

AL1

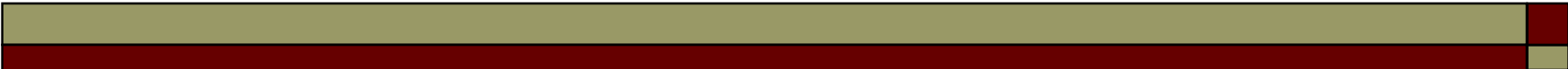
Week 1, Monday

The materiality of death

HPAH5080/6080: Ancient Lives in Death

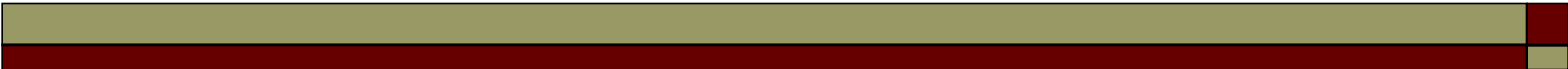
Dr Katharina Zinn

Associate Professor in Egyptian Archaeology and
Heritage



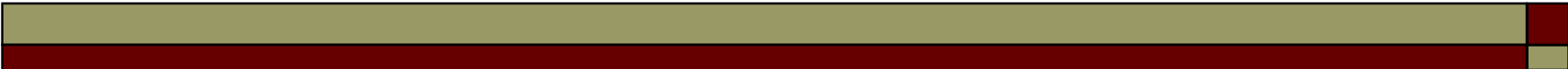
The Materiality of Death

- Aspects of the archaeology of death
- Stolen from a book
 - **The Materiality of Death** by Fredrik Fahlander & Terje Oestigaard. Oxford : Archaeopress, 2008. BAR international series, 1768 → published papers presented at EAA 2005



The Materiality of Death

- What does *materiality of death* mean for you?



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- Subtitle:
 - Bodies
 - Burials
 - Beliefs

Materiality of Death

**LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT
EGYPT...**

Bodies

Seti I - mummy



**MMA 22.2.21 -
representation**



Sennefer equipped bodies



TT ? (Nebamun), Banquet scene entertained bodies



Burials



© Paolo Bondielli. Min Project

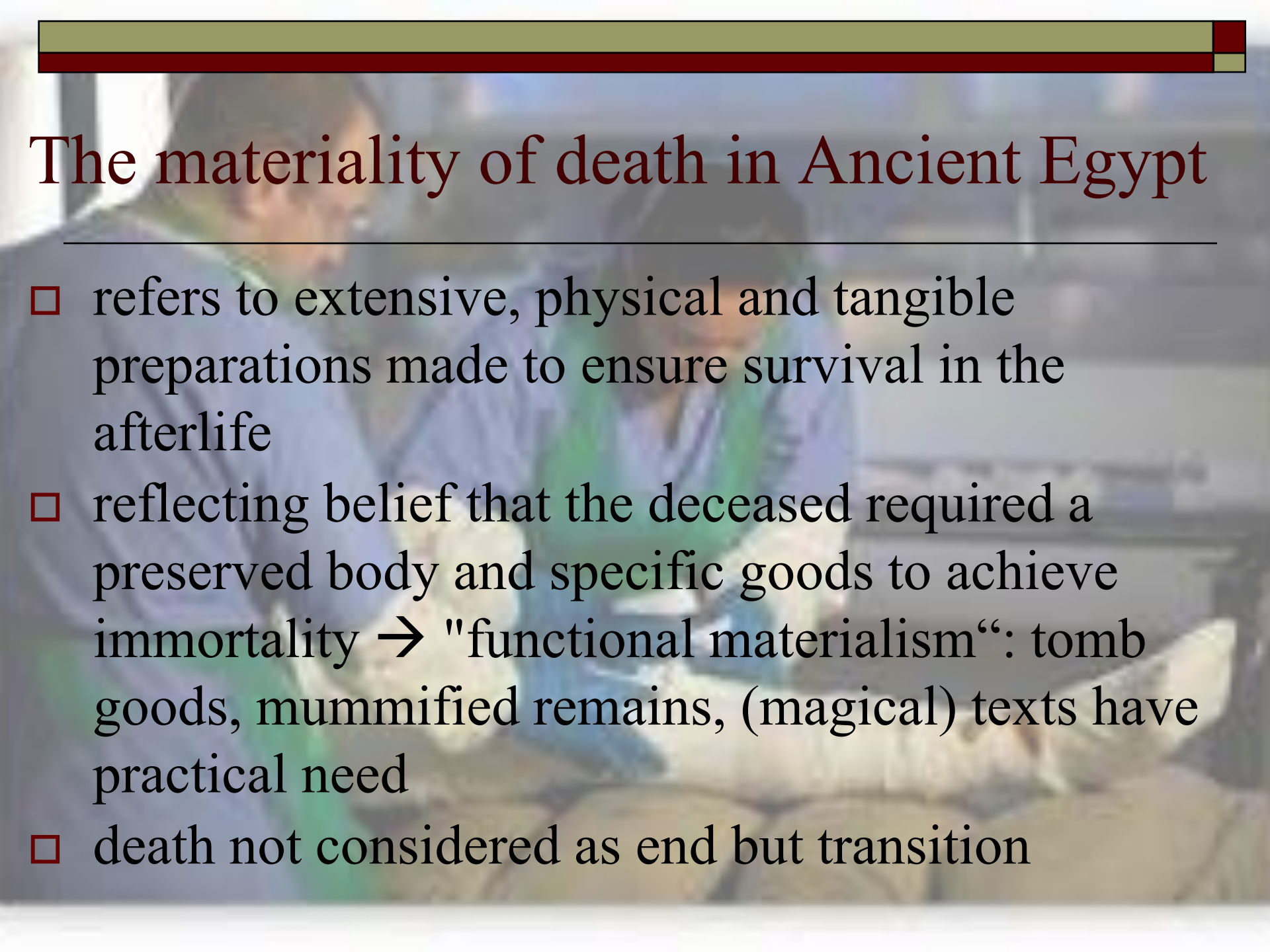
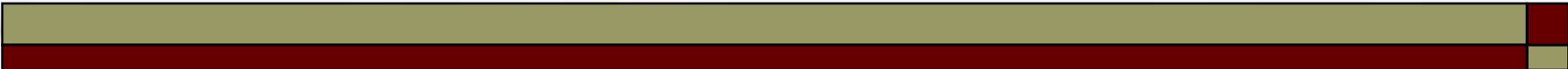




