

CHAPTER 8: SAI AS AN EGYPTIAN MICROCOSM IN NUBIA

by Julia Budka

8.1 LIVING ON SAI IN THE 18TH DYNASTY

*“Cross-culturally, colonists often attempt to recreate the built environment of their homeland down to the smallest detail in order to enhance their feeling of belonging in an alien environment.”*¹⁵⁶²

As outlined in Chapter 7, the site of Sai Island can be understood as the prime example for settlement policy of New Kingdom Egypt in Upper Nubia from the early 18th Dynasty onwards. One may propose that the New Kingdom Egyptian towns set up in Nubia mirror Egyptian lifestyle within Egypt proper, but recent work has illustrated that the individual microhistories of the individual site had a considerable impact and resulted in local developments.¹⁵⁶³ Despite of a general state-planning of sites such as Sai in Nubia, certain dynamics are traceable and one may well challenge the assumption that apart from general common characteristics, there were precise factors defining a certain type of Egyptian town in New Kingdom Nubia. Such towns like Sai were most probably “multi-faceted in function, ensuring – to varying degrees – the control and exploitation of resources, access to and monitoring of and or river trade routes, the support of military campaigns and mining expeditions, and the promotion of Egyptian propaganda and ideology.”¹⁵⁶⁴ Taking all these aspects into account, it seems therefore likely that these New Kingdom sites share several aspects, but differ in others, depending on their regional context and, most importantly, on the input of their occupants and their decisions. Steven Snape has, for example, proposed “that some Egyptian colonists felt secure enough to develop a more disperse form of urban occupation, which they would have known well from, for instance, Thebes.”¹⁵⁶⁵

On a broad scale, the Egyptian ‘re-conquest’ of Upper Nubia introduced central changes for the local population as they were confronted with Egyptian culture and in particular with representatives of Pharaonic administration (see Chapter 7.4).¹⁵⁶⁶ Ellen Morris recently stressed the impact of three major conversions within New Kingdom Nubia: 1) built environment, 2) economy mirroring Egypt’s system and 3) a new religious landscape focusing on Amun, divine kings and other Egyptian gods.¹⁵⁶⁷ All three aspects are to be considered when reconstructing the lifestyle of Egyptians and Nubians on New Kingdom Sai. These living conditions in terms of the built environment seem to have developed in the course of the 18th Dynasty as was outlined above (Chapters 3.2.2 and 3.3.2). Evidence from AcrossBorders excavations suggests that Sai was largely dependent on Egypt in the early 18th Dynasty and supplies were at least partly brought from Egypt (cf. the evidence from the ceramics and the animal bones, in particular pigs). Only during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III there is increasing evidence for a more independent state of Sai and the temple towns in Nubia in general (see Chapter 7.2).

The conversions regarding the administrative system and the religious landscapes lead to the question of the cultural identity of the occupants of the newly founded towns such as Sai. Recent archaeological research (e.g. at Tombos,¹⁵⁶⁸ cf. Chapter 7.3) has begun to highlight that impenetrable boundaries and prominent ethnic categorisation in Egyptians and Nubians in New Kingdom Nubia are likely to be

¹⁵⁶² Morris 2018, 230.

¹⁵⁶³ See Spencer 2015; Spencer 2017; Budka 2018f, 22.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Spencer et al. 2017, 20. Also for urban sites in Egypt it is not possible to differentiate specific functions for various categories of urban forms, but rather “principal functions” which vary, see Moeller 2016, 379.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Snape 2014, 224.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Smith 2003a, 56–96. For a slightly different view that the conversion to Egyptian culture has its roots already in the Second Intermediate Period, see Williams 2018. Cf. also Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Morris 2018, 223–252.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Smith 2003a; Buzon 2008; Smith 2014a; Smith and Buzon 2017; Smith and Buzon 2018.

a modern conception and no longer tenable.¹⁵⁶⁹ In line with modern theoretical approaches to identities and cultural entanglement, these sites can be taken as examples to illustrate the dynamic and situational character of past societies.¹⁵⁷⁰ Other than drawing artificial border lines between Egyptians and Nubians, the aim should be to reconstruct social, economic and cultural identities at the local level of these Upper Nubian sites. Such identities can change, interact and merge with each other,¹⁵⁷¹ and allow a more direct approach to diverse aspects of life than a stereotype perspective derived primarily from textual references. As Neal Spencer could demonstrate: “the actions of individuals and small groups play a major role in maintaining and developing social organization and cultural expression”.¹⁵⁷² Recent works have furthermore stressed that “hybridization and entanglement have a temporal dimension”¹⁵⁷³ and a diachronic approach to Egyptian-Nubian relations at individual sites is clearly necessary.¹⁵⁷⁴

One big advantage of the microscale of AcrossBorders’ approach can be described in the words of Anna Boozer: “By examining individuals, families, or small groups within their social fabric, we become aware of variants that macroscale analyses flatten out in quantitative approaches.”¹⁵⁷⁵ However, already at planning the research project, it was completely clear that this ambitious pretence will be difficult to achieve for Sai with evidence from the town only. Thus, from the beginning the combined approach, assessing the material culture of Sai with both finds from the town and from the elite cemetery SAC5, promised new information on the micro-level (see Chapter 1.4). Tomb 26 allowed tracing a family who lived in 18th Dynasty Sai and the finds from the tombs, especially the pottery, found close parallels in the town area.¹⁵⁷⁶

In general, the artefacts and especially ceramics processed by AcrossBorders (see Chapter 4) testify to a cultural fusion from the foundation of the town in the early 18th Dynasty throughout the New Kingdom.¹⁵⁷⁷ The ceramics in particular indicate that there was a complex, two-way mixture of lifestyles, resulting in a great variability and also in ‘hybrid’ forms that display both Egyptian and Nubian features. Similar findings by Spencer and others mirror “a picture appearing throughout the region of a complex two-way entanglement of Nubian and Egyptian cultural features”.¹⁵⁷⁸ This “heterogenous cultural mix”¹⁵⁷⁹ has to be embedded in the changing appearances of the respective towns, also taking generations into account.¹⁵⁸⁰ For Sai it is clear that by the mid-18th Dynasty, during the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, things have changed for its inhabitants – the outer appearance is that of an Egyptian fortified town, being mastered by viceroys like Nehy and Usersatet and a mayor of Šꜥꜥ.t as the highest local representative of the civil administration (see Chapters 6 and 7.4). During this heyday of Egyptian building activity at the site the occupants living there were the second generation of witnesses to the campaigns of the first kings of the 18th Dynasty.¹⁵⁸¹ It seems straightforward that the relationship of these individuals with the Egyptians was considerably different compared to their ancestors still living under Kerma rulers.¹⁵⁸² Considering the general developments in Upper Nubia during the times of Ahmose to Thutmose III, it is not surprising that the persons traceable in the archaeological records are fully integrated into the Egyptian power structure and administrative system.¹⁵⁸³

¹⁵⁶⁹ Cf. also Näser 2013 for the area of the First Cataract.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Cf., e.g., Jones 1997; Gramsch 2009; van Pelt 2013; Smith 2014a; Spencer 2014a.

¹⁵⁷¹ Cf. Morkot 1995, 181.

¹⁵⁷² Spencer 2014a, 47.

¹⁵⁷³ Spencer 2014a, 57; see also Smith 2014a, 3 and Pappa 2013, 36–37; see also Excursus.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Budka 2017g.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Boozer 2010, 141.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Cf. Budka 2017c.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Budka 2017g.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Smith 2014a, 2.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Smith 2014a, 3.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Spencer 2014a, 42.

¹⁵⁸¹ See Budka 2015b.

¹⁵⁸² Cf. also Williams 2018 for the respective phases of cultural adaptation and conversion.

¹⁵⁸³ Cf. already Morkot 1995, 181.

This becomes especially evident by funerary remains in the elite cemetery of the island, SAC5, where burials in Egyptian-style are attested from Thutmose III onwards.¹⁵⁸⁴ Even if funerary objects reflect a contemporaneous Egyptian-style, the individuals with Egyptian names and titles might still be of Nubian origin.¹⁵⁸⁵ Like Morris pointed out, it was more convenient to accept the various items offered from the new Egyptian workshops than to maintain an independent production of traditional Nubian objects and pottery.¹⁵⁸⁶ However, the traditional objects did not disappear completely, as was pointed out with the evidence from the town of Sai (see Chapter 4). This allows stressing again the impact of individual choices reflected in the material culture – the so-called ‘hybrid’ pottery vessels and Nubian-style artefacts appearing within the overwhelming Egyptian culture may very well attest to persons which for a number of possible reasons decided not to rely exclusively on the products from the Egyptian workshops. Other than those personal decisions, major motivators for becoming overwhelming Egyptian in New Kingdom Nubia were probably the access to power, increased opportunity within the new system and simply convenience.¹⁵⁸⁷ People of Nubian origin who wanted to make a career within Egyptian sites like Sai Island needed to speak Egyptian, adopt an Egyptian name and cultivate an Egyptian appearance.¹⁵⁸⁸ It is quite likely that successful players in the higher social strata were then in turn becoming “role models”¹⁵⁸⁹ for fellow Nubians who followed their example. One of these successfully converted citizens on Sai might very well be the overseer of goldsmiths Khnummose, whose burial of Egyptian type was discovered in Tomb 26, but for whom Strontium isotope analysis suggests that he was local to the region of Sai.¹⁵⁹⁰ Examples like Khnummose are to be expected at all New Kingdom sites of the 18th Dynasty in Nubia. As recently presented by Johannes Auenmüller, the social fabric of Soleb is well comparable with Sai, whereas the prosopography from Amara West illustrates certain changes in the Ramesside period.¹⁵⁹¹ All assessments of Nubian New Kingdom towns and their citizens must, therefore, consider both the chronological framework and the regional conditions (see Chapter 7).

