>612</sup> The existing evidence does not directly hint at violence and warfare taking place in this particular area in the late Middle Kingdom due to the following:
  - there is no evidence for violent destruction in the three settlement phases discussed here in Area A/II. The deep ash deposits in some places<sup>613</sup> are likely to come from domestic activities such as craft production or food production;
  - there is no evidence for social structures used for the suppression of people in an asymmetrical power balance, such as small walled cubicles/cells or barracks in which people could be imprisoned;
  - the only male individual buried in this area was equipped with weapons. Whether this means he was actually a warrior or they signify his status<sup>614</sup> or whether these weapons may have been his booty remains unclear. Whilst those weapons could hint at domination, there are no other males buried in this particular area. This provides several possibilities:
    - the other males did not receive proper burials;
    - they were buried elsewhere;
    - there were no more males;
    - the other males died elsewhere and were buried elsewhere.
- there is no evidence for fortification or even just a city wall;
- the settlement is in a borderland between Egypt and the Near East, but was there some sort of border control undertaken at this particular site?

<sup>612</sup> Dietler 2010, chap. 6, inspired these considerations.

<sup>613</sup> Cf. Bader 2020.

<sup>614</sup> See Kletter and Levi 2016 for a discussion of ‘warrior’ burials.

In summary of this section, it can be said that none of these possibilities can be securely supported by any archaeological evidence.<sup>615</sup>

- The level of pluralism and tolerance in interacting societies is difficult to fathom for the seemingly illiterate society of Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom (perhaps only due to waterlogging, which precludes the preservation of organic materials). The fact that variety exists in Phase G/3–1 between Areas A/II, A/IV and F/I might hint at tolerance towards burial customs that are not following Egyptian cultural traditions exactly although a certain extent of appropriation/incorporation or entanglement of items following Egyptian traditions also happened there. The historical, textual and non-site specific sources suggest an influx of foreign people of lower status. To what extent these individuals considered to be of lower status, many of whom would have been prisoners of war, would have been able to influence the ‘way of doing things’ of the superior power remains unexplained in the culture-historical narrative. This situation contrasts with that of the more ‘international’ New Kingdom, about which much more information concerning foreign elite individuals, contacts and relations exists.
- Schneider<sup>616</sup> used marriage patterns for the application of acculturation theories, but this cannot be utilised for Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom as the connection of a known non-Egyptian individual in Egyptian society to the objects that he or she used, unfortunately, does not exist for scrutiny. Ideally, such a case could be studied in terms of which ‘things’ were used: Egyptian things, imported things, ‘entangled’ things or local things. Even if we had that information it would not need to form a rule or a ‘law’ as this constitutes an individual level with its own *habitus* that is influenced by dispositions and circumstances within various social groups from childhood onwards and there may well have been diverse experiences at work. It could also be interpreted to fit more or less the “middle ground” model, perhaps, although children of mixed ‘marriages’ of Aamu and Egyptian people are no longer recognisable in textual evidence due to the habit of giving such individuals Egyptian names, but that says nothing about their actual behaviour and is thus inaccessible to us.

The result of the case study is that neither of the two well-known cultural traditions completely disappears and we do not know exactly who the actors were because no names are preserved. In the published cemeteries of Stages III, IV and V (specifically in Phases G/3–1, but also in F and E/3) enough variation can be observed in the burial customs to remain uncertain as to who belonged to which cultural group, ‘Egyptian’ or ‘Asiatic’, from an etic viewpoint anyway. Such variation also serves to highlight the normative culture-historical understanding as unsuitable because generalisations do not do the variation of the actual facts any justice. Thus, acculturation models are not ideal for the situation at Tell el-Dab’a as described, although some stages might fit an acculturation model, namely where adaptation can be observed, e.g. the owner of the statue with the mushroom hairstyle from Phase H and that of the Aamu scarab in Phase F. At least two members of this local social group chose the ‘Egyptian’ way of expressing their alterity from the Egyptian viewpoint. The question of whether this choice of two individuals of conceived higher status can be extrapolated to all the other members of the social group, where we have no unequivocal evidence, must remain unanswered. However, it is dangerous to generalise such a vital question as it creates bias. Many traits of the earlier phases show that people did appropriate/adapt various elements from both cultural traditions probably in relational entanglements:<sup>617</sup> weapons, paired animals in front of the tomb. However, at the same time the deceased people buried have been given

<sup>615</sup> Of course, it is appealing to our modern minds to study peaceful communities, but how peaceful this particular one was in the late Middle Kingdom cannot be remotely estimated.

