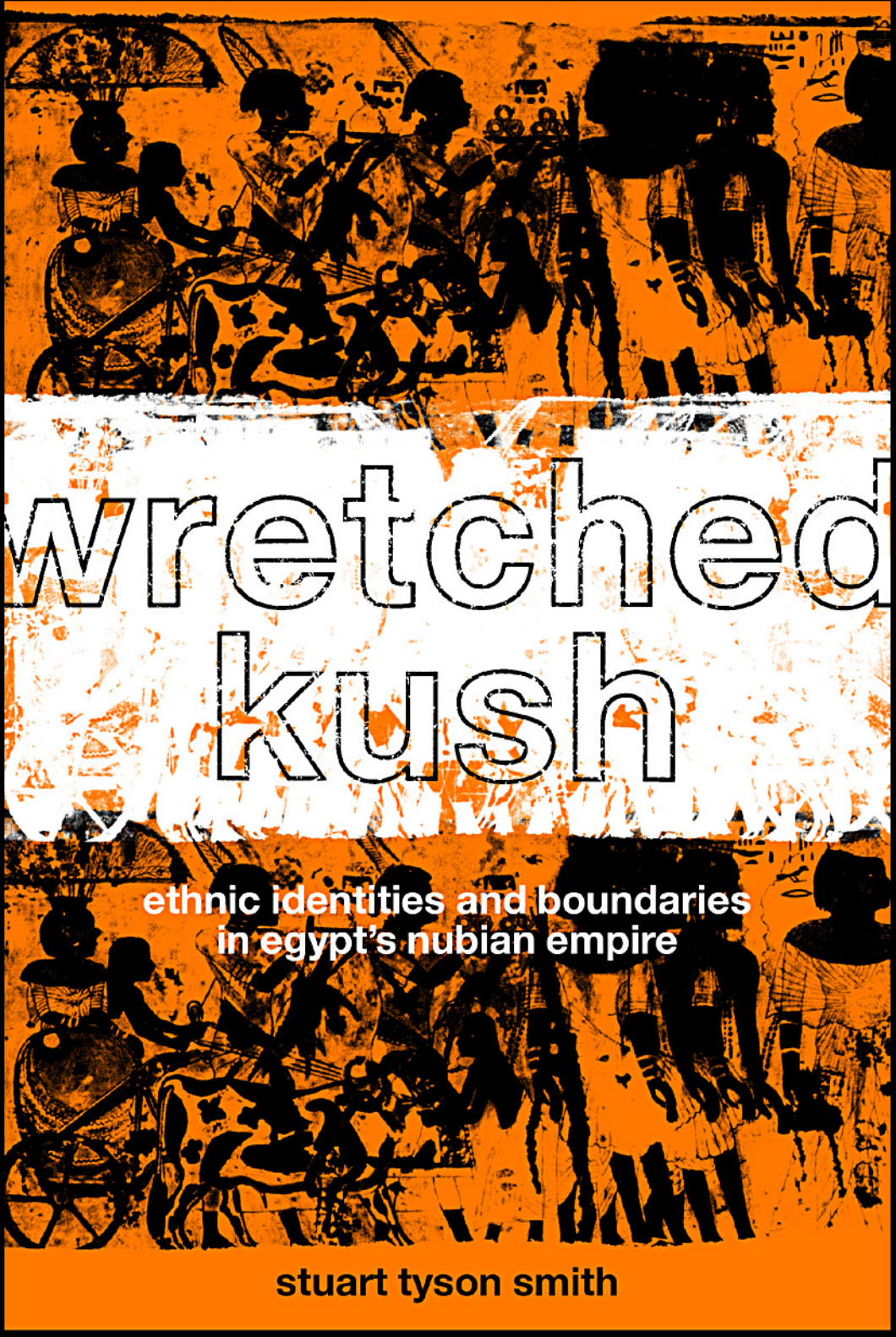


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Wretched Kush

Ethnic groups are often seen as distinctive, well-defined units. Yet recent research suggests that ethnic boundaries are permeable, and that ethnic identities are contested, manipulated and overlapping. This is particularly true when cultures come into direct contact, as with the Egyptian conquest of Nubia in the second millennium BC.

Professor Smith uses Nubia as a case study to explore the nature of ethnic identity. He begins by using the tools of anthropology, examining the ancient Egyptian construction of ethnic identities with its stark contrast between civilized Egyptians and barbaric foreigners – those who made up the "Wretched Kush" of the title.

The book then turns to archaeological evidence for ethnicity on Egypt's southern frontier, in the fortress community at Askut and the pyramid cemetery at Tombos. The multiple dimensions of ethnic identities and boundaries are highlighted, as the author juxtaposes the political use of the ethnic "other" in texts and monumental art with archaeological patterns of mutual influence and intermarriage across ethnic boundaries.

With its combination of the latest theoretical and methodological developments in the social sciences with previously unpublished archaeological data, *Wretched Kush* is an original and important work for Egyptologists, archaeologists and anthropologists.

Stuart Tyson Smith is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His previous publications include *Askut in Nubia: The Economics and Ideology of Egyptian Imperialism in the Second Millennium BC* (1995). He excavates in the Egyptian colonial cemetery in Tombos, Sudanese Nubia, and has acted as a consultant on several Hollywood movies featuring ancient Egypt.

Wretched Kush

Ethnic identities and boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire

Stuart Tyson Smith

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For Deneen Elder Smith
and in memory of James F. Deetz

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Preface

> There are advantages and disadvantages to writing about ethnic identity, and they stem from the same characteristic: ethnic identity is a powerful phenomenon. It is powerful both at the affective level, where it touches us in ways mysterious and frequently unconscious, and at the level of strategy, where we constantly manipulate it. Its power is also perceived and interpreted differently by individuals and groups, whether they are users of ethnicity, observers of ethnicity, or analysts of ethnicity.
>
> Anya Peterson Royce (1982: 1)

I first became interested in the complexities inherent in the nature of ethnic identities through the way in which the Nubian Prince of Miam (Aniba) Hekanefer shifted ethnic identities in different social contexts. In spite of his Nubian origins, he portrayed himself in his tomb at Toshka in Nubia as ethnically Egyptian, the same as any member of the contemporary elite (Simpson 1963). In contrast, Hekanefer appears in the tomb of his superior, Huy, the Viceroy of Kush in the time of Tutankhamen (*c.* 1325 BC), as a "barbaric" foreigner, a living icon for "Wretched Kush (Nubia)," abjectly groveling in front of Pharaoh during the annual ceremonial presentation of "tribute" (Davies 1926; see Figure 7.3 below). At the same time, I began to notice interesting patterns in the material culture of the fortress community of Askut, which, like Hekanefer, refused an unequivocal categorization as Egyptian or Nubian. In the winter of 2000, I began an excavation further south in the Egyptian colonial cemetery at Tombos to address some of the issues raised by this research.

I turn to anthropology and sociology to inform this study, and place Egyptian and Nubian interactions and constructions of ethnicity in a broader context. I found that traditional Egyptological approaches, like Huy, tend to emphasize the inherent superiority of Egyptian culture and inevitability of Nubian assimilation. Nevertheless, Loprieno's (1998) innovative study of the *topos* and *mimesis* of the foreigner in Egyptian literature provided considerable inspiration, as did Liverani's (1990) consideration of the role of foreigners in the state ideologies of Egypt and the ancient Near East. This work is not an attempt to resynthesize the considerable anthropological and sociological literature on ethnicity and the inherent difficulties of identifying ethnic dynamics in the

archaeological record. This would just replicate the thorough work of others (e.g. Emberling 1997; and especially Jones 1997). Instead, I concentrate on applying theories about ethnicity that I feel have a particular relevance to a specific historical and archaeological context. I hope that this focus will make this important aspect of these civilizations accessible to a larger audience interested in cross-cultural comparisons, as well as moving towards a deeper understanding of the ethnic dynamics involved in the interrelationships between ancient Egyptians and Nubians.

My theoretical framework work follows on from and was to some extent inspired by *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* by Sîan Jones (1997). This book builds on her work and will, I hope, enliven and extend debates on the nature of ethnic identities, a question of increasing interest in the social sciences. Jones' thorough study lacks three dimensions that my work will address. First, she never provides an in-depth case study. While she does suggest the potential and directions for the study of ethnicity by archaeologists, her theoretical discussions are not well grounded in archaeological evidence. My study integrates anthropological theory and more historically oriented Egyptological sources with two concrete case studies employing new data from the Egyptian colonial settlement at Askut and cemetery at Tombos. Second, like other recent examinations of ethnicity, Jones focuses on ethnic identity as self-defined by individuals within groups. Yet ethnic identities are sometimes defined and imposed from the outside, particularly in colonial situations. My work investigates ethnicity's two-sidedness – both self-defined and imposed from without – through the juxtaposition of ideological constructions of ethnic identity by the pharaonic state and the reality established through the day-to-day interactions of Nubians and Egyptians, particularly the elements of that interaction that are reflected in the archaeological record. Finally, Jones also focuses on the impact of interaction on native societies, as do most other studies of culture contact in imperial situations. This study reverses this emphasis, examining cultural transformations in colonial communities rather than people dominated by colonialism. My focus is, however, not on the transplantation of Egyptian society in Nubia, but rather on the effect of Nubians, particularly Nubian women, on Egyptian colonial society. A recent example of this approach is Henk Driessen's *On the Spanish–Moroccan Frontier* (1992). Egyptian–Nubian interactions provide an even more dramatic example of the contradictions between colonial policy and the actions of individual agents on a colonial frontier.

The application of an anthropological approach in Egyptian and especially Nubian archaeology is still rare. Some Egyptologists will doubtless find this work too theoretical and broadly focused, but whether or not they agree with the stances taken, my hope is that the book will spur discussion about the issues involved in Egyptian–Nubian interactions and the use of ethnicity in Egyptian ideology. Like my previous study, *Askut in Nubia*, this book is not intended to replace a final site report for either excavation. In particular, a comprehensive publication of Askut is moving forward, and this book draws on the rich data coming from that project. A few Egyptological studies have appeared that show interest in the application of theory to Egyptological problems. An early example is *Egyptology and the Social Sciences*, edited by Kent Weeks (1979), but it unfortunately failed to spark much additional interest. There is, however, now an

increasing Egyptological interest in studies that examine key theoretical questions. Notable recent contributions in this vein are Jan Assmann's many works on Egyptian religion and ideology, notably *Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* (1990), Antonio Loprieno's literary analyses, like *Topus und Mimesis* (1988), David O'Connor's *Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa* (1993), and a collection of articles edited by Judy Lustig, *Anthropological Analysis of Ancient Egypt* (1997). At the same time, anthropologists tend to make only superficial use of ancient Egypt, one of the world's primary civilizations (Adams 1997; O'Connor 1997). The richest collaboration between the disciplines is from scholars trained in both areas. Lynn Meskell's *The Archaeologies of Social Life* (1999) is one of the few examples of this kind of interdisciplinary approach, but such studies are still quite rare. I hope that this book will contribute to this movement, providing access for Egyptologists, anthropologists and other social scientists to a valuable case study integrating social science and humanistic perspectives. This investigation sheds light not only on the ethnic dynamics of ancient Egyptian–Nubian interactions, but by extension on the nature of ethnicity and interaction in other areas and times. Culture contact studies of ancient societies are also relevant to today's concerns, yielding insights into the dynamics of globalization and the ways in which societies create and develop ethnic and social identities in the context of increasingly complex worldwide interactions.

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My study also draws upon previously unpublished data from the UCLA excavations at the Egyptian fortress of Askut in the early 1960s. The late Alexander Badawy directed the project, and was ably assisted by Ernest Chandonet, who was in particular responsible for producing many of the site plans and packing the material for shipment to UCLA. Finding the field documentation was quite an expedition in itself, and I would particularly like to thank May Trad of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, for her assistance, and the UCLA Friends of Archaeology and Noel Sweitzer and the ARCE Southern California chapter for their support. I would like to thank the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at UCLA for access, support and facilities for my study of the Askut collection. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my debt to the Directors Emeritus Christopher Donnan and Doran Ross, and their staff. I would also like to thank a succession of Curators of Archaeology, Paul Farnsworth, Roger Colton, Glenn Russell and currently Wendy Giddens-Teeter for their support. The excavation at Askut was sponsored by UCLA and funded by grants from the United States government and the Ford Foundation.

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Chapter 1

Boundaries and ethnicity

A coward is he who is driven from his border.
Since the Nubian listens to rumors,
To answer him is to make him retreat.
Attack him, he will turn his back,
Retreat, he will start attacking.
They are not people one respects,
They are wretches, craven hearted.
My Majesty has seen it, it is not an untruth.
King Senwosret III, *c.* 1850 BC
(Lichtheim 1973: 119)

Modern boundaries seem firm and immutable. National borders are delineated through diplomatically recognized maps and on the ground through border posts, customs offices and physical barriers. Travel across them is regulated by treaty and enforced by bureaucrats, military, and police. Although sometimes disputed, arguments over boundaries concern where to draw the line, not whether the line should exist at all. Even when different polities are unified, as with the European Union or the former Yugoslavia, internal boundaries have proven surprisingly resilient (e.g. Darian-Smith 1999; Jones and Graves-Brown 1996). In a similar way, ethnic groups are seen as bounded, distinctive entities. Ethnic identity is based upon a real or perceived (self-defined) shared culture, history, and language. Ethnicity can also be ascribed by others, a phenomenon that is particularly common in colonial contexts like the one discussed here. As the quote above illustrates, Egyptian ideological stereotypes presented Nubian ethnicity in negative terms, in this case as cowards. In the celebratory monuments of the ancient Egyptian state, Nubia could not simply be referred to by its ancient name, Kush, but must always be "Wretched Kush." The negative qualities of Nubian ethnicity helped to define the positive qualities of Egyptian-ness. Both of these perspectives, internal and external, represent ethnic groups as distinctive traditions, bounded in space and time. In a similar way, the archaeological search for national and ethnic boundaries has typically assumed that distinct transitions between groups and polities will be manifested in the archaeological record.

Recent investigations suggest, however, that this view is too limiting. Boundaries are and were more permeable than the pronouncements of governments assert (e.g. Driessen 1992). There is also an emerging consensus that ethnic identities are not absolute and bounded, but rather situational and overlapping.

This is particularly true when cultures come into direct contact, like the Egyptian conquest of Nubia that forms the focus for this volume. Most studies of ethnicity and imperialism have understandably focused on the groups dominated by empires, often emphasizing the role of ethnic identity in the assimilation or resistance of native groups. In the past, culture contact tended to be regarded using "quincentennial" models emphasizing the unequal relations of Old World dominance over New World cultures. Cultural influence was, and often still is, assumed to be unidirectional. In particular, acculturation models stressed a European donor culture transforming a passive Native American culture into an image of the dominant core (Foster 1960; Spicer 1962). Acculturation models like this one continue to be used today, sometimes in surprising contexts like the spread of agriculture in Neolithic Europe (eg. the Demic Diffusion model of Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza 1984; Cavalli-Sforza 1996), or the replacement of Neanderthals by modern humans (D'Errico et al. 1998).

Cultural changes resulting from contact are, however, neither inevitable nor unidirectional, as Malinowski (1945: 12) asserted, simply "the result of an impact of a higher, active culture on a simpler, more passive one." Recent anthropological publications have re-evaluated culture contact studies, abandoning this simplistic view of acculturation (Curtin 1984; Thomas 1990; Schortman and Urban 1992; Wilson and Rogers 1993; Lightfoot 1995; Cusick 1998; Stein 1999). Instead, these scholars focus on a more complex constellation of contact situations with varying degrees of incorporation, transformation and rejection as opposed to straightforward assimilation (e.g. Bishop 1984; Dietler 1990; Helms 1992; Rogers 1990; Stern 1982; Wells 1992; Jones 1997; Deagan 1998; Smith 1998). Native American responses to European colonialism are therefore now seen as complex adaptations, transculturation or ethnogenesis rather than acculturation (Charlton and Fournier G. 1993; Cleland 1993; Rogers 1990; 1993; Farnsworth 1992; Turnbaugh 1993; Waselkov 1993). For example, as Bamforth (1993) has demonstrated, even the adoption of metal tools in California was conditioned by a complex set of factors, including cultural considerations as well as the effectiveness of the new technology. Indeed, several scholars have pointed out that even in contexts of dramatic power differential, such as slavery, cultural borrowings are not passive but, rather, selective and adaptive (Davis 1994; Singleton 1998; Scott 1985).

Both sides in such an imperial encounter are interlinked, if nothing else through strategies of dominance and resistance. The complex dynamics inherent in this relationship require the study of both the indigenous society and colonial minority in the context of a specific colonial situation (Gluckman 1949; Balandier 1951: 35, 54–5; Wallerstein 1966; Driessen 1992). The study presented here focuses on the impact of contact and interaction on the colonial communities founded in Nubia (Figure 1.1) by one of the first imperial powers, ancient Egypt. As we will see, cultural influences flowed in both directions as individuals wended their way though the shifting geo-

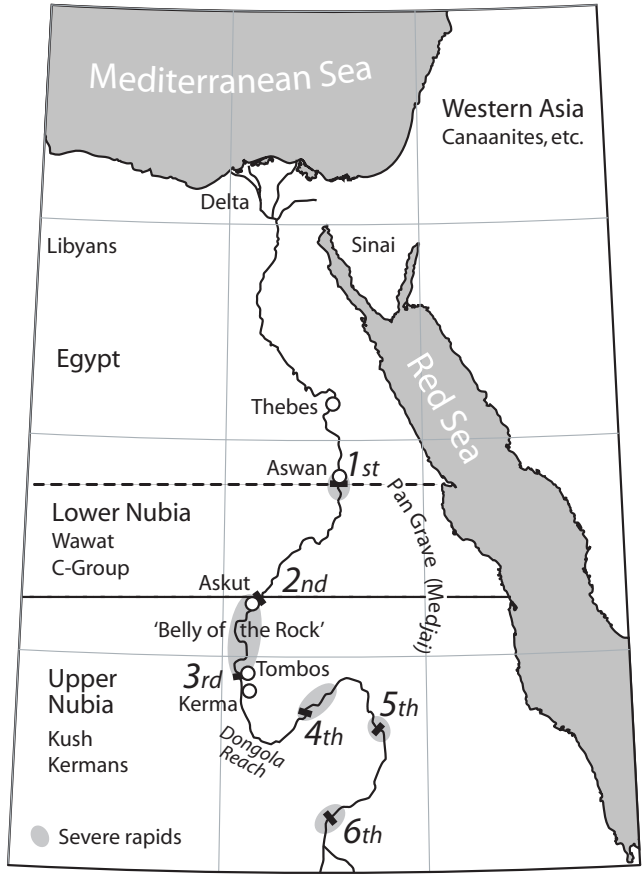


Figure 1.1 Map of Nubia showing cultural and geographic boundaries.

political situation in the second millennium BC, sometimes affirming and sometimes defying the strong ethnic stereotypes portrayed in Egyptian sources. The first part of this book considers the nature of ethnic identity and examines the ancient Egyptian construction of ethnicity and imperial boundaries derived from the historical record and large-scale archaeological patterning. In the second half of the book, I shift from the regional to the local and the general to the individual through a focus on the archaeological evidence for ethnic identity on Egypt's southern frontier at Askut (*c.* 1850–1050 BC) and Tombos (*c.* 1450–1050 BC). Egyptian colonists, distant from the centers of power, forged new communities, creating their own trajectories of culture contact that came to influence the nature and pace of interaction in Egypt's far-flung empire.

EGYPT AND NUBIA

> One teaches the Nubian to speak Egyptian,
> The Syrian and other strangers too.
> Say: "I shall do like all the beasts,"
> Listen and learn what they do.
> The sage Ani, *c.* 1250 BC
> (Lichtheim 1976: 154)

At first glance, Egypt appears to affirm the traditional characterizations of distinct borders and bounded ethnic groups. In a system similar to modern national borders, the Egyptians explicitly established political frontiers that tended to coincide with strategic natural boundaries. Egypt is bounded geographically by the Mediterranean to the north, the mountainous Sinai, Eastern Desert and the Red Sea to the east, the vast expanse of the Libyan or Sahara Desert to the west, and to the south the granite obstacle of the first cataract (Figure 1.1). The Egyptian state was made up of numerous levels of boundaries, all referred to as *tash*, a term also used in numbers and counting and to indicate limits for measures of all kinds (Hornung 1980). With a people so preoccupied with borders, it should come as no surprise that firm international borders were established delineating the limits of Egyptian conquests and marking the ethnic boundary between Egyptians and other groups, including Nubians. Now part of Egypt and Sudan, Nubia stretches from the first cataract to the Shabaluqa Gorge (sixth cataract), not far from the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile at Khartoum (see map). Lower Nubia is north and Upper Nubia south of the second cataract near the modern Egyptian–Sudanese border. The cataracts consist of outcrops of granite that cut through the bed of the Nile, creating rugged terrain and treacherous rapids that formed an important strategic point of control for Nubians and Egyptians.

Like many modern states and imperial powers, the Egyptians made strong characterizations of ethnic identity that correlated at various levels with their boundaries. Thus, to Middle Kingdom Pharaoh Senwosret III, Nubians are "craven wretches" who will flee from the boundary if challenged. The New Kingdom sage Ani takes an even more extreme view: Nubians and other foreigners are not even really human, and so are compared with animals. Today boundaries and ethnic identities are constructed and reconstructed by us as archaeologists based on patterns of material culture, including the built landscape, but also, in the case of historic civilizations like ancient Egypt, through written records. In the central ideology, the Egyptians existed as a unique and distinctive group, bounded by the Nile delta in the north and the first cataract at Aswan in the south. To step beyond these boundaries was to journey into a wilderness populated by chaotic barbarians. This ideological construction of ethnic identity bears a strong resemblance to modern constructions of ethnic and racial categories, tying skin color to distinctive cultural practices like dress, funerary rites, and so on. This picture of absolute ethnic boundaries is, however, balanced by less formal

documents, including administrative records, stories, and personal funerary monuments. These texts often reflect a more fluid situation where ethnic and political boundaries could be crossed with greater ease than the state ideology implied. While Pharaohs and bureaucrats dictated imperial policy from Egypt, Nubian and Egyptian men and women implemented those large-scale plans, forging new communities and creating their own trajectories of culture contact, that came to influence the nature and pace of interaction on Egypt's far-flung imperial frontiers.

This book investigates the dynamics of Nubia as a frontier, considering both the regional and the local, and, as much as possible given the limitations of the evidence, the collective and the individual. I speak here of a frontier not in Turner's sense of the modern westward American expansion of individuals bonding together, shedding their cultural baggage and forging a new society (Billington 1967). Both archaeology and texts reveal that Egyptian colonists brought plenty of cultural baggage with them, although I argue below that they nevertheless forged a new society. Neither did the Egyptian frontier operate as a "safety valve" for the disaffected. The Egyptian disaffected fled beyond Egypt's borders or paid the consequences of rebellion. Indeed, Williams (1999) has argued that Egypt's hardened Middle Kingdom frontier was meant as much to discourage flight by dissatisfied Egyptians as to prevent Nubian infiltration. Instead, we can see Nubia as a controlled but dynamic zone of contact and interaction between two powerful states and distinctive cultures, ancient Egypt and Kush (Kerma). But, of course, states and cultures do not interact, people do, and so this book will draw on a combination of historical and archaeological evidence to examine some of the contacts between the individuals and communities that made up Egypt's southern frontier.

If ethnic identities are self-defined and situational, then how can ancient ethnic groups be identified at all? For Egypt, we have the advantage of a rich textual and artistic record that can provide direct access into the minds of ancient people. Historical and art-historical evidence provides a clear view of the construction of ethnic identity in the state ideology. Similar material from more modest sources produced by the literate elite provides a more personalized point of view (see Chapters 2 and 3). But all of these sources are biased towards the Egyptian elite. Archaeological evidence can provide an important corrective as well as yielding insights uniquely its own to the problems under discussion here. The case studies from Askut and Tombos can be placed within a larger archaeological context through the use of older excavation reports and the increasing number of final publications from the Aswan High Dam Salvage Campaign in Lower Nubia. Additionally, a growing archaeological interest in Upper Nubia is gradually bringing this heretofore poorly known region into better focus. The integration of archaeology and text in ancient Nubia provides an opportunity, not only better to understand the nature and dynamics of the construction of political boundaries and ethnic identity in ancient states, but also to assess the role of ethnic stereotypes in state ideology as a legitimating tool for early rulers.

Although some argue that ethnicity is a modern construct, both the origins of the word in classical civilization and ancient examples demonstrate that it existed long before the emergence of modern nation states. Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of the applicability of the concept of ethnicity to the ancient world. The persistent view

of ethnicity as essential and thus clearly bounded is then contrasted with more recent theories emphasizing the multi-dimensional nature of boundaries and ethnic identities. Instrumentalists argue that ethnic identities are created to the advantage of individual agents, and thus are mutable and manipulated depending on the individual situation (Royce 1982). Ethnicity is not immutable and essential, but flexible and situational, sometimes existing in very narrow, specific contexts in space and time. The chapter continues with an examination of this dynamic from a different point of view that acknowledges the importance of instrumental contingencies while seeing ethnic identity as grounded in Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977: 78–93; Jones 1996, 1997).

This chapter also examines the importance of the "other" in defining ethnic identity, with specific reference to ancient Egyptian definitions of the different *ethnoi* surrounding them. Some have argued that ethnic definitions imposed from the outside are not valid (Royce 1982). Yet ethnic categories can be and often are created by outsiders. In particular, imperial powers create ethnic stereotypes to characterize conquered peoples, usually in order to create or reinforce existing power structures. A fundamental quality that sets ethnicity apart from the *habitus* or indeed the general concept of culture is the idea of difference (Bourdieu 1977; Barth 1969a; Jones 1996, 1997). Ethnic identities are constructed through cultural difference with relation to the specific cultural practices of ethnic "others" (Díaz-Andreau 1996; Fitzpatrick 1996; Renfrew 1996). Some argue that ethnicity cannot even exist without contact with other groups. The contact itself produces a self-consciousness of difference that leads to the construction of ethnic identity (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 235–63).

As a result, ethnicity is defined as much by the "other" as itself. External definitions of ethnicity are therefore just as "real" as self-identifications (Hines 1996), and can have real consequences in the context of contact and interaction, particularly when one group tries to dominate another. The political use of the ethnic "other" is particularly applicable to the highly idealized construction of ethnic identities reflected in ancient Egyptian ideology. Egyptian ideology created a *topos*, or stereotype, of distinctive ethnic categories presenting Egyptians as civilized and foreigners as barbaric enemies (Loprieno 1988). Egyptian art depicts Nubians with stereotypical dark skin, facial features, hairstyles, and dress (Yurco 1996), all very different from Egyptians and the other two ethnic groups, Asiatics and Libyans (Figure 1.2).

The methodology developed in Chapter 3 provides the basis for an examination of identity through patterning in three basic categories of evidence, architecture, material culture, and ritual practice, at the Egyptian frontier community at Askut in Lower Nubia (Chapter 5) and cemetery at Tombos in Upper Nubia (Chapter 6). Assumptions of ethnic groups as distinctive, bounded entities have led archaeologists to conclude that the difficulty of identifying ethnicity archaeologically relates to limitations inherent in the archaeological record (Allaire 1987). But if we recognize that ethnic identities vary situationally, then we would expect patterns of material culture to be complex and overlapping (Hodder 1982a; Wiessner 1983). Both Rogers (1990) and Farnsworth (1992) argue that the archaeological impact of colonial interaction must be assessed through a careful examination of the often subtle ways in which

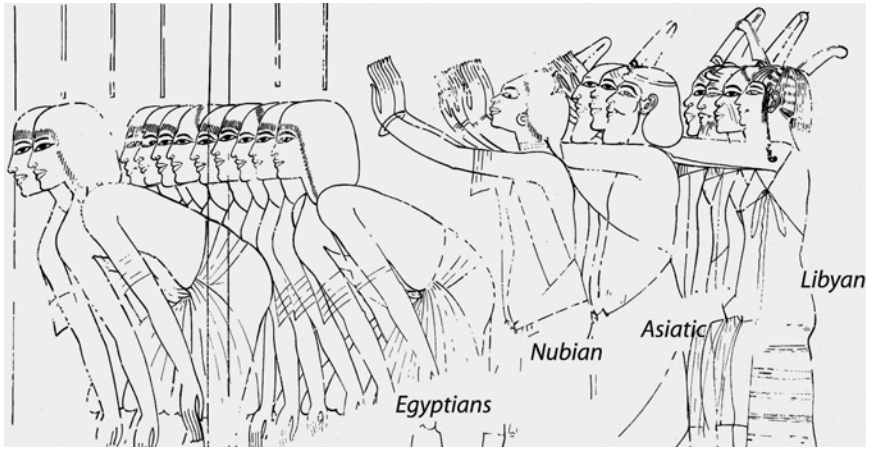


Figure 1.2 Ethnic stereotypes of Egyptians and foreigners (after Davies 1941: Pl.37).

imported objects and practices are integrated into an existing culture. Santley *et al.* (1987) take a broader view, arguing that ethnicity can be identified through ritual, dress, language, and culinary practices. They separate the archaeological evidence for ethnic identity into larger categories of household and community, distinguishing between domestic and ritual activities within each of these larger contexts. Ritual contexts are particularly important at the community-wide level, appearing archaeologically in distinctive architecture and artifact assemblages. Askut contained a community chapel and several household shrines as well as ritual artifacts like censers and fertility figurines. Funerary architecture and practice are a particularly important area where ethnic identity is asserted. Death tears at the fabric of society, and creates opportunities for the reinforcement of existing and negotiation of new roles during rites that lead to the reconfiguration of society for individuals, families, and the larger society after the loss of one of its members (Morris 1987). This can be detected at Tombos through a reconstruction of funerary practices reflected by architecture, grave goods, and burial position.

Stanish (1989) emphasizes the utility of a strong contextual approach focused on the household in determining the ethnic identity of colonists. The domestic assemblage should reflect the material culture of origin, particularly the sub-assemblage that reflects culinary preferences and practices. Through dining etiquette, food preferences, and culinary equipment, meals serve to reaffirm group identity and social structure (Goody 1982). Foodways can be examined at Askut in an analysis of culinary equipment, primarily pottery used for storage, food service, and cooking. Stein (1999) also effectively employed faunal and ethnobotanical analysis to identify an Uruk enclave in Turkey. Due to the nature of the contact situation and deposition, this kind of analysis is problematical at Askut. Chemical analysis of absorbed residues can, however, establish correlations between ceramic styles and differences in the types of

foods actually cooked and eaten in pottery. Gas chromatography with mass spectrometry (GC/MS) yields profiles of the fatty acids that appear both as visible residues on pottery (or other artifacts) and are absorbed into the walls of storage and cooking vessels. Plants and animals contain different ratios of these fats and so can be identified. Even where identification is difficult due to decomposition or mixing, distinctive profiles indicate different cuisines that can be correlated with Egyptian or Nubian cookpots to see if an ethnic cuisine is apparent at Askut in a GC/MS pilot study.

Ethnic identities are created by individuals but shaped by historical context (Stein 1999). Any study of ethnicity and culture contact should therefore be situated within its cultural and historical background (Rogers 1990). Chapter 4 provides the historical background essential for understanding the development of the colonial communities that form the central focus of this study, and incorporates data from my recent surveys in Upper Nubia's Dongola Reach. Egypt adopted both peaceful and militaristic strategies of contact over time and space, but always geared towards securing valuable resources. Imperial expansion secured control over key trade routes and sources of sumptuary goods including ebony, ivory, incense, and gold from Nubia. Gold and luxury products were central to the Egyptian state's political economy, serving as tools of legitimization through display and the creation of patronage relationships through redistribution. At the same time, individuals used these sumptuary goods for their own purposes through conspicuous consumption, especially among the elite and middle class. Although a redistributive system characterized the state economy, a thriving private sector sought to acquire these goods for themselves and accumulate wealth by acquiring these and other goods by themselves if possible, without the help of Pharaoh. This basic historical and economic background represents a point of departure for a deeper investigation of colonial identities and dynamics at Askut and Tombos.

No single material correlate, no matter how abundantly represented, unambiguously reflects ethnic group affiliation. Evidence from Askut and Tombos in all of the above categories is examined in the following chapters. Chapter 5 provides the first case study, an in-depth assessment of ethnicity within a colonial settlement at Askut through patterns reflected in architecture, material culture, and ritual practice. Askut was excavated by the late Alexander Badawy with the assistance of Ernest Chandonet from 1962–64 during the Aswan High Dam Salvage Campaign (Badawy 1964, 1965, 1966a). The occupation spans the entire period under discussion here, from the fortress' founding in *c.* 1850 BC through the end of the New Kingdom. The site is remarkable because of the completeness of the collection and the care with which provenance was recorded. Other colonial settlements in Lower Nubia were poorly recorded or heavily sampled or culled for diagnostics, rendering the quantification of ceramics and other artifacts problematical (Smith 1995). Since virtually all of the artifacts from Askut were saved and can be placed with some precision within the site, Askut represents an unparalleled opportunity to study a colonial community.

Chapter 6 provides the second case study, an assessment of ethnicity in a funerary context at Tombos through patterns reflected in tomb architecture, grave goods, and ritual practice. Tombos was founded in the New Kingdom, perhaps after Thutmose I's conquest of Kush in 1500 BC or alternatively with Thutmose III's consolidation of

the empire in *c.* 1450 BC. The first season of excavation by UCSB, conducted in winter 2000, uncovered the large pyramid tomb of Siamun, a high-ranking administrator, the Scribe of the Treasury and Overseer of Foreign Lands, and his wife Weren, the Mistress of the House. In addition, a previously unsuspected middle-class component to the cemetery was identified, dating from *c.* 1450 to 1000 BC. The human remains recovered in just this one season represent a minimum of 121 individuals, pointing to a substantial Egyptian colonial presence in this area. Tombos is the only Egyptian cemetery in the Dongola Reach, which formed the core of the Nubian kingdom of Kush. It also lies upon a key internal boundary between territorial and hegemonic Egyptian colonial strategies.

One goal of this study is to juxtapose the construction of boundaries and ethnic categories of the state ideology with the practice and perceptions of native groups and Egyptian and colonial society reflected in the archaeological record. Chapter 7 returns to the importance of the "other" in ethnicity by examining the dynamics of ideology and the legitimating role of ethnic stereotypes to the Egyptian state. The seemingly contradictory ability of individuals at Askut and elsewhere to cross boundaries and shift identities in different contexts supports the multi-dimensional nature of ethnic identity. On the face of it, monumental texts from Egypt conflict with the picture of practical day-to-day administration that emerges from archaeological and more prosaic textual sources for Egypt's New Kingdom empire. The key to understanding these texts lies in placing them within the context of negotiations of power between Pharaoh and elite, within elite factions, and between the elite and subordinate population. The last chapter brings together the theoretical discussions and the case studies in order to highlight the ways in which subjugated peoples, especially women, influence the dominant culture of the colonizer, and subtly assert their own ethnic identity within a colonial context.

Chapter 2

Ethnicity in antiquity

> You made the earth as you wished …
> you set every man in his place …
> Their tongues differ in speech,
> their characters likewise;
> their skins are distinct,
> for you distinguished the peoples.
> Akhenaton, *c.* 1350 BC
> (Lichtheim 1976: 131–2)

The concept of ethnicity is often thought of as a modern phenomenon, the product of or reaction to the emergence of nation states over the last two centuries (Handler 1988). Kohn (1944: 573) asserted, "before the French Revolution there had been states and governments, after it emerged nations and peoples." Scholars supporting this view see ethnicity as inextricably linked to the dynamics of European colonialism (and its aftermath), and particularly the emergence of nationalist movements in the nineteenth century. Thus we can ask, are the terms "ethnicity" and "nation" really appropriate to an ancient context? The word "ethnicity" is not modern, but rather derived from the ancient Greek root *ethnos.* The word "nation" also has an ancient origin in Roman *natio*, a term equivalent to Greek *ethnos* (Daugé 1981; Díaz-Andreau 1996). As far back as 445 BC, the Greek historian Herodotus defined the Greek *ethnos* as "the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life" (Rawlinson 1964:VI.144). A thousand years earlier, Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton defined the different "peoples" of Egypt and her neighbors in very similar terms. Renfrew (1996) points out that Herodotus' focus on genetic, linguistic and cultural foundations for ethnicity corresponds to most modern definitions. Following Dragadze (1980), he argues that ethnicity is based on a common territory, descent (or a myth of origins), language, culture, and beliefs (especially religion). An ethnos must also have a name expressing group identity and self-awareness of that identity as a group. For Renfrew, the people in question determine ethnicity in its fullest sense. In this traditional approach to ethnicity, group identity is represented as monolithic

and bounded, immutable and self-defined (Royce 1982: 23–4). Membership is ascribed from birth, and in most cases any fluidity of or movement between ethnic boundaries is therefore characterized as dishonest and manipulative, fundamentally at odds with the primordial nature of ethnic identities founded on shared histories, languages, culture, and beliefs.

This view corresponds well to the popular conception of ethnic identity, but recent work on ethnicity suggests that, far from being immutable and primordial, ethnic identities are fluid, dynamic, and contested (Jones 1996, 1997; Fardon 1987; Handler 1988; Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Eriksen argues that ethnic identities are segmentary and situational, and do not correspond to neatly bounded units as is assumed in the traditional view (1992: 172, emphasis in original):

> *Ethnic oppositions are segmentary in character*, the group created through a common cause expands and contracts situationally, and *has no absolute existence in relation to unambiguous principles of inclusion and exclusion*. This mechanism of segmentation does not always create a neat system of concentric circles or "Chinese boxes of identities", or an otherwise internally consistent segmentary classificatory system.

Contemporary nationalism and its manipulation of ethnicity are also not only a modern phenomenon. Nations often borrow the imagery and rhetoric of ethnicity, but have neither replaced nor do they inevitably stand in conflict with ethnic identity. Instead, nations and ethnic groups are interconnected in complex relationships. In the context of colonialism, names imposed on others are and were used to reinforce dominant–subordinate relationships (Royce 1982: 26–7, 84–107). Nationalist movements have generated new ethnic groups, as with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia (Brown 1994). Nazis both created a Germanic Aryan *ethnos* and manipulated ethnic divisions for political ends (Arnold 1990). Ethnic divisions were created during the war in Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Linguistic commissions created an artificial division of Serbo-Croat into separate languages. "Ethnic" monuments were destroyed in order to create a false ideology of historical pasts by erasing evidence of primordial ties embedded in the landscape, supposedly returning to a time of ethnic homogeneity which in fact never actually existed (Chapman 1994; Lewis 1999: 15–16). Similarly, a political use of the ethnic "other" to build internal solidarity and justify imperial expansion characterized the Classical world. Fitzpatrick (1996: 244) notes that:

> Just as the classical texts are often used today in the construction of ethnic identities, they also helped create the *"other"* in the classical world … Consequently the texts were not "objective" descriptions, nor were they meant to be. In naming the "barbarian" they helped to constitute the classical.

The ideologues of the Egyptian state created similar oppositional ethnic categories for political ends. Thus Kush, the ancient toponym of Upper Nubia, was transformed into "Wretched Kush" after the Egyptian New Kingdom conquest



Figure 2.1 Depiction of "Wretched Kush" from the base of a monumental statue of Ramesses II at Luxor Temple (*c.* 1250 BC).

(*c.* 1500 BC, Figure 2.1). "Wretched" connotes not only inferiority, but also a sense of foreordained failure in any rebellion against Egyptian authority (Liverani 1990; Lorton 1974). The mandatory linkage of "wretched" and "Kush" also activated sympathetic magic to work against Nubians (Evans-Pritchard 1940). Each time the phrase was written or pronounced in a ritual context, Kush was magically made "wretched" (Ritner 1993). The creation of a Nubian ethnic stereotype was not confined to naming. The pharaonic state created a fundamental opposition between civilized Egyptians and barbaric foreigners using an elaborate *topos*, or stereotype, that appeared in both texts and representations (Loprieno 1988).

Herodotus and Eriksen propose very different definitions of ethnic identity. The inherent ambiguity embedded in the latter's view requires a dramatically different theoretical approach to ethnicity, one that can accommodate the contextual nature of ethnic identity in time and place (Jones 1996). Royce (1982), Eriksen (1992), and especially Jones (1997) have already provided extended discussions of the evolution of scholarly thought on ethnicity, and so this chapter presents short discussions of different theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity relevant to this study. I begin with a brief examination of the traditional essentialist view of ethnicity, contrasting it to newer approaches that emphasize ethnic identity as multi-faceted and situational. The next section examines this dynamic from a different point of view with a consideration of Jones' (1997) use of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to investigate the dynamics behind the generation of ethnic identities. The final section explores the importance of the "other" in defining ethnic identity, with specific reference to ancient Egyptian definitions of themselves and the different *ethnos* surrounding them.

ETHNICITY: ESSENTIAL OR SITUATIONAL?

> Having been brought into Egypt [the Libyans] were settled into fortresses … They heard, while in the service of the king, the Egyptian language, and the king let them forget their own language, he overturned their tongues.
>
> Ramesses III, *c.* 1150 BC (Liverani 1990: 38)

Ethnic identity was originally characterized as "primitive" (Jones 1997). In this model, pure ethnicity can only exist in isolation, since ethnic identities are transformed by contact leading inevitably to blending or assimilation, like Ramesses III's Libyans. The concept of unilinear evolution popular in the late nineteenth century incorporates this idea of primordial attachments. In particular, Marx and the scholars whom he inspired felt that with the emergence of modern states and capitalism, class would replace ethnicity as a source of identity and solidarity. Ethnicity was maladaptive since ethnic conflict made societies vulnerable to Western capitalist imperialism, and so would be abandoned with the emergence of nationalism and the nation state. Recent history has shown that this is not the case (Royce 1982: 34–8, 97–102). Ethnic identity was (and is) strongly tied to the emergence of the nationalist movements that overthrew colonial rule, and

continues to be an important part of the political dynamic in former colonial areas and even within the old imperial core (Darian-Smith 1999). Even in the West, ethnic boundaries often coincide, or are at least asserted to correlate, with national borders. Geertz (1963) argues that emerging nations use ethnicity and primordial attachments to legitimate power and to form political units. The presence of multiple ethnic groups is not necessarily antithetical to the modern nation state, but can form the basis for power blocs within states.

In archaeology, the primitivist view of ethnicity was a central feature of the methodology of culture history. Archaeological "cultures" were equated with bounded and immutable ethnic units (Jones 1996). This allowed archaeologists to define groups for study but, perhaps most importantly, to trace the movement of peoples. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many, if not most, archaeologists viewed migration as the prime mover in explaining cultural change. This approach has been and continues to be misused to support nationalistic, imperialist and racist agendas (Renfrew 1996; Díaz-Andreau 1996). One classic early example is Petrie's (1920) creation of a "dynastic race" to explain the rise of Egyptian civilization, a position that was still championed by Walter Emery (1961) long after the concept had been discarded. Petrie posited that it was not black Africans, but a superior white or at best brown "race," migrating to Egypt from the north, who produced the pyramids and the other great cultural achievements of the ancient Egyptians. In a similar way, some scholars asserted that the impressive stone complex at Great Zimbabwe was the work of Phoenicians, not native Africans. These colonialist views helped legitimize British imperial control over Egypt and other parts of Africa (Trigger 1989). Ironically, in a strange twist reaffirming the appeal of the primitivist model, leaders of the Afrocentric movement, like Cheik Ante Diop (1974), simply reversed the direction of the movement of people to prove an African origin for the Egyptians rather than refuting the colonialist and racist assumptions that underlay the "dynastic race," and emphasizing the considerable evidence for the *in situ* development of the Egyptian civilization and its connections to other African cultures (for both views see variously in Bailey 1996).

In a similar and ultimately more sinister vein, Gustaf Kossina linked ethnicity and archaeological cultures through a nationalist philosophy creating the *volk* of *Germani* (Hides 1996: 40–1; Kossina 1911; Trigger 1989: 163–70; Arnold 1990; Veit 1994). Nazi scholars used Kossina's archaeological definition of this superior Aryan ethnic group to legitimate German hegemony over Europe and justify the policies of the Holocaust (Renfrew 1996: 126–7; Hides 1996: 40–1). The search for ethnic ancestors continues to be misused by political movements, like the connection between primordial ethnic identities in the ongoing conflict in the Balkans (Renfrew 1996; Chapman 1994). Europe has been a particular focus for these attempts to connect ancient and modern peoples (Bursche 1996. Archaeological research advocating the reconstruction of an overarching Celtic ethnic group is less sinister but politically important to the European Union. The archaeological search for a pan-Celtic ethnicity legitimates a European confederation through the creation of a common ethnic heritage (Shore 1996). Archaeology has also been used in Palestine in attempts to "prove" primordial attachments reinforcing territorial claims (Silberman and Small 1997). Ethnic

polarization has created strange contortions in connection with the Arab–Israeli conflict, for example Semitic Arabs being accused of anti-Semitism. In a similar way, Nazi ideology originally grouped both Jews and Arabs together as inferior Semites until policy makers saw a political advantage in gaining Arab allies, at which time Arabs were reclassified as an acceptable lesser branch of the Aryan *ethnos*. Ironically, the two sides in fact share very similar origins, languages, and religious traditions, the prime criteria of a common *ethnos*. Indeed, many Iraqi Jews in the 1920s and 1930s considered themselves Arabs and were considered by some Iraqi nationalists to be Arabs. Some even went so far as to join with other Iraqis to reject the creation of the state of Israel, which they perceived as an imposition of European Jews in Arab Palestine (Lewis 1999: 33–9).

In spite of these obvious abuses and inadequacies of the essentialist archaeological approach to ethnicity, the basic assumption that archaeological "cultures" reflect ethnic groups has remained surprisingly resilient through the paradigmatic changes of the late twentieth century. Processual archaeologists viewed the search for ancient ethnic groups with some skepticism, citing the difficulty of correlating artifacts with specific groups. Nevertheless, processual archaeology still tended to operate within the same essentialist framework (Hides 1996). This view is still widely employed even though this methodology has also been rejected in post-processual archaeology (Díaz-Andreau 1996). The essentialist approach ultimately rests on the assumption that cultural units, and thus ethnic groups, are bounded and uniform. It adopts a normative view that cultures or ethnic groups are made up of a set of shared beliefs handed down in a continuous tradition (Jones 1996; Graves-Brown 1996). These "uniformitarian principles, in effect a form of Platonic universal, negate the possibility of different identities in different times and places" (Graves-Brown 1996: 89; Hodder 1991; cf. Graves 1994).

In a contradiction of the Marxist argument that ethnicity is maladapted to modernism, these expectations of boundedness, homogeneity, and continuity have been related to the emergence of nationalism and the modern nation state (Handler 1988). As will be seen below, historical evidence contradicts this notion. Ethnicity is an ancient phenomenon. Ethnic identities have been constructed explicitly in very similar terms since the emergence of early states in the Near East, Africa, and the Aegean. As noted above, the concept of *ethnos* originates, after all, not through modernism but with the ancient Greeks. The fact that ethnic groups often define themselves in essentialist terms may help to explain the resilience of the notion of their immutability and boundedness. At the same time a careful, contextual examination of sources reveals that these characterizations were highly idealized and do not necessarily correspond to reality. For example, Díaz-Andreau's (1996) and Driessen's (1992) discussion of modern Europe, Fitzpatrick's (1996) study of ancient Greece and Rome, Liverani's (1990) discussion of prestige and propaganda in the Near East and Egypt, and Loprieno's (1998) and my own consideration of Egyptian ideology (Smith 1997, see below and Chapter 7) all describe situations where ethnic characterizations and historical reality do not necessarily coincide.

All of the older perspectives, sinister or not, share the common view that a "true" ethnic identity exists that can be recovered from the archaeological, historical and/or ethnographic record. The connection between tradition and ethnicity is particularly strong. Ethnic groups are not legitimate unless they can draw upon a long and continuous

tradition. While this often is a goal in the creation of ethnic identities, its utility in defining ethnic groups assumes that they are essentially static, dismissing any innovation and flexibility as somehow inauthentic and thus illegitimate (Royce 1982). For example, Geertz (1963) notes the overpowering coerciveness of blood, speech, and customs. Renfrew (1996) advocates the search for "real" ethnic identities, and criticizes the manipulation of ethnic identity for political purposes, asserting that this practice represents a misuse of ethnicity. Yet, as Glazer and Moynihan (1963: 13–14) note, the so-called "objective" characteristics of ethnicity are highly mutable. They found that immigrants to the United States change their identities dramatically by the second and third generation, so much so that the constellation of cultural features that make up their ethnic identity would not be recognizable to the original immigrants. Even biological descent is not a reliable indicator of ethnic membership. Yet people still retain an ethnic identity through a subjective sense, but not objective reality, of tradition. In a similar way, a causal relationship is often posited between ethnic boundedness and conflict like the Balkans, but these justifications are most often really *post hoc* rationalizations (Graves-Brown 1996).

Abandoning essentialist notions for a new instrumentalist paradigm, Barth (1969a: 14) noted that ethnic boundaries and the features that make up ethnic identities might change. He argued strongly for a diachronic approach that focused on ethnic continuity (or the lack thereof). During the 1970s and 1980s, instrumentalists argued that if ethnicity is really subjective, then it can be manipulated and mobilized at both the individual and group level to maintain boundaries and meet needs (Jones 1996). These scholars emphasized the importance of economic and political interests in the construction of ethnic identity. For example, both Barth (1969a) and Haaland (1969) attribute the shift by the agriculturalist Fur of Sudan to a Baggara Arab identity as a strategy adopted in order to take advantage of the latter's more economically lucrative practice of cattle pastoralism (Patterson 1975).

Following Barth's (1969b) groundbreaking symposium, recent studies of ethnicity reject essentialist approaches and instead emphasize its dynamic nature (Jones 1996). They see ethnic identities as neither static nor universal, but part of dynamic, living systems. Ethnic groups are subjective entities, derived from an emic point of view where actors determine their own ethnicity (Graves-Brown 1996), regardless of the objective "reality" of their cultural similarities or differences. For example, Barth (1969a) observed that Pathan ethnic identity was founded not upon broadly shared features, but focused on several key social elements, including hospitality, public affairs, and domestic seclusion. Ethnic identities are thus fluid, embedded in economic, social, and political relations. As a result, they can change between different social contexts and according to the interests and positions of the individual actors (Jones 1996; Cohen 1978; Wallman 1977). This model contrasts with the idea of ethnicity as a primordial culture-bearing unit, a notion central to nationalist discourses and social science theory (Jones 1996).

One point upon which both new and old approaches to ethnicity agree is that ethnic identities are self-ascribed and thus ultimately subjective. For example, although Weber cites objective criteria as the basis of ethnic identification, he argues that ethnic groups are ultimately subjective, regardless of the reality of an objective connection between its members:

> We shall call "ethnic groups" those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent – because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and emigration – in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of nonkinship relationships … regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not.
>
> (Weber 1947: 306)

Royce (1982: 169–84) documents the selective assumption of different ethnic roles by upwardly mobile Zapotec in order to maximize opportunities for advancement in the local and national social hierarchy, shifting between Zapotec and Mexican identities as the situation demands. Their assumption of ethnic identities is both selective and adaptive, allowing individuals to maintain within-group integrity while taking advantage of outside opportunities. In this way, the Zapotec of Juchitán are able to maintain political and economic dominance in spite of the larger dynamics of Mexican social and political control. This strategy would not work if ethnic status could not be achieved. Royce cautions that rules limiting access to different groups can constrain the ability of individuals to shift identities, for example the Hindu caste system or color prejudice in the American South. But even in these cases, individuals who are without birthright can circumvent ethnic ascription with the successful manufacture of an identity to which they have no birthright. Individuals can disclaim, set aside, or reject an identity ascribed by birth. Additionally, it is important to remember that ethnicity is only one of many available identities. An individual can develop, display, manipulate, or ignore ethnicity according to the demands of particular situations. Humans are aware of their surroundings and can manipulate individuals and situations to achieve a desirable end.

