

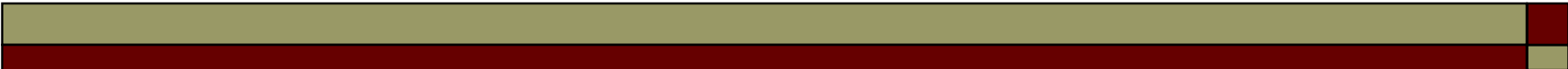
Week 1 - **Materiality and Death**

Mon (1) – The archaeology of death and burial – an overview

HPFY3007

Talking to the Dead

Dr. Katharina Zinn



Talking to the Dead – human and material remains

Archaeology of Death?

□ Why?

Archaeology of Life?

□ Why?

Talking to the Dead – human and material remains

Archaeology of Death?

- ❑ Physical remains of the dead (bone, skin, other tissue)
- ❑ Materials of the past meant for the afterlife – specific production process?
- ❑ Entangled pasts – funerary practices and beliefs

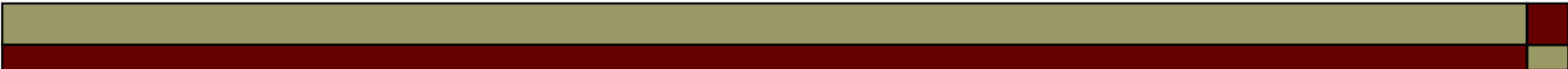
Archaeology of Life?

- ❑ Information of the **lived** past: demography, diet, environment, health, body alterations, ...
- ❑ Grave goods – info about production processes, used materials, the way to live your life
- ❑ Customs: cremation, fully body burial, sacrifice, ... → ALWAYS within their actual lived context

The Nature of Sources

or

How do we know what we know?



The nature of sources

- ❑ Tracing death in the past – Think of burials!
- ❑ Burial – often synonymous with disposing of the corpse (western civilisations), despite the fact that in UK is mostly cremation
- ❑ Remind ourselves – burial (inhumation, interment) only ONE method to distance dead from the living
- ❑ Act of burial and attached material culture provides us with a huge array of information regarding funerary practices and social context