<sup>616</sup> Schneider 2003a, 291–315, with all its uncertainties due to imprecise descriptions of blood relationships.

<sup>617</sup> Although the objects were found together, mostly as burial gifts in tombs, it remains unclear whether usage differed from their traditional backgrounds.



Egyptian-style cosmetic vessels and other cosmetic implements such as mirrors and tweezers, Egyptian amulets specifically as burial gifts which shows that Egyptian popular beliefs were at least used by the local population. Does that make them Egyptians appropriating Syro-Palestinian objects or Syro-Palestinian immigrants acculturating ('Egyptianising')? In addition, status may play a major role in this consideration, namely, why were certain individuals equipped with certain objects by their surviving kin. Another point to consider is looting: although the data set is not bad, it is not perfect either because massive looting diminishes the dataset of the tombs of all phases but not to the same degree.

Even the recent ( $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ) strontium isotope ratio study does not solve this dilemma, on the contrary. The result of the strontium isotope analysis suggests that the individual buried in tomb A/II-n/16-no 2, buried in a contracted position with shoulders on the ground (Fig. 7d) grew up in the delta, the same as the woman from tomb A/II-l/12-no 4 who was buried extended supine (Fig. 7a). On the other hand, the two women, A/II-m/15-no 11 and A/II-r/18-no 2, who did not grow up in the delta were equipped with a majority of Egyptian-style burial gifts and one of them was put to rest supine extended (A/II-m/15-no 11 with one leg up, not paralleled anywhere else<sup>618</sup>), while the other was slightly contracted and slightly turned on the left side (Fig. 7c). Again the influence of the living on the dead may be underestimated, if we assume it was the dead person's wish to be laid down in a certain position.

Turning away from the culture-historical paradigm, the use of post-colonial models is problematic to a certain extent because necessarily colonialism, in the proper sense of the word, needs to be proven and the case study does not really provide this proof as there are too many blank spaces in the picture.<sup>619</sup> The concept of borderlands on the other hand may be applied whether a colonial situation can be proved or not, whether a frontier existed as a fortified line or not or whether it may be thought of as permeable or not. Thus, 'mutual appropriation' in a virtual or real 'space/place' is probably the best model in this situation because it saves us from having to decide beforehand if the individuals buried there were 'Asiatics' or 'Egyptians'. General acculturation theory seems to impose a circular argument in the sense that it was assessed beforehand, which cultural traits are 'Egyptian' and which are 'Syro-Palestinian' and furthermore, which cultural traits are dominant in certain situations. Following this the decision of the direction of acculturation is based on this previous assessment. This argumentative circle can be broken if we rely on the archaeological sources exclusively and remove the dictatorship of interpretation of the historiographic non-site specific textual tradition generally used to reconstruct the history of the late Middle Kingdom in Egypt as a whole and use it as an inevitable backdrop of the late Middle Kingdom settlement analysed here.

Following Yasur-Landau's<sup>620</sup> assumption that the domestic sphere reflects the acculturation strategy of migrants, namely assimilation, segregation, separation or marginalisation, and applying that model to the settlement of Phases H and G in Area A/II (Stage III) when the Egyptian cultural traits dominate, would mean a) that immigrants assimilated totally (excepting a few burial customs and a very small amount of pottery) and b) Egyptian people would have had to reside there in major numbers to introduce the immigrants into the Egyptian "way of doing things". The overwhelming lack of non-Egyptian traits (or completed assimilation? to Egyptian ways) in the private/internal sphere of the settlement<sup>621</sup> complicates the search for 'proof for migration' in this case. Thus, in terms of material culture the private/internal sphere did not yield any substantial evidence for immigration – against expectations as this sphere was thought to be extremely conservative and less susceptible to change than public areas of life.<sup>622</sup> The

<sup>618</sup> See Forstner-Müller 2008, 71a.

<sup>619</sup> Cf. Dietler 2010, 18, which defines colonialism as follows "the projects and practices of control marshaled in interactions between societies linked in asymmetrical relations of power and the processes of social and cultural transformation resulting from those practices."

<sup>620</sup> Yasur-Landau 2010, 15–17.