BOURDIEU'S *HABITUS* AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

> It is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies … But the rejection of mechanistic theories in no way implies that … we should reduce the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and works to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors.
>
> Pierre Bourdieu (1977: 73)

Essentialist approaches tend to conflate ethnicity with culture. Since ethnic identity is primordial and pervasive, it becomes fundamental to the definition of a society. Like structuralists, essentialists also generally adopt a normative view of ethnicity, emphasizing its immutable nature rooted in similarities shared with all members of an ethnic group. Instrumental models separate ethnicity and culture through an emphasis on ethnicity's situational flexibility and its economic and

political value. This approach avoids the mechanistic assumptions of essentialist models, instead placing a premium on individual agency. The problem of an overly instrumental approach is that it reduces ethnicity to no more than an economic or political strategy. Is ethnic identity just an arbitrary set of characteristics adopted for economic or political gain in line with instrumental approaches? Or does it have a greater significance and complexity implied by the primordialist paradigm?

The primordial and instrumental paradigms are seemingly irreconcilable, but several anthropologists have attempted to resolve the apparent contradiction between the two approaches. For example, Royce (1982) argues that ethnicity is instrumental, but at the same time must still be reasonably consistent within its cultural context. In a similar way, Eriksen (1992) notes that ethnic identities are not made up of arbitrarily selected features that only meet the instrumental needs of a particular situation. Instead, they bear relevant meanings that in turn shape the course of interaction and limit the options available for the production of ethnic symbolism. Bentley's (1987) "practice" approach employs what is ultimately a structuralist paradigm, applying Bourdieu's (1977: 72–95) concept of the *habitus* in an attempt to reconcile the primordialist and instrumental approaches. The *habitus* consists of shared dispositions that both shape and are shaped by the social practice of individual social actors. According to Bentley (1987: 32), "sensations of ethnic affinity are founded on common life experiences that generate similar habitual dispositions." Yet, if ethnicity is derived entirely through the *habitus*, then ethnic identity sounds at best like a sub-set of culture (Yelvington 1991). Ethnicity is just a reflection of the *habitus* of the group, where habitual likeness with the *habitus* of others defines ethnic identity. Although it allows for some contextual and situational diversity, Bentley's use of the *habitus,* at least to some extent, returns to the notion of ethnic identities as bounded social entities (Jones 1997: 87–94).

Ethnicity and the *habitus* are not one and the same, but the *habitus* can still play a role in the generation of ethnic groups. In spite of Bentley's normative application of *habitus,* Bourdieu's original concept avoids the normative structuralist view of culture that assumes a mechanistic enactment of a system of rules (Jones 1997: 89). Instead, the *habitus* consists of durable dispositions, often subconscious, that function as "principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules" (Bourdieu 1977: 72). *Habitus* is not a set of rules to be applied, but relates to a "socially structured situation in which the agent's *interests* are defined, and with them the objective functions and subjective motivations of their practices" (Bourdieu 1977: 76).

Jones also sees ethnic identity as grounded in Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* (Jones 1996, 1997), but avoids the pitfalls of a normative approach by positing that the construction of ethnic identities draws from the *habitus* through the use of shared symbolic resources. Her model does not rule out innovation and acknowledges the importance of instrumental contingencies, but avoids an extreme instrumental position through the recognition that the constitution of ethnic identities is constrained, but not determined, by existing cultural practice. Jones deliberately avoids conflating ethnicity and *habitus,* arguing that ethnic identity takes on particular forms as a product of *habitus* and the instrumental social conditions of a particular context. *Habitus* is an important, but not

the only, factor involved in the generation of ethnic identities. In particular, Jones argues that the consciousness of ethnic categories is not "primarily constituted by a subliminal recognition of similarities, but is *essentially a consciousness of difference,"* which necessarily resides outside of the familiar experience and knowledge that characterizes the *habitus* (Jones 1997: 94, emphasis in original).

"OTHERNESS" AND ETHNICITY IN ANCIENT EGYPT

> I am indeed like a stray bull in a strange herd … No Asiatic makes friends with a Delta-man. And what would make papyrus [Egypt] cleave to that mountain [Western Asia]?
>
> Sinuhe, *c.* 1950 BC (Lichtheim 1973: 227)

The feature that sets ethnicity apart from the *habitus* or indeed the general concept of culture is the idea of difference (Bourdieu 1977; Jones 1996, 1997). Barth gives interaction a major role in the generation and sharpening of ethnic identity. Social interaction often provides the "very foundations on which embracing social systems are built. Interaction in such social systems does not lead to its liquidation; cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence" (1969b: 9–10). Ethnic identities are constructed through cultural difference with relation to the specific cultural practices of ethnic "others." Indeed, many argue that ethnicity cannot exist *without* contact with other groups (Díaz-Andreau 1996; Fitzpatrick 1996; Renfrew 1996). The contact itself produces a self-consciousness of difference that leads to the construction of ethnic identity (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). Without this contrast, ethnicity does not exist.

Ethnic identity is sharpened by conflict. Spicer (1971: 797–9) cited threat of conflict or incorporation as an essential factor in ethnic persistence. Royce (1982: 95) notes that, before unification, Italy remained politically fragmented even with a common culture, religion, and language. These similarities were not enough to overcome internal divisions. Only when a common threat materialized, in this case the need to overthrow foreign domination by France and Austria, did a common *ethnos* and nation emerge. In a similar way, McGuire (1982) found few archaeological differences between Anglo and Mexican settlers in mid-nineteenth century Arizona when the Apache presented a common foe. Competition is also a driving force behind ethnic differentiation, and so McGuire notes that ethnic differentiation emerged in Arizona following the cessation of Apache raids in the late nineteenth century. This new security led to economic and political competition between the Anglo, Mexican, and newly introduced Chinese communities that was expressed in part through ethnic differentiation. In colonial-era Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), ethnic identity intensified with interaction among different groups brought together for mining (Epstein 1958; Mitchell 1956). Hodder's (1979) study in Baringo found strong ethnic differences among groups that were interacting heavily but in a highly competitive atmosphere.

Interaction and contact with others who are different thus often prompt a strengthening of each group's identity, underlining the situational and political nature of ethnic identity. Ethnic identities are reactive, dynamic, and flexible (Royce 1982: 47).

Self-definition is usually considered an essential quality of ethnicity, but if ethnicity is founded on difference, then the external "other" must be defined along with the internal group. Thus ethnic categories are both self-identified and ascribed from the outside (Royce 1982: 12–22). Along similar lines, Isajew sees the generation of ethnic groups as a "process by which individuals either identify themselves as being different from others or belonging to a different group or are identified as different by others, or both identify themselves and are identified as different by others" (Isajew 1974: 115). The attribution of collective identity by a dominant group can itself lead to the construction of ethnic affiliations that need not have any foundation in pre-existing historical reality. These subordinate ethnic groups typically use their new ethnicity as an emblem of shared predicament and interest, contrasting with the ethnic identity of dominant groups (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). The generation of ethnic identities is thus a complex process of self- and other ascription.

This is especially true when ethnic categorizations are imposed by a colonial regime. In these cases, the instrumental contingencies of prevailing power relations determine the relative material and symbolic means necessary for the imposition of dominant regimes through ethnic categorizations. In particular, imperial powers create ethnic stereotypes to characterize conquered peoples, usually in order to create or reinforce existing power structures. These classifications are often seen as not "real," since they represent an imposition from without, and thus may not conform to an individual's self-identification. This notion springs from the idea that ethnic groups are bounded and immutable; anything other than self-identification represents manipulation. Yet if ethnicity exists in opposition to the "other", then by definition ethnic identities are constructed in the context of ethnic characterizations of outsiders created by the same group. If, as instrumentalists argue, the nature of ethnic identities is flexible and mutable, then external definitions of ethnicity are just as "real" as self-identifications (Hines 1996).

The imposition of ethnic categories on other peoples is often thought of as a modern phenomenon (Rustow 1968). The use of *ethnos* developed by Hellenistic historians like Herodotus reflects a Greek consciousness of forming a unique and absolute community. Central to the idea of Greek-ness was the sense that the Greek *ethnos* was superior to all others (Daugé 1981). This is consistent with the idea that ethnicity "is invariably founded on a marked opposition between 'ourselves' and 'other/s' … " (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 51). Far from being objective recorders of peoples and events, Herodotus and other Greek and Roman historians adopted a deeply ethnocentric view of other groups. Greek and Roman identity was therefore constructed as much through the definition of these "others" as in a process of self-identification (Díaz-Andreau 1996). So from the very beginning of the concept, ethnic identities were imposed as much as self-ascribed. The 3,000-year-old words of Akhenaton quoted at the beginning of the chapter demonstrate that the construction of the ethnic "other" goes back even further, long before the emergence of Classical civilization to the foundations of civilization in the West and Near East. Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern documents speak explicitly in terms of nations and

peoples, creating and manipulating ethnic identities in order to legitimize the power and authority of their kings (Fitzpatrick 1996; Díaz-Andreau 1996; Liverani 1990; Loprieno 1988; Smith 1997). Although these ethnic categories were often very abstract and created mainly with an internal audience in mind, individuals from conquered territories were affected. For example, Nubians were expected to assume the garments and accoutrements of their Egyptian-derived ethnic stereotype in certain conditions (see below, Chapter 7). In defining the "other," pharaonic ideologues highlighted what was Egyptian.

Three primary ethnic "others" bounded the Egyptian *ethnos*, the Libyans to the north and west, Asiatics to the north and east, and Nubians to the south. The solar theology explicitly acknowledges these different ethnic groups, reflected in the passage from Akhenaton's *Hymn to the Aton*, quoted above. In a similar way, the Hellenistic worldview surrounded the Greeks with four barbarian peoples, the Celts, Scythians, Persians, and Libyans (Hartog 1980; Fitzpatrick 1996: 244). When ethnicity is founded on self vs. other ascription, as is the case in Egyptian and Classical ideology, ethnic identities are constructed with immediate and unambiguous symbols of identity. The definition of the features that characterize outside groups is problematic since knowledge of other groups is usually limited, especially with the receiving audience who may never have had direct contact with outsiders (Royce 1982: 29–31, 145–68). Thus clear and consistent markers must be identified, leading to stereotyping and exaggeration. These symbols, stereotypes, and so on, must be immediately recognizable to both those who display them and their audience. They are thus often centered on the body, emphasizing both physical features and dress, potentially including height, skin color, tattooing, ornaments, and language. These stereotypes must have some basis in reality, but rarely reflect reality accurately.

When tied to power relations, these features are also often derogatory and subordinating, like the Egyptian assertion that Kush must always be "wretched." In ancient Chinese sources, ethnic groups were distinguished through dress and hairstyles, and sometimes ridiculed for them. Northern Chinese were referred to as *tiu*, a derogatory reference to the heavy beard that characterized their ethnic stereotype. The Dia people of Yunan still refer to the Han as *tiu* today (Wang Ningsheng 1994). If there is no immediate threat, then the ethnic "other" is described as benignly inferior, for example simple and primitive. If the context is threatening, then the subordinate group is described as cunning and animal-like (Royce 1982), which is normally the case in the state ideologies of Egypt and the Near East (Liverani 1990; Loprieno 1988). On the other hand, if a subordinate group cooperates, then it is possible to see positive stereotypes. Ethnic identities were expressed in ancient Egypt through both textual and artistic sources, for which it is important to adopt a source-critical approach (Redford 1979, and the extended discussion below, Chapter 7; Fitzpatrick 1996).

Egyptian royal ideology portrayed Egyptians as civilized superiors to their barbaric foreign counterparts. Foreigners were differentiated artistically through skin color and dress, and in literature through speech and character. This resonates with the essentialist view of ethnicity, where primordial, ultimately genetic, attachments are central to the definition of ethnic groups. Primordial attachments, real or imagined, are also a central feature in most internal definitions of ethnic groups. Remember that

Herodotus' first criterion for the Greek *ethnos* was "the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech … " (Rawlinson 1964:VI.144). These words echo those of Akhenaton a thousand years before when he defined the different "peoples" by stating: "Their tongues differ in speech … their skins are distinct … " (Lichtheim 1976: 131–2). The theme itself goes back even further to passages from the Coffin Texts (*c.* 2134–1786 BC) depicting humans as offspring of the sun god (Yurco 1996).

Differences in phenotype were rendered artistically on a large number of Egyptian monuments, but in the most systematic way, in scenes from tombs of Ramesses III and Seti I (Yurco 1996; Hornung 1990: Figures 107–9; 1991: Pls 58–9) showing the basic divisions of humankind. These depictions separated people into four *ethnoi*, each with stereotypical skin color, coiffure, and dress (Figure 2.2). The Egyptians are simply referred to as "people." They appear with red-brown skin, black shoulder-length hair, a simple white kilt a and small trimmed beard. Only men are represented in the androcentric world of the Pharaohs who commissioned this work and the scribes and craftsmen who undertook it. Asiatics (specifically Syro-Palestinians) appear with yellow skin, a black bobbed hairstyle with a headband tied at the back, elaborately decorated kilts, and ample beards and mustaches. Nubians are shown with black skin, broad flat noses, short hair in trimmed ringlets, hoop earrings, and decorated leather sashes over white Egyptian-style kilts. Finally Libyans appear with the lightest complexion, geometric tattoos, braided/ringletted hair with side-locks and two ostrich feathers, and wearing a loincloth under a long leather cloak showing the natural patterns of the cow's fur.

Although these ideologically charged stereotypes approached modern racism in the context of state dogma, on a practical level the Egyptians did not engage in the kind of racial prejudice seen in modern times. Modern racism largely revolves around differences in skin color. In particular, dark skin color was (and with some groups unfortunately still is) a sign of inferiority, regardless of individual achievement and sophistication. Miscegenation, or racial intermarriage, was considered immoral. At its worst, skin color distinguished between slaves and free people in the American South. In contrast, the ancient Egyptians, and indeed ancient Mediterranean peoples in general, did not make skin color a definitive criterion for racial discrimination (Snowden 1983). Slavery was not connected to race or even class. Royce (1982) notes that ethnic definitions stressing phenotype can inhibit the ability of individuals to cross ethnic boundaries, but the separation of language and culture (costume, hair style, etc.) from biological phenotype (skin color, facial features), in social practice if not ideology, meant that foreigners could cross ethnic boundaries.

For example, Nubians like soldier and royal confidant Mahirper achieved high position in Egyptian society so long as they assimilated to Egyptian cultural norms. Mahirper was raised at the Egyptian court with the future Pharaoh, and so may have been the son of a Nubian prince. He held the important military title "Fanbearer to the Right of the King." He was buried in the Valley of the Kings, a privilege reserved only for kings and their immediate relatives. The burial itself was quite lavish, with, among other things, high-quality coffins and expensive jewelry, reflecting Mahirper's wealth and position (Daressy 1902; Reeves and Wilkinson 1996; Smith 1992). In his *Book of the Dead*, he appears in every way Egyptian, except for his skin color and facial features (phenotype), which fit the Nubian stereotype (Figure 2.3). In a similar way,

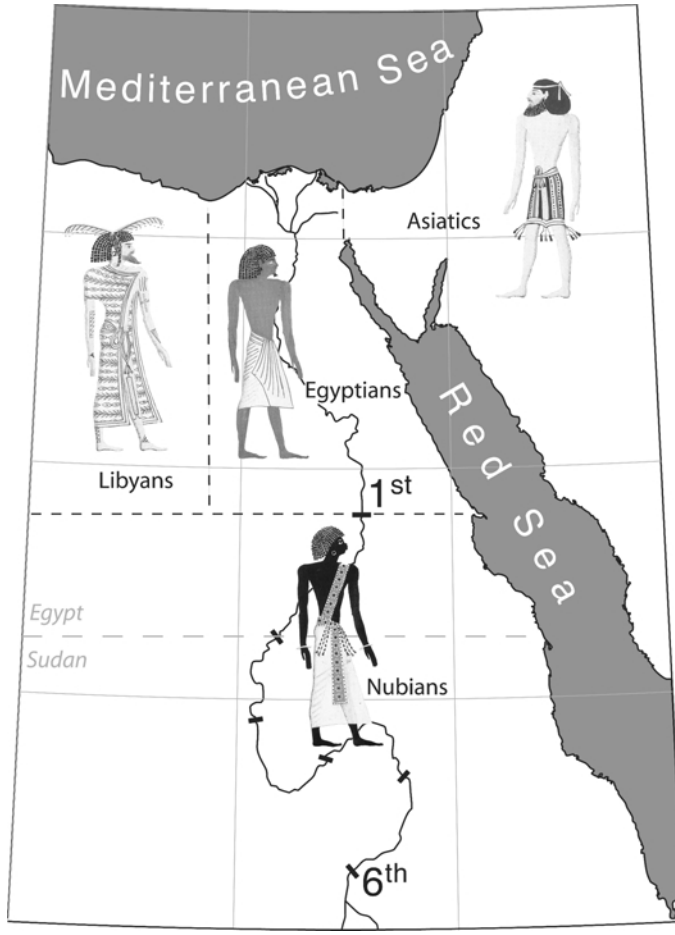


Figure 2.2 Map showing the four "races" from the Tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings (the ethnic stereotypes after Rossellini 1832–44: Pls CLV and CLVI).

Nubian mercenaries who settled in Egypt during the First Intermediate Period (*c.* 2150–2050 BC) were depicted on Egyptian funerary stelae in Egyptian dress with their Egyptian wives, but with Nubian physiognomy (Loprieno 1988; Fischer 1961). Foreigners could attain the highest offices in the land. A man of Asiatic ancestry named Aper-El achieved the title Vizier, the highest office in the land. His tomb and the shattered remains of his burial reflect his wealth and power (Zivie 1990).

Nubians, Asiatics, and other peoples married freely with Egyptians, and slaves were sometimes adopted into Egyptian families, at least among the elite. Asiatic gods and goddesses even found a place in the Egyptian pantheon (Redford 1992). It was the *cultural* identity of immigrants to Egypt that mattered to their success in Egyptian society,



Figure 2.3 The Royal Fanbearer Mahirper from his copy of the *Book of the Dead* (*c.* 1350 BC, Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

not their skin color or ancestry. Even when foreigners remained culturally foreign, more prosaic sources allowed that foreigners could act in positive ways and be incorporated into the civilized sphere. The ancient Egyptian construction of ethnic identities thus reflects cultural chauvinism more than racism. Antonio Loprieno's (1988) distinction between *topos* and *mimesis* in literature provides a means for understanding the complexity of the Egyptian view of different ethnic groups. *Topos* represents an idealized view of the world, which serves a rhetorical, not necessarily a literal, end. *Mimesis* reflects the reality of daily experience, if ultimately filtered through the perceptions of the Egyptian elite.

The foreigner *topos*

Literary themes in the foreigner *topos* characterize foreigners as barbaric and cowardly, and, in their most extreme expression, treat foreigners as animals (Loprieno 1988). Liverani (1990) notes that the *topos* of foreigners in Egyptian and contemporary ancient Near Eastern civilizations considered the inner core surrounded by inferior people ripe for conquest, but nonetheless posing a serious threat through their barbaric behavior and potentially overwhelming numbers.

Their efforts are foredoomed to failure, however, since they are qualitatively inferior. In a military context, foreigners were cowards, instantly defeated by the king, often without a fight, as seen in the boundary stela of Senwosret III (*c.* 1850 BC) set up at Semna just south of the second cataract (quoted at the beginning of the first chapter). Nubians are "wretched" and so cowardly that they run away when confronted. The *Instruction for King Merikare* takes a similar tone for peoples in the north (Lichtheim 1973: 103–4):

> Lo the miserable Asiatic,
> He is wretched because of the place he's in:
> Short of water, bare of wood,
> Its paths are many and painful because of mountains.
> He does not dwell in one place,
> Food propels his legs,
> He fights since the time of Horus,
> Not conquering nor being conquered,
> He does not announce the day of combat,
> Like a thief who darts about a group …

Asiatics are both cowardly and pitiful, leading a marginal existence, constantly fighting but with nothing ever settled. They are also sly and ultimately treacherous, attacking without warning. This passage characterizes Asiatics as both primitive and threatening, consistent with Royce's observations on the creation of negative stereotypes in situations of competition and dominance. In this case, the passage reflects Egypt's combination of colonial domination and outright military conflict. This textual portrait is paralleled by representations of foreigners defeated in battle from the exterior areas of temples (Figure 2.4). These scenes inevitably show Egypt's ethnic enemies as a disorganized mob, often outnumbering the Egyptians, but inevitably failing against the might of Pharaoh and his army.

In a similar vein, the foreigner *topos* compares foreigners with animals. Commenting on the theme of the threatening, cunning foreigner with the foreigner as animal, Merikare goes on (Lichtheim 1976: 103–4):

> The Asiatic is a crocodile on its shore,
> It snatches from a lonely road,
> It cannot seize from a populous town.

Along the same lines, the *Prophecy of Neferti* (*c.* 1950 BC) portrays Asiatic immigrants as a flock of rapacious birds descending on Egypt, taking advantage of the civil wars of the First Intermediate Period (*c.* 2150–2050 BC) to infiltrate parts of the rich Egyptian delta (Lichtheim 1973: 141):

> A strange bird will breed in the delta marsh,
> Having made its nest beside the people



Figure 2.4 Chaos in battle. A *topical* Asiatic falls from the battlements of a fortress under siege (*c.* 1325 BC, Brooklyn Museum 77.130, Wilbour Fund)).

> The people letting it approach by default.
> Then perish those delightful things,
> The fishponds full of fish-eaters,
> Teeming with fish and fowl.
> All happiness has vanished,
> The land is bowed down in distress,
> Owing to those feeders,
> Asiatics who roam the land.
> Foes have risen in the East,
> Asiatics have come down into Egypt.

Not only were foreigners wretched cowards, they were not people at all. A decorated box from the tomb of Tutankhamen shows the king in his chariot, larger than life, defeating Nubians and Asiatics on either side as easily as he hunts animals in the desert, depicted on the top (Gardiner 1962). The king wears the same regalia, including the blue battle crown, in both animal and battle scenes. In each case, dogs assist the king and a similar range of military officials supports him. Tutankhamen's epithets in both the battle and hunt speak of him shining or blazing like the sun, Re.

Texts playing on similar themes go beyond the metaphor of foreigner as cunning animal, introducing the theme of the foreigner as primitive, like a beast. Like the *Prophecy of Neferti*, the *Admonitions of Ipuwer* portrays the social disorder that marked the chaotic First Intermediate Period. Everything in Egypt is topsy-turvy, the poor man is rich, the master serves the servant, and "foreigners have become people everywhere. Lo … there are no people anywhere … " (Lichtheim 1973: 151–2). At the end of the New Kingdom *Instruction of Ani*, the student complains that nobody could possibly learn everything that his teachers have set out for him. Ani replies that (Lichtheim 1976: 144, emphasis added):

> There's nothing [superfluous in] our words,
> Which you say should be reduced.
> The fighting bull who kills in the stable,
> He forgets and abandons the arena;
> He conquers his nature,
> Remembers what he's learned …
> The monkey carries the stick,
> Though its mother did not carry it.
> The goose returns from the pond,
> When one comes to shut it in the yard.
> *One teaches the Nubian to speak Egyptian,*
> *The Syrian and other strangers too.*
> *Say: "I shall do like all the beasts,"*
> *Listen and learn what they do.*

Along similar lines, another teacher tries to shame his student into a harder effort by saying, "The ape understands words, yet is brought from Kush." The teacher implies that the ape's difficulty in learning Egyptian words comes not from being an animal, but from being Nubian. In other words, the language of Nubians was unintelligible, like the jabbering of baboons (Liverani 1990: 38). The ancient Egyptian description of foreigners as animals reflects an extreme manifestation of ethnicity's "complementary assertion of the collective self and the negation of the collective other" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 53). In a similar way, apartheid-era mine managers in South Africa viewed their Kavango and Ovambo workers as animals (Gordon 1978). Sarwa (bushmen) were seen by nineteenth-century Tswana as *phologolo*, "wild beasts." The Tswana themselves were called *skepsels*, "creatures," by Afrikaner settlers (Comaroff 1978; Crapanzano 1985). These characterizations represent a fundamental quality of ethnic identity in contexts of dominance and resistance, and are adopted by both dominant and subordinate. Thus the Kavango and Ovambo referred to their European overseers as barbarians (Gordon 1978), and the Tswana retaliated against the Afrikaners by calling them *makgoa*, "white bush lice" (Comaroff 1978; Crapanzano 1985). Unfortunately, we do not know what the Nubians called their Egyptian overlords.

The foreigner *mimesis*

The construction of ethnic "others" need not embody negative qualities in every context. Just as self-ascription of ethnic identity is not essential but situational, other ascription varies depending on social context. For ancient Egypt, Loprieno (1988) argues that a more realistic portrayal occurs in texts reflecting a foreigner *mimesis*. Foreigners are treated as individuals, not a stereotype. They are identified by name. They can be incorporated into the Egyptian cultural framework, especially if they can speak Egyptian like a "real" person. The fact that they are foreigners does not preclude the possibility that they can act in a positive way. This contrasts with the foreigner *topos,* where foreignness is a negative category in a dualistic opposition to Egyptian-ness. In texts reflecting *mimesis*, interactions with foreigners can occur on a very intimate level. For example, in the New Kingdom *Tale of the Doomed Prince*, the royal protagonist travels into Syria where he marries an Asiatic princess who saves his life (Lichtheim 1976). Outside of the ideologically charged foreigner *topos*, foreign influences and even deities were tolerated within Egyptian society. For example, despite state ideological representations of Asiatics as uncivilized enemies, Levantine mythical and literary motifs, loanwords, and deities such as Ba'al, Astarte, and Reshep had all entered into the Egyptian cultural sphere by the New Kingdom. The royal harem was also filled with wives from outside of Egypt, some of whom may have wielded great influence (Redford 1992). Although no indisputably Nubian deities appear in Egypt, elite military dress and accoutrements, including leather kilts and hairstyles, were borrowed from Nubia (Brovarski et al. 1982: 175–6).

In the *Story of Sinuhe*, the protagonist is befriended by a number of Asiatics. Sinuhe was a court official who fled Egypt upon the assassination of King Amenemhet I (*c.* 2000 BC) to live in northern Palestine/Lebanon. The story was written in the Middle Kingdom not long after the events it portrays, and may have been based upon real events. The classic tale of adventure and redemption clearly touched the Egyptian psyche, becoming a popular "classic" much used in scribal schools through the New Kingdom. In one passage, Sinuhe brags about his service to Ammunenshe, the ruler of Upper Retenu, which was probably located in northern Palestine:

> When Asiatics conspired to attack the Rulers of Hill-Countries, I opposed their movements. For this ruler of Retenu made me carry out numerous missions as commander of his troops … I won his heart and he loved me, for he recognized my valor. He set me at the head of his children, for he saw the strength of my arms.
>
> (Lichtheim 1973: 227)

When a champion comes to challenge Sinuhe, he recognizes that his position is unusual, and that as a stranger he is regarded as inferior to local princes, a concept entirely foreign to the state *topos*:

> I am indeed like a stray bull in a strange herd, whom the bull of the herd charges, whom the longhorn attacks. Is an inferior beloved when he becomes a superior?

> No Asiatic makes friends with a Delta-man. And what would make papyrus [Egypt] cleave to that mountain?
>
> (ibid.)

As this passage indicates, the foreigner *mimesis* still draws distinctions between Egyptian and foreigner. This passage reflects the perception of the Egyptian author that ethnicity exists in a self–other opposition. Even more remarkably, the author also recognizes that ideas of ethnic superiority and inferiority are perceived differently by different cultures. Sinuhe's rivals treat him as an inferior because he is Egyptian, forcing him to prove himself.

Upon his return, Sinuhe extols the superiority of Egyptian ethnic identity and the luxuries that accompany his high status in Egypt as opposed to his barbaric existence among the Asiatic elite:

> I was put in the house of a prince. In it were luxuries: a bathroom and mirrors. In it were riches from the treasury; clothes of royal linen, myrrh, and the choice perfume of the king and of his favorite courtiers were in every room. Every servant was at his task. Years were removed from my body. I was shaved; my hair was combed. Thus was my squalor returned to the foreign land, my dress to the Sand-farers. I was clothed in fine linen; I was anointed with fine oil. I slept on a bed. I had returned the sand to those who dwell in it, the tree-oil to those who grease themselves with it.
>
> (ibid.: 233)

In line with anthropological studies of ethnicity, both the *topical* and *mimetical* ethnic categories were founded on the notion of difference. Furthermore, the characterization of ethnic groups was situational, varying considerably from *topos* to *mimesis,* between the contexts of state ideology and elite sensibility reflecting the day-to-day interactions of Egyptians with people from other groups. The ideological *topos* created highly oppositional categories of Egyptian and foreigners, describing the latter with such negative characteristics that they were hardly people at all. Elite popular culture was more charitable, but still presented contrasting pictures of Egyptians and foreigners. These contextual differences reflect the highly cosmopolitan character of Egyptian society. Foreign influences surrounded Egyptians in their everyday life, including foreign-produced and -influenced material culture and the worship of foreign gods and goddesses. Egyptians, Asiatics, Libyans, and Nubians mixed in dynamic economic, political, and social settings.

Chapter 3

Ethnicity and archaeology

> Most historians, it seems, continue to view the artifact as only an illustrative adjunct. Perhaps when the elite is studied, this is not an unintelligent course of research … but for most people … the procedure must be reversed … . When we have learned to read the silent artifact, history will not be an easier pursuit. But if artifacts … can be read, then history will become a philosophically more plausible pursuit. Any artifact that can be provided with association in space and time, either by being accompanied by a document or better … by being set into the land, is a valuable source of a great quantity of information.
>
> Henry Glassie (1975: 12)

For the great mass of the ancient Egyptian and Nubian populations, artifacts are the only way of establishing ethnic identity. But what can archaeology, which deals after all in objects not thoughts, contribute to an understanding of ethnic identity? Some argue that such an attempt is futile (e.g. Bursche 1996; Hines 1996). Historical records do help inform most studies of ancient ethnicity, and make up a substantial part of this one. Yet the problem of elite bias lingers and requires a heavy reliance on archaeology in order to achieve any real reconstruction of ancient ethnicity (see below Chapter 7). Archaeology provides an important independent line of evidence that can both act as a check on and transcend historical data. Kemp (1984) pessimistically argues that archaeology can never hope to match the insights into individuals that texts give us. He juxtaposes the rather meager remains from the workmen's village at Tell el-Amarna with the rich textual record from its later incarnation at Thebes. To some extent Kemp sets up a straw man, since the historical record from Deir el-Medineh is extraordinary. The combination of a very high degree of literacy and excellent preservation from its location in the desert produced an unusually extensive amount of written material from personal and private archives, the historical equivalent of Pompeii in archaeological terms. Additionally, Amarna is by no means the richest site in Egypt in terms of well contexted material culture, since the city was occupied for such a short period of time and systematically abandoned as the official capital shifted back to Thebes.

As a result, Kemp's view underestimates the value of archaeological evidence. The search for individual action on a broader level through archaeology is by no means hopeless (Blake 1999). We *can* get at individuals through archaeology. Objects in context often reflect individual action without the ideological and personal filters inherent in the textual record. Archaeology reflects both elites and the rest of society, reaching further down the social ladder than is possible with texts alone. Kemp (1989) ultimately acknowledges this through the importance archaeology plays in his major analysis of Egyptian cultural dynamics, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization.* He uses archaeology extensively to address questions that the historical record alone is ill-equipped to answer. Archaeology has its limitations, but we need not agree with Hines (1996) that ethnicity is essentially ideological, and therefore cannot exist outside of writing. Written documents can supply a direct statement of ethnic identity. Material culture, however, also plays a critical role in the creation and assertion of ethnic identity. In spite of the self-referential and situational nature of ethnic identities, ancient ethnicity can be examined archaeologically through a careful contextual approach (Yoffee and Kamp 1980; Aldenderfer and Stanish 1993; Meskell 2001; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; McGuire 1982; Jones 1997; Emberling 1997; Santley et al. 1987; Hall 1997). On the face of it, objects seem more difficult to interpret than the textual record but as, Glassie points out, the challenge is rewarding and necessary given the limitations of historical and art historical sources (see Chapter 7, below).

Archaeological studies of ethnicity began with focuses on establishing the nature of migrations across Europe and the ancient Middle East (e.g. Childe 1936; discussion in Hall 1997: 114–28), and providing linkages between the past groups and the cultural identity of living peoples (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996). The latter focus has had a particularly checkered past. In particular, Nazi scholarship developed the nationalist ideas of Kossina (1911) into an ethnic and racial ideology legitimizing German expansionism and the Holocaust (Arnold 1990; Härke 1991; Veit 1994). In a more recent and benign example, some scholars and politicians argue that the Celts provide a common pan-Celtic ethnic foundation for the European Union (Díaz-Andreau 1996; Dietler 1994). The one-to-one correspondence of peoples and archaeological cultures has at best proven problematical. It is important to remember that material culture does not always correlate with ethnicity. For example, the Middle Assyrian colonies (*c.* 1850 BC) placed as enclaves within eastern Anatolian cities are unidentifiable archaeologically (Larsen 1987). The only reason that we know that they were Assyrian is through the correspondence that they left behind. On the other hand, the proto-historical Uruk colonies founded around 3500 BC with similar goals were identified almost entirely through archaeological evidence (Stein 1999).

Because of this inconsistency in the correlation of material culture and ethnicity, Hines (1996) implies that ethnicity cannot even exist, let alone be reconstructed, without writing. Hines and others see the difficulty as not lying with the investigator's conception of ethnicity, but rather with inadequacies in the level of archaeological visibility. Even when differences in material culture are established, it is difficult to determine which cultural features were used to establish ethnic identities. Hines argues that the widespread adoption of Roman features, cross-cutting regions and

social classes, negates the possibility that any material category was used in the construction of ethnic identity. Thus Pictish round huts and similar cultural features were not an assertive expression of identity, even though they contrast with Roman styles of architecture. Instead, ethnic identity was defined through art and language, in contrast to Roman-ness. Since the creation of Pictish identity was keyed to Roman identity, it was in a sense the creation of Romans. Basically Hines argues that if ethnic identity is expressed through material culture, then the material correlates to ethnic identity should be exclusive and bounded geographically. Since they are not, ethnic identity must exist within a non-material realm.

This assumption proceeds from the view that ethnic groups are somehow real and bounded. In the past, archaeological expectations were founded on this essentialist understanding of ethnic identity (Jones 1997: 113). However, if, as the instrumentalists argue, ethnicity is situational and contingent, then the cultural content of ethnicity may vary both qualitatively and quantitatively in different contexts, as may the importance of ethnicity in general (Jones 1996: 70; Eriksen 1992). There could potentially be a considerable degree of variability in the archaeological correlates expressing ethnic identity, even within a putative ethnic group (Hall 1997: 135). But how can we go from pots and other artifacts to individual identities? How can we distinguish superficial trade from deeper cultural interactions and transformations within Egyptian colonial communities? This is a thorny problem in archaeology – getting from pots to people. One difficulty lies in establishing that different patterns of material culture really correlate with distinct ethnic or even cultural groups. The production of ethnic identities does not lie in the acceptance of universal abstract categories, but is engendered through the intersection of dispositions of social agents and the interests and oppositions created in a particular social situation (Jones 1996). Thus archaeologically we would expect to see a complex pattern of overlapping material culture distributions rather than discrete monolithic entities (Hodder 1982a; Wiessner 1983). In this case, the historical, social, and archaeological context of the artifacts is critical to any understanding of how they might function as an expression of ethnic identity. In this chapter, I consider the problem of defining and delineating ethnicity through archaeology, in particular examining the role of funerary practice, ceramics, and foodways in the construction of ethnic identity within a colonial context. These ideas will then be applied in case studies using evidence from the Egyptian fortress of Askut in Lower Nubia, and the colonial cemetery at Tombos in Upper Nubia, in Chapters 5 and 6.

FINDING ETHNICITY IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

> Think about the day when the Tribute is sent, and you are brought into the presence [of the king] under the window [of appearances], the Nobles to either side in front of his Majesty, the Princes and the Envoys of every foreign land standing, looking at the Tribute … Tall Terek-people in their leather [?] garments, with

> fans of gold, high, feathered [?] hairstyles, and their jewelry of ivory, and numerous Nubians of all kinds.
>
> Paser, Viceroy of Kush, *c.* 1250 BC, to a Nubian prince (Gardiner 1937: 118–20)

The correlation of artifacts with specific groups has been a central problem in studies of ancient ethnic identity and contact situations in general. Archaeologists have recognized but largely failed to come to grips with the difficulty of moving from objects to peoples. This was especially true of early attempts like that of V. Gordon Childe (1936), who used restricted artifact types as "fossil" indicators of ethnic identity in Europe without any serious consideration of how objects and identity were linked (Hides 1996). The appearance of a shared artifact form may represent a shared cultural identity. Both the Middle Kingdom *Story of Sinuhe* (above) and the more prosaic New Kingdom school exercise attributed to Paser, the Viceroy of Kush, explicitly recognized dress, adornment, and accoutrements as markers of ethnic identity for Asiatics and Nubians respectively. Before we as archaeologists can reach a similar conclusion, we must consider how the artifact is situated within different groups. For example, Bursche (1996) argues that similarities in elements of material culture among the Wielbark, Westbalts, and Przeworsk cultures of second- and third-century AD Europe reflect a common economic interest stimulated by Roman trade, not a common cultural heritage as has been asserted. On the other hand, Bunimovitz and Faust (2001) argue persuasively that the Philistines used a distinctive monochrome decorated pottery as an ethnic marker in the context of their strained and competitive relations with Egyptians and Canaanites in early Iron Age Palestine.

As we saw in Chapter 2, ethnic identities are dynamic and multi-faceted, constantly changing at different times and contexts, and subject to individual choice (Royce 1982: 45–9). There is an emerging consensus that ethnic identities are not absolute and bounded, but rather self-defined, situational and overlapping (Jones 1996, 1997; Royce 1982; Barth 1969a; Driessen 1992). If ethnicity is by nature multi-dimensional and fluid, one would not expect to find neatly bounded archaeological assemblages corresponding to ethnic groups. In this case, the examination of large-scale patterns of material culture and architecture would be insufficient to characterize ethnic identity in most situations. The archaeological record embodies this dynamic, and any artifact can have meaning as part of the process of changing identities. Thus how an object was used can be more important than the object itself, especially since the meanings of imported and even imitated goods are often adapted to a new cultural setting rather than adopted wholesale (Smith 1998; variously in Cusick 1998; Graves-Brown 1996; Higginbotham 2000). Traits and forms must be placed in context. The challenge is to identify which objects express the differences inherent in ethnic identities within a particular historical context.

In our case, we must first establish whether Nubian and Egyptian material culture is distinctive enough to distinguish cultural features that might mark ethnic identity. Fortunately, Nubian sacred and secular architecture, burial practice, iconography, and material culture form a distinctive assemblage that is often quite different from



Figure 3.1 An Egyptian bowl and a Nubian beaker sherd from Askut.

that of Egypt (Williams 1991; Säve-Söderbergh 1989; Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991; Reisner 1923; Bonnet 1988, 1990; Smith 1992, 1995,1996). Both Egyptian and Nubian domestic architecture employs mud brick, although in some areas, including Hannek opposite Tombos, Nubians employed undressed stone. Initially, Nubian architecture relied on circular forms, but influence from Egypt led to the widespread use of rectilinear layouts. Even so, Egyptian house and temple plans vary from Nubian. This is dramatically illustrated by a comparison of the Deffufa at Kerma with a contemporary Egyptian temple (O'Connor 1993). Although the technique of large-scale mud-brick construction was borrowed from Egypt, the solid core and non-axial entrances are completely different from Egyptian temple layout.

Some categories of artifact present dramatic contrasts. This is especially true of ceramic traditions (Figure 3.1). Egyptian pottery was mass-produced on the wheel and fired in large industrial-sized kilns. The ceramic industry was utilitarian in character with only the occasional appearance of simple painted and incised motifs. Contemporary Nubian pottery includes hand-made, labor-intensive, high-quality blacktopped red polished wares. Elaborate incised and impressed decoration is found even on otherwise utilitarian pots (Bourriau 1981; Gratien 1978; Bonnet 1990). Throughout the Egyptian pre-dynastic and Nubian Neolithic, ceramics were elaborately decorated and used to create and reinforce status differences through display during feasting and at burial. Shortly after the official unification of the Egyptian state around 3000 BC, however, the decoration of Egyptian pottery simplifies, and pottery was replaced as a marker of status by vessels made of metal and stone (Bourriau 1981). In contrast, Nubian ceramics continued to play a central role in elite display within the Kerma civilization. The high degree of skill needed to produce their distinctive thin blacktopped wares meant that each pot was invested with a large amount of

energy and therefore value. The presence of large quantities of this pottery in royal and elite graves at Kerma reflects this ware's importance within Nubian society (Reisner 1923). This contrasts with the largely utilitarian appearance of Egyptian ceramics, although there are a few exceptions to this rule. Simple decoration would have provided some opportunity for display during feasting, but perhaps more as a marker of Egyptian-ness than of status. Egyptian pottery became somewhat more elaborate during the New Kingdom, with some simple polished finishes and monochrome or bichrome decoration. Blue painted ware was produced in royal workshops and thus served as a marker of status. This distinctive decorative style included both appliqué and lively painted designs. This type of pottery is, however, very rare in Nubia and indeed outside of the major royal centers in Egypt (Hope 1982).

Several studies note that the Egyptian colonists in Nubia forged a society much like that of Egypt itself (Adams 1984; Kemp 1978; Trigger 1976; Higginbotham 2000). If one simply counts gross percentages of artifacts, the character of these colonial sites is overwhelmingly Egyptian, and remains so through to the end of the New Kingdom. The ubiquitous presence of Nubian pottery and other artifacts, however, raises the problem of defining and delineating archaeological cultures. If the material assemblage is 90 percent Egyptian, does that mean that the people *were* Egyptian? At what percentage would they become something else? Both Rogers (1990) and Farnsworth (1992) caution against the use of simple percentages of indigenous vs. imperial material culture as an index of interaction and cultural transformation. Their "artifact processes" and "acculturation profile" respectively focus upon the way in which imported objects and practices are integrated into an existing culture in an Anglo-American and Spanish colonial situation. The maintenance of traditional forms and the simple replacement of local by imported objects serving a similar function indicate cultural continuity. The addition of material culture and/or practices that represent completely new cultural elements and the cultural transformation of new and/or old features would indicate a significant redefinition of economic, social, and/or symbolic relations as a result of contact. A careful contextualization of the archaeological record is necessary to reach any understanding of the complexity and nuances inherent in constructions of ethnic identity.

For Rogers, social context is critical to relating artifact distributions to the cultural dynamics of contact. Simple trait lists or distributions do not take social relevance into account. Artifacts are not randomly distributed, but occur in the archaeological record with meaningful associations. He examines Anglo-American influences on Arikara artifact assemblages through a careful consideration of historical context by correlating each major contact phase with changes in material culture. He establishes the social and cultural relevance of these changes through the separation of Arikara material culture into three assemblages: domestic, ceremonial, and mortuary. He then correlates these contextual situations with a consideration of whether material categories stayed the same (maintenance); added new classes of object (addition); substituted old with new objects serving the same function (replacement, for example the substitution of European metal for native stone tools), equivalent to Spicer's (1962) incorporative integration; deliberately rejected the introduction of items (rejection); or transformed a

cultural assemblage with the elimination of some native categories and the introduction of functionally non-equivalent imported categories in a new social context (transformation). Maintenance, replacement, and rejection all indicate the preservation of cultural integrity in a contact situation. Replacement allows for a greater potential for change, destabilizing the material component of social action by reifying cultural values and categories with the replacement of native objects by foreign exotica. Addition and especially transformation reflect fundamental influence from outside contact. The introduction of new categories of artifacts may cause rapid social change.

Farnsworth adopts a similar approach with his "acculturation profile." He assesses the degree and nature of artifact assemblage change by examining whether an artifact is new or traditional, is made of local or imported materials and technologies, and represents a new or traditional cultural element. Farnsworth generates a series of ten possible outcomes from these variables, ranging from completely new artifact types, like buttons, wine bottles, and earthenware plates, to traditional forms completely unmodified by contact, like stone tools, bone awls and manos, and metates. The other categories reflect a combination of traditional and introduced influences. For example, baskets incorporating Spanish designs represent a traditional artifact form, material, and technique, but with a new element that changed their social meaning. This system provides a more nuanced assessment of cultural change than Rogers' five categories, but without his explicit focus on different social contexts (domestic, ritual, funeral), to some extent a result of differences in their respective datasets.

As noted above, the difficulty of identifying ethnicity archaeologically is often assumed to relate to limitations inherent in the archaeological record, for example material culture boundaries blurring through trade and imitation (Allaire 1987). Kamp and Yoffee (1980) argue, however, that the failure of archaeological trait-list approaches to identify ethnic groups is entirely predictable. In modern Western Asia, ethnic groups are rarely bounded and different ethnic groups sometimes live in the same village. Instead, archaeologists should focus on recovering evidence of particular behaviors, not overall similarities. Santley *et al.* (1987) demonstrate that ethnicity *can* be identified through archaeology, particularly in the case of ethnic enclaves. In their discussion of a Teotihuacan enclave at Matacapan, they note that ethnography establishes that ethnic identity in enclaves is expressed through ritual, dress, language, and culinary practices. No single material correlate, no matter how abundantly represented, unambiguously reflects ethnic group affiliation. Evidence must exist in all categories. They separate the archaeological evidence for ethnic identity into two larger contexts, household and supra-household. At the community-wide level, archaeological correlates of ethnicity should be manifested in religious architecture associated with a ritual–ceremonial assemblage. Ethnic identity figures prominently in funerary architecture and practice at both the individual and enclave-wide levels. In this case, identity extends into the afterlife through the proper burial of the deceased reflected in tomb architecture, burial position, and grave goods. Shared religious activity from their place of origin both expressed boundaries between the colonists and natives and promoted within-group social solidarity. Households should also show distinctive ritual installations and assemblages, particularly those connected with an ancestor cult if one exists within the originating culture.

DEATH AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

> You shall not die in a foreign land, interred by Asiatics! You shall not be wrapped in the skin of a ram to serve as your coffin … Think of your corpse, come back!
>
> Pharaoh Senwosret I to Sinuhe, *c.* 1950 BC(Lichtheim 1973: 230; Simpson 1972: 68)

Death represents a profound crisis and both a spiritual and social transition (Morris 1987; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Meskell 1994). Radcliffe-Brown (1922) characterized funerary ceremonies as an affirmation of the social order in the face of disorder. Funerals allow for the reintegration of mourners into society through a restatement of the social structure and the relationships of the living to the dead (Morris 1987: 32). But funerals also allow for the renegotiation of social identities, providing the opportunity for the reinterpretation of relationships between individuals in a redefinition of the role of the dead constructed through funerary rites (Hodder 1982a). The ancient Egyptians recognized the connection between death and the social order through the importance of preparations for the afterlife. Egyptian death rites had a strong public character, including funerary banquets and processions displaying grave goods (Figure 3.2). Decorated tombs continued in use after the funeral as a setting for a continuing ancestor cult, with Ka-priests, ideally a son or male relative, sustaining the dead through the performance of ritual libations and food offerings (Figure 3.3). Tombs also often became family crypts and so were a focus of ritual activity, both during the life of the owner and potentially for generations after their death. The wealth and cultural cues embodied in funerary monuments and grave goods did not simply reflect the social position of the deceased, but offered an opportunity for redefining and negotiating social roles and identities, including ethnicity.

O'Shea (1984: 286–301) argues that ethnic differentiation is not an important factor in mortuary symbolism. Analyzing three adjacent Native American groups, he found more similarities than differences between them, so he concludes that mortuary practice crosscut ethnic divisions. A similar pattern can be seen in the adoption of the distinctive mortuary practices of Christianity across ethnic and national boundaries in Europe. O'Shea is searching for universals, and his conclusions are ultimately colored by essentialist notions of ethnicity. As noted above, the expression of ethnic boundaries is a complex process. No single class of material culture or practice needs correlate with ethnic identity in any particular social or historical context. O'Shea notes that a combination of a common cultural history and adaptation to a similar environment contributed to the similarities between his different groups. Thus it is difficult to determine what, if anything, about mortuary practice expressed ethnic affinities. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that mortuary practice could express a distinctive ethnic identity in other times and places. Another problem with O'Shea's argument is that he relies too heavily on quantification and broad similarities at the expense of qualitative analysis. Morris notes: "the analysis of burial as ritual action yields results in direct proportion to the amount of other types of evidence available to provide a context." To

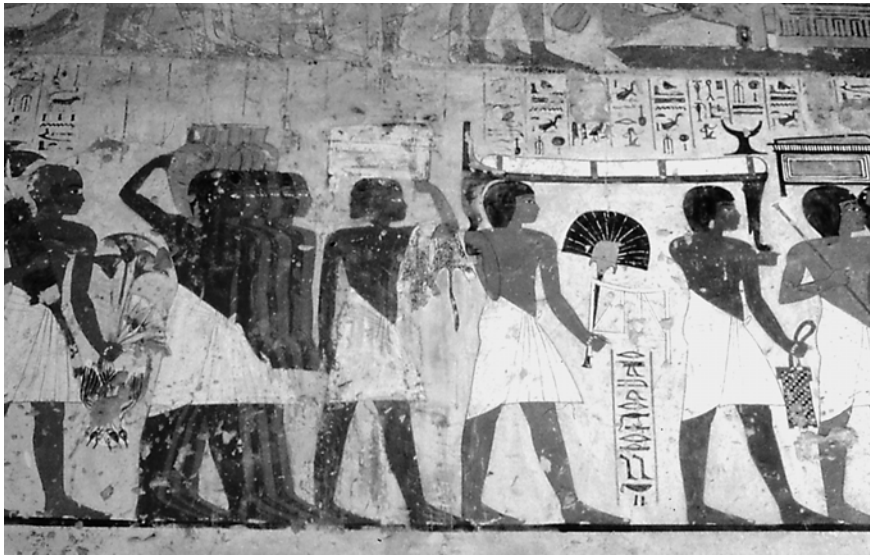


Figure 3.2 Funeral procession of the Vizier Ramose (from his tomb in the Theban necropolis, TT 55, *c.* 1350 BC).

return to O'Shea's example, although the advent of Christianity created substantial changes and a degree of uniformity in European mortuary practices, a carefully contextualized and nuanced examination reveals differences that are tied to the expression of ethnic or cultural affiliations. For example, Metcalf and Huntington note that, in the predominately Christian West, "variation in the form of the death rites between classes within one nation (aside from sheer cost) is less noticeable than variation from country to country. This relative uniformity may indicate that, insofar as the nation is a solidarity community, it needs to share a system of beliefs and practices concerning death" (1991: 206). For ancient Egypt we have a rich body of artistic and textual sources that can provide just such a context for the archaeological evidence.