EXCURSUS: THE METAPHOR OF CULTURAL ENTANGLEMENT¹⁵⁹²

Theoretical background

One of the buzzwords in recent archaeological studies dealing with settlement remains and cemeteries of the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE in northern Sudan is ‘entanglement’.¹⁵⁹³ Since this concept also became of relevance for AcrossBorders’ interpretation of Sai, the theoretical background and the most important publications and ideas will be outlined in the following. Crucial for understanding new approaches to Northeast African archaeology is a strong bias in early research. Until quite recently, archaeology in Northeast Africa has been dominated by ancient Egypt and its rich cultural heritage. The monuments located in modern Sudan, ancient Nubia, were first described and analysed by Egyptologists and traditionally viewed from an ‘Egyptian’ perspective, resulting in several shortcomings in assessing African indigenous cultures.¹⁵⁹⁴ Many studies exhibit an Egyptocentric bias and refer primarily to written Egyptian sources which have been read as accurate evidence, partly neglecting archaeological findings.¹⁵⁹⁵

¹⁵⁸⁴ See Minault-Gout and Thill 2012; Budka 2017k; Budka 2018e.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Minault-Gout and Thill 2012, 415; Budka 2018e, 193.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁵⁹⁰ See Budka 2018e.

¹⁵⁹¹ Auenmüller 2018b and in this volume, Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁹² For a slightly different version of this excursus, see already Budka 2018h.

¹⁵⁹³ See, e.g., Smith and Buzon 2014; Smith and Buzon 2017; Budka 2018h.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Edwards 2004, 7. Cf. also Williams 2018, 99.

¹⁵⁹⁵ See, e.g., Liska 2011.

The early phase of research on Sai Island also shows this bias and a strong focus on textual sources (see above, Chapter 1.2).

The archaeological remains from the periods of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom, when Egypt ‘colonialised’ parts of northern Sudan, attest not only to an Egyptian presence but also to certain adaptations of the Egyptian culture. The latter was labelled as ‘Egyptianisation’ and described as one of the main features of Egyptian colonialism in Nubia.¹⁵⁹⁶ However, in recent years fresh theoretical approaches have stimulated a diverse discussion and moved away from this too simplistic point of view of processes which were in reality very complex and exhibit local features as well as regional variants.¹⁵⁹⁷ New work in Egypt and Sudan has begun to identify impenetrable boundaries and a prominent ethnic categorisation in Second Millennium BCE as modern conceptions that are no longer sup- portable.¹⁵⁹⁸ Since the publication of an article by Paul van Pelt in 2013 the phenomenon of ‘cultural entanglement’ is also discussed for New Kingdom Nubia.¹⁵⁹⁹ These new approaches on archaeological fieldwork in northern Sudan were applied by the AcrossBorders project on Sai Island as a case study where Egyptian culture met with the Nubian Kerma culture.

New approaches to Egyptian and Nubian archaeology

For about five years now, the well-established concept of ‘Egyptianisation’ has been subject to criticism on the grounds that it projects a one-dimensional and static view of culture. In its stead, a model based on the notion of ‘cultural entanglement’ has been suggested,¹⁶⁰⁰ borrowing from a more advanced discussion in Mediterranean archaeology and also studies about Romanisation.¹⁶⁰¹ Ongoing excavation work at New Kingdom sites in Sudan has since expanded the material basis of the debate and has shown how central the dynamics of cultural intermingling really are.¹⁶⁰²

Similar to research in North America and elsewhere, the use of ‘entanglement’ in Sudanese archaeology is related to colonial and postcolonial studies.¹⁶⁰³ What has yet not been touched in detail is the question whether entanglement in Northeast African archaeology is used as a model or as a metaphor.¹⁶⁰⁴ Its relation to the older idea of ‘Egyptianisation’ might suggest that it is regarded as a model. Similar to the concept of hybridity,¹⁶⁰⁵ which has been discussed in a number of recent papers on Nubian New Kingdom sites and is especially well traceable in pottery vessels (see Chapter 4.2), this can cause several complications.¹⁶⁰⁶ It seems, therefore, more reasonable to use ‘entanglement’ as a metaphor.¹⁶⁰⁷ From my perspective, ‘cultural entanglement’ stands for an important redirection of the archaeological interpretation of finds in northern Sudan, but should not be regarded as the one and only solution. Following Philipp Stockhammer’s categories,¹⁶⁰⁸ small finds, ceramics and other objects can be seen as evidence of “material entanglement”.¹⁶⁰⁹

‘Biologic entanglement’ is another theme recently discussed in Northeast African archaeology, in particular in the work by Stuart T. Smith and Michele Buzon.¹⁶¹⁰ Especially the funerary evidence sug-

¹⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Edwards 2004, 7–9, 107–109.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Cf. De Souza 2013; De Souza 2019, 140–153 and *passim*; see also Spencer et al. 2017.

¹⁵⁹⁸ See Smith 2003a; Smith and Buzon 2014; Smith and Buzon 2017; cf. also Spencer et al. 2017; Budka 2018f.

¹⁵⁹⁹ van Pelt 2013; Binder 2017; see also Budka 2018h.

¹⁶⁰⁰ van Pelt 2013, based on Stockhammer 2012.

¹⁶⁰¹ See Stockhammer 2013.

¹⁶⁰² See Smith and Buzon 2014; Spencer 2014a; Budka 2015a; Budka 2017c; Spencer et al. 2017.

¹⁶⁰³ For “colonial entanglement”, see Silliman 2016, 33 with further references; see also Hodder 2012, 88–112 for various approaches to entanglement

¹⁶⁰⁴ Silliman 2016.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Stockhammer 2012.

¹⁶⁰⁶ See Silliman 2016.

¹⁶⁰⁷ See Silliman 2016; also Budka 2018h.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Stockhammer 2012, 49–51.

¹⁶⁰⁹ See Budka 2018d, 149.

¹⁶¹⁰ Smith and Buzon 2017.

gests that the individuals buried at the New Kingdom sites in northern Sudan were both Egyptians and Nubians, thus a “culturally and biologically mixed group of people.”¹⁶¹¹ Since these people can safely be interpreted as the occupants of the relevant town sites in the neighbourhood of the cemeteries, this is a clear indication that the town population represented complex communities. Related to this new theory, the systematic variation in the isotopic composition of Strontium in the environment and in dental enamel of ancient skeletons was examined in the last decade for tracing human migration in Nubian archaeology (see Chapter 7.3).¹⁶¹² The isotope signals can be used as basis for the further interpretation of the autochthony or allochthony of the skeletal remains of the excavated individuals. Ongoing analyses, for example from the AcrossBorders project, will provide relevant new data in the near future.¹⁶¹³ Again, ‘biological entanglement’ should first of all be regarded as a metaphor – a metaphor which clearly marks the necessary redirection of older interpretations, away from strict categories such as ‘Nubians’ and ‘Egyptians’.

Recent outcome and outlook

As was illustrated in this volume, the Egyptian town of Sai is one of the most promising examples of a ‘colonial site’ built during the New Kingdom in northern Sudan, especially because of its long occupation period and its attested history during the African Kingdom of Kerma. As is the case with other Egyptian colonial sites, the archaeological evidence of Sai – the architecture, the objects, the pottery, the religious materialisation – identifies the New Kingdom town as an Egyptian foundation. However, similar to other sites, indigenous Nubian elements are also present and from the beginning of the AcrossBorders project, it was clear that these African features have to be carefully assessed. In order to achieve a better understanding of the situation on Sai, a bottom-up approach to the investigation of the society in the New Kingdom town was introduced, also taking into account new data from the contemporaneous elite cemetery on the island (see Chapter 1.4).¹⁶¹⁴

In the context of these Egyptian elite burials it is important to stress that perceptions of status differ seemingly depending whether they are viewed from a micro or a macro perspective (see Chapter 7.3). Local ‘wealth’ is well traceable with case studies such as the overseer of goldsmiths, Khnummose, whose family tomb was discovered by AcrossBorders (cf. Chapter 6).¹⁶¹⁵ It seems as if flourishing families of Nubian origin on Sai Island were not holding overly significant positions within the Egyptian administration and this once again underlines the dynamic character of this Egyptian microcosm and its occupants in Nubia. AcrossBorders’ multi-faceted research suggests that at the local level social, economic and cultural identities were changing, interacting and merging with each other. Sai can, therefore, be regarded as an example for the dynamic and situational character of past societies¹⁶¹⁶ for which firm categories such as ‘Nubians’, ‘Egyptians’ and ‘Egyptianised Nubians’ fall short.