<sup>621</sup> The result of the Elise Richter project 'Foreigners in Ancient Egypt – The Archaeology of Culture Contact in an Egyptian Settlement', V147-G21, awarded by the Austrian Science Fund. The project used, among other things, Stefan Burmeister's approach of change and difference of material culture in the internal/external sphere of the life of the immigrants. Cf. Burmeister 2000.

<sup>622</sup> Burmeister 2000; Yasur-Landau 2010, 16.



argument that the immigrants had no choice but were forced to assimilate entirely can be countered by the archaeological record of the late Middle Kingdom settlement that does not provide evidence for a huge power asymmetry in plan or otherwise. A further counter-argument would be the small number of burials with some Syro-Palestinian cultural traits hinting at a slightly elevated social status. It would appear unlikely that they would be buried in such rich burials, had they been of low status or even less appreciated prisoners of war. It would be necessary for both of these preconditions to be present to put forward a “creole” community as commonly defined.<sup>623</sup> Thus, this post-colonial concept seems largely inapplicable to the known circumstances of the settlement in Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom.

Interestingly, the main object group, in which changes and developments become visible over time, is the pottery at the site. The reason for this concentration on products of the raw material clay may lie in its ubiquitous availability and its potential to accommodate creative formation processes that were perhaps not as regulated as object types made of rarer and more precious materials, which were harder to obtain (metal and [semiprecious] stone). The other exception are glazed scarabs, often made from steatite, which may have been more easily available than the former materials, although there is no known source close to the delta.<sup>624</sup> Other expressions of creativity such as textiles and mats or leather objects are not preserved in the wet soil. While in the settlement, in Stage III, perhaps acculturation proceeds towards Egyptian traditions, as very little hints at Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions, the obvious ceramic imports result from commodity exchange. Only when local production of previously imported ceramic material starts (marginally in Stage III and more comprehensively in Stage IV) a change in the behaviour of the potters at the site becomes clear and, thus, a change in the cultural disposition. The question of why this change happens at this particular point in time, without an obvious new wave of immigrants, remains unanswered. But perhaps this is one of the “group identities founded upon everyday practices”<sup>625</sup> that we see in archaeology (see also below) or some unidentifiable market demand provoking a new habit. Using the borderland processes as template, the mutual engagement with material culture may lead to new practices or the engagement between the social groups required the development of new practices and therefore objects necessary to conduct it.

Much of the historical reconstruction in Syria-Palestine and at Tell el-Dab'a is based specifically on the belief that potters never change their *habitus* and ‘way of doing things’ in making pottery<sup>626</sup> due to the way they learnt this craft by endless repetition of psychomotor routines thus internalising certain working steps by craft-learning. That changes are possible has been shown<sup>627</sup> and therefore care must be taken in generalising such approaches. In order to be able to be sure of meaningful differences observed in chaînes opératoires, minute details need to be observed and published to present data for the evidence necessary to prove such points.<sup>628</sup>

It takes quite a long time after this Stage, IV, until a “fusion of traditions” with inextricable trait lines developed (IV–VIIa) and something new is created out of various traditions mainly in the pottery corpus (see above). This stands in stark contrast to assimilation, which is the total integration of ‘adherents of a cultural tradition’ so they cannot be distinguished anymore. However, that does not happen in the test case detailed here.<sup>629</sup> Another difficulty is to have to prove first that ‘newcomers’ came, who then assimilated. The recent strontium isotope study details a limited influx of people who did not grow up in the delta in each phase of this period, although the numbers seem to decrease in Phases D/3–2 equivalent to Stage VII.<sup>630</sup> In contrast, using the metaphor of ‘material entanglement’ or mutual appropriation, Stage VII is the culmination and materialisation of a pottery-producing tradition incorporating a long

<sup>623</sup> See Bader forthcoming-c.

<sup>624</sup> Aston et al. 2000, 58–59, central and southern Eastern desert.

<sup>625</sup> Jones 1998, 47.

<sup>626</sup> Cf. Bader 2015a for a discussion of scenarios.

<sup>627</sup> Gosselain 2000; Budden and Sofaer 2009.

<sup>628</sup> In this sense the claims about cooking pots at Tell el-Dab'a are still not supported by enough published evidence, cf. Bader forthcoming-a.

<sup>629</sup> Contra Liszka 2012, 239–240, who puts forward a quick acculturation of the ‘Hyksos’.