Skeletal material of a child burial

Amarna South
Cemetery



Mummies

Seti I



**Elderly Lady (likely to be Queen Tiye,
Wife of Amenhotep III
and mother of
Akhenaton, grandmother
Tutankhamun**

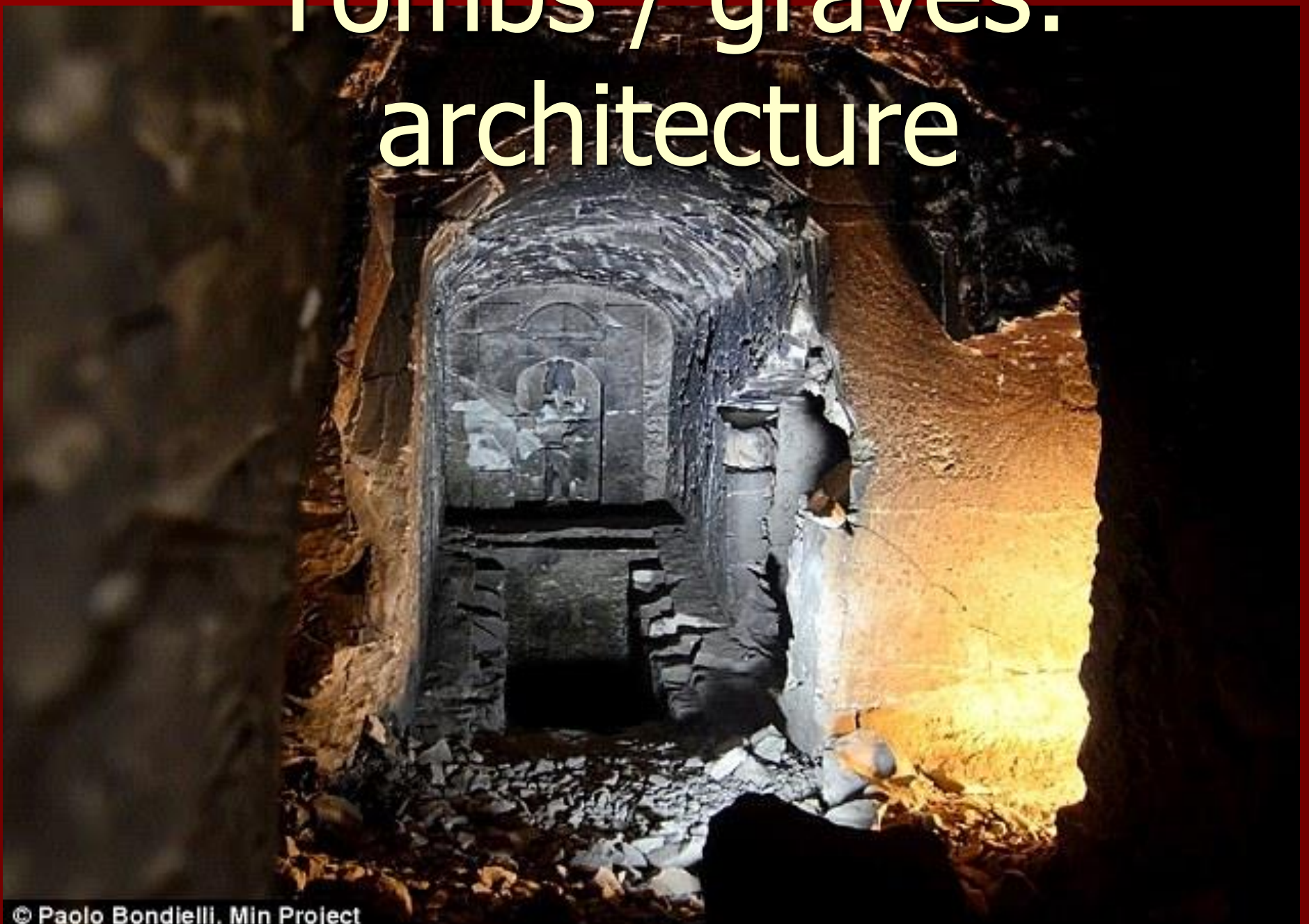




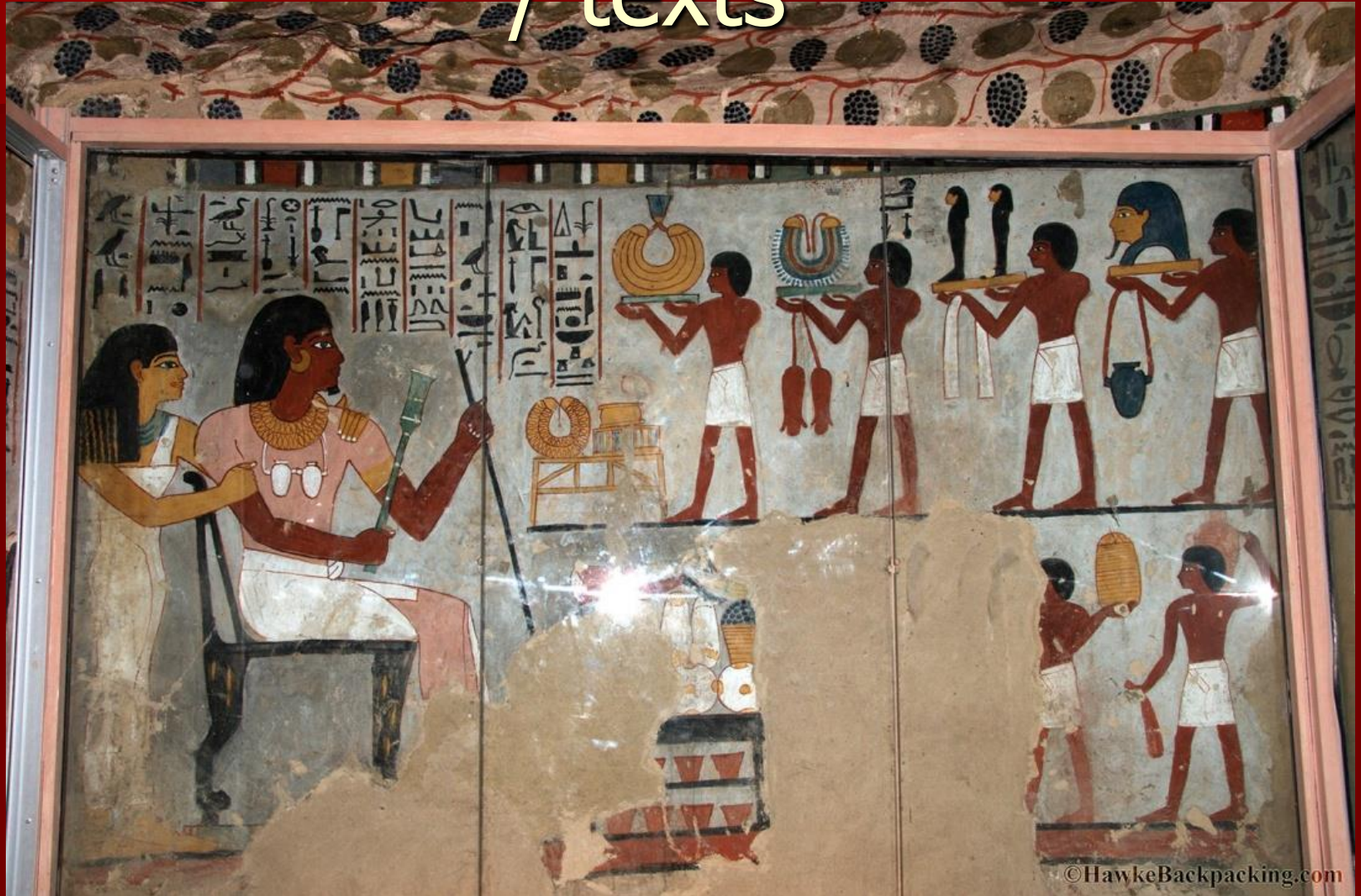
Bodies

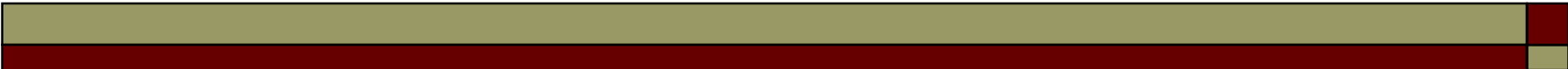
- Info on gender, age, health

Tombs / graves: architecture



Tombs/graves: representations / texts





Bodies were interred into tombs/graves

- ❑ Info on gender, age, health
- ❑ Social status → cemetery organisation, grave orientation, body arrangement
- ❑ Echoes contexts among the living (grave goods, body adornments, food/drink)
- ❑ Specifically produced graves or usage of natural features?
- ❑ Sacrifice – what did the culture believe in?
- ❑ Separations of the dead and the living (fluid boundaries)

Textual Evidence beyond the tomb

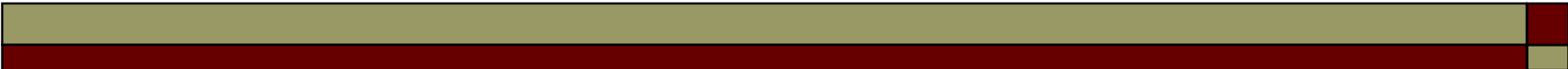
Book of the Dead



UCL 16244

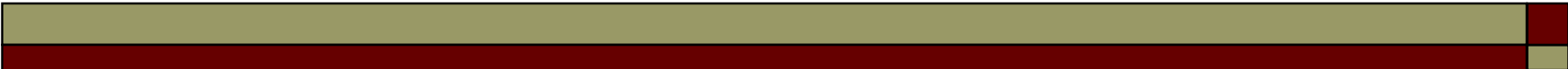


(1) A sister speaks to her brother. The sole friend Nefersefkhi. (2) A great cry of grief! To whom is a cry of grief useful? You are given it for the crimes committed against my daughter evilly, evilly, (3) though I have done nothing against him, nor have I consumed his property. He has not given anything to my daughter. Voice offerings are made (4) to the spirit in return for watching over the earthly survivor. Make you your reckoning (5) with who(ever) is doing what is painful to me, because my voice is true against any dead man or any dead woman (6) who is doing these things against my daughter.



Material Culture

- ❑ Excavation on settlement sites: large amounts of objects of diverse kinds, usually broken and discarded rather than lost or deliberately buried
