CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

From furniture to food, animals to architecture, manuscripts to musical instruments, most objects have been miniaturised at one time or another. In the Near East miniature images have been documented from as early as the Neolithic[1]. Perhaps it is as Ben Jonson said: »In small proportions we just beauty see«[2]. In *The Savage Mind*, C. Lévi-Strauss agreed: »All miniatures seem to have intrinsic aesthetic quality« and questioned whether miniatures »may not in fact be the universal type of the work of art«[3]. Modern writers have also noticed the »almost universal appeal« of miniatures with their ability to variously induce »wonder and amazement«, »intrigued awe«, »comforting familiarity« and »enchantment«[4]. From 1997–2001 the German Archaeological Institute (*Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* hereafter referred to as the DAI) excavated over 3,000 mortuary miniatures from the 1st millennium BC Sabaean ʾAwām cemetery of the ʾAwām sanctuary in the Mārib oasis, 135 kilometres northeast of Ṣanʿāʾ, Yemen[5]. Of these 3,000 or so mortuary miniatures, 1,006 miniatures are made of stone and 126 of metal. It is this body of over 1,000 stone and metal mortuary miniatures that constitutes the core of this study. Prior to the excavation of the ʾAwām cemetery, and in common with many sites in the Near East, miniature finds in South Arabian archaeological contexts were typically fragmentary. Even though miniaturization as a technique is well known in Near Eastern archaeology there has been little examination of the extent to which miniatures as a class of objects are able to contribute to an interpretation and understanding of the culture to which they belong. Generally they are underutilised as an explanatory tool when compared to other small find groupings such as seals, coins, jewellery, beads, figurines or scarabs. However, a link into the culture of a time and place can be and needs to be made through the material culture of all recovered objects. Like all objects miniatures are part of the materiality of a culture and represent cultural relationships, intentions and practices that are constructed for a specific time and place. I. Hodder has pointed out that »… material culture has a meaning which goes beyond the physical properties of an object, and derives from the network of social entanglements and strategies within which the object is embroiled«[6]. Therefore objects are sites for the social construction of reality. They are part of a whole range of devices used by groups and individuals to actively construct and negotiate social power and economic relationships in a given time and place. There are no random objects, only cultural objects with cultural functions which leave behind echoes of their past to be deciphered. As L. Meskell put it »… humans create their object worlds … there are no a priori objects; they require human interventions to bring objects into existence«[7]. The study of miniatures can provide a valuable resource that deepens and refines our understanding of a culture as they have their own system of symbols and values that derive from and are integrated into the originating culture's »social entanglements and strategies«[8]. While the study is

1 Moorey 2003, 16.
2 Jonson 1640, 435 no. 27.
3 Lévi-Strauss 1966, 23.
4 Langin-Hooper 2015, 62.
5 Hitgen 1998; Hitgen 2000; Hitgen 2002; Hitgen 2005 b; Vogt – Gerlach – Hitgen 1998/99, 139–143; Gerlach 1999; Gerlach 2002; Gerlach 2003; Gerlach 2005; Bessac – Breton 2002; Japp 2002; Japp 2005; Japp 2005; Nebes 2002; Röring 2002; Röring 2005.
6 Hodder 2003, 73. See also Hodder 2012.
7 Meskell 2004, 3.
8 Hodder 2003, 73.

based on an artefact repertoire and therefore provides a typology of those objects, it also attempts to look at what echoes, if any, the stone and metal miniature repertoire has left behind about its past ›social entanglements and strategies‹, about its origins and roles in South Arabian miniaturization in general and Sabaean mortuary miniaturization in particular. Specifically the study aims to document the stone and metal mortuary miniature corpus from the ʾAwām cemetery, explore both miniature and full size comparanda for the stone and metal repertoires, analyse antecedents to miniaturization in South Arabia and its relationship to other Near Eastern regions, and understand as far as is possible, the function/s and symbolic values of the miniatures as grave goods in 1st millennium BC Sabaʾ.

