



BESONDERS/EXEMPLARISCH **Morphomatische Fallstudien zu Biographie und Portrait**

Abstract

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Exemplary as Typical. Case Studies and Narrative Strategies in the Historiography of Museum Collections

Exemplariness can on the one hand be understood as a normative concept implying worthiness of imitation. On the other hand it refers to representativity and typicality. The latter are particularly relevant for scholarly argument and methodology: exemplary cases can illuminate entire fields of knowledge, shed light on broader contexts, substantiate and illustrate theories and regularities. The explanatory power of the exemplary will be discussed in the context of historical research in museum and university collections: How can certain processes in the coming together of collections be described as typical? Can for example provenance research chart 'typical trajectories' of museum objects indicative of museum practices, networks and theories of their time? Can such 'typical trajectories' or 'typical object biographies' be narrated and constructed from mere fragments of an individual case or as a synthesis of more than one individual case – in particular in the face of the numerous lacunae in the documentation of acquisition processes? The protracted research into the entwined trajectory of a 'specimen' from the teaching collection of the Institute for Institute of Systematic Zoology and Evolutionary Biology in Jena poses the question of how to (re-)present and discuss the typical.