To conclude, important advances were made in the last decade regarding the concept of ‘Egyptianisation’ for Nubia which is now replaced by approaches using theories of cultural entanglement and appropriation.¹⁶¹⁷ The notion of the importance of indigenous people for the area and the period was also highlighted¹⁶¹⁸ – other than drawing artificial border lines between Egyptians and Nubians, the focus should be on interacting identities of people.¹⁶¹⁹ The AcrossBorders project and its interpretation of Sai exhibit this new methodological development and its advances. With a fresh emphasis on the importance of the microhistories and individuals of specific sites, the ‘entanglement’ metaphor developed in the last

¹⁶¹¹ Smith and Buzon 2017, 619.

¹⁶¹² Smith and Buzon 2017; Budka 2017c.

¹⁶¹³ Budka forthcoming c.

¹⁶¹⁴ Budka 2017c.

¹⁶¹⁵ Budka 2018e.

¹⁶¹⁶ Budka 2017f, 177.

¹⁶¹⁷ van Pelt 2013.

¹⁶¹⁸ See already Morkot 2013b.

¹⁶¹⁹ Cf. Spencer 2015; Spencer 2017.

years for Nubia can also be of relevance for sites located in Egypt.¹⁶²⁰ It seems safe to expect that this new image describing complex inter-African intermingling of cultures will result in fresh insights in Northeast African Archaeology in the upcoming decade.¹⁶²¹

8.1.1 The occupants of Sai

“Thus, it was quite likely easier, if one lived near Egyptians, to outwardly become Egyptian than it would have been to refuse the clothing, pottery, and other items offered and insist in manufacturing them oneself. Under Kerma rule, after all, Nubians had of their own volition already begun to experiment with adopting aspects of Egyptian material culture.”¹⁶²²

Can we now reconstruct who lived in New Kingdom Sai and how?¹⁶²³ The basic problems with this task have already been mentioned and are connected with the general evidence and the difficulties tracing individuals, in particular in urban contexts.¹⁶²⁴ Gender and age are often concealed in settlement contexts and women and children are especially difficult to trace, particularly at Egyptian sites in Nubia.¹⁶²⁵ This topic was tackled by Stuart T. Smith who pointed out what also applies for the citizens on Sai: “Fortress inhabitants usually included both women and children, who are typically neglected in favor of the adult men who performed the more obvious military, political and economic roles associated with these specialized communities.”¹⁶²⁶ This bias is especially evident in Egyptian and Nubian archaeology which traditionally focused on textual evidence (see Chapter 7.4 for almost exclusively male officials attested in the Egyptian administration of Nubia; for women in the prosopographical data of Sai, see Chapter 6.4.7). Smith has stressed useful ethnographic parallels and mentions gaming pieces as possible children’s toys.¹⁶²⁷ For Sai, the categories of possible toys primarily include small animal figurines and stone and clay balls (see Chapter 4 and see below). Furthermore, there is evidence for several productive activities, such as pottery making, where children were probably involved.¹⁶²⁸

The question of women within the communities of New Kingdom ‘temple towns’ is equally problematic. In addition to the presumed bias in the archaeological record, especially within the textual records, “a false notion of objectivity”¹⁶²⁹ by the researchers seems relevant as well. For Nubia, this becomes especially evident in assessments of the cooking traditions: Nubian cooking pots have been associated with Nubian women and cooking is thought to represent a predominantly female activity.¹⁶³⁰ Such a gender-specific factor for the composition of the pottery corpora of Egyptian sites in Nubia assuming that indigenous females were responsible for cooking and were using Nubian cooking pots faces certain difficulties in interpretation.¹⁶³¹ Male cooking activities are well-attested in various cultural contexts,¹⁶³² and the evidence from New Kingdom Nubia does not allow a precise

¹⁶²⁰ Cf. corresponding research by Bader 2013 and Bietak 2016.

¹⁶²¹ Budka 2018h.

¹⁶²² Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁶²³ See also the recent summary by Morris 2018, 233–235 with references to AcrossBorders’ work. For more general aspects of the occupation in New Kingdom Nubia see Spencer 2019, 446–452.

¹⁶²⁴ Darnell 2014, 239; see also Smith 2003a. For the reconstruction of the elite social fabric at Sai, see Auenmüller 2018b and this volume, Chapter 6.

¹⁶²⁵ Smith 2013. For the lived reality of children in Egypt, see Harrington 2018.

¹⁶²⁶ Smith 2013, 269.

¹⁶²⁷ Smith 2013, 274–275.

¹⁶²⁸ Smith 2013, 274–275.

¹⁶²⁹ See Conkey and Spector 1984, 6: “We argue that the archaeological ‘invisibility’ of females is more the result of a false notion of objectivity and the gender paradigms archaeologists employ than of an inherent invisibility of data”.

¹⁶³⁰ See Smith 2003a, 43–53, 190–193, 204.

¹⁶³¹ See Budka 2018d, 149.

¹⁶³² See Goody 1982, 101–102; cf. also Raue 2015, 55, fn. 119.

gender-attribution. In general, the Nubian elements traceable in the New Kingdom town of Sai, such as Nubian pottery vessels, may indeed be related to Nubian women who were married by the Egyptian town community,¹⁶³³ or just simply to Nubian families loyal to the new rulers from Egypt and engaged with food preparation.¹⁶³⁴ The need for a contextualised approach, in particular the consideration of the chronological dimension, also applies for questions about the presence of children and women at New Kingdom Sai. In the very early phase of Sai, the Egyptians arriving on the island were connected to the campaigns against the Kerma Kingdom. At this early stage, it is likely to assume that these settlers included various officials of military rank as well as craftsmen and others, probably travelling within small, labour related communities and not with their own families. Women and children are rather to be expected for the more consolidated stages of Egyptian settlement on Sai, especially from the time of Thutmose III onwards, when also objects such as amulets and toys can tentatively be connected with females and sub-adults. As was stressed above, it is of less priority to speculate about a ‘Nubian’ or ‘Egyptian’ origin of these people; more essential is reconstructing their importance within the social fabric of Sai.

The changing social structures regarding females and sub-adults in the course of the 18th Dynasty on Sai might be reflected in the built environment as was proposed for sector SAV1 North.¹⁶³⁵ The simple, small building units of the earliest phase of Sai traceable at SAV1 North, but also at SAV1 East and SAV1 West, are clearly lacking a second storey and seem unsuitable for larger sets of families. For New Kingdom Egypt, Kate Spence has convincingly shown that at Amarna the second storeys of houses were spaces for female family members and generally dedicated to family life.¹⁶³⁶ Could the layout of the small workshop-like structures with storage installations in the earliest phase of Sai therefore relate to a predominately male occupation of a military character? In line with this, the second building phase of Sai could reflect a more complex social stratification. Besides the administrative buildings at SAV1 East and in the southern part, SAV1 also includes larger, more standardised houses which are comparable to the Amarna houses.¹⁶³⁷ A second storey is more likely for these buildings, perhaps indicating that Egyptian officials living there in the consolidated phase after defeating the Kingdom of Kerma were accompanied by their families.¹⁶³⁸ The lack of secondary storeys in the small building units of Thutmoside date at sectors SAV1 North and SAV1 West of course do not necessarily suggest a lack of females and/or sub-adults in these zones of New Kingdom Sai. The different architectural layout and especially the many sub-building phases of these structures could rather relate to changes on the social level, possibly supporting the idea that individuals had much impact on creating living spaces, even in a state-controlled town like Sai. These dynamics are also clearly reflected in the material culture, in particular the pottery.

How many people lived within the New Kingdom town of Sai is still a really challenging question and will be addressed below (Chapter 8.3). Nevertheless, as was illustrated throughout the volume, the fresh research of the AcrossBorders project allows a more detailed assessment of the citizens of Sai. A well stratified society embedded in the Egyptian administration of Upper Nubia is visible by the prosopographical data from Thutmose III onwards (Chapter 6). In addition to the elite officials and less high ranking persons, most of the occupants remain anonymous. A range of priest titles of people living on Sai testify that the cultural conversion to Egyptian religion was probably complete. The material remains for state and domestic religion on Sai will be discussed in the next subchapter (Chapter 8.1.2).

¹⁶³³ Cf. Smith 2003a, 192–193.

¹⁶³⁴ Budka 2016c, 291.

¹⁶³⁵ Budka 2017f, 177.

¹⁶³⁶ Spence 2004.

¹⁶³⁷ See Adenstedt 2016, 45–56.

¹⁶³⁸ Evidence from the pyramid cemetery SAC5 (see Minault-Gout and Thill 2012) attests to family burials from the reign of Thutmose III onwards, clearly indicating the presence of women and children in the New Kingdom town of Sai.