1 Overviews

1.1 Mortuary Studies

Interpretation in archaeology is often dependent on evidence from mortuary contexts. Mortuary rites are performed by the living for the living, so such contexts provide a fundamental link to social organisation and cultural rituals through the presence or absence of cemetery organisation, grave architecture and size, inscriptions, grave goods and skeleton treatment. Decisions taken about the burial place and associated rituals are important and are proxy indicators for much cultural information. But mortuary contexts are difficult if not treacherous contexts, often being »a hall of mirrors, representations of representations«[9]. First, because they are often plundered, destroying stratigraphic and chronological information, but secondly and more importantly, because they are symbolic environments in which the meanings of objects are indirect and heavily idealised. They tell us about how people thought life should be led not how it actually was led, »the community of the dead may well be very different from the communities of the living«[10]. The use and abuse of mortuary contexts in deciphering the past is well known and has given rise to a considerable amount of scholarly literature in archaeology about burial populations, grave goods, landscapes of internment and the appropriate interpretative paradigms[11]. Indications of social organisation and especially indications of status, power, rank, gender, kinship, and age are looked for and analysed through mortuary material culture. As M. Parker Pearson has put it, »one of the main ways in which we interpret past societies is through recovering the material traces of those practices associated with the remains of the dead«[12]. By the 1970s functionalist behavioural explanations in archaeology and anthropology gave way especially in north America to the so-called New Archaeology or processual archaeology and its search for so-called universal laws or middle range theories regarding human behaviour[13]. Mortuary studies became caught up in the new approaches which, while providing correctives to A. L. Kroeber's[14] view that there was little relationship between mortuary and wider social traditions, suggested a direct reflective approach between mortuary material culture and social organisation[15]. Post-processualist approaches to archaeology replaced this view with a reflexive, contextual approach[16], and current views of mortuary studies[17] tend to favour a more transformative view of the relationship between mortuary treatment and social position, a reflexive rather than reflective approach, allowing for »contradictory tendencies between lived and idealised notions of social structure«[18]. Mortuary rites and sites are now interpreted as images of *idealised* social organisation that play a crucial role in the construction of differentiated social identities, memorialising identity and status among the dead, confirming and reinforcing

9 Parker Pearson 2003, 9.
10 Parker Pearson 2003, 114.
11 Kroeber 1927; Binford 1962; Saxe 1970; Binford 1971; Bottéro 1980; Goldstein 1981; Pader 1982; Parker Pearson 1982; Shanks – Tilley 1982; Tsukimoto 1985; Shanks – Tilley 1987; Cannon 1989; Morris 1992; Parker Pearson 1993; Campbell – Green 1995; Hodder 2003; Parker Pearson 2003; Cohen 2005.
12 Parker Pearson 2003, 3.
13 Binford – Binford 1968; Binford 1971; Binford 1987.
14 Kroeber 1927.
15 Saxe 1970; Binford 1971; Goldstein 1981.
16 Hodder 1982 a–c; Hodder 2003; Hodder – Hutson 2003.
17 Parker Pearson 2003; Cohen 2005; Brück 2006.
18 Parker Pearson 2003, 23.

social identity and differentiation among the living. Summarising P. J. Ucko's (1969) research, M. Parker Pearson (2003) spelt out the practical implication for mortuary studies: »The presence of grave goods does not necessarily imply belief in an afterlife; the orientation of a buried corpse might not reflect ideas about the direction of the other world; cremation need not imply any belief in the existence of a soul after death; and dynastic tombs need not indicate royalty«[19].

