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UMM QAYS, JORDAN

iDAI.tutorials on the Road: a Universally Applicable Package of Teaching Materials for Finds Processing in a Field Test

Report on the Summer School 2023

**Damascus Branch and Amman Research Unit of the
Orient Department of the German Archaeological Institute**

by Hanna Hamel and Heike Möller



e-FORSCHUNGSBERICHTE DES DAI 2023 · Faszikel 2

Aufgrund der COVID-19-Pandemie musste die für 2020 geplante Summer School »Pottery Processing. Introduction to the Scientific Treatment of Ancient Ceramics« im Museum in Umm Qays abgesagt werden und wurde schließlich in diesem Jahr (04.–12.06.2023) durchgeführt. In der Zwischenzeit wurden zwei Lehrvideos zum Zeichnen und Fotografieren von Keramikscherben erstellt und auf ihre »Feldtauglichkeit« getestet. Ein ergänzender dritter Teil über die Bearbeitung der Keramik von der Ausgrabung bis zur Lagerung im Depot wurde während der Sommerschule gedreht. Darüber hinaus wurde aus dem Online-Tutorial ein Handout mit dem Titel »Instructions for the archaeological drawing of ceramic sherds« erstellt und den Studierenden zur Verfügung gestellt. Das so entstandene Paket, das in arabischer Sprache zugänglich ist, soll den Studierenden eine nachhaltige Möglichkeit geben, ihr erworbenes Wissen anzuwenden und sich selbstständig weiterzubilden.

Due to the COVID-19-pandemic, the Summer School »Pottery Processing. Introduction to the Scientific Treatment of Ancient Ceramics« at the Museum



Cooperation partners: Department of Antiquities, Umm Qays Museum; Yarmouk University, Department of Archaeology and Department of Fine Arts.

Financial support: Auswärtiges Amt (German Federal Foreign Office), Cultural Preservation Program.

Head of project: C. Bührig.

Team: H. Hamel, H. Möller, S. Shoubaki.



1 Group photo of the cooperation partners at Umm Qays Museum from left to right: Luna Watkins (DAI), Sereen Shubaki, Hussein Sababha (Yarmouk University), Heike Möller (DAI), Hanna Hamel (DAI), Ahmad Abu Baker (Yarmouk University), Mousa Melkawi (DoA Umm Qays), Maher Tarboush (Yarmouk University). (Photo: Olga Zenker)

in Umm Qays planned for 2020 had to be cancelled and was finally carried out this year (04.–12.06.2023). In the meantime, two educational videos for drawing and photographing ceramic sherds were created and tested for their »field suitability«. A complementary third part on the processing of pottery from excavation to storage in the depot was filmed during the summer school. In addition, a handout was created from the online tutorial titled »Instructions for the archaeological drawing of ceramic sherds« and made available to the students. The resulting package, which is accessible in Arabic, is intended to give students a lasting opportunity to use their acquired knowledge and to continue their education independently.

تم بسبب الجائحة إلغاء المدرسة الصيفية في أم قيس التي كان من المخطط إجراؤها في عام 2020 وتم تنفيذها أخيرًا هذا العام 2023. في خلال تلك الفترة تم إعداد مقطعي فيديو تعليميين لرسم وتصوير كسرات الفخار واختبار «ملاءمتها الميدانية». تم تصوير جزء ثالث حول معالجة الفخار من مراحل التنقيب إلى التخزين في المستودع خلال المدرسة الصيفية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك تم إعداد نشرة من البرنامج التعليمي عبر الإنترنت «تعليمات الرسم الأثري للفخار» وتم توفيرها كمراجع للطلاب حيث يمكنهم الوصول إليها باللغة العربية حيث يساهم ذلك في منح الطلاب فرصة دائمة لاستخدام المعرفة المكتسبة ومواصلة تعليمهم بشكل مستقل.

Genesis of the Project

1 During the 2019 excavation campaign [1] an information day on finds processing was organised for the local staff of the Department of Antiquities (DoA). Inspired by the great interest on the part of local colleagues and in order to strengthen cooperation, the idea arose to organise a summer school to further support local colleagues in their finds processing (Fig. 1). Since the processing of finds plays a subordinate role in the university curriculum, there is usually a lack of practical knowledge and experience in dealing with material from field research. Through cooperation with Yarmouk University in [Irbid](#)[↗] (Fig. 1), young scientists should be confronted with finds processing at an early stage and gain initial experience with ceramics. In addition to the spatial proximity between [Umm Qays](#)[↗] and Irbid, there was also the



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- 2 Lisa Peters (center) shows the students the work on section 1. (Photo: Heike Möller)
- 3 Ibrahim Rousan (center) guides through the ancient site. (Photo: Hanna Hamel)
- 4 Marwan Tawaha introduces ceramic art at the Ceramics Studio of Yarmouk University. (Photo: Heike Möller)
- 5 Student Yazeed Helali demonstrates the work at the potter's wheel. (Photo: Heike Möller)

possibility of involving students who have less opportunity for exchange with international institutions, as is possible in [Amman](#)[↗], for example.