8.1.2 State religion and domestic religion at Sai

With much awareness of both the “blurred boundaries between state and private religion”¹⁶³⁹ and severe problems of identifying relevant proof in settlement archaeology,¹⁶⁴⁰ the evidence from the New Kingdom town of Sai shall be discussed in the following. As stated above (Chapter 7.2), one of the central elements of so-called ‘temple towns’ in New Kingdom Nubia are stone temples of Egyptian type, most often associated with cult for the god Amun. Also at Sai, the official Egyptian cult and religious rituals for Egyptian gods can be traced within the context of Temple A.¹⁶⁴¹ At this temple not only Amun-Ra, but also ‘Horus the Bull, Lord of Ta-Seti’¹⁶⁴² was adored. The identity of ‘Horus the Bull, Lord of Ta-Seti’ has been discussed diversely.¹⁶⁴³ I would follow Florence Thill that this deity is not a local Horus deity but a manifestation of Thutmose III,¹⁶⁴⁴ therefore showing a close connection of the state cult on Sai to kingship and the ruler. The general invocation of divine royalty and the cult of royal ancestors are evident at Sai from the very beginning of the New Kingdom; Ahmose and Amenhotep I both commissioned *heb-sed* statues in a predecessor of Temple A or maybe a *ḥw.t-k3* (see above, Chapter 1.2).¹⁶⁴⁵

The deification of Egyptian rulers was a common practice in Nubia. The most important personalities during the New Kingdom are Thutmose III, Amenhotep III and Ramses II.¹⁶⁴⁶ The cult of Egyptian kings is not only traceable by evidence from temples, but there are also important sources from domestic quarters.¹⁶⁴⁷ At Sai, the viceroy of Kush, Nehy, can be named in this respect. As viceroy he was responsible for the religious building activity on Sai in the name of Thutmose III. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that several door lintels show Nehy in adoration before the cartouches of Thutmose III (see also Chapter 6.4.1.2).¹⁶⁴⁸ These lintels were found in the southern part of the New Kingdom town, associated with the magazine area in the western part of the site.¹⁶⁴⁹ They find very close parallels at Aniba which are interpreted as the earliest of such scenes.¹⁶⁵⁰ That the first attestation of an Egyptian official adoring the royal cartouche derives from Nubia and here in particular from the reign of the ruler who overthrew the Kingdom of Kerma and founded a large number of sites and temples in the area is unlikely to be a coincidence (cf. Chapter 7.1 and 7.2).¹⁶⁵¹

Interestingly, several door lintels and jambs in domestic mud brick buildings in New Kingdom Nubia refer to the wish of Egyptian officials to participate in festivals in honour of the king and to see the king in his barque.¹⁶⁵² Furthermore, a barque and statue cult for the living king is also attested thanks to other documents in both Lower and Upper Nubia.¹⁶⁵³ Thus, in addition to the official royal cult associated with temples and rock shrines in Nubia, the ruling king was also a deity addressed by various means in the domestic sphere, especially for the general well-being of the occupants of the towns. This is well illustrated by scenes of adoring the royal cartouches, found on lintels of private houses. The demonstration of loyalty by the officials to the king was of prime importance in the life of an Egyptian official in general, and especially on representative architecture in the settlement sphere.¹⁶⁵⁴

Having mentioned the importance of the king and deified kings in Nubian settlements of the New Kingdom, the most common gods addressed for general protection in the domestic sphere shall be

¹⁶³⁹ Stevens 2006, 17.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Cf. Stevens 2006, 17.

¹⁶⁴¹ Azim and Carlotti 2012; Gabolde 2012.

¹⁶⁴² See Thill 2016.

¹⁶⁴³ Cf. Török 2009, 227 who mentions “Horus Lord of Nubia” and “Amun-Re” as the gods of the temple on Sai.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Thill 2016.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Budka 2015b, 76–80.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Cf. Török 2009, 215–262; Morris 2018, 240.

¹⁶⁴⁷ See Budka 2001 with further literature.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Well-comparable to lintels from Aniba, see Budka 2001, 109–113; Thill 2016; Budka 2017d.

¹⁶⁴⁹ See Thill 2016; Budka 2017d.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Budka 2001 with further references and examples.

¹⁶⁵¹ See Budka 2017d; Budka 2018c.

¹⁶⁵² See, e.g., Budka 2001, 187, fig. 56 (Buhen).

¹⁶⁵³ See Müller 2013, 61–62 and 232–233 (general references in Nubia); Budka 2015b, 78 (for Sai).

¹⁶⁵⁴ See Budka 2001, *passim*.

named. Whereas well-attested deities such as Amun, Hathor, Thot and Ptah also held important roles in the state religion, Bes and Taweret were primarily associated with private religion.¹⁶⁵⁵ As essential protectors of women and fertility, these two gods were of major importance for daily life. The same holds true for Hathor as the protector of maternity. This goddess is closely associated with women, health-related issues, childbirth and fertility; aspects of sexuality are also included through her role as the mistress of festivity and drunkenness.¹⁶⁵⁶ The strong association of the gods addressed in the domestic space with aspects encompassing regeneration, rebirth, fecundity, fertility and sexuality¹⁶⁵⁷ is in particular typical for the 18th Dynasty. In Ramesside times there was a major development; in this heyday of so-called ‘personal piety’, almost every deity could be addressed in the private sphere.¹⁶⁵⁸ References to gods of one’s hometown now became very common.¹⁶⁵⁹ Door jambs from Elephantine and Aniba attest that Theban officials made it very clear in their ‘home away from home’ that they wanted to return to their hometown, to see the gods there and to participate in the local festivals.¹⁶⁶⁰

Finally, the prosopographical evidence from cemetery SAC5 in relation to the state cult on Sai can be mentioned. Some personnel of the religious sphere of Sai are attested in tombs of the 18th Dynasty and must have fulfilled their priestly office in the town, but unfortunately the sources are without indication of the specific local cult they were attached to (see Chapter 6.4.5). Thill has suggested a number of possible readings that include either Ra and/or Horus, proposing to connect such a reconstructed priestly title to a particular cult of Ra-(Horakhti) on Sai which she located at the enigmatic ‘pyramid’ at SAC5.¹⁶⁶¹

Material remains of private religion at Sai

Objects from the New Kingdom settlement of Sai cover a large spectrum of functions, from personal items and tools (Chapter 4) to storage and food production (Chapter 5), but references to fertility and religious acts are also present. Multi-faceted and variable private religious practices are to be expected in an Egyptian town of the New Kingdom, as highlighted in the seminal study by Anna Stevens on remains from Amarna, introducing the term “private religion”.¹⁶⁶²

Rebirth and creative aspects formed especially important issues in daily life and are traceable in some objects found at Sai.¹⁶⁶³ Several groups of objects from Sai fall into the category of rebirth, fertility and well-being.¹⁶⁶⁴ Firstly, rudimentary female figurines, faience Nun bowls and also specific ceramic vessels, such as duck-bowls and feminoform vessels, can be highlighted.¹⁶⁶⁵ All of these objects are known from domestic as well as funerary and temple contexts.¹⁶⁶⁶ The domestic evidence nicely complements the findings in the cultic sphere. For example, from several domestic contexts of the 18th Dynasty (Memphis, Amarna, Elephantine and Sai Island), female figurines are archaeologically associated with Nun bowls.¹⁶⁶⁷ Nude female figurines are not only connected to sexuality and childbearing, but with a more complex ideology that is somehow hard to grasp.¹⁶⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵⁵ Stevens 2006, 18

¹⁶⁵⁶ See Pinch 1993; Stevens 2006, 35–36, 40 and *passim*.

¹⁶⁵⁷ In ancient Egypt, sexuality, childbirth, fecundity, regeneration and rebirth merge with each other and there is no clear separation line, cf. Meskell 2000, 260; Budka 2016b.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Stevens 2006, 19. For a recent account of the ideas about ‘personal piety’, see Luiselli 2008.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Budka 2008, 95 with references; Budka 2015f.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Budka 2001, 113; Bommas 2003, 42 (Aniba); Budka 2008, 96 (Elephantine).

¹⁶⁶¹ Thill 2017, esp. 207–208. See also Auenmüller, this volume, Chapter 6.4.5.

¹⁶⁶² Stevens 2006, *passim*. See also Gahlin 2007; DuQuesne 2011. For a new approach of ‘Lived Ancient Religion’, focusing on the Roman Empire but of much relevance for exploring daily practices also in Egyptian contexts, see Raja and Weiss 2015; Raja and Weiss 2016.

¹⁶⁶³ Budka 2016b; Budka 2018c.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Budka and Doyen 2013, 183–187.

¹⁶⁶⁵ See Budka 2016b.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Budka 2016b.

¹⁶⁶⁷ See Giddy 1999, 28–31, 267, pls. 8–12; Stevens 2006, 178–179.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Cf. Waraksa 2009; Doyen 2016.

More than three dozen female figurines in low-fired clay were found in the New Kingdom town of Sai, finding close parallels in Egypt and Nubia.¹⁶⁶⁹ The rudimentary figures in the shape of simple sticks with an incised or dotted area representing the pubic region are of a common Egyptian-style (see Chapter 4.1). The simple hand-modelled clay sticks with representations of the female genitalia are already attested in the earliest level of the Egyptian town on Sai.¹⁶⁷⁰ As was stressed above, some of the figurines combine a typical Nubian pattern of wavy incised lines¹⁶⁷¹ with Egyptian stylistic features (Chapter 4.1).¹⁶⁷² Similar rudimentary figurines with comparable decoration were found at Buhen.¹⁶⁷³ It remains open how these specific figurines were perceived by the individuals at Sai. However, one can speculate that they were either inspired by Nubian-style manufacturing and decorating processes (maybe carried out by a Nubian craftsperson) or that such figurines directly refer to Nubian tattooed women, maybe considered as something special/desirable by the Egyptian and/or Nubian craftsperson.