In contrast to O'Shea's pessimism, many archaeologists studying ethnicity agree that funerals, monuments, and burial practice are a key area for the expression of ethnic identities because they provide a materialization of the primordial ties that form such an important dimension in the construction of ethnicity (Hall 1997). DeCorse (1999: 144–9) stresses the importance of religion reflected in ritual assemblages and especially burial, since they often incorporate material expressions that reflect an individual's worldview. Burial practice relates directly to expressions of ethnic identity since cemeteries establish ancestral ties. In a recent example, cemeteries were targeted alongside mosques and churches as a part of the ethnic cleansing of monuments in the Balkans (Chapman 1994). Santley *et al.* (1987) cite burial practice and ancestor veneration as key cultural elements that reflect ethnic identity. Participation in common rituals enacts an ideological framework that binds a group

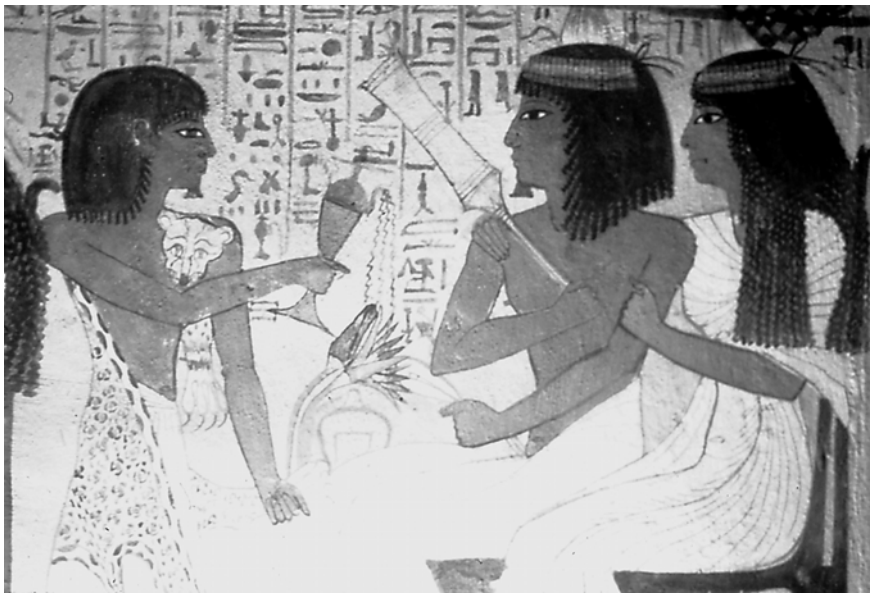


Figure 3.3 A son libates for the souls of Servant in the Place of Truth (Valley of the Kings) Sennedjem and his wife Iyneferti (from their tomb at Deir el-Medineh, TT 1, *c.* 1250 BC).

together. Religious ideology and dogma express both boundaries between groups and promote within-group ascriptive bonds of attachment, whether real or fictive. Monumental religious structures in the style of the homeland, whether tombs or temples, provide a highly visible statement of a place of origin. In his study of early third millennium Mesopotamia, Emberling (1997) sees burial practice as a source of ethnic differentiation through the maintenance of lineage and kin relations. Blake (1999) also cites monumental funerary architecture as a deliberate means of self-definition of ethnic identity for the Bronze Age Nuragic culture of Sardinia. Within a domestic context, ancestor veneration taking place in a household or in community shrines establishes and reinforces constructs of origin and group affiliation (Santley *et al.* 1987). The distinctive dress donned during ceremonies would also reinforce group membership, and burial in a ritually prescribed fashion extends ethnic membership into the afterlife. Senwosret I's appeal to Sinuhe to return home from the Levant explicitly acknowledges death's ethnic dimension. Sinuhe is reintegrated into Egyptian society not only by throwing off his Asiatic garments, but by building a proper tomb and ensuring that the proper rituals will be observed when he dies.

Burial practice provides a fertile ground for an investigation of ethnic identity among the Egyptian communities in Nubia. Although they shared an early history during the Neolithic period, both material culture and social practice diverged with

the formation of the pharaonic state between 3500 and 3000 BC. By the Middle Kingdom, burial practice provides a particularly dramatic feature distinguishing between Egyptian and Nubian cultures. At the same time, the two cultures shared a similar Nilotic environment, limiting O'Shea's concerns about ecological adaptation as an explanation for difference. Conflict over resources, trade, and territory created a competitive environment that should enhance ethnic distinctions. Egyptian and Nubian burial practices present a particularly strong contrast (Williams 1991; Gues 1991; Smith 1992). Egyptian burials were extended and placed in coffins, with rectilinear tomb chapels for the wealthy that in the New Kingdom often included small pyramids. A number of specialized grave goods designed to aid the deceased reflect Egyptian conceptions of the afterlife. In contrast, Nubian bodies were flexed, placed upon beds and/or a cow's skin, and buried under tumuli. These circular mounds were often decorated with white and black stones and, for the wealthy, might be built up using masonry. Animal sacrifices were also often included, a practice absent from Egyptian burials except for joints of meat or the occasional pet. Royal and some elite burials were accompanied by human sacrifice, again a practice that did not occur in Egypt at this period. Both cultures included objects of daily life in their tombs, but these often reflect the different material cultures of each. The position of the deceased (extended or flexed) and the presence or absence of an Egyptian-style coffin distinguishes between Egyptian and Nubian burial practices. Evidence of mummification would also indicate Egyptian practice, but not necessarily the full removal of internal organs, their separate mummification, and placement in Canopic jars, which was associated only with the elite (Smith 1992). Finally, the presence of personal items that might serve as ethnic markers, including items like jewelry (including simple amulets like scarabs), cosmetics, and pottery, would also provide an important indication of cultural affiliation.

One advantage of burial practices is that they are deliberate, allowing for the possibility of directly getting at self-identification through the material remains from funerals. Egyptian funerary beliefs stressed the survival of the identity of the deceased, which was reflected in tomb scenes and grave goods. Tomb scenes that represent the tomb owner at work and at play in this life are often thought to represent a kind of idealized picture of the afterlife, but in reality they were designed more to allow the survival of the name, personality, and identity of the deceased. The actual afterlife was sometimes depicted below the chapel in the underground tomb chambers. There the deceased worshipped and worked for the gods in the idyllic "Fields of Iaru and Hotep (peace)." Objects of daily life placed with the deceased served a similar purpose to that of the chapel scenes, preserving an individual's personality by surrounding the mummy with objects central to its identity in life. Specialized magical aids, like coffins, amulets, and figurines (Figure 3.4), correspond more to scenes from the burial chamber, being designed to aid the deceased in his or her quest for immortality in the company of the gods..

As a result, the material remains of Egyptian funerary practice provide a strong indication of an individual's identity, particularly in the New Kingdom, when objects of daily life formed a central part of the funerary assemblage. Pharaoh entices Sinuhe to



Figure 3.4 An *ushabti* from Tombos (Unit 6, Pit G)

return to Egypt with the promise of a proper ethnically Egyptian burial that restores his ethnic identity:

> Today old age has begun for you … You have thought about the day of burial, the passing over into blessedness. A night will be made for you with ointments and wrappings from the arms of Tayet [the goddess of weaving]. A procession is made for you on the day of burial; the mummy-case is [overlaid] with gold; its head of

> lapis lazuli, and the sky above you as you are placed in the outer coffin, oxen drawing you, preceded by musicians. The dance of the *Muu*-dancers is performed at the door of your tomb, and the offering list invoked for you. They will slaughter at the entrance to your tomb chapel, its pillars set up in limestone as is done for [those of] the royal children.
>
> (Lichtheim 1973: 229–30; Simpson 1972: 67–8)

Senwosret concerns himself with the distinctive rituals and specialized grave goods that characterized an Egyptian burial, most of which have distinct material correlates. Mummification is represented by the preservation of actual mummies. Where the preservation of organics is not good, as is the case at Tombos, skeletons in extended burial with traces of linen provide evidence for the practice. According to Egyptian funerary beliefs, the destruction or decay of the body was a serious threat to survival in the afterlife. Mummification preserved the body so that the soul had an enduring place to reside (Spencer 1982). Coffins would also be evident, with the appropriate decoration and inscriptions, if not in every case with costly gilding and lapis lazuli inlays. Coffins helped preserve and protect the body, and provided a medium for decorations and inscriptions to aid the deceased in his or her journey. The procession itself, including *Muu* dancers, would not leave much material trace, but the slaughtering of offerings, including the provision of a funerary feast, should be evident through hearths, ceramics, and potentially actual remains of food. Funerary processions also involved displaying the personal belongings of the deceased, and the correlation between grave goods and depictions of funeral processions shows that these objects did indeed make it into the grave.

Burial was on one level a highly personal affair, reflecting an identity that the deceased wished to project, at least to the extent that he or she prepared grave goods in advance. Egyptian funerary ideology also provided a formal linkage between the proper performance of funerary rituals, including the provision of grave goods, and inheritance (Figure 3.3). Burial was ultimately the responsibility of family members, serving to renew the social order and allowing them the opportunity to reassert or redefine their position in society. The ancient Egyptians recognized the connection between death and the social order through the importance of preparations for the afterlife, and public performance of funerary rituals that revived the senses of the mummy and displayed the objects that accompanied the deceased into the tomb. For the wealthy these events were lavish, including the provision of professional mourners weeping at appropriate times in the ritual (Figure 3.5). Radcliffe-Brown (1922) studied ritual weeping in the Andaman Islands. He saw choreographed wailing at Andaman funerals as a means of creating sentiments that renewed the bonds of the mourners with the living, recreating the social order through ceremonial customs. Metcalf and Huntington (1991: 44–8) rightly caution against the universal applicability of this model, the product of Radcliffe-Brown's search for a grand theory of persons and society. Still, for our case it applies reasonably well if we acknowledge that such ceremonies operated on a number of levels, and avoid the mechanistic

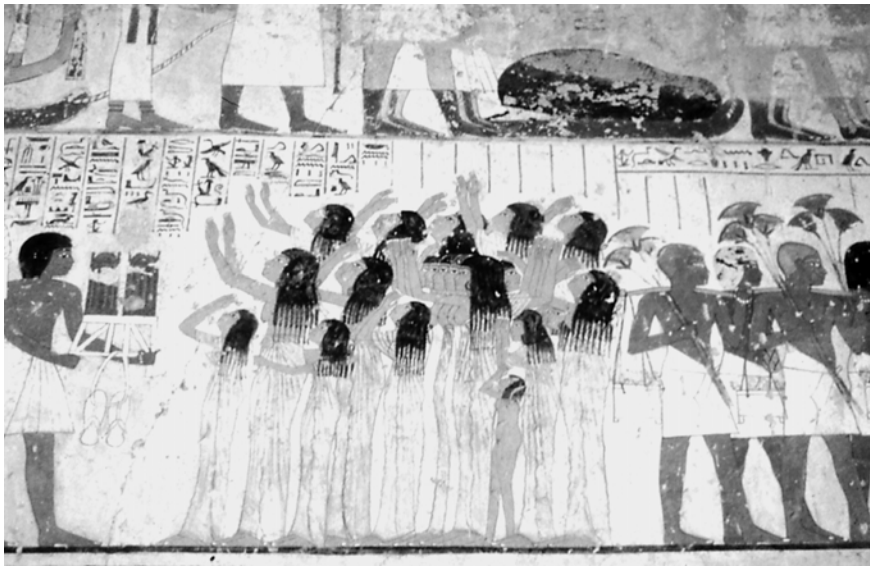


Figure 3.5 Weeping mourners at the Vizier Ramose's funeral (from his tomb in the Theban necropolis, TT 55, *c.* 1350 BC).

implications that ritual simply reinforced social bonding and consensus. Meskell (1998: 366–8) correctly observes that we should not lose sight of the fact that death in ancient Egypt was a very personal response to loss as well as a moment of negotiation. Choices of grave goods and tomb style served both as a commemoration and a means of mediating intra-family relationships. But burial also served as a means for negotiations between individuals and the larger society through architecture, public processions, and ceremonies that extended well beyond the immediate family (Morris 1987; cf. Chapman 1994). As such, funerary practice could serve as an expression both of individual as well as corporate ethnic identities, particularly in a competitive frontier situation, as is the case in Nubia.

FOODWAYS AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

If you are one among guests
At the table of one greater than you,
Take what he gives as it is set before you;
Look at what is before you,
Don't shoot many glances at him …
The great man gives to the chosen man;
Thus eating is under the counsel of god,

> A fool is he who complains of it …
> One man is rich, another is poor,
> But food remains for him (who shares it)
> Ptahhotep to his son, *c.* 2300 BC
> (Lichtheim 1973: 65)

> Writing is more enjoyable than a basket of Bayi and beans …
> Nebmare-nakht to his apprentice Wenemdiamun, *c.* 1150 BC
> (Lichtheim 1976: 169)

Santley *et al.* (1987) also argue that the domestic assemblage should reflect the culture of origin, particularly through culinary preferences and practices (Yoffee and Kamp 1980; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; Burmeister 2000; Bunimovitz and Faust 2001). Meals are communal activities that reaffirm group identity and social structure through the cuisine itself, the symbols placed with it, and dining etiquette (Goody 1982), as the quotes above illustrate for ancient Egypt. In the Middle Kingdom, Ptahhotep emphasizes etiquette, reflecting the social hierarchy and the more egalitarian ideal of reciprocity through generosity in sharing food. Nebmare-nakht simply appeals to Wenemdiamun's preference for a particular delicacy in order to motivate him to study harder. Against this apparent connection between food and social practice, Marvin Harris argues that most food preferences and taboos derive not from cultural considerations, but originate in the costs and benefits of raising and consuming certain animals and plants within different environmental settings. If he is correct, then foodways would not be a particularly good marker of ethnic identity, or at least only to the extent that the two groups came from different environments, which is not the case with Egypt and Nubia. In support of his model, he cites the existence of pig avoidance in four separate ancient civilizations, Israelites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Babylonians, along with a Middle Eastern religion, Islam. He argues:

> If the early Israelites had been alone in their interdictions of pork, I would find it more difficult to choose among alternative explanations of the pig taboo. The recurrence of pig aversions in several different Middle Eastern cultures strongly supports the view that the Israelite ban was a response to recurrent practical conditions rather than to a set of beliefs peculiar to one religion's notions about clean and unclean animals.
> (Harris 1985: 82–3)

Although seemingly reasonable at first glance, Harris' arguments break down upon closer examination. In particular, his ecological explanation for the avoidance of pigs in the Middle East and North Africa (especially Egypt) is too simplistic. Four of these groups are far from being "different" cultural or religious traditions. Islam and the civilizations of Babylon, Phoenicia, and Israel are closely intertwined historically and culturally. Biblical tradition borrows heavily from Sumerian and Babylonian

mythology. For example, the Biblical story of Noah and the Flood is borrowed almost directly from the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh (Redford 1992; Pritchard 1955; Smith 1990a, Genesis 6–8). The Babylonian myth of the birth of King Sargon (Pritchard 1955) bears strong similarities to Moses' early history, including being placed in a reed basket sealed with bitumen and found and raised by royalty/divinity (Exodus 2: 3– 10). Additionally, the Bible states that Abraham came from the old Sumerian center at Ur (Genesis 11: 31). Independent archaeological and textual evidence establishes that in 597 BC the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II took the Judean King Jehoiachin and other Israelites to Babylon; Jehoiachin and his court lived in the royal palace. A decade later, after the sack of Jerusalem, many others were also deported to Babylonia, where they would have been exposed to Mesopotamian religion and mythology (Smith 1990a). The Phoenicians share an even closer relationship with the early Israelites, since both cultures sprang from Late Bronze Age Canaanite civilization (Dever 1990; Smith 1990a). The name Isra-el is theophoric, incorporating the name of the head of the Phoenician and earlier Canaanite pantheon – the god El (Smith 1990a). The popular Canaanite/Phoenician god Ba'al was worshiped in the Temple at Jerusalem until the seventh century BC, when Josiah removed his cult equipment (Smith 1990a, II Kings 23: 4). The cultural and religious traditions of these three groups were therefore closely related, with common or at least heavily intertwined religious traditions. The Israelite Bible also provides the core of Islamic belief, being enshrined in the Koran, so the presence of the same taboo in all of these cultures can hardly be regarded as providing independent proof of an ecological explanation of pork avoidance. By his own criteria, this casts serious doubt on Harris' model.

Egyptian and Israelite religion and culture are, however, markedly different, if not entirely unrelated. But does Harris' contention about the ecological origins of pig taboos hold up for Egypt? Harris dismisses the pig's early negative religious association with the anti-hero god Seth as an explanation (Harris 1985: 83–4). He prefers instead an economic interpretation that pigs were avoided because they competed directly with people for food in the densely occupied Nile valley. Citing the Roman historian Pliny, Harris argues that only the wealthy could afford to feed pigs basic staples like wheat and dates. On the face of it, Harris' discussion seems sensible. However, he makes the same mistake as early Egyptologists, relying entirely on literary sources that are heavily dependent on the textual record, which itself is highly biased towards religious inscriptions. Recent archaeological work contradicts the notion that the pig taboo was a widespread feature of Egyptian culture and that only the wealthy elite could afford to raise pigs. For example, Barry Kemp (1989; Shaw 1984) has reconstructed a thriving pig-raising industry among middle-class artisans at Amarna, Egypt's capital under Akhenaton (*c.* 1350 BC), at exactly the same time when the pig taboo should have been increasing, according to Harris. An enterprising villager set up specially constructed pens and fed the pigs grain. The complex included carefully prepared butchering and salt-packing facilities. The sale of this preserved meat would have provided a significant supplement to the family's state income, and

would have helped to meet a local demand for protein. Like Heqanakht before him, this entrepreneur attests to the private side of the Egyptian economy.

It is clear from this and other evidence that the pig taboo refers not to general cultural practice but to rules of ritual purity in very specific sacred contexts. Even the aversion to the depiction of pigs in art has religious motivations, since Egyptian art occurs almost entirely in tombs and temples (Aldred 1980; Weeks 1979). In fact, raising pigs makes good economic and ecological sense in Egypt, contrary to Harris' assertions. Far from being finicky eaters, swine are highly omnivorous, consuming leftovers that might otherwise have spoiled in Egypt's warm climate, and keeping down the smell from the trash heaps scattered throughout Egyptian settlements like Amarna by eating food scraps that would otherwise have rotted (Shaw 1984). It is far more likely that the pig taboo increased during later periods as a means of differentiating Egyptians in an increasingly cosmopolitan society, and as a means of promoting solidarity in the face of conquest by the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans (Bowman 1986; Chauveau 2000). Even in these periods, the pig taboo was primarily religious. Pigs were raised then and continue to be raised today, albeit by Christians under highly restricted conditions in an overwhelmingly Muslim nation (Shaw 1984).

Ultimately, Harris acknowledges the controversial nature of his arguments. He does not completely deny the social and symbolic importance of food, albeit established primarily (but not entirely) after the fact (Harris 1985: 15). In general, anthropologists have adopted a very different stance to Harris' strong materialist approach. For example, Mary Douglas emphasizes social concerns in her explanation of Jewish dietary laws. The way Jewish culture ordered the world combined with religious sensibilities, resulting in the avoidance of pigs and other foods (Douglas 1971). The discipline has long recognized the importance of foodways within cultures. Anthropologists adopting a functionalist perspective have argued particularly for the central role of the commensual character of food and feasting in establishing and maintaining social relations (Goody 1982, 1998; Wood 1995). The communal character of meals means that those who eat and drink together are tied by bonds of friendship and mutual obligation. Thus Ptahhotep also says: "Sustain your friends with what you have," and "Friends will say 'Welcome!'" (Lichtheim 1973: 69). Radcliffe-Brown (1922) saw the gathering, preparation, and consumption of food as the most important social activity. In particular, social sentiments were most frequently called into action through food taboos. Social relations can, however, be reflected through more mundane foodways as well. The kinds of food eaten with others reflect social closeness or distance and demonstrate status and power differences. Feasting in particular offers opportunities for both host and guest to demonstrate social competence and position through the choice of food and food etiquette. Dining also plays an important role in the process of enculturation, providing children with the opportunity to observe adults acting in appropriate roles (Goody 1982; Wood 1995). The advice from the *Instruction of Ptahhotep* on dining etiquette and social position was considered so good that teachers used it as an exercise a thousand years after its composition.

Richards' (1939) study of food among the Bemba of Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) provides a good example of the functionalist approach to food. Like her contemporaries,

Richards was more interested in the processes of production than the symbolic value of food (Goody 1982: 15). Nevertheless, her work illustrates the cultural determinates of food and feeding, as well as the centrality of foodways to pre-industrial societies, where the bulk of the population is directly involved in food production. She notes that food and beer provided the most exciting and interesting topics of conversation among the Bemba. Seasonal changes were related to food and stages in its production. In a similar way, ancient Egypt's seasons were keyed to the agricultural cycle with the "flood," "emergence" (of the new crop), and "harvest." Among the Bemba, even birthdays were established in this way. The social significance of food was tied to relationships between kinsmen. For example, Richards observed that the preparation of porridge by women expressed their kinship relationships towards male relatives.

The staple meal of millet porridge with a relish of meat or vegetable stew in effect defined the Bemba and differentiated them from other groups like the Bantu, who relied upon maize. The Bemba avoided strong tastes and spices, and rarely ate raw foods. Porridge stood for food itself, and other foods like pumpkin were not really food at all. Richards observed a girl, jilted by her cook, who ate only pumpkin and gourd for four days. One of the villagers exclaimed: "Look! Grief has caught her by the throat. She is refusing food" (Richards 1939: 48). Even the relish was not food, but the millet porridge could not be eaten without it. Porridge and relish were prepared in set proportion, and etiquette proscribed larger portions of relish to elders. Only one relish was eaten at a meal. One of the Bemba derided the European practice of eating several dishes at single meal (ibid.): "It is like a bird first to pick at this and then at that or like a child who nibbles here and there through the day."

Food and salt also had important ritual symbolism in Bemba society. Husbands in Bemba folk tales fulfill their role by going to fetch salt from distant places. Girls' initiation ceremonies echo this imagery. The woman impersonating a bridegroom carries a block of salt over her shoulder. Millet porridge stands for food and bits of salt are included in the sacred objects presented to girls during the ceremony. Millet and salt also figure in the founding of new villages, being placed with meat under the floor of the new chief's house. In a similar way, joints of meat and bread were placed in ancient Egyptian foundation deposits (Wilkinson 2000: 38–9). In the *Instruction of Amenemope*, the provision of bread and beer each day for the schoolchild is equated with mother's milk and motherly love (Lichtheim 1973: 141).

Food also played an important role in ancient Egyptian religion. Bread and beer formed the standard ritual and funerary offering, with the addition of meat in higher status contexts (Figure 3.6). The Bemba also valued meat. Goatss and sheep were kept for wealth and slaughtered only on ceremonial occasions. Curiously, their milk was not used. Cattle played a similar role in ancient Egypt. They were valuable and their slaughter was central to major religious rituals, which were the focus of large feasts. Unlike the Bemba, the Egyptians used milk and milk products, which also played an important role in rituals connected with fertility and rebirth, especially for the cults of the goddesses Hathor and Isis. Special milk vessels were made with appliqué nipples or breasts and feminine faces (Figure 3.7). Sometimes the nipples were pierced to act as spouts for a milk libation.



Figure 3.6 Offering bearer from the tomb of the Astronomer of Amun, Nakht (TT 52).

The functionalist stress on the socializing power of foodways provides important insights into the relationship between food and culture but, like many functionalist models, presents a static and somewhat circular argument. In a similar way, structuralist models tend to overestimate the unity of cultures, and often search for a broader unity of mankind that inappropriately applies the notions of a particular people to the construction of general models, as in the work of Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1964; Goody 1982). Although coming from a structuralist perspective, Mary Douglas' (1971) linguistic structuralist approach provides a more dynamic view of foodways and culture, seeing meals as structured social events which both provide continuities to previous and following meals and also ultimately react to the different situations in which they occur. Meals structure relations both within a family group and between that group and other groups within a society.

Taking a more complex contextual approach, Goody (1982) argues that foodways vary systematically both within and between societies, providing an important marker of class as well as culture. He examines the entire process of acquiring and preparing food, noting that the final stage is:

> the consuming of prepared food, both the cooked and the raw, where the identity and differentiation of the group is brought out in the practice of eating together or separately, as well as in the content of what is eaten by different collectivities; this is the arena of feasts and fasts, of prohibitions and preferences, of communal and domestic meals, of table manners and modes of serving and service.
>
> (Goody 1982: 38)



Figure 3.7 Hathor milk jar (eighteenth dynasty, Sawama, Tomb 91, Brooklyn Museum 14.642, gift of Col. R. Woodward, 1914).

Foodways can be used to establish social identity, relationships, and status (Wood 1995). Food was used among the Bemba to draw distinctions between subject and chief (Richards 1939). Hunted or domestic meat was valued and thus could be given as status rewards, but gathered resources like caterpillars were not. Cultivated food was generally valued over wild resources, but non-Bemba foods like maize could not be given as status rewards. Presents of honor included beer, unthreshed millet, meat, fish, or honey. Imported European foods were used only for entertainment or display. Food was also connected with status in ancient Egypt. Goody (1982) notes that complex societies tend to develop an elaborate court cuisine, using Egypt as a prime example. The *Onomasticon of Amenemope*, a scribal student vocabulary exercise, lists theoretically everything, including many foodstuffs (Gardiner 1947). For example, New Kingdom Egyptians had over 40 types of bread and cake to choose from, many of which have been found preserved in tombs (e.g. Schiaparelli 1927). The *Onomasticon* also lists 23 types of beer, and 29 cuts of beef which could be prepared with a variety of different spices, pickled or salted (cf. Ikram 1995). Along similar lines, Sinuhe defines his good life in exile in the Levant by describing the food that he ate:

> Much also came to me because of the love of me; for he had made me chief of a tribe of the best part of his land. Loaves were made for me daily, and wine as daily fare, cooked meat, roast fowl, as well as desert game. For they snared for me and laid it before me, in addition to the catch of my hounds. Many sweets were made for me, and milk dishes of all kinds.
>
> (Lichtheim 1973: 227)

Food was also a critical component of religion and rituals, with specialized dishes appearing in funerals and both state and private rituals, and large-scale festivals sponsored by the temples or Pharaoh. In addition to precious luxuries, foodstuffs played a prominent role in the ancient Egyptian rewards ceremony (Kemp 1989). Public festivals acted as backdrops for spectacle and feasting that reinforced the power of Pharaoh through patronage and display (e.g. Smith 1997). Private feasts demonstrated and negotiated social position and relationships through elaborate meals, music, and dancing. Some foods were particularly associated with the elite. Hunting was a pastime of the wealthy (Touny and Wenig 1969: 61–75), often employing chariots, the Ferrari of the day (normal folk had to settle for donkeys). Meat in general was expensive and available in larger quantities only to the upper echelons of Egyptian society (Ikram 1995). Wine was also associated with the elite. In my study of intact burials from New Kingdom Thebes, wine was found only in tombs of the wealthy, but beer was common across social boundaries (Smith 1992). Imported foodstuffs like oils and wine were also important status symbols in ancient Egypt.

Archaeology can reconstruct ancient foodways through a study of culinary equipment, including pottery and tools for food preparation, faunal and botanical remains, and chemical analysis of food residues. Tomb scenes of feasts show pottery filled with food and beverages carefully arranged and festooned with garlands (Figure 3.8). Richards (1939) noted that Bemba foodways were directly associated with material culture. For example, communal meals were taken around a central container of food, and beer was sipped through straws from a communal calabash. In this way, culinary equipment, like groundstone but especially pottery, can provide direct evidence for foodways. Ceramics were the principal medium for the preparation and consumption of food for both Egyptians and Nubians, as is common in pre-modern societies. Against this, Skibo, like Harris, explains the Kalinga preference for ceramic as opposed to metal pots because they are easier to clean. But there is no reason that cultural preference, like the distinctive appearance of the pots and flavor of the rice, might play a central role, especially given the importance of rice in the meal (Skibo 1992). Rice (1987: 465) notes that the composition and shape of both water jars and cooking pots in particular contribute to the flavor of water stored or food cooked in them. Similarly, the appearance, and thus the experience, of food is affected by the pottery on which it is served. Since pottery affects both the taste and presentation of food, Goody's remarks on foodways have a direct relevance to the interpretation of ceramic distributions. Changes in the ceramic repertoire should therefore correspond to changes in the presentation and composition of meals and potentially in the organization of society.

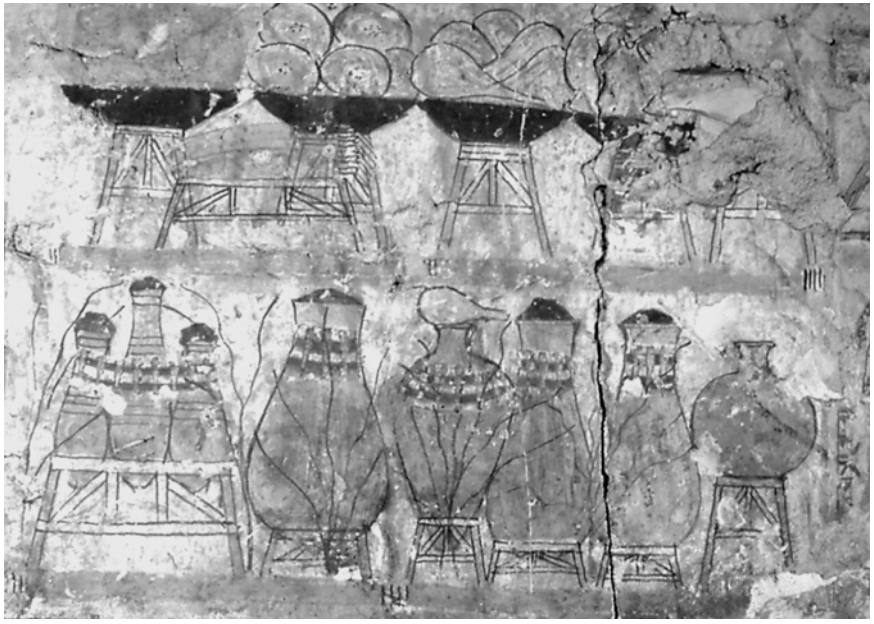


Figure 3.8 Decorated pots from a banquet scene in the tomb of Knummose (TT 253, *c.* 1310 BC).

Bunimovitz and Faust (2001) argue that Philistine domestic pottery, including both decorated and utilitarian wares, reflects a distinctively Aegean way of life strongly connected to Philistine foodways. Although they used some local Canaanite ceramics, Philistine vessel forms and decoration reflect differences in cooking, eating, and wine drinking that set them apart from their Egyptian and Canaanite neighbors, who did not employ Philistine pottery. In the chaotic and competitive atmosphere surrounding their settlement on the Palestinian coast in the early Iron Age, the Philistines projected a distinct ethnic identity through their exclusive use of Aegean pottery types, architectural features, and a few other daily items like loom weights and bathtubs, that ultimately reflect a distinctive cuisine and set of social habits.

Direct evidence for the kinds of food consumed can be had through floral and faunal analysis, but this still leaves us with the difficulty of establishing just which kinds of flora and fauna are associated with Egyptian and Nubian cuisines. One possible complication lies in the environmental similarity between Egypt and Nubia. To a great extent, both cultivated and wild plant and animal species were the same. Contrary to Harris' radical materialist approach, ethnic food preferences can be very different in similar environments. For example, Stein (1999) supports his identification of an Uruk enclave at Hacinebi, Turkey, in part through different proportions of sheep/goat, cow, and pig bone associated with artifact concentrations indicating Uruk and native zones of the site. The Uruk faunal assemblage showed a distinct preference for sheep/goat, over 80

percent, with small amounts of cow and very little pig, consistent with faunal data from sites in the Uruk homeland in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). Native contexts showed a more even balance between sheep/goat, cow, and pig, with some variability but broadly consistent with other sites in south-eastern Anatolia (Turkey).

Sheep/goat, cow, and pig were also the main fauna consumed in Egypt as well as Nubia, with the addition of hunted birds, fish, and shellfish from the Nilotic environment. Other hunted fauna, like gazelle and antelope, would be rare, but would also be the same in both areas. As at Hacinebi, however, ethnic food preferences might well have varied. For example, given the Nubian cultural and religious emphasis on cattle (O'Connor 1993; Kendall 1996), we might expect a greater reliance on both meat and milk from cows among Nubians. Egyptian cuisine has been defined in several studies combining archaeological and historical evidence (Darby 1977), but with a heavy emphasis on the latter. In spite of great strides accomplished in recent years, the lack of completed, systematic botanical and zooarchaeological analyses leaves us with a lack of comparable Nubian and Egyptian archaeological datasets. Additionally, most contexts at Askut come from secondary trash disposal. These deposits would provide a good reflection of the general activities taking place in a given area, but would potentially mix the refuse from more than one activity area and household (Schiffer 1987). These factors combine to make the kind of comparisons that allowed Stein to identify distinctively Anatolian and Uruk cuisines through faunal remains difficult at Askut, since there are apparently no distinctively Nubian or Egyptian contexts at the site, perhaps indicating a more mixed ethnic situation as opposed to Hacinebi's distinct Uruk enclave within an Anatolian settlement. So how can we connect culinary equipment and cuisine at Askut?

Residue analysis

Chemical analysis of absorbed residues can provide a direct association between foodways and material culture at Askut when correlated with Egyptian- and Nubian-style cookpots. Fatty acids appear both as visible residues on pottery (or other artifacts) and are absorbed into the walls of storage and cooking vessels. The use of gas chromatography with mass spectrometry (GC/MS) yields profiles of the different fatty acids that appear in the sample. The ratios of common fatty acids, along with some rare diagnostic types, are linked to specific plants and animals. The decomposition of fatty acids through oxidation and hydrolysis can pose difficulties in the chemical characterization of organic residues. Fats oxidize over time, producing potential distortions in the ratios of stable vs. unstable fatty acids, or potentially the complete absence of fat molecules altogether. One experimental archaeological study showed that most of the change in fatty acids occurred within the first four months of burial. The relative proportions of different acids remained the same after four years. The same study successfully identified fatty acids from fish dating to 100,000 bp (Nakano 1989). Oxidation can also be identified in samples through the absence of saturated fats, which are the first to break down. If the fats survive oxidation, then they can undergo hydrolysis, which transforms them into adipocere, a specific type of fatty acid.

This process shifts the overall proportions of fatty acids over depositional time, potentially producing distorted or incorrect results. This problem can be identified when the sample is dominated by adipocere and only a few of the most stable fatty acids, a situation which does not occur naturally. Fortunately, the vessel wall itself may inhibit oxidation and perhaps also hydrolysis.

Fatty acids can survive both heating (cooking) and long periods in the depositional environment (e.g. Condamin et al. 1976; Nakano 1989). Contamination and/or degradation from storage in archaeological collections are apparently not a problem (Skibo 1992). Samples from very dry or continually wet depositional conditions show the least degradation, while samples from more variable environments can experience considerable decomposition of their lipids. The environment at Askut will have remained consistently dry from the founding of the fortress to its excavation in the early 1960s. Taking samples at least 1 mm below the surface of a pot has proven highly successful in producing residues showing little evidence of either oxidization or hydrolysis. This technique also has the advantage of eliminating surface contamination (Marchbanks 1989). Despite considerable decomposition in one study (Deal et al. 1991), GC/MS analysis was still useful for characterizing the broad class of foods used, or the dominant class where there was a mixture of food types. For example, the wide range between aquatic and terrestrial animals was preserved, with terrestrial plants falling in between the two in the ancient samples. In any case, misinterpretations due to decomposition can be avoided, since both oxidization and hydrolysis can be recognized in fatty acid samples.

Several studies have successfully made gross determinations (grain/vegetable; plant/animal; terrestrial/aquatic animal) and sometimes even the identification of specific species in food residues. Vessels that were used for a single food item, often storage jars, have produced the most specific attributions. Results for cookpots that were used for a mixture of food classes produced a mixed fatty acid profile more difficult to interpret, although even here broad categories (plant/animal; terrestrial/aquatic) can be identified (Heron et al.1991; for useful summaries see Deal et al. 1991; Skibo 1992). Most recently, Malainey (1997; Malainey et al.1999a, b, c) established criteria for broader food categories in a study of prehistoric North American diet, employing experiments controlling for the changes in food from cooking and long-term decomposition. Even without specific identifications, such a study is still sufficient to identify possibly ethnic food preferences. At Hacinebi, the fact that the two assemblages were different was ultimately the most significant factor. For our purposes the actual foods eaten are less important than establishing whether or not there is a consistent difference between the foods cooked in Egyptian and Nubian cookpots that would point to distinct ethnic food preferences.

EGYPT AND NUBIA, ASKUT AND TOMBOS

In the following chapters, I will consider Nubia as a frontier, shifting focus from the regional to the local. Nubia was a controlled but dynamic zone of contact and

interaction between two powerful states and distinctive cultures, ancient Egypt and Kush (Kerma). But of course, states and cultures do not interact, people do, and so the following discussion will also examine some of the contacts between the individuals and communities that made up Egypt's southern frontier, using Askut and Tombos as case studies. As Lightfoot and Martinez (1995) point out, studies of frontiers tend to see colonial boundaries as a polarized opposition between colonial and indigenous populations. In practice, frontiers act as zones of interaction that crosscut political, social, and, in our case, ethnic boundaries. This study combines several of the strategies discussed above in an analysis drawing on different artifact categories, carefully considering their social context and associations.

The island fortress of Askut provides an unparalleled opportunity to document the changing cultural and ethnic dynamics of an Egyptian colonial community. The site was excavated between 1962–4 by the late Alexander Badawy as a part of the UNESCO Aswan High Dam Salvage Campaign and under the auspices of UCLA (Badawy 1964, 1965; Badawy 1966 /d). Owing to a generous division with the Sudan Antiquities Service and Badawy's foresight, virtually the entire collection from the project was preserved and is now curated in the Archaeological Collections of the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at UCLA. Unlike the majority of other sites in the area, there was no "winnowing" of "undesirable" or "uninformative" objects. This is of critical importance to this study, since it allows for the quantification of relative percentages of Egyptian and Nubian pottery and other artifacts. Preservation was relatively good, and the standards of excavation were excellent considering the time and pressures of salvage, better than virtually any of the major Egyptian settlement sites in Nubia (Smith 1995). These factors combine to allow for a far better reconstruction of the total assemblage and its stratigraphic associations than has previously been the case in Egyptian settlements in Nubia.

Arkell (1950) spotted the Egyptian cemetery at Tombos in 1946, but he carried out no systematic work at the site. David Edwards and Ali Osman M. Salih of the University of Khartoum partially excavated one tomb there in 1991 (Edwards and Salih 1992). I visited the site in 1996 and 1998, and began excavation in 2000 under the auspices of the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Although reduced to a few courses above the original surface level, the tomb chapel uncovered in the UCSB excavation was preserved well enough for me to ascertain the entire plan of the complex. Similarly, while organic preservation was poor and ancient looting had disturbed many of the burials, enough articulated remains and traces of organic objects remained to reconstruct burial practice at the site within an elite and middle-class zone. The location of the site at the southern edge of Egypt's territorial empire in Nubia places the cemetery in a unique geo-political context. As noted above, Tombos is one of only four Egyptian sites in the Dongola Reach. As the only identified Egyptian colonial cemetery in this region, Tombos provides a unique opportunity to investigate burial practice among the colonial agents of Egypt's empire overseeing conquered Kerma's heartland.

Askut provides an example from a domestic context, including ritual spaces. Tombos provides an example of funerary context. Combining Rogers' and Santley *et*

al.'s methodologies, three larger contexts are examined at each site: for Askut architecture, material culture, and ritual contexts; for Tombos architecture, grave goods; and for evidence for ritual practice. Artifact assemblages are analyzed with Rogers and Farnsworth's concern for borrowing and adaptation of new items within functional groups. At Askut, the reconstruction of foodways through an analysis of culinary equipment, especially pottery, and chemical residue analysis provides a particularly important focus for inquiry. Given ideal conditions, evidence both of settlement and cemetery would be used from each site. Unfortunately, the cemeteries associated with Askut have yet to be published in any detail (Mills 1967–8; Mills and Nordström 1966), and the settlement associated with Tombos has not been located but may lie beneath the modern village. As a result each site provides a case study for specific aspects of ethnic interaction and expression. Although neither provides a complete picture of the archaeological expression of ethnic identity, a consideration of the larger patterns of ethnic expression within Egypt's colonial communities can be addressed when the geo-political and social context of each is taken into account.

Chapter 4

Egypt and Nubia

> I would like to know what [use] is my strength with a Prince in Avaris and another in Kush, and I sit united with an Asiatic and a Nubian, each man with his slice of this Egypt, sharing the land with me?
>
> Kamose, *c.* 1600 BC (Gardiner 1916)

Ethnic identities are created by individuals but shaped by historical context (Stein 1999). Any study of ethnicity and culture contact should therefore be situated within its cultural and historical background (Rogers 1990). Ideally an understanding of past cultural contexts should be derived from a variety of sources, and incorporate a diachronic framework to identify shifts in the expression of ethnicity and the elements of material culture that represent it over time (Jones 1996). This chapter provides a broad historical background to the course of Egyptian imperialism in the second millennium BC and the development of the colonial communities that form the central focus of this study. Egyptian imperialism can be reconstructed through a combination of historical sources and large-scale patterning in the archaeological record. Most studies of Egyptian imperialism end at this level of resolution (Kemp 1978; Frandsen 1979). For this study, this basic background represents a point of departure for a deeper investigation of colonial identities and dynamics through the contextual analysis of material culture patterning at two Egyptian colonial sites, the fortress-settlement at Askut and cemetery at Tombos.

Egypt's fortunes changed dramatically over the course of the second millennium BC, reaching great heights but also undergoing a stunning reversal, as Kamose's complaint indicates. The Egyptians interacted with their southern neighbor Nubia initially with trade and peaceful exchange in mind, but increasingly with violence and both hegemonic and territorial imperialism. Egypt began its first substantial imperial expansion during the Middle Kingdom (*c.* 2040–1650 BC), when a chain of powerful fortresses running up to the second cataract secured Lower Nubia (Figure 4.1). The Egyptian empire fell apart during the Second Intermediate Period (*c.* 1650–1550 BC) when Nubia was unified by the powerful Upper Nubian Kerma state, and the Syro-Palestinian Hyksos controlled northern Egypt. The Pharaohs of the New Kingdom (*c.* 1550–1070 BC), however, engaged in a series of military campaigns that not only reconquered

Table 4.1 Chronology

Date BC	*Upper Nubia*	*Lower Nubia*	*Egypt*	*W. Asia*
2050–1650	Formative Kerma	C-Group Egyptian colony	Middle Kingdom (dynasties 11–13)	Middle Bronze Age
1650–1550	Mature Kerma state	C-Group and Pan Grave Kerma colony	Second Intermediate Period (dynasties 14–17)	Middle Bronze Age
1550–1050	Egyptian colony (from 1500)	Egyptian colony	New Kingdom (dynasties 18–20)	Late Bronze Age

Lower Nubia, but also fueled an expansionist policy that forged a vast empire, at one point stretching from the Euphrates in Syria to Kurgus in Nubia. The material correlates of the Egyptian empire are seemingly unambiguous, particularly in Lower Nubia. Egyptian colonists left a series of massive fortresses full of Egyptian material culture that would leave us in no doubt of direct Egyptian control even without the support of a rich textual record. This chapter begins with a brief review of recent discussions of ancient imperialism, balancing imperial strategy with native agency. A discussion of trade and the political economy is followed by an overview of Egyptian–Nubian relations in the second millennium BC.

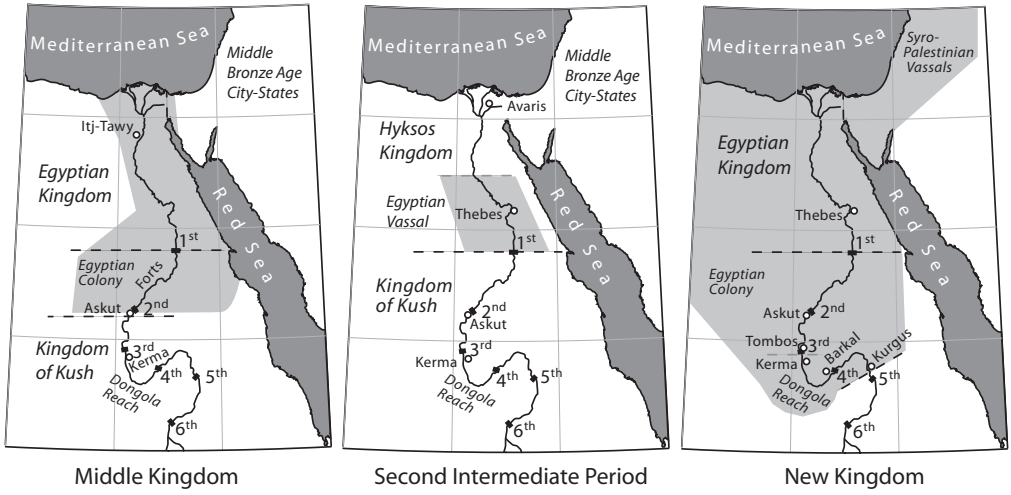


Figure 4.1 Political maps of Egypt and Nubia in the Middle Kingdom, Second Intermediate Period, and New Kingdom.

IMPERIAL STRATEGIES AND NATIVE AGENCY

> I have come that I may cause you to trample on the uttermost parts of the earth,
> What the Ocean encircles being held in your grasp;
> That I may cause them to see Your Majesty as lord of the falcon-wings,
> Who takes what he sees at will.
> I have come that I may cause you to trample on those who are in the Southland
> And to bind the Sand-dwellers as captives.
>
> The God Amun to Thutmose III, *c.* 1450 BC (Simpson 1972: 287)

This triumphal passage commissioned by Thutmose III reflects the official line of the Egyptian state that Nubia was easily dominated by Egypt, if only Pharaoh exerted himself. Taking their cue from the constant repetition of these sentiments in Egyptian ideology, Egyptologists and Nubian specialists often place interactions between Egypt and Nubia within some kind of core-driven center–periphery framework (Adams 1984; Trigger 1976; Emery 1965; Breasted 1909; David 1988). For example, Barry Kemp argues that the cosmopolitan, bureaucratic mindset of the scribal elite determined imperial outcomes during the New Kingdom (Kemp 1978; 1997; see Smith 1995,1997 and Chapter 7 below for a critique). Citing an ideological imperative to "expand the existing" and create order from chaos, Kemp sees imperial occupation facilitating the extension of Egyptian elite scribal culture abroad through cultural assimilation. This view is consistent with early theoretical approaches to imperialism, like Eisenstadt's (1979), where a dominant core determines imperial outcomes. The underlying character of an empire guides the structure of the imperial system. "Patrimonial" empires integrate center and periphery in a common political and cultural system with little interconnectedness between the parts. In contrast, "imperial" systems allow considerable differentiation within the empire, but with a high level of interconnectedness between the individual parts. In terms of Durkheim (1893), "patrimonial" empires are held together through mechanical solidarity, while "imperial" systems rely upon organic solidarity. Kemp's acculturation strategy would produce a widespread "patrimonial" empire in Eisenstadt's terms.

In more economically driven models (Smith 1998), Egypt is still seen as a dominant core, exploiting subordinate Nubia's natural resources in a pattern reminiscent of Wallerstein's Modern World System (Kohl 1987; Wallerstein 1974). Egyptian celebratory texts list the presentation of vast quantities of prestige goods like gold, ivory, ebony, and incense to the temples and the royal treasury (Adams 1984; Frandsen 1979; Zibelius-Chen 1988). This classic model of core dominance and peripheral subordination downplays native agency. In Kemp's acculturation model, Nubians simply go along with Egyptian policy, abandoning their own cultural traditions in favor of Egyptian cultural norms. In the Modern World System, conquered groups are not able to mount an effective resistance due to the technological and military superiority of the center, combined with an imperial strategy geared towards economic and political subordination through the maintenance of that differential.

Although to some extent still popular (Frank 1993; Kardulias 1999), the application of World Systems theory to ancient contexts is coming under increasing criticism, with scholars either suggesting substantial modifications (Kohl 1987) or, for the most part, abandoning the concept altogether (Stein 1999).

Most recently, Gil Stein (1999) has challenged the application of the Modern World System to the mid-fourth millennium Uruk expansion into south-eastern Anatolia. Several scholars, most notably Algaze (1993), have argued that the presence of Uruk settlements and artifacts indicates an early Mesopotamian empire along the lines of the Modern World System. Stein argues that this reconstruction owes more to a mistaken sense of Mesopotamian superiority similar to the Egyptological assumptions of Egyptian dominance. Instead, he replaces Wallerstein's dominant core–subordinate periphery with a distance–parity model. He argues sensibly that imperial control becomes more and more difficult as distance to the core increases. At the same time, imperial domination is problematical the more equal the two societies are in complexity, technology, and population. These two factors act together, so that even a highly complex core will have difficulty maintaining control over a simpler society at a great distance. Stein's system is similar to Parker's (1998) modified territorial–hegemonic model, with territorial occupation only possible near the core or along transportation corridors, and hegemonic strategies and equal relations at a distance. In this case, the presence of settlements from the "core" would indicate a trade diaspora of the kind discussed by Curtin (1984) rather than imperial outposts.

Center–periphery models of culture contact are also being reassessed, with more recognition of peripheral agency (Cusick 1998). I have argued that in the case of Egypt, ancient imperial outcomes do not necessarily follow a straightforward pattern of dominance and subordination, but are determined by a complex relationship between imperial goals, native agency, and potential threats from competing cores – a consideration absent in the Modern World System (Smith 1995, 1997, 1998). Alcock (1989) provides a similar model covering the mechanisms involved in imperial decision making for the Roman Empire. Although she considers a number of factors, her approach emphasizes a cost-minimization strategy by the dominant state as the prime mover. The degree of reorganization after conquest is conditioned by the interplay between the nature of the indigenous system and the exploitative goals of the imperial system. Where the necessary infrastructure for exploitation is lacking, the imperial polity will create a new system. If the existing structure is too unwieldy, it will be simplified, for example, by dividing a larger area into smaller units. Finally, the conquered polity will be left intact if it can meet imperial requirements without intervention. D'Altroy (1992) envisions a complex set of interactions between geo-politics, imperial goals, resources exploited, transport, and the political and economic organization of the center and subject periphery. He also employs the territorial–hegemonic model developed by Luttwak (1976) for the Roman Empire and elaborated by Hassig (1988) for the Aztecs. A territorial empire incorporates a dominated periphery directly into the center. Since it requires considerable investments in infrastructure, this means of control is costly, but it also produces higher yields of extracted resources by direct control of production. A hegemonic empire controls a region through coopting

the local elites. Desired resources are obtained by skimming a portion of those normally consumed by local elites. Hegemony is therefore comparatively inexpensive to maintain. This is not a rigid formulation, like Eisenstadt's (1979) either/or choice between "patrimonial" or "imperial" systems of exploitation guiding the entire structure of the imperial system. The two strategies sit at either end of a continuum, with various blending and degrees chosen for specific situations based on cost–benefit reasoning and geo-political considerations (Hassig 1988). Parker (1998) has extended this continuum to include buffer zones and polities not under the direct control of imperial cores, but which imperial strategists must take into account.

Doyle (1986) provides an even more explicit consideration of the dynamics behind native agency. He argues that, while the interests of the agents of contact (in other words, resources exploited) must be considered, the character of the dominated society plays a critical role in imperial outcomes. He divides conquered societies into three levels of internal complexity: tribal, patrimonial, and feudal. According to Doyle, a tribal society's critical lack of centralization and social differentiation makes it particularly vulnerable to aggression. A high level of integration with low centralization magnifies the shock of conquest, making both coordinated resistance and cooperation difficult. The greater degree of differentiation found in patrimonial societies allows for collaboration, but the lack of centralization makes coordinated resistance difficult. The imperial power can gradually integrate sectors of the indigenous society into its system, but imperial rule is much more likely than a tribal society to be indirect through coopted native intermediaries. Rogers (1993) adopts a similar perspective, emphasizing ideology in his study of the Native American Arikara. Societies with greater differentiation have more institutional avenues for maintaining their cosmologies in the face of imperial intrusions than more simply structured kinship-oriented societies. The lower Nubian C-Group fits this category. They were able effectively to resist the initial Egyptian occupation by maintaining cultural solidarity, but were eventually brought into Egyptian society through coopted elites. Finally, Doyle's feudal society is a socially and institutionally differentiated polity of small quasi-sovereignties, each pursuing its own advantage. Centralization within each unit is high, but low between units. Here collaboration without social collapse is very likely. Indirect rule over such well-developed systems also has the advantage of reducing administrative costs and meets with less resistance than formal rule by the exploiting polity (Doyle 1986: 132–6). This category provides an excellent model for Egypt's relations with the city-states of the Levant during the New Kingdom, and also the local polities that were left after the Egyptian defeat of the Upper Nubian Kerman state (1998).