Beliefs

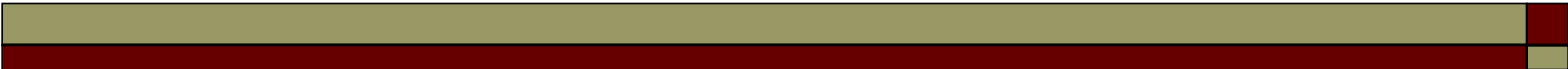
or

**what material do we have to “guess”
beliefs and ideas?**



The materiality of death in Ancient Egypt

- refers to extensive, physical and tangible preparations made to ensure survival in the afterlife
- reflecting belief that the deceased required a preserved body and specific goods to achieve immortality → "functional materialism": tomb goods, mummified remains, (magical) texts have practical need
- death not considered as end but transition



Key Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Materiality of Death

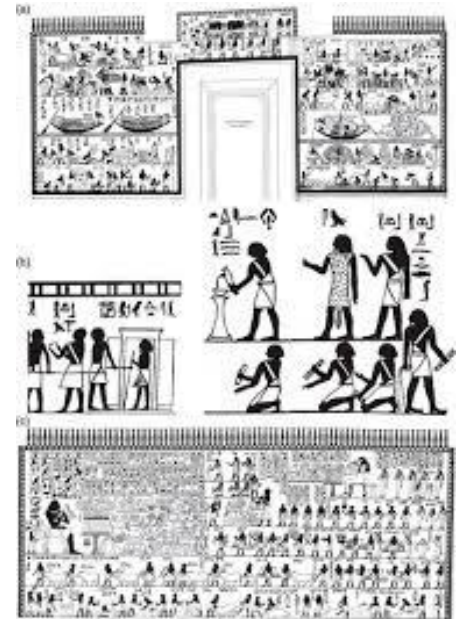
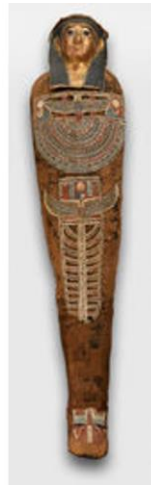
- ❑ Mummification as Preservation: dehydration with natron, treated with resins, wrapped in linen as permanent vessel for Ka (life force) and Ba (“soul”)
- ❑ Tomb as "House of Eternity": made from durable / non-perishable materials, protect the physical body, space for the deceased, gateway to the underworld
- ❑ Grave Goods and Utilitarian Objects: items of daily life, including furniture, clothing, food, drink, weapons
- ❑ Servant Figurines and Shabtis: as labour force
- ❑ Amulets and Magical Protection: Jewellery, heart scarabs to protect body
- ❑ Funerary Texts: spells and incantations to guide the deceased through trials and afterlife