<sup>630</sup> Stantis et al. 2020a, tab. S1.

local development of ceramic traditions. This model is based on the creativity of local individuals rather than on the immigration of more Syro-Palestinians. This seems corroborated by the limited results of the isotope study, the focus of which were individuals of Area A/II.<sup>631</sup>

In the current case study of the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II there is no obvious trace of any more newcomers noticeable in the material culture and the only non-Egyptian trait is represented by a very small number of flat-based Middle Bronze Age cooking pots and a small number of tombs with some Syro-Palestinian traits – but they are not laid out exclusively according to Syro-Palestinian traditions. To be bold/heretic, it could be argued that ‘Egyptians’ living in the north-eastern delta acculturated to/emulated cultural traits from the north, which they got to know during contacts with the north due to spatial closeness in a borderland situation. This could be a very localised proposition which is only valid for Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II, but it will never be possible to prove beyond doubt either way with the data currently available. This thought experiment was just proposed to prevent us from thinking in too tightly circumscribed boxes dictated by historiographic tradition.

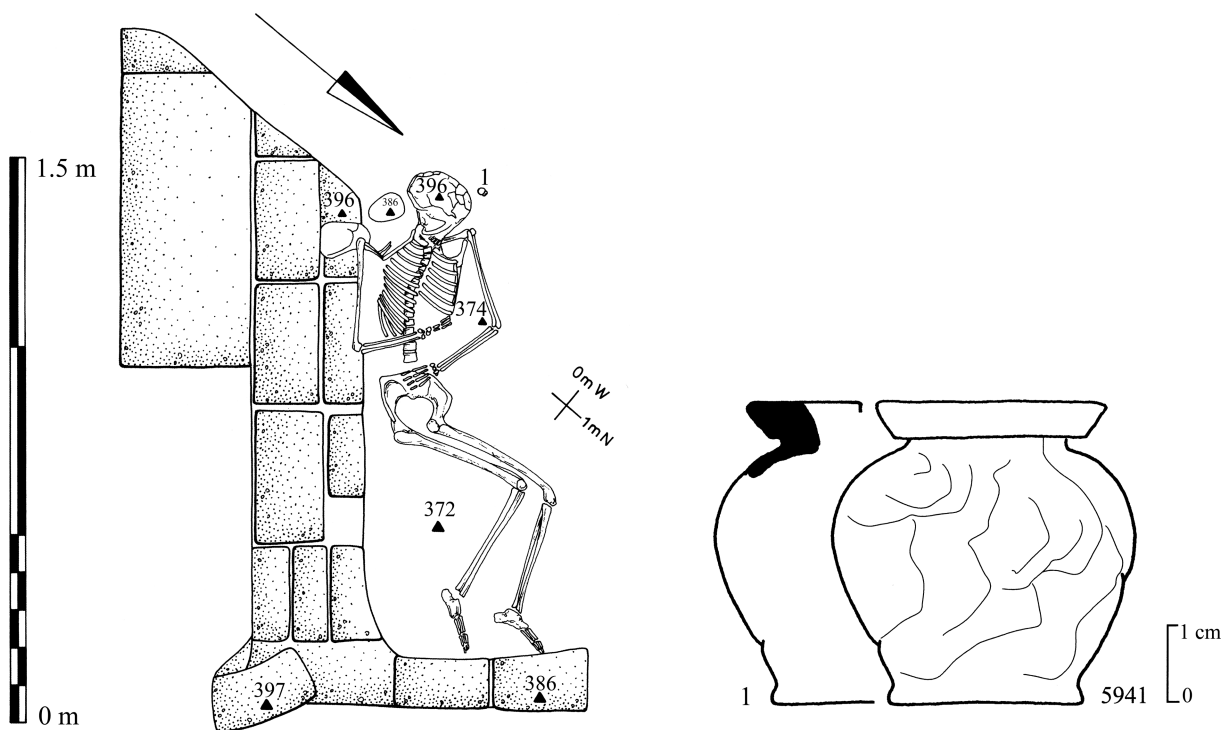


Fig. 16 Tomb A/II-r/18-2 (after Forstner-Müller 2008, fig. 77)

If we consider two tombs more thoroughly, the interpretational dilemma will become obvious because even a culture-historical approach does not yield a clear-cut result: in one tomb a woman was buried, with a corroded toggle pin and an Egyptian cosmetic pot, in a (slightly) contracted position with both shoulders on the ground (Fig. 16).<sup>632</sup> The decision as to which cultural sphere this individual belonged (or to which her bereaved relatives assigned her by placing these items into her tomb) is not easy to make. Isotopic analysis has been conducted on one of this woman's teeth and shows that this particular woman grew up elsewhere herself, whether in Syria-Palestine or the Nile Valley is currently

<sup>631</sup> Stantis et al. 2020a.

