



## WASTE AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF A ROMAN WASTE DEPOSIT IN SYENE, UPPER EGYPT

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In Archaeology, the evidence of deliberately disposed waste is of particular importance, as valuable, sometimes unexpected, conclusions about ancient living conditions can be drawn from these findings. Waste layers, however, are usually not processed with pleasure, as they often involve large quantities of unstratified material, which is usually disposed over a longer period of time. In addition, closed landfills are relatively rare found. Ceramic finds from use levels are preferred for dating purposes in construction phases. Further investigations on socio-economic and socio-ecological questions are hardly carried out. In the project applied for, a waste layer from the Roman Imperial Period from Syene/Upper Egypt is to be comprehensively evaluated for the first time. This not only forms a well-contained archive, but also offers insights into the life of the inhabitants of an imperial city on the Nile.



Fig. 1: Roman housing in area 2 (© ÖAI-ÖAW/N. Gail)



Fig. 2: Waste layer between two houses in area 2 (© ÖAI-ÖAW/H. Schwaiger)

In the course of excavations in the ancient urban area (fig. 1) of Syene, modern Aswan, in 2012 revealed a finding between two houses that could be interpreted as a waste disposal from the 1st century to the early 3rd century CE (fig. 2). The majority of the material disposed of is pottery, the evaluation of which is the focus of this project (fig. 3). The waste layer from Syene represents a unique finding for Upper Egypt, which consistently allows references to be made to the present day. Waste management is not only an important, ubiquitous topic, but is also increasingly finding its way into archaeology as a discipline in its own right („archaeology of waste“). Due to the interdisciplinary evaluation of the finds (pottery, glass finds, animal bones and botanical remains), the project can also be considered a pioneer project for the region and leads to a significant expansion of the research horizon. The temporal limitation of this find complex also allows detailed studies, which in turn will bring new insights in ceramological terms.



Fig. 3: Pottery finds from the waste layer in area 2 (© ÖAI-ÖAW/N. Gail)