Key Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Materiality of Death

- Social Stratification and Materiality
 - Elite vs. Commoner: elite with elaborate tombs + detailed mummification, commoners often buried in simple graves + fewer, more basic items
 - Informal Workshop Economy: production of coffins, amulets etc. as massive industry that evolved over time, even poorer Egyptians finding ways to ensure a "proper" burial (faience amulets)
- The Role of the Living
 - "Opening of the Mouth" Ceremony: Priests performed rituals, enabled deceased to use their senses, speak, eat in afterlife
 - Ongoing "Maintenance": deceased depend on living for continued offerings
→ materiality of death as long-term, intergenerational responsibility
- Symbolism and Meaning
 - Rebirth / Regeneration: symbolism of material culture – representing resurrection (f.i. scarab beetle equating sun's daily cycle of rebirth)
 - "Going West" to the land of the dead

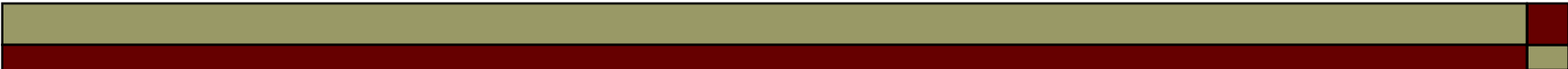
Summary?!

- The focus on the material aspects of death reflected a deep love for life, which Egyptians hoped to continue eternally, viewing the tomb as a necessary, functional vessel rather than merely a final resting place.



Sources

- AE primarily through material culture, written and artistic sources
 - most of it comes out of tombs
- reveal an ancient Egypt directly experienced by Egyptians themselves???
 - Including their belief system
- only small proportion of sources survived, never covered the full spectrum of experience → chance of survival
- Writings: the Egyptians limited themselves in their reflections on their own behaviour and society
- Art: strongly guided by conventions and propriety