<sup>632</sup> Forstner-Müller 2008, figs. 77–78, A/II-r/18, grave 2.

unknown.<sup>633</sup> However, the addition of a cosmetic vessel and the largely ‘Egyptian’-style tomb architecture exemplifies the use of cultural features from both cultural backgrounds. Apart from that, as stressed before, the biology does not influence cultural behaviour; the socio-cultural environment does. It need not be the culture “she was born into” because the genes do not dictate which kind of cosmetic pot one uses. The argument is circular: if we assume that she is an ‘Asiatic’, the Egyptian-style traits are those that she acculturated to, but if we assume she was ‘Egyptian’, she acculturated towards Syro-Palestinian habits. The same holds true for the woman in the stone sarcophagus with purely Egyptian-style burial gifts who was buried in a supine position (Fig. 17).<sup>634</sup> The circumstances attest an affinity to Egyptian burial traditions. Does the fact that the burial was in a room behind a screen wall increase the possibility that she was of Syro-Palestinian ancestry? Not to forget the other local woman of A/II-n/16-no 2 (see Tab. 2) buried with some Middle Bronze Age cultural affinities who should be mentioned here again: while the pottery is entirely Egyptian containing sheep and goat offerings, she also had a toggle pin. In these three cases it becomes particularly clear that the acculturation model assumes too much from the beginning and that scientific analyses may shed light on biological ancestry but fail to explain the modalities of the use of material culture and this in turn is rooted in the socio-cultural traditions of any one environment/unit. It seems that acculturation theories work particularly well with the culture-historical paradigm, at least superficially.

Another factor in the thinking pattern leading to the assertion that people displaying burial customs or other Near Eastern traits can only be Near Easterners because of the stout belief that the Egyptian central authority would not have tolerated any other burial customs than traditional Egyptian ones to be used if it had been strong enough to prevent this from happening. But, after all, what we are seeing at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> is not a ram skin as Sinuhe states.<sup>635</sup>

The use of concepts of cultural mixing, in particular more recently hybridity,<sup>636</sup> does not entirely abandon the culture-historical paradigm or the ‘trait-list’ approach, assigning the traditions, out of which objects develop, amongst others to ethnic identities. Defining ‘hybrid types’, also depends on a rigid culture-historical view, which does not do sufficient justice to the creative potential of ancient crafts people and the fact that culture is neither bounded nor ‘pure’. When people with a different cultural background meet, an exchange of ideas takes place and finds material expressions sometimes, if not always. Creativity and connectivity were likely at work in ancient times. It is rather a modern rigid imagination and the need to categorise things that invents neat boxes to file cultural features in order to label phenomena, which then do not need to be further investigated because everything seems clear about them. Thus, the presence of a (virtual) ‘space/place’ between cultures is currently the best option for a model to explain the findings of the case study which may be called a ‘Third Space’, a materialised borderland situation or one scenario of several depoliticised cultural entanglement scenarios (see Chapter 2.5).

Finally, I would like to advocate a more differentiated view on the inhabitants in Area A/II of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> in the late Middle Kingdom. While we will probably never know for sure, it seems rather unlikely that only ‘Egyptians’ lived there at this time as is the opposite proposition that only ‘Asiatics’ spent their lives at that site. Moreover, the possibility must be considered that even other individuals from other geographical areas found a home in this place, if indeed a harbour and economic hub developed there that early, which to date is not proven.

“Group identities are founded often upon everyday practices and the material domains associated with them”<sup>637</sup> – and in the case of Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom this seems to be the definitely interwoven socio-cultural flavour to be found in Development Stage III.

<sup>633</sup> Stantis et al. 2020a, tab. S1. The researchers expect that the difference between delta and Nile Valley isotope levels will be marginal. Implicitly they seem to suspect an origin from outside of Egypt.

<sup>634</sup> Bietak 1991b, A/II-n/12, grave 4, figs. 8–9.

<sup>635</sup> B197–198, “you will not be put in the skin of a ram, when your grave is made”, cf. Gardiner 1909; Ritner et al. 2005, 62; Smith 2018, 132.

<sup>636</sup> E.g. Budka 2018, 163–164. See Stockhammer 2012, 1–3, for a critique.