Where mortuary studies in Yemen are concerned, while a variety of grave types has been uncovered little is known about mortuary practices. Bronze Age tombs from the fourth to the 2nd millennia BC have been documented and connected to similar types in the Sinai, Saudi Arabia and Oman[20]. Turret tombs[21] near the edges of the Ramlat al-Sabʿatayn from the fourth and the 2nd millennia BC[22] but also dating to the 1st millennium BC at al-Makhdarah near Ṣirwāḥ are known. Hypogeum tombs at al-Sawdāʾ from the early 1st millennium BC[23], Kharibat al-Ahjar near Dhamār from the early 1st century BC[24] and from Qāniʾ between the 2nd to 5th centuries AD[25] are also documented. However, not surprisingly the most common South Arabian graves are pit graves and cists such as are found near Madīnat al-Ahjur (al-Ḥadāʾ) or typically dug into the sides of Wadis such as in the Wadi Ḍuraʾ. Other grave types documented include cave or rock chamber tombs such as those in the Ḥaḍramawt at Ḥurayḍah, Shabwah and Raybūn and others containing partially mummified bodies at Shibām al-Ghirās[26]. The final type of grave is the one that is of interest to this study. These are the monumental, multi-storied, mortuary structures of the ʾAwām cemetery from which the miniature repertoire was excavated. This type of mortuary structure is also found at the Ḥayd bin ʿAqīl necropolis at Tamnaʿ and it is this necropolis that has documented the greatest quantity of mortuary miniatures after the ʾAwām cemetery. Along with the pottery miniature corpus[27], the ʾAwām cemetery miniature repertoire is the only miniature collection, mortuary or otherwise of any size and diversity currently available with which to reference Sabaean and South Arabian miniature and mortuary material culture.

1.2 Stone and Metal Vessel Studies

There has been little research in South Arabia devoted to stone and metal vessels. Currently for example, there is no study of materials and industries such as realised by P. R. S. Moorey for Mesopotamia[28]. In a way this is surprising as Yemen is well provided with abundant stone, especially limestone and travertine, suitable for building and decorative purposes as well as mineral deposits including gold, lead, nickel and copper[29]. However, on the other hand perhaps the lack of stone and metal research is not so surprising as Yemen is an area where archaeological work started later than many other regions and where continued excavation programs and archaeological research have been difficult to sustain. Therefore analysis of stone used in buildings, ornamentation or vessels is still in its infancy in South Arabian archaeology. Studies exist of the use of stone, mostly limestone, in Sabaean buildings often as an adjunct to architectural analysis[30] and there is some literature albeit usually from an art historical point of view often concentrating on individual stone ornaments, but there has been little focussed discussion of the use of stone in South Arabian vessels. The lack of a critical mass of recovered stone vessels for study has undoubtedly contributed to the situation. Therefore the typical overview of stone vessels found in other jurisdictions[31] has not yet been possible in South Arabian archae-

19 Parker Pearson 2003, 21.
20 Steimer-Herbet 1999; Steimer-Herbet 2001; Braemer – Cleuziou – Steimer 2003; Steimer-Herbet 2004; Steimer-Herbet – Davtian – Braemer 2006.
21 de Maigret 1996.
22 Braemer *et al.* 2001; Steimer-Herbet – Davtian – Braemer 2006, 263.
23 Vogt 2002, 182.
24 de Maigret – Antonini 2005.
25 Sedov 2001, 34.
26 Anonymous 1984; Abd-el-Halim 1990; Bāsalāma 1997.
27 Japp 2002.
28 Moorey 1999.
29 Marcolongo 2005, 398–399 figs. 4. 5.
30 Hitgen 1998; Vogt – Herberg – Röring 2000; Bessac – Breton 2002, 117–119; Gerlach 2002; Röring 2002; Röring 2005; Harrell 2007; Kirnbauer 2007; Schnelle 2007; Weiss – Koch – Gerlach 2007.
31 Warren 1969; Aston 1994; Sparks 1998; Sparks 2003; Bevan 2007; Sparks 2007.

ological studies. Likewise the archaeological examination of copper-base artefacts in South Arabian archaeology is also in its infancy and there is no sure knowledge yet of copper sources or of alloying techniques. Most of the few fragmentary and isolated studies of South Arabian metal work have used an art historical or epigraphical approach[32] typically concentrating on major and unique finds. As a result and with some notable exceptions, there has been little analysis of artefacts such as bronze vessels, jewellery, tools and weapons[33]. The ʾAwām cemetery miniature material provides an opportunity to document a corpus of stone and metal artefacts and to incorporate them into current South Arabian archaeological research.

