NUBIAN A-GROUP AND EGYPTIAN NAQADA TRADE RELATIONS IN THE PREDYNASTIC

by

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The archaeological study of interregional trade provides the unique opportunity to reconstruct not only the foreign relations of cultures that are no longer in existence, but also how these relations evolved over extended periods of time. This study examines interactions between the Egyptian Naqada and Nubian A-Group cultures - located near the present day border of Egypt and The Sudan - between 3800 and 2900 B.C.E. Cemeteries from each group were compared looking at frequency of grave goods, burial architecture, the treatment of the deceased, and how these factors changed over time, in order to determine: (a) the degree of social complexity in Nubian A-Group society, and (b) the ability of trade to influence culture. The study found that while Nubian A-Group society shows some signs of social complexity, the A-Group culture was not nearly as complex as the near state-level society seen with the Egyptian Naqada culture. In line with this, the study found that there was a disproportionate level of cultural influence between the two groups, with the Nubian A-Group culture adopting many Egyptian traits.

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION

The study of interregional interaction and economics has been and continues to be a topic of interest to scholars in many different academic fields such as anthropology, archaeology, history, sociology, geography, political science, etc. Under ideal conditions, the archaeological study of interregional trade provides the unique opportunity to reconstruct not only the foreign relations of cultures that are no longer in existence, but also how certain factors contributing to these relations evolved over long periods of time. Specific factors associated with foreign relations include trade routes, the role of elites, general social complexity, and foreign policy. The relationship between Predynastic Egypt and the distinct and complex culture in Lower Nubia (southern Egypt and northern Sudan) referred to as Nubian A-Group is often overlooked due to the more well known and romanticized Dynastic Egypt (Figure 1). However, taking a closer look at A-Group and Predynastic relations can bring the cultural history of Egypt and the Sudan into clearer focus. Spanning a period of about 900 years from 3800-2900 B.C.E.(Gatto 2006), the A-Group was a distinct cultural group exhibiting extensive interaction with the Naqada culture to the north which was the precursor to Old Kingdom Egypt and the First Dynasty. Currently, scholars debate whether Nubian society was organized as a complex chiefdom or as small tribal groups (O'Connor 1991). By examining the trade goods from each group, this study sheds some light on this issue. Due to a number of factors, including age and location of sites, gathering data on the A-Group and Naqada cultures has proved difficult for archaeologists. Therefore, the majority of data collected to this point is from desert cemetery sites rather than settlement sites, which were typically located on the flood plain of the

Figure 1 Egyptian Sites (Adapted from Oriental Institute Map Series)

Nile Valley. Even without the reliable aid of settlement sites, by examining a few key indicators at cemetery sites we can begin to reconstruct interactions between these two groups.

This study has three driving research questions: (1) How extensive were trade interactions between the Naqada and A-group cultures; (2) Did these interactions lead to noticeable changes in the cultural practices of either group; and (3) At the time of its fall, was the A-Group society organized as a complex chiefdom similar to the Egyptian Naqada culture, or was it a series of extremely wealthy tribal rulers? To do this, the study examines the Egyptian Cemetery N7000 at Naga-ed-Dêr and the Nubian Cemeteries W, L, Q, and T in the area of Qustul. The study will examine each cemetery, looking at the proportions of Egyptian and Nubian items in each grave, the treatment of the deceased and the burials themselves, as well as changes in these variables over time. In doing so it has been possible to show that foreign cultural influences increased over time as a result of prolonged interactions through trade.

PREDYNASTIC EGYPT AND THE NUBIAN A-GROUP CULTURE

Directly preceding the great population and cultural boom of the Near East was a period of erratic climate change associated with the Holocene epoch beginning approximately 12,000 years ago. The Holocene witnessed the glacial retreat, causing sea levels to increase and changing the elevation of the Nile River, therefore altering the amount of cultivatable land available in the Nile Valley. After the wet period came the "mid-Holocene arid phase" occurring around 6,000 B.C.E which led to the warming and drying of the Sahara desert, creating a drastic decrease in the livable areas in Africa (Midant-Reynes 2000: 90). By around 5000 B.C.E the western desert was abandoned completely due to hyper aridity. It was during this environmental context that the cultural period known as the Neolithic began; a period spanning from roughly 10,000 B.C.E. to 5000 B.C.E (Midant-Reynes 2000). This period, which means 'New Stone

Age', is typified by explosions in cultural advances throughout the entire world, the most significant of which included agriculture and the domestication of animals. The Neolithic is characterized by increases in population, permanent habitation, advances in tool kits, and the development of ceramics. It is within this period that the Nubian A-Group and the Egyptian Naqada cultures have their roots.

Interregional Interaction in the Nile Valley

The A-Group and Naqada cultures were not the only ones occupying this region during the Neolithic. A string of distinct cultural groups was present all along the Nile. To the south of the A-Group were the pastoralists of Upper Nubia, and to the north of the Naqada was the Maadian culture of Lower Egypt (Figure 2). This "ribbonlike arrangement" of cultures accounts for the very structured trade routes seen during this time period (O'Connor 1991: 12). Like all major water ways, the Nile was a major highway for interregional trade, and the river itself was a major influence on the structure of trade routes and the location of settlements.

Within this string of distinct regions, each culture acted as a sort of middleman with its immediate neighbors, so that while each had intense interaction with those immediately to the north and south, they were rarely in contact with those regions that they were not immediately adjacent. In this way, goods from as far away as Syro-Palestine found their way to the A-Group culture in Lower Nubia. This method of exchange also provided the ability to monopolize trade goods. For example, while evidence of Egyptian trade is abundant in A-Group sites, there is practically no trace of Egyptian goods in Upper Nubia. This, however, may be misleading. While there is no evidence of sustained access to Egyptian goods in Upper Nubia, neither is there evidence of trade between Lower Nubia and Upper Nubia. Yet trade must have occurred as this

would be the logical route for ivory and ebony to enter Lower Nubia and subsequently to reach the Naqada culture in Upper Egypt (O'Connor 1991). It is possible, indeed even likely, that this lack of evidence is simply due the difficulties associated with locating archaeological sites in the Nile Valley, a problem that is discussed in greater detail below.

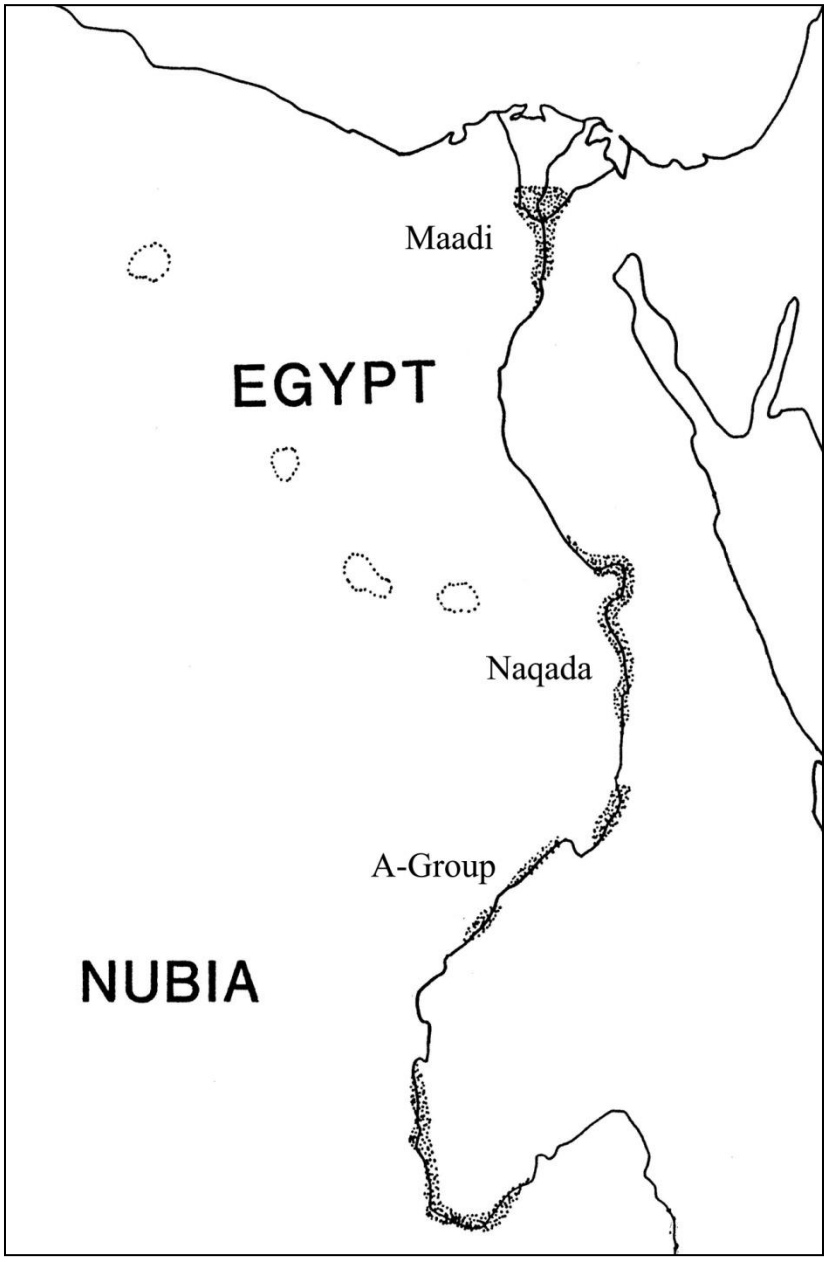

Figure 2. Population Concentrations in the Early Bronze Age Nile Valley
(Adapted from Davies 1991)

The Nubian A-Group culture likely depended on this network of intermediary trade for its longevity and continued survival. During the course of Egypt's 1st Dynasty the A-Group culture began to fall apart, and it is during this decline that the stream of Egyptian imports ceases in Nubian A-Group sites. It is possible that the centralized government of Egypt's 1st Dynasty sought to eliminate A-Group culture as the middleman to sub-Saharan Africa and establish a direct route to the source of their luxury goods (Trigger 1976).