BRONZE AGE TRADE AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

> No-one really sails north to Byblos today. What shall we do with cedar for our mummies? Priests were buried with their produce and nobles were embalmed with the oil thereof as far away as Keftiu [Crete], but they come no longer. Gold is lacking …
>
> *The Admonitions of Ipuwer, c.* 2000 BC (Pritchard 1955: 441)

Although the relationship was not inevitably one of dominant center and subordinate periphery, the acquisition of luxuries and valuable bulk goods, whether by peaceful or violent means, was a key economic goal of Egypt's interactions with Nubia and Western Asia, as the lament of Ipuwer (above) illustrates. The dynamics of ancient empires, the eastern Mediterranean in particular, differ from the institutionalized economic and political subordination found in modern colonialism. Ancient empires like Egypt did not expand into neatly bounded territorial zones like the nineteenth-century division of Africa by European powers. Instead, we see a complex mosaic of direct and hegemonic control, including the establishment of buffer zones that took potential rivals into account. Ancient empires adopted different strategies depending on their goals and the geo-political situations that they encountered during the course of expansion and imperial maintenance. In some cases, this may have resulted in peripheral dependency similar to that found in the Modern World System. This may be the case for Lower Nubia. On the other hand, the creation or maintenance of a complex periphery could benefit ancient empires, either as a means of mobilizing distant resources while avoiding the costs of direct control, or by creating a buffer zone between themselves and other powerful polities, as was the case for Egypt in Upper Nubia and Syro-Palestine.

The fact that Ipuwer mentions trade as one of things that disappeared in the political and social chaos of the First Intermediate Period reflects the importance to the ancient Egyptians of long-distance exchange. Yet scholars following the substantivist economic model articulated forcefully by Karl Polanyi assert that trade made up such a small part of pre-modern economies that long-distance exchange served only to maintain horizontal relationships among elites. Trade for profit, whether managed by the state or individuals, was unknown (Janssen 1992; Polanyi et al. 1957; Lattimore 1962; Sahlins 1972; Renfrew 1972; Halstead 1988; Lattimore 1962; Hopkins 1978). This argument goes back to Weber's primitivist conception of the ancient economy as essentially agrarian in its interests (Sherratt and Sherratt 1991; Frank 1993), itself ultimately derived from the model of unilinear cultural evolution developed by Morgan (Engels 1902) and adopted by Marx, Engels (1902), and Weber (1947). The substantivists argue that pre-capitalist economies lacked both the markets and the monetary system necessary to support trade for profit. Necessities were produced by each household or acquired through barter transactions where the only goal was obtaining a desired good, with no idea of profit. Exchange was embedded in social relations through redistribution at the state level and reciprocal gift exchange at the individual level. Interregional trade was so small in scale compared to the agrarian economy that it was at best peripheral to ancient societies. Wallerstein (1974) argued along similar lines that transportation networks were not sophisticated enough in antiquity to carry large enough quantities of goods to create a world or even regional economy. If we accept the substantivist model, the colonists living on the frontier at places like Askut and Tombos would play a minor role in the state redistributive economy, securing small quantities of luxury goods at the command of the Pharaohs.

In contrast, a number of scholars have adopted a more formalist model, asserting the presence of market rationality and the importance of trade to ancient economies, including Egypt. Formalists employ modern economic principles that consider individuals as rational economic actors seeking to maximize scarce resources and accumulate wealth. In this case, our colonists would have played a more dynamic role in the ancient Egyptian political economy, securing ever-larger quantities of prestige goods needed by the Egyptian state, and perhaps engaging in transactions of their own. Silver (1983) provides a convincing response to the assertions of Polanyi and those who follow his substantivist model, citing evidence for the existence of markets, semi-monetized systems of value, and a maximizing profit motive in Egypt, the Near East, and Greece and Rome. He argues that evidence of price fluctuations, including both luxuries and staples like grain (Ahmed 1968; Çerny 1933; Baer 1962; Leemans 1950), contradicts the notion that prices were either fixed by the state or determined entirely by use-value. Demand-driven production for commodities like cloth and metal also existed (Crawford 1973; Larsen 1987; Barber 1994; Heltzer 1978). Venture capital was supplied by Mesopotamian entrepreneurs and "firms" to merchants engaged in long-distance trade (Larsen 1987; Silver 1983). Egyptians like Heqanakht made loans and converted perishable grain into copper, oil, and cloth, which could be stored for long periods as accumulated capital (Baer 1963). The exchange value of commodities was keyed to amounts of precious metal in a semi-monetary system. Although silver and gold were used, the most common measure for exchange in Egypt was in copper *deben*, about 91 grams. Although actual coins did not exist until the seventh century BC, metal itself was often used as part or all of a transaction (Janssen 1975; Kemp 1989), anticipating the use of coins (Silver 1983). Both archaeological and textual evidence from Egypt, the Levant, and Mesopotamia also supports the existence of markets, where both staple and finished goods could be purchased. Shops and taverns have been identified in the Levant at Ugarit, Hazor, and Jericho (Kenyon 1957), in Mesopotamia at Eshnunna, Assur, and Ur (Woolley and Moorey 1982), in Anatolia at Beycesultan (Lloyd 1962), and in Egypt at Deir el-Medineh (Kemp 1989).

Against this formalist perspective, Jac Janssen and Edward Bleiberg have been strong advocates for a substantivist approach to the Egyptian economy (Janssen 1979,1982; Bleiberg 1996). They argue that the Egyptian economy as a whole was organized on the principle of redistribution. Agricultural surpluses were collected and placed in royal and temple storehouses and later redistributed to support state institutions and projects and maintain the elite. The sub-structure of peasant society was largely self-sufficient. Exchange for items like copper, salt, or luxuries was acquired by direct barter or reciprocal gift exchange. Markets played only a peripheral role, and even here prices were fixed by the use-value of the goods and not by their exchange value. The Egyptian economy did not have market mechanisms like trade for profit, responses to supply and demand, or money for the accumulation of capital. Bleiberg (1996) recognizes that Polanyi presents a romanticized vision of a system of redistribution and reciprocity founded on social consensus, where the economy serves society and not the individual. Like the normative approach of structuralists, this static model cannot explain change and virtually eliminates individual agency.

Bleiberg rightly criticizes some of Silver's sources and interpretations, in particular noting where the translations he quotes created false impressions. Yet in the end he cannot entirely dismiss the evidence for the existence of a private, demand economy. Much depends on how the evidence is interpreted. For example, a paean to a student's teacher from Papyrus Anastasi implies that he not only owned a ship, but that it returned laden with a cargo from Syro-Palestine. Bleiberg allows the individual ownership of large sailing ships, and even the commissioning by individuals of trading missions, but argues that, since no mention is made of profit from the sale of the goods acquired, it still fits the substantivist model. Yet the entire passage sets an entrepreneurial tone for the life of a scribe (Kemp 1989: 310). Not only does the master send a ship to Syria, but he also manages land, herds, and a weaving shop. This passage implies that long-distance trade was not a monopoly of the state. This reference to entrepreneurial activity opens the possibility that Egyptian colonists could have sponsored ships and caravans, or worked as factors for the wealthy elite back in Egypt, like the scribe of Papyrus Anastasi. Wealth and its trappings come not from Pharaoh or the state, but from the scribe's own energy:

> You go down to your ship of fir-wood manned from bow to stern. You reach your beautiful villa, the one you have built for yourself … Your ship has returned from Syria laden with all manner of good things. Your byre is full of calves, your weavers flourish …
>
> (Kemp 1989: Fn. 81)

Yet Bleiberg and Janssen reject any notion of individual trade when the state was strong. They argue that a redistributive system cannot coexist with any notion of private profit. The best example of individual trading for profit comes from the letters of a man named Heqanakht, who lived and traded during the early Middle Kingdom. His highly entrepreneurial activities are dismissed as the product of the First Intermediate Period and its aftermath, times without a strong central government. Bleiberg (1996: 12) asserts that rational actors like Heqanakht would have disappeared with the implementation of the centralizing reforms of Senwosret III (*c.* 1878–1841 BC). Yet by any reasonable criteria, Heqanakht did not live in a time of social chaos. His probable contemporary, Senwosret I, reigned from 1971–1926 BC, a hundred years after the reunification of Egypt into a centralized kingdom by Nebhetepre Montuhotep (*c.* 2040 BC). Heqanakht may have lived a generation earlier at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. Even in this case, Nebhetepre Montuhotep and his immediate successors ruled over a powerful, centralized state. He mobilized considerable resources for the construction of his monumental mortuary complex at Deir el-Bahari. The unfinished tomb of his short-lived successor was begun along similar grand lines. Nebhetepre also campaigned south into Nubia. Even during the First Intermediate Period, Bleiberg himself recognizes that the old redistributive system never actually disappeared. Provincial nomarchs like Ankhtifi perpetuated the system locally. Additionally, the Thebans unified the south into a single polity stretching

from Aswan to Cusae within a generation of the initial troubles. If Heqanakht lived later, as Bleiberg admits is possible, his case for a weak Egyptian state is even harder to support.

Amenemhet I, the founder of the twelfth dynasty, had the power and command over resources to shift the capital from Thebes to Itj-tawy, "Seizer of the Two Lands," in northern Egypt near the Faiyum. He mounted military campaigns into Nubia and Western Asia and revived the practice of building pyramids. The magnificent jewelry from the intact tombs of royal ladies found at Dahshur and Lahun reflects the opulence of his successor Senwosret I's court. He carried out building work at almost three dozen sites from the Nile delta to Aswan. At the temple of the sun god Re at Heliopolis he commissioned two 20-m high obelisks, each weighing 121 tons. As will be seen below, Senwosret I is credited with the consolidation of Egypt's Nubian empire with the costly construction and garrison of 13 fortified outposts stretching from Aswan to Buhen (Figure 4.1). Although the reforms attributed to Senwosret III no doubt resulted in greater centralization, the early Middle Kingdom government was hardly as weak as Bleiberg asserts.

Bleiberg argues that Kemp removes Heqanakht from his historical and social context, but fails himself to consider his ecological context. Heqanakht refers to shortages and famine, and both Bleiberg and Kemp assume that he lived in hard times. But it is by no means clear how widespread or severe the shortages were. Nor is it certain just how accurate Hekanakht's observations are. After all, he was trying to motivate his family to economize and maximize production in order to take advantage of the higher price of grain and cattle. Although overall Egypt produced a substantial surplus most years, local conditions were variable. Agriculture in ancient Egypt depended on the annual inundation of the Nile, which watered a complicated network of natural basins stretching hundreds of miles from Nubia up to the delta. Just which fields would be watered depended on a combination of the height of the inundation and hydrology of the Nile floodplain in that particular area. Butzer (1976) cites the difficulties of controlling such a complex system to refute Wittfogel's (1957) hydraulic hypothesis for the rise of the Egyptian state.

State sources de-emphasize local shortages, but they must have been a regular part of Egyptian agriculture. The actions of Heqanakht were a natural response to the fluctuations of the inundation, which made agricultural production extraordinarily difficult to manage centrally. In order to maximize yields, he rented fields for his family to farm and loaned grain to others to take advantage of that year's inundation. He stored some of his surplus, but converted much of it into imperishable (or at least longer-lasting) luxuries like copper, oil, and cloth. These goods served as accumulated capital that could be displayed for prestige, invested in other activities, or used as a "hedge" in times of severe shortage, when it could be converted back into foodstuffs. The convertibility of metal to commodities is attested over a thousand years later at Thebes. For example, the tomb robbers of the twentieth dynasty used "bread" as a euphemism for the wealth in metals that they looted from the tombs. In one case, the herdsman Bukhaf testified that one of his accomplices, a woman named Nesmut, warned him that some of their coconspirators were trying to make off with the loot without telling

them by saying: "Some men have found something that can be sold for bread; let us go eat with them." Bukhaf's share came to 60 *deben of* silver, which would have bought a lot of bread!

To a large extent, Bleiberg and Janssen rely on a circular argument that privileges state over private economic sources. Heqanakht is able to get good prices for his grain because there are food shortages. If there are food shortages then the central redistributive system must not have been functioning. Therefore Heqanakht exists in a period of decentralization that marks an exception from the normal redistributive, centrally managed economy. Using similar logic, they assert that, since words for buying, selling, and profit do not exist in the Egyptian language, no market-driven private economy or profit motive existed. One could just as easily assert that because there was no word for religion, religion did not exist in ancient Egypt. As Kemp points out, just because they lacked the terminology of modern capitalism does not mean that the Egyptians did not try to get the best price for their commodities and accumulate wealth thereby. For example, Heqanakht urges one of his household to hold back a bull so that he can make a particularly good sale, noting that the animal's price had risen by half (Kemp 1989: 240). Finally, Janssen and Bleiberg use the fact that the vast majority of Egyptian documents deal with state finance to deny the existence of a private economy. This view fails to acknowledge the archaeological context of the written record. The vast majority of the Egyptian population lived within the floodplain. The wet conditions characteristic of most town sites means that private archives of paper documents have simply not survived. Although also fragmentary, the official historical record has fared much better. Economic accounts connected with the doings of high officials or the operations of temples are preserved in durable stone. Both the tombs of the elite and state temples are more likely to be located in the desert, where dry conditions promote preservation, especially of papyrus documents. Hekanakht's letters are available today by pure accident. His absent-minded son inadvertently left them behind while attending to the burial of Mesekh, sealing them up in the tomb after he had completed the funerary rites. One cannot argue, *prima facie*, that there was no private demand economy because the vast majority of texts deal with the state economy. Private archives like Heqanakht are rare, not because they did not exist, but rather because they did not survive.

Bridging the substantivist/formalist divide

Advocates of the universality of economizing behavior are more flexible in the application of formalist theory than the substantivists. For example, Herskovits (1952) indicated points of divergence between conventional economics and the economies of the cultures that he studied. Similarly, Firth (1967) emphasized the linkage between economizing and economy, but acknowledged the influence of social factors. More recent studies reject any fundamental opposition between the two models. For example, North (1977: 709) observes that "all societies have elements of reciprocity, redistribution, and markets in them." He argues that control of transactional costs points to economizing behavior in ancient societies

and that individuals can use a reciprocal system to gain economic advantage. D'Altroy and Earle (1985) argue that formalist (emphasizing individual economizing) and substantivist (emphasizing the social and institutional context) economics can be seen as complementary rather than exclusive. Appadurai (1986) criticizes the tendency towards excessively dualistic formulations like market exchange vs. reciprocity. He notes that barter transactions are distinct from reciprocal exchange since they include the "maximum feasible reduction of social, cultural, political, or personal transaction costs" (Appadurai 1986: 9). Kemp argues for a combination of state redistribution and private markets in ancient Egypt. He responds to the substantivist instance on a fundamental divide between past reciprocal and redistributive systems and modern market economies by noting that "at the level of individual states the modern world contains no examples, nor has it ever, of an economic system based fully on market forces" (1989: 233).

Neither Kemp nor I deny the importance of the large-scale state-run redistributive system to the ancient Egyptian economy. As Kemp points out, the ancient Egyptian state economy was ultimately effective in satisfying institutional demands, but could never hope to meet all of the individual contingencies of private demand. The state would have to collect and manage surpluses and meet local as well as central needs in case of any difficulty. But it is by no means clear what centralized mechanisms could have monitored the needs of the 1.5 to 3 million inhabitants of Egypt in ancient times. Indeed, managing an economy that size would be a daunting task today with modern systems of communication and transport. The state supplied a basic level of support to its employees, but this does not mean that private market forces were not at the same time in operation. For example, although the state employed carriers to supply water to Deir el-Medineh, which was located in the desert, the carriers themselves often rented the use of donkeys from the villagers to ease their burden and speed up the process (Kemp 1989).

Kemp (ibid.) notes that the great mansions at Amarna have a storage capacity for grain that far exceeds the needs of an individual household, indicating the accumulation of private surpluses. Janssen (1992) counters this formalist argument by asserting that this storage capacity of elite residences represents the delegation of state storage for redistribution. If this were the case, however, one would expect a uniform distribution of grain capacity in the largest houses, as is the case at the centrally organized Middle Kingdom pyramid town of Kahun. There a series of large mansions had equal blocks of magazines capable of storing enough grain to feed the entire community (Petrie 1890). At Amarna the pattern is very different. There is great variability in storage capacity from mansion to mansion and the amount of storage does not correlate with the size of the house, as one would expect in a centrally organized redistributive system. Kemp (1989) interprets this pattern as a reflection of a combination of income in state salaries and private holdings of an official's family, which might be concentrated in an official's hometown or spread throughout Egypt. As with Heqanakht in the Middle Kingdom, accumulated grain could be reinvested through trade by *shuty*, professional merchants, and by implication through sponsorship of attached workshops producing a variety of products, including jewelry and ceramics.

Evidence for craft production is spread throughout the residential suburbs of Amarna in a decentralized pattern that points towards entrepreneurial rather than state-sponsored activity. The city was also not segregated by class like hierarchically organized Kahun. Rich, middle-class, and poor lived together.

Kemp sees "an uneasy truce between two forces: the urge of the state to provide itself with a secure base for its own existence and plans, and the fragmented pressure of private demand" (1989: 233). The all-or-nothing primitivist/modernist, substantivist/formalist divide obscures the real complexities of ancient economies by forcing them into an artificial evolutionary framework, privileging the emergence of Western capitalism and the Modern World System. On the one hand, Janssen and Bleiberg are right in pointing out that Egyptian officials are beneficiaries of redistribution by the state economy. Yet, as North (1977) argues, maximizing economic motives fitting the formalist model can lie behind activity that the participants would characterize in terms of redistribution or reciprocity. In ancient Egypt, officials portray themselves engaging in economic activities, like the ceremonial award of the "gold of glory," that are embedded in the social system. Yet at the same time these same officials portray and enumerate at great length the economic value of those awards in at least a semi-public context – their tombs. They also managed an income derived from both private and state income with the intention of increasing their wealth and converting perishable grain into longer-lasting goods, effectively accumulating capital. Officials competed among themselves and with the Pharaoh for ideological, political, and economic advantage.

Conspicuous consumption and the political economy

Werner Sombart, a contemporary of Weber, stressed the importance of conspicuous consumption that produced a demand for a wide variety of goods, especially luxuries, as opposed to Weber's insistence on the centrality of the agrarian economy. Conspicuous consumption helps to resolve the divide between substantivist and formalist perspectives, providing a social mechanism for maximizing behavior. Bleiberg differs from Janssen and Polanyi in that he allows for the possibility of individual greed and aggrandizing. He also agrees with North (1977), who finds economic motives behind actions that would be described internally in terms of social relations, but he downplays their economic significance. Individual officials may have engaged in aggrandizing behavior, but their greed was focused more on social prestige than economic gain. Thus the Old Kingdom expedition leader Harkhuf describes Pharaoh's approbation in more detail than the economic rewards of the successful conclusion to his trading mission into Nubia and sub-Saharan Africa. One might, however, just as easily cite the autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ibana, where, along with accounts of royal praise, he details the substantial quantities of gold and the several slaves with which his military valor was rewarded (Lichtheim 1976). Similarly, scenes from Amarna tombs documenting awards of the "gold of glory" show tomb owners heaped with golden necklaces (Kemp 1989). These scenes depict in great

detail the lucky awardees' servants carrying off vessels and jewelry of precious materials along with staples like wine and foodstuffs.

Janssen and Bleiberg are correct when they assert that the path to both social position and the greatest wealth lay through access to state largess. This does not mean, however, that the demand for luxuries through conspicuous consumption was confined to government officials, nor that the state met everyone's needs. Even if he never sold any of the items obtained from Syria, the scribe from Papyrus Anastasi would have gained a significant advantage over his less fortunate peers in the competitive display of exotic luxuries. His ability to gain access to exotic goods outside of state largess would also erode the patron–client system created through redistribution, chipping away at the authority of Pharaoh. The demand for such goods was not confined to the wealthy elite. For example, the desire for coffins unified the wealthiest and all but the poorest internments in my study of intact burials from New Kingdom Thebes (Smith 1992). Even modest burials might contain jewelry made up of precious materials like gold and lapis lazuli. It was in order to meet the widespread private demand for grave goods that craftsmen from Deir el-Medineh moonlighted as makers of coffins and other funerary equipment. Janssen argues that this activity still falls under the substantivist rubric, since these men were ultimately part of the state redistributive economy. Yet these individuals were clearly using their training as funerary specialists to maximize their income and accumulate wealth, taking advantage of the demand for high-quality grave goods fueled by ostentatious and more modest displays of wealth at funerals.

In a similar way, women at Deir el-Medineh wove high-quality linen garments, a luxury destined for very public display as clothing or as palls in funerals. Barber (1994: 272–3) attributes the longevity of women's legal equality in ancient Egyptian society to the economic power of individual women to produce this valuable product (ibid.). Receipts document women engaging in independent transactions in cloth worth 26, 79, 170, and 223 *deben* of copper, amounts comparable to the commissions earned by male artisans decorating coffins (Robins 1993: 129–31). To put this in perspective, a skilled craftsman's annual wages at Deir el-Medineh, paid monthly in grain, were worth 96 *deben* of copper, a foreman's 132, enough to feed a family and still have something left over for trading. Unskilled laborers earned considerably less – guards and porters at Deir el-Medineh earned a yearly income in grain worth 48 and 24 *deben* of copper respectively (Figure 4.2).

Finished goods and raw materials obtained through long-distance exchange played a key role in conspicuous consumption. The quote from Papyrus Anastasi shows that these items were a mark of wealth and status in daily life. Ipuwer indicates that rare imported commodities were also in demand for competitive display during funerals. Ipuwer's linkage between specific materials and religious rituals shows that exotic imports were valuable for social reasons that transcended their relative scarcity (Sherratt and Sherratt 1991), playing a significant role in the political economy as prestige goods. Appadurai (1986: 38, emphasis in original) proposes, "We regard luxury goods not so much in contrast to necessities (a contrast filled with problems), but as goods whose principal use is *rhetorical* and *social*, goods that are simple

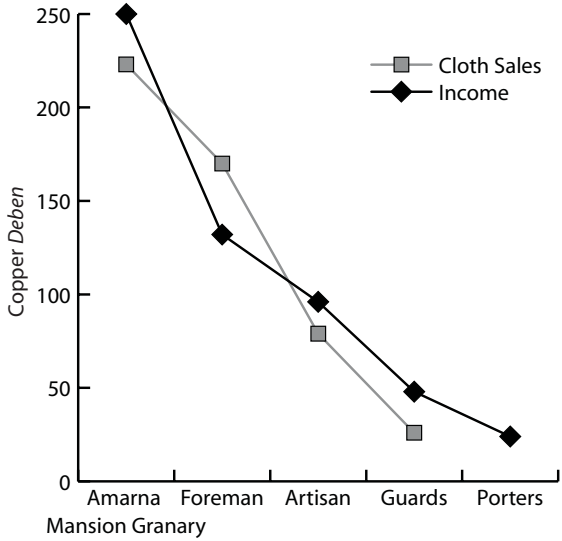


Figure 4.2 A comparison of incomes at Deir el-Medineh and granary storage at Amarna (after Janssen 1975; Kemp 1989).

e *incarnated signs*." Although exchanged in smaller quantities, luxury goods played a key role in the language of ostentation and display used in political strategies of recruitment and exclusion. The enhanced social value of these goods created an incentive for long-distance trade to acquire them, particularly on the part of the state, but also the elite and those who aspired to higher social position. The importance of long-distance exchange was therefore all out of proportion in its relation to total production. The increasing demand for such goods through conspicuous consumption led to an expanding need for consumer goods and intensification of local production of commodities for export in Egypt, Nubia, and the ancient Near East and eastern Mediterranean (Sherratt and Sherratt 1991).

Even when such goods acted ostensibly as part of state-level reciprocity in long-distance exchange, seemingly conforming to the substantivist model, a closer reading of these texts shows that economic "profit" was a consideration. In the ancient Near East, the ideology of prestige presents state-sponsored trade in terms of gift exchange. At the same time, however, texts detailing such transactions often dwell on the value of "gifts," and show a lack of concern for the politeness formulae and terminology associated with ceremonial reciprocity (Zaccagnini 1987; Liverani 1990). For example, Burna-Buriash, the King of Babylon, complains "the 20 minas of gold that were brought here were not all there. When they put it into the kiln, not 5 minas of gold appeared" (Moran 1992: 19). There is also evidence that the state economy recognized the forces of supply and demand in the organization of the international trade in luxuries. For example, Egyptian and Mesopotamian traders benefited from a differential in the gold and silver rates in each country (Rowlands 1987). New Kingdom rulers exported so much gold, much

of it mined in Nubia, that the Babylonian economy shifted from a silver to a gold standard (Edzard 1960).

While state ideologies added an important social dimension to such transactions, they nonetheless often had a distinctly commercial character reflecting a maximizing tendency (Marfoe 1987; Appadurai 1986). Oates (1979: 89), drawing on historical and archaeological evidence, suggests that Egyptian gold financed the extensive building programs of contemporary Babylonian kings. Referring to the gold that his ancestor Kurigalzu used to build his palace, Burna-Buriash asked: "As soon as possible, let them take to me much gold that is yours alone. Let them take to me [much gold]! By the end of [this very] year I wish to bring the work to completion quickly." His predecessor Kadashman-Enlil was equally blunt:

> And as to the gold I wrote you about, send me whatever is on hand, as much as possible … right now, in all haste, this summer … so I can finish the work that I am engaged on … But if in the months of Tammuz or Ab you do not send me the gold and [with it] I do not finish the work, what would be the point of your being pleased to send me [gold]?
>
> (Moran 1992: 9)

In the case of Egypt, tribute from conquered territory and trade from independent foreign lands were both referred to as *Inw* by the Egyptian state. Both Egyptians and foreigners presented *Inw* to Pharaoh in a large yearly ceremony (Redford 1967: 120–8; Bleiberg 1984; Müller-Wollermann 1983; contra Liverani 1990: 256–62). Bleiberg (1984) and Müller-Wollermann (1983) view *Inw* as institutionalized gift-giving, symbolizing and reinforcing the king's status with his subjects in both dominated and independent foreign lands (cf. Janssen 1982). This view fits the substantivist model of foreign trade as mainly social in purpose (e.g. Lattimore 1962). I have argued, however, that *Inw* represented an important source of state income, particularly in the sumptuary goods so critical to the internal political economy of Egypt through conspicuous consumption (Smith 1995,1997). I agree that *Inw* was imbued with considerable social significance, but have also argued that the state consciously attempted to increase the amounts presented in the yearly *Inw* ceremony, particularly foreign tribute that played a central role in competitive display and patronage relationships. A nineteenth-dynasty model letter written by a scribe-apprentice illustrates this maximizing tendency on the part of the state (Gardiner 1937: 118–20): "When my letter reaches you, prepare the *Inw* in every respect [a long list of products follows] … Exceed your obligations every year … Think about the day when the *Inw* is sent, and you are brought into the presence [of the king] … ." (cf. Gardiner in Davies 1926: 28; Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991: 211). These references and others like them indicate that the state set minimum levels of *Inw*. Those whose amounts were insufficient would be reprimanded or punished. More importantly for our purposes, those who exceeded their quota would be rewarded, setting a maximizing tone more consistent with the formalist model. Thus, while the

presentation of *Inw* served an important symbolic role in reinforcing and legitimizing the relationship between the king and Egyptian and foreign elites, it would also produce a regular income when applied within Egypt or to a conquered territory like Palestine or Nubia. Egyptian officials at Askut and Tombos not only would be expected to do their part to meet Pharaoh's immediate need for luxuries in a simple state-command economy, but were rewarded if they could help bring about increases in tribute each year.

Historical – and a growing body of archaeological – evidence demonstrates that the actual quantity of goods in both obligatory tribute and trade moving through the ancient Mediterranean littoral on boats and in donkey caravans was large enough to play a significant economic role in state finance, and in meeting the substantial public and private demand for luxuries generated by conspicuous consumption at all levels of Egyptian society. Texts and imported pottery show that high-value bulk goods like wine, olive oil, and aromatic resins formed a significant part of ancient trade from the Bronze Age onwards (Schneider 1977; Marfoe 1987). Even staples like grain traveled on ships from Egypt up the Levantine coast during the Bronze Age. For example, Egyptian grain was sent via boat to the Hittites in Anatolia to meet a demand for grain. A thousand years later, Rome depended on the arrival of the grain fleet from Egypt to feed its population. Only about a third of these grain exports came from Egypt as tribute; the rest were sold to businessmen and government on the international market (Hopkins 1978). Nubia produced some grain, but more important were large herds of cattle, and wood for shipbuilding and construction (Zibelius-Chen 1988). Wood was also shipped in great quantities from Lebanon and Syria to both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Textiles only rarely survive in the archaeological record, but texts from Egypt and the Near East show that they were another high-value bulk good exchanged in quantity and produced by the state, in private workshops, and in individual households (Larsen 1987; Crawford 1973; Kemp 1989; Barber 1994).

The Bronze Age shipwreck at Ulu-Burun (Kas), dating to *c.* 1300 BC, gives us a sense of the amounts exchanged. Its main cargo consisted of over a hundred amphorae of terebinth resin and ingots of both copper and tin. Terebinth was much in demand in Egypt for use as incense in religious ceremonies. Thousands of amphorae with residues remaining were found at Amarna (Serpico and White 1998), Akhenaton's short-lived capital (*c.* 1350–1375 BC). Aegean palace archives record the storage of large quantities of this and other commodities like olive oil, presumably in the large magazine complexes attested archaeologically (Bass 1987; Sanders 1985: 55–79). Bass (1987) and Pulak (1988) estimate that the ship carried some 200 talents (12,000 lbs) of copper. The size of the shipment indicates that it was destined for a large-scale consumer like the Egyptian state. When converted into bronze, the copper and tin could outfit an army with 300 helmets, 300 corselets, 3,000 spears, and 3,000 swords (Bass 1987). The contemporary Egyptian army was divided into major divisions of 5,000 men each. Ramesses II left Egypt to face the powerful Hittites with an army of four such divisions (Kitchen 1982). Metals were a highly liquid way of converting, circulating, and accumulating wealth (Marfoe 1987). We can calculate the value of metal as stored labor through records from Deir el-Medineh, the village of workmen who built the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Wages



Figure 4.3 Map showing key sites and trade routes in the Eastern Mediterranean during the New Kingdom.

are given in measures of grain, for which the value in copper or sometimes silver is given (Janssen 1975). The copper from the Ulu-Burun wreck alone would support 5,000 Egyptian unskilled workers or 900 highly skilled craftsmen for a year.

This shipment was by no means unique. Contemporary correspondence mentions the same amount of copper as part of exchanges with Egypt. Texts from the Syrian coastal city of Ugarit point to a fleet of 150 ships, some with a displacement of 500 tonnes (Heltzer 1978: 150–6; Sanders 1985: 39). Hundreds of ships from Egypt, the Levant, and the Aegean must have sailed around the eastern Mediterranean, up the coast of Syro-Palestine, across the Turkish coast, where the Ulu-Burun ship foundered, through the Aegean, down to the north coast of Egypt, where archeologists have found evidence for storage at Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham (Mersa Matruh, see White and White 1996; Snape 1997), and back to Palestine (Figure 4.3). Luxuries like gold, ebony, and ivory, all of which were found on the Ulu-Burun wreck, flowed into this network on riverboats sailing down the Nile from Nubia. The Nubian gold dedicated yearly to the Temple of Amun at Thebes, a fraction of the total flowing into Egypt, could support from 9,000 to 17,000 unskilled workmen or 1,600 to 3,100 skilled craftsmen for a year, if converted into labor

through standard wages (Smith 1995). The wealth goods flowing in and out of Egypt clearly represented a considerable investment in stored labor, and thus an important resource for the state economy.

Although a state monopoly on trade is often assumed for Egypt (Ekholm and Friedman 1979), there is no real evidence to support such a conclusion and some that contradicts it, like that of Papyrus Anastasi discussed above. Nevertheless, the linear flow of goods through Egypt along the Nile give the state an advantage in managing trade. Massive amounts of goods came to Egypt through the activities of the state, including both tribute and trading missions. The demand for foreign luxuries reached down far below the literate elite. Imported objects and materials were widespread in both domestic and funerary contexts, indicating a lack of sumptuary laws that often characterize pre-modern redistributive economies (Appadurai 1986). Some commodities were even packaged for export to a mass market. For example, Cypriot Base Ring ware containing opiates was made in the shape of a poppy case. Foreign styles became so widely popular that Egyptian potters produced Cypriot, Syro-Palestinian and, Mycenean "knock-offs" locally. Egyptian pottery decoration was heavily influenced by foreign design motifs during the New Kingdom (Figure 4.4; Bourriau 1981).

Imported goods were not always subject to redistribution. Tomb scenes show that trading began at dockside, with both men and women setting up small booths poised for exchanges as soon as the boats landed. Bleiberg (1996) and Janssen (1992) argue that these individuals might be working for state institutions, but this kind of activity is hardly characteristic of centrally organized redistribution. The assortment of goods, and the duplication of items from booth to booth, resemble more closely a modern *suq* where individual craftsmen and farmers come to trade. The Ulu-Burun shipwreck included small quantities of a variety of goods that might have been destined for such exchanges. This provides another example where formalist and substantivist models could coexist. Crews ostensibly carrying large state-sponsored cargoes set aside space for commodities that could be traded for their own benefit. In a similar way, crews on boats sailing from India to the Persian Gulf are allotted space for their own goods, one of the reasons why the profession of sailor is highly desirable.

This discussion has important implications both for imperial policy and individual action on Egypt's Nubian frontier. If we take a formalist position, then the Egyptian state would have been interested in maximizing the acquisition of scarce resources. The acquisition of luxuries from distant lands played a key role in the legitimization of royal authority, but also in the cycles of competition through conspicuous consumption within Egyptian society. The individuals who ran the colony not only served the interests of the state, but also might have taken advantage of their position as middlemen. This position is a much more dynamic one than that taken by the substantivists. Imperial expansion secured control over key trade routes and sources of sumptuary goods desired by the Egyptian state. The colonial communities served as nodes for a complex intersection of state and individual interests, as well as points of contact between Nubians and Egyptians. These interactions cannot be understood, however, without considering the nature of the polities Egypt conquered, as well as the larger geo-political situation in Nubia and the Levant.

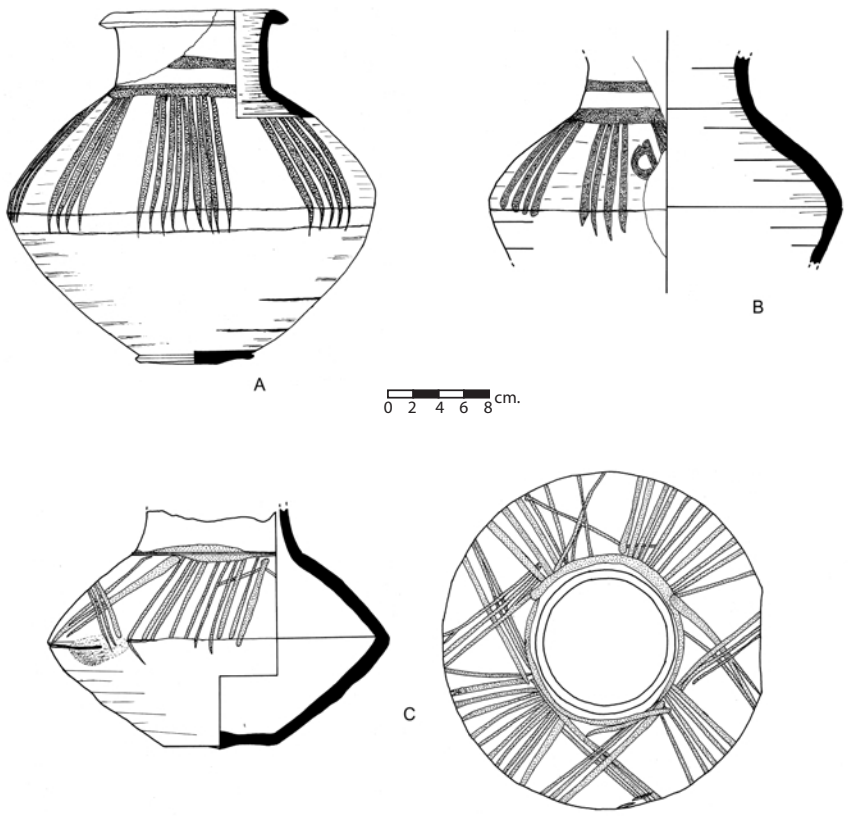


Figure 4.4 Eighteenth-dynasty pottery from Askut with shapes and decoration showing Asiatic influences.

NUBIA IN THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC

Hail to you Khakaure …
Protecting the land, extending your borders,
Overwhelming the foreign lands with your crown …
Slaying the bowmen without striking a blow …
Terror of you strikes the Nubians in their land,
Fear of you slays the Nine Bows.
(*Chorus*) Horus, protecting your border, may you repeat eternity!
Hymn praising Senwosret III, *c.* 1850 BC (Simpson 1972)

Egypt's long relationship with its southern neighbor shows a complex pattern of interactions, which can sometimes be characterized as equal exchange, but often as an empire, shifting from territorial to hegemonic strategies in various regions and contact situations. The Egyptians interacted with three different cultures, delineated by geographical boundaries. The cataracts served as both political and cultural boundaries for the first two groups. The Lower Nubian C-Group lived between the first and second cataracts of the Nile, or Wawat. Before being inundated by the Aswan High Dam, the region supported a population of around 50,000, but in antiquity would have held perhaps 20,000. Its small population and proximity to Egypt made Lower Nubia more susceptible to Egyptian control. After a barren stretch of river known in modern times as the Batn el-Hajar, or "Belly of the Rock," the Egyptians encountered the Kerma civilization, which stretched from the second to fourth cataracts, a region known as Kush, and perhaps extended further south. The Kerma heartland lay between the third and fourth cataracts, which supported a population in the neighborhood of 200,000. In line with Stein's distance–parity model, the conquest of Kerma presented a much more formidable challenge to Egypt. The semi-nomadic Medjay, correlated archaeologically with the Pan-Grave culture, lived in the eastern desert between the Nile and the Red Sea. They had a long history of collaboration with the Egyptians, serving as police and making up elite military units. With these considerations in mind, I will now move on to discussion of the ebb and flow of Egyptian imperialism in Nubia from the Middle Kingdom (*c.* 2050–1650 BC), through the Second Intermediate period (*c.* 1650–1550 BC), and on into the New Kingdom (*c.* 1550–1050 BC).

Extending the borders: the Middle Kingdom (*c.* 2050–1650 BC)

Taking his cue from the thoughtful, pensive expressions on the faces of Middle Kingdom Pharaohs, Wilson (1951: 167, 174) characterized the rulers of this period as passive and more interested in internal development than external expansion. Yet the founder of the Middle Kingdom, Nebhetepre Montuhotep, set the tone for the period by campaigning south into Nubia shortly after reunifying Egypt. He set in motion a process that led to the absorption of Lower Nubia into a territorial empire guarded by some of the most impressive fortifications ever created in the ancient world. The well-preserved walls at Buhen included elaborate systems of revetments, bastions, and towers with specially designed loopholes allowing archers to fire in every direction. In the succeeding reigns, Middle Kingdom Pharaohs built and expanded this series of massive fortresses situated at key population centers along the Nile. The large fortified towns of Buhen and Mirgissa lay at either end of the worst rapids, facilitating and administering trade with the south. Around 1850 BC, Senwosret III completed the consolidation of the new colony when he finished a chain of six massive forts that provided a hardened frontier a few kilometers south of the second cataract. To scholars employing the usual center–

periphery model, the number, scale, and elaborate construction of the fortresses required far more effort than any threat from the Nubian periphery could justify. Thus, given the lack of a credible opponent to the south, Adams (1977) suggested that they represent a kind of hyper-monumentality, a materialization of pharaonic power akin to the pyramids.

The growing evidence for the complexity of the contemporary Kerma culture, however, contradicts this notion (Bonnet 1990; Gues 1991). Recent excavation at the Kushite capital of Kerma has shown that the city was already fortified by the time Egyptian armies marched south from Aswan. This defensive system enclosed a large urban area, including palaces and temple complexes. Contemporary royal tombs in the city's main cemetery demonstrate the ability of these early Kerma kings to mobilize resources in elaborate funerary displays. One tomb was surrounded by rows of cow bucranea, attesting to the slaughter of around 4,000 cattle (Figure 4.5), presumably for a massive funerary feast (Bonnet 1999). Kerma would have posed a serious threat to Egyptian control over Lower Nubia (Williams 1999). Egyptian policy makers must have taken Kerma military power into account in their choice of the second cataract as a boundary. The cataract itself provides a formidable obstacle – virtually impregnable when the fort system was fully manned. Immediately upstream was the barren Batn el-Hajar ("Belly of the Rock"), which would have provided a buffer zone between the Egyptians and their Nubian rival.

Still, we need not completely reject Adams' argument. The whitewashed walls and towers of the massive forts would provide a dramatic materialization of Egyptian power. The forts located behind the frontier dominated the landscape next to the local C-Group's population centers. With names like "Overthrowing the Nubians" (Askut) and "King Khakaure is Powerful" (Semna), the fortresses left no doubt as to Egyptian intentions. The three fortresses and wall system at the Semna cataract unambiguously marked the imperial boundary. Stelae set up by Senwosret III established a territorial frontier restricting the movements of Nubians and southern trade goods across the boundary (Janssen 1953; Smith 1991a). The Egyptians were serious about policing the new frontier. A series of dispatches from desert patrols report that even small groups of Nubians were turned away when they tried to cross the border (Smither 1945), despite in some cases their professed desire to serve Pharaoh.

The forts served on the one hand a purely military role in support of punitive campaigns to the south and as a static defense to prevent violation of the boundary. On the other hand, they also regulated and assisted riverine and overland trade, monitored the local population, and facilitated exploitation of the natural resources of the area (Adams 1984; Trigger 1982; Smith 1991a). The construction and supply of these elaborate colonial outposts must have been very costly. Archaeological and textual evidence shows that by around 1800 BC, Egyptians began to be buried in large numbers in Nubia, including officials and their families. Staffing by permanent settlers would result in greater autonomy for the forts and a saving to the central administration, compared to the old system of centrally supplied rotating garrisons (Smith 1976, 1995).

At the same time, archaeology shows that the local C-Group preserved their distinctly Nubian culture. Before the conquest, Egyptian trade goods and even burial practices were gradually working their way into C-Group funerary customs. This

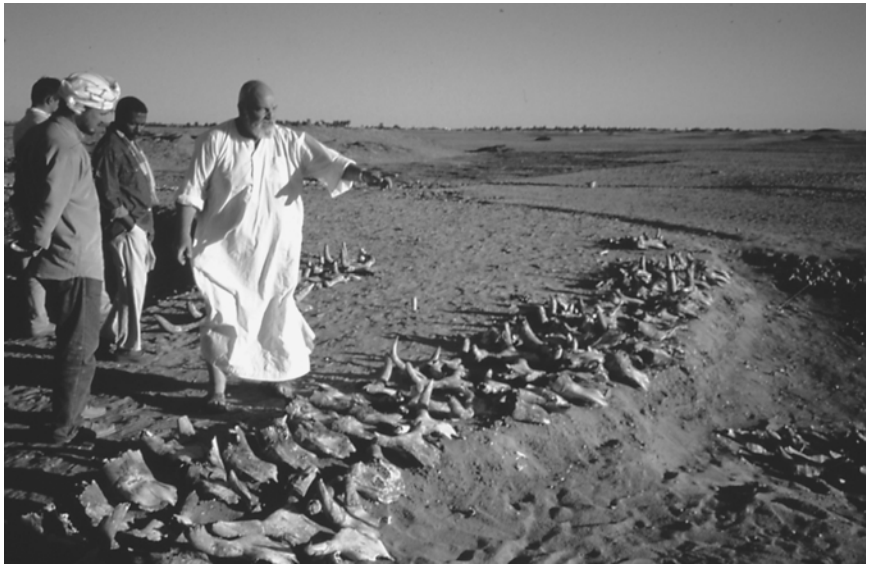


Figure 4.5 Cattle bucranea surrounding the tomb of a Middle Kerma ruler (*c.* 1900 BC).

stopped abruptly once Egypt gained control of Lower Nubia. Imports of both finished goods and raw materials decreased during the occupation, pointing to a general lack of interaction in spite of the fact that the two communities lived in many cases side by side (Säve-Söderbergh 1989: 8–9; Williams 1983: 117). This pattern may reflect a strategy of resistance. Given the realities of Egyptian coercive power, large-scale revolt would be highly risky. Scott (1985) notes that in such cases open rebellion is used only as a last resort. If a revolution failed, death for the conspirators, and a more repressive regime for those who remained behind, would result. The New Kingdom Pharaoh Merneptah records a particularly brutal suppression of rebellion among the C-Group in *c.* 1219 BC:

> The wild lion [Pharaoh] sent the hot blast of his mouth against the land of Wawat [Lower Nubia]. They were destroyed at once. There is no heir to their land, all having been brought to Egypt together. Their chiefs have been set on fire in the presence of their supporters [or relatives?]. As for the rest, the hands of some were cut off because of their crimes; others, their ears and eyes were removed, taken back to Kush and made into heaps in their settlements. Never again will Kush repeat rebellion.
>
> (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991: 3–6)

In the absence of open rebellion, Scott argues that other less overt forms of resistance are employed that do not directly threaten the interests of the dominant group (Scott 1985; Deagan 1998; Armstrong 1998). An emphasis on native ethnic

identity, reflected archaeologically in a more exclusive distribution of material culture, could have provided a means of maintaining native cultural and ideological integrity in the face of such overwhelming force (Rogers 1993). In this way, the C-Group may have opposed the Middle Kingdom occupation by emphasizing their own culture and excluding Egyptian influences, also by refusing participation in the Egyptian economy (Säve-Söderbergh 1989: 6–14; Williams 1991). Hodder (1979) has observed this strategy of ethnic exclusiveness in Kenya. In this case, the two groups continued to interact and trade, using ethnic identity to gain a competitive edge. Several studies have identified the use of ethnicity as a means of resisting outside domination. Athens (1992) suggests that the Cara culture manipulated regional exclusiveness to oppose Inca expansion in highland Ecuador. The Cara focus on ethnicity to promote solidarity in the face of invasion worked for a while, but the more powerful Inca finally conquered them after a long and expensive campaign. Stern (1982: 53 ff.) cites the creation of a common ethnic identity with the Tanquiongos movement resisting Spanish colonialism in sixteenth-century Peru. Along similar lines, Turnbaugh (1993) documents a group of Narragansett Indians who resisted the adoption of European ways in the face of Anglo-American colonial expansion. Farnsworth (1992) sees the decrease in cultural exchange and increase in native cultural continuity among California Indians as a response to the Spanish colonial mission system with its imposed shift from subsistence to production for exchange in the early nineteenth century. In each of these cases the strategy of ethnic emphasis failed. This was ultimately the case for the C-Group as well.

In addition to their lack of cooperation, the Egyptians may have seen the C-Group as unlikely partners in their colonial enterprise. They would fall into Doyle's patrimonial level of organization. Some differentiation would have allowed cultural survival, but the comparative lack of hierarchy would have made them unsuitable for collaboration without substantial intervention from Egypt. O'Connor has argued that the C-Group was more complex than previously recognized. He uses patterning in the C-Group cemetery at Aniba to support his contention. The tumuli only range from around 1–3 m in diameter, however, so both the overall scale and differential between O'Connor's larger and smaller group of tombs are minimal. A comparison with the highly hierarchical pattern in the slightly later Second Intermediate Period tumuli at Kerma points out the lack of evidence for C-Group complexity (Figure 4.6). Regardless, in the end the Egyptians chose largely to bypass the C-Group, whether because of C-Group resistance, lack of complexity, or most likely a combination of both factors.

Serving the Ruler of Kush: the Second Intermediate Period (*c.* 1650–1550 BC)

> The Nobleman Ka … says: I was a valiant servant of the Ruler of Kush; I washed my feet in the waters of Kush among the retainers of the ruler Nedjeh, and I returned safe and sound to my family.
>
> Ka, Commandant of Buhen, *c.* 1600 BC (Säve-Söderbergh 1949)

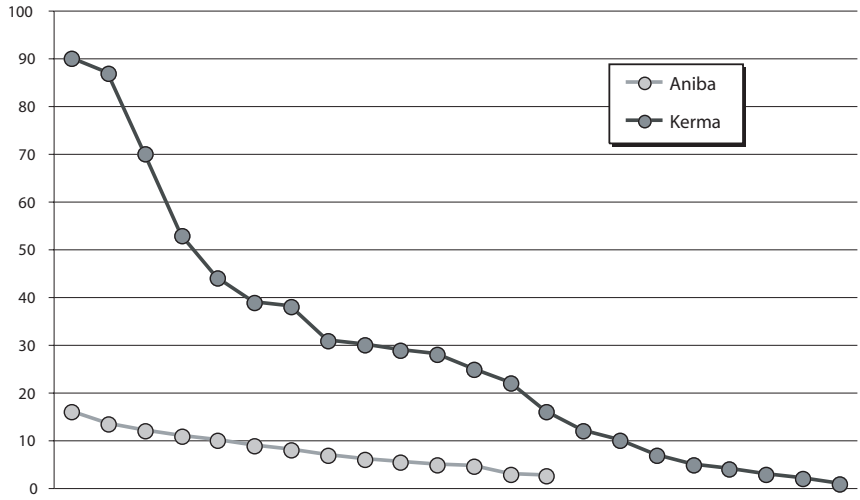


Figure 4.6 Comparison of tumulus size from the C-Group cemetery at Aniba and the eastern cemetery at Kerma (*c.* 1650–1550 BC).

When fully manned, the fort system could deal with any military threat, but Egypt's empire fell to a combination of the growing power of the Hyksos in the Nile delta to the north and Kerma to the south. A fundamental difference between ancient empires and the Modern World System lies in the tendency of imperial cores to promote a complex infrastructure in their peripheries (Smith 1998). As Stein (1999) points out, territorial domination becomes increasingly difficult at a distance given the limited transport capability of ancient times. This policy enabled these early polities to mobilize distant resources at minimal expense to the center. The danger of this strategy lay in the possibility that an increasingly complex periphery might come to challenge the center, especially if they could establish control over access to sources and markets for the raw materials and the trade goods desired by the dominant core (Smith 1998). Egyptian demands for foreign luxury goods were met by direct exploitation in Lower Nubia, but through the Kermans in Upper Nubia and the Middle Bronze Age Hyksos in Syro-Palestine. This demand stimulated production for export and, as a result, complexity in both areas.

By around 1680 BC, the Hyksos emerged as a power at the city of Avaris, taking over more and more responsibility for the northern trade. In the south, the Kerman rulers had consolidated their hold over Upper Nubia. No one knows exactly what happened next. The ancient Egyptians tell of a swift Hyksos invasion that deposed the last ruler of the thirteenth dynasty. Yet excavations at Avaris show that the Hyksos had thrived there for generations before the collapse of the Middle Kingdom. One possibility is that the Hyksos and Kermans made contact through either the Red Sea or the

Oasis route through the Sahara, bypassing Egypt. A somewhat later diplomatic letter indicates that the Ruler of Kerma had reached a direct accommodation with the Hyksos king (Van Seters 1966: 165–9), effectively bypassing the new Theban dynasty. Out of convenience trade continued to flow through Upper Egypt (Bourriau 1991), but Kerma's northern connection gave them alternatives that would have shifted the balance of power between them. Kerma and Avaris could form a powerful alliance, cutting off direct Egyptian access both to northern and southern trade. This would have given each side a military advantage as well as the possibility of denying the Egyptians access to foreign prestige goods, thus disrupting the political economy. The capacity of the central authority to maintain prestige through display and patronage relationships through the redistribution of luxuries would be compromised, and thus the ability of the state to resist Hyksos and Kerma hegemony weakened.