1.3 Terminology: ›Miniature‹ and ›Model‹

Given the fragmentary and often ambiguous recognition of miniatures in the archaeological literature, the use of ›miniature‹ has been reserved for those artefacts designated as such in excavation reports and publications. ›Small‹ describes those artefacts in excavation reports and publications whose dimensions approximate the maximum dimension of the ʾAwām miniature corpus. The study uses ›miniature‹ in preference to ›model‹ even though the term ›model‹ is sometimes used instead of or interchangeably with ›miniature‹ in the literature. ›Model‹ has most often been used in Near Eastern contexts when describing the small everyday scenes, often found, for example, in Egyptian[34] or sometimes Phoenician tombs[35]. It is also used to describe model clay furniture[36], and models of buildings such as houses[37]. In South Arabia, examples of model temples[38] and possibly houses[39] are also known. In Egyptian archaeology the term can also refer to full-scale dummy vessels such as the New Kingdom jars of wood that copied stone jars[40]. There is no evidence to suggest recognition of ›miniature‹ or ›model‹ as emic categories in South Arabia. Modern usage of the term ›model‹ implies a wider category of objects such as architectural building models that are beyond the purview of this discussion. Usage of ›model‹ rather than or as well as ›miniature‹ would therefore more likely confuse than explicate the following study given that the discussion is centred on a narrow group of tiny vessels and a small number of personal items, tools and weapons.

2 MINIATURIZATION

Miniaturization is well attested in the archaeological literature with early mentions of model tools made by W. M. F. Petrie in his 1909 *The Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt*[41]. A survey of miniatures in the literature shows their ubiquitous nature across both time and place including Asia[42], the Americas[43] and Europe[44]. E. Haerinck and B. Overlaet[45] noted their presence in nearly all domains including the magical and religious as well as the profane. There is a particularly significant presence in Greece with miniaturised versions of standard Greek and Hellenistic vessel forms recovered from a range of sites[46]. Sometimes thousands have been reported in votive deposits from sanctuaries[47] such as 5,000 from the Megalopolis road sanctuary, 7,000 at Metroon in Athens and 14,000 from the so-called sanctuary of Persephone at Lokroi Epizephyrioi[48]. In the Near East, Egyptian models and miniatures are perhaps the best documented[49]. At one Old Kingdom site,

32 Segall 1958; Ryckmans – Vandevivere 1975.
33 ʿAqīl 1991; ʿAqīl – Antonini 2003; Weeks *et al.* 2009.
34 Tiradritti 1999, 93. 101–103. 108–111. 113–119; Agnese – Re 2001, 125.
35 Moorey 2003, 59.
36 Cholidis 1992; Beck 1993.
37 Shaw – Nicholson 1996, 293.
38 Darles 1997, 135.
39 Du Ry 1969, 246.
40 Allen 2006, 21.
41 Petrie 1996, 75.
42 Ghosh 1989; Hiebert 1994.
43 Meighan 1976; Finsten 1995; Bray 2003; Hendon – Joyce 2004.
44 Blake 2005; Tomaž 2005.
45 Haerinck – Overlaet 1985, 407.
46 Payne 1940; Dunbabin 1962; Hayes 1984; Stillwell – Benson 1984; Hayes 1992; Carey 2001.
47 Stroud 1965; Bookidis 1969; Pemberton 1989.
48 Dunbabin 1962, 290.
49 Petrie 1937; Spencer 1982, no. 10; Bárta 1995; Petrie 1996; Schiestl 1996; Arnold 1999; Hope 2001; Allen 2006; Odler – Dulíková 2015.

Abū Rawāsh, around 45,000 miniature objects were recorded in three seasons[50]. While miniatures are also documented in the rest of the Near East they are somewhat fragmentary in both recovery and analysis. Of nearly 2,000 2nd millennium BC Levantine stone vessels catalogued by R. Sparks[51] only four miniatures were identified. Nevertheless, miniatures have been recovered from Mesopotamia[52], Iran[53], Afghanistan[54] and the Levant[55] where they have been documented from as early as the Neolithic and Chalcolithic[56]. Apart from South Arabia, stone and pottery vessel miniatures are known on the Arabian Peninsula from the 3rd to the 1st millennia BC and up to the 7th century AD from at least Saudi Arabia[57], the United Arab Emirates[58] and Oman[59].