Predynastic Egypt and the Rise of the Naqada Culture

Neolithic Egypt

The cultural and monumental wonders of Egypt are well known throughout the world, from the Great Pyramid of Egypt to the impressive rock cut tombs of Aswan. But while Egypt is most well known for the monumental architecture of the Pharaonic period, Egypt's cultural history goes back much further, to the very beginning of the Neolithic Period. During the Neolithic, Egypt was host to a large number of different material cultures, separated by time and geography.

During the Early Neolithic (8800-6800 B.C.E.) in the western desert, settlements were typically in the form of small camps located near lakes or *playas*. There was no true sedentism at this time, with sites being used seasonally and returned to year after year. By the Middle and Late Neolithic (6800-5100 B.C.E) site size and frequency increases. These later settlements were more permanent and there is evidence of wells and wattle-and-daub structures. It is during this time period that cattle became domesticated and ceramics became much more prevalent (Midant-Reynes 2000). It is during this period that early monolithic sculptures were carved and some stone calendar circles at Nabta Playa were built, indicating that the cultural practice of

monolithic construction was present in Egypt long before the pyramids and funerary temples of the Pharaonic period.

Meanwhile, in the Nile Valley we see two distinct material cultures; the Faiyum Culture and Merimdekultur, which is named for the site at Merimde Beni Salama in the western Nile Delta (Figure 3).

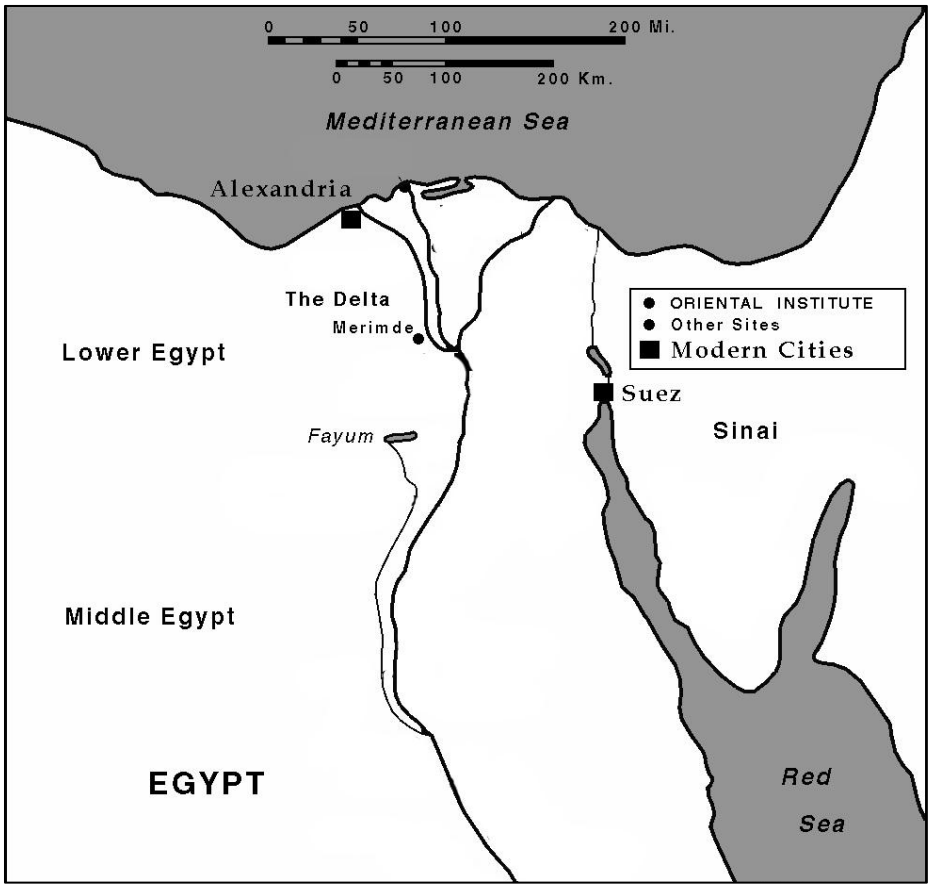

Figure 3. Faiyum and Merimde Beni Salama (Adapted from Oriental Institute Map Series)

The Faiyum culture has tool assemblages characterized by bone tools and stone axes, but most importantly sickle blades set into wooden handles (Figure 4). These sickle blades are important because they show a distinctive wear on the cutting edge, acquired from cutting cereal

grains (Midant-Reynes 2000). These included wheat and barley, two cereal grains that were staples in Egyptian diets throughout the Predynastic and Pharaonic periods (Trigger 1983).

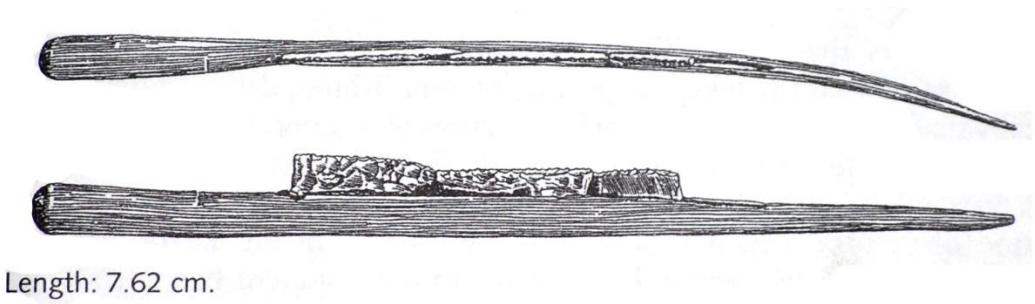

Figure 4. Faiyum Sickle Blade with Wooden Handle (Midant-Reynes 2000)

The Merimdekultur, centered around Merimde Beni Salama, is essentially the same as the material culture of the Faiyum groups, with the only significant difference being the resources used for subsistence. This has led archaeologists to question whether these are two truly different cultures, or just different manifestations of the same group; the theory of Nilotic Adaptation suggests the ladder. Nilotic Adaptation suggests that groups change in order to take advantage of the resources available at different times of the year in the Nile Valley, with group size shrinking as resource availability shrinks and vice-versa (Midant-Reynes 2000). Big game would be hunted between April and August when water availability is at its worst during the year. In late fall, catfish would be easily accessible due to the small pools left behind after the receding of the Nile Flood, with mollusks, plants, and birds available at other times throughout the year (Figure 5).

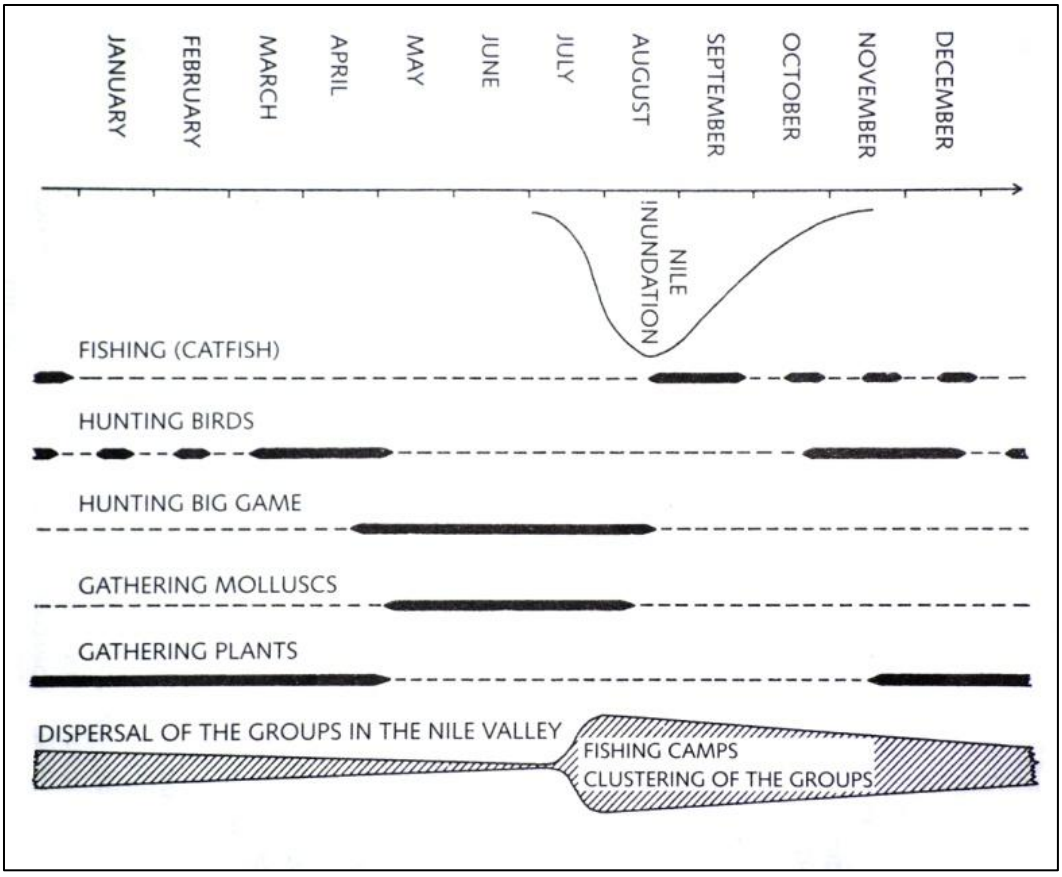

Figure 5. Nilotic Adaptation and Resource Availability (Midant-Reynes 2000)

It seems much more likely that these cultural differences are a result of resource procurement rather than the presence of two separate cultures, especially given the close proximity of the two sites. Whether or not this is true, the Neolithic period in Egypt witnessed important cultural advancements that set the stage for the Predynastic Naqada culture and the later Old Kingdom.

Predynastic Egypt: The Badarian Culture

Around 4400 B.C.E. the Badarian culture emerged as the direct precursor to the Naqada culture in Upper Egypt. Discovered in the 1920's by Guy Brunton and Gertrude Canton-Thompsen, the Badarian culture marks the beginning of the Predynastic and the subsequent rise of Egypt as a

political power rivaling cultures like Mesopotamia in the Middle East (Midant-Reynes 2000). The Badarian is associated with some interesting advances in artistic material culture, including female and animal figurines. Additionally, the period saw the emergence of palettes, oval and rectangular sheets of slate used for grinding pigments for make-ups like eyeliner, as well as the development of a distinct ceramic complex. Burials in this period indicate two levels within the social hierarchy, with a definite difference in the quality of grave goods. There is continued evidence of the use of barley and wheat in agriculture as well as the domestication of sheep, goat, cattle, and pig. There is also evidence of trade - with imports of copper and semi-precious stones from the eastern desert, and turquoise from Sinai (Trigger 1983). It is clear that the Badarian archaeological culture represents a large step towards the highly stratified and specialized social groups that would become Egypt's Old Kingdom.