All in all, although certain aspects how female figurines, feminoform vessels and also Nun bowls were perceived and communicated within the context of the New Kingdom town of Sai remain unclear, these objects are best labelled as “objects of life”.¹⁶⁷⁴ A wide-range of settings for their use has to be taken into account, depending on the context within the site. Based on the common aspects traceable for these object types in New Kingdom domestic contexts, they can also be understood as icons for themes under the general label of “human health or well-being”.¹⁶⁷⁵

One of the greatest concerns within the sphere of human health in ancient societies such as New Kingdom Sai was clearly the pregnancy of women including birth.¹⁶⁷⁶ This concern has triggered several object types as materialisation during the New Kingdom, for which gender aspects and the role of children¹⁶⁷⁷ would be highly relevant, but are almost impossible to reconstruct within the domestic sphere. A specific object addressing the theme of pregnancy in the New Kingdom town of Sai is the cowroid bead (SAV1W 0723) containing an image of the Egyptian goddess Taweret (Chapter 4.3.2).¹⁶⁷⁸ Taweret is shown wielding a knife, an iconography commonly attested on Middle Kingdom apotropaic wands.¹⁶⁷⁹ Clearly, Taweret as the protector of pregnant women and childbirth was being invoked here. Together with the general symbolism of a cowrie shell thought to resemble a female vulva,¹⁶⁸⁰ SAV1W 0723 seems the perfect amulet to protect a pregnant woman during this vulnerable period. The fact that the cowroid is pierced longitudinally would suggest that it was actually worn by a female citizen of Sai, maybe across the pelvic region as part of a girdle.

Regeneration, as expressed in the female figurines and the Nun bowls, is also closely related to ancestor cult and the commemoration of individuals. At Amara West and Sesebi anthropoid busts attest to the invocation of ancestors within the houses at Egyptian sites in Nubia,¹⁶⁸¹ while domestic shrines were identified at Askut and Mirgissa.¹⁶⁸² Although it might be an illusion, such architectural forms of ‘private religion’, such as shrines, are traditionally interpreted as belonging to the male sphere. Interestingly, the shrine at Askut combines typical Egyptian cultic installations, such as a niche for a stela and a

¹⁶⁶⁹ Doyen 2016 and this volume, Chapter 4.3.2.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Budka and Doyen 2013, 183; Budka 2017j, 158.

¹⁶⁷¹ See, e.g., a net weight found at Elephantine in Nubian fabric and with an un-Egyptian incised decoration; see von Pilgrim 1996, 276, fig. 120b.

¹⁶⁷² Budka and Doyen 2013, 183; Budka 2017j, 168.

¹⁶⁷³ E.g. Millard 1979, no. 747, pl. 53.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Woods 2009.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Budka 2016b.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Leitz 2000 with references.

¹⁶⁷⁷ For a recent account of children and religion including aspects outside the sphere of fertility in Ramesside Egypt, see Luiselli 2018.

¹⁶⁷⁸ See Griffin and Gundlach 2015c.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., Capel and Markoe 1996, 64, cat. 12.

¹⁶⁸⁰ See Golani 2014, 75–76. Cf. also Stoof 2015.

¹⁶⁸¹ Spencer 2014a, 49.

¹⁶⁸² Cf. Smith 2003a, 124–133.

libation table, with votives of both Egyptian and Nubian type.¹⁶⁸³ The so-called ancestors busts, mainly attested from Deir el-Medine, have been interpreted as representations of women.¹⁶⁸⁴ The small amount of such busts from Nubia should probably not be over interpreted and connected to the gender bias in New Kingdom towns of the area (see above), because also in Egypt examples from outside of Thebes are rather small in number.

Libation and the burning of incense are well attested in the New Kingdom town of Sai by means of ceramics.¹⁶⁸⁵ It is remarkable that pedestal bowls which often contained organic residues, including incense, were primarily found at SAV1 West (see Chapter 4.2). The white wash or slip of these vessels is clearly related to the cultic sphere.¹⁶⁸⁶ Comparable pedestal bowls/burners in Nubia were found at Askut and Dokki Gel (see Chapter 4.2). Based on the parallels from Askut, it is possible that a former shrine within one of the structures at SAV1 West has not been excavated yet or has not survived the Post-New Kingdom activities at the site.

Another remarkable group of objects from the New Kingdom town of Sai are small sandstone and clay balls found in all sectors (SAV1 North, the southern part of the town, SAV1 East and SAV1 West). These spherical objects find close parallels at Elephantine and other New Kingdom settlements in Egypt.¹⁶⁸⁷ Miniature clay balls are well known from Amarna, where they could be connected to the ritual of the first haircut.¹⁶⁸⁸ Nevertheless, some of these balls from Sai probably represent actual gaming pieces and might have been primarily used as toys by children. One example from the southern part of the town, SAV 003, has been sealed with a finger ring giving the name of Thutmose III, possibly for apotropaic reasons.¹⁶⁸⁹ This clay ball can, therefore, be regarded as evidence that the king (and divine versions of the ruler) was especially popular in Nubia – not only in the official temple cult, but also in domestic contexts (see above).¹⁶⁹⁰

The group of objects presented here covers only a set of nuances of day-to-day activities, highlighting the fact that creative aspects were important issues in daily life at New Kingdom Sai, corresponding to preferences traceable in Egypt proper.¹⁶⁹¹ All in all, it seems that the inhabitants of Sai were equipped with a standard set of objects required in an Egyptian settlement of considerable influence. On a high-ranking level it was compulsory to demonstrate an Egyptian appearance, no matter if this was an actual one or a role adopted as inhabitant of the Egyptian site (see above).¹⁶⁹² Besides the god Amun, the king himself was of prime importance for the occupants within their domestic surrounding.¹⁶⁹³ Loyalty to the king was the key to general well-being and promotion.¹⁶⁹⁴ Since the Egyptians sent to Nubia in the 18th Dynasty were living in towns set up by the state authority, i.e. the king, this is well understandable. It seems perfectly natural then that they were consequently also putting their faith in the king to arrange a safe burial, common health and most importantly, their return back to Egypt. The pronounced role of the living ruler in New Kingdom towns in Nubia might be regarded as slightly more important than in towns in Egypt.¹⁶⁹⁵

Very similar to Egyptian sites in Egypt, there are several levels of religious practices in the Egyptian towns in Nubia. Everything connected with text and inscriptions creates a perfect image of a 'home away from home' where the king was of prime importance, followed by the main state deities. However, if one takes a closer look at the less prominent evidence – the uninscribed objects and pottery vessels –

¹⁶⁸³ Smith 2003a, 132, fig. 5.32.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Harrington 2005; see also Exell 2008.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Budka 2016a.

¹⁶⁸⁶ See Hulin 1984; Budka 2006, 91.

¹⁶⁸⁷ For balls from Amarna, see Stevens 2012, 232–233.

¹⁶⁸⁸ See Arnst 2006. Cf. also Budka 2017g, 439, fig. 9.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Budka 2017g, 439, fig. 9.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Budka 2001, 53–54; Spencer 2014a, 48.

¹⁶⁹¹ Cf. Stevens 2006, 323–329.

¹⁶⁹² Budka 2001; Budka 2015f; cf. also Morris 2018, 224.

¹⁶⁹³ Cf. Budka 2001, 62.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Budka 2001, 99–101.

¹⁶⁹⁵ See Budka 2001, *passim*; Budka 2017d.

it becomes clear that the situation is much more complex. For day-to-day affairs, people at Sai trusted gods like Bes, Hathor and Taweret for their well-being.¹⁶⁹⁶ This picture very closely compares to sites located in Egypt itself.¹⁶⁹⁷ Similar to Amarna, there is a clear bias between high-ranking/elite references to the state religion and the anonymous finds evoking gods in the domestic sphere. However, there is also an element specific to private religion on sites like Sai: Egyptian objects appear side by side with Nubian-style objects and sometimes also as hybrid-types, combining both traditions and thus most probably reflecting lived realities of the citizens of Sai.¹⁶⁹⁸ Thus, a complex mixture of lifestyles at Sai, well attested through the ceramic evidence, obviously also affected the private religion. Individual choices and group dynamics may sometimes be more significant than cultural identities,¹⁶⁹⁹ seen also when it comes to pious practices. It is tempting to associate both the natural stone SAV1W 1184 (Chapter 4.3.2) and the seal-amulets SAV1E 1089 and SAV1E 2865 (Chapter 4.3.1) with such individual choices.

8.1.3 Domestic activities at Sai

For most of the common domestic activities, such as grinding, fishing and spinning, the tools and relevant installations at Sai are typical of contemporaneous Egyptian towns.¹⁷⁰⁰ The question of the group of net weights which might reflect a “centralized system of food production”¹⁷⁰¹ was already discussed above (Chapter 4.1). Some of the whetstones found in the town area might also be related to fishing, representing sharpening tools for metallic fishhooks, which have not survived in the material record at Sai.¹⁷⁰²

Grinding is well attested at both sectors excavated by the AcrossBorders project, SAV1 East and SAV1 West, by means of abundant grind stones. The only quern emplacement, found in Structure D at SAV1 West (as part of Feature 159, see Chapter 3.3.4), was found within a grind stone but still clearly attested the crushing of grain for the bread making process.¹⁷⁰³ Other than grain, other materials were crushed as well. At Sai this might have been quartz for the gold processing, but definitely pigments for making colours. Colour palettes and mortars were especially numerous at SAV1 West, where also painter’s pots appeared. One of the best examples for stone tools associated with making colour is SAV1W 1694, a kind of mortar where red pigment was found inside, obviously being crushed with the pestle SAV1W 1693 discovered next to the mortar (see Chapter 4.4.2).