Regardless, by the end of the thirteenth dynasty the Kermans moved into Lower Nubia, not in a violent conquest as has often been suggested, but by coopting the old Egyptian infrastructure of fortress-settlements (Smith 1995). The old boundaries proved surprisingly resilient under the new regime. Kerma's boundary expanded north to the first cataract, simply absorbing the Lower Nubian colony. Archaeologically, Kermans are attested in small numbers in Lower Nubia through their distinctive burial practices, but the colony was run using a hegemonic strategy coopting Egyptian administrators like Ka and Sepedhor of Buhen, the descendants of the colonists who had established the Middle Kingdom fortress system over a hundred years before. Their stelae indicate clearly that they had shifted their allegiance from Pharaoh to the Kerman Ruler of Kush (Säve-Söderbergh 1949).

Walter Emery, the excavator of Buhen, interpreted a massive fiery destruction layer there as evidence for a violent overthrow by the forces of the Ruler of Kush (Emery *et al.* 1979: 3, 92; Smith 1976: 80–5). Adams argues, however, that the evidence need not indicate a sack by Kerma armies, but simply deliberate or accidental burning while the site was occupied or upon its abandonment by the Egyptian garrison. Emery's interpretation of the stratigraphy at Buhen is flawed (Smith 1995). For example, he argues that Kerma pottery associated with burnt levels points to the culprit, reflecting the presence of Kerma "squatters" in the ruins. Yet, as Bourriau (1991) points out, one can hardly imagine Sepedhor trying to maintain an elite lifestyle in such a context. Sepedhor boasts (Säve-Söderbergh 1949): "I was a valiant Commandant of Buhen, and never did any commandant do what I did; I built the temple of Horus, Lord of Buhen, to the satisfaction of the Ruler of Kush." Why would he build a new temple in a ruin? In fact, the destruction layers seal deposits of Kerma pottery, leading to exactly the opposite conclusion, that the destruction took place *after* Kerma had established control. I have pointed out that at Askut there is no evidence of violent overthrow and every indication that the fort was continuously occupied. In fact, none of the second cataract forts, including Mirgissa, shows any solid evidence of a siege, and several show strong evidence for continuity (Smith 1995). Yet this powerful chain of forts was designed especially to stop an invading force from the south and so should have borne the brunt of the first Kerma assault.



Figure 4.7 Bronze foundry at Kerma with the settlement and Deffufa in the background.

There is also evidence of continuity at Buhen. H. S. Smith traced the family of Ka and Sepedhor back to the thirteenth dynasty, when Egypt was still in control of the fortresses. In order to reconcile their continuing presence with an attack on Buhen, he suggested that they betrayed the fort to the conquering army, explaining the apparent ease with which the Kermans breached such powerful defensive works (Smith 1976: 80–5). They did replace another family in the office of commandant, but this need not indicate that Sepedhor's father turned traitor. It could rather reflect a shift in politics at a crucial transition. This reconstruction is consistent with the evidence for continuity from Askut and the other forts. The Egyptian colonial communities and the Kermans had everything to gain from cooperation after the collapse of the thirteenth dynasty. The Egyptians had generations of experience as intermediaries, and, as we will see below, close contacts with Kermans. It is a measure of the trust that Kerma rulers like Nedjeh placed in leaders like Ka of Buhen that only liaisons and light garrisons were established in Lower Nubia, with the main concentrations at Saras, located at the second cataract and Faras at the entrance to the Wadi Allaqi gold fields. Just as under the kings of the late Middle Kingdom, the brunt of both defense and trade was still undertaken by the expatriates. This is in itself more consistent with a system taken over intact than one rebuilt after a hiatus.

The Kermans adopted a sophisticated imperial strategy in their conquest of Lower Nubia, coopting the Egyptian colonial elite at a minimal cost to the Kerman core. Egyptologists have had some difficulty in accepting Kerma as a sophisticated civilization capable of this kind of diplomatic finesse. This attitude is in part the relic of a

colonialist mentality prevalent throughout much of the twentieth century that characterized sub-Saharan cultures in primitivist terms. These views resonated with Egyptian texts that emphasized the foreigner *topos*, giving the impression that Egyptians would never defect *en masse* into the service of Nubian "wretched Kush." But if the Kermans did not invade, then who did sack Buhen? The most likely candidate is the Egyptian army of Kamose, bent on eliminating any threat from the south before beginning the final push against the Hyksos. His army, honed in the ongoing war against the Hyksos, would have been well equipped to reduce the fortifications around Buhen. The second cataract forts would block an attack by a large force coming from Kerma, but an invading Egyptian army could easily bypass the fortresses between Aswan and Buhen. The second cataract, however, would block all progress south, and Buhen would have provided a natural rallying point for the dispersed Kerma forces.

This reconstruction also solves the problem of the Buhen horse, which was found at the base of the Middle Kingdom defense walls under burnt debris related to the fort's sack. Emery therefore dated it to the late thirteenth dynasty. Horses are otherwise unattested in the Middle Kingdom, and chariot warfare, the usual employment for horses, is nowhere mentioned or depicted. Yet the Buhen horse had been broken to a bit, implying that it was part of a chariot team (Clutton-Brock 1974). Even if horses were used that early, which is doubtful, what would it be doing on the Nubian frontier? A horse would, however, be *expected* to appear in the army led by Kamose in the late seventeenth dynasty, when chariot warfare had become the norm. In this case, the horse would have died during or just after the assault and been buried in the destruction debris.

The rise of Kerma is often explained as the result of Egyptian weakness (Emery 1965: 166–74), but excavations by Charles Bonnet demonstrate that that by the middle of the seventeenth century BC Kerma was a power to be reckoned with. The capital contains all the hallmarks of an early state, including an expanded and heavily fortified urban center with monumental architecture (Figure 4.7), central storage, and institutions involved in the production of food for redistribution (O'Connor 1993; Bonnet 1988). There is also evidence for marked social differentiation both within the settlement and especially in the cemetery (Figure 4.8). The tombs are much larger than during the Middle Kerma phase and, along with cows, up to 400 sacrificial human victims accompanied the Kerman Ruler of Kush into the afterlife (Reisner 1923; Gues 1991). Egyptian imports, including both large and small statuary, were given a prominent place in these tombs. Lacovara (1987) and Bourriau (1991) trace the increasing use of Egyptian objects, technologies, and ideology from the Middle through Classic Kerma periods. Locally rare prestige items, often imported from Egypt, were passed down the social hierarchy and presumably figured prominently in ceremonies of legitimization. To the extent that the Kerman rulers could control these socially critical resources, they could monopolize political power. In this way, the rest of society would depend on them for the objects and symbolism that define and create social status (cf. Schortman and Urban 1992: 153).

Intangibles were also borrowed from the Egyptian colonists in Lower Nubia. For example, an Egyptian administrative sealing system was adopted at Kerma, not just to secure containers, nor in simple imitation of Egyptian practices, but to provide the



Figure 4.8 Royal Tumulus K III taken from atop the cemetery Deffufa (K II).

accounting system to manage state storage (Smith 1996). The massive Deffufas at the heart of the urban center and in the cemetery were constructed using Egyptian mud-brick architecture, and were embellished with Egyptian symbolism (Figure 4.9). Egyptian faience technology was used to produce amulets, vessels, and architectural elements (Lacovara 1998). Egyptian ceramic styles and decorative motifs were also borrowed. This was, however, not a straightforward acculturation to Egyptian norms. The Kermans very deliberately chose specific motifs, practices, and technologies for their own purposes, sometimes modifying or blending them with native motifs and technologies to suit Kerman cultural norms (Smith 1998). This broad borrowing and modification of Egyptian objects, motifs, architectural styles, ideology, and practices enhanced the growing power of the Kerman ruler and elites. Contact with Egypt gave them a powerful set of administrative, economic, and iconographic/ideological tools to effect the strong centralization present in the Classic Kerma period. The colonists manning the fortress system likely played a key role in the transmission of these features (Smith 1996), setting the stage for Kerma's expansion into an empire.

Like a panther among the cattle: the New Kingdom (*c.* 1550/1500–1050 BC)

> Year 2, second month of the first season, fifteenth day, under the majesty of Horus … the King of Upper and Lower Egypt A'kheperka-Re, Son of Re Thutmose, living forever and ever … He has overthrown the Ruler of Kush, the



Figure 4.9 Egyptian-style winged uraeas from the fallen lintel of K III.

> Nubian is defenseless in his grasp … like a young panther among the fleeing cattle; the fame of his majesty blinded them.
>
> Thutmose I, *c.* 1500 BC (after Breasted 1906:II: 30)

Resurgent under the militaristic Pharaohs of the New Kingdom, the Egyptian state again expanded southwards, reconquering Lower Nubia, defeating the Hyksos, and recapturing the Nile delta by 1550 BC. Thutmose I sacked Kerma itself in 1500 BC, establishing a new southern boundary at Kurgus, near the fifth cataract. He also marked the third cataract at Tombos with a large stela and several small inscriptions visible to anyone traveling north down the Nile (Figure 4.10). In the north, he pursued the defeated the Hyksos into Syro-Palestine, pushing as far north as the Euphrates in Western Asia. At its height, the New Kingdom empire included both Upper and Lower Nubia and most of the Levant. In the south, the old administrative boundaries keyed to the cataracts again proved durable. The administration of Nubia was placed under a single official, the Viceroy of Kush, who lived in Egypt at Thebes until the later New Kingdom, when he was based at Aniba. The Viceroy had two "deputies," one in charge of Wawat and the other in charge of Kush, recognizing the geographical and cultural divisions of Lower and Upper Nubia respectively. Nubians rose as high as the rank of "deputy," and filled many of the posts in the colonial administration. Beneath them, Nubian princes administered the countryside, and mayors managed urban centers, including most of the old fortress communities.

The new colonial administration coopted C-Group elites, using them to restructure completely Lower Nubian society along Egyptian lines. The Second Intermediate Period represented a prosperous time for the C-Group, allowing them to reach a much



Figure 4.10 Small stela of Thutmose I at Tombos.

greater degree of complexity (O'Connor 1991). At the same time, however, foreign influences from the Kermans, Egyptians, and Medjay eroded C-Group ethnic solidarity, making them vulnerable to manipulation by Egypt through a deliberate policy of coopting local leaders. The new Nubian bureaucratic elite depict themselves in their tombs and monuments with all the markers of Egyptian ethnicity. In layout, decoration, and grave goods, their tombs are identical to their counterparts in Egypt. Säve-Söderberg (1991) suggested that the three native princes might actually have been Medjay appointed by the Egyptians to replace C-Group leaders. Regardless of the identity of the princes, Egyptian rapidly replaces Nubian material culture, architecture, and modes of burial throughout Lower Nubia in a deliberate campaign of cultural assimilation. The once dispersed population was concentrated in towns, often located at the old Middle Kingdom forts. Egyptian gods, usually Horus, Lord of such a place, or Hathor, Lady of that place, replaced native deities in each community.

The continuing presence of Egyptians in Nubia may help to explain the rapid acculturation of the Nubian elite, who gradually brought the rest of Nubian society into the Egyptian cultural sphere. Säve-Söderbergh and Troy (1991) document this process for the principality of Tehkhet through an assessment of the quantity and quality of grave goods at the cemetery of Fadrus (Figure 4.11). At the beginning of the eighteenth dynasty (*c.* 1550 BC), small numbers of Nubians acculturated without a marked differential between wealth groups. The jump in mid- and especially low-status burials in the mid-eighteenth dynasty reflects the acculturation of the broad populace. The number of elite burials holds constant, but they now make up a small

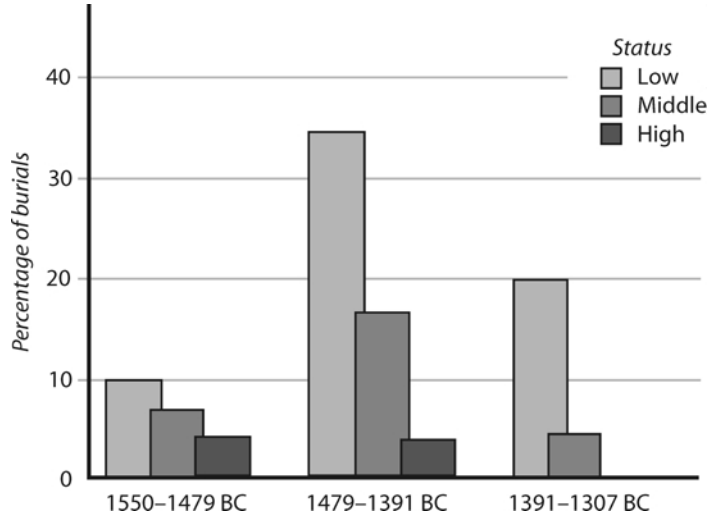


Figure 4.11 Pace of acculturation at Fadrus (after Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991).

minority of the overall cemetery population. By the late eighteenth dynasty, all of the burials are relatively impoverished and the elites drop out altogether, represented now only in the burials of officials at the Egyptian centers, as large private and temple estates managed by the elite replaced the more egalitarian socio-economic structure of the C-Group.

Barry Kemp (1978, 1997) argues that the cosmopolitan, bureaucratic mindset of the scribal elite determined this acculturation strategy. Citing an ideological imperative to "expand the existing," articulated earlier in the poem praising Senwosret quoted above, Kemp sees imperial occupation facilitating the extension of Egyptian elite scribal culture abroad and creating order from chaos by "taming" the ethnic "other" through social and religious assimilation (Figure 4.12). This strategy would produce a widespread "patrimonial" empire, in Eisenstadt's (1979) terms. This patrimonial model has important implications historically and archaeologically. Colonial administrators should have placed a premium on assimilation to Egyptian cultural norms. This is exactly what happened in Lower Nubia. For Kemp's patrimonial model to hold true, however, it should also apply to Egypt's empire in Upper Nubia and ideally also in Syro-Palestine.

Kemp's model draws upon the common assumption that Egypt's highly intrusive acculturation strategy in Lower Nubia applied to the rest of Egypt's empire. Both Breasted (1909: 561) and later Emery (1965: 206–8) assumed that all of Nubia assimilated to an inherently superior Egyptian culture. Similarly, Trigger (1976: 110) argued that the Egyptians viewed both Kerma and the C-Group as barbarians, so they completely reorganized their cultures along Egyptian lines. A series of semi-fortified settlements was established between the second and third cataracts. These towns were centered on large stone

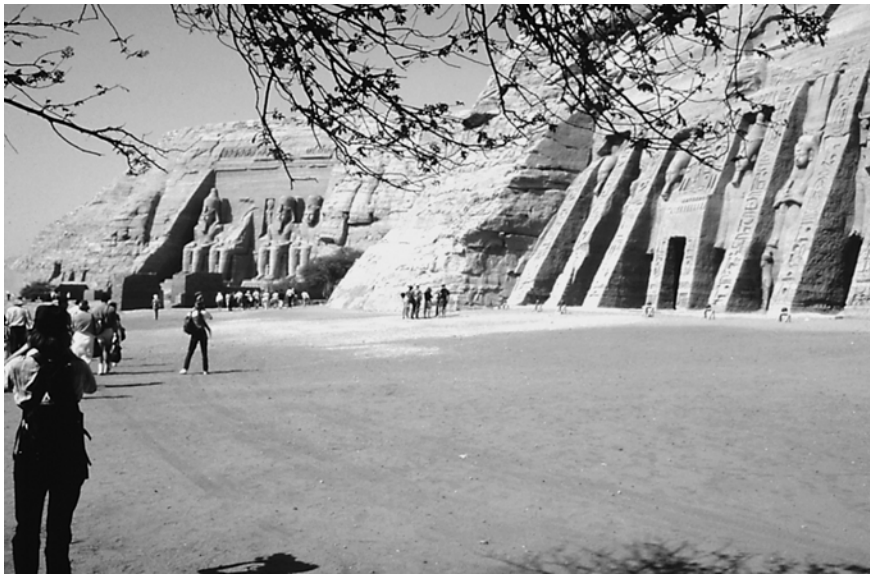


Figure 4.12 Temples of Ramesses II and his Great Wife Nofretari at Abu Simpel.

temple complexes, which probably also served as nodes for state storage and redistribution. It is not clear, however, whether these towns contained substantial numbers of Egyptianized Nubians or were occupied by Egyptians along similar lines to the Middle Kingdom fortress system in Lower Nubia. Even less clear is whether any substantial Egyptian presence existed south of the third cataract, the Kerman heartland. Adams (1977: 239–44) notes the lack of information on the New Kingdom colony in Upper Nubia and comments on the resilience of Nubian culture in the south. While ultimately arguing for extensive Egyptianization, O'Connor (1993: 65) also comments on the lack of available archaeological data to support acculturation in the south.

The UCLA (now UCSB) Dongola Reach Expedition sought to address this problem through an archaeological survey along the west bank of the Nile, stretching from Hannek at the third cataract 140 km south to Khandaq (Figure 4.13). The project employed a combination of vehicle and foot survey from January to March 1997 with a short follow-up in January 1998. Sites were sampled by surface collection of diagnostic pottery and other artifacts. Three environmental zones were sampled: the inundated land next to the river, the desert margin, and the desert proper. The first two zones were narrow in the southern half of the concession, with inundated land disappearing altogether at wadis Nimeiri, Sahaba, and Khandaq. The area closest to the river was usually under heavy cultivation and therefore inaccessible. No sites were identified in the spots that could be surveyed: hardly surprising considering that the rich alluvial soils were probably always used for agriculture. Most of the sites were located at the desert margin or on low cobble-covered hills overlooking the floodplain. Walking survey using 10-m

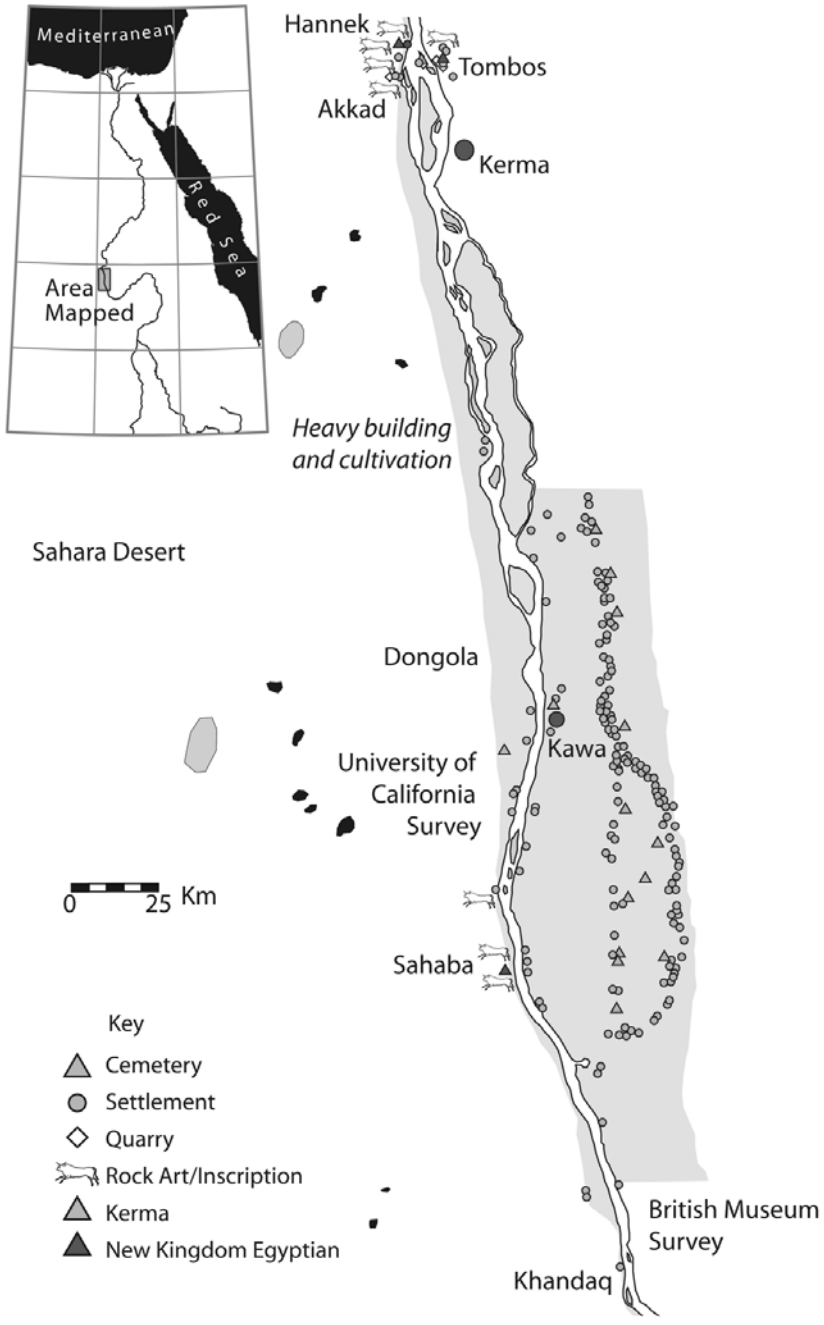


Figure 4.13 Distribution of Kerma sites in the northern Dongola Reach.

interval transects was extensively employed here. The area from Dongola to Akkad is under heavy development by large agricultural schemes and, since most of the fields were under cultivation, they could not be surveyed. Where possible, open areas were walked in transects, but these opportunities were rare, explaining the small number of sites identified. The desert proper consisted of an undulating plain covered by gravel and cobbles with occasional ferracritic sandstone outcrops. This zone was surveyed mostly by vehicle in north-to-south running transects. Although archaeological visibility was excellent, very few sites were identified. A brief reconnaissance was made to the Wadi el-Qa'ab, where the cobbled surface turns into a sandy desert with dunes fed by wind erosion from ferracritic sandstone mountains. This deep desert was apparently barren, although evidence of lakebeds and Neolithic occupation was found in the Wadi el-Qa'ab itself. An Islamic fortress and enclosures may be related to the famous Darb el-Arba'in, or "40 days' road" that led from Darfur to Asyut in Egypt.

The survey recorded a total of 101 sites with 135 occupation phases ranging from the Neolithic through the Islamic period. A total of 18 Kerma sites were distributed more or less regularly through the survey area, including occupation scatters, settlements, and cemeteries with characteristic oval tumuli. The gap in the site distribution between Sahaba and Sori corresponds to a narrowing of the floodplain. In the absence of natural irrigation from the Nile and artificial irrigation from the *saqqia*, a waterwheel introduced much later, cultivation would not have been possible. The low number of sites found between Dongola and Akkad reflects the reduction in archaeological visibility caused by agricultural development in the area, rather than an actual absence of settlement. Kerma sites reappeared regularly once the irrigation schemes ended at north Akkad. Most Kerma settlements consisted of concentrations of sherds, groundstone and occasionally lithics and other artifacts (Figure 4.14). As is common in Kerma settlements identified on the other side of the river (Welsby 1996a), there was no obvious surface indication of structures apart from the rare appearance of stone foundations, in our case only with several large stone casemate-style alignments at Hannek (Figure 4.18). Kerma cemeteries were rare and much smaller than those found on the east bank opposite, with distinct superstructures appearing only at Sahaba and Hannek. Ceramics provide evidence for a long, continuous occupation, from the *Ancien* to *Classique* phases (*c.* 2400–1000 BC). Seven sites had been occupied over very long periods of time, in several cases stretching from the Neolithic through the Kerma *Classique*. A mixture of Egyptian and Nubian ceramics in a cemetery at Sahaba, and the settlement and cemetery at Hannek, indicates that they overlapped with the New Kingdom, lasting into the Napatan period when Nubian kings became Pharaohs (*c.* 750–650 BC). The Egyptian-style ceramics include both Nile silt fabrics, which could have been made locally, and Marl clay fabrics, which must have come from Egypt (Arnold and Bourriau 1993).

The cemetery at Sahaba (UCLA 97.40) consisted of several widely spaced tumuli and clusters of possible burials (Figures 4.15 and 4.16). Area A consisted of several small, rough stone circles across the top of a sandstone hill. There were indications of up to a dozen burials. These possible pit tombs were scattered across the top of the ridge. Sherds of small Egyptian-style wheel-thrown dishes and miniature beer bottles were scattered

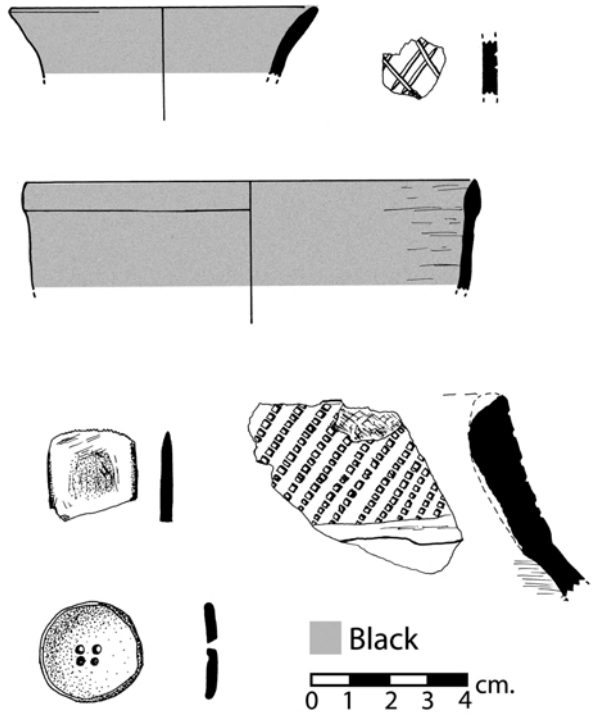


Figure 4.14 Ceramics and finds from the UCLA Dongola Reach survey.

across the surface. Several could be almost completely reconstructed, perhaps indicating a smashing ceremony or votive offering left on the surface (Figure 4.17 A–E, G, H). A hand-made simple, polished Nubian bowl was similar to sherds from Hannek, and probably dates to the later New Kingdom colonial period (Figure 4.17 F). Similar to Area A, Area C consisted of a scatter of sherds across the top of a cobble hill. Rough circles and mounds of sandstone may mark three burials. Tumulus B was 6.10 m in diameter, and approximately 70 cm tall. In contrast with the more carefully prepared tumuli at Kerma, this structure consisted of a rough conical mound of largish sandstone blocks, ranging from $70 \times 30 \times 25$ cm to $15 \times 10 \times 5$ cm. Classic Kerma-style pottery predominates with some Egyptian imports, which point to a date in the early New Kingdom (Figure 4.17 I–O). The well-constructed Tumulus D sits upon a natural hill created by a sandstone outcrop, part of which was incorporated into the structure. The tumulus is 5.7 m in diameter, with a smaller 3.7 m stone circle to the east that may or may not be an ancient structure. Pottery and bone were scattered on the surface, concentrated along the south side of the tumulus. The tumulus is constructed of largish sandstone blocks (ranging from 10 – 5 cm square). The pottery was very similar to Tumulus B, except somewhat less distinctive and less in quantity. Tumulus E is 5.7 m in diameter, roughly constructed of stones comparable to Tumulus B. Pottery dating to

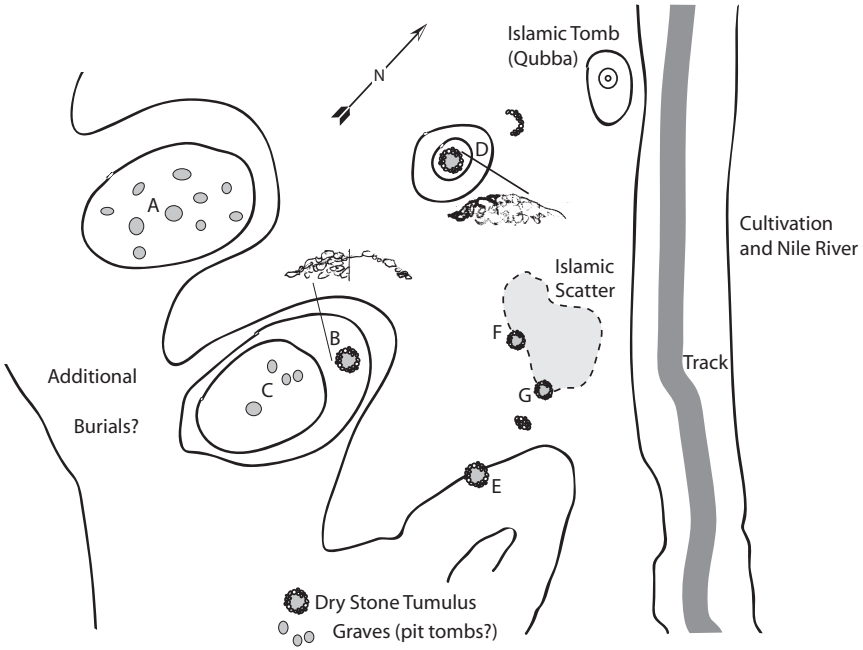


Figure 4.15 Sketch plan of the Nubian cemetery at Sahaba.



Figure 4.16 Sahaba Tumulus B.

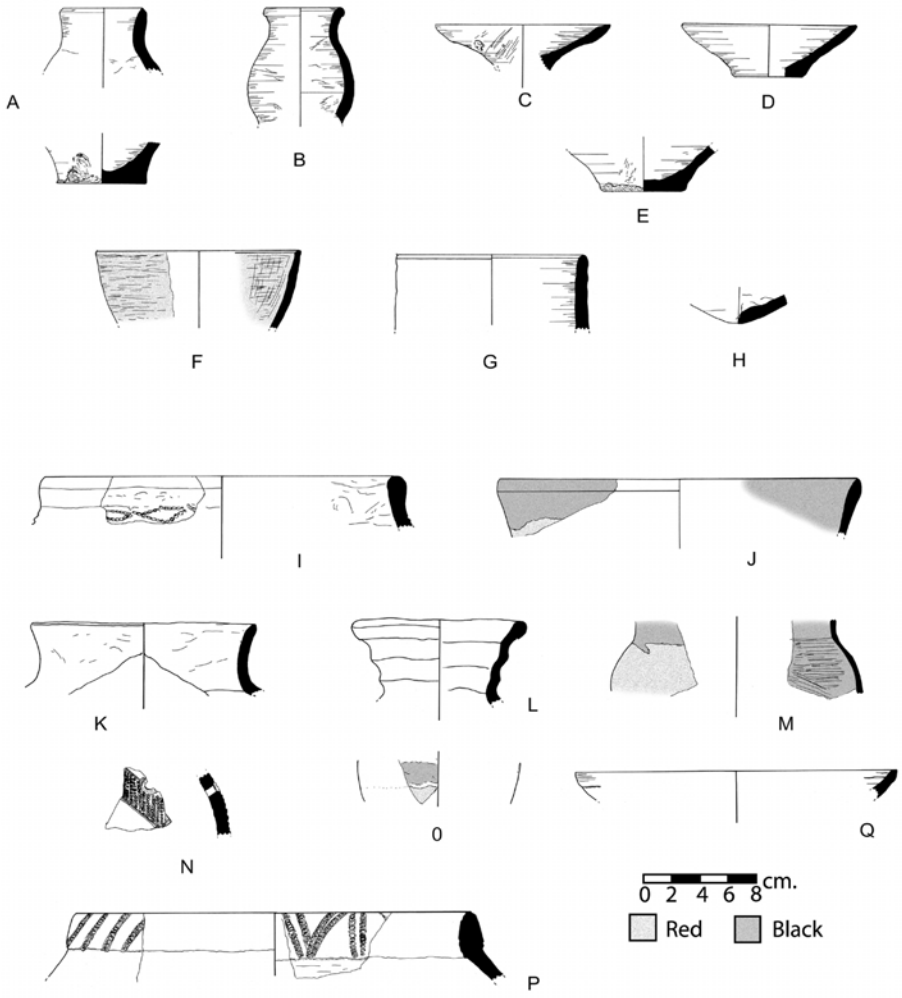


Figure 4.17 Egyptian and Nubian ceramics from Sahaba.

the Classic Kerma period was scattered to the north-west (Figure 4.17 P, Q). Tumuli F and G had both been badly disturbed by modern activity.

The cemetery at Hannek (UCLA 97.97) contained a group of four tumuli of 5 – 7 m built of circular rings of small- to medium-sized square granite chips. These superstructures resemble the tumuli at Sahaba more than those at Kerma. The site is on a low alluvial rise next to a field, and has suffered some superficial disturbance. Because of surface disturbance, including some likely Islamic graves nearby, more burials like areas A and C at Sahaba and even tumuli may originally have existed for which there is now no surface indication. Surface ceramics consist of a similar mix of Classic Kerma



Figure 4.18 Walls at Hannek.

and Egyptian ceramics, indicating a date in the Second Intermediate Period and perhaps continuing into the early New Kingdom. One of the existing tumuli is larger and more complex than the others, with outer rings of stone for a more massive effect or to accommodate subsidiary burials. The largest tumulus at Hannek is larger than those at Sahaba, but overall they are comparable. Tumuli of this size might belong to minor local elites, and would consist of individual burials, rather than the larger group burials common in contemporary Egypt. In each case, Nubian-style tumulus burials extend at least into the early New Kingdom. Although the later burials at Sahaba lacked tumuli, they appear to continue the Nubian practice of individual burial and attest to the continuation of Nubian ceramic traditions.

A thin scatter of sherds extends across the modern track at Hannek to a Kerma settlement site located at the southern end of a granite outcrop (97.98). In the settlement, the densest concentration of sherds occurs amongst the stones of a granite outcrop, and adjacent to a series of substantial foundations for walls and/or buildings. Several of these are over a meter wide and employed casemate construction, with two lines of larger granite boulders filled in with smaller stones and chips. Both the walls and pottery continued to the south and east, ending very close to the river channel. The largest walls run perpendicular to the river. A large cow graffito was placed on a prominent boulder overlooking the site. Surface collection from the settlement and cemetery shows an occupation lasting from the Classic Kerma through the Napatan Period (*c.* 1650–600 BC). Surface pottery from both sites, while mostly Nubian, contained a significant amount of Egyptian pottery. Like the cemeteries, there is no

particular indication of Egyptianization, although there was clearly at least some Egyptian influence.

No actual Egyptian colonial sites were found during the survey. This confirms a pattern already noted by Derek Welsby (1996a) for the Wadi el Khowi on the east bank opposite my own survey. He found dozens of sites aligned along a system of ancient Nile channels that would have provided a fertile zone for agriculture and grazing in what is today desert. A number of these sites continue into the New Kingdom, yet none reflects the dramatic acculturation seen further north in Lower Nubia. Surveys by Jacques Reinold (1993) for the Kerma basin, and Krys Grzymski (1987,1997) for the Letti basin produced similar results. None of these expeditions uncovered evidence for a substantial Egyptianized imperial culture or even colonial occupation south of the third cataract. The only clearly Egyptian sites are at Tombos (Edwards and Salih 1994), Kawa (Macadam 1949), and Gebel Barkal (Dunham and Reisner 1970). The small number of Egyptian colonial sites rules out for Upper Nubia the massive intervention and acculturation seen further north in Lower Nubia. Instead, the results of all the recent surveys in the Dongola Reach support a model of hegemonic domination as opposed to the territorial incorporation and acculturation seen in the north.

If we relied only on historical sources, we would similarly conclude that Egypt's New Kingdom imperial policy in Syro-Palestine was one of territorial conquest along the lines suggested by Kemp's patrimonial model. Archaeological evidence, however, suggests a very different explanation. Like Upper Nubia, the Egyptians maintained control of large areas of Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria through a policy that encouraged local autonomy so long as Egyptian economic and political goals were met (Redford 1992; Higginbotham 2000). The Egyptian presence in Syro-Palestine was limited to small garrisons, with local affairs continuing in the hands of independent vassal states with Egyptian military, diplomatic, and/or commercial officials acting as liaisons. Many conquered cities in Israel and Palestine remained unfortified after being besieged by Egyptian armies, presumably as a deliberate policy to keep the southern part of their northern empire vulnerable to Egyptian military force. The Amarna Letters reflect the use of Near Eastern diplomatic conventions in establishing Egypt's imperial infrastructure. Conquered cities were treated as vassals and could not treat with outside powers without permission from their Egyptian overlords. Local princes supplied an annual tribute of sumptuary goods as well as food and sometimes levies for military campaigns.

As was also the case in Nubia, sons of local rulers were taken as hostages to Egypt and trained at court in a classic method of coopting elites reminiscent of modern British imperialism. Otherwise there was no particular interest in acculturation. As Redford points out, these coopted princes trod a thin line between their Egyptian overlords and local populations, and so could not have maintained too strong an Egyptian ethnicity for fear of appearing too subservient to Egyptian interests. Although some sites show Egyptian influence, Higginbotham (2000) has demonstrated that these borrowings represent elite emulation and adaptation of imported features, rather than cultural assimilation, much like that taking place at Kerma in the Second Intermediate Period. Egyptian architecture, symbolism, and practices were adapted to suit local needs, and were used to create and maintain prestige at home

more than to please their Egyptian overlords. She also argues strongly for the political autonomy of the Syro-Palestinian vassals, at least in local affairs. Against conventional Egyptological wisdom, her analysis of Egyptian texts relating to imperial administration shows that there were no permanently settled Egyptian governors. Instead, "Overseers of Foreign Lands" and "Royal Envoys," who were based in Egypt, acted as traveling commissioners implementing imperial policy.

The most intensive evidence for direct Egyptian control lies along the "Ways of Horus," later the *Via Maris* (Figure 4.3), a key trade route running along the coastal plain of Israel (Higginbotham 2000). Texts show that an administrative center was established at Gaza in southern Palestine, which operated as a base of operations for southern Palestine. The site of Beth Shean, lying in the Jezreel valley, united the coastal route with an inland trade route running through the Jordan valley. Excavations at the latter provide a rare example of an Egyptian colonial site, with Egyptian-style architecture and burial in mummiform coffins. Even here, however, approximately three-quarters of the pottery is of local types (James and McGovern 1993: 238). Egyptian pottery predominates at Dier el-Balah, although local types form a significant component of the ceramic assemblage. Although several sites contained an Egyptian-style building, only Beth Shean has more than one. Only a small number of Egyptian military and administrative personnel was actually resident in Syro-Palestine, probably only at Beth Shean, Deir el-Balah, Gaza, and Jaffa (Higginbotham 2000: 127–38).

Higginbotham (123) notes that this pattern contrasts sharply with New Kingdom Nubia. It is, however, consistent with the pattern south of the third cataract, suggesting a similar hegemonic policy that left both Asiatic and Nubian vassals to rule their territories on behalf of Pharaoh in southern Upper Nubia at Tombos, Kawa, Gebel Barkal, and perhaps Kurgus, although it is not clear whether any permanent settlement accompanied the boundary stelae and the many inscriptions of Egyptian officials found there. Recent excavations show that while Kerma itself was sacked and burnt, confirming the historical accounts of Thutmose I, the site nonetheless remained an important political and economic center (Bonnet 1990). The local leaders who remained loyal to Egypt are depicted in a similar hybrid dress as the Lower Nubians, which may indicate a degree of acculturation, but even at Kerma Egyptian material culture is sporadic and native traditions continue. As noted above, the sites at Sahaba and Hannek also reflect the survival of the Kerma culture, as do sites within the area surveyed by the British Museum team (Welsby 1996a). Local rulers in this area, like the princes of Syro-Palestine, may have been allowed a degree of autonomy as long as the trade and tribute flowed steadily northward. Some Egyptian material culture and cultural practices may have been adopted, but in a selective and adaptive strategy more characteristic of transculturation than assimilative acculturation (Smith 1998; Ortiz 1940), Higginbotham's (2000) "elite emulation" in Syro-Palestine. The selective adoption of Egyptian elements would allow the Kerma elite to draw prestige from the power of their Egyptian overlords. This strategy could backfire, however, if the Kerma leaders were perceived as too completely aligned with Egyptian interests. Retaining Kerma features and especially burial practices would reinforce local ties and

avoid potential reprisals from a nativist movement of resistance like the Tanquiongos in Peru (Stern 1982).

Although ideology portrays a unity of imperial policy ultimately stretching from the Middle through the New Kingdom, archaeological evidence and a more nuanced interpretation of texts paints a highly complex picture of Egyptian imperial dynamics. The degree of direct control imposed by Egypt under the new colonial regime correlates directly with the distance and difficulty of travel, and complexity of the existing native polity, supporting Stein's distance–parity model. Thu,s in both the Middle and New Kingdom, we see a policy of strong intervention. In complex and somewhat more remote Syro-Palestine and southern Upper Nubia, the Egyptians adopted a hegemonic approach that gained maximum economic advantage from minimal imperial intervention and therefore investment. Egyptian settlements south of the third cataract are rare and keyed to strategic points of control: Tombos and Gebel Barkal controlling either end of the Dongola Reach at the third and fourth cataract, and Kawa at a key juncture between natural agricultural basins and most likely upon a desert trade route cutting across the great bend in the Nile.

The above discussion allows us to situate Askut and Tombos within the context of the larger economic considerations and geo-political developments of the second millennium BC. An analysis of the archaeological record at Askut and Tombos will allow us to examine the dynamics of contact and ethnicity in several different social and political contexts. Askut allows for a diachronic study of identity within domestic and ritual contexts in an Egyptian colonial community across nearly the full span of the second millennium, changing from a position lying directly on a militarized border during the Middle Kingdom, to a situation lying well behind the official boundary in the New Kingdom. Tombos provides an example of a funerary context along a less militarized but still significant internal boundary between zones of territorial and hegemonic imperial control during the New Kingdom. How did the individuals who lived on Egypt's southern frontier adapt to the ebb and flow and changing strategies of Egyptian imperial power over time? What was the effect of their long interaction with Nubians and how did this impact upon their construction of ethnic identity?

Chapter 5

Life at Askut

> Askut is the shortest-lived of all excavated Egyptian monuments, being drowned in 1968 barely four years after it was brought to light and hardly ever visited … I would feel gratified if it adds a new chapter to the history of Egyptian military architecture and garrison life four millennia ago in Lower Nubia.
>
> Alexander Badawy (n.d.)

The archaeological character of Askut (Figures 5.1 and 5.2), like other Egyptian colonial sites in Nubia, is overwhelmingly Egyptian. On the face of it, this pattern appears to correlate with the ideological portrait of absolute boundaries and distinctive ethnic categorizations, but just the presence of Nubian pottery, jewelry, and other artifacts at Askut is interesting and shows that the border was more permeable than the official edicts imply. A more complex picture of interaction emerges if we look beyond simple percentages of artifacts and carefully examine the context of Egyptian and Nubian objects within a settlement like Askut (Rogers 1990; Farnsworth 1992). The resulting patterns in some cases match expectations derived from the historical sequence outlined above, but inconsistencies revealed through a more detailed contextual analysis pose questions about the implementation of imperial policy and ethnic identity at Askut.

The Egyptian fortress at Askut lay only 10 km behind the Middle Kingdom frontier on an island in the midst of a series of smaller rapids leading down to the rushing torrent of the second cataract (Figures 1.1 and 4.1). Like the entire "Belly of the Rock," sandstone cliffs narrowed the Nile valley to a comparatively narrow gorge, but several small alluvial plains supported a modest local population both before and after the fortress was built (Smith 1995). In addition to the fortress, both C-Group and Kerma peoples settled in the area, although the former may have been gone or removed when the fortress was constructed. The massive magazines that take up half of the interior of the fortress point to the site's main function as a rearward granary supporting the fortress system and the armies that periodically marched south into Upper Nubia (Kemp 1986). Along with Shalfak, Askut also bounded the Saras plain, which contained a key resource: gold. Extensive underground workings yielded a quartz ore that was reduced at pounding stations near the river. The gold dust was

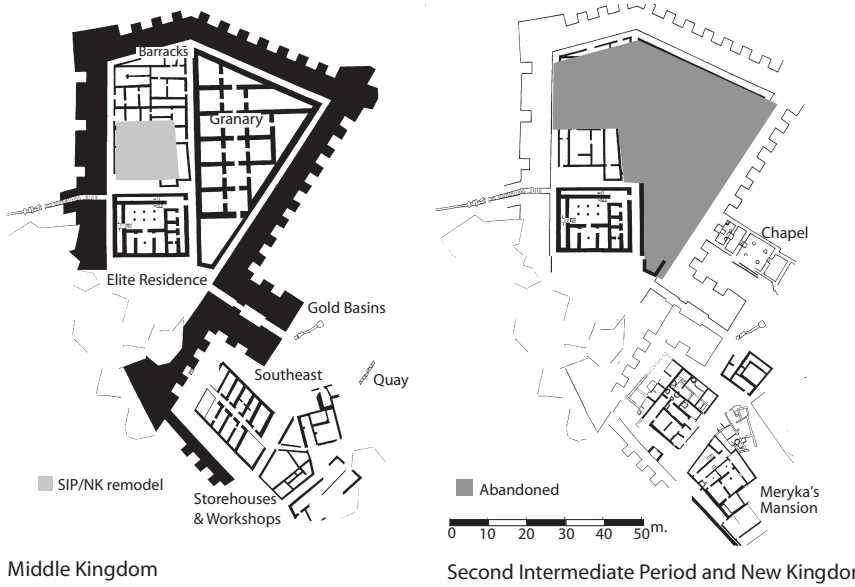


Figure 5.1 Askut in the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom.

extracted through washing in a trough and basin system near the massive entrance towers at Askut (Smith 1995).

Askut contained two basic building phases, one from the original construction of the fortress in the Middle Kingdom, and a second reflecting the abandonment and rebuilding that accompanied the transition to the New Kingdom settlement (Figure 5.2). Deposition at the fortress occurred in a classic example of secondary trash disposal, creating what Near Eastern archaeologists refer to as "spiral stratigraphy." As sections of the fortress were abandoned, the areas became dumps (Schiffer 1987; Smith 1995). These rooms filled up quickly with refuse while adjacent rooms continued to be occupied and their floor levels maintained. This site formation process resulted in a complex pattern of horizontal stratigraphy as opposed to a more straightforward system of superposition leading to a "layer-cake" stratigraphy. Only in the extramural south-eastern part of the fortress do we see superimposed layers, the lowest dating to the Middle Kingdom and the highest combining the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom with horizontal stratigraphy.

The earliest strata reflect the initial militarized character of the fortress. Askut would have been manned by rotating garrisons, but like its counterparts to the north and south, colonists replaced soldiers by the end of the twelfth dynasty (*c.* 1800 BC). At the end of the Middle Kingdom (*c.* 1680 BC), the granary complex was abandoned and began to fill with trash, reflecting the continuing demilitarization of the outpost



Figure 5.2 Overview of Askut looking from the south-eastern sector towards the main entrance.

as Kerma absorbed Egypt's Nubian colony. The main fortress was increasingly abandoned in favor of the more convenient south-eastern sector. Occupation at Askut continued into the New Kingdom, when the island settlement lay well behind Egypt's new southern frontier. Even though its military importance declined as imperial boundaries shifted, Askut's strategic location allowed the community to prosper through and perhaps even past the end of the New Kingdom, facilitating trade and riverine travel (Smith 1995). Keeping these comments in mind, I now turn to an examination of three larger categories of evidence that bear on the construction of ethnic identities: architecture, material culture, and ritual contexts.

ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of the fortress shows a strong adherence to Egyptian techniques and technology (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The massive walls with their external buttressing and wood and mat reinforcement reflect a mud-brick construction technology employed at the other Nubian forts and eventually exported to Kerma (Badawy 1966b). The buttresses may in fact have served as supports for towers or a running platform for the defenders to rain arrows and stones down upon attackers (Lawrence 1965: 75–6). This design is attested with other fortifications both within Egypt and later in Egyptian-controlled Syro-Palestine. Although at first glance the kite-like shape of the fortress seems unusual, the architect simply

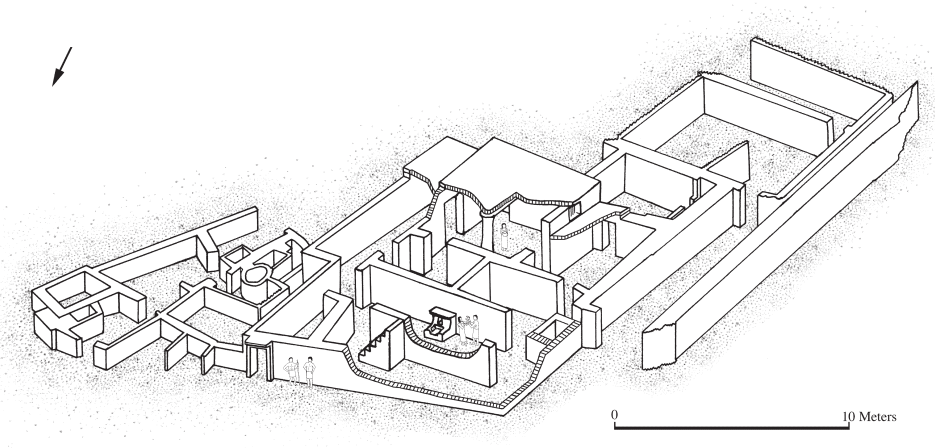


Figure 5.3 Hypothetical reconstruction of the house of Meryka.

took advantage of the natural shape of the island and the rock outcrops upon which the fortress was situated. Several of the other second-cataract fortresses show similar adaptations, including Shalfak, Uronarti, Semna, and Kumma. The inclusion of a semi-fortified extramural area is attested at other forts, especially Uronarti (Badawy 1966b). The domestic areas of the fortress also show strong links to Egyptian architectural styles. Three-roomed complexes match areas identified as barracks at the other fortresses. The large mansion duplicates the layout of elite residences with a long tradition in Egypt. Similarly, the series of narrow rooms in the south-eastern sector matches an Egyptian storehouse complex (Badawy 1966b), perhaps for food processing (cf. Kemp 1989).

This comes as no surprise. After all, the fortress was built by the Egyptian state to secure the Lower Nubian colony, but modifications and rebuilding as the settlement's character shifted from military to domestic also reflect Egyptian architectural traditions (Smith 1995). In particular, houses of the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom reflect a central-hall plan that became the standard form of Egyptian domestic architecture. This kind of house is particularly well attested at Amarna (c. 1379–1362 BC, Badawy 1968). At Askut, one entire block of barracks in the main fortress was reconfigured in this style. In the south-east sector, houses designed along the same lines replaced the old Middle Kingdom storehouses and workshops. The largest house belonged to the family of Meryka. It bears all the hallmarks of an elite residence (Kemp 1989; Badawy 1968). The house sits at the heart of a large complex, with enclosed courtyards and possibly outbuildings similar in conception to an Amarna mansion. A column raised the roof of the central hall, which probably had windows providing a clerestory effect. A ceramic window grill painted red, probably in imitation of wood, would have let light into this central space, an important area for receiving visitors and communal family activities (cf. Figure 5.3, Smith

1995; Peet and Woolley 1923:Pl. VI: 4). A fragment from a stone lintel with torus molding associated with the house provides another feature that marked an Egyptian elite residence. Stone-framed doorways proclaimed the status of the (usually male) owner, and were often inscribed with his name and titles (Kemp 1989).