Predynastic Egypt: The Naqada Culture

As mentioned above, the Badarian culture is the direct precursor to the Naqada culture. The Naqada culture is split into three periods: the Naqada I (Amraitian), Naqada II (Gerzean), and Naqada III. A map showing the change in site location from the Badarian through the Naqada II period is given below (Figure 6). The Naqada I period sees the continuation of Badarian burial traditions and the survival of some of the pottery styles used in the Badarian period. However, the most important developments in this period are the emergence of mace heads, figures of bearded men, and more distinct differentiation in burial treatments.

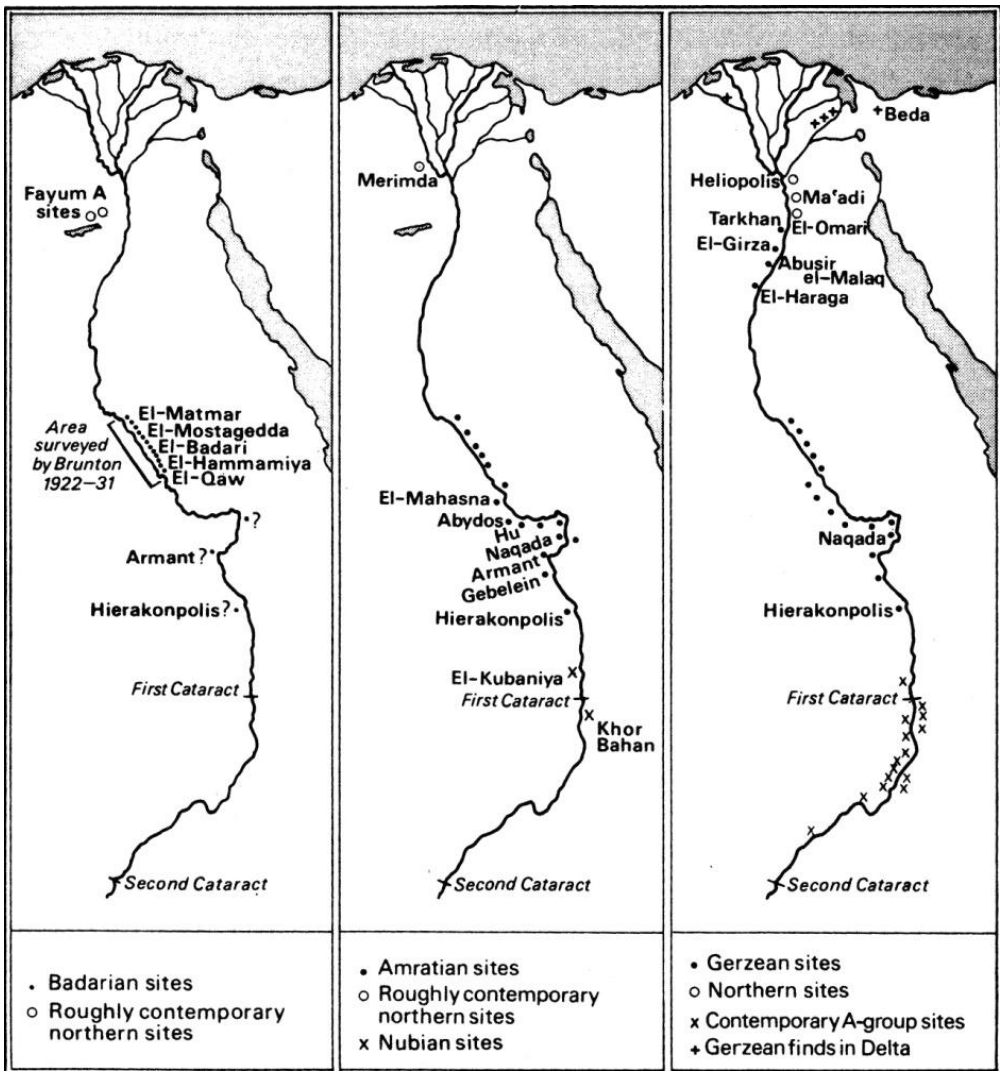

Figure 6. Badarian, Amratian, and Gerzean Sites (Trigger 1983)

In the Naqada I period bodies are buried in pits, with a very small number of people buried in large graves with high quality grave goods. During this period there is also the emergence of the pattern of orienting bodies with the head to the south, facing west. This pattern will be examined closer in the analysis portion of this document, below. The appearance of mace heads and bearded men on Naqada I ceramics is believed to represent early depictions of power. The bearded men figures are especially reminiscent of the braided beards seen in later

depictions of Pharaohs. These three factors clearly indicate an increase in social complexity and the rise of elites in Predynastic Egyptian culture.

The Naqada II, or Gerzean, period sees an overall enhancement of the characteristics that began to emerge in the Naqada I period. The tombs in the Naqada II were "increasingly large, well-built and equipped with ever richer and more abundant grave goods" (Midant-Reynes 2000: 187). Additionally, there is increased variation, with more divergence in the burial pattern of head to the south, facing west as well as increased variation in the size and shape of tombs. Evidence of craft specialization is also seen in the mass production of pottery, resulting in a very restricted number of pottery styles and themes (Midant-Reynes 2000). Trigger summarizes additional advances in material culture very well in a passage from *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*:

> There was also a marked development in other crafts. Decoration was more finely conceived and formally arranged than ever before and the execution of designs was often of high quality. Flint blades became more common, although the most elaborate flint objects continued to be produced using careful bifacial techniques. Thin, scimitar-like knives manufactured by controlled ripple-flaking were made towards the end of the Gerzean period and bear witness to the skill of certain highly-specialized craftsmen. Slate palettes were manufactured in the shape of fish, birds and animals and zoomorphic vases were ground out of hard stone. (Trigger 1983: 34)

This was also a period of expansion for the Naqada culture, expanding north to the Faiyum and further south, increasing the amount of interaction with the Maadian culture in the Nile Delta and the Nubian A-Group in southern Egypt (Trigger 1976, 1983). The continued development of variability and stratification in burials and the emergence of craft specialization once again indicates an increase in social complexity and the rise of elites, a trend that continues in the Naqada III period.

The Naqada III period marks a distinct break from the Predynastic into the Pharaonic period. The period is divided into two segments; Naqada IIIa is associated with the end of Naqada II, and Naqada IIIb represents a transition to Old Kingdom Egypt and the historical period (Midant-Reynes 2000). As in the previous periods there is an increase in burial differentiation, with larger graves and an increase in the number and quality of grave goods. Craft specialization continued to develop with evidence of large brewing and baking complexes emerging at Hierakonpolis. In terms of cultural traits, the Naqada III was "simply...a continuation of the cultural traits that had developed" in the previous periods (Midant-Reynes 2000: 234). Trade with other areas increased, with a higher quantity and diversity of foreign items from Nubia, Lower Egypt, the Western Desert and Southern Palestine (Trigger 1983). The rise of elites is also evident in the increase of items indicative of power (like mace heads), and the appearance of truly massive tombs and restricted cemeteries at Abydos (Cemetery U), Hierakonpolis (Cemetery HK6), and Naqada (Cemetery T). It was these extremely powerful rulers that would become the first pharaohs of Egypt. As the Naqada culture continued to expand, it overtook the Maadian culture of the Nile Delta, resulting in a culturally unified Egypt that would eventually become the politically unified, state level society of the Old Kingdom (Midant-Reynes 2000, Trigger 1983).

Ancient Nubia

A discussion of the circumstances leading up to the Nubian A-Group is, perhaps, an easier one than for the Naqada culture simply due to the fact that not as much is known about the A-Group. Ancient Nubia underwent the same environmental changes as Egypt, including the fluctuating flood plain and the amount of arable land in the Nile Valley. Trigger (1976) stresses, however,

that while Egypt and Nubia share the same wildlife, the broader floodplain of the Egyptian Nile Valley allows for a much greater carrying capacity than the restricted area available in Nubia further south. While this is certainly something to keep in mind for later cultural developments, during the early Neolithic it is unlikely that populations would have approached the carrying capacity of the Nile Valley. Indeed, during the early Neolithic period there are much the same patterns in Nubia as in Egypt, with semi-sedentary bands living in small, seasonally used camp sites. Like their Egyptian counterparts, Nubians were taking advantage of easily accessible wild grains including wheat and barley by 9000 B.C.E., crops that became two of the first domesticates in this region of the world (Trigger 1976).

These are a number of different cultures represented in Lower Nubia before the A-Group. These cultures are identified through lithic industries and there does not seem to be continuous progression. Rather, these cultures show a large degree of discontinuity with long periods of abandonment. Much like Egypt at this time period, there are a number of local cultures, each with unique traits. The two latest of these cultural groups are the Arkinian, beginning around 7500 B.C.E., and the Shamarkian, beginning between 5700 and 4500 B.C.E. It is in the later Shamarkian culture that pottery emerged in Lower Nubia around 4500 - 4000 B.C.E.

It was around this time period that the Early A-Group emerged. The Early A-Group is centered around Khor Bahan (Figure 5), and represents the northernmost regions of the Nubian A-Group. It is important to note that the Nubian A-Group was named by George Reisner in his archaeological surveys of Egypt in the early twentieth century. Since then, much more data has become available. Maria Gatto has recently proposed that the Early A-Group culture is not the "real" A-Group since it does not "display the same cultural development" as the Middle and Late/Terminal A-Group periods (Gatto 2006: 73). In fact, it seems that much of what was once

believed to be Early A-Group is actually a combination of both A-Group and Naqada cultures in the region surrounding the first cataract, where interaction between the two groups would have been very regular.

