Objects, Temples, Texts: How to deal with sources when capturing Ancient Cvilisations

AHSK6002/6003

Dissertation Module Class

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Evidence and its archaeological questions:

- Explanations of artefacts based on theoretical rules (as rules of authority)
- → different explanations, using the same object
- Must deliver an accurate (as best as possible) description with identification, and cataloguing of finds) → leads to assumptions, should be attempted to explain and prove
- Done via a viable hypothesis (model: presenting phenomena in a logical/objective way)
- MODEL NEEDS TO BE EVALUATED on the basis of accessible data

Ancient Civilisations: the “problem” of the sources

- Sources are open to interpretation
- Everybody, especially with different knowledge about your topic, will read them differently
- Needs to be described
  - Provide **enough information** to make yourself understood
  - But do **NOT overload** the reader (an marker!)
- if too much for word limit, move to appendix

Appendix: What to put in?

- Everything necessary for your dissertation, but has no space in text corpus
- supplementary material at the end of a book, article, document, or other text, usually of an explanatory, statistical, or bibliographic nature
  - Illustrations (maps, images, drawings, …)
  - Catalogue entries
  - Charts
  - Wikis
  - Glossaries
  - …

Appendix: formalia

- Needs to be preceded by a fully referenced contents page

Appendix A2

Some appendix again

A2.1 section in appendix again

A2.2 section in appendix again

A2.2.1 sub section in appendix again

The Nature of Sources
or
How do we know what we know?

Sources

Ancient Egypt (as an example)

- been studied primarily through written but mostly artistic sources that survived
- reveal an ancient Egypt directly experienced by Egyptians themselves
- BUT: Only tiny proportion of sources survived, never covered the full spectrum of experience
- Egyptians seems to be limited in their reflections on their own behaviour and society
- Art/Architecture: strongly guided by conventions and propriety

Possible purposes of art/craft/ material culture in Ancient Civilisations

Ceremonial - ritual, celebration, artworks created to support worship ceremonies

Artistic expression - artwork to express or communicate emotions, ideas, feelings or to beautify objects