MATERIAL CULTURE

Egyptian artifacts dominate the material assemblage at Askut, but relying on simple overall percentages of Egyptian and Nubian style artifacts alone homogenizes the archaeological record, potentially masking the dynamics of contact and interaction. A careful contextual analysis can reveal the nuances of contact, which can impact some areas and leave others untouched. This section takes a closer look at several different sub-assemblages from Askut: tools, adornment, and foodways. The first is perhaps the least likely to reflect ethnic identity, since practical considerations often determine the adoption of utilitarian items. Still, Bamforth (1993) found that the pace of acceptance of seemingly technologically superior metal tools by Native Americans was conditioned by symbolic cultural considerations. The choice of personal adornment makes an important statement about individual and corporate identities (Marcus 1993; Blake 1999), and so is a good candidate for ethnic expression (Santley et al.1987). Jewelry plays an important role in the Nubian *topos,* where Nubians are shown with distinctive earrings, beads, pendants, and so on. (Figures 1.2 and 2.1). On the other hand, in our case this is mitigated by the fact that jewelry has an exotic quality that lends itself to borrowing between cultures. Foodways provide a better means of getting at ethnic identity through cuisine. In particular, a comparison of different functional groups of pottery from Askut, cooking (cooking pots), food service (plates, bowls), and storage (both small and large jars), reveals fundamental insights into the nature of ethnic identity in public and private contexts.

Tools

Tools of stone, metal, and clay at Askut were largely Egyptian in character, although some, like round or ovoid handstones and querns, were the same in both cultures and so cannot really be attributed to one group or another (cf. Figure 5.4; Giddy 1999a; Bonnet 1990). Elongated triangular profile handstones and saddle-backed querns, both of which appear at Askut, are, however, typically Egyptian, appearing from at least the Old Kingdom onwards. Specialized clay weights for large fishing nets were also Egyptian in style, as were small bead-like weights (Figure 5.5). The large weights date to the Middle Kingdom, and contemporary models showing fishing nets confirm their identification as net weights and not loom weights or some sort of weapon or maul (Figure 5.6 and cf. Figure 5.5, especially the first weight with a single hole). Their use at Askut may reflect a centralized system of food production later abandoned when the settlement lost its military character. Other fishing paraphernalia found at Askut,



Figure 5.4 Groundstone.

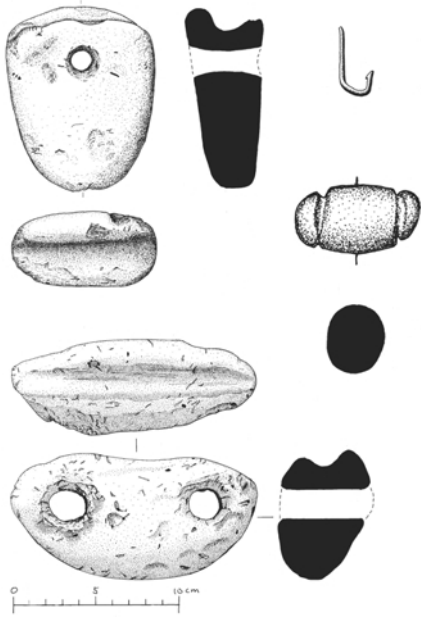


Figure 5.5 Fishing gear.



Figure 5.6 A model of fishing boats towing a net with large weights from the tomb of Meketre (Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

like metal hooks and small stone and ceramic weights (Figure 5.5), do not appear to have a particular cultural affiliation. A few simple bone tools were probably used in weaving and again have no particular cultural distinctiveness (cf. Figure 5.7; Giddy 1999a; Bruyère 1937; Bonnet 1990).

Tools of chipped stone and metal also appeared at the site (Figure 5.8). Some very specialized Egyptian-style lithics were made from Egyptian flint. The lack of flint cores and debitage implies that the tools were made off site and imported from Egypt. Tools include simple blades and flake-based tools, but also elaborately worked examples including fragments of skillfully pressure-flaked, bifacial spear points. Vercoutter (1970) reports the discovery of a cache of 3–400 similar examples at Mirgissa, so, in spite of the availability of copper, these sophisticated lithics were a central element of contemporary Egyptian military technology. Chipped stone tools were made on site

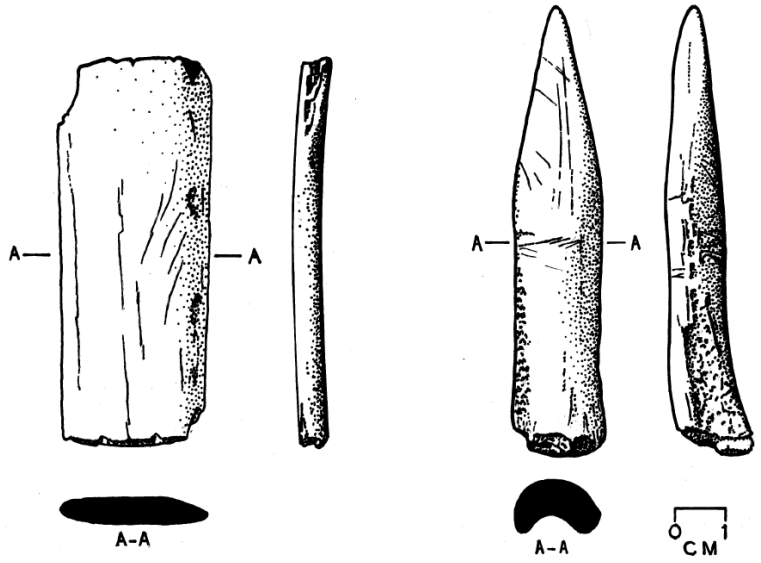


Figure 5.7 Bone tools.

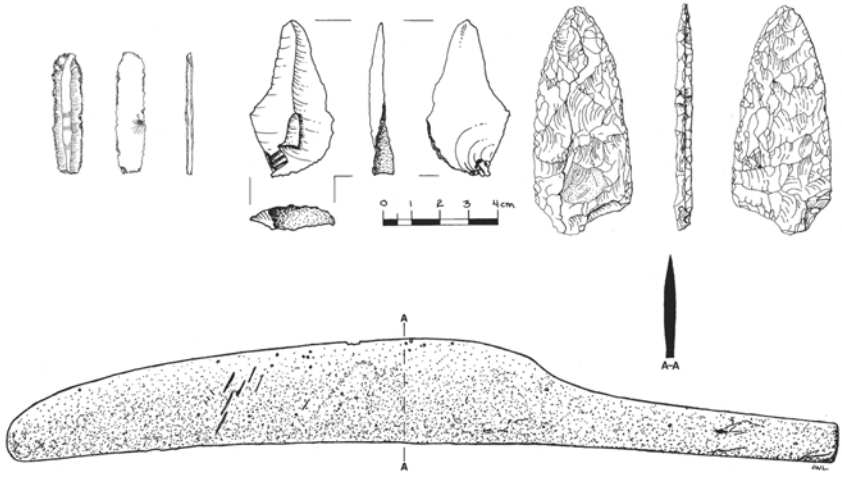


Figure 5.8 Lithic and metal tools.

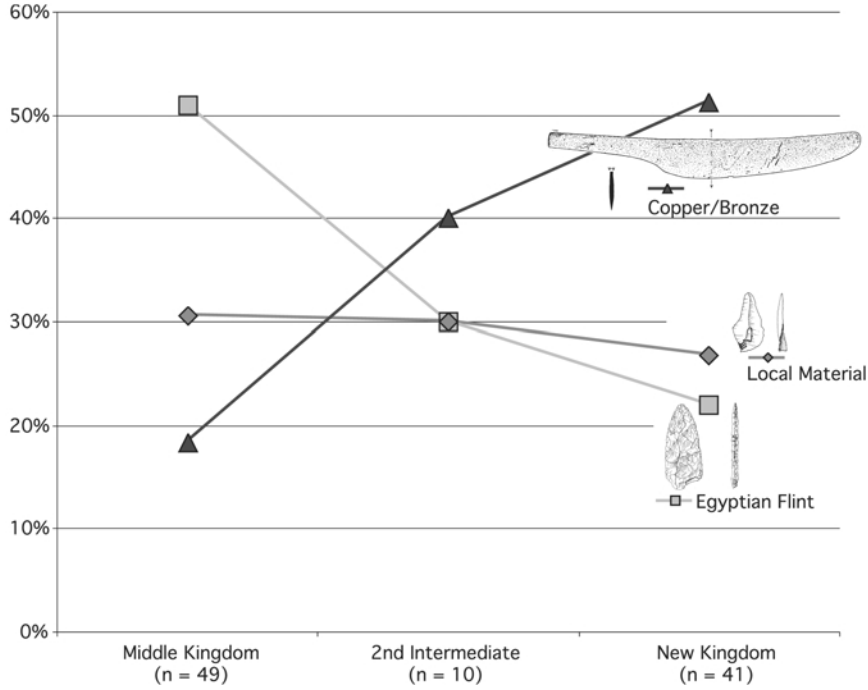


Figure 5.9 Use of chipped stone and metal over time at Askut.

from local materials, mainly from cobbles rounded by the river. These lithics were primarily small, simple flake-based tools with little or no retouch. The use of Egyptian flint declines dramatically over time, especially between the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom (Figure 5.9). In contrast, chipped stone tools made of local materials only decline slightly as a percentage of this overall assemblage. This does not, however, indicate a Nubianization of the assemblage, since the flint tools are apparently replaced by bronze implements. Tools of copper and bronze are initially a minor component of the assemblage, but jump in importance during the Second Intermediate Period and come to dominate the assemblage by the New Kingdom. The New Kingdom also contains the most substantial evidence for metallurgical work at the site, with a metallurgist's kit of two tuyeres (hearth blowpipes) and two molds set aside for future use in the south-eastern sector. Fragments of crucibles, spill from casting, and a tuyere sherd also came from deposits in the same general area. This equipment shows that some tools were made, or at least recast, on site using Egyptian metallurgical technology (cf. Pusch 1996). At least some metallurgical work was carried out during the Middle Kingdom, judging from the presence of a hammerstone that may have been used for annealing and a tile cut into an adze mold. The metal tools with a distinctive form were all Egyptian in style, and thus we might regard their prominence as an assertion of Egyptian cultural

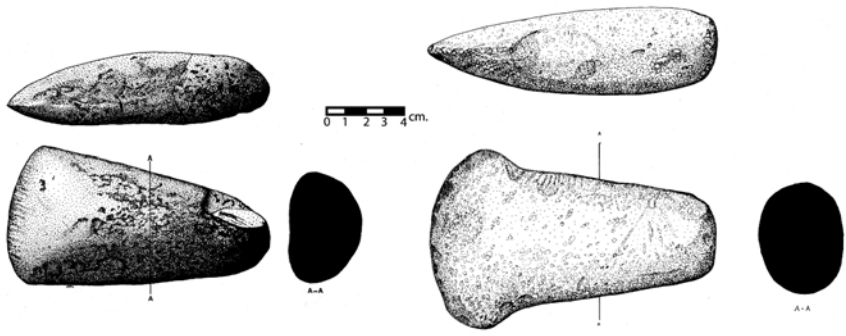


Figure 5.10 Groundstone axes.

identity. Rogers (1990) cautions rightly, however, that functional replacement carries the least weight in assessing cultural transformations in a contact situation. The replacement of flint by metal tools at Askut more likely simply reflects a general trend in the later second millennium BC towards a greater reliance on metal for high-quality tools, replacing the more finely crafted chipped stone tools used for cutting, drilling, scribing and, punching tasks, although a fairly sophisticated lithic industry persisted in Egypt throughout the New Kingdom (Miller 1987).

Two groundstone axes are the only tools that fit distinctively into a Nubian cultural framework (Figure 5.10). Each was made of green granular serpentine, one light and the other dark, a favored material for Nubian celts (Caneva 1990). Three other stone axes used a T-shaped design derived from Egyptian metal forms (Reisner 1923; Bonnet 1990, no. 70). This style of stone axe occurs in both Egypt and Nubia and so is probably not culturally diagnostic. Nubian groundstone axes like the two from Askut were a common funerary offering, particularly earlier in Nubian history, but are also found in periods contemporary to the occupation at Askut. They are often highly finished and without wear, serving as an important cultural marker for Nubians, especially Kermans (Caneva 1990; Bonnet 1990, no. 28). Unlike many examples, both of the axes from Askut show wear from use, and so were not only for display or ritual. Bamforth (1993) notes that cultural context is critical in assessing the adoption of even seemingly utilitarian tools for Contact Period California Native Americans. These two seemingly utilitarian Nubian axes may thus have served as markers of Nubian identity because of the important symbolic value carried by this class of object.

Adornment

Egyptian-style jewelry predominates at Askut, taking familiar forms with a variety of bead shapes (Figure 5.11). Amuletic beads include a leonine goddess (A), presumably Sakhmet or Bastet, a baboon with a moon symbol on his head (B),

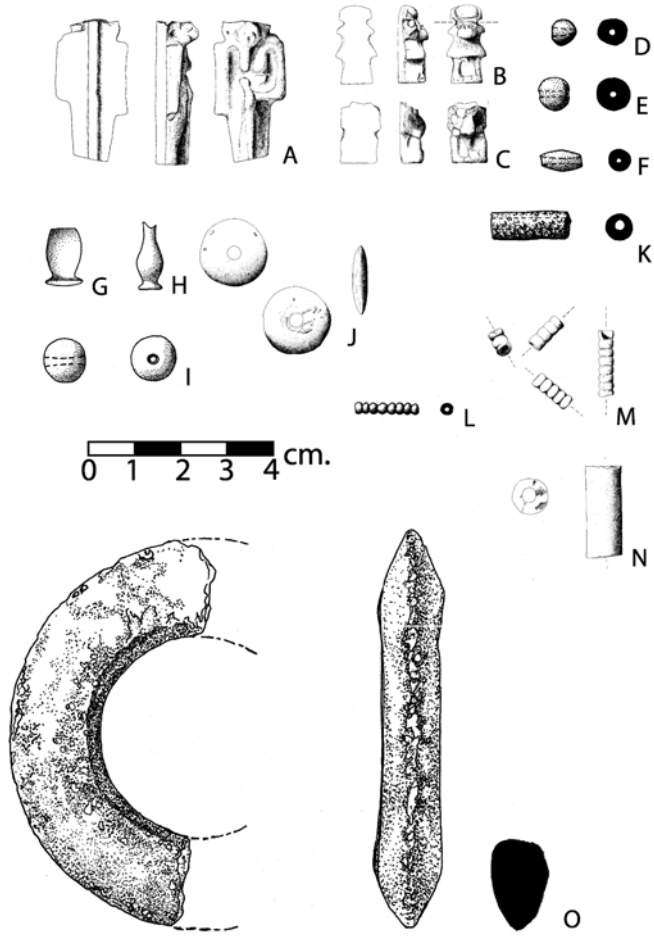


Figure 5.11 Nubian-style jewelry.

Thoth the patron of scribes, and a fat-bellied dwarf (C), the popular household protective deity Bes. These pieces of jewelry signaled Egyptian religious beliefs as well as providing cultural cues. Carnelian and amethyst ball beads were popular in the Middle Kingdom (D and E; Brunton and Engelbach 1927), being replaced by glass and faience (I) in the New Kingdom (Brovarski et al.1982: 241). Cornflower beads like the carnelian ones shown here (G and H) were popular during the New Kingdom, as were segmented beads (L and M; cf., Brunton and Engelbach 1927). The cornflower was probably introduced in the eighteenth dynasty from Syria (Brovarski et al. 1982: 238). Long tubular and biconical beads of various materials (F, K, and N) occur throughout Egyptian history. A greenstone blank could have been used to produce the long cylindrical beads popular in Egypt (Figure 5.13).

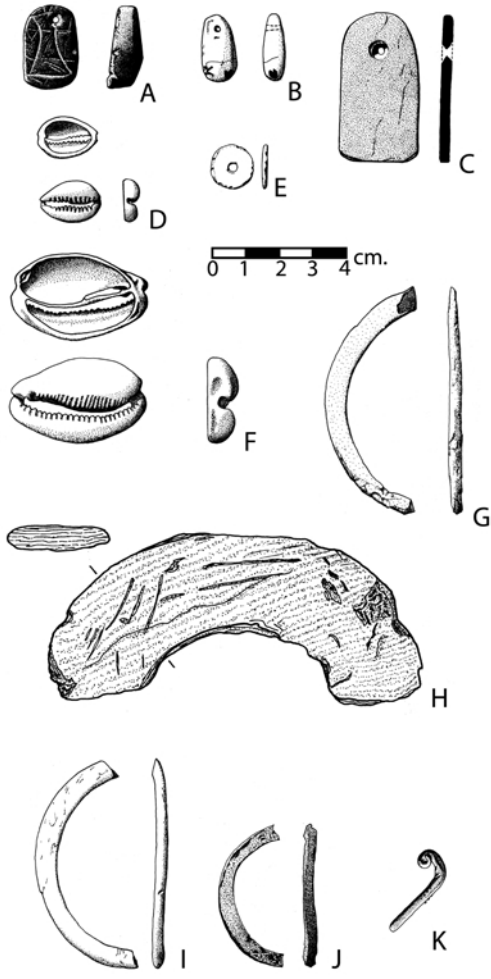


Figure 5.12 Egyptian-style jewelry.

Throughout the New Kingdom (ibid.: 238–9) Egyptians often wore lenticular or disk beads of blue faience (Figure 5.11 I) in a series of short necklaces or chokers. Egyptians wore bangle bracelets loose around the wrist or snug on the arm below the elbow (ibid.: 243). This example in green granular serpentine (N) was either for a child or very small person if it did not have an opening. Fragments of bracelets made of faience and ivory were also found.

While in the minority, significant amounts of Nubian jewelry appear at Askut, steadily increasing over time from a minor component in the Middle Kingdom to around a third of the assemblage in the New Kingdom (Figures 5.12–14). The rather crudely made stone pendant, perhaps of burnt steatite (Figure 5.12 A), is also probably

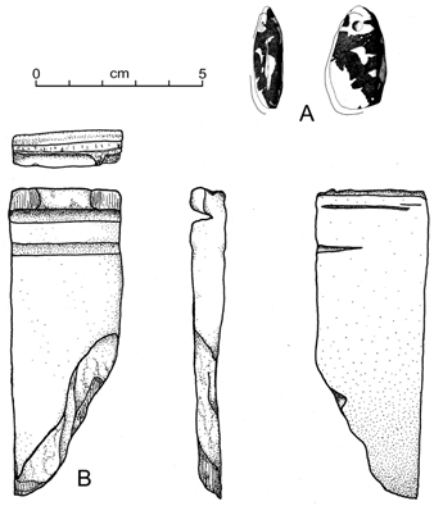


Figure 5.13 Egyptian and Nubian jewelry blanks.

Nubian (cf. Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991:Pl. 47 l-u). An ovoid ivory pendant (B) from the Middle Kingdom is also typically Kerman (Gratien 1985:Figure 285, type J8). A diorite pendant "blank" of this type from Askut, nicely finished with a partially drilled hole (Figure 5.13; cf. Bonnet 1990: 166), indicates that the residents produced Nubian jewelry locally (Figure 5.13). A flat pendant made of schist (C) is similar to items that are very common at Kerma (Bonnet 1990, nos. 37, 38, 40). They are usually identified

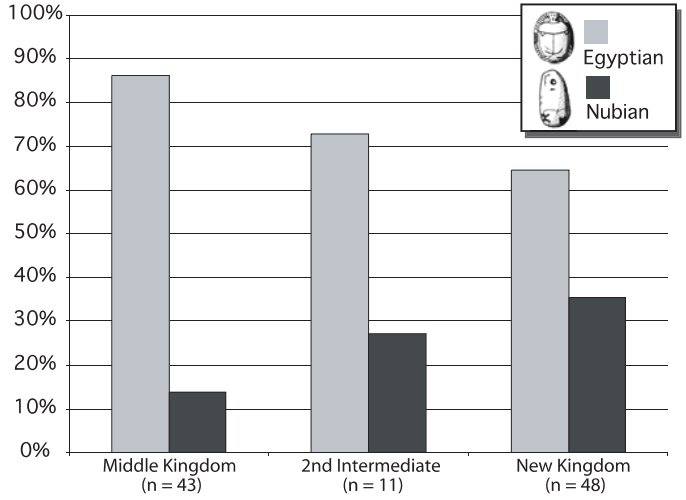


Figure 5.14 Distribution of Nubian and Egyptian jewelry over time at Askut.

Table 5.1 Ostrich eggshell at Askut

	Grams of ostrich egg
Middle Kingdom	9.5
Second Intermediate Period	12.1
New Kingdom	190.0
Single ostrich egg	284.7

as a polishing tool pierced for suspension, but their appearance in tombs suggests their use as an ornament (Dunham Dows 1982:Pl. XXXVIIIc). In any case, the Askut example is neither as smooth nor pointed like those from Kerma and shows no particular signs of use. Rounded pendants of stone and ivory were popular at Kerma (Bonnet 1990, nos. 78, 154, 156, 239). Cowry beads were popular in Nubia (Figure 5.12 D and F), although Williams points out that they also appear in Egypt (Williams 1983: 95, Pl. 118). Wainwright (1920: 19) cites them as typical of the C-Group, and they appear to be more typically Nubian than Egyptian. Bone bracelets like these New Kingdom examples (G, I and J) associated with Askut's chapel are found with the C-Group (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991:Pl. 51 b-h), and bone is reported for oval penannular drop bracelets at Adindan (Williams 1983: 83). Alternatively, two (G and I) could be large hoop earrings of the kind represented in the Nubian ethnic *topos*. Copper torques like a fragment from the late Middle Kingdom at Askut (K) appear in Pan Grave burials (Brunton 1937:Pl. LXXIV–V: 3120, 3170). Kermans used mica ornaments to decorate fez-like headpieces with animals and geometric designs (Bonnet 1990: 218–20). The shaped piece of white mica (Figure 5.12 H, of muscovite) found at Askut has the appearance of a "blank" being prepared to create just such an ornament.

The Nubian jewelry at Askut could simply represent trading. Both Farnsworth (1992) and Rogers (1990) note the persistent borrowing of jewelry across cultural boundaries. On the other hand, Marcus (1993) cites jewelry as a key means of expressing identity, and Santley *et al.* (1987) cite costume and personal adornment as key avenues for the expression of ethnicity. Thus at least some of the jewelry at Askut might have served to maintain Nubian identity within an otherwise Egyptian cultural milieu, or represent a blending or transformation of Egyptian culture into a new colonial hybrid. The production of both Egyptian and Nubian jewelry at the site also points towards this interpretation (Figure 5.13).

Cosmetic equipment

A variety of kohl pots, applicators, grinders, and dishes was found at Askut for the storage and preparation of cosmetics (Figures 5.15 and 5.16). Both men and women used cosmetics in both Egypt and at least to some extent in Nubia. In contrast to the jewelry, the cosmetic equipment from Askut is almost entirely Egyptian in style (Vandier 1972). Kohl pots in steatite, limestone, alabaster, and basalt take the usual rounded shapes found during the entire period under consideration



Figure 5.15 Cosmetic equipment.

here (Figure 5.16 A–D), including specially designed separate add-on rims (for A and B). A well-preserved wooden example is also similar to those found in Egypt (E). Egyptian-style hematite and ebony applicator wands were also found at Askut. Palettes used to grind the materials like kohl needed to make cosmetics were also predominately Egyptian (Figure 5.15 D–G), although small ovoid groundstone dishes are Nubian in style (cf. Figure 5.15 A; Williams 1983: 76, Pls. 114–15). This kind of small mortar is common at Kerman sites (Bonnet 1990: 208), although larger examples may have been used for grinding pigments used in pottery

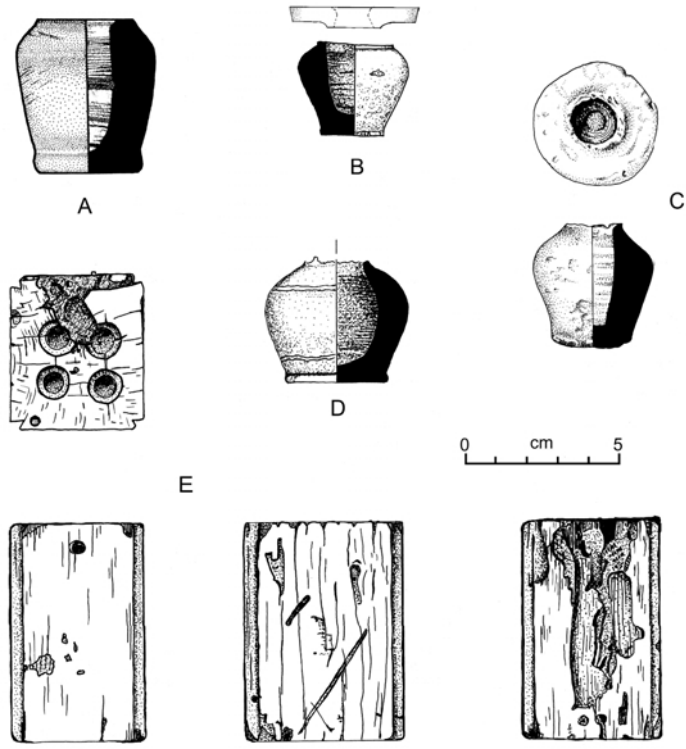


Figure 5.16 Vessels for kohl.

production. A shard from a variegated glass cosmetic vessel reflects the prosperity of the community during the New Kingdom (Figure 5.15 C). Glass vessels were introduced into Egypt some time after 1500 BC. The technology was probably acquired during the Egyptian imperial expansion into Syria (Brovarski et al.1982). These small cups and cosmetic jars were quite valuable, were particularly associated with the Egyptian elite in Theban tombs (Smith 1992), and were one of the items along with precious metals like gold and valuable oils, targeted by the looters who made the initial forays into Tutankhamen's tomb (Reeves 1990). Other containers include a typically Egyptian ribbed alabaster dish (Figure 5.15 B) and a number of fragments from blue faience bowls, some showing evidence of the black lined vegetative designs that formed a typical decorative motif for these small dishes (Brovarski *et al.* 1982: 140–45). Faience technology was exported to Kerma, and similar bowls were produced both in Egypt and Nubia (Reisner 1923; Lacovara 1998). A number of smoothed Nile clam and oyster shells may have been used as cosmetic dishes in a more Nubian tradition, although none contained residues of kohl like the *Etheria elliptica* (oyster) shells found in C-Group tombs at Adindan (Williams 1983: 75–6, Pl. 113). Like the Adindan examples, the rough, spiny

exterior periostracum of the *Etheria* was removed, revealing the brighter nacreous interior of the shell. The edges were also smoothed. These shells do sometimes appear in Egyptian contexts, as at the New Kingdom cemetery at Gurob (Brunton and Engelbach 1927).

Seals, seal amulets, and sealings

Only four scarabs were found at Askut (Figure 5.17 A–D). These probably served as jewelry or amulets, a common use for them in Egypt (Brovarski *et al.*1982). Two of the scarabs included references to popular kings Ramesses II and his father Seti I (Figure 5.17 A and D). Another has a short appeal to the god Re (Figure 5.17 B). These were surely used as jewelry and probably also as amulets (see below). Sometimes scarabs and other stamp seals were impressed on mud sealings used to secure doors and containers (Figure 5.18). The sealings were stamped with large institutional and/or small private seals to indicate responsibility for withdrawals from storerooms. Fiandra and Ferioli (1990), Weingarten (1990), and I have argued that the sealings were archived as administrative receipts in an elaborate accounting system (Smith 1990b, 2001; contra Wegner 2001). The large number of seal impressions found in Middle Kingdom strata at Askut and the other Nubian forts attests to a high degree of hierarchical control down to the end of the Middle Kingdom. The number of sealings drops dramatically in the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom (Table 5.2). Since the Kushite state borrowed a system of administrative sealing from Egypt (Smith 1996), this pattern does not simply indicate a shift in administrative style with the collapse of the Middle Kingdom, but rather a decentralization under the new Kushite regime that continued with the restoration of Egyptian control in the New Kingdom.

All of the sealings from the Middle and New Kingdom were stamped either by large institutional seals or small seals with names or designs like those commonly found on the base of scarabs (Figure 5.17). A single sealing from the Second Intermediate Period was the only impression without a typical Egyptian design, consisting of an elongated oval showing a human figure. Although they do not appear in impressions, seven seals or seal amulets dating to the Middle Kingdom at Askut had geometric patterns similar to those found on sealings at Kerma (cf. Figure 5.17 E–J; Reisner 1923). The lack of impressions may simply be due to archaeological preservation, particularly if they were rarely used. On the other hand, they may have served as seal-amulets instead. Egyptian scarabs could serve either as a seal or simply an amulet (Williams 1977; Johnson 1977). Regardless, the abstract geometric patterns are similar to those found at Kerma (Reisner 1923), and are not attested in Egypt.

Foodways

Evidence for foodways at Askut comes from bone, botanical remains, and ceramics used for food service, storage, and preparation (Figure 5.19). This section focuses on ceramics as a means of linking Nubian and Egyptian identity

Table 5.2 Sealings from Askut

	Sealing	*Time span*
Middle Kingdom	347	200 years
Second Intermediate Period	1	100 years
New Kingdom	13	500 years

to culinary practice. An examination of the relative frequency of Nubian and Egyptian pottery overall yields limited results (Figure 5.19). Using the frequency of Nubian ceramics as an index, interaction during the Middle Kingdom was minor. Not surprisingly, the amount jumps almost fourfold during the Second Intermediate Period when the fortress communities owed allegiance to the Nubian Ruler of Kush. The frequency declines only a bit in the New Kingdom, when Nubia was theoretically brought fully into the Egyptian cultural sphere.

This pattern in some cases matches expectations derived from the historical sequence outlined above, but in others poses questions about the implementation of imperial policy. Thus, during the Middle Kingdom, when the Nubian population maintained their cultural integrity and Egyptian fortresses remained aloof overlords over the local population (Adams 1977; Smith 1995), Nubian pottery as expected represents a minor component of the ceramic assemblage, although the presence of even a small amount of Nubian pottery is curious. During the Second Intermediate Period, Nubian pottery not surprisingly jumps substantially as Kerma assumed control over the former Egyptian colony. If anything the percentage of Nubian pottery seems small, especially in comparison with Avaris in the Nile delta, where levels of Middle Bronze Age pottery climbed from 20 to 40 percent of the overall assemblage when the Syro-Palestinian Hyksos assumed control during the same period. This pattern is consistent, however, if the Kermans adopted a minimalist colonial policy and the fortress communities remained Egyptian but simply switched their allegiance to the Kerman ruler of Kush (Smith 1995), rather than fleeing in the face of a substantial Kerman occupying force as previous models have suggested (Bourriau 1991; Emery 1965). During the New Kingdom, we would expect the complete disappearance of Nubian ceramic traditions as Nubian society Egyptianized, but while there is a decline, the percentage of Nubian pottery is still almost three times that of the Middle Kingdom. This suggests that a more fundamental change may have begun in the Second Intermediate Period, continuing into the New Kingdom, and with roots going back to the Middle Kingdom.

We can test this idea by contextualizing the Nubian pottery through a comparison of different functional groups, cooking (cooking pots), food service (plates, bowls, etc.), and storage (both small and large jars). Note that the last category includes some vessels that were used in food service as well as long-term storage. Similarly, some of the service and storage vessels could have been used during food preparation. For example, Egyptian beer was brewed in large jars sealed with clay stoppers (Figure 5.20). But for the most part the categories reflect the activities indicated. Both service and, to a lesser extent, storage vessels track fairly well with the overall fluctuations

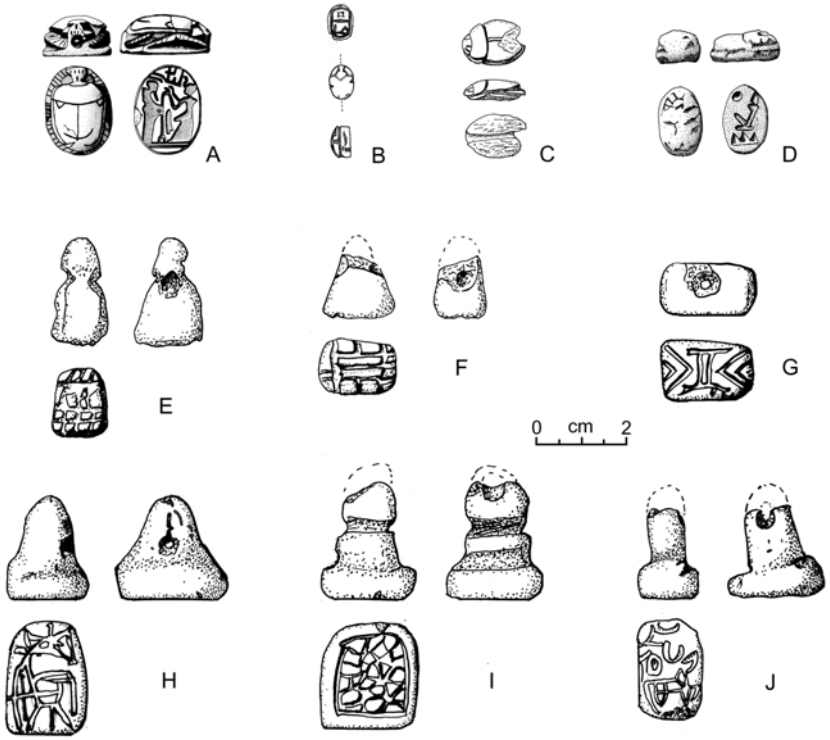


Figure 5.17 Scarabs and seals.



Figure 5.18 Sealings.

Table 5.3 Relative frequency of Nubian pottery at Askut

Nubian pottery	*Overall %*	*Colonial policy*	*Expected result*	*Actual result*
	3.6	Separation	Little or no Nubian	Minor Nubian
Second Intermediate	13.8	Rule by Kerma	Increase in Nubian	Increase in Nubian
New Kingdom	9.6	Egyptian acculturation	Nubian replaced by Egyptian	Small decrease in Nubian

described above, with a peak in the Second Intermediate Period and a small decline following, but still at higher levels than the Middle Kingdom (Table 5.4). The frequency of cookpots, however, contrasts with the overall pattern. Nubian cookpots are disproportionately represented at Askut, starting out at a high level and increasing steadily over time to dominate the cooking assemblage. This pattern indicates a deeper level of interaction. In comparison, Nubian serving and especially storage vessels remain a minor component of their respective sub-assemblages, and of Nubian pottery as a whole (see below, Chapter 8). Since one would not expect highly utilitarian and idiosyncratic cookpots to be exchanged in preference to storage and decorative serving vessels, trade can be ruled out as the major source of Nubian influence.

Of course, the Egyptian colonists might have relied on local Nubian potters to meet their day-to-day utilitarian needs if pottery was difficult to obtain, but Egyptian cookpots and pottery in general were readily available through industries based at the larger forts like Mirgissa and Serra East. The Egyptians had no difficulty shipping pottery along the Nile. Ceramics made of the more common Nile silt clays are hard to provenance, but pottery made of marl clays found only in Egypt increased over time, starting at 4.3 percent in the Middle Kingdom, rising to 12.9 percent in the Second Intermediate Period, reaching

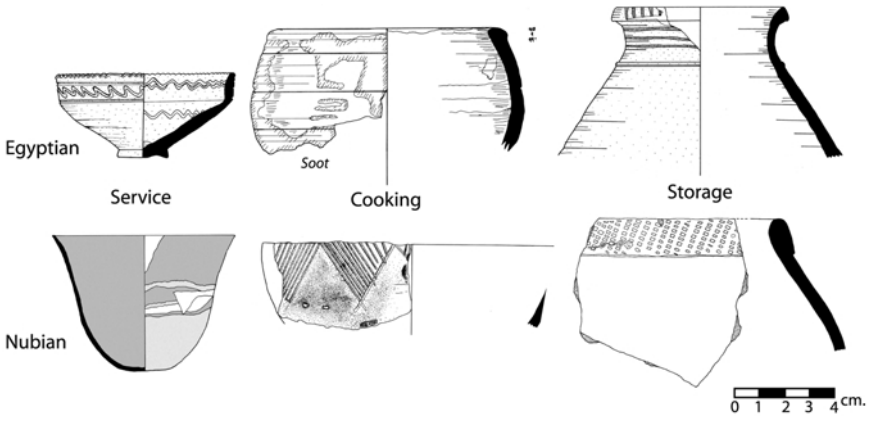


Figure 5.19 Egyptian and Nubian serving, cooking, and storage vessels.

17.1 percent in the New Kingdom. At least some of the pottery made from Nile silt clay, which is available in alluvial deposits in both Egypt and Nubia, might also have been imported directly from Egypt. Additionally, there is evidence for Egyptian-style wheel-thrown pottery production at Askut, including wasters, unfired sherds, and a potter's wheel head made of chaff-tempered Nile silt clay (Badawy 1966: Pl. XII, no. 11). An unfired hand-made Nubian bowl of the mat-impressed type often used for cooking was also found. The wheel head is the only example recovered from a dynastic Egyptian context. Unfortunately, it was not found *in situ*, but in a secondary trash deposit in the south-eastern sector. This is, however, the general area where both unfired sherds and wasters are distributed and thus the likely location of a ceramic workshop. The shape of the wheel head is very similar to an experimental reconstruction based on renderings of wheel heads in Egyptian art and both ancient and modern parallels from the region (Powell 1995). Indentations in the cavity for the pivot would have helped bind the wheel to the clay used to secure the pivot stone in place. The pivot emplacement is also more heavily built up than the Amarna examples, which would help in the distribution of weight across the wheel head, minimizing the risk of failure. The wheel head could then be placed on a greased lower pivot stone. At 42 cm, the Askut example is slightly larger than the smaller experimental wheels made at Amarna, which proved awkward to use. It is considerably smaller than the largest experimental wheel, which was 60 cm in diameter. Although the most successful in producing a spin, it ultimately failed, breaking into two pieces. The Askut wheel head has four holes spaced evenly around the circumference, perhaps allowing the attachment of a larger wooden throwing platform that might also have provided greater strength. The presence of these artifacts suggests a very sophisticated Egyptian ceramic industry in the region, so the use of Egyptian vs. Nubian pottery was a matter of choice, not availability.

Thus the ceramic distribution at Askut most likely reflects a cultural and to some extent demographic transformation. How did this transformation affect different households? Archaeological deposits at Askut were primarily the result of secondary trash disposal (Smith 1995), so it is difficult to identify individual households, since this site formation process has the effect of mixing activities from several areas (Schiffer 1987). Ceramic distributions in larger sections of the fort, however, can be reconstructed with the understanding that peripheral trash deposits potentially accumulated from nearby households (Tables 5.5–8). During the Middle Kingdom, three areas remained relatively discrete, the elite residence presumably occupied by the commandant, the barracks area occupied first by soldiers and later by Egyptian colonists and their families still subordinate to the commandant, and the south-eastern sector, which primarily served as an area for storage, and in the earliest phase of the fortress as an area for communal food preparation (Smith 1995). These distributions reveal some interesting differences between these areas. In both the elite residence and work area, Nubian cookpots are under-represented, with the largest proportion of Nubian cooking vessels appearing in the barracks (Tables 5.5–6). On the other hand, Nubian service vessels appear in the largest proportion in association with the commandant's house. Thus social position seems to exert considerable influence over the nature and distribution of Nubian influence at Askut. Chronology might also play a role, particularly in the south-east sector where the earliest deposits were found.



Figure 5.20 Mud stopper and beer jar.

Dividing the barracks deposits into three phases using horizontal stratigraphy established through diagnostic ceramics, including the use of hemispherical bowl vessel indices, establishes chronological control for the Middle Kingdom (Table 5.6; Arnold 1988; Smith 1995). The earliest deposits match the numbers from the south-eastern sector, indicating that Nubian influence was minor initially as permanent settlers garrisoned the fortresses. Nubian influence in cuisine expanded dramatically in the mid–late thirteenth dynasty as the fortresses became more and more self-sufficient, continuing to increase in the last Middle Kingdom deposits. The Nubian impact on the serving and storage assemblages was minor throughout the barracks area, and still less than the relatively high amount associated with the commandant's house. At the same time, the proportion of Nubian cookpots was strongest in the "barracks" area, by this time the location of several modest households.

During the Second Intermediate Period, not only does the frequency of cookpots jump, but the relative frequency of Nubian service vessels, the majority of which are fine wares used for display and in feasting, also jumps substantially to over a tenth of the overall serving assemblage (Table 5.4). The residents of Askut abandoned a large part of the main fortress and built new homes in the south-eastern sector. Dividing the Second Intermediate Period assemblage along these lines (the main fortress and south-

Table 5.4 Frequency of Nubian pottery and functional assemblages at Askut

Percent Nubian pottery	*Overall %*	*Service %*	*Storage %*	*Cookpots %*	*All cook %*
Middle Kingdom	3.6	2.0	0.8	45.5	5.0
Second Intermediate	13.8	11.0	5.9	65.0	7.6
New Kingdom	9.6	4.3	3.5	83.1	7.0
Overall	8.0	4.5	3.1	70.8	6.4

eastern sector) shows that the new houses in the south-east showed another increase in Nubian cooking pots, continuing the trend from the barracks area (Table 5.7). The main fortress also increased, but remained at levels similar to the overall Middle Kingdom. Assuming that the commandant's house continued as an elite residence, however, this would still represent a significant increase over previous levels in this same area. At the same time the service assemblage is similar for each area, although the south-east sector has double the proportion of storage vessels.

During the New Kingdom, Nubian cookpots overall rise to dominate almost completely the cooking assemblage, while both storage and especially service vessels drop substantially, although still maintaining levels higher than the Middle Kingdom (Table 5.4). As in earlier periods, the more detailed distributions are more complex (Table 5.8). In the main fort, Nubian cooking pots continue to rise and storage and service vessels decline, although, as in earlier periods, the proportion of serving vessels is comparatively high. The pottery associated with the group of other south-east houses presents an even more Nubian character in both cookpots and serving vessels, which nonetheless still decline compared to the Second Intermediate Period. In contrast, the south-eastern house of Meryka has the most Egyptian character, although the proportion of Nubian storage vessels is comparatively high, as is the overall percentage of Nubian pottery. At this time, the house of Meryka was the largest at Askut, apparently including a large series of outbuildings and enclosures similar to the great mansions at Amarna. This distribution may mirror the pattern in the Middle Kingdom, when the most elite residence, the commandant's quarters, had the least Nubian cookpots and thus presumably the most Egyptian character. One difference is that Meryka's household also has the least Nubian serving vessels, while the commandant's house has the most. This distinction may reflect the different geo-political situation of the fortress community in each period. During the Middle Kingdom, Askut lay upon the boundary between Egypt's Nubian colony and the powerful kingdom of Kush, which held the key resources desired by the Egyptians. The Middle Kingdom elite may have used Nubian pottery as a token of respect to their Kerman trading partners. After the New Kingdom conquest of Kush, this kind of political accommodation was not only no longer necessary, but perhaps also discouraged, given Egypt's policy of cultural assimilation in Lower Nubia.

The high frequency of Nubian cookpots at Askut implies a fundamental shift in foodways at the site, but could they simply reflect Nubian servants or even wives cooking for their Egyptian overlords and not a change in cuisine and by implication identity? If this were the case, we would expect the Nubians to cater for Egyptian culinary tastes. Chemical analysis of residues in a small pilot sample of Egyptian and Nubian cookpots revealed distinct differences in the fatty acid profiles of the two groups, particularly in the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom. Although it should be cautioned that this work is just the beginning of a larger study, the pattern is suggestive, pointing towards a change towards Nubian foodways at the site and mirroring the adoption of Nubian cookpots. Scientists describe fatty acids by the number of carbon atoms and double bonds between those atoms (for example, C18:1 = 18 carbon atoms with a single double bond). Fats without double bonds are saturated and tend to be stable over time. Unsaturated fats with double bonds are less

Table 5.5 Nubian and Egyptian pottery at Askut during the Middle Kingdom

	Cook %	*Service %*	*Storage %*	*Overall %*
Commandant				
Nubian	22.2	5.1	0.0	5.6
Egyptian	77.8	94.9	100.0	94.4
Barracks				
Nubian	42.5	1.8	0.9	4.0
Egyptian	57.5	98.2	99.1	96.0
South-east				
Nubian	19.4	2.7	0.6	3.2
Egyptian	80.6	97.3	99.4	96.8

Table 5.6 Nubian and Egyptian ceramics in the barracks area

	Cook %	*Service %*	*Storage %*	*Overall %*
Barracks, early Middle Kingdom				
Nubian	17.6	1.9	2.5	3.0
Egyptian	82.4	98.1	97.5	97.0
Barracks, mid–late Middle Kingdom				
Nubian	50.0	1.5	0.3	4.1
Egyptian	50.0	98.5	99.7	95.9
Main Street, end Middle Kingdom				
Nubian	52.5	2.0	1.9	5.4
Egyptian	47.5	98.0	98.2	94.6

stable, converting to an unsaturated fat two atoms lower (i.e.: C18:1 decays to C16:0). Palmetic acid (C16:0), oleic acid (C18:0), and its unsaturated correlates (C18:1 and 2) are commonly found in large amounts in both plants and animals, and C18:1 is particularly common in mammals. The two unsaturated C18s decay, so the relationship between these fats can change dramatically with cooking and decomposition. Nevertheless, a careful comparison with experimental controls can yield identifications of general food categories and sometimes specific food sources. In our case, the specific identification of the foods cooked is less important than whether or not different foods were cooked in Nubian and Egyptian pots. Continuing research on a larger sample of sherds and a set of experimental controls will focus on reaching more specific identifications of the foods prepared in these pots, but the preliminary results presented here provide an important parallel line of evidence for the transformation of foodways at Askut.

Table 5.7 Egyptian and Nubian pottery at Askut during the Second Intermediate Period

	Cook	*Service*	*Storage*	*Overall*
Main fort				
Nubian	41.7	13.1	3.9	11.2
Egyptian	58.3	86.9	96.1	88.8
South-east				
Nubian	67.6	12.1	8.3	16.1
Egyptian	32.4	87.9	92.3	83.9

Table 5.8 Egyptian and Nubian pottery at Askut in the New Kingdom

	Cook%	*Service %*	*Storage %*	*Overall %*
Main fort				
Nubian	84.2	4.9	2.5	10.4
Egyptian	15.8	95.1	97.5	89.6
Meryka				
Nubian	68.8	2.2	4.3	8.4
Egyptian	31.3	97.8	95.7	91.6
South-east houses				
Nubian	93.1	5.4	4.4	9.3
Egyptian	6.9	94.6	95.6	90.7

Overall, Egyptian and Nubian cookpots produced very different fatty acid signatures (Figures 5.21–3). One striking difference is the tendency for Egyptian cookpots to contain large amounts of unsaturated C18:1 and especially high amounts of C18:2. Nubian pots contained large amounts of saturated C16:0 and 18:0, as well as small but significant amounts of C14:0, 15:0, and 17:0, but very little unsaturated C18:1 and 18:2. The two cultural groups also show some internal similarities across time. The profiles of Middle Kingdom sample 973 and Second Intermediate sample 1528a are very similar. Both Second Intermediate Period Egyptian sample 1528a and New Kingdom sample 1418 have large amounts of C16:1, although some other fats occur in different proportions. The fatty acid C16:1 is common in pork or chicken (Skibo 1992: 92–3; Hildich 1956). Chickens are not attested in Egypt until the New Kingdom, but geese and ducks were raised and eaten. Birds and pigs are present but rare in Askut's faunal assemblage. Nubian samples 958 and 1517 are also quite similar, suggesting the possibility of continuity in ethnic foodways between periods. On the other hand, Middle Kingdom Egyptian sample 1145b and Nubian sample

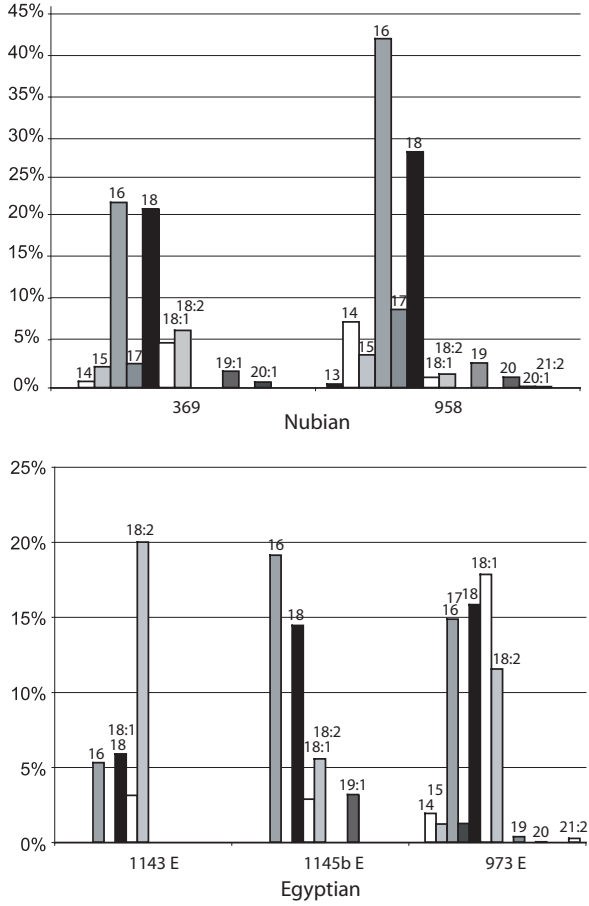


Figure 5.21 Middle Kingdom fatty acid residue profiles.

369 show some similarities, particularly in the relative amounts of palmetic (C16:0), stearic (C18:0), oleic (C18:1), and linoleic (C18:2) acids, and the unusual presence of C19:1. The presence of C14, C15, and C17 in the Nubian but not the Egyptian samples may be due to the former's much stronger overall intensity, since they occur at very low levels that might disappear with the lower intensity found in the Egyptian samples. In very strong samples, these medium-length chain fats tended to disappear in successive tests as the sample was diluted with additional solvent to get a better reading of the larger peaks, effectively simulating a weaker sample.

Linoleic acid (C18:2) is consistently strong in the Egyptian Middle Kingdom samples. High levels of this fat, along saturated palmetic acid (C16:0) and lower levels of stearic acid (C18:0) and unsaturated oleic acid (C18:1), are characteristic of sweetcorn and certain kinds of fish (Malainey 1997: 183, Figures E-2 and E-13). Since sweetcorn

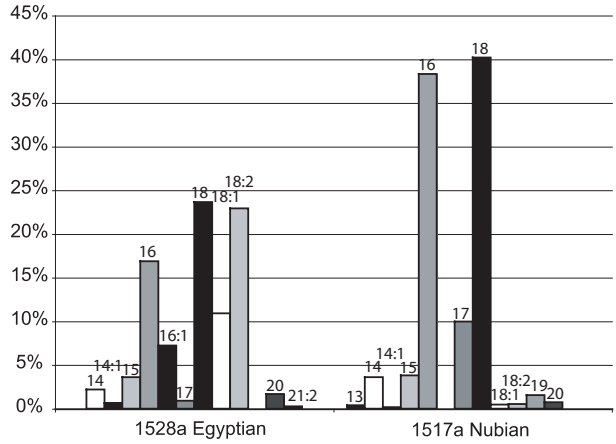


Figure 5.22 Second Intermediate Period fatty acid residue profiles.

was unavailable, the Egyptians thus possibly preferred fish. Fish bone is well represented in the faunal remains from Askut, and, as noted above, net weights and hooks provide abundant evidence for fishing at the site. One Middle Kingdom example not shown here included C18:3, common in beans (Skibo 1992; Hildich 1956). Beans are well attested in Egyptian sources (Darby 1977), and beans appear in the botanical remains from Askut. The Nubian samples have consistently high values for palmetic acid and stearic acid, with much lower levels of oleic and linoleic acid. This pattern is consistent with large land herbivores like deer and cattle (Hildich 1956; Malainey 1997: 182, Figures E-4 and E-11). The high level of palmetic acid in sample 958 is unusual, but may be the result of the decomposition of the polyunsaturated C18 fats, which convert

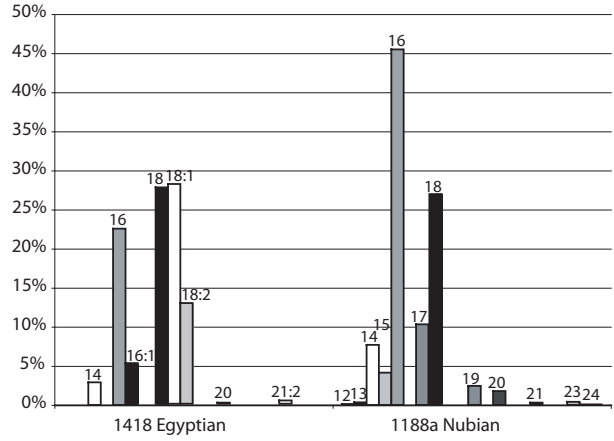


Figure 5.23 New Kingdom fatty acid residue profiles.

to palmetic acid. Cattle, sheep, and goat constitute the bulk of the faunal sample. Thus, while there is some possible overlap, particularly in the Middle Kingdom, the foods cooked in Nubian and Egyptian cookpots show more differences than similarities in their fatty acid makeup, suggesting the presence of distinctive cuisines associated with the different cultural ceramic assemblages.