<sup>637</sup> Jones 1998, 47.

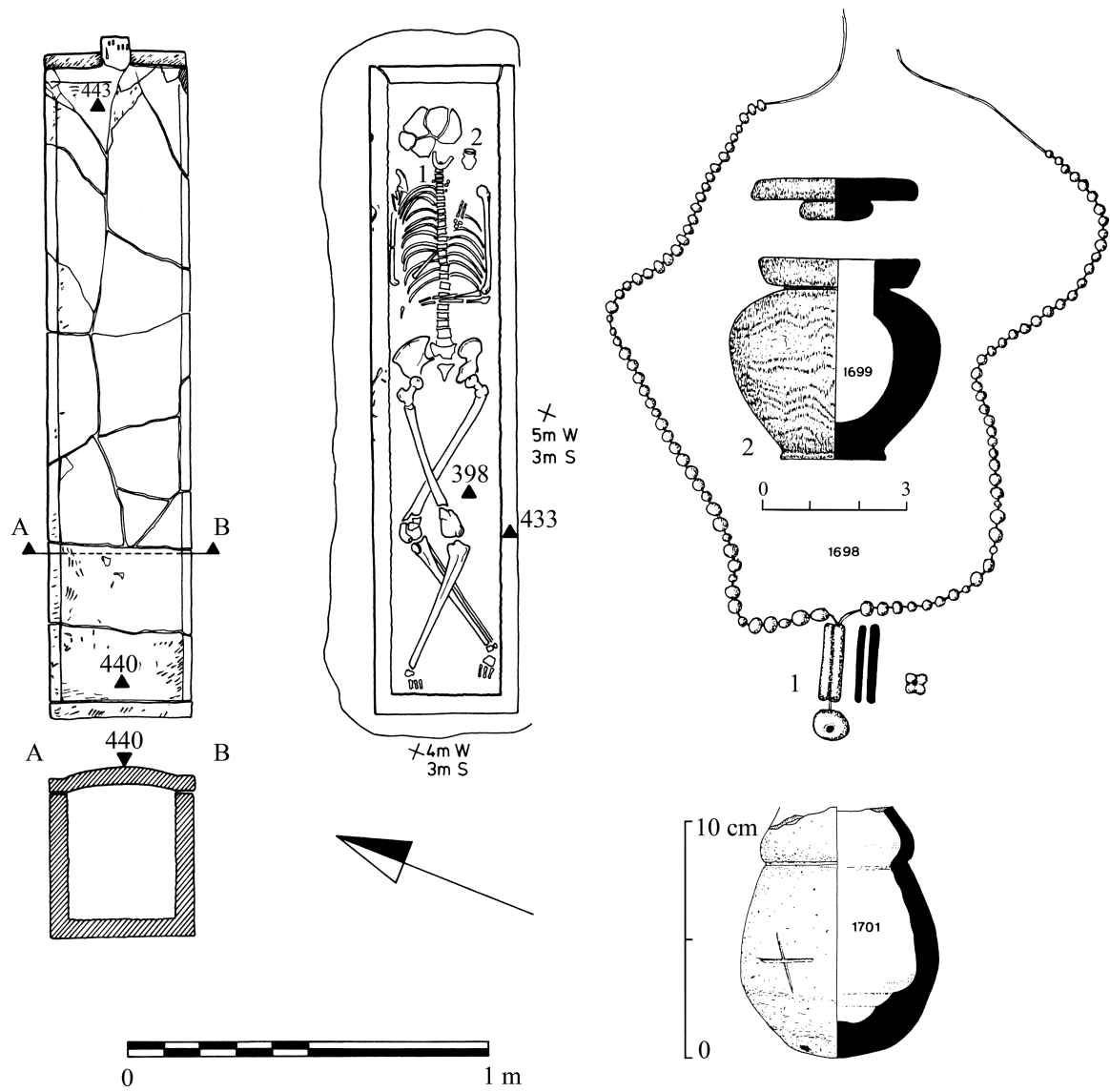


Fig. 17 Tomb A/II-n/12-4 (after Bietak 1991b, figs. 8–9)



## 5. FUTURE PROSPECTS

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The most important step towards a better understanding of the ‘phenomena of cultural encounter’ manifest in material culture is an appropriate description by means of words and illustrative material of the outcome of such phenomena in order to be able to assess them and relate them to other case studies. The terminology used is perhaps less important<sup>638</sup> than actual examples and their number and the abolition of purely binary categories, which do not leave other options and are therefore too rigid to be useful. It is extremely frustrating to read about, for example, the ‘imitation of something’ because usually neither the ‘imitation’ nor that ‘something’ is illustrated and described sufficiently, so that it remains impossible to form one’s own opinion in retracing the comparison suggested in case studies.