The Middle and Terminal A-Group phases lasted from around 3400 to 2900 B.C.E. The Middle and Terminal A-Group shifted further to the south than the previous A-Group culture, moving down to the second cataract of the Nile River. Figure 2 (above) is a map of the population concentrations around 3100 B.C.E. and shows population centers of the A-Group and Naqada cultures during this time period. During the Middle and Late phases, the A-Group underwent many of the same changes that were occurring in the Naqada culture, just not to as great an extent. Population size was increasing, intensive agriculture was being undertaken, and social stratification was taking place. The question, as already mentioned, is whether Nubian society was organized as a complex chiefdom or as a succession of small tribal groups composed of a few extremely wealthy individuals.

The Nubian A-Group continued into Egypt's 1st Dynasty, but suddenly disappeared soon afterwards. It is likely that the Egyptians continued their expansion to the south, taking the A-Group in a colonial move to gain further access to the ivory and gold available in the region (Midant-Reynes 2000, Trigger 1983).

History of Research

Problems Identifying Nile Valley Sites

As mentioned above, archaeologists have encountered difficulty finding sites, especially Predynastic sites, in the Nile Valley. This is due to a number of reasons, primarily the annual flooding dynamics of the Nile Valley alluvial plain. The ancient Egyptians relied on the flooding

of the Nile to rejuvenate their agricultural fields. While essential for survival, the flooding of the Nile means that sites located on the alluvial plain are covered in silt every year. While it may not make a large difference over a year or two, over thousands of years the accumulated deposition amounts to several feet of deposits on top of archaeological remains. For archaeologists this makes finding ancient sites like those of the Predynastic nearly impossible to find, much less excavate, due to the deep alluvial deposits covering them. As a result, settlement sites typically located within the alluvial plain are underrepresented in the archaeological record. On the other hand, cemetery sites are abundant due to their location on the arid low desert plain wich lies beyond the reach of annual flood deposition.

Another difficulty that arises, even once a site is located, is the preservation of that site. Almost all of the Predynastic sites have encountered some type of looting or grave robbing; something that continues to be an issue today. There is some evidence that Predynastic groups ceremoniously looted cemeteries, perhaps as soon as a generation after the burial of the individual. Due to the looting of valuables, many luxury items such as gold and precious stones are not present in these older tombs. In addition to looting, many cemeteries have been partially destroyed by fires. Cemetery L at Qustul, for example, had been subject to as many as three fires before being excavated (Williams 1986). Even in the best preservation conditions, finding intact Neolithic sites in the Nile Valley and the surrounding desert is a challenging task.

METHODOLOGY

As discussed above, the Nile River was a vital route for trade between the cultures located along its banks. Nubia and Predynastic Egypt formed a strong lasting relationship built through trade

and continuous interaction. This thesis uses evidence of trade interactions to address the following research questions:

1. How extensive were trade interactions between the Naqada and A-Group cultures?
2. Did these interactions lead to noticeable changes in the cultural practices of either group?
3. At the time of its fall, was the A-Group society organized as a complex chiefdom similar to the Egyptian Naqada culture or was it a series of extremely wealthy tribal rulers?

To shed light on these issues, this study examines the Egyptian Cemetery N7000 at Naga-ed-Dêr and the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition (OINE) excavations at Qustul, Nubia; specifically cemeteries W, L, Q, and T from the OINE excavations. These cemeteries, Egyptian and Nubian, were selected because they both have burials covering a long period of time and they were in existence during the end of the A-Group and Naqada periods.

Excavations at Qustul

The excavations in the area of Qustul were directed by Dr. Keith C. Seele between 1962 and 1964 as a part of the OINE conducted by the University of Chicago (Williams 1986). The excavations recovered information on numerous sites from various Nubian cultural groups, however the data examined here comes from cemeteries W, L, Q, and T (Figure 7). These cemeteries were selected because each contains burials from the Middle A-Group to the Late/Terminal A-Group. Within these cemeteries there are a total of 54 A-Group burials, 45 of which can be reliably dated. Of those 4, 14 are dated to the Middle A-Group (Williams 1986:

14). All of the data used can be found in volumes three and four of the OINE publications (Williams 1986).

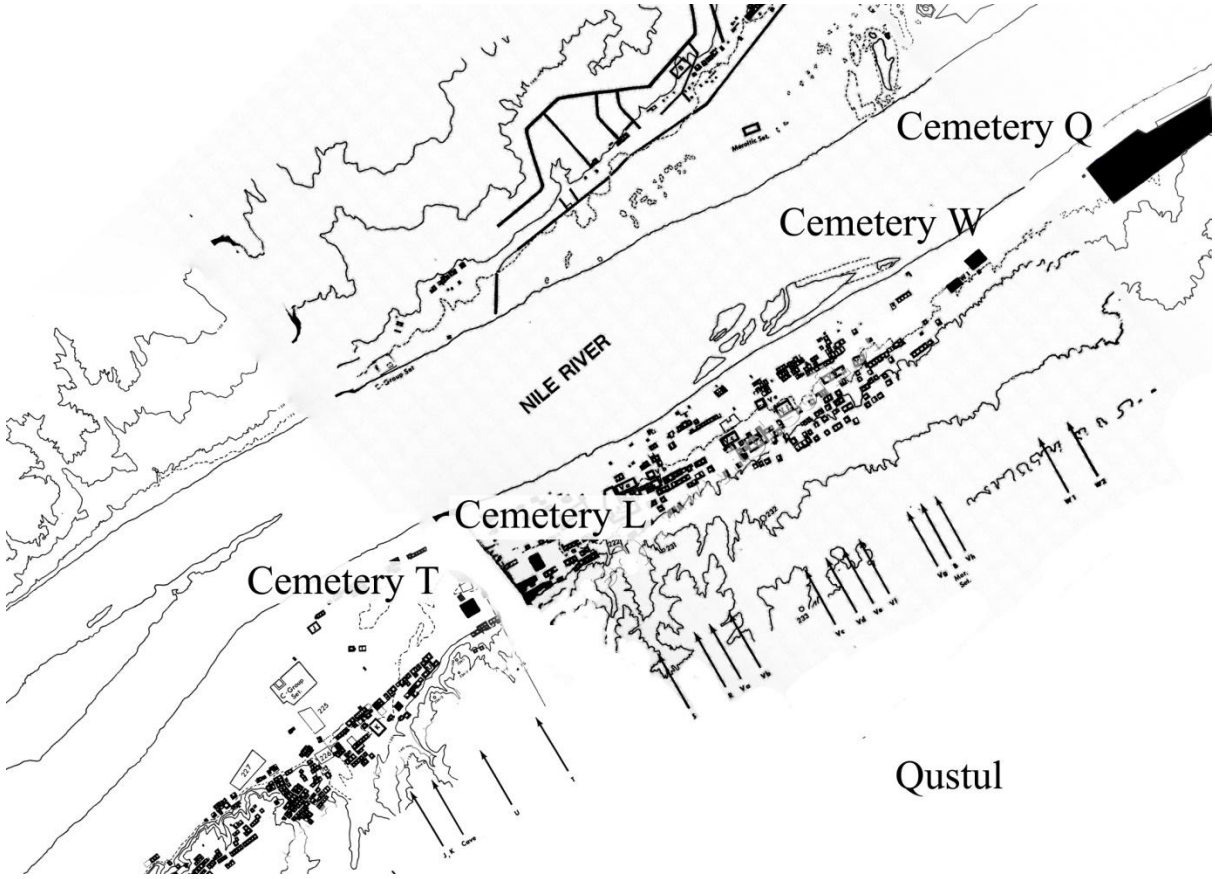

Figure 7. OINE Qustul Site Map (Adapted from Williams 1986b: Plate 2)

Cemetery N7000 at Naga-ed-Dér

Cemetery N7000 at Naga-ed-Dér was first excavated in 1903-1904 by George A. Reisner and Albert M. Lythgoe during the Hearst Egyptian Expedition conducted by the University of California. However, in 1905 the excavations were taken over by Harvard University and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts due to the withdrawal of the support of Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst who was the financier of the project (Lythgoe 1965). The Lythgoe publication identifies 634 separate graves at Cemetery N7000, however, unlike the Nubian publication (Williams 1986) it does not provide dates for the graves. Fortunately, Cemetery N7000 has been

extensively studied since Reisner and Lythgoe's initial excavations and this thesis examines the data compiled by Dr. Stephen Savage (1995) well as dates provided by Renée Friedman (1981). The Savage (1995) data contains a detailed analysis of the individual graves including seriation, architecture, and grave goods. However, Savage (1995) proposes a new dating system that does not correlate to the Kaiser system. For this reason, I used the *Stufe* dating system provided by Friedman (1981), which can be directly correlated to the Kaiser system and in turn can be compared with the Nubian chronology provided in Williams (1986). This study examines both the Savage data and the Lythgoe publication.

Data Analysis

To address the research questions posed above, I examined: (1) the relative proportions of grave goods; (2) treatment of the deceased and grave style; (3) trends and changes in artifact styles. The majority of the data was analyzed using two Microsoft Access databases, one for N7000 and the other for the Nubian Cemeteries. The remainder of the analysis was performed by examining the figures and plates of burials and unusual objects provided in both Lythgoe (1965) and Williams (1986).

A total of 30 graves were chosen from the OINE excavations at cemeteries W, L, Q, and T. Of the 30 selected graves, 13 date to the Middle A-Group (5 from IIB, 8 from IIC) and 13 date to the Late A-Group (III). Four of the 30 graves are described in Williams (1986) as "Transition to Late A-Group", therefore I refer to these as IIC/III. Of the four cemeteries, cemetery L had the most graves that could be reliably dated, with a total of 33 well documented. However, all except two of these graves are dated to the Late A-Group. The 13 graves to be studied were selected using a random number generator in Microsoft Excel. The 13 that date to

the Middle A-Group represent the entirety of the Middle A-Group grave population that was reported on.

For Cemetery N7000, of the 634 graves present around 300 were reliably dated by Friedman (1981). A total of 36 of these graves fell within the dating range that this study examines (Naqada IID-Late Naqada III); all 36 graves were used.