Generally speaking miniatures are rarely dealt with in a systematic or in-depth way in archaeological literature. This is not to say they are absent from the literature as the previous paragraph attests. On the contrary they are relatively easy to find but mainly as fragmented mentions, with little or no discussion of them beyond noting their presence, although sometimes even this is absent[60]. Where documentation is present, it is typically brief vague mentions and at times disorganised contextual reporting with little information relating to individual pieces. A. Green commented on the »… too few, secondary and ambiguous«[61] context details published for Mesopotamian miniatures in trying to analyse the miniatures from the 6G Ash Tip at Abū Ṣalābīkh. In some cases it is almost impossible to designate pieces as miniature or not as dimension information is lacking. Sometimes even if dimensions are documented, there has been little attempt to attend to the thorny issue of whether the tiny artefact documented is a miniature or a tiny but full sized vessel. Two reports can be used to exemplify this lack of discussion. The Hazor excavation reports described pottery and small finds from the Early Bronze Age through to the Persian period in the Levant[62] and therefore there was an opportunity to provide a diachronic overview of the use of miniatures at the site. However, apart from the listing of approximately 60 miniatures in the various excavation reports[63] there was little analysis of miniature use over time in the reports even given Y. Yadin's acknowledgement of the importance of miniatures as votive vessels »inherent in Palestinian temple assemblages in general«[64]. Likewise, F. W. James and P. E. McGovern reported miniature vessels as »very common in temple contexts«[65] from the Middle Bronze Age to the Iron Age in Palestine. At Beth Sheʾān at least 17 miniatures were recovered, parallels published and a time range for their use from the Middle Bronze through the Iron Age suggested but little analysis of their function beyond their likely use as »small, symbolic offerings«[66]. Perhaps such a situation came about partly because of the often fragmentary find nature of miniatures. Another reason for the lack of serious archaeological attention paid to miniatures may be that as conservative long-lived forms they are more difficult to date and therefore less easy to interpret than other classes of material culture. Additionally, they are ambiguous artefacts mostly found in symbolic environments such as temples, sanctuaries and graves. Consequently miniatures are typically mentioned in the literature without accompanying analysis that incorporates them into their wider cultural »social entanglements«[67].A powerful motivation to analyse miniatures as an ensemble seems to

50 Allen 2006, 20.
51 Sparks 1998.
52 Mallowan – Rose 1934; Woolley 1934; Tobler 1950; Delougaz 1952; Hansen 1973; Hansen 1978; Woolley – Mallowan 1976; Curtis 1979; Green 1993; Oates – Oates – McDonald 2001.
53 Deshayes 1963; Deshayes 1965; Moorey 1971; Voigt 1983; Haerinck – Overlaet 1985; Perrot – Madjidzadeh 2005.
54 Haerinck – Overlaet 1985.
55 Ben-Dor 1950; Yadin 1958; Yadin 1961; Katz – Kahane – Broshi 1968; Yadin 1989; James – McGovern 1993; Sparks 1998; Bourke *et al*. 2000; Richard 2000; Bourke *et al*. 2003; Routledge 2004; Sconzo 2006; Sparks 2007.
56 Tadmor 1990; Moorey 2003; Levy – Kansa 2006.
57 Burkholder 1984.
58 Vogt 1985; McSweeney – Méry – Macchiarelli 2008.
59 Yule – Weisgerber 2001.
60 Green 1993, 2 n. 3.
61 Green 1993, 114.
62 Yadin 1958; Yadin 1989.
63 Yadin 1958, pls. 88, 17. 18. 21. 22; 89, 14; 93, 4. 5; Yadin 1961, pl. 269, 1–21.
64 Yadin 1989, 256.
65 James – McGovern 1993, 178.
66 James – McGovern 1993, 178–180.
67 Hodder 2003, 73.