One has to stress that in all groups of tools from Sai, thus the micro- and macrolithics, the bone tools and the metallic tools, many objects do not allow identifying a precise function. Some were clearly multi-purpose tools, which might also apply to many of the re-used sherds. All in all, diverse activities of grinding, crushing, hammering, polishing and piercing took place in New Kingdom Sai.

Food production was not only one of the main tasks in towns like Sai, but the various tasks connected with it also left a considerable amount of material remains. The quern emplacement and the grinding stones were already mentioned; built remains are the oven room at SAV1 West and several cooking areas at SAV1 East. The latter are located in probably open spaces and the baking and cooking took place on informal surfaces. One baking plate was still found in situ (Feature 63) and left only small spots of ash and burnt material on the surface; this might explain why no proper hearths were found during AcrossBorders’ excavation. More of such cooking areas are to be expected.¹⁷⁰⁴ The so-called fire dogs, which

¹⁶⁹⁶ Budka 2018c.

¹⁶⁹⁷ See especially Stevens 2006, *passim*.

¹⁶⁹⁸ This can also be observed for the official cult in the Egyptian temples set up in Nubia, see Török 2009, 228–229.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Cf. Spencer 2014a, 47.

¹⁷⁰⁰ See already Budka and Doyen 2013, 199–200. For activities in the New Kingdom towns in Nubia see most recently Spencer 2019, 452–455.

¹⁷⁰¹ Smith 2003a, 101.

¹⁷⁰² Budka 2017j, 166.

¹⁷⁰³ Samuel 2000, 561; Lang 2016.

¹⁷⁰⁴ For similar zones at Amara West, see Dalton 2017.

are presumably also connected with cooking (see below), were only found at sectors SAV1 North and SAV1 West, maybe associated with the large number of Egyptian-style cooking pots from these sites.

To conclude, it is important to consider household and cooking devices in context, within their find spot and architectural framework in the New Kingdom town of Sai. As demonstrated above by the examples of sectors SAV1 East and SAV1 West, the architectural remains within the town of Sai can differ considerably in size, for example, in the wall thickness of the buildings (see Chapter 3.4), but compare well for the material remains, especially the pottery and stone tools,¹⁷⁰⁵ though with certain dissimilarities regarding the quantities and proportions. This suggests that the prime usage of distinct areas within a town is not always clearly reflected in the material evidence, but may be diluted in the archaeological record.¹⁷⁰⁶ Sediment thin section micromorphology has the potential to answer questions regarding the functions of buildings and streets which are neither traceable on the macro-scale nor by means of find analysis (cf. Chapter 3.7).

8.2 COMPARISON WITH THE TOWNS OF ELEPHANTINE AND ABYDOS

The major goal of the AcrossBorders project was to evaluate the specific living conditions on Sai Island in comparison to the sites of Elephantine and South Abydos – three sites situated across ancient borders and cultures – and to reconstruct the multifaceted lives of individuals (see Chapter 1.4). Is there evidence for a common ‘New Kingdom lifestyle’ or are there clear differences illustrating the diverse environmental conditions? The results from excavations within the New Kingdom town have clearly demonstrated the need to consider all remains of household activities and material culture in general in context, within their specific find spot and architectural framework. This also needs to be kept in mind for this short outline of AcrossBorders’ comparative approach.

Together with the mud brick architecture, the pottery and objects from the main building phases at sectors SAV1 East and SAV1 West are responsible for identifying the sites as parts of an Egyptian town. The material culture is closely comparable not only to sites in Upper Nubia, but also to sites like Amarna and Elephantine in Egypt (see Chapter 4.1). Stone tools are the most common category of finds and are comparable to finds from Egyptian New Kingdom sites, but also find parallels in the Nubian cultures. Object categories like Nun bowls and female figurines are well comparable between the sites of Sai, Elephantine and Abydos. However, the figurines from Sai partly combine their Egyptian appearance with Nubian decorative patterns (see Chapter 4.1).

One of the differences between Sai and Egyptian sites like Elephantine and Abydos is its scarcity of textual evidence within the categories of small finds. As mentioned above, jar docketts are extremely rare and no ostraca have been found to date (See Chapter 4.1). Another difference, which partly applies to the comparison with Elephantine and Abydos, but especially with one to the main residential sites in Egypt like Memphis and Amarna, is that no signs for faience production were found on Sai. Moulds for small faience objects, commonly attested at Egyptian sites, are missing in the material culture from the New Kingdom town of Sai.¹⁷⁰⁷ Faience and glass production was presumably carried out in the large urban centres of New Kingdom Egypt.¹⁷⁰⁸

At present, ceramics are the group of finds which are best suitable to highlight both similarities and differences between the sites. As highlighted in Chapter 4.2, the pottery from the New Kingdom town of Sai compares well with material from Elephantine and Abydos, but with some features attesting to a local style. Especially meaningful is an assessment of the functional pottery at the individual sites which have all yielded ceramics of clearly domestic character. The most common functional vessel types from

¹⁷⁰⁵ Budka 2016c.

¹⁷⁰⁶ See Budka 2017j, 170.

¹⁷⁰⁷ See Budka 2017j, 165–166.

¹⁷⁰⁸ See most recently Hodgkinson 2018.

all three sites are pot stands, cooking pots and bread plates.¹⁷⁰⁹ Another quite well-attested functional type is the so-called *Schaelbecken* or fish dishes, also attested at Abydos, Elephantine and Sai (see Chapter 4.2, Fig. 91). In general, these large thick-walled trays with incised decoration on the interior occur both in Marl and Nile clay variants. Here, it seems significant that Marl clays dominate the corpora at Abydos and Elephantine, whereas on Sai primarily local Nile clays were used.¹⁷¹⁰

Amongst the site-specific features of the town of Sai, the large number of fire dogs is especially relevant (see Chapter 4.2). Compared to Elephantine and Abydos, the quantity is much higher and raises the question whether the fire dogs are really only connected with the preparation of food, holding a cooking pot above the fire. It seems possible that fire dogs are also connected with some production process or might have been used as multiple tools. This could suggest some kind of workshop character for parts of SAV1 North and SAV1 West where the majority of the fire dogs were found. Interestingly, the high concentration of fire dogs is comparable to the very large number of stone tools found in these sectors.¹⁷¹¹ Finally, one should not rule out the possibility that fire dogs in New Kingdom Sai received a new kind of meaning and were used in a different way than in Egypt.

Another category of functional vessels which are, like the fire dogs, still not completely understood regarding their function are so-called crucibles, in German “Spitzbodenflaschen”. These are well attested at both Sai and Elephantine,¹⁷¹² finding parallels at Amarna¹⁷¹³ and Mirgissa.¹⁷¹⁴ Whereas these vessels were frequently found in the contexts of hearths/ovens at Mirgissa and Elephantine, the find contexts on Sai are diverse and the function remains unclear. Common features of all “Spitzbodenflaschen” are that they are produced in coarse Nile C variants and most of them were red burnished.¹⁷¹⁵

The class of spinning bowls, dishes with two handles attached to the interior of the base, is also one of the interesting types within functional ceramics (Chapter 4.2).¹⁷¹⁶ Spinning bowls have been recorded at all three sites. Whereas Elephantine and Abydos show a more or less even distribution between Marl clay and Nile clay spinning bowls,¹⁷¹⁷ Sai yielded a considerably lower number of Marl clay vessels. Nile clay spinning bowls dominate the corpus at Sai and this represents a contrast to the findings in Egypt.¹⁷¹⁸

In general, functional ceramics from 18th Dynasty strata at all three sites compare well with each other. Despite of close parallels regarding the general corpus and the vessel types, a distinct difference seems to apply to the use of Marl or Nile clay for functional vessels. This can be illustrated by spinning bowls, but also fish dishes (*Schaelbecken*), pot stands and *zir* vessels. It becomes therefore evident that the differences between the sites are probably connected with the access to raw material and the closeness/distance to pottery production centres. Much of the functional pottery on Sai seems to have been produced according to the local demand, at least from the time of Thutmose III onwards. The sites in Egypt obviously had access to both imported pieces from main production centres and products from local workshops.

These findings regarding diverse accessibilities to raw materials as reflected in the pottery corpus of Sai in direct comparison to the Egyptian sites of Elephantine and Abydos compare well to observations concerning another group of objects from the New Kingdom town of Sai. Flint tools were primarily produced according to the local demand from locally/regionally available chert and flint pebbles/gravels (see Chapter 4.4.1), even if these stones were of rather poor quality. Just a very a very small amount of

¹⁷⁰⁹ See Budka 2006, 84–88 for South Abydos; Budka 2018d for Sai and Elephantine.

¹⁷¹⁰ Budka 2018d, 162.

¹⁷¹¹ See Budka 2017g, 438.

¹⁷¹² See Budka 2018d, 162.

¹⁷¹³ Rose 2007, 92–93, type SG5.

¹⁷¹⁴ Vercoutter 1970, 199–200.

¹⁷¹⁵ Budka 2018d, 158.

¹⁷¹⁶ See Rose 2007, 60–61, SD 6, 202–203.

¹⁷¹⁷ See also the general assessment for this type of functional ceramic based on the evidence from Egypt by Allen 1998, 28: “The pottery fabric from which the bowls are made does not seem to be important.”