The point of this study is not to doubt or deny the existence of contact or the presence of individuals of non-Egyptian origin at Tell el-Dab’a overall or to try and find out whence they had come but to study the material culture at a liminal site in a borderland between Egypt and Syria-Palestine and to determine the way in which the creative powers of the otherwise voiceless inhabitants of Tell el-Dab’a were inspired and how they used their immediate socio-cultural environment to produce the things they handled every day and how this situation differs at other sites. It would be extremely interesting to compare effects and stages of development of material culture from other liminal areas, e.g. at Aswan where the Egyptian and Nubian cultural traditions were in close geographical and physical contact as well as to carry out further research in the regionalism of material culture and what causes it in presumed ‘inner Egyptian’ contexts without influences that are *a priori* connected to non-Egyptians. Thus, this is another result of this study: it seems increasingly unlikely that any two sites would provide an exactly parallel development of material culture but while this is a valid suggestion it also has to be tested.

The material culture can be compared to multiple strands of reeds of different derivation which are then interwoven into a mat with unique patterns that may be similar to each other but never exactly the same. This is due to the fact that various items and traditions that are used develop according to “the way of doing things” with input from various social groups and in different ways as well as due to local circumstances and elements. Thus, such strands of the mat may have a very local derivation as well as more distant features.

An important task for future research is to study material culture in more detail to tease out the spaces between types in typologies, into which modern researchers force ‘things’ sometimes and make them reveal their inherent information on ancient practices. In addition, the case study may serve as an example to show that over-generalisation robs us of the possibility of recognising diversity. At the same time, the study of ‘things’ is not the end in itself, but a means to obtain an additional perspective. This can only be gained, if one knows the “stuff”.

Historical narratives based on human-thing relations in the widest sense are but one aspect of historical events and the multitude of such relations does not necessarily exclude some of them. The language component, for example, cannot be treated at all in this case study. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that these theoretical considerations are just that and that they – inevitably – are in flux as new data are collected, new theoretical models are developed and thinking about things changes. These

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<sup>638</sup> Of course, this is an oversimplification, but when Yasur-Landau (2010, 19) writes “innovation may then be expressed in finding new uses for ‘foreign’ pottery types by connecting them to existing behavioural patterns,” it describes an actual process and rings very similar to what is described by Stockhammer 2012, 49–50, and called relational entanglement.



reconstructions, however, can never be detached from the sum of philosophical thought of modern researchers and, thus, remain *etic* in nature and cannot demand to be the exclusive truth.

At the end of this study an appeal to scholars does not seem out of place, due to the all-enveloping presence of the themes of mobility, migration and identities and the relevance of such research to modern themes and pressing problems. Any simplified presentation of complex results of research into ancient migration runs the risk of being used in the modern discourse in ways not anticipated or intended by the researchers.<sup>639</sup> Undertheorised results of aDNA analyses especially might lead to unwanted attention by modern politics for hidden agendas, if the scientific community is not extremely circumspect. On the other hand, knowledge obtained and used wisely may enhance a global understanding of mobility as a natural part of being human and humankind in general.

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<sup>639</sup> Insoll 2007, 7.