Narrative - artworks that tell stories, describe and illustrate experiences

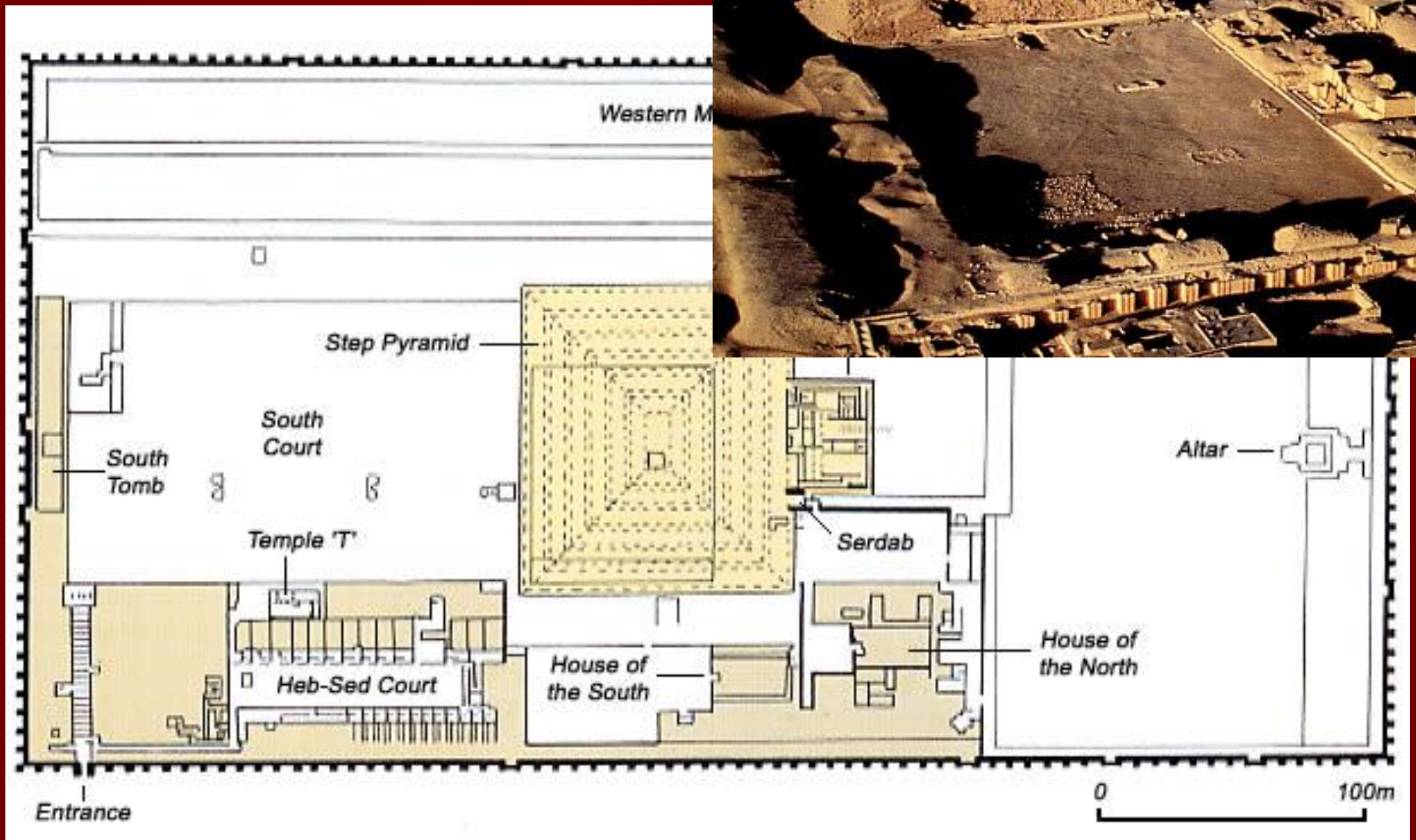
Functional - artistic objects used in everyday life that serve an actual purpose