¹⁷¹⁸ Budka 2018d, 162.

the flint objects was made in better quality material and imported from Egypt, most likely from Thebes and/or Amarna. It is likely to assume that these imported flints, like Marl clay vessels, were brought to Sai already as finished product and not as raw material.

At present, despite a general similarity with contemporary pottery in Egypt, the Egyptian pottery from Sai Island can be used as a case study that local pottery workshops and traditions are traceable in New Kingdom Nubia. Regional style was mostly expressed by surface treatment and decoration (e.g. the preference of painted triangles or incised lines, see Chapter 4.2).¹⁷¹⁹ Accessibility of raw materials and knowledge of production techniques are in general of key significance for assemblages of finds and in particular for ceramics.

The most pressing questions about the pottery from Sai Island, especially with regard to its comparison with Elephantine and Abydos, were the identity of the producers/potters and of the users of the vessels. The answers must derive from respecting a very dynamic microcosm with fuzzy boundaries between cultural identities at the site (see above). As illustrated by other examples with both real Egyptian and Egyptianised pottery, e.g. in the Levant, the following seems likely for Sai as well: “the close and multifaceted links between issues of cultural identity and the production sequence and technology employed in pottery manufacture, as well as the food ways and administrative systems of the individuals who produced and utilized such pottery”.¹⁷²⁰ No clear traces of kilns were found at Sai, but part of the material was definitely a local production in Egyptian-style (see Chapter 4.2). Here, it is interesting to mention the situation of pottery production at the Middle Kingdom Nubian forts. Nadejda Reshetnikova and Bruce Williams have convincingly argued that episodic work of potters as itinerant craftsmen travelling from site to site played an important role.¹⁷²¹ Based on the existence of a ceramic potter’s wheel head at Askut, Smith demonstrated that the production and distribution of pottery in Middle Kingdom Nubia was probably quite complex, including industrial workshops at major sites like Askut as well as local production for demands on a much smaller scale at other sites.¹⁷²²

For New Kingdom Sai it would be reasonable to assume an industrial workshop during the heyday of the site. However, since we still know little about the internal structure of the town, it is possible to consider small scale production as well; perhaps the demands of the various sectors within the town were fulfilled on a micro scale. Hybrid versions of New Kingdom and Nubian-style vessels illustrate the close interconnections between Egyptians and Nubians. One has to assume that Nubian potters were being trained in wheel-made production by Egyptians, at least in the first generation. For this training, but also possibly to explain higher quality products in local fabrics as they were found, for example, in Feature 15 at SAV1 East, the presence of Egyptian potters at the site is very likely.¹⁷²³

Nubian cooking pots and storage vessels are regular finds both at Sai and Elephantine and have also been found at Abydos.¹⁷²⁴ Such pots seem to attest to Nubian presence, maybe to Nubian cooks or persons otherwise involved in food production. Nubian fine wares seem a little less clear in this respect; they may also be regarded as ‘luxury ware’, likewise used by Egyptians.¹⁷²⁵ Nubian fine ware is common at both Sai and Elephantine, but so far lacking from the town of Abydos.

To conclude, the individuals using the pottery within the New Kingdom town of Sai remain difficult to grasp, also after the comparison with Elephantine and Abydos. Of course they were the citizens of New Kingdom Sai, but apart from that, much is still debatable. At present, the most likely scenario would be that both Egyptians and Nubians settled at the site, with the Egyptians probably being the majority, at least in the early phases. That the Nubian pots are the minority confirms to the character of Sai as an Egyptian-style town. Similar to the other groups of the material culture, the pottery corpus seems to attest to people who identified themselves primarily as Egyptian officials and occupants of an Egyp-

¹⁷¹⁹ Cf. Smith and Buzon 2018.

¹⁷²⁰ Pierce 2013, 531.

¹⁷²¹ Reshetnikova and Williams 2016, 500–501. Cf. Budka 2017i, 123; Budka 2018d, 164.

¹⁷²² Smith 2014b.

¹⁷²³ Budka 2018d, 164–165.

¹⁷²⁴ See Budka 2006, 85–86, fig. 1.

¹⁷²⁵ Cf. Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler 2012, 36; Raue 2015, 360–361. See also Raue 2018, 78–80.

tian site but may nevertheless have had family ties in Nubia and derive from a local group with a specific cultural identity that was never completely abandoned but much adapted to an Egyptian appearance.

8.3 SUMMARY

Formation processes in all areas of AcrossBorders' excavation within the New Kingdom town of Sai were examined, in particular by micromorphology (Chapter 3.7). It became obvious that daily life activities, such as grinding, storing things, cooking and baking, contributed to the creation and use of space in the town. The mud brick architecture at both SAV1 East and SAV1 West was subject to continuous modification, reconstitution and also re-use. Floor surfaces differ from open to roofed spaces and footways like the "wall street" at SAV1 West experienced several changes of use.¹⁷²⁶

Pottery, small finds, tools and various types of equipment were analysed in relation to their associated finds, architecture and past human actions. The functional, economic and social significance of these finds was assessed and the question of Nubian versus Egyptian lifestyle discussed (see Chapters 8.1 and 8.2).¹⁷²⁷ Objects of Egyptian type dominate the material assemblage at Sai, reflecting observations made at other Egyptian Nubian towns.¹⁷²⁸ Nevertheless, specific elements which are most probably results of local dynamics and site-specific to Sai were also highlighted (Chapter 8.2).

All in all, the new information from Sai presented in this volume is highly relevant for understanding distinct phases of the Egyptian occupation in Upper Nubia. Evidence from Sai suggests that the Egyptian sites were largely depending on Egypt in the early 18th Dynasty – the region was centrally administered and supplies were brought from Egypt.¹⁷²⁹ Besides the importance of seizing Sai, which was the northern stronghold of the Kerma Kingdom, the Egyptians also seem to have preferred the site because of natural resources of the area (cf. Chapter 7). Egypt's strong interest in gold and sandstone is well known and both materials are available in the region of Sai. Nubian gold was among the main Egyptian economic interests during a long time span.¹⁷³⁰ The sandstone from Sai was most likely also used for pharaonic building projects further north (see Chapters 2.4 and 7.4).

Archaeological findings of recent years illustrate that the 're-conquest' of Nubia and the establishing of Egyptian authority in Upper Nubia was a long process with considerable changes (see Chapter 7). Large scale Pharaonic building activities seem not to be attested before Thutmose III: only then, with the Kerma Kingdom overthrown, the 'temple towns' and large stone temples for gods were realised. Beginning with the reign of Thutmose III, there is also abundant evidence for viceroys, mayors and other officials in Upper Nubia; the system of the *jd n. w n W3w3.t* and *K3š* was established soon after (see Chapter 7.4).¹⁷³¹ Consequently, life and living conditions in Nubia have changed markedly in character with these major structural changes from the reign of Ahmose Nebpehtyra to Thutmose III. On Sai, this is reflected, among others, in the pottery. An increase in the variability in shapes and wares can be noted from the time of Thutmose III onwards and is most probably related to the heyday of Sai as an administrative Egyptian centre. The ceramics also attest to the full integration of the town within Egyptian international trade routes of the second half of the 18th Dynasty, when the Egyptian administration in Nubia was firmly established.¹⁷³² What must not be overlooked within this macro-approach considering the evolution of Sai is that the Egyptian New Kingdom empire, similar to the Roman Empire, must be understood "as a complicated, multifaceted force of social change in individual lives, rather than a seamless whole."¹⁷³³

¹⁷²⁶ Cf. Dalton 2017 for similar processes at Amara West.

¹⁷²⁷ Cf. Smith 2003b. See already Budka 2015b, 68–69.

¹⁷²⁸ See, e.g., Millard 1979; Smith 2003a, 101 and Chapter 4.

¹⁷²⁹ Cf. Budka 2015a, 50–51; Budka 2017b, 57–58.

¹⁷³⁰ Cf. Müller 2013, 74–79.

¹⁷³¹ Cf. Morkot 2013b, 925–926.

¹⁷³² See Budka 2011, 31.

¹⁷³³ Boozer 2010, 155

Reconstructing life on New Kingdom Sai has made considerable progress in the last few years and there is new information for the complex evolution of the town site thanks to the application of diverse methods and extended fieldwork in the town, as well as in the main pyramid cemetery, SAC5. It seems now safe to propose that the evolution of the new Kingdom town of Sai, as preliminarily and fragmentarily as it is currently understood, actually reflects the phases of Egyptian involvement in Nubia (Chapter 7). Sai was a changing microcosm throughout the New Kingdom, shaped by different individuals and adapting to historical and economic progress on its own local level. The following three main phases are proposed for the development of the town:¹⁷³⁴

- Phase A. In the early 18th Dynasty, Sai was probably not much more than a simple landing place, a bridgehead and supply base for the Egyptians during the reigns of Ahmose Nebpehtyra, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I. This is supported by new archaeological evidence from SAV1 East and around Temple A. Scattered proof of Egyptian presence comes from the reign of Hatshepsut. The size and internal structure of the town at this early stage remains unclear; there is no sign of an enclosure wall, although occupation remains were discovered in 2017 at sector SAV1 West parallel to the town wall. One can only speculate that if an enclosure of this early phase existed, it probably had different dimensions than the one established in Phase B.
- Phase B. The 240 × 120m large walled settlement with buttresses and the main city gate in the west was established (or maybe re-established?) during the time of Thutmose III, after the defeat of the Kerma kingdom. The site turned into an important administrative centre with an Amun-Re temple, a governor's residence (SAF2) and an administrative building (Building A). The dating of the foundation of the town wall of this phase is now confirmed thanks to recent work in SAV1 West. The enlargement of the site goes hand in hand with an increasing complexity with varied lifestyles amongst the inhabitants, suggesting a complex social stratification. Sai Island was now the administrative headquarter of Upper Nubia and continued to flourish until the reign of Amenhotep III.
- Phase C. New finds from both the town site and cemetery SAC5 stress the importance of Sai during the 19th Dynasty. The island was still used by high officials including one of the deputies of Kush as burial place. These fresh data add to our knowledge of events in early Ramesside times in Upper Nubia and illustrate that our present understanding is far from complete, especially concerning regional contacts between the Egyptian sites.