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## APPENDIX

Description of pottery and objects shown in Figures 8 to 15

Figure	Register number	Rim/base diameter	Fabric*	Surface treatment	Type	Phase
8a	2531	9.5	I-b-1?	Uncoated, red rim band	Hemispherical cup	G/3-1
8b	2531a	9.0	I-b-1	Uncoated, red rim band	Hemispherical cup	G/3-1
8c	2531b	10.0	I-b-2	Uncoated, red rim band	Hemispherical cup	G/3-1
8d	K1951/55168	41.0	I-c-2	Red slip int, uncoated ext	Large dish	G/3-1
8e	K1128/41130	22.0	I-c-2	Uncoated	Medium dish	G/3-1
8f	K456/10401	26.0	I-c-1	Uncoated	Large dish	G/3-1
8g	K453/10568	10.0	I-b-2	Red slip and polish ext, uncoated int	Ring stand	G/3-1
8h	K730/19026	10.4	I-b-2	Red slip and polish ext, uncoated int	Ring stand	G/3-1
8i	K576/14666	16.0	I-c-2	Uncoated	Ring stand	G/3-1
8j	K3002/71063	11.0	I-c-2	Red slip int/ext	Beer jar	G/4
8k	K3002/71058	9.0	I-c-2	Uncoated	Beer jar	G/4
8l	K518a/11773	10.0?	I-c-2	Red slip ext	Beer jar	G/3-1
8m	K937/70145	9.0	I-c-2	Uncoated	Beer jar	G/3-1
8n	K4229/71874	10.0	I-c-2	Uncoated	Beer jar	G/3-1
8o	K518a/11775	9.6	I-c-2	Red slip ext	Beer jar	G/3-1
8p	K504/11425	10.0	I-c-2	Uncoated	Beer jar	G/3-1
8q	K504/11424	9.6	I-c-2	Uncoated	Beer jar	G/3-1
8r	K518a/11776	10.0	I-c-2	Red slip ext	Beer jar	G/3-1
9a	2530	8.5	I-c-2	Upper body red slip ext, rim int	Beer jar	G/3-1
9b	2545a	9.8	I-c-2	Red slip ext	Beer jar	G/3-1
9c	2545b	7.8	I-c-2	Uncoated	Beer jar	G/3-1
10a	K509/11536	23.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10b	K566/14257	23.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10c	K584/15010	23.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10d	K566/14256	24.0	I-e-2	White slip on rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10e	K566/14251	25.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10f	K584/15009	32.0	I-e-2	obscured by blackening	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10g	K543/13020	26.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10h	K576/14667	27.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/slip int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10i	K576/14668	28.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
10j	K543/13023	29.0	I-e-2	White slip ext/rim int	Restricted bowl	G/3-1
11a	2583e	24.0	II-c	Uncoated	Storage jar	G/3-1
11b	K518/11783	21.0	II-c-2	Uncoated	Storage jar	G/3-1
12a	K1061/33942	40.0	I-e-3	Uncoated	Straight sided vessel	G/3-1

Figure	Register number	Rim/base diameter	Fabric*	Surface treatment	Type	Phase
12b	K2667/70800	30.0	I-e-2	Smoke blackened	Restricted vessel	G/3-1
12c	K4056/71738	15.0	I-e-2	Uncoated	Restricted vessel	G/3-1
12d	K1171/70040	32.0	I-e-2	White slipped rim, horizontal burnish int	Bowl	G/3-1
12e	K2718/70888	11.0	I-e-2	White slip ext	Closed vessel	G/3-1
13a	2528	8.4	IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Jug	G/3-1
13b	2530c/10688	6.0	IV	Brown slip and burnishing ext	Jug	G/3-1
13c	2530c/10691		IV	Brown slip and burnishing ext	Jug	G/3-1
13d	2530c/10689		IV	Brown slip and burnishing ext	Jug	G/3-1
13e	2530c/10692		IV	Brown slip and burnishing ext	Jug	G/3-1
13f	2530c/10690		IV	Brown slip and burnishing ext	Jug	G/3-1
13g	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13h	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13i	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13j	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13k	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13l	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13m	2530d/10684		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13n	2859		I-d?	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13o	2867		I-d?	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
13p	K1128/41142		IV-2	Red slip and burnishing ext	Juglet	G/3-1
14a	2532c		IV	Uncoated, combed pattern	Amphora	G/3-1
14b	K551/13543	12.0	IV-1	Uncoated	Amphora	G/3-1
14c	K551/13546	11.4	IV-1	Uncoated	Amphora	G/3-1
14d	K551/13547	11.4	IV-2	Uncoated	Amphora	G/3-1
14e	K551/13548	11.4	IV-2	Uncoated	Amphora	G/3-1
14f	K551/13544	10.6	IV-2	Uncoated	Amphora	G/3-1
14g	K551/13545	13.0	IV-2	Uncoated	Amphora	G/3-1
15a	K551		Limestone		Grinding stone	G/3-1
15b	2509		Silex/chert		Sickle blade	G/3-1
15c	2659		Limestone		Mortar	G/3-1
15d	2660		Limestone		Quern	G/3-1

Abbreviations: int interior  
ext exterior

\*Fabric designation follows the Tell el-Dab'a system, cf. Bietak 1991, 324-330.