Persuasive - artworks that promote ideas, philosophies, or products

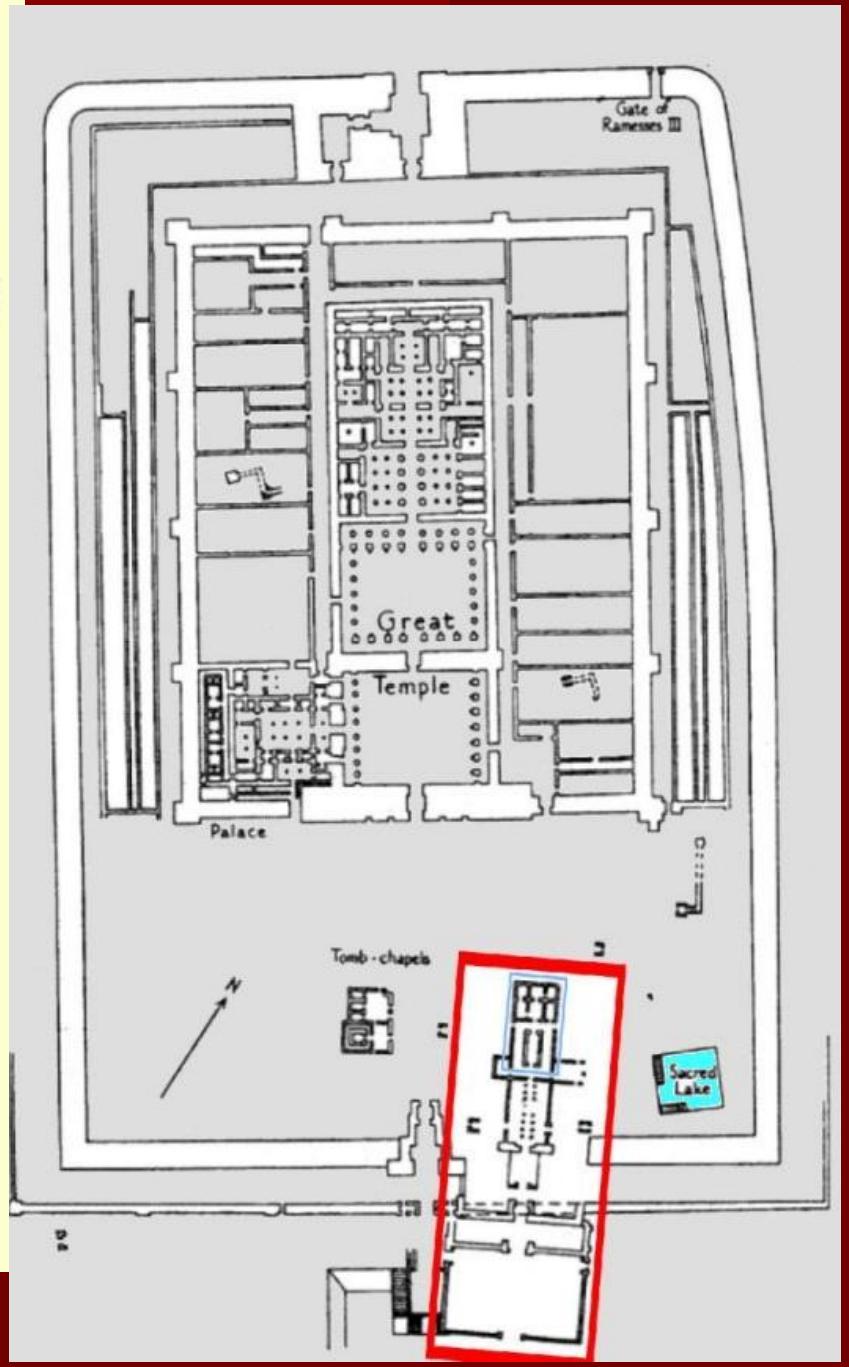
Sources available

- Architecture
  - Tombs
  - Settlements
  - Ritualistic / religious sites

Communicate this to the reader



To Karnak
Chapel of Sarapis
Nectanebo I Sphinxes
Chapel of Hathor
Pylon
Remaining Obelisk
Kiosk of Shabaka
Tuhmosis Shrine
Peristyle Courtyard of Ramesses II
Mosque of Abu el-Haggag
Colonnade
Sun Court of Amenhotep III
Hypostyle Hall
Roman Sanctuary
Birth Room
Barque Shrine of Alexander the Great
Offering Table Room
Main Sanctuary or Statue Room
N



Sources available

- Architecture
- Art
  - What is art?
  - Are all images art?
  - What is the symbolism behind the images?
  - Tomb texts
  - Stela