Relative Proportions of Grave Goods

The first variable examined was the proportion of grave goods within each cemetery. In each cemetery the graves were first analyzed based on the proportion of Egyptian to Nubian goods within them and then organized according to their general time period (i.e. A-Group IIB, Naqada IIIa, etc.). For the most part, all classification of goods as either Egyptian or Nubian was completed by Dr. Savage (1995) or Dr. Williams (1986), however there were some items that they were unable to classify as Egyptian or Nubian. For the purpose of this study all ivory was considered to be Nubian in origin. Similarly, all gold items, unless definitely of Egyptian craftsmanship, were considered to be Nubian in origin. While this is not ideal, the vast majority of the identifying grave goods are ceramics; therefore this should not greatly influence the results. Initially, the analysis of each database was conducted individually, comparing the relative proportions of grave goods from each time period to examine any trends or changes over time. Finally, Cemetery N7000 and the Nubian Cemeteries were compared to discover whether there were contemporary trends and changes. The comparison between cemeteries was done using the relative chronology table provided below (Table 1).

Table 1. Nubian/Egyptian Dating System

Nubian A-Group	***Date***	***Egyptian Predynastic (Kaiser)***
Early A-Group (I A)	3800-3600 B.C.E.	Naqada IC-IIA
Early A-Group (I B)	3600-3400 B.C.E.	Naqada IIB-D
Middle A-Group (II A-C)	ca. 3400-3200 B.C.E.	Naqada IID-IIIA
Late A-Group (III)	ca. 3200-2900 B.C.E.	Naqada IIIB-C

Adapted from Gatto (2006) and Williams (1986)

Orientation of the Deceased/Grave Architecture

The second variable examined was grave architectural style along with the orientation of the deceased within the graves if bodies were present. The main factors looked at were the positioning and orientation of the bodies, the dimensions of the graves, architecture of the substructures of the graves, and the presence of any type of superstructure. Increased stratification in grave dimensions and variation in body orientation were used as correlates to social complexity. Once again, N7000 and the Nubian cemeteries were compared, looking at changes within the individual cemeteries over time and whether or not any cultural influences could be seen in those changes. Analysis of burials was conducted through examining the figures and cemetery maps provided in Lythgoe (1965) and Williams (1986).

Artifacts

The final variable examined was artifact style. In general, any changes or irregularities in the form or decoration of artifacts was noted with specific emphasis on locally made artifacts showing characteristics of foreign or exotic items. Such artifacts served as correlates to foreign influences impacting the form or character of locally made objects. Examples of these types of

artifacts include pottery and beads that are exotic in form but constructed with local materials. Additionally, the appearance of any new type of artifact from the opposing culture (A-Group and Naqada, respectively) was important in identifying foreign influence as well. The most important examples of this type of artifact include palettes from Egypt and incense burners from Nubia. As with grave architecture, the analysis of artifact irregularities was conducted through examination of Lythgoe (1965) and Williams (1986) with the addition of certain objects from the Scandinavian Joint Expedition (Nordström 1972).

Analysis/Results

Grave Goods

As mentioned above, the analysis of grave goods was conducted using a Microsoft Access database to isolate Egyptian and Nubian goods within graves. Microsoft Excel was then used to perform calculations on that data.

Nubia

The data shows a steady increase in the proportion of Egyptian goods present in Nubian graves as Figure 8 shows below. It is apparent from this table that there is a consistent increase in the percentage of Egyptian goods in Nubian graves over time, going from only 4.6% in the Middle A-Group (IIB) period to 31.0% in the Late or Terminal A-Group (III) period. It seems that the one anomaly in the trend is the frequencies displayed during the Middle A-Group IIC period. However, after conducting a χ^2 test and creating a bullet graph I discovered that there is a no statistically significant difference between the Middle A-Group IIB and IIC period ($\chi^2 = 0.640$, *p*

= 0.424, V = 0.566). Also no statistically significant difference between the A-Group IIB period and the A-Group III period (χ^2 = 0.238, p = 0.626, V = 0.345). However, I believe that if there were a larger sample size, there would be evidence for a statistically significant increase in Egyptian goods in Nubian cemeteries.

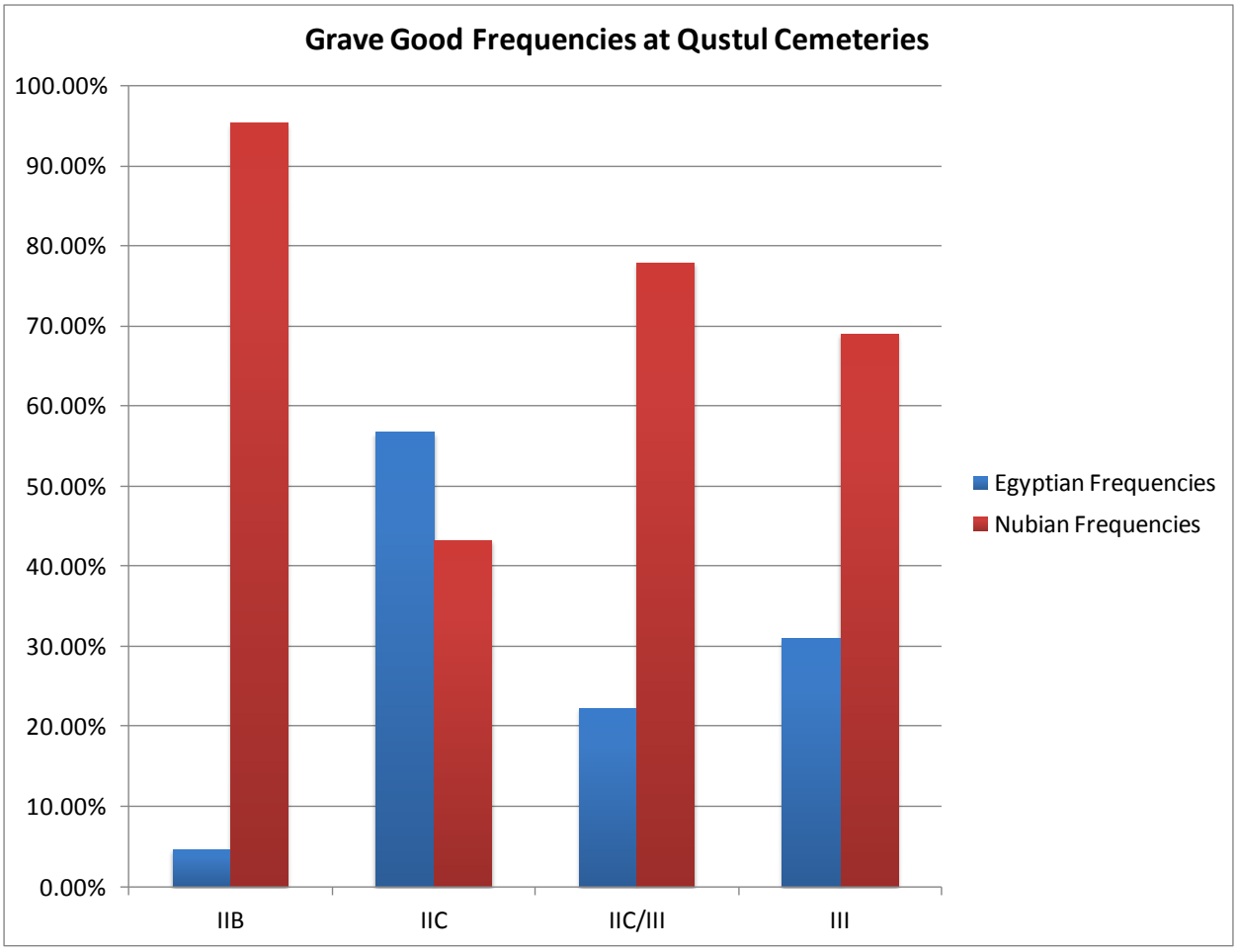

Figure 8. Nubian/Egyptian Grave Good Frequencies in Nubian Cemeteries

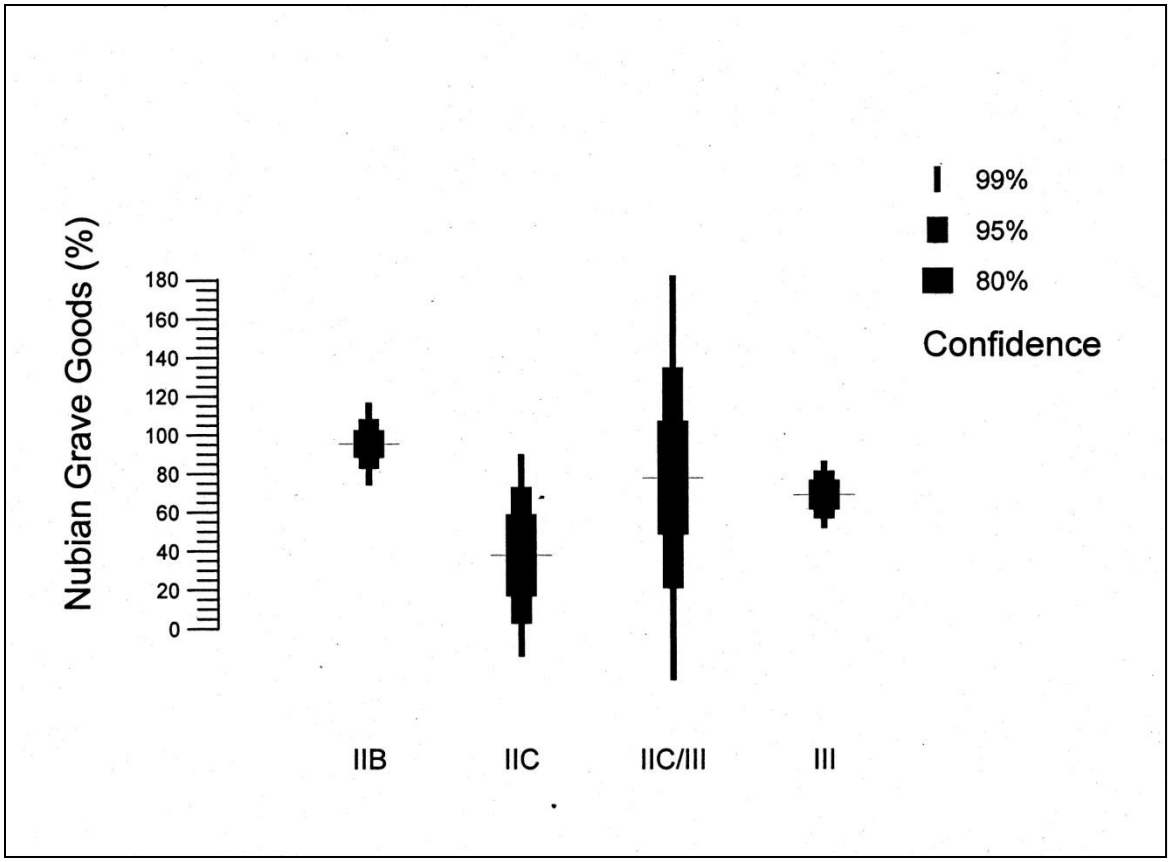

Figure 9. Bullet Graph of Nubian Grave Goods

Irregularities are to be expected. Trade between the two cultures would have fluctuated over time, as is the case in today's economic markets. Furthermore, the scarcity of data due to the age of the sites also contributes to variability seen within the Nubian grave good data. In order to safely say that there was an increase in Egyptian goods in Nubia over time, there needs to be a study that examines a larger sample size which would have to be drawn from multiple sites. However, if we look at Figure 9 over all time periods, there does seem to be a general increase in the percentage of Egyptian goods. Regardless of whether or not there was an increase, the large number of Egyptian goods in Nubian graves shows that there was considerable trade interaction between the two cultures.