RITUAL CONTEXTS

Finally, ritual architecture and ritual assemblages provide an important avenue for ethnic expression, both in the household and public contexts. Stein (1999) emphasizes the importance of public sacred and secular architecture in the identification of diaspora communities. Santley *et al.* (1987) cite religious architecture as an area that should reflect ethnic ties, particularly public structures and practices, but also ancestor veneration. Sacred architecture at Askut reflects Egyptian religious beliefs, and is expressed in both a public community context in the form of a chapel and in a domestic context in household shrines for private worship and ancestor veneration. A variety of small finds, especially figurines, reflects a more mixed pattern of personal religious practice focused to some extent on fertility.

Chapel

A small mud-brick chapel added to the eastern defense wall, the first real public religious architecture, dates to the early eighteenth dynasty, although the origins of the building could be earlier (Smith 1995). Its axial design has close parallels with the New Kingdom at Deir el-Medineh and Amarna (cf. Figure 5.24; Bomann 1991), although the building at Askut is earlier. The chapel's eastward orientation towards the rising sun and axial plan resonates with Egyptian solar theology. The progression from light to darkness, from openness to hidden-ness, is a central feature of Egyptian temple architecture, particularly during the New Kingdom (Hornung 1992; Wilkinson 2000). The succession of entry chamber, open pillared hall, dark antechamber, and finally hidden "holy of holies" represents standard Egyptian practice very different from that found in Nubian cultures. Askut's mud-brick chapel was modest in comparison with the elaborately decorated stone temples constructed at other forts, including Semna and Kumma, Uronarti, and Buhen. Egyptian temples like Abu Simpel (Figure 4.12) were constructed throughout Lower Nubia, in the temple towns of Upper Nubia, and at Kawa, Kerma and Gebel Barkal in the Dongola Reach (Trigger 1976; Adams 1977; O'Connor 1993; Wilkinson 2000).

While the exact deity worshipped is uncertain, Horus or Hathor are the most likely candidates since they appear prominently at other Nubian sites and especially in a chapel of similar construction at Mirgissa (Vercoutter 1970). These deities traveled throughout Egypt's empire, and were often syncretized with local gods and goddesses.

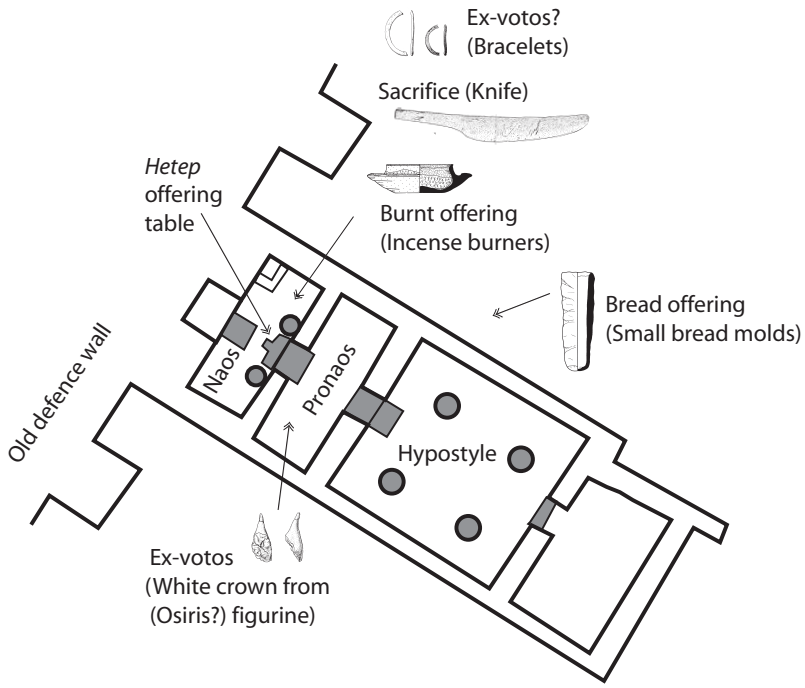


Figure 5.24 Plan of Askut's chapel.

The cult equipment found in the temple at Askut, however, does not directly reveal the deity worshipped there. Incense burners, dishes, and a small number of storage jars with lids reflect Egyptian ritual practice and material culture (Figures 5.24 and 5.25). A small baboon figurine from the temple's sanctuary is also consistent with Egyptian religion, since baboons were both connected with the solar cult and were one of the heraldic animals for the god Thoth, patron of scribes. A simple Egyptian-style offering table of stone was found in the doorway to the sanctuary, and a block of granite had adhering residues as if it had been used for the kind of libation offerings that were central to Egyptian ritual practice (Sadek 1987; D'Auria *et al.* 1988; Baines 1991). On either side of the entrance lay two balls of incense and a beautifully preserved knife (Figure 5.8), presumably for use in animal sacrifice, another central feature of Egyptian ritual practice. Deposits of animal bone were found in the Naos and outside of the antechamber adjacent to the chapel. Small bread molds clustered consistently in or around the chapel, and thus presumably provided a regular offering. The small size of the loaf produced from these molds indicates a ritual, rather than subsistence, use. A deposit of *nabq* fruit was found in the south corner of the Naos, and a brick bin in the north-east corner contained *Dôm* palm nuts, which have a ritual significance in Egypt (Darby *et al.*1976: 730–3). The ritual offering of food and burning of incense played a key role in Egyptian ceremonies (Meeks 1996: 126–36). Several pieces of

jewelry, some of it Nubian, were found in the temple, although from contexts closer to the surface. Their association with the temple complex is, however, likely. Jewelry was a common offering for the goddess Hathor, and numerous pieces of jewelry and amulets were found within her shrine at Mirgissa (Vercoutter 1970), Deir el-Bahari, and other sites (Pinch 1993: 265–300).

The modest chapel at Askut clearly fits the model established for Deir el-Medineh of locally based cultic activity reflecting a new interest in personal piety, bypassing the role of the king as intermediary between human and divine. If such a chapel was present in the early eighteenth dynasty even at a fairly marginal, if prosperous, community like Askut, then personal piety must have been a pervasive and important part of private religion before the Ramesside Period, when the Deir el-Medineh chapels flourished (contra Assmann 1989). The special facilities present to accommodate personal piety at Memphis and Karnak show that even the state cult centers recognized its importance at this period, well before the Amarna "revolution". As Sadek (1987) points out, the great temples of Egypt were not places of privilege only, where strange and exotic rites were carried out which had no meaning to the average townsman, let alone villager (Baines 1991). Rather, the two systems of public and private devotion had a considerable sphere of intersection, represented on the one hand by local chapels staffed by private individuals and on the other by accessible areas and adjunct facilities provided at the great state temples.

Architectural evidence shows that the chapel at Askut was built in several stages, starting with a naos with a pillared portico, then with a separate pronaos added, later a pillared courtyard, probably without the benches typical at Deir el-Medineh, and finally an antechamber attached. The final plan is very similar to the layout of chapels at Deir el-Medineh and elsewhere (Bomann 1991), and it clearly represents a similar expression of personal piety, allowing for a more direct relationship between worshipper and deity. Associated ceramics date the initial phases to the early eighteenth dynasty, with good evidence for activity during the reign of Thutmose III, backed up by a jar sealing stamped with his cartouche. This makes it the earliest example of the private chapel attested, with the possible exception of a poorly preserved structure at Deir el-Ballas. Ramesside ceramic types indicate that the chapel continued in use throughout the occupation of the site.

There is a small chance that the first phase of the chapel dates back as far as the Second Intermediate Period or even the thirteenth dynasty. A small thirteenth-dynasty statuette of an official found nearby could have been placed as an ex votos in the chapel. This statue might have come to Askut in the thirteenth dynasty, or was perhaps looted during the SIP and traded up to Nubia, like others found at Kerma. Its distance from any domestic structure, either in the south-east sector or in the main fort with only the granary opposite, makes such an association tempting. Nonetheless, all of the associated pottery from the chapel and its vicinity dates to the New Kingdom, so this attribution must remain somewhat speculative. If the chapel does date back to the Second Intermediate Period, it is interesting to note that the original plan is very close to the "Migdol" style found at Tell el-Dab'a in the early Hyksos stratum E3/2 (Bietak 1997). This would support Bowmann's (1991) notion of Asiatic influences on private religion and specifically on the private chapel in the New Kingdom.

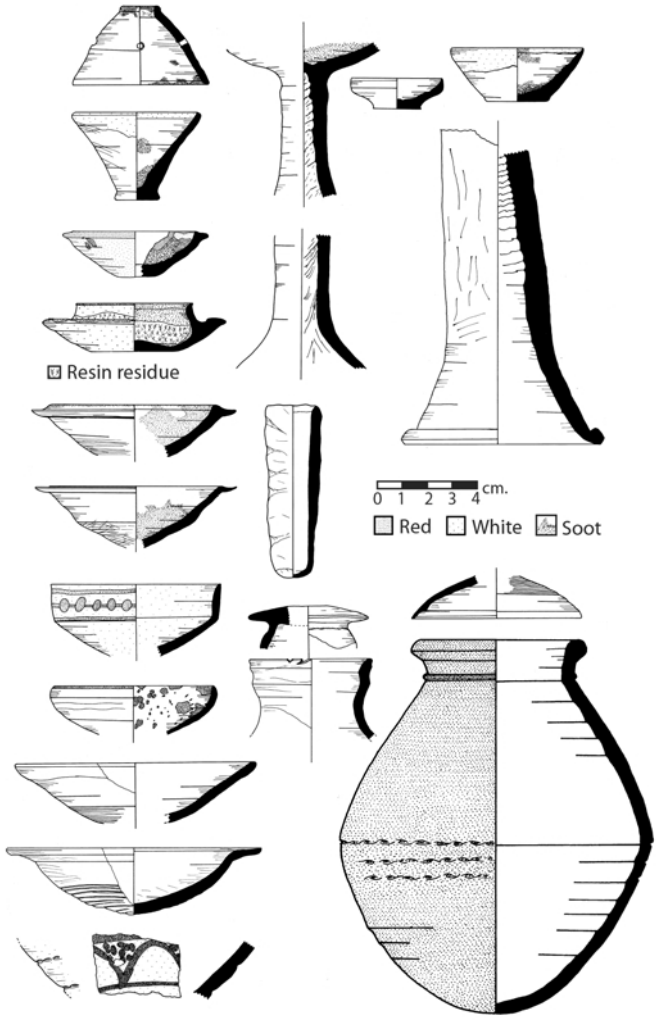


Figure 5.25 Pottery from the chapel.

Ancestor veneration

The veneration of ancestors provides a direct expression of primordial attachments so common in the construction of ethnic identities (Santley *et al.* 1987). Religious installations appear in two houses at Askut, one in the Middle Kingdom barracks area and another in the later house of Meryka in the southeastern sector (Figure 5.26). Similar household shrines at the village of Deir el-Medineh were used for a combination of ancestor veneration, the practice of fertility cults dedicated to deities like Hathor and the harvest goddess Rennenet,

and the worship of household gods and goddesses like the dwarf god Bes, who frightened away evil spirits, the hippo goddess Taweret, protectress of women and children, along with other more obscure deities like the cat goddess Miu (Sadek 1987; Baines 1991). This section will deal with evidence for ancestor veneration in these shrines and throughout the fortress.

The earliest household shrine at Askut dates from the late twelfth to early thirteenth dynasty, and represents the earliest evidence for a stela niche in a household context (Smith 1995), although Petrie (1890) found evidence for religious activity in the houses at Kahun, a twelfth-dynasty pyramid town. The room at Askut probably represents reception hall and gathering place for the family, with a pillar supporting raised roof space or windows allowing light to enter. The niche is modeled in plaster with a standard Egyptian-style cornice, and is located above a bench where cult equipment could be placed. A fragment of a sandstone stela from the debris of an adjacent room was probably originally placed in the niche, supporting the presence of an ancestor cult. Another Middle Kingdom funerary stela was apparently reused in the wall of the water staircase, and several simple funerary offering inscriptions on the island indicate an interest in providing for ancestors outside of the cemeteries, which lay on the west bank opposite the fortress and on the island just to the south.

Several specialized types of ceramic also indicate ritual activities probably associated with ancestor and perhaps household cults. Several fragments of pottery offering trays of a type attested from funerary contexts in Egypt were associated with Middle Kingdom domestic contexts at Askut (Figure 5.27). Commonly found in cemeteries placed on top of a modest tomb, the deceased benefited magically from the representations in clay of foodstuffs, including bread (Figure 5.27 D and E), meat (B, C, and F), greens (E), and tanks to hold water or perhaps a libation (A). Incense burners were a particularly common form found regularly in Middle Kingdom and later contexts (Figure 5.28). This type almost always has evidence of actual burning, occasionally accompanied by resinous incense residues. These would play a role in ceremonies for ancestors and deities, but also could reflect a physical and spiritual purification of the household, a practice that continues today in both Egypt and the Sudan. Pieces of massive offering stands, or perhaps tables, were also found. Elaborate examples of similar stands or tables were found by Petrie at Kahun, which were sometimes decorated with representations of household deities like Bes and Taweret (Petrie 1891: 11, Figure VI).

Funerary stelae and offering platters are usually associated directly with the tomb, but examples appear regularly in domestic contexts within settlements like Kahun and Buhen (Smith 1995; Petrie 1890). The usual explanation for their presence is that they were robbed from nearby cemeteries for reuse (often as thresholds or pivots in the case of stelae) or as a child's toy. Alternatively, they were thought of as ex-votos offerings in a temple located within the settlement. This explanation, however, is not convincing for the examples from Askut, since the fortified settlement was located on an island with the cemetery placed on the opposite bank. It is unlikely that an adult or child would go to the trouble of rowing across the river just to get a plaything or a door pivot, especially when stone and sherds were plentiful on the island. This



Figure 5.26 Household shrine at Askut.

consideration, combined with the presence of the Middle Kingdom niche and a later preserved altar with a funerary stela *in situ* (Figure 5.26), indicates strongly that these ritual objects were used within the settlement and in a domestic context.

This practice continues into the Second Intermediate Period, with a more elaborate household shrine built into a new house constructed in the remodeled southeastern sector (Figure 5.29). Pottery appearing as abandonment debris associated with the altar dates to the mid-eighteenth dynasty, probably around the reign of Amenhotep II (*c.* 1400 BC), but not later than Amenhotep III (*c.* 1350 BC). The altar was built on about 40 cm of fill above the building's original floor, and presumably dates to the early eighteenth dynasty. The stela itself, however, and some of the associated pottery are clearly of Second Intermediate Period date (Smith 1995). The presence of a drain running from the base of the altar down to the original tiled floor of the building, which was reused from an earlier structure, confirms the early date of the original installation. The building itself was well preserved, up to the rafters in some places, and the wall plaster goes down all the way to the tile floor, indicating continuous use. Thus we have clear continuity of cult activity from the Second Intermediate Period to the mid-eighteenth dynasty. The descendants of Meryka worshipped the same ancestor for about 200 years, with some sort of shrine in the same spot for over 300 years and through three major renovations of the house.

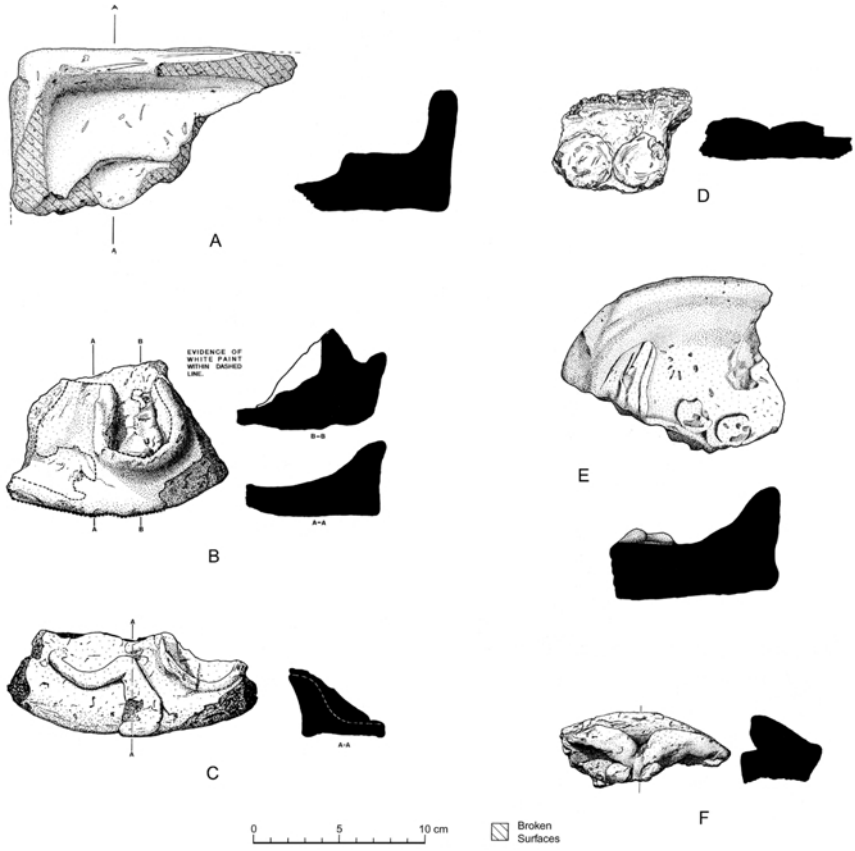


Figure 5.27 Middle Kingdom offering platter sherds.

The altar itself consists of a sloped channel below a niche that still contained a funerary stela dedicated to a man named Meryka. The stela itself clearly reflects an Egyptian tradition, but is very crudely made. The hieroglyphic inscription is barely legible, and the glyphs themselves seem very cursive, like hieratic, the written form of hieroglyphs. It begins with the standard offering formula for the dead, "A boon that the king gives …," and then seems to mention a god, perhaps Horakhti. The rest of the inscription draws in places on traditional offering formulae, but is ultimately incoherent, finally ending in the name of the deceased, Meryka (Smith 1995). Either someone who was semi-literate, or simply sloppy and aiming at an effect more than precision, made the stela. The installation itself, however, was well thought out. Two holes with the remains of wooden columns indicate that some sort of wooden canopy and/or naos protected the stela. The drain allowed libation offerings to dissipate into a series of pots below the shrine. Two small-footed incense burners were found near the shrine. A faience lion's head from the next room may indicate deities worshipped

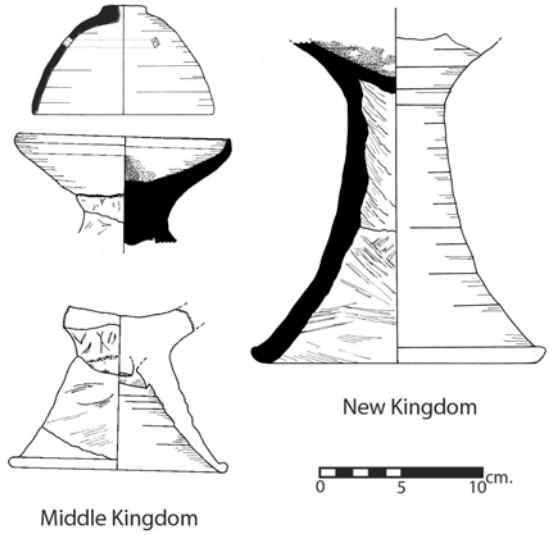


Figure 5.28 Middle and New Kingdom incense burners from domestic contexts.

here too, perhaps the goddess Bastet or Sakhmet (Figure 5.32 A), although lions are also connected with the solar cult. The head is made in Egyptian style of blue faience with black highlights. A small blue faience model of a persea fruit from the drain also reflects cultic activity, since the persea was a sacred tree often used for religious bouquets (Figure 5.32 C). Similar examples were found in the Mirgissa Hathor chapel (Vercoutter 1970: 349, Figure 47: 128) and at Deir el-Bahari (Pinch 1994: 282–4, Pl. 57a).

Figurines and fertility

Both Egyptian- and Nubian-style human, and a variety of animal, figurines occur in domestic contexts at Askut (Figures 5.30–2), reflecting household religious practice. Some were carefully crafted of faience (Figure 5.32 A, C), pottery (Figure 5.31 A), and stone (Figure 5.30 A), but most were simply made in unfired mud. A small fertility figurine in typical Nubian style found near the shrine in the house of Meryka implies the maintenance or syncretization of personal religious beliefs between the Egyptian colonists and resident Nubians during the New Kingdom (Figure 5.31 A). Wenig (1978: 111, 116, 122–8) suggests an association with the C-Group, but similar figurines occur at Kerma (Nora Ferraro in Bonnet 1990: 133, Figure 117), and a close parallel was found in the Kerma cemetery at Akasha (Maystre 1980: 140, 188, Figures 28, 58). A battered but fine stone fertility figurine and a group of other more modest mud figurines from contexts throughout the site represent Egyptian types (Figure 5.30), but many of the human figurines fall outside of Egyptian tradition (Figure 5.31). Some of the

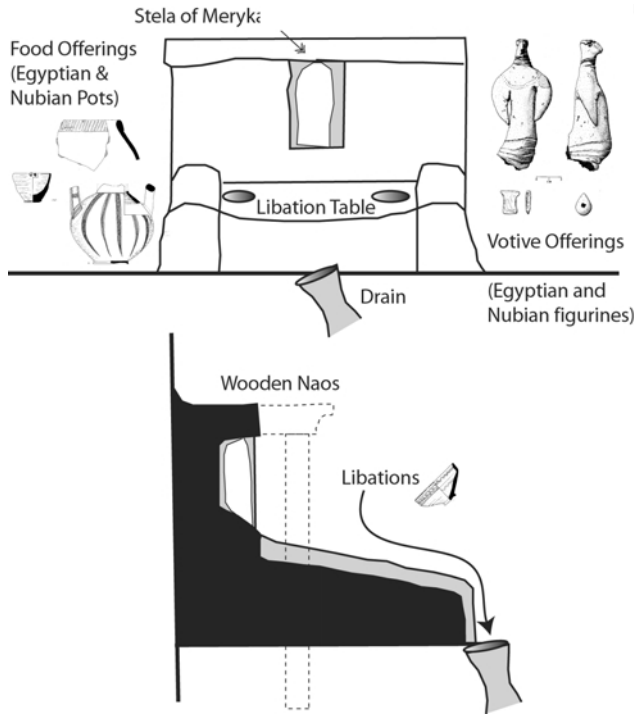


Figure 5.29 Shrine in the house of Meryka.

rounded figurines are difficult to place in either culture, but flat figurines with incised and punctate designs are typical of those found in Egypt, with parallels at Deir el-Medineh and Deir el-Bahari (Bruyère 1937; Pinch 1993, 1994). The seated types, however, do not appear in Egypt and are typically Nubian. The creation of a separately modeled head is a particularly distinctive Nubian feature (Figure 5.31 H). Some of the other rounded examples also have parallels within the Kerma culture and, although they have a generic quality, Egyptian figurines tend to be quite different in style.

Other figurines included large numbers of quadrupeds (Figure 5.32 E–I), probably mostly cattle (although I is perhaps a pig), crocodiles (B, D), which also appeared as an appliqué on pottery, possible fish and bread loaves, a bird (J), a model axe (K), and finally an assortment of model vessels. Crocodiles appear as offerings in Egyptian temples (e.g. Dreyer 1986), and inscriptions from other Nubian colonial sites contained dedications to the crocodile god Sobek of Sumenu from middle Egypt (Vercoutter 1957). Crocodiles also played a key role in Egyptian magic (Pinch 1994). Vessels are the most common type of figurine for all periods, accounting for nearly half of the figurines in each period. Human figurines are most common during the Middle Kingdom, but decline in the Second Intermediate Period and especially the New Kingdom. During

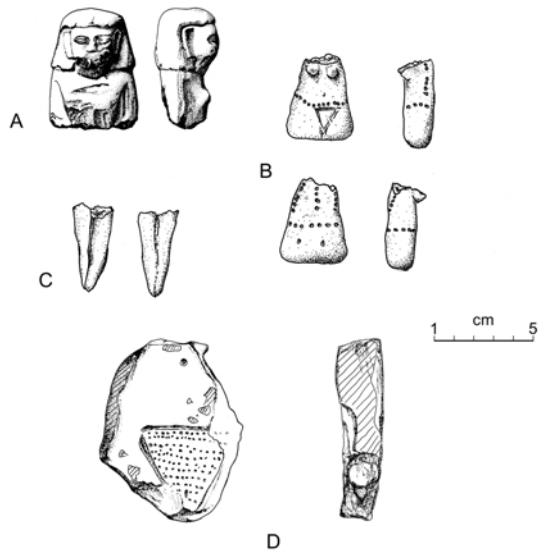


Figure 5.30 Egyptian-style human figurines.

the New Kingdom, quadruped figurines became popular, accounting for almost a third of the figurines. This pattern may reflect a Nubian influence, since cattle were particularly important in Nubian religious practice (Bonnet 1990).

At Askut, expressions of private religious practice were multi-faceted and changing. In the Middle Kingdom, the emphasis is on the veneration of ancestors and perhaps household deities like Bes and Taweret. There is no evidence for direct worship of the deities of state, although the changing nature of the settlement from military fortress to fortified settlement may have obscured evidence of such. This is entirely consistent with contemporary Egyptian practice, where Pharaoh played an official role as divine intermediary for the state cults. At the beginning of the New Kingdom, and perhaps earlier, we see a continuation of the household cults, but with the addition of a formal chapel along the lines of those found at Deir el-Medineh. This suggests the emergence of personal piety at Askut, a private religious practice that sidestepped royal prerogative beginning in the New Kingdom (Assmann 1989). The one area where Nubian influence appears is in figurines, especially those of women. Fertility magic in household shrines was particularly the province of women in ancient Egypt, as was cooking (Robins 1993; Pinch 1993, 1994). The combination of these features may indicate intermarriage of the colonists with Nubians, but all of the most overt forms of religious practice fall within Egyptian practice.

What does the presence of Nubian artifacts, including stone celts, jewelry, cosmetic equipment, figurines, pottery, and especially cookpots represent in terms of actual people? It could indicate a small group of Nubians living at the site. Although, as noted above, some areas have more Nubian pottery than others, suggesting some

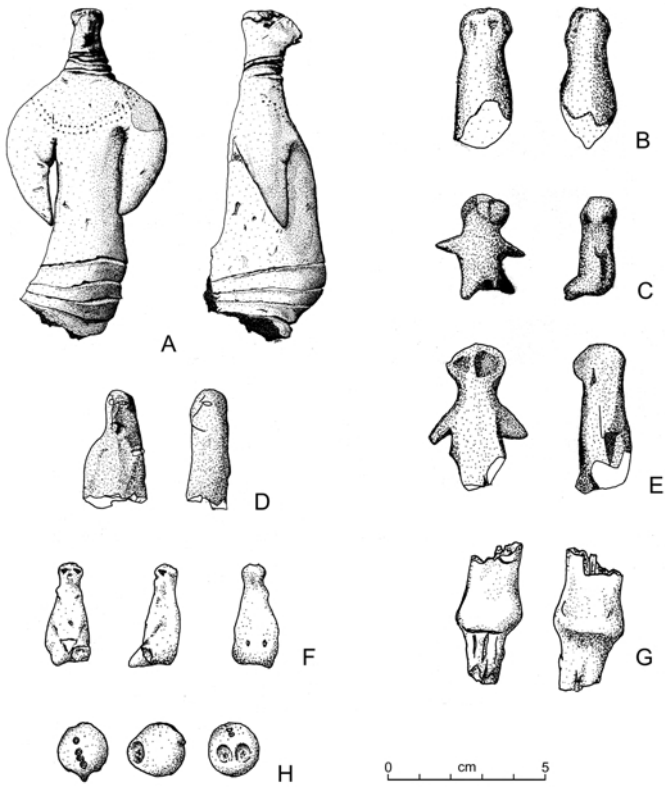


Figure 5.31 Nubian-style human figurines.

variability between households, the distribution of pottery and other artifacts is not highly localized or segregated as one would expect in an enclave (e.g. Stein 1999). Instead, Nubian artifacts are spread throughout the site and ceramic assemblage. On the other hand, the Nubian material could be the result of trade without the actual presence of Nubians living at the site. This explanation could conceivably account for the jewelry, cosmetic equipment, and even some of the pottery found at the site, but is not consistent with the presence of Nubian figurines and the overall distribution of Nubian pottery. For the last, we would expect an emphasis on storage vessels containing imported goods, and perhaps also to a lesser extent serving vessels that might serve as exotic imports for display in feasting, demonstrating both economic prosperity and connections with key Nubian trading partners. There would be no need for cookpots and other utilitarian ceramics. But this is exactly the opposite of the pattern that actually appears in the Nubian ceramic assemblage at Askut. Storage vessels are quite rare, and utilitarian cookpots are by far the most common type of pottery. Taking all of these observations into account, the kinds and distribution of

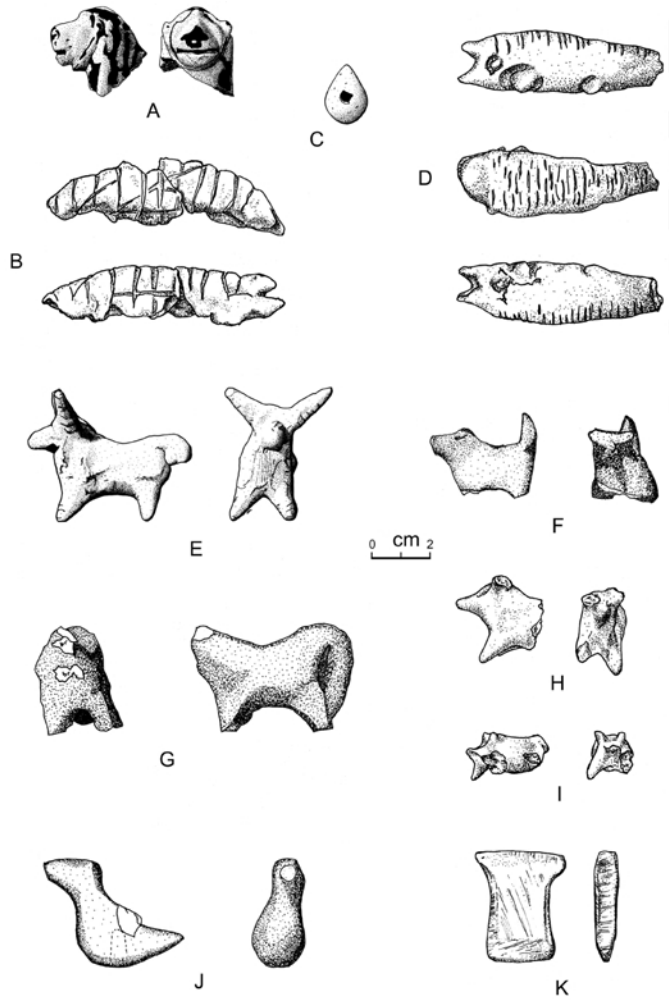


Figure 5.32 Animal and other figurines.

Nubian artifacts point towards the presence and cultural influence of Nubians as an integral part of the frontier community, particularly women, given the evidence for Nubian foodways and personal religion, especially fertility magic. Egyptians associated both of these with women and so they represent a likely avenue for Nubian women to express a Nubian identity upon entering into an Egyptian cultural setting. Whether or not this pattern represents cultural conservatism or an assertion of ethnic identity will be considered in the final chapter.

Chapter 6

Death at Tombos

> When I turn my face to the south, I work a wonder for you
> I cause the chiefs of Wretched Kush to turn to you,
> Bearing all their tribute upon their backs.
> They present themselves to you with their children,
> In order that you may give them the breath of life.
>
> The god Amun to Amenhotep III
> (after Breasted 1906: II: 361)

The discussion of Askut lacks one crucial religious dimension that plays a prominent role in ethnic expression: funerary practice. As discussed above, burial monuments and rituals reinforce and define ethnic identities through their demonstration of primordial attachments. Unfortunately, only brief preliminary publications have appeared for the cemeteries associated with Askut (Mills 1967–8; Mills and Nordström 1966). As a result, we must look elsewhere for this evidence, in this case to a new excavation at Tombos, a colonial cemetery that lay at the third cataract upon another key frontier within Egypt's New Kingdom empire. There are similarities in the geo-political situation of the two sites. Amun promises to deliver the Nubians with their tribute to Pharaoh, but the residents of Tombos were ideally situated to enforce Nubian compliance. Like the second cataract, the third cataract at Tombos is dotted with rocky islands and submerged granite boulders creating rapids that open on either side to a clear, navigable channel. As is the case today, travel through the cataract would be restricted to a narrow channel, and would prevent all but small boats from traversing the area outside of the flood season without portage (Figure 6.1). To the south, the narrow floodplain opens up to the expansive Kerma basin, an important source of economic support for the former capital of Kush at Kerma. The river remains clear until Gebel Barkal and the fourth cataract, where the Egyptians presumably established another colonial settlement. Unfortunately, archaeologists have yet to locate evidence of Egyptian colonial occupation outside of the massive temple complexes that lay next to the dramatic mountain that gives the site its name. Although Tombos lies far downstream of the official New Kingdom border at Kurgus, its strategic position was nevertheless

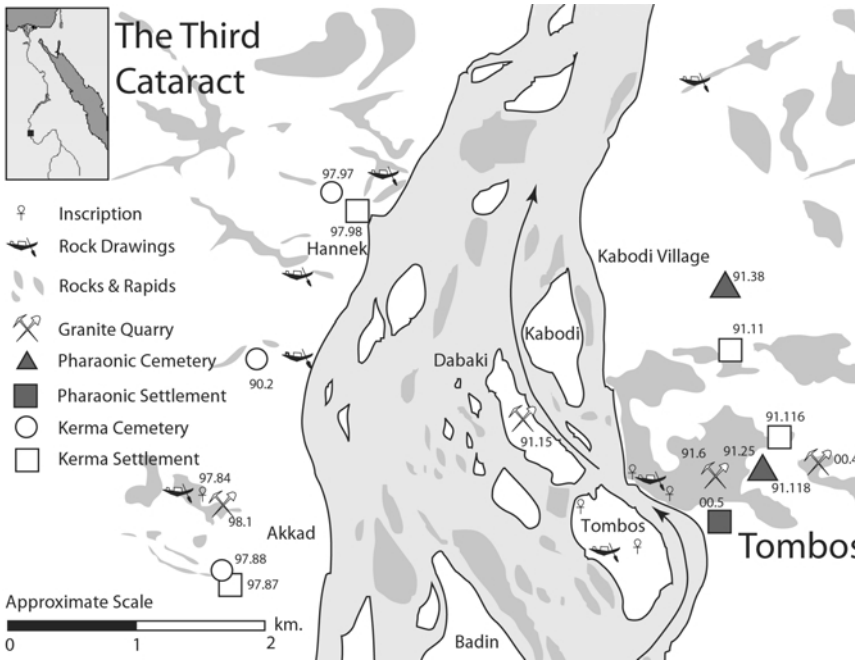


Figure 6.1 The third cataract and Tombos.

analogous to that of Askut in the Middle Kingdom, since the third cataract marked an important internal boundary, as is explicitly set out by Thutmose I on his great Tombos stela (Bradbury 1984–5). The Egyptian colony at Tombos doubtless acted as an important customs post for the regulation of trade and assembly of the annual tribute promised by Amun to Amenhotep III and other Pharaohs, but collected by mortal hands. Since ethnicity is often polarized on competitive political and economic boundaries, we might expect strong expressions of ethnic identity to appear at Tombos.

A survey and test excavation conducted in 1991 by David Edwards and Ali M. Osman Salih (1992, 2001) of the University of Khartoum revealed the importance of Tombos as a substantial Egyptian colonial cemetery, until now the southernmost found in Nubia. Their excavation at the northern end of the cemetery uncovered remains of a mud-brick superstructure of uncertain plan surrounding a shaft with three chambers cut 6 m deep into the granite in a typically Egyptian layout. Ceramics and other objects date the tomb to the later eighteenth dynasty. The first two seasons of the University of California excavations at Tombos, conducted in the winters of 2000 and 2002, uncovered the large pyramid tomb of Siamun, a high-ranking administrator, the Scribe of the Treasury and Overseer of Foreign Lands and his wife Weren, the Mistress of the House (Figure 6.2).

Table 6.1 Chronology of the burials excavated at Tombos

Context	*Reign*	*Date*
Conquest stelae	Thutmose I	*c.* 1502 BC
Gap before use of the cemetery?		
Unit 6, Pit I initial burial	Amenhotep II	*c.* 1425 BC
Unit 6, Pit G first burials	Amenhotep III	*c.* 1375 BC
Pyramid of Siamun subsidiary burials		
Unit 7 initial burials		
Unit 8 burials		
Unit 6, Pit G second set of burials	Akhenaton	*c.* 1335 BC
Unit 6, Pit G third set of burials	Ramesses II	*c.* 1290 BC
Unit 6, scattered remains of later burials		
Unit 6, Pit H, final burials in entrance	late Ramesside	*c.* 1100 BC

The entire complex was exposed, along with several single burials scattered around the pyramid. The burial shaft was located in the chapel, as is common in contemporary tombs. It was partly excavated, but the burial chamber was not reached. In addition, a previously unsuspected middle-class component to the cemetery was discovered (Units 5 and 6). Several pit tombs were excavated, and traces show that more exist. Three underground chamber tombs made of mud brick were found (Units 6, 7, and 8). Units 6 and 8 were excavated completely, but only the first chamber of Unit 7 was cleared. Several pit tombs were also found near the chamber tombs, with a cluster towards the north (Unit 5). Test excavation among a series of ovoid rock circles to the south-east of the main cemetery revealed a burial that probably dates to the Napatan period (Unit 3, *c.* 750–300 BC). A roughly constructed drystone tumulus surmounted this pit tomb, with a side chamber below containing a disturbed extended burial lying on a bed (for discussion see below, Chapter 8). The human remains recovered in two seasons of excavation represent over 150 individuals from the New Kingdom, pointing to a substantial Egyptian colonial presence in this area. Although Thutmose I conquered the area in 1502 BC, the first burials took place around 75 years later (Table 6.1). The end of the eighteenth dynasty saw a great deal of activity in the cemetery, but burials continued down to the end of the New Kingdom. Although there is still much work to be done at this important site, the evidence recovered thus far allows for an assessment of burial practice through an analysis of funerary architecture, grave goods, and a reconstruction of ritual practice.

ARCHITECTURE

The layout of Siamun and Weren's tomb reflects contemporary elite burial tradition in Egypt (Figures 6.3–5). Up until the early eighteenth dynasty, only Pharaohs had pyramid tombs. By the mid-eighteenth dynasty, both elite tomb complexes in

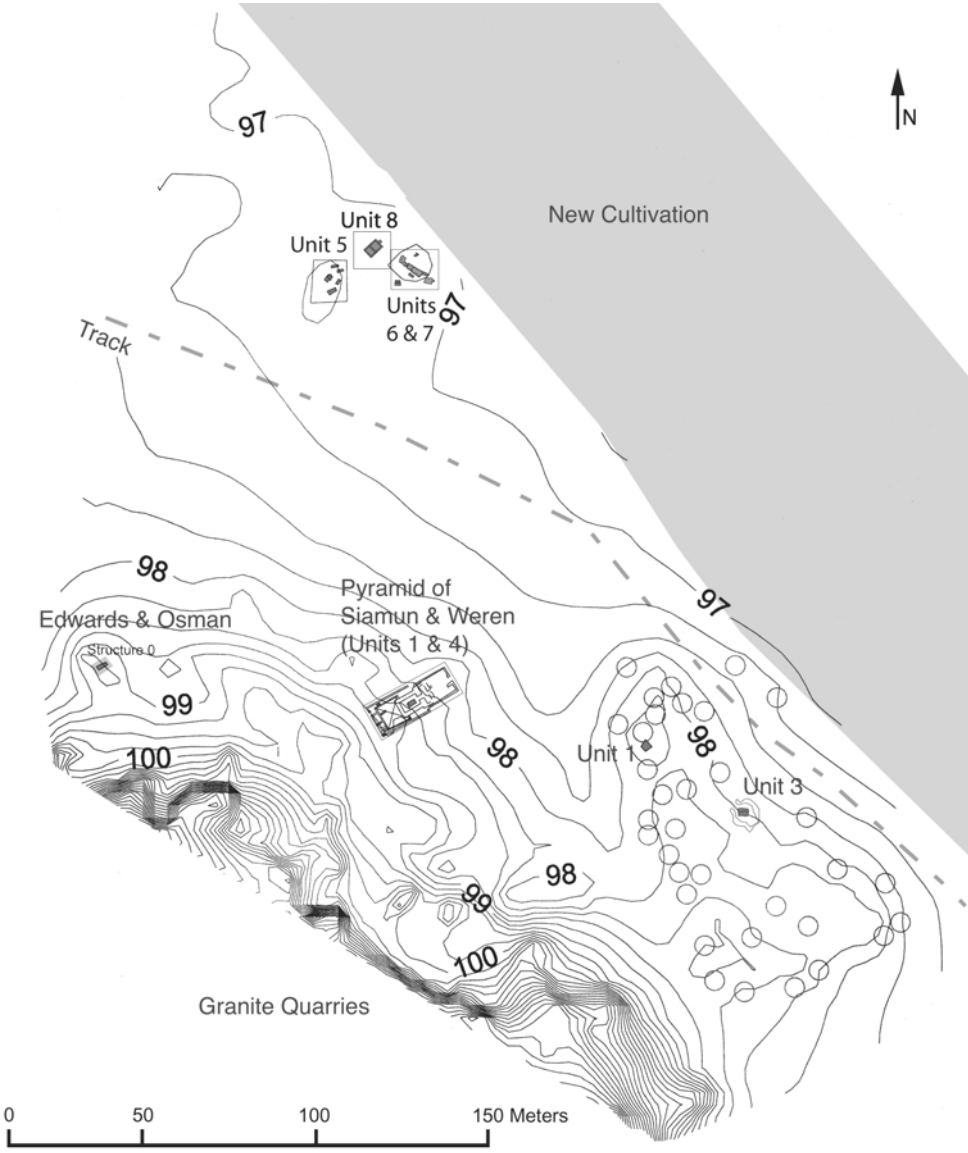


Figure 6.2 The cemetery at Tombos.

Egypt and colonial cemeteries in Nubia like Aniba and Soleb often included small pyramids made of mud brick with attached chapels (Steindorff 1935; Schiff Giorgini et al. 1965). Just as at Tombos, an enclosure wall often surrounded these complexes, creating ritual spaces in the form of a courtyard in front and sometimes

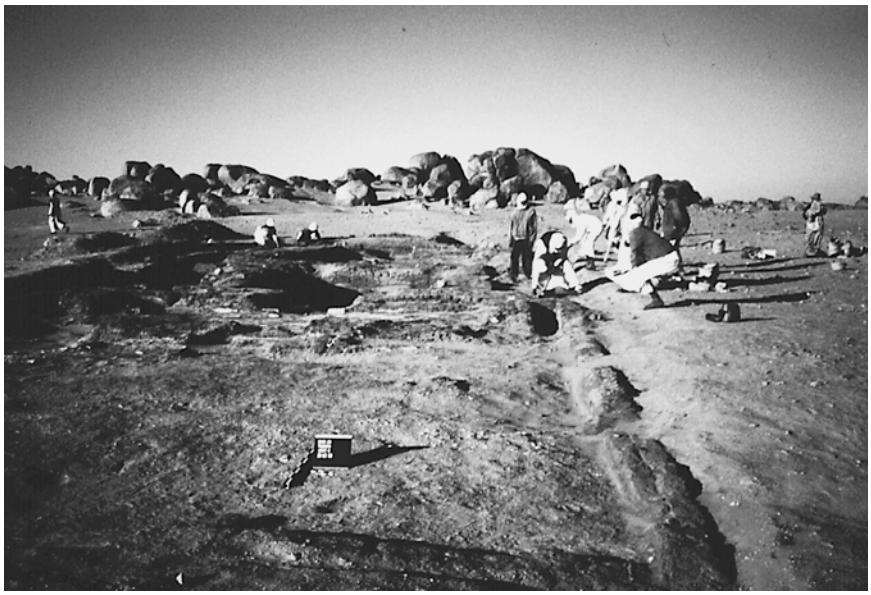


Figure 6.3 The pyramid of Siamun and Weren.

to the rear of the complex (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991; Williams 1993). This type of tomb was characteristic of the Egyptian capital at Thebes and northern administrative center at Memphis (Martin 1991). The T-shaped chapel design was a particularly Theban feature (Badawy 1968; Manniche 1987). The pyramid itself and its approximately east–west alignment tie into Egyptian solar theology, and the adoption of the pyramid in private tombs may be related to the emergence of personal piety discussed above for the Askut chapel.

Siamun also decorated his tomb with funerary cones. During the New Kingdom at Thebes, cones of clay were stamped on their flat end with the name(s) and title(s) of the deceased. Funerary cones have more than just epigraphic significance (Ryan 1988). They were inserted into plaster in a decorative frieze running the length of the tomb's façade (Figure 6.5). Funerary cones appear almost exclusively in the Theban necropolis, burial ground of Pharaohs and the most powerful bureaucrats during the New Kingdom. The cones appear in Nubia only in the tomb of the Deputy Aanuw and his wife Sennu at the provincial capital of Aniba. The Deputy reported directly to the Viceroy of Kush with administrative responsibility for all of Lower Nubia. Although the excavator describes only four cones, he mentions finding other examples associated with the same tomb, implying that the structure was decorated with a complete frieze of cones. Like Aniba, the dozens of cones recovered from the vicinity of Siamun's tomb were not *in situ*, but they do demonstrate that it too had a full frieze. As is standard, the cones were impressed with a stamp naming both the tomb owner and his wife. Additionally, rectangular "cones" were stamped with a

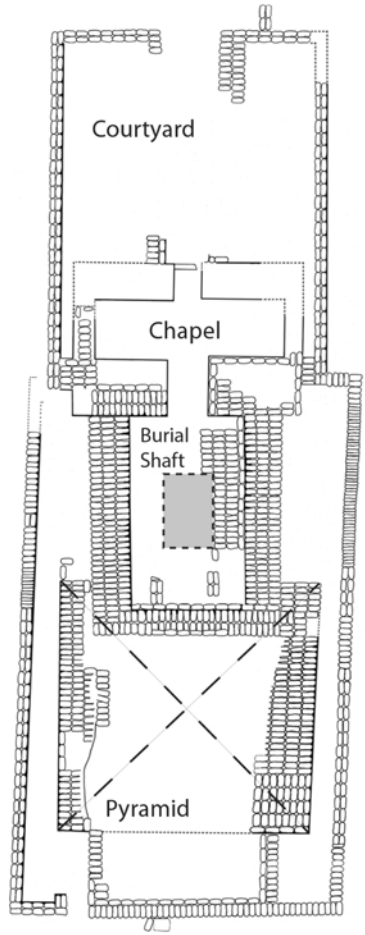


Figure 6.4 Plan of the pyramid.

separate set of seals, one for Siamun and one for Weren. Siamun means "Son of Amun," the Theban chief god of the state during the New Kingdom. Both names were common in Egypt during the New Kingdom (Ranke 1935). As is usual, the full inscription from the cones was pieced together using overlapping portions of several examples, since it is rare to find a cone with the full inscription legible (Figure 6.6). The text reads: "Honored by Osiris and Anubis, Master of the Divine Pavilion, the Scribe of the Treasury, Overseer of Foreign Lands, Siamun, [and] his wife the Mistress of the House Weren." Fragments of fired bricks stamped with Weren's seal complete the set, indicating that the couple not only had a full frieze of cones, but also the rarer architectural elaborations, probably consisting of framing around the entryway (Ryan 1988; Davies and Macadam 1957).

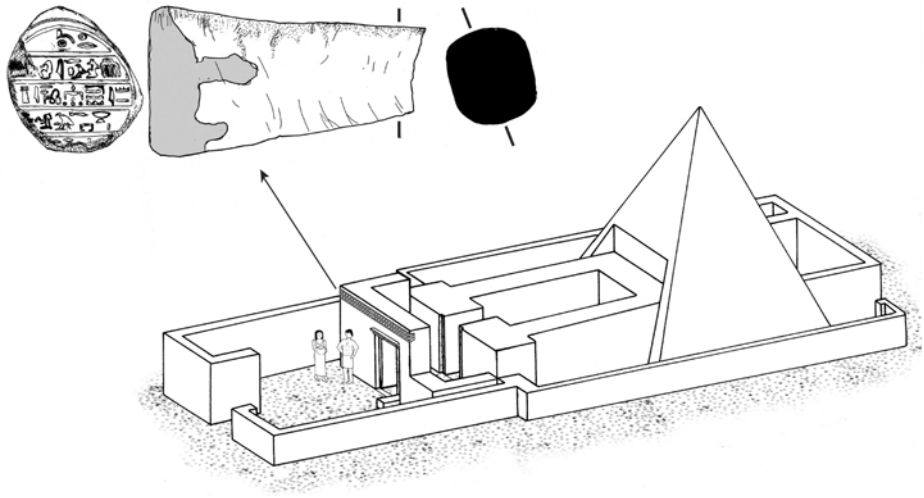


Figure 6.5 Hypothetical reconstruction of the pyramid with funerary cones.

Siamun's titles reflect his key role in the administration of tribute coming from what remained of the old Kerman kingdom of Kush. The Egyptian treasury department was under the direct control of Pharaoh, and was heavily involved in the collection and shipment of gold (Vercoutter 1959). As an Overseer of Foreign Lands, Siamun played a key diplomatic role in managing relations between Egypt and Kush, and in assembling gold and other exotic resources like ebony and ivory for the ceremonial 'Presentation of *Inu*' before the king (see Chapter 7, below). Higginbotham (2000) notes that in Syro-Palestine these officials gathered intelligence, collected taxes, and may have mediated between local rulers. Only the Viceroy and his troop commander held the title in the Nubian administration. Siamun's importance in the imperial hierarchy is also demonstrated in the size of his tomb, which is as big as the largest elite tombs found in Nubia.