These phases based on the archaeological and textual evidence from Sai Island are of relevance in a broader context and contribute to a better understanding of the relations of Upper Nubia with Egypt. The first phase, attested by scattered remains and deposits in the northern, eastern and western parts of the town, can until now not be associated with a town wall. Early New Kingdom evidence at Mirgissa¹⁷³⁵ and Sesebi¹⁷³⁶ might represent parallels for an Egyptian settlement without enclosure wall. Despite of an in some respects very fragmented state of knowledge about Phase A on Sai, it seems safe to suggest that the earliest 18th Dynasty remains are markedly different from the later 'temple town' layout, despite the fact that the earliest remains at SAV1 East seem to show the same grid-arrangement as is later attested with Building A (see Chapter 3.2.3). All of this supports the reconstruction of Sai as an important site for the Nubian campaigns of Ahmose and Thutmose I. Therefore, the following distinction of historic/political phases of Upper Nubia during the 18th Dynasty which cover the Phases A and B of Sai Island can be proposed:

Phase 1a = Phase A) Ahmose Nebpehtyra led several campaigns against the kingdom of Kerma in Nubian territory, reaching as far as the Third Cataract (see Chapter 7.1). Ahmose and his troops probably set up a small camp on Sai Island with several storage installations. The material culture is primarily Egyptian, but with a clear Kerma presence. Nothing indicates that the Egyptians were already involved

¹⁷³⁴ See Budka 2015b; Budka 2017c, 79–80; Budka 2018b, 123–124.

¹⁷³⁵ Vercoutter 1970.

¹⁷³⁶ Spence and Rose 2014, 410.

on Sai on a permanent basis and with large scale building activities. The Egyptian presence in Kush was as limited as it is reflected in the missing data for a sophisticated administration, as it is attested in Wawat. This situation might have changed a bit on a local level during Amenhotep I, when textual evidence suggest a firm presence of Egyptian troops on Sai.¹⁷³⁷

- Phase 1b = Phase A) Thutmose I managed to go further upstream, as far as Kurgus, and he founded several fortified towns in Nubia. Unfortunately, archaeological proof for the identification of these sites is still lacking (see Chapter 7.1). At Sai, no enclosure wall is traceable during this period. Possibly the camp set up by Ahmose and used by Amenhotep I continued and storage facilities were used – a full account of the site during the reign of Thutmose I is at present not possible. The material culture is primarily Egyptian, but with a Kerma presence indicating close relations between Egyptians and Nubians. The phase of the Egyptianisation of Kush seems to have made remarkable progress.¹⁷³⁸
- Phase 2a = Phase B) After several contributions by Thutmose II and Hatshepsut,¹⁷³⁹ Thutmose III succeeded in overthrowing the Kingdom of Kush. The *mnn.w* at Sai was equipped with an enclosure wall and extended to a large-scale site of administrative importance, including a stone temple for Amun-Ra built in several phases. Current fieldwork has highlighted that by the reign of Thutmose III, Sai had become one of the most important Egyptian centres in Upper Nubia. The material culture becomes more diverse, bears an international character and compares well to Egyptian sites like Elephantine and Abydos. There is still a mixture of Nubian and Egyptian ceramics, but locally made Egyptian-style vessels prevail. Hybrid types of vessels indicate a complex entanglement of the Nubian with the Egyptian culture. The time of Thutmose III was the first heyday of Egyptian involvement in Kush.
- Phase 2b = Phase B) Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III continued Pharaonic building activities in Upper Nubia with a focus on temples and the gold of Kush. On Sai Island, the Nubian component in the material culture is by this time much faded – presumably, the indigenous elements have been largely Egyptianised and are difficult to detect in the archaeological record.¹⁷⁴⁰ Kush was under the same Egyptian influence as Wawat.

Phase B of Sai Island mirrors – on the meso level – the installation of a permanent Egyptian administration for the region of Kush. At all major sites in Upper Nubia, Egyptian architecture and material culture testify to the presence of Egyptians during this period and to the appropriation of the Egyptian style through indigenous elements, resulting in a complex material entanglement of cultures and a lifestyle that is very similar, but not completely identical to sites in Egypt proper.¹⁷⁴¹

The potential and challenges of analysing the material culture for the question of ‘Nubian’ vs. ‘Egyptian’ lifestyle in New Kingdom fortified towns in Upper Nubia, such as Sai, have been discussed throughout this volume. The artefacts and especially ceramics testify to a cultural fusion from the foundation of the town in the early 18th Dynasty throughout the New Kingdom.

Lastly, the essential question of the number of occupants of New Kingdom Sai shall be discussed. According to Morris, *mnn.w* of the New Kingdom in Nubia were densely populated and are comparable to Egyptian towns situated in Egypt.¹⁷⁴² With 2.76ha,¹⁷⁴³ the town of Sai is rather of small size,¹⁷⁴⁴ e.g. compared with c. 5.4ha of Sesebi.¹⁷⁴⁵ Since not all of the area of the fortified site has been excavated yet, the number of individual houses must remain very vague. The only proper Egyptian-style houses,

¹⁷³⁷ See Gabolde 2012, 127–128.

¹⁷³⁸ See also the evidence from Kerma, Valbelle 2014, 107. Cf. Williams 2018.

¹⁷³⁹ Cf. Bonnet 2012, 71; see also Valbelle 2006, 33–50.

¹⁷⁴⁰ See above and compare, e.g., the burials within Tomb 26; see Budka 2017k; Budka 2018e.

¹⁷⁴¹ Budka 2017f.

¹⁷⁴² Morris 2005, 809–814.

¹⁷⁴³ Adenstedt 2016, 24, fig. 7; Budka 2017c, 71; see also Adenstedt 2018.

¹⁷⁴⁴ For town and city sizes in Egypt and Nubia, see Uphill 1988, 66.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Uphill 1988, 66. Also Buhen is much larger with 3.55ha.

presumably with two storeys, are located in the southern part of the town between the governor's residence and the area of magazines. At SAV1 West, comparable to SAV1 North, several structures of quite modest character, presumably courtyard houses were documented. These buildings probably only had one storey according to their wall thicknesses.

For mid-18th Dynasty Sai I would propose a size of *c.* 150–200 occupants as quite reasonable. This takes into account that housing for *c.* 30 persons could be provided at SAV1, for *c.* 50 persons in SAV1 West and surroundings and for *c.* 50 persons in SAV1 North and surroundings. Considering that we know little about the unexcavated sectors, 150–200 citizens in total seem probable, also in consideration of the size and the burials of cemetery SAC5. However, a higher number cannot be ruled out at present. As a comparison, the troops of the Ottoman fortress on Sai may be named. The size of the troop is reported as 150 men, all together 300 simple huts were set up in the fortress.¹⁷⁴⁶ Certainly, the proposed 150–200 citizens of New Kingdom Sai do not necessarily represent the total population of the island – extra-mural settlements, presumably of both Egyptians and Nubians, are very likely, but as yet archaeologically invisible. Not invisible, but difficult to trace, are females and children in New Kingdom Sai (see above). Cooking and grinding¹⁷⁴⁷ were maybe primarily tasks of the women at Sai, but little is known about the agents of these domestic activities and others, such as fishing, flint knapping and pigment production. The gold processing as well as the storage of goods in the large magazines and the complete administration involved with the *jnw* were probably associated with the male occupants of whom we know some individuals from burial remains in cemetery SAC5 (see above, Chapter 6).

The new data presented here allowed a more complete assessment of the history and nature of the New Kingdom town on Sai Island. The reconstruction of some patterns of the living conditions at one of the key towns of Upper Nubia is significant and holds much potential for further studies. AcrossBorders' bottom-up approach with a strong diachronic focus, similar to that applied to Amara West,¹⁷⁴⁸ illustrated Sai as a changing Egyptian microcosm throughout the New Kingdom, shaped by different individuals and adapting to historical and economic progress.

The decline of the site and the process of the abandonment of Sai remain at present still partly unclear; this is closely linked to the assumptions why the founding of Amara West was necessary.¹⁷⁴⁹ Many more open questions were articulated while contextualising Sai and the lived experience on this site during the New Kingdom. It is to be hoped that research on Sai Island will continue and will address further queries connected with the complex way of cultural expressions in New Kingdom Nubia and beyond.

¹⁷⁴⁶ See Prokosch 1994, 116.

¹⁷⁴⁷ For grinding as primarily a female task, see Lang 2016.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Spencer 2014a; Spencer 2017.

¹⁷⁴⁹ See most recently Spencer 2017.