Egypt

In contrast, the data from the Egyptian Cemetery N7000 shows almost a complete lack of Nubian goods in Egyptian graves (Figure 10), with less than one percent of grave goods being Nubian in origin in both the Naqada IId and Naqada III periods. This drastic difference between the two cultures will be examined further in the conclusion section of the thesis.

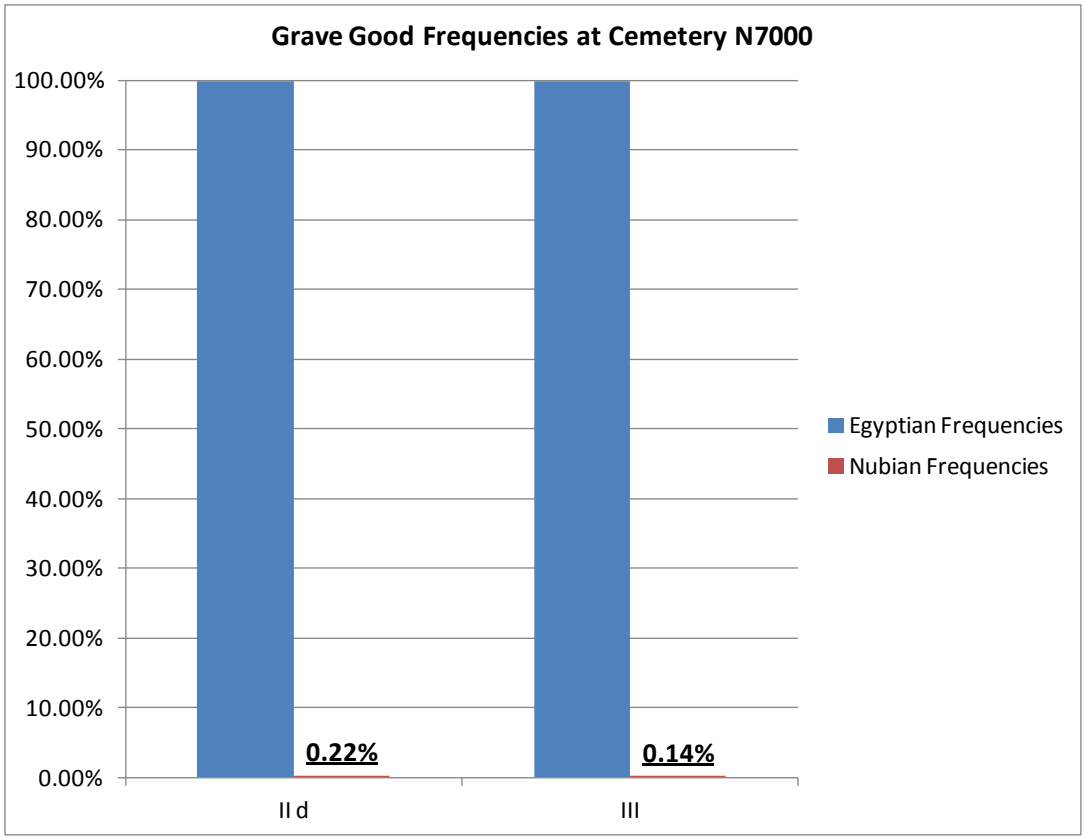

Figure 10. Egyptian/Nubian Grave Goods in Cemetery N7000

Treatment of the Deceased/Grave Architecture

As mentioned above, the main factors looked at were the positioning and orientation of the bodies, the dimensions of the graves, architecture of the substructures of the graves, and the presence of any type of superstructure. It should be noted here that none of the graves examined showed any signs of a superstructure, and because of that there will not be a discussion on grave

superstructures. Additionally, while the architecture of grave substructures was examined, there was no discernible difference between Egyptian and Nubian substructures; both used the same type of burials: shaft, pit and chamber, and trench and chamber. Therefore, only grave orientation and grave dimension will be analyzed in this section.

Grave Orientation and Positioning

In Cemetery N7000, the Egyptians show a clear pattern of orienting the body with the head towards the south and the facing west, towards the setting sun and the land of the dead. In fact, while an increase in the variability of body positioning is documented in the Naqada II and III periods, not one burial that was analyzed that varied from this arrangement by more than 35 degrees. The Nubian graves, however, exhibit a degree of variability in orientation and body positioning. As Figures 11- 14 show, there seems to be no pattern or trend in orientation and positioning. Furthermore, there does not seem to be any sign of Nubian groups beginning to adopt the Egyptian burial patterns and as such it seems that A-Group burial orientation was not influence by the Naqada culture.

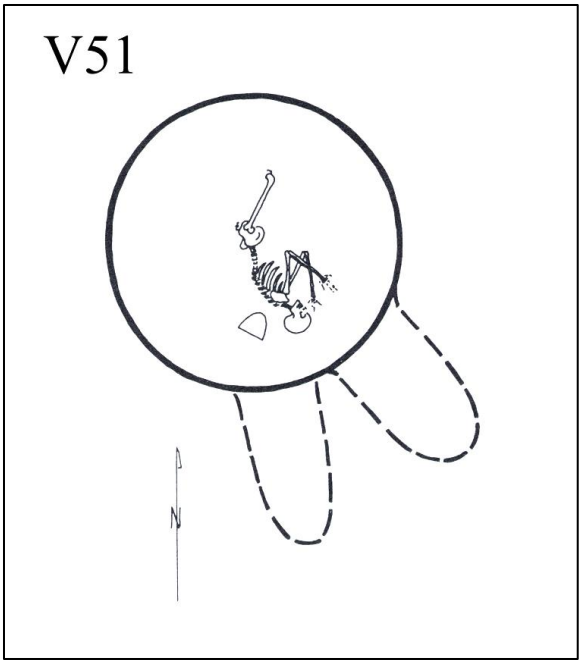

Figure 11. Grave V51 (Williams 1986a: Figure 45)

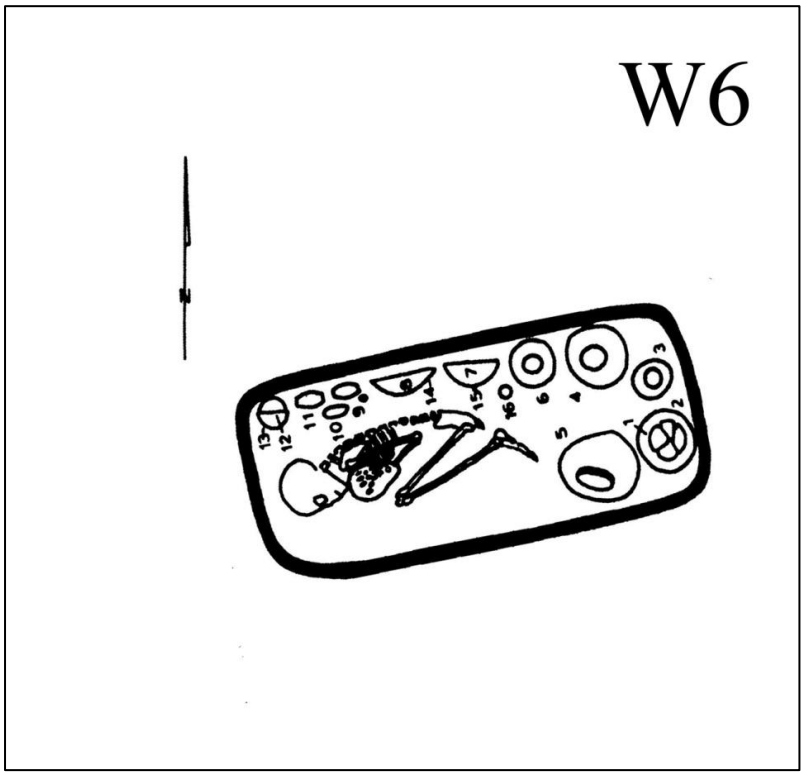

Figure 12. Grave W6 (Williams 1986a: Figure 16)

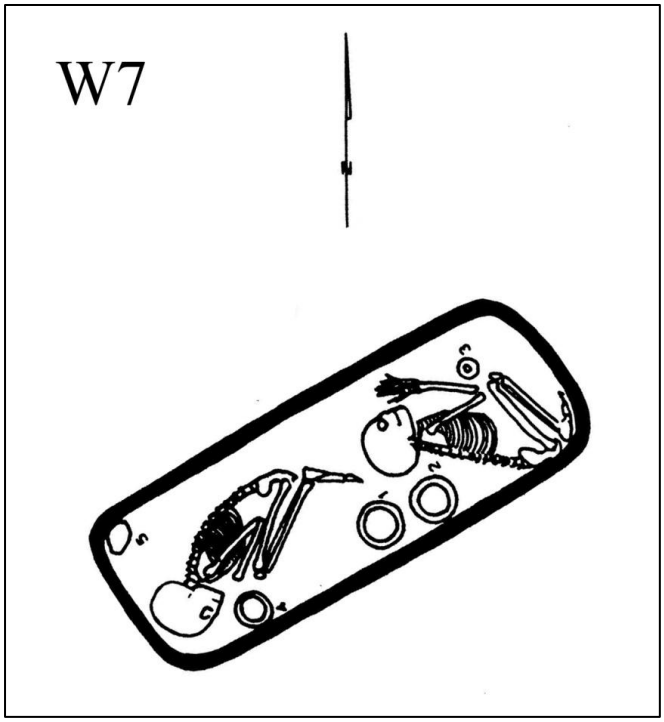

Figure 13. Grave W7 (Williams 1986a: Figure 20)