- ❑ require skilled examination and recording
- ❑ offer an incomplete picture of the material, but reflect aspects of the lives and activities of people
- ❑ study of material culture needs to consider user's experience of things, how manufactured and how reached user → history of technology and study of distribution networks



Material Culture

- ❑ Some classes of objects = heightened awareness of spiritual forces
- ❑ Excavations of the first half of the 20th century = large scale: only possible to do this by being highly selective
- ❑ As soon as one accepts that fragments, if studied with care, can yield more or less the same information as complete pieces, and as soon as one introduces the sieving of loose debris as it is excavated, the number of artefacts to be kept and recorded hugely increases.

Material culture – to endure?

- Perishable vs. non-perishable artefacts
 - Everywhere the same?
 - Thing Wales vs. Ancient Egypt
- What is reality?
 - What is represented by the sources?
 - Is self-representation a form of reality?
 - Dead bodies – what they wore, tattoos, ...
 - What chosen as grave goods?
 - Reality beyond the interred body?





Summary – aspects of the archaeology of death and burial

- ❑ Learning from the dead about the living (society as such)
- ❑ Reading the body – boundaries between science, humanities and philosophy
- ❑ Status, rank and power in this and the afterlife
- ❑ Gender and kinship
- ❑ Placing the dead (separation of cemeteries and settlements?!?)
- ❑ Human experience of death – rites, rituals and religion
- ❑ The heritage of death – modern politics and identity
- ❑ Death and memory