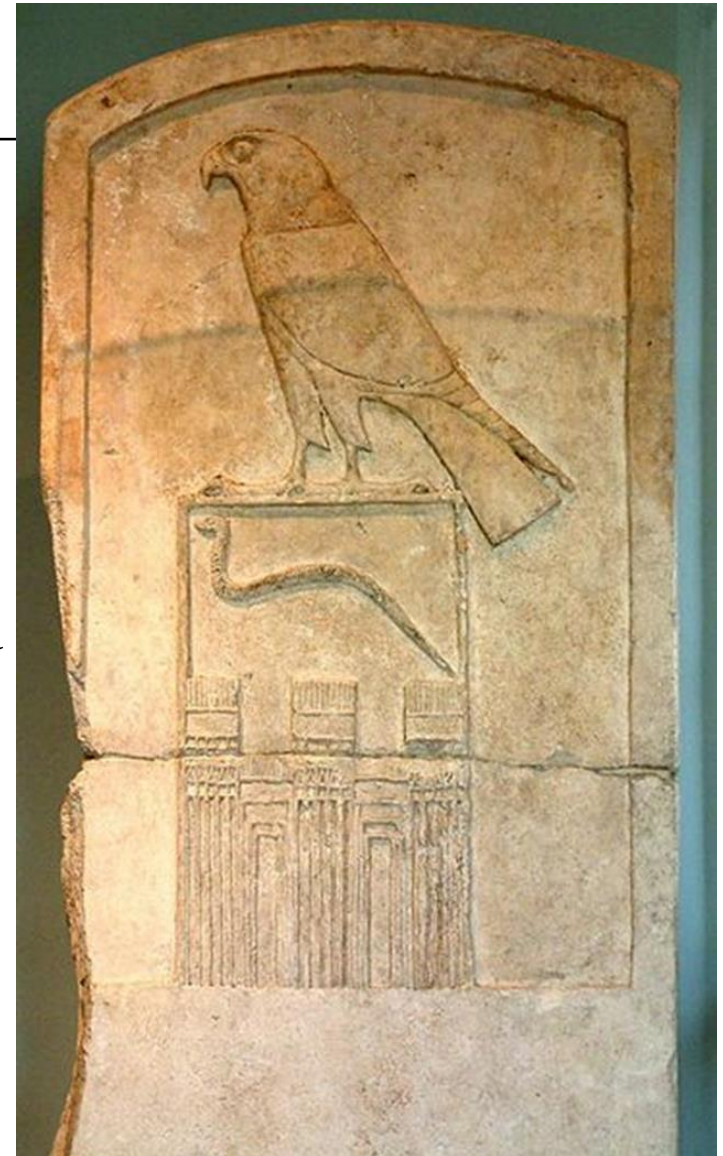


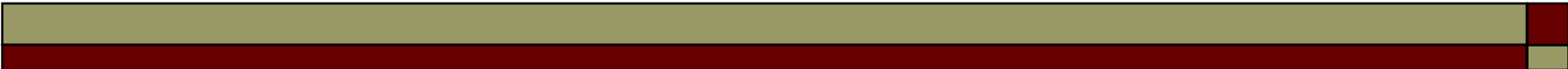
Beliefs captured by

- Architecture
 - Tombs
 - Settlements
 - Ritualistic / religious sites

Beliefs captured by

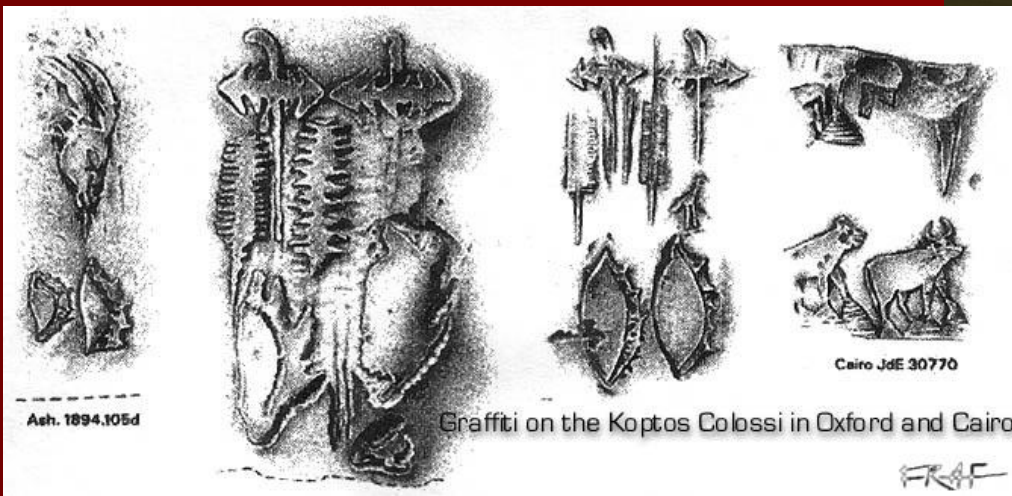
- Architecture
- Art
 - What is art?
 - Are all images art?
 - What is the symbolic behind the images?





Beliefs captured by

- ❑ Architecture
- ❑ Art
- ❑ Archaeological sources
 - Finds
 - Archaeological record
 - Materials used for dating
 - Archaeological reconstructions

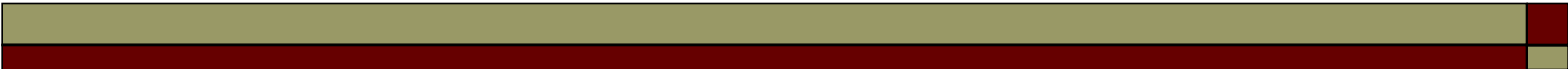


Min colossi Ashmolean Museum



Koptos, Temple of Min (reconstruction)





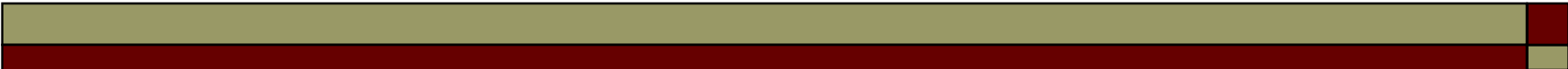
Beliefs captured by

- Architecture
- Art
- Archaeological sources
- Textual sources
 - Papyri, Ostraka, Wooden boards