Paris, Louvre 290

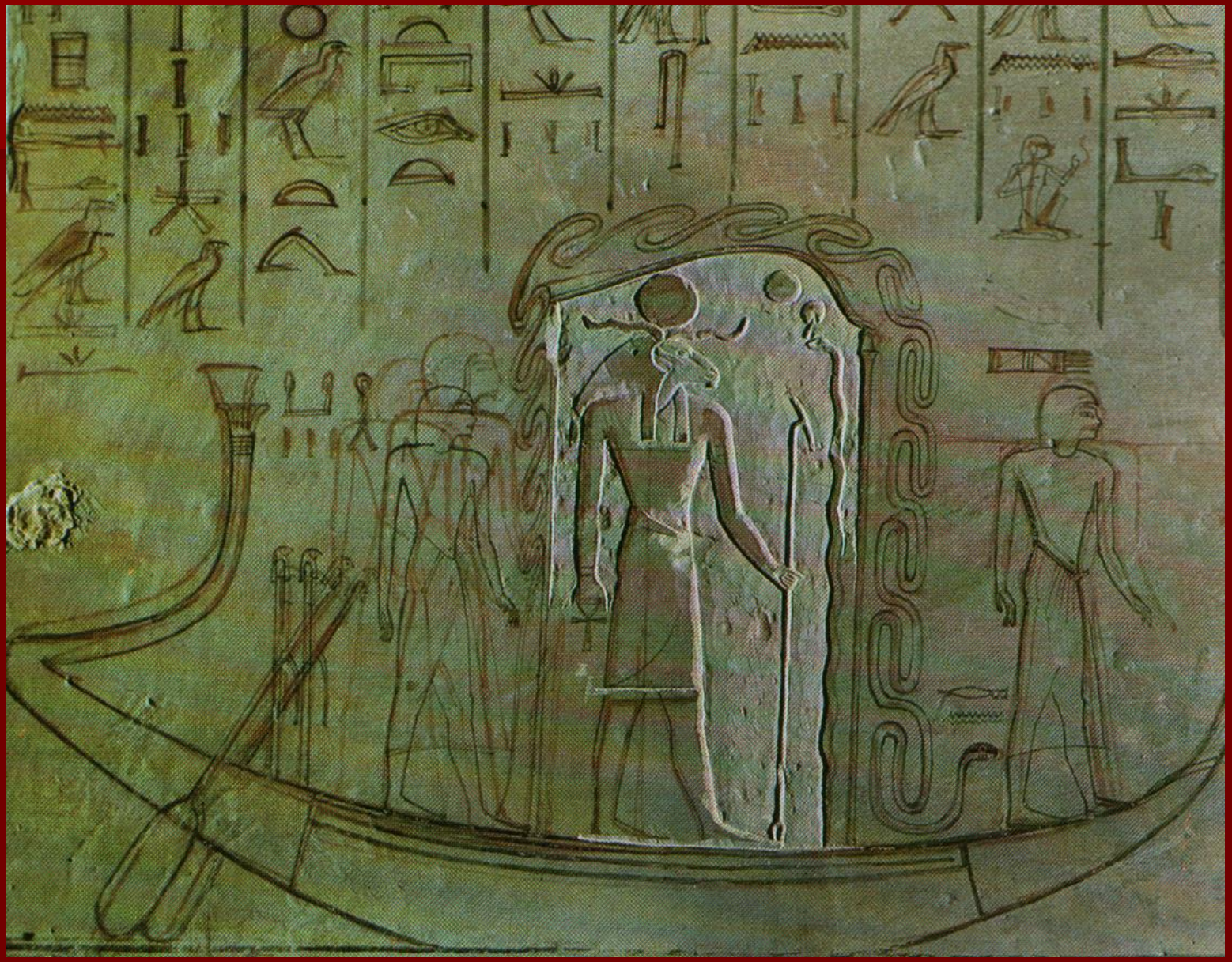
Sources available

- Architecture
- Art
- Archaeological
  - Finds
  - Archaeological record
  - Materials used for dating

Sources available

- Architecture
- Art
- Archaeological
- Textual

Royal Tomb of Horemhab (KV 57)



Sources available

- Architecture
- Art
- Archaeological
- Textual
  - Stela
  - Tomb texts
  - Administrative and legal texts
  - Chronologies