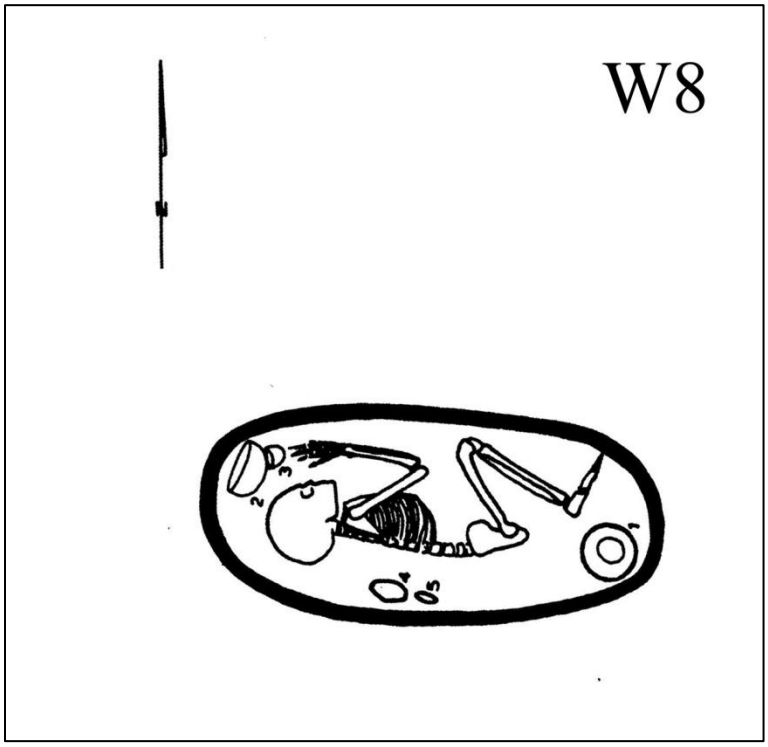

Figure 14. Grave W8 (Williams 1986a: Figure 21)

Grave Dimensions

For the analysis of grave dimensions, I compared the floor area of burials and tombs from both Cemetery N7000 and the OINE excavations and looked for any trends over time. As the bar graph in Figure 15 (below) shows, the average floor area of tombs in Nubian cemeteries increases, with a drastic increase in floor area during the Late A-Group period. We can take a closer look at this by examining the average floor area of the three social classes described by Williams (1986): commoner, patrician, and royal. Figure 16 (below) shows that royal tombs, which are only present in the Late A-Group period, are more than five times larger than the patrician or "middle" class. This explains the drastic increase in average floor area during the Late A-Group as well as providing evidence that the Nubian A-Group had some degree of social complexity and stratification.

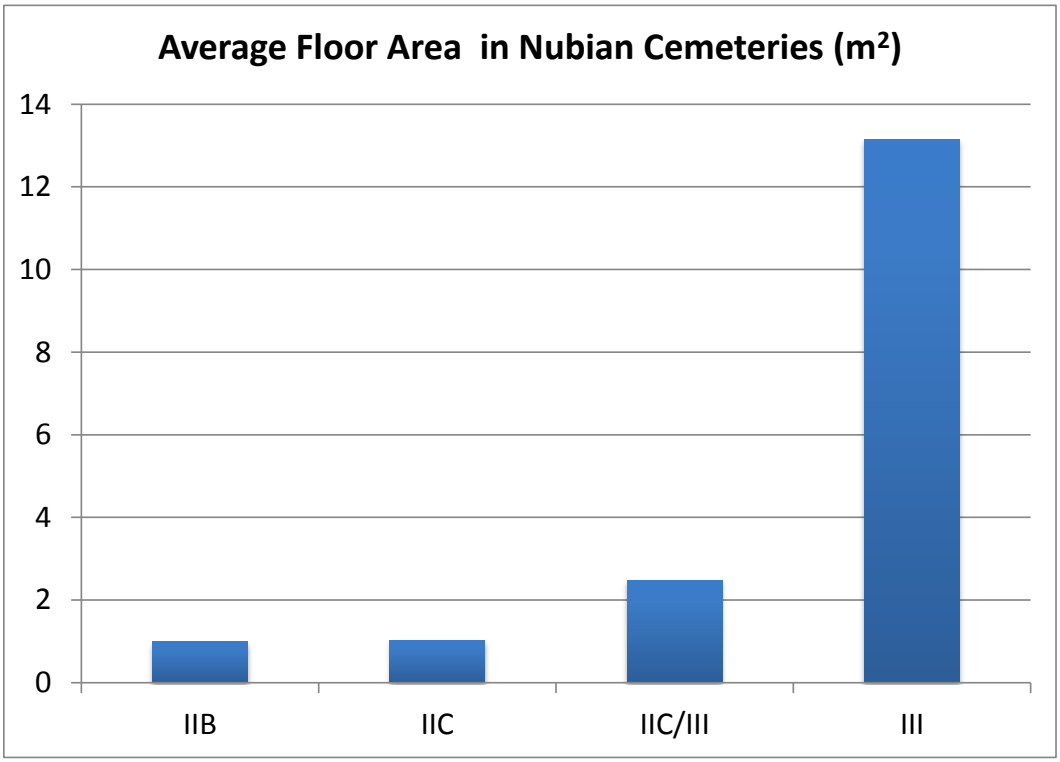

Figure 15. Average Floor Area in Nubian Cemeteries

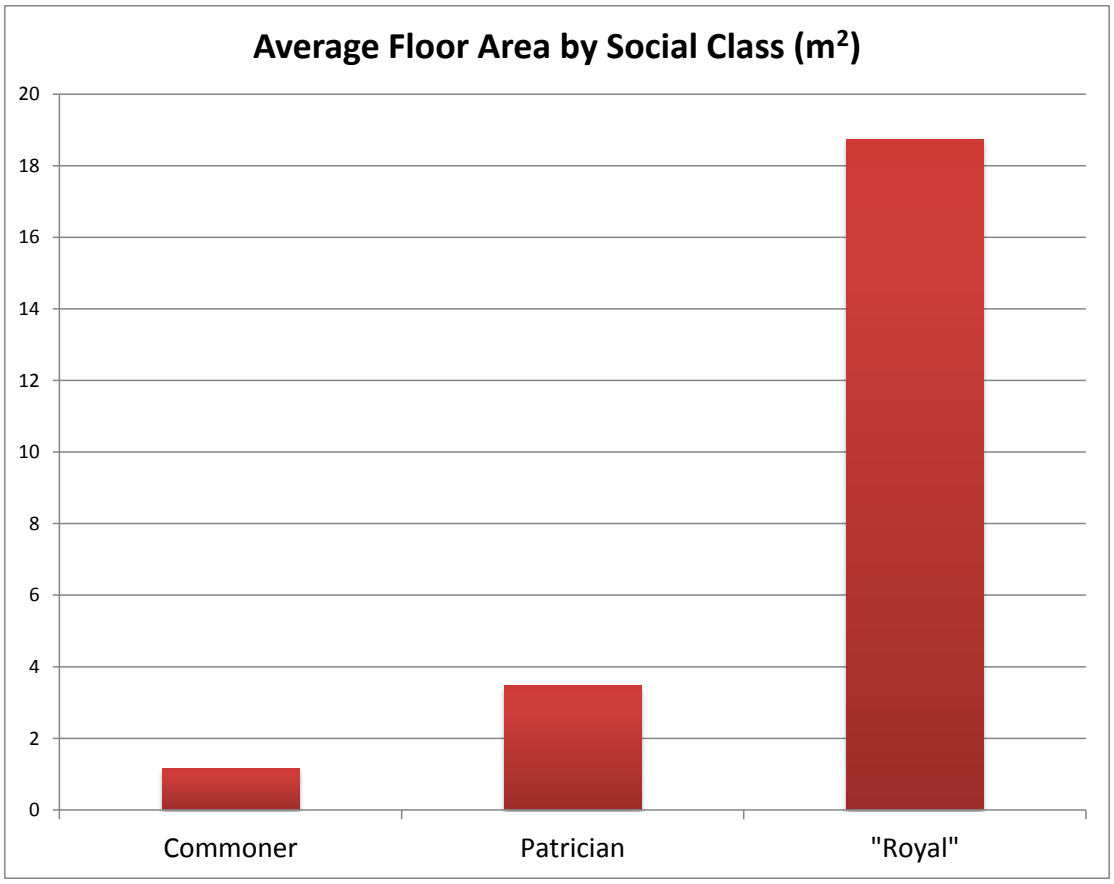

Figure 16. Average Floor Area by Social Class in Nubian Cemeteries

The average floor area in the Egyptian Cemetery N7000, however, actually decreased (Table 2). I believe that this can be easily explained by the restricted cemeteries mentioned in the earlier discussion on the rise of the Egyptian Naqada culture. It is well documented that there was an increase in the size of tombs among the elite during the Naqada III period, so the decrease in average floor area at Cemetery N7000 is out of place. However, the massive elite burials of the Naqada III were located in restricted cemeteries like Cemetery HK6 at Hierakonpolis. What we are seeing in Cemetery N7000 is a continuation of commoner burials. This is supported by the bullet graph in Figure 17, which shows that there is only a moderately significant difference in floor area between the two time periods (80-95% Confidence).