Textual Evidence

Book of the Dead





Sources available

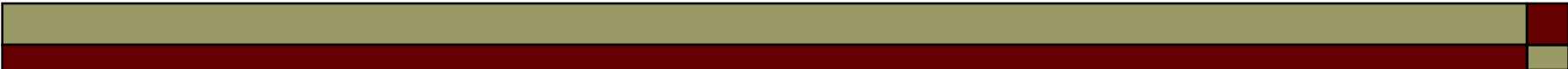
- ❑ Architecture
- ❑ Art
- ❑ Archaeological
- ❑ Textual
 - Papyri, Ostraka, Wooden boards
 - Stela
 - Tomb texts
 - Administrative / Legal texts

Pap. Abbott (BM EA10221): Account of tomb robberies at the end of NK



Scandal in Thebes, 1111BC (year 16 of Ramses IX) – beliefs vs. reality

- The UNSPEAKABLE: tombs of the Pharaohs are being plundered of priceless treasure (tombs violated)
- labourer Amenpanufer arrested for tomb robbery / tortured
- Gives account of realities of late NK (events 4 days during the 16th regnal year of Ramesses IX): cover up of lies and corruption: scandal between Paser (mayor East Bank of Thebes) and Paweraa (mayor West Bank of Thebes)
 - Paser has knowledge of robberies , starts proceedings, but is shown in bad light in the investigations
 - papyrus seems to have been written from the perspective of Paweraa, suspicion that he was involved in the tomb robbery



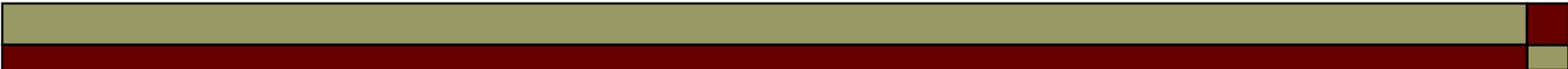
Sources available

- ❑ Architecture
- ❑ Art
- ❑ Archaeological
- ❑ Textual
- ❑ Human remains
 - → often / mostly connected with archaeological evidence
 - Skeletal finds

Skeletal material of a child burial

Amarna South
Cemetery





Sources available

- ❑ Architecture
- ❑ Art
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- ❑ Textual
- ❑ Human remains
 - → often / mostly connected with archaeological evidence
 - Skeletal finds
 - Mummies

Royal mummies

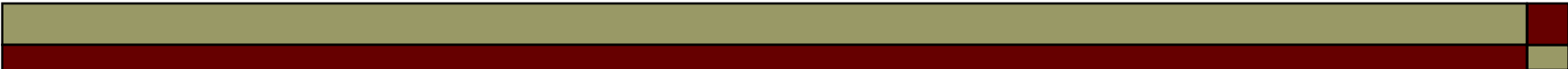


RAMSES II, CALLED "THE GREAT," THE PHAROAH OF THE NEW EMPIRE;
REIGNED B.C. 1494 TO B.C. 1237 (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MUMMY)

SETI I, FATHER OF RAMSES THE GREAT; REIGNED B.C. 1451 TO B.C. 1404
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MUMMY)

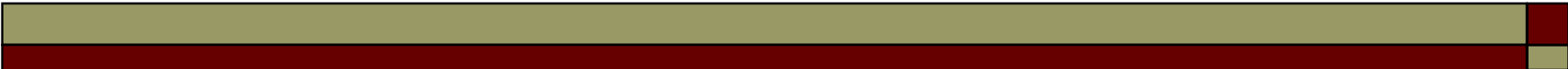
ROYAL MUMMIES RECENTLY UNBANDAGED AT THE BOULAK MUSEUM, EGYPT





Sources available

- ❑ Architecture
- ❑ Art
- ❑ Archaeological
- ❑ Textual
- ❑ Human remains
- ❑ Material culture



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



Now: Imagine you are about to move on into the afterlife and you have one hour to prepare for your **eternal** afterlife

What would you need or want to take with you, why?



The materiality of death in modern heritage context

The Golden Mummy Parade



Case Study

- ❑ Lemos, R. 2018.
Materiality and cultural reproduction in non-elite cemeteries. In: Maynart, E., (eds.). 2018.
Perspectives on materiality in ancient Egypt – agency, cultural reproduction and change edited by Érika Maynart, C. Velloza and R. Lemos.
Oxford Archaeopress. 24-34.
- ❑ <https://www.archaeopress.com/ArchaeopressShop/Public/download.asp?id=%7BD8605B9B-BA5C-4938-AB2E-9ADAF03872D7%7D>