Practical Approach

- 2 The seven-day course, which took place during the [excavation campaign of the German Archaeological Institute \(DAI\) in Umm Qays](#)[↗] in June 2023, was designed according to the needs of the students through a preliminary discussion with Hussein Sababha (Yarmouk University). Students gained insight into all processes, from excavation to the publication of pottery. The archaeological context of the pottery selected to be worked on for the course was presented in the field by the excavators, Luna Watkins and Lisa Peters (Fig. 2). This provided a direct link between the finds and their features, which is fundamental to the evaluation of the assemblage. Additionally, a guided tour of the ancient site and old village from the late 19th/early 20th century by Ibrahim Rousan (DoA, Umm Qays Museum) established the larger frame of reference for the students (Fig. 3). In the [Umm Qays Museum](#)[↗], well-preserved vessels were first discussed chronologically and typologically, allowing students to be introduced to the chronological characteristics of local production before working with small-scale shattered material. Following numerous discussions on the production of ceramic vessels, a film of a [pottery workshop in the West Delta/Egypt](#)[↗] was first shown. To give the students practical insight, the Department of Fine Arts (Yarmouk University) offered an opportunity to visit the »Ceramics Studio« (Fig. 4), where all production steps were explained and demonstrated by staff and students (Fig. 5). The lively discussions on the use of clay also took us to the work yard ([Werkhof](#))[↗], where the use of clay as a building material was explained and demonstrated by mason and restorer Ronny Brühl (Fig. 6).
- 3 Shorouq Alomari and Bar'a Sayhah presented to the students the single steps for cleaning the pottery sherds and other finds (Fig. 7). Using the find material from the parallel excavation, the students first learned how to recognise and classify fabrics (Fig. 8), recognise ceramic forms and identify them in a type-catalogue, and enter them in a form for statistical analysis.



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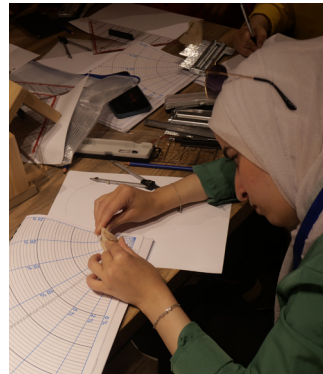
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- 6 Ronny Brühl explains the chemical composition of the clay plaster to the students in the workyard. (Photo: Heike Möller)
- 7 Shorouq Alomari and Bar'a Sayhah (left) show students how to clean ceramics. (Photo: Heike Möller)
- 8 The students sort the pottery sherds according to fabrics. (Photo: Hanna Hamel)
- 9 Marya Ababneh helps Eman Hasan align the sherd. (Photo: Hanna Hamel)
- 10 The diameter of a rim sherd is determined with the aid of the handout. (Photo: Hanna Hamel)

This was followed by training in drawing ceramic profiles (Fig. 9). Various methods were presented based on [the educational film](#)[↗], the [iDAI.tutorials handout](#)[↗] and on the part of the course instructors and practised with the students using rim and base sherds (Fig. 10). An introduction to the photography of pottery sherds was also presented using the [educational film](#)[↗] and then implemented by the students using their own smartphones. Finally, various publications on regional ceramics were presented, and best practices for publications of pottery were discussed.

Evaluation of the Training Materials

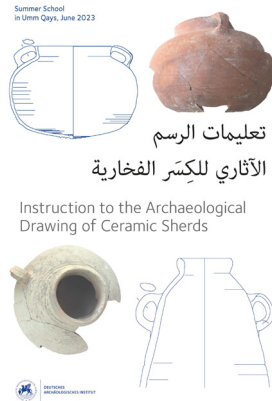
- 4 During the Summer School, it was possible to produce a [third educational film](#)[↗] which will supplement the two existing parts with the steps between excavation and storage in the depot (Fig. 11). The combination of the various teaching materials developed at the DAI, consisting of educational films and handouts (Fig. 12), proved to be particularly practical and established basic tools for further trainings. The package can be used in a variety of ways, on the one hand spatially – in the Arab world – but also in terms of content, as it is not aimed at specific target groups with defined prior knowledge and can be adapted to any need. The same applies to the technical equipment of the trainees, as methods with and without specific tools for ceramic documentation are presented. The existing open-source materials from [iDAI.world](#)[↗] and the new instructional films result in a package that is universally applicable for the introduction to find processing and secure accessibility for the students. The interaction of the tools provided in [iDAI.world](#) and the newly designed tools was positively evaluated by teachers and learners in the course (Fig. 13).

Acknowledgements

- 5 Our special thanks go to Hussein Sababha and Ibrahim Rousan, who not only made the premises at the museum available but also contributed decisively to the success of the course through numerous contributions. We would like to thank Sreen Shoubaki for the translation as well as for her tireless efforts, which always promoted discussions and made practical experience



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possible (Fig. 14). We would also like to thank the team of SchwabenFilm for their constructive collaboration and Paige Steen for proof-reading this article as well as Wassim Alrez for his assistance with the Arabic text. We are also grateful for the support of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Lamia El-Khoury, and the Faculty of Fine Arts, Ali Al-Rabat, as well as the Department of Antiquities in Umm Qays, Mousa Melkawi.

Participants

6 M. Ababneh, W. Abualhayja'a, E. Al Bnyan, W. H. A. Alhmoud, L. Alnuami, M. Alomari, S. Al Saggar, A. Al Sarayreh, E. Alsoúd, S. Bader, A. Bataineh, E. Hasan, S. Hatamleh, E. Khasawneh, D. Masarwah, D. Melhem, A. Nazzal, M. Obeidat, N. Obeidat.

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David 2022 [↗]

R. David (Hrsg.), Concise Manual for Ceramic Studies from the Nile Valley to the Middle East, Études d'Égyptologie 24 (Paris 2022)

Endnote

[1] Bührig et al. 2021.

- 11 The film team (»SchwabenFilm«) [↗] interviews two students of the Summer School. (Photo: Sereen Shoubaki)
- 12 Cover of the Handout »Instructions for the archaeological drawing of ceramic sherds«. (Photos and drawings: Hanna Hamel, Heike Möller; Layout: Annika Busching)
- 13 Participants with their certificates, course instructors, representatives of the DoA and Yarmouk University. (Photo: Olga Zenker)
- 14 Sereen Shoubaki gives students further insight based on the vessel that was just potted. (Photo: Hanna Hamel)



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