Table 2. Average Floor Area in Cemetery N7000

Time Period	*Average Floor Area*
Naqada IId	3.27 m^2
Naqada III	2.43 m^2

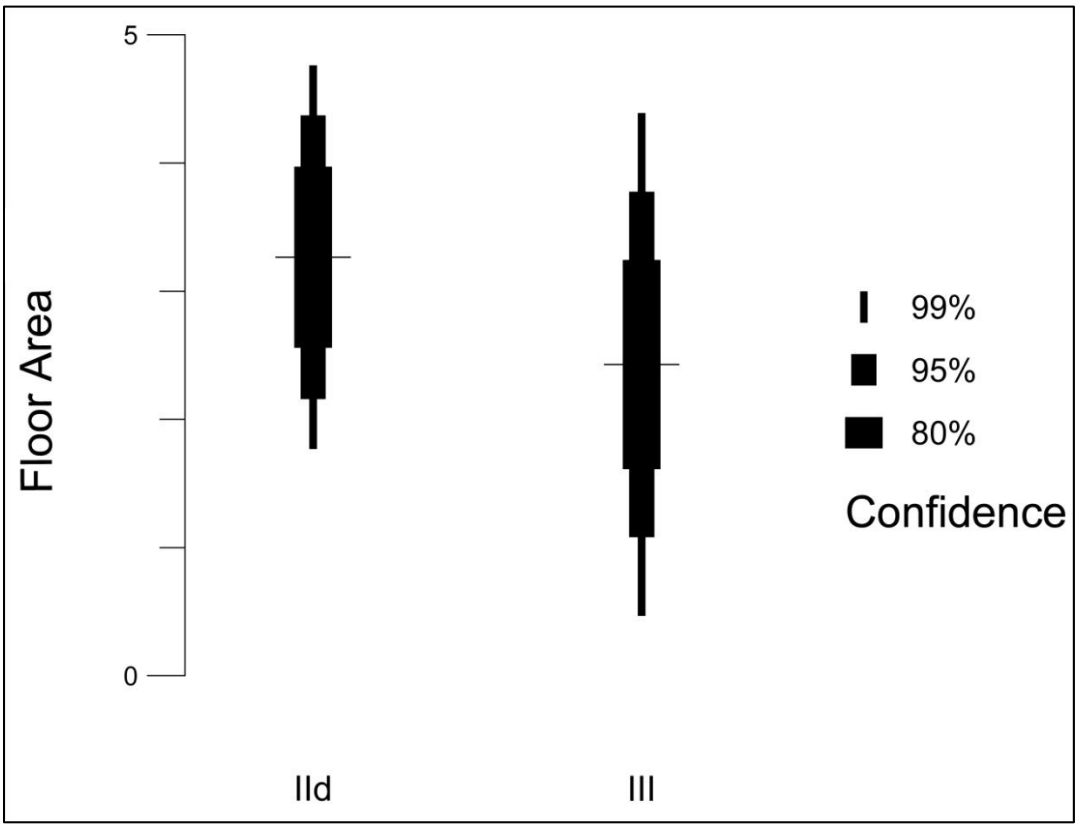

Figure 17. Bullet Graph of Average Floor Area in Cemetery N7000 (m^2)

In conclusion, the burial analysis provided few significant results, only providing evidence for social stratification of the Nubian A-Group and the emergence of very wealthy elites in the Late/Terminal period.

Artifacts

Going into the analysis, I had believed that the occurrence of palettes would be a significant indicator of increased Egyptian cultural diffusion through trade, however this was not the case.

The percentage of graves containing palettes actually decreased from the Middle A-Group (IIB-IIC) to the Late A-Group (III). However, while the percentage of graves containing palettes decreased, the average number of palettes per grave is much higher in the Late A-Group period, perhaps indicating an increase in wealth among elites (Table 3). This is especially significant when you consider that of the 36 Egyptian graves that were analyzed, only six contained palettes and no grave contained multiple palettes. Furthermore, incense burners, which are a distinctly Nubian artifact, are completely absent from Cemetery N7000. This, combined with the abundance of palettes in Nubian graves, suggests that Egypt had greater cultural influence over Nubia than vice versa.

Table 3. Palettes in Nubian Cemeteries

Graves with Palettes		***Palettes per Grave***	
II	52.9%	II	0.824
III	44.8%	III	2.100

In addition to the rising frequencies in Egyptian goods within Nubian graves and the abundance of palettes, there were a number of additional items found in Cemetery L that may indicate Egyptian influence on Nubian culture. The occurrence of bilobate, bag-shaped, and conical pendant beads begins in the Late A-Group period. These beads are "interesting early examples of the tradition of bead making exemplified by the beads found in the tomb of Djer at Abydos," and they are not present in any of the graves from the Middle A-Group period (Williams 1986b: 121).

In Cemetery L there was also an alabaster gaming board found in L24, along with gaming pieces made of ivory, faience, and other stones. Williams (1986) believes that this gaming set represents the same type of game that is depicted in Hesy's tomb of the First Dynasty. Within

this same tomb (L24) there was also a pear-shaped stone mace head, a very common Egyptian symbol of power. A fragment of another mace head was also found in L19. Again, these artifacts indicate that the Naqada cultural group had greater influence than did the Nubian A-Group. Lastly, in tomb L11, an incense burner was found that depicts the symbol of the god Horus as well as a man in a large headdress (Figure 18); this is a common Pharaonic motif in the later Dynastic period that has its roots in the Naqada culture.

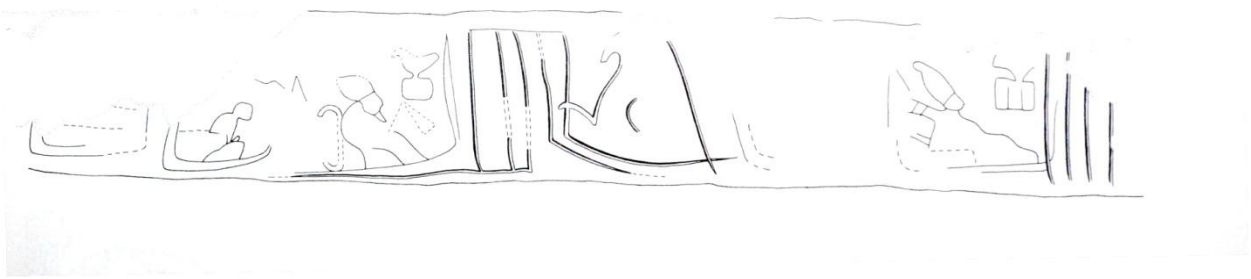

Figure 18. Archaic Horus Incense Burner (Williams 1986b: Plate 37)

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the data analysis clearly indicate that the Nubian A-Group had little influence on the Naqada culture, at least in terms of grave goods and burial traditions. However, in contrast to this, the data suggests that Nubians were greatly influenced by Egyptian culture. While these results were not expected, they are very informative.

In regards to my first research question: How extensive were trade interactions between the Naqada and A-Group cultures? It is clearly evident from the sheer number of Egyptian artifacts present in the Nubian cemeteries that the two cultures traded quite extensively. While the graves in Cemetery N7000 contained almost no Nubian artifacts, I believe this is due to the

fact that they were more interested in their culture, whereas the Nubians associated Egyptian culture with power and prestige.

This brings me to my second research question: did these interactions lead to noticeable changes in the cultural practices of either group? The answer is yes; most likely. In Nubia, the increase in the frequencies of Egyptian goods in Nubian Graves alone indicates an increase in trade, which is almost always accompanied by changes in cultural practices. However, the presence of Egyptian power objects in Nubian tombs is perhaps a better indicator of changes in cultural practices. As mentioned above, items like stone mace heads had been symbols of power in Egypt since before the Naqada II period. The presence of these items in addition to the abnormal number of palettes leads me to believe that Nubian elite saw Egyptian material culture as a symbol of power, prestige, and social superiority. Egypt, however, does not show any changes in culture due to interactions with the Nubian A-Group in this particular analysis. However, I do not believe the Egypt was unaffected by the A-Group, especially considering the proximity of the two cultural groups. Rather, I believe that the evidence for A-Group cultural interaction with the Naqada culture may be found settlement sites and could be a topic for further research. Gatto (2006) suggests that A-Group settlements could extend as far north as Hierakonpolis (see figure 1). If this is the case, then we should see some interesting synthesizing of the two cultures in these areas.

In terms of burials, individuals are buried with what they feel is most important, and by looking at Figure 10 it seems that Egyptians, at least around Naga-ed-Dér, did not feel that Nubian material goods were important to them. However, this could very well be a result of looting. Nubia's two main exports, gold and ivory, were prized possessions in the ancient world

and are still considered luxury goods to this day. The probability that these items were looted from Predynastic Egyptian graves is likely quite high.

Finally, my last research question: at the time of its fall, was the A-Group society organized as a complex chiefdom similar to the Egyptian Naqada culture or was it a series of extremely wealthy tribal rulers? I am inclined to believe, given the data above, that while the Nubian A-Group culture certainly had social complexity and stratification, it was not at the same level of complexity as the nearly state-level society of the Naqada culture. The reason for this is simple, Nubians adopted Egyptian symbols of power as their own, but the Egyptians did not adopt Nubian symbols to enhance their power and authority. Furthermore, the sudden appearance of extremely large tombs could indicate a large influx of wealth, wealth that was likely generated by selling luxury goods to the growing complex Naqada culture to the north. Individuals could gain vast amounts of material wealth through a monopoly on the luxury goods trade with Egypt. Furthermore, at the end A-Group the Naqada culture was extremely complex and on the verge of becoming the state-level society of Old Kingdom Egypt. It seems reasonable Nubian individuals, with personal contacts in Egypt and the resources to purchase prestige goods, would adopt the power and status symbols of the politically dominant culture. It seems much more likely that the social stratification seen in the A-Group is a result of powerful tribal chiefs accruing large amounts of wealth rather than the emergence of a complex chiefdom. The most powerful indicator supporting this is that the Nubian A-Group disappeared with the rise of Egypt's 1st Dynasty. With the rise of the Dynastic Period, Egypt circumvented the A-Group, eliminating them as middlemen and ending their monopoly on ivory (Trigger 1983). Without the continuous source of material wealth through the trade of ivory and gold, the lavish graves of the Nubian A-Group disappear and Egypt becomes a dominant force in the Mediterranean.

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