Abydos- Temple Sethos I, King List

Sources available

- Architecture
- Art
- Archaeological
- Textual
- Material culture

Material Culture

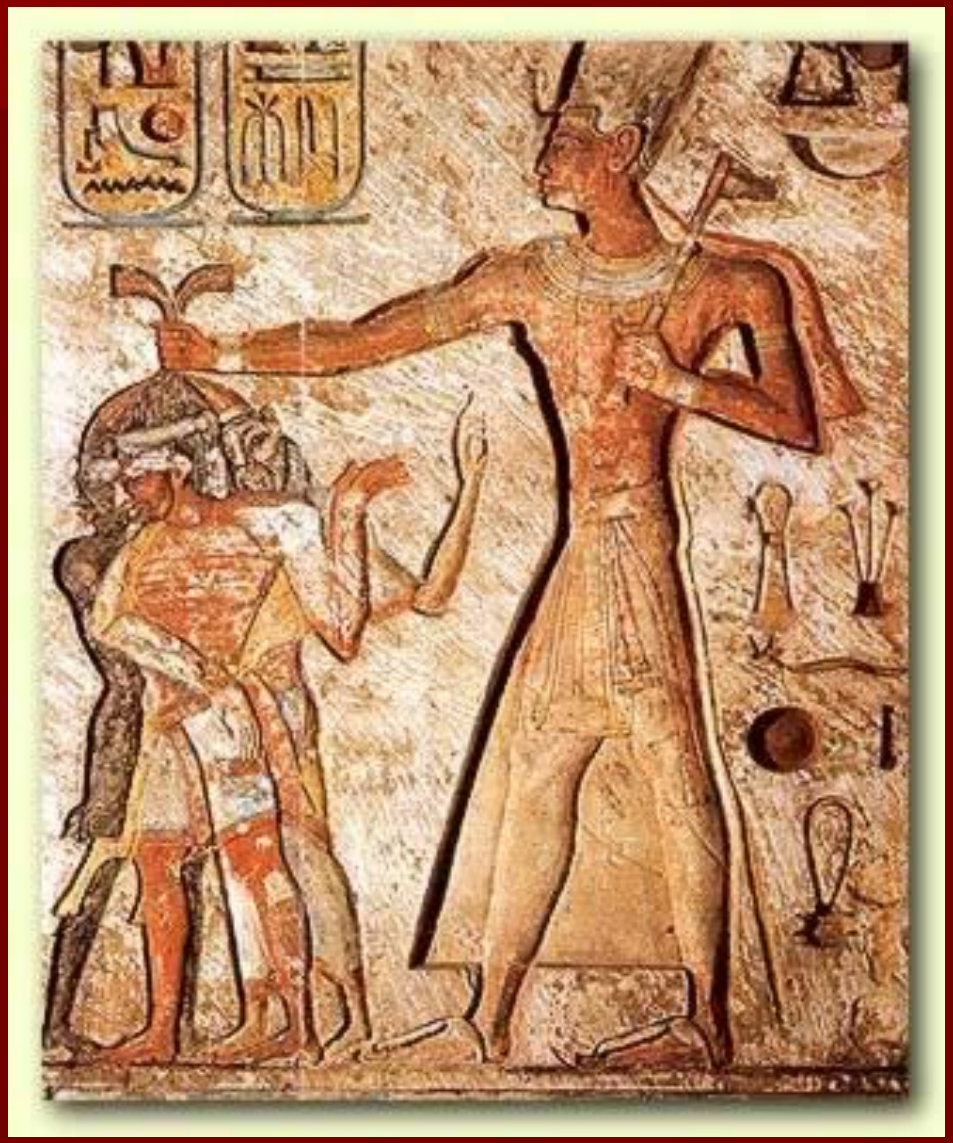
- Excavation on settlement sites: large amounts of objects of diverse kinds, usually broken and discarded rather than lost or deliberately buried
- require skilled examination and recording
- offer an incomplete picture of the material, but reflect aspects of the lives and activities of people
- study 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

Fitzwilliam E.1.2006

- Dimension: length 0.015 m, width 0.011 m, height 0.006 m
- Base: scarab-beetle with exaggerated wings: above beetle two winged uraei in protecting gesture, guarding two Maat-feathers; single line encircles the inscription
- Beetle, uraei and two feathers can be interpreted as equivalent for the sun disc – cryptographic writing for the god Amun(-Re)

Narmer Palette (31st century BC)

Ramses II smites enemies



Ivory Label King De(we)n

Ramses II in Abu Simbel

How to prepare yourself for dealing with these sources?

- Look into “millions” of catalogues
- Read descriptions
- Talk to friends about them
- Prepare a description, put the image of the objects/temple etc. aside and read through description – can you still imagine it?
- Connect them back to your theory and dissertation question
- Do not get lost in the object!