The pit and underground mud-brick chamber tombs of Units 5–8 also reflect Egyptian funerary architectural styles (Figures 6.7–9). Both pits and built underground chambers are common in Egypt (Brunton and Engelbach 1927), as well as colonial cemeteries like Fadrus (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991). Multiple burials in communal tombs represent a particularly Egyptian burial practice, but single inhumations in pits still outnumber them by a very large margin in Egypt (see below). The presence of staircases at Tombos implies that the chambers were designed with multiple inhumations in mind. The Tombos burial chambers are larger and more elaborate than those usually found, attesting to the wealth of even the middle-class colonists. Several of the pit tombs used full or partial side-chambers, another Egyptian feature that was eventually adopted in Nubian burial practice

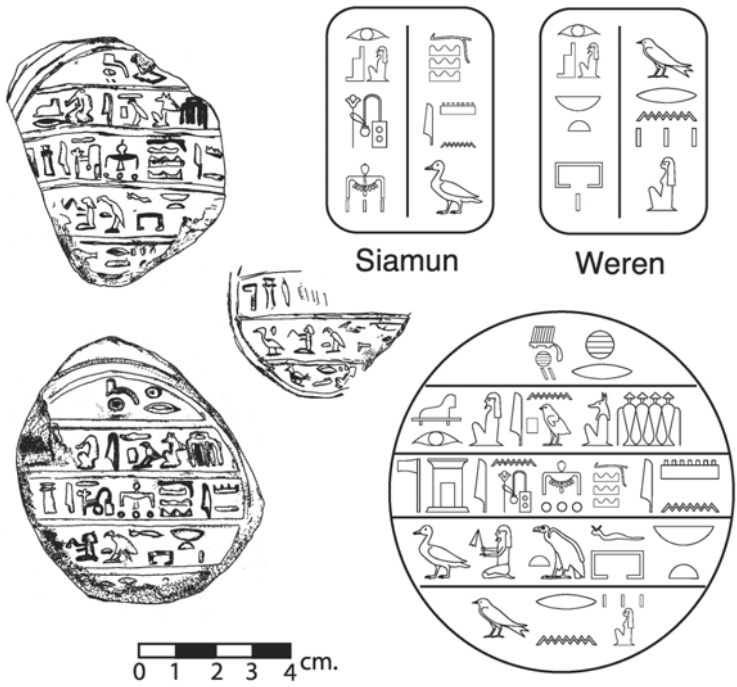


Figure 6.6 Inscription from the funerary cones.

(Welsby 1996b). Two of the intact burials next to the pyramid were at least partly enclosed by mud bricks, also attested in New Kingdom cemeteries like Gurob (Brunton and Engelbach 1927).

GRAVE GOODS

The grave goods placed with the dead also strongly reflect Egyptian practice. The New Kingdom burial assemblage included objects specially made for the tomb, like coffins, statuary, and amulets. Objects of daily life were also quite common, including jewelry, cosmetic equipment, furniture, and other possessions (Smith 1991b, 1992). Objects of daily life were found in both Egyptian and Nubian tombs, but specialized objects provide direct evidence of Egyptian funerary beliefs. Nevertheless, the inclusion of objects of daily life in Egyptian burial practice served to reinforce the identity of the deceased by surrounding the body with items either used during life or meant to project the deceased's social position into the afterlife. Members of the elite like Siamun often began their tomb early in life, and even acquired grave goods ahead of time, so to some extent the burial assemblage reflects the identity of the deceased, including any objects that served to signal ethnicity.



Figure 6.7 Overview of Units 5–8.



Figure 6.8 Detail of Unit 6 vaulted tomb.

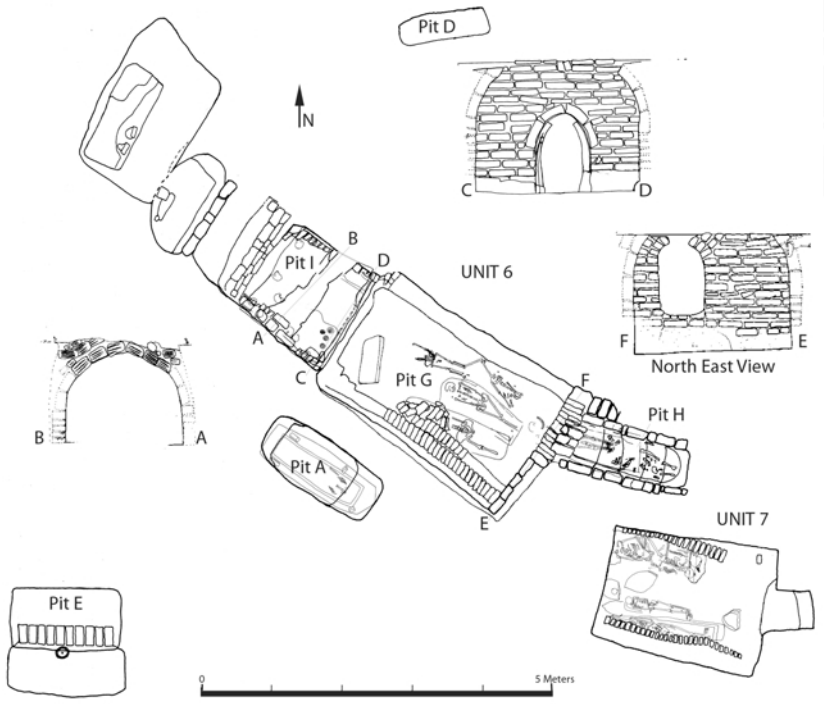


Figure 6.9 Unit 6 and 7 plan.

On the other hand, the final selection of the grave goods was made by relatives of the deceased, ideally his or her children. In this case, the type, quality, and quantity of grave goods provided an important opportunity for display by the family of the deceased during funeral processions, rituals, and feasts. This section discusses grave goods at Tombos along these lines, first considering objects designed for the tomb and then those artifacts that might have been used in daily life.

Objects designed for the tomb

Although termites had wreaked havoc on organic materials, most of the burials at Tombos showed some signs of a coffin, often confined to a darker stain surrounding the body (Figure 6.9). Numerous fragments of decorated plaster, including elements clearly from mummiform coffins, were also recovered (Figure 6.10). Several examples included hieroglyphs, indicating that many of the coffins were originally inscribed with spells meant to ensure that the deceased became an immortal spirit in the afterlife. The shape of an entire mummiform coffin was preserved in Unit 7, although the decoration survived only at the foot end. The name and figure of the god Duamutef, one of the protective four Sons of Horus,



Figure 6.10 Inscribed coffin fragments.

was preserved, along with large sections of inscription. Additionally, ceramic coffin fragments were recovered from the fill of the pyramid's shaft, a complete pottery coffin trough was found in Unit 6, Pit G, and a shattered but complete trough, parts of a second trough, and most of the top part of a lid were found in Unit 8 (Figure 6.11). Ceramic mummiform coffins are well known from Egyptian-controlled Syro-Palestine, but seem strange in this context. In fact, pottery anthropoid coffins occur during the New Kingdom in Egyptian-controlled Nubia, the eastern delta, and the Faiyum (D'Auria *et al.*1988: 160–1). In my study of intact burials from Thebes, I concluded that coffins were the most basic requirement for a New Kingdom burial (Smith 1991b, 1992).

The overburden above the pyramid chapel contained a crude inscribed *ushabti* made of faience (Figure 6.12). A second *ushabti* was found *in situ* next to a ceramic coffin in the main chamber of the tomb in Unit 6, where ancient looters had probably thrown it (Figures 6.13 and 3.4). Two *ushabtis* were found alongside the legs of Tahut (Thoth), the man buried in the decorated mummiform coffin from Unit 7 (Figure 6.14). One was completely eaten by termites, but preserved the distinctive mummiform shape of an *ushabti*. The head and feet of the second *ushabti* were damaged, but almost the entire inscription was preserved along the body (Figure 6.15). The inscription contains the



Figure 6.11 Ceramic coffin fragment from Unit 8.



Figure 6.12 *Ushabti* from next to the pyramid.

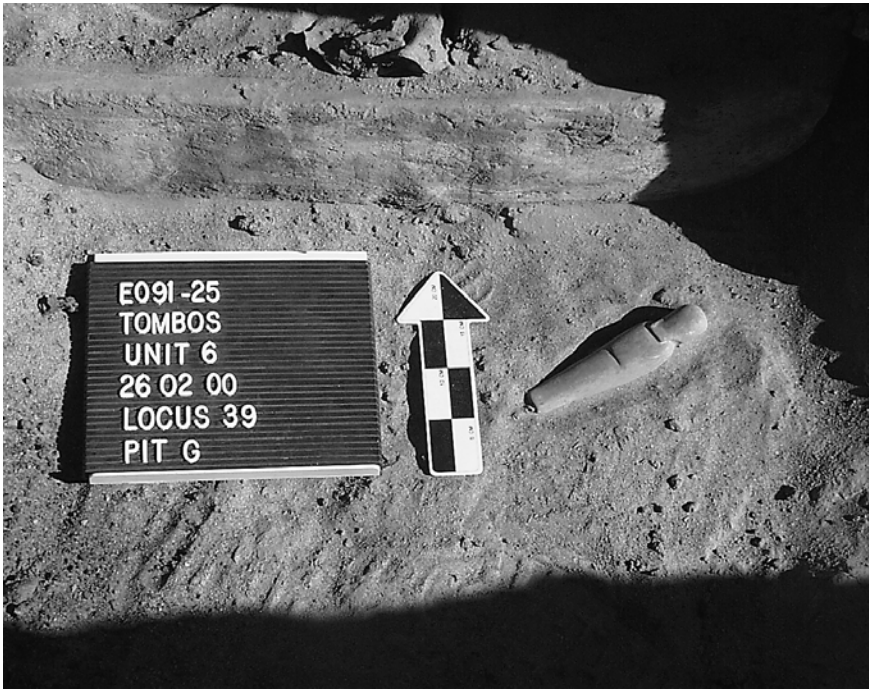


Figure 6.13 *Ushabti in situ* next to the ceramic coffin from Unit 6, Pit G.

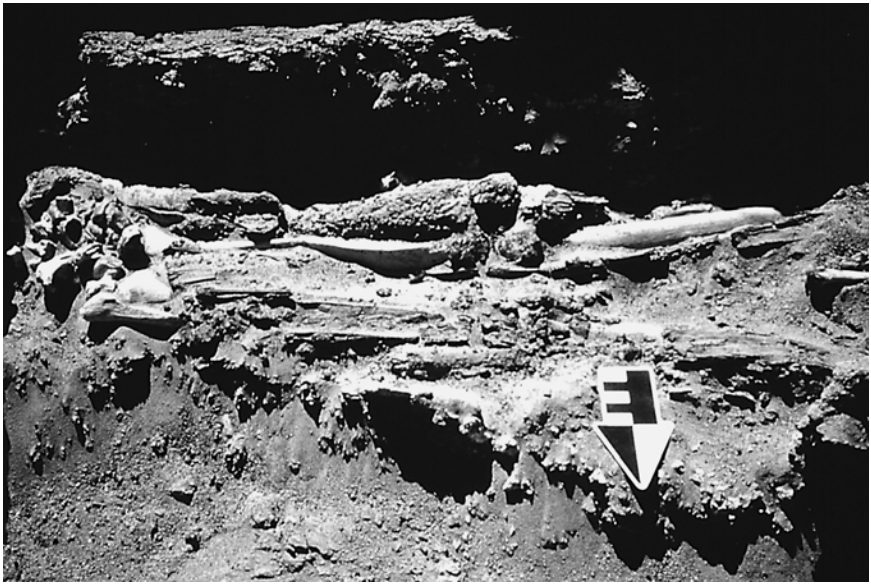


Figure 6.14 *Ushabtis in situ* next to Tahut's leg.



Figure 6.15 Ebony *ushabti* of Tahut with spell from the *Book of the Dead*.

standard spell from the *Book of the Dead* calling upon the figurine to substitute for the deceased, in this case Tahut, in case the gods required him to work in the afterlife. The Egyptians conceived of the afterlife as a kind of bucolic paradise, but life after death came with a price. There were fields to be tilled, canals to be dug, and so on. The gods called upon the dead to perform these tasks. *Ushabtis* would leap up and substitute for the deceased should the gods call upon them to work in the divine fields. *Ushabtis* are one of the hallmarks of an Egyptian burial, although the relative rarity of them at Tombos is not surprising since only the wealthy could afford them (Smith 1992).

No specialized amulets like heart scarabs and Isis knots were found, but ordinary scarabs and more generic amulets point towards Egyptian religious beliefs (Figures 6.16, 6.27, and 6.31). Other jewelry has a more direct connection to Egyptian funerary beliefs. A small carnelian heart amulet is similar to examples from Egyptian-style burials in both Egypt and Nubia. The Egyptians believed that the heart was the seat of the soul, and, so must be protected, and this small piece of jewelry may represent a cheap substitute for the more elaborate and expensive inscribed heart amulet. Several Bes amulets found in Unit 6 reflect the veneration of a deity popular in Egyptian households. Bes amulets would protect the wearer from evil spirits, both in life and the afterlife (Pinch 1994). Small amulets from a child's burial within the pyramid's compound included an amuletic necklace including figures of the god Bes and goddess Taweret (Figures 6.26 and 6.27). The hippo goddess Taweret protected mothers and children, and so was particularly appropriate for a child's burial. Small *ujat* amulets were found in Units 6 and 7. As the healed Eye of Horus, it symbolized wholeness and restoration, with obvious funerary connotations connected with rebirth (D'Auria *et al.* 1988). Scarabs

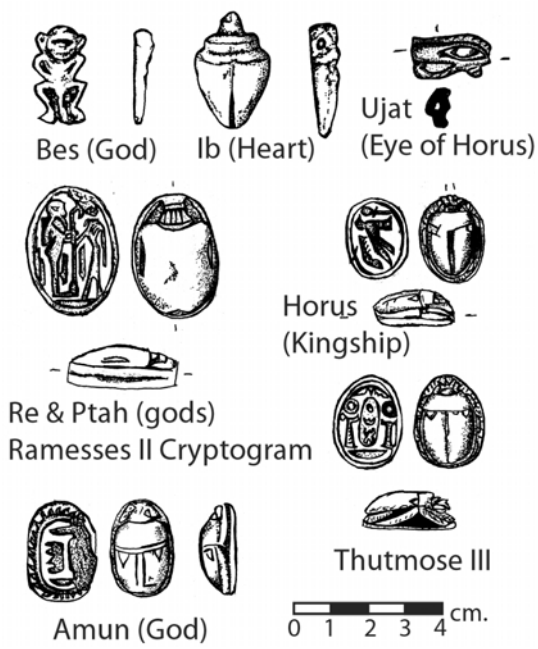


Figure 6.16 Scarabs and amulets from Unit 6.

were also a particularly common grave good, usually placed as a ring or tied on the third finger of the left hand. They also appear strung in necklaces or simply among the grave goods (Smith 1992). Several scarabs were recovered in general association with the jumble of burials in Unit 6, Pit G, among the burials in Unit 7, and scattered among the wreckage in Unit 8. Three were found *in situ* (Figure 6.17), one presumably from a necklace under the clavicle next to the heart amulet mentioned above, another still next to the third finger of the left hand of a second burial in Unit 6, and one with Tahut in Unit 7, probably originally placed on the hand but found beneath the body on the floor of the coffin. The scarabs from Tombos most commonly refer to kings, including Thutmose III, Amenhotep III (the most popular), and Ramesses II. Amun was the most popular god named on scarabs at Tombos, not surprising since he was the head of the Egyptian pantheon during the New Kingdom. Although scarabs were traded and imitated extensively throughout the Levant and in Nubia, they do symbolize rebirth and played an important role in preparations for the afterlife, and so reflect Egyptian funerary beliefs and practice.

Objects of daily life

Apart from jewelry, objects of daily life were rare, although the poor preservation of organics may have contributed to this pattern as much as any real lack of items.

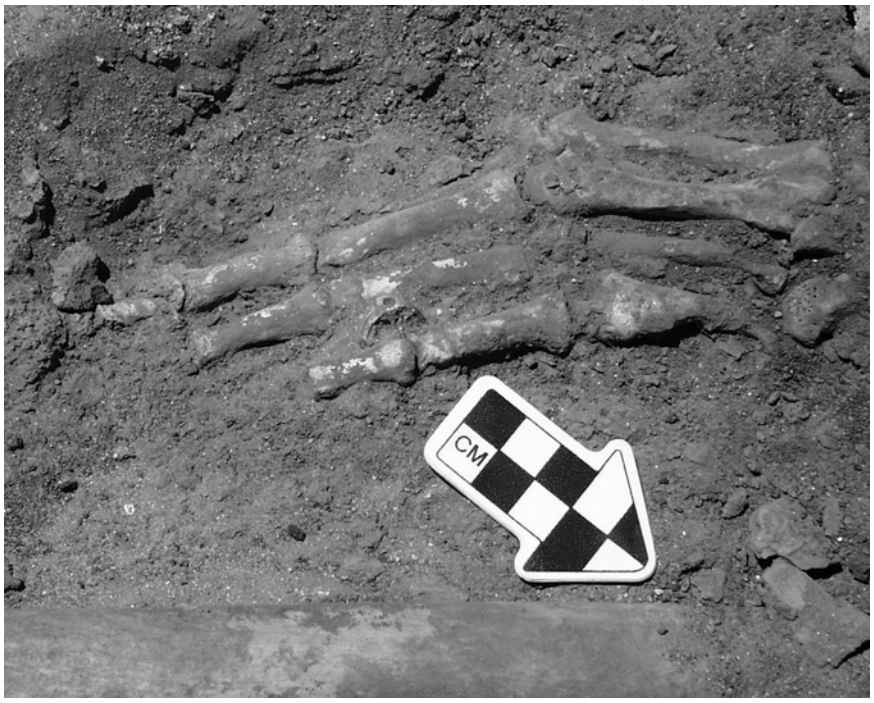


Figure 6.17 Scarab *in situ* in Unit 6.

Additionally, poorer burials from Thebes had only jewelry and cosmetic equipment, and objects of daily life became increasingly rare in burials of the later New Kingdom (nineteenth and twentieth dynasties). The jewelry recovered from Tombos all has close parallels in contemporary Egypt (cf. Figure 6.18; Brovarski et al. 1982; Brunton and Engelbach 1927), although some items, like simple penannular earrings in ivory, shell, and quartz (Figure 6.18 B and D), are also found in Nubian burials (Williams 1983). An ivory bangle (E) could be a bracelet, but it is tempting to consider the possibility that it is a Nubian-style large hoop earring of the type that plays a key role in the Nubian ethnic *topos.* Several pieces of cosmetic equipment were also found, including a poorly preserved wooden container for kohl, a galena- (lead ore) based eye-paint, from each of the two main chambers in Unit 6. This tomb also contained an applicator made of ebony and another of hematite. Tahut had a tubular wooden kohl container, completely eaten by termites but with the shape preserved, along with a kohl stick of ebony that survived mostly intact. Another ebony kohl stick was found near the head of a burial on the west side of Unit 7. Some rounded pieces of wood from Unit 6, Pit G, suggest the presence of furniture, but they were not well preserved. Remains of a badly decayed folding seat were found at the head of Tahut's coffin, including the bronze hinges and fluted casts of termite-eaten

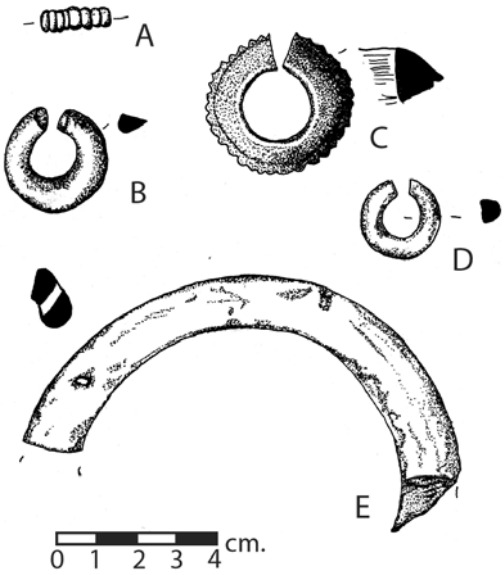


Figure 6.18 Jewelry from Unit 6.

wood from the legs. An ebony throwing stick of the type used by the elite for hunting wild birds survived the termites almost intact in the back chamber of Unit 6, Pit I (Figure 6.19; Touny and Wenig 1969: 61–4, Pls. 50 and 51).

The most common grave good was pottery (Figures 6.20–22, 32). In Egyptian and probably also Nubian burials, ceramics usually contained or symbolized food offerings when placed in the tomb, but represent the material remains of funeral ceremonies and feasts when found in association with tomb superstructures. The vast majority of the pottery from Tombos is Egyptian. Two complete Mycenean juglets from Unit 6, Pit G, and base sherds from two more juglets from the pyramid, attest to the wealth of the community and its participation in the long-distance exchange of luxury goods (above, Chapter 4 and Figures 4.3 and 6.21). Only just above 1 percent of the pottery from the pyramid and Units 5 and 6 at Tombos was Nubian (Figure 6.22). As with Askut, a more

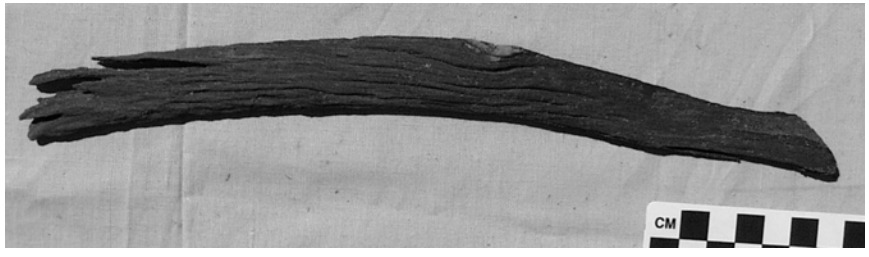


Figure 6.19 Ebony throw stick from Unit 6, Pit I.

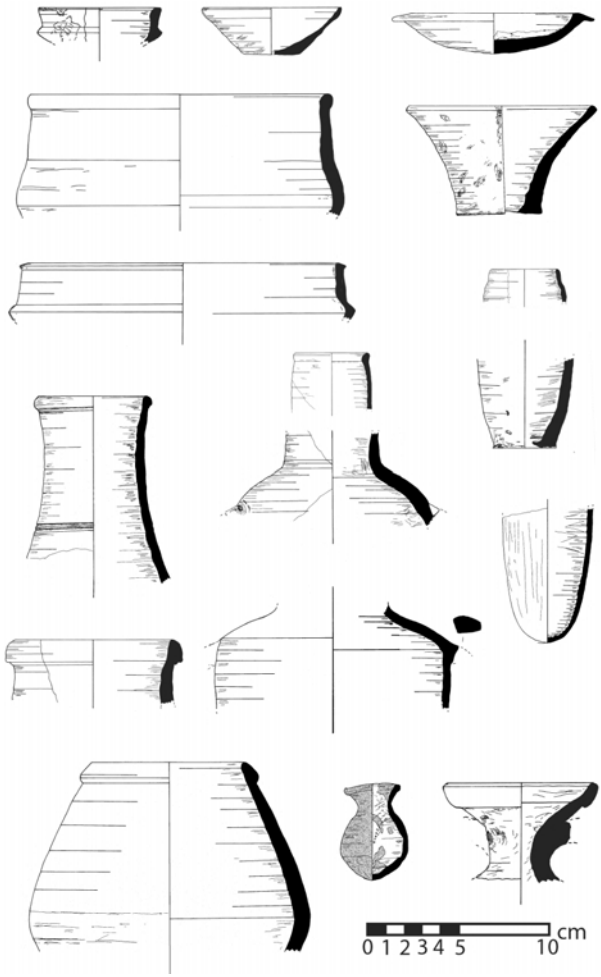


Figure 6.20 Egyptian pottery from various contexts.

detailed contextual analysis produces a more nuanced result (Table 6.2). I divided the pyramid complex into three sections. As noted above, an enclosed area with single inhumations of children surrounded the pyramid itself. The chapel contained a mix of material thrown out of the shaft by looters and presumably also the residue of ritual activity taking place within the structure. Finally, the courtyard contained hearths and should include debris from the performance of offering rituals and funerary feasts. In contrast, the material from Units 5 and 6 should derive almost entirely from offerings placed within the shafts and underground chambers. Not surprisingly, the ceramic assemblages in each area ranged from above two-thirds to over three-quarters jar sherds, reflecting the inclusion of food offerings with the burials. Very few Nubian ceramics

Table 6.2 Distribution of Egyptian and Nubian ceramics at Tombos

Vessel type	*Pyramid (n = 850)*	*Chapel (n = 1586)*	*Courtyard (n = 339)*	*Unit 6 (n = 1315)*	*Unit 5 (n = 142)*
Bowl	29.9	33.0	39.8	22.51	29.58
Jar	69.1	62.5	56.6	77.03	67.61
Nubian bowl	0.5	2.5	2.9	0.08	0.00
Nubian jar	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.23	0.00
Late	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.15	2.82

were found, perhaps indicating offerings donated by local friends or associates (but see below). The chapel and courtyard of the pyramid present a different picture. Although jars are still the most common ceramic, bowls potentially used for food service and preparation during funeral feasts become more common, especially in the courtyard itself. Nubian bowls are still uncommon, but appear in much larger numbers than elsewhere at Tombos. Several sherds from incense burners were also found, either in the courtyard or around the chapel. One complete censor was found adjacent to the chapel on the south side next to a possible threshold leading from the main courtyard to the enclosed area along the side of the chapel.

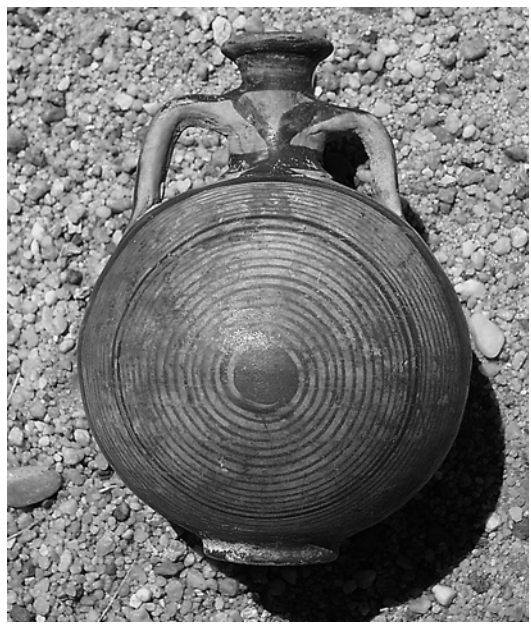


Figure 6.21 Mycenean pilgrim flask from Unit 6, Pit G.

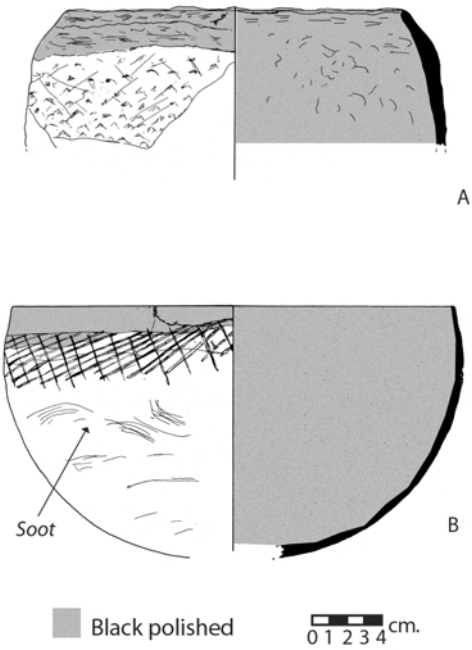


Figure 6.22 Nubian jar sherd from Unit 6, Pit I and sherd of bowl used for cooking from the pyramid's courtyard.

RITUAL PRACTICE

Architecture, material culture, extended burial position, evidence for mummification, and signs of funeral feasts around the pyramid reflect a strong adherence to Egyptian funerary rituals at Tombos. On the other hand, none of the burials apparently received Canopic sets indicating full mummification, and few specialized grave goods that reflect a belief in an Osirian afterlife, like *ushabtis*, were recovered. The poor preservation of organics explains the absence of some items, like fragile papyrus copies of the *Book of the Dead*, but nevertheless the scarcity of amulets and other items that should have survived begs the question: did the individuals at Tombos really uphold Egyptian funerary beliefs? In their analysis of the cemetery at Fadrus, Säve-Söderbergh and Troy (1991) correctly point out that the simple presence of Egyptian material culture and an extended burial position does not necessarily indicate an acceptance of Egyptian religious beliefs. This provincial cemetery provides important evidence for the transition to New Kingdom rule, including the gradual replacement of Nubian-style burials by Egyptian burial practice in the Lower Nubian principality of Tekhet (Figure 4.11). Conventional Egyptological wisdom sees items like *ushabtis* and Ka figurines, heart scarabs, and other elaborate amulets, papyrus *Books of the Dead*, and

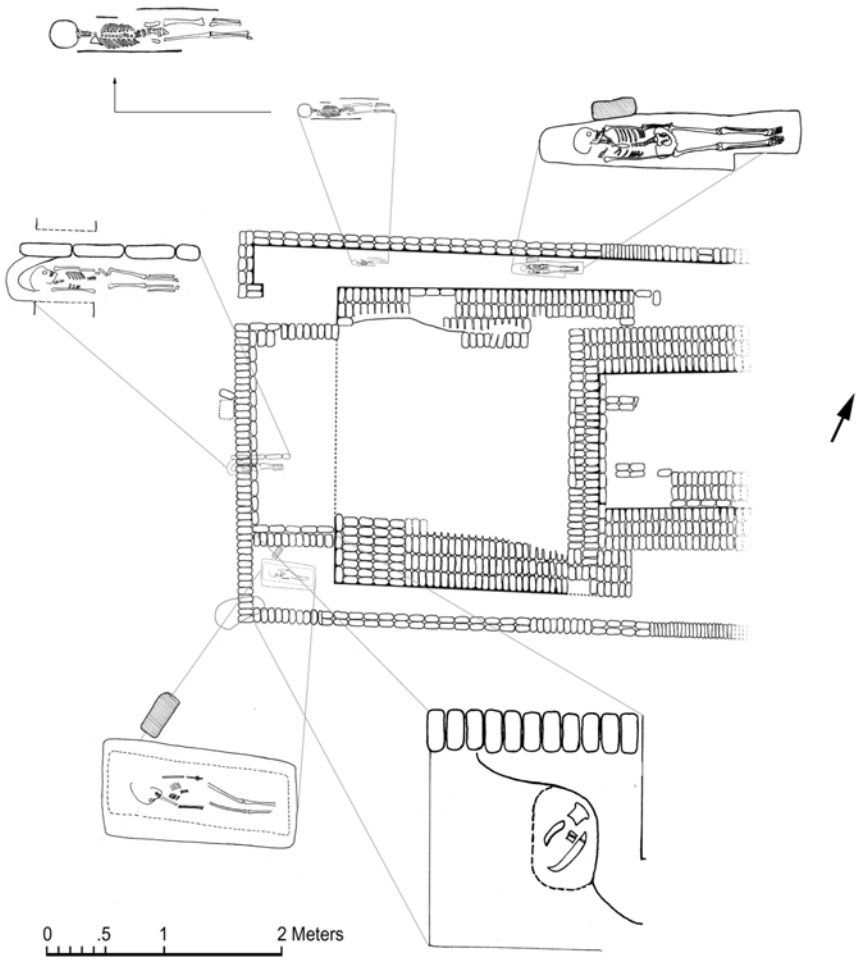


Figure 6.23 Burials around the pyramid.

full mummification, including the separate mummification of the internal organs and their placement in special Canopic jars, as essential components of an Egyptian burial. Säve-Söderbergh and Troy argue on this basis that acculturation at Fadrus was superficial, since they lacked these specialized artifacts associated with an "Osirian" afterlife.

This pattern, however, may have more to do with the status of the tomb occupants than their cultural or ethnic ties. My study of intact burials from Thebes found a strong correlation of status with these grave goods at the same period as the Fadrus cemetery (Smith 1992). These objects include the *Book of the Dead*, figurines, heart

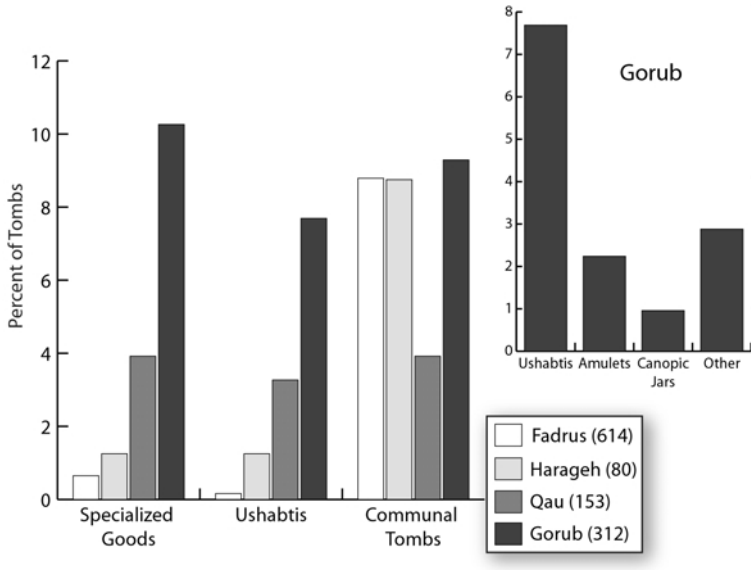


Figure 6.24 Distribution of specialized funerary objects at Fadrus, Harageh, Qau, and Gurob.

scarabs, and specialized amulets, all of which were inscribed and many of which were beyond the financial means of middle- and lower-class families. For example, a papyrus *Book of the Dead* cost 60 *deben* of copper, nearly two-thirds of a middle-class Deir el-Medineh craftsman's yearly salary in grain (Janssen 1975). Like the elaborate inscriptions on temples, these objects reflect a rarified religious practice connected with the Egyptian literate elite. This pattern is not confined to the Theban necropolis. A comparison with New Kingdom cemeteries excavated in the early part of this century at Harageh (Engelbach 1923), Qau (Brunton 1930), and Gurob (Brunton and Engelbach 1927) highlights the rarity of such items (Figure 6.24). The occurence of specialized goods at these cemeteries and Fadrus was calculated using presence/absence criteria by tomb in order to help control for the differential looting of wealthier tombs. Although Fadrus had the least number of tombs with specialized goods and *ushabtis*, even at Gurob, an important provincial center with royal ties, only around 10 percent of the tombs had specialized goods. Harageh and Qau consisted mainly of poor burials, and only Gurob included members of the highest elite, including a prince and the mayor/governor of the city and its hinterland. These sites thus provide a better parallel for Fadrus than Gurob, since the Nubian princes who were the real elite of the principality of Tekhet were buried not at Fadrus, but in pyramids located some distance away (Säve-Soderbergh and Troy 1991). The princes were buried with all the specialized grave goods expected for an elite Egyptian. Thus, while Fadrus is comparatively low in these items, the numbers for these two cemeteries are also quite low, with only just over 1 percent of the burials at Harageh and 4 percent at



Figure 6.25 Tahut coffin showing multiple interments.

Qau containing specialized grave goods. Additionally, *ushabtis* were the single most common specialized funerary item, apart from coffins, found at the three Egyptian sites, a pattern which also appears at Tombos. These figurines were often made of wood, as was the case with two of the four *ushabtis* recovered at Tombos. Like Tombos, wood did not survive well at Fadrus, so more tombs could originally have contained *ushabtis*.

Although Säve-Soderbergh and Troy (1991) de-emphasize them, decorated and inscribed coffins do reflect a belief in an Egyptian afterlife, since they provide physical and magical protection for the body, which must survive as a resting place for the soul, as well as spells aiding the deceased in the afterlife. Coffins were so important to Egyptians that they were often shared between several individuals (Smith 1991b; Brunton 1930; Brunton and Engelbach 1927; Engelbach 1923). This unusual burial practice occurs at Tombos. The well-preserved mummiform coffin in Unit 7 was the final resting place for two women and a man (Figure 6.25), and at least two of the three burials next to it shared the same coffin. Coffins represent a significant departure from Nubian burial practice, which consisted of a flexed burial often wrapped in a cowhide and placed upon a bed. The presence of communal, presumably family, crypts in the tomb excavated by Edwards and Osman and in Units 6–8 is another strong Egyptian feature not found in Nubian burials. Remains from a minimum of 23 individuals were found in association with the pyramid, so it



Figure 6.26 Child's upside-down burial.

too almost certainly contained a communal crypt. Communal burials were common among the elite, who could afford the excavation of large underground complexes. Chambers were often expanded or new rooms added off a communal shaft as new family members were interred (Williams 1993). In contrast, single burials in pits were the norm in Nubian cemeteries, although they are also extremely common in Egypt and at Fadrus, as well as other colonial cemeteries in Nubia. Thus the presence of communal and coffined burials at both Fadrus and Tombos implies more than a superficial imitation of Egyptian practice. The orientation of the burials provides further indication of Egyptian religious beliefs. Individuals at Tombos were consistently extended with hands over the pelvis and head towards the west so that the deceased would symbolically receive the rising sun's rays. In Egyptian theology the sun's rise symbolized rebirth and tapped into the magical force of the first creation. As a result, we need not conclude that the individuals from Tombos or Fadrus with extended coffined burials but few other grave goods did not fully share in an Egyptian conception of the afterlife.

A careful look at the objects and contexts at Tombos also reveals some direct evidence of Egyptian rituals. For example, specialized beer bottles and so-called "flowerpots," a form actually derived from early bread molds, were among the most common ceramic types to appear at Tombos. These specialized forms carried religious connotations connected with the traditional Egyptian offering formula providing bread and beer for the deceased. A large broken red pot found over one child's burial at the back of the pyramid complex provides even more direct evidence for Egyptian

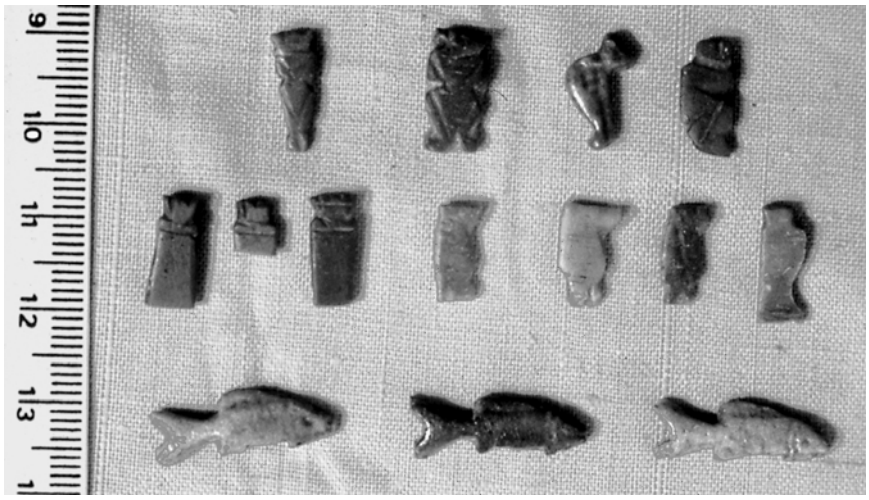


Figure 6.27 Amulets from the child's burial.

rituals (Figure 6.23 shows where the child was buried). Red pots were selected to represent *Isfet* (chaos, evil) in the well-known ceremony of smashing the red pot. In this ritual, a red vessel, usually a jar, was broken over the grave ritually to destroy any evil spirits or demons that might threaten the deceased (D'Auria 1988). Evidence for

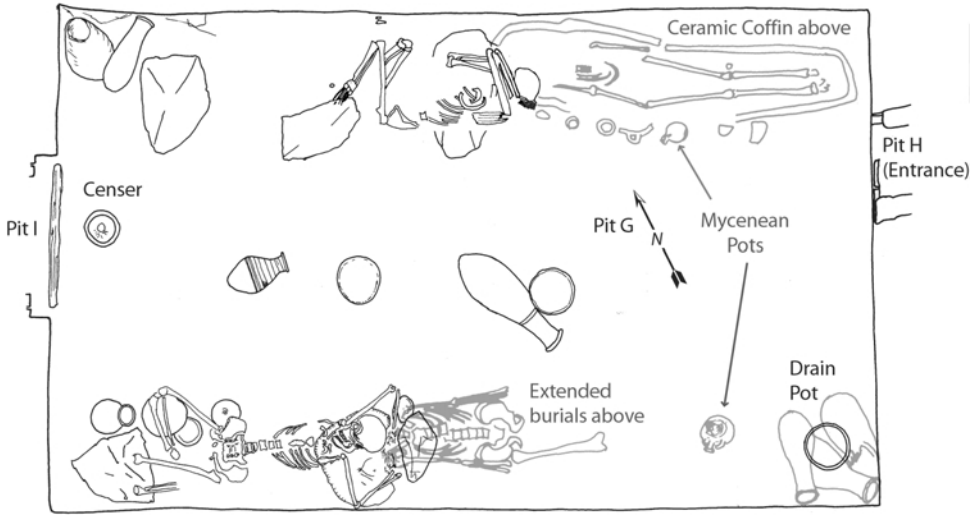


Figure 6.28 Unit 7 plan including Nubian burials.

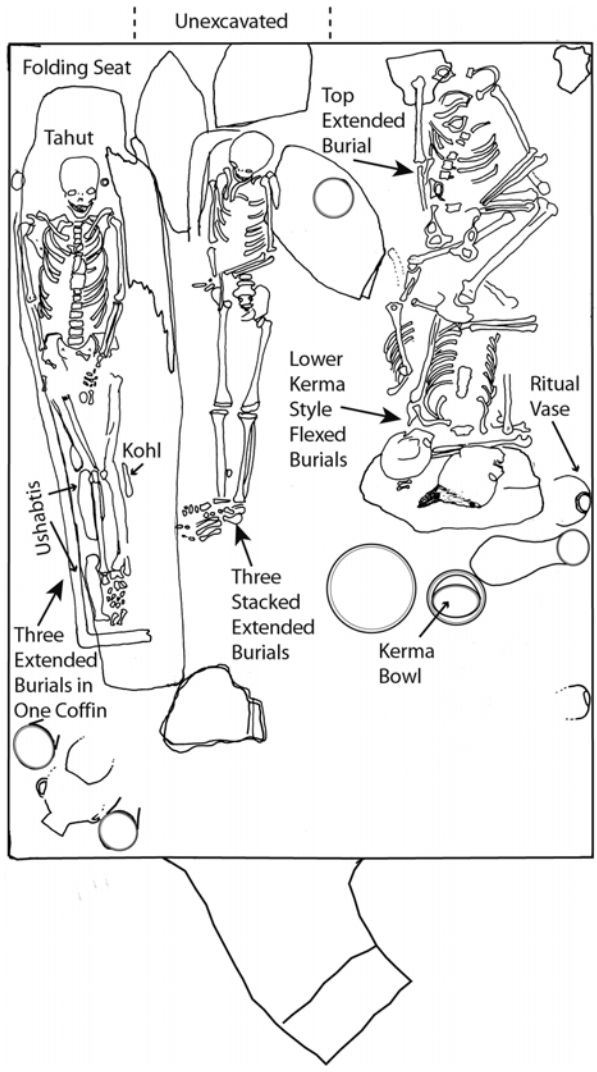


Figure 6.29 Unit 6, Pit D, plan including Nubian burials.

mummification was rare at Tombos, but small scraps of linen did survive the poor preservation of organics. Additionally, impressions of fabric survived in the casts made by termite frass found around the bodies in Unit 6. Decayed masses of fabric also appeared next to the bones in some cases, most notably with the burial of Tahut in Unit 7 (Figure 6.14). Mummification was designed to preserve the body, providing a haven for the soul, part of which, the sustaining Ka, stayed within the tomb. The bird-like Ba also rested in the body, but ventured in and out of the tomb. One of the



Figure 6.30 Detail showing hand placement of Unit 6 Kerma-style burial.

children near the pyramid was buried face down, a very strange treatment that also occurs in Egypt (Figures 6.23 and 26). A mid-eighteenth dynasty burial at Thebes provides an explanation for this unusual position (Hayes 1935). The mummy of an elite man Boki appeared to be wrapped normally. When the wrappings were removed the excavators found that poor Boki had spent 3,400 years upside down! The embalmers lost track of which side was up, and added padding to create a set of artificial feet and a face. Säve-Söderbergh and Troy (1991) suggest that the presence of a number of face-down burials at Fadrus, where wrappings also did not survive, implies that an increasingly large number of individuals was wrapped. Such a mistake would only go unnoticed if the wrapping was very thorough and thick. In confirmation of this reconstruction, the child's mummy at Tombos had a string of small amulets around his or her neck placed as if the mummy were face up (Figures 6.26 and 27).

At the end of the first season of excavation, the evidence for burial practice at Tombos was entirely Egyptian, but the second season produced four burials of women in a Nubian position and orientation that contrasts with the extended burials that characterize the cemetery. Two contracted burials were found at floor level on the right side of Unit 7 (Figure 6.28). Although they were not tightly



Figure 6.31 Jewelry associated with the Unit 6 Kerma burials.

flexed, they were both oriented with head towards the east, exactly opposite to Egyptian practice, on their side and facing to the north, as is typical with Kerma burials. Two tightly flexed bodies in the same orientation were found on the floor of Unit 6, Pit G (Figure 6.29). One burial had hands placed on either side of the face, fingers twined together at the back of the head (Figure 6.30). This position occurs at Kerma itself, most notably among the sacrificial burials of the latest royal tombs (Reisner 1923; Kendall 1996: Figure 30). This position was cited as evidence that the individual was buried alive, with the hands placed to protect the



Figure 6.32 Pottery from Unit 7.

face. Since this could not have been the case at Tombos, it is more likely that this placement simply represents a Kerma burial position, unless there is just an accidental similarity. The other woman's burial treatment was unusual, she looking very relaxed with hands behind the head, face up, and one leg splayed up from the



Figure 6.33 Nubian bowl associated with Kerma burials in Unit 7.



Figure 6.34 Ritual vase from Unit 7.

normal flexed position. This pose, however, was probably due to pilfering taking place at the time of, or shortly after, burial. Upon removing the skull, we found three Bes amulets and a few beads behind the woman's neck (Figure 6.31). If she also had valuable jewelry, perhaps of gold, strung with them, there would be a strong temptation to steal them quickly, displacing the body in the process. Assuming that the body was originally arranged similarly to the other Unit 6 burial, moving the left arm to reveal a necklace would shift the head, torso, and legs into their final positions, assuming that the flesh had not yet entirely decayed. One burial facing east from the top of the pile in Unit 6 may also represent Kerma treatment (Figure 6.29) although, since the burial was disturbed, looters may have flipped it around. Another slightly contracted body was one of a handful of intact or semi-intact burials from around floor level in Unit 8, but although on its side, its orientation was the same as the extended burials from the tomb. Regardless, at the very least the four burials represent a dramatic departure from the other burials of men and women from around and above the two women in Unit 7, and the layers of Egyptian-style burials above the women in Unit 6.

Some cultural blending is also evident in the grave goods. The presence of Nubian pottery at Tombos probably represents the participation of Nubians in funerary rites taking place there, including at least some Nubian rituals for women. Only two Nubian pots were found *in situ*, one set into the floor of the back chamber of Unit 6 (Pit I) along with a large group of *in situ* Egyptian pots (but unfortunately no intact burials), and the other nested in an Egyptian shallow bowl placed above the heads of the Unit 7 women (Figures 6.28, 6.32, and 6.33). Several Egyptian vessels were

positioned right next to these burials, including a ritual vase with an ashy deposit that surely represents the kind of burnt offering attested in Egypt (Figure 6.34). Beads and a long plait of hair preserved on one of the women also carry Egyptian associations. The Bes amulets found around the Unit 6 woman's neck imply that she shared in the very popular worship of this Egyptian protective household god (Figure 6.31). The second woman from Unit 6 probably wore a scaraboid plaque with a lion on one side and an image of a scarab and sun disk on the other. The Egyptian solar cult associated lions with the sun god Re, and the scarab–sun combination makes reference to Khepri, a manifestation of the sun god connected with creation and rebirth. The evidence from Tombos therefore points to a less frequent but similar ethnic complexity as within households at Askut. Nubian women entered into colonial society, maintaining some Nubian practices within an otherwise Egyptian context. The final chapters will consider the implications of this new archaeological evidence from Askut and Tombos for the understanding of the Egyptian ideological construction of ethnic groups, and the dynamics of ethnicity within the context of these colonial communities.

Chapter 7

Ideology and the Pharaohs

> Most historians preside over the construction of the collective memory. And they are not architects whose patrons have given them a free hand. They are under pressure to design an impressive, even a glorious façade that may bear only a tangential resemblance to the structure of events concealed behind it … . It has all too often been the historian's assignment to assist his culture in remembering events that did not happen, and in forgetting events that did. The culture wants a past it can use.
>
> Peter Gay (1988: 206, as quoted in Carneiro 1992: 192)

The residents of Tombos projected a strong image of Egyptian identity through their adherence to Egyptian funerary practice and monumental architecture, and yet several women chose to be buried in Nubian style. In a similar way, the archaeological evidence from Askut indicates considerably more flexibility and room for individual agency in Egyptian–Nubian interactions across the imperial frontier than the highly regulated system implied by royal edicts like the boundary stela of Senwosret III and ideological categorizations like the foreigner *topos*. How can we reconcile the contradiction between political statements and ideology in texts and representations that portray a uniform Egyptian *ethnos* and seemingly immutable political and ethnic boundaries with the variability of ethnic expression and boundedness at Askut and Tombos? Egyptologist Barry Kemp (1997) argues that we should look first to ideology to understand the motivations behind Egypt's empire. In effect he argues that we must choose between ideology and archaeology, and that the foreigner *topos* should guide our interpretation of the archaeological evidence. He goes on to maintain that by acknowledging an interpretation based on archaeology that is at odds with the picture presented by ideology, we dismiss ideology as irrelevant, mere posturing. As Morris (1992: 200) points out, archaeology is not a "zero-sum game, with its value declining in the relationship to the amount of literary evidence available." Both archaeological and historical evidence have their own unique problems of interpretation, but at the same time each presents important information that should not be ignored (Deetz 1983; Glassie 1975; Knapp 1993). The integration of archaeology and text provides an opportunity in this case not only better to

understand the nature and dynamics of the physical boundaries of ancient imperial states, but also to assess the role of ideology in constructing political and ethnic boundaries that served as a legitimating tool for early rulers.

Kemp's view privileging the historical record is by no means unusual. Egyptological research has tended to be driven by texts, especially religious and historical inscriptions (Giddy 1999b; Bietak 1979). This is understandable considering Egypt's embarrassment of riches when it comes to well-preserved monumental architecture with elaborate historical texts and scenes describing events like Hatshepsut's expedition to the fabulous land of Punt or large-scale military campaigns into Syro-Palestine and Nubia. With the ancient Egyptians in effect speaking to us directly through these texts, archaeology has often been reduced to a status as the "handmaiden of history" (Daniel 1976: 9; Glassie 1975: 12; Bietak 1979; Yoffee and Kamp 1980; Trigger 1989: 72). The textual record does give us an irreplaceable insight into an ancient people's minds, but too often the texts and representations found on monuments are taken uncritically as statements of historical fact or representations of political policy and motivation without considering their context. Yet, as the quote from Gay above points out, history is constructed for specific ends, and cannot be viewed as anything approaching objective reporting of events and motivations (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 3; Urton 1990: 1–13). Even seemingly objective letters, diaries, and similar private documents are inherently biased, driven by elite concerns and prejudices. Archaeology thus plays a pivotal role in establishing the critical context of the written record, and serves as an important and inherently less socially biased balance to the historical record (Glassie 1975: 8–12; Bietak 1979).

HISTORY OR PROPAGANDA?

> It is thus evident that the two basic methods used in historical research, philology and archaeology, may easily produce results which differ from each other. … Contradictions between the two methods only go to show that we still lack a perfect understanding of our ancient sources … and that we should think over all the evidence once again.
>
> Manfred Bietak (1979: 157–8)

At the heart of how one views the ancient written record is how one conceives of the nature of ideology. Kemp (1997) argues that the Pharaohs speak to us through inscriptions, giving us direct evidence of their motivations. Moreover, he adopts a normative view of the state ideology, arguing that these texts did not have a legitimating purpose since elites and kings shared the same beliefs. Freidel (1992) similarly argues that the shamanistic character of Maya religion allowed ideology to transcend the full spectrum of society. Elites and commoners thus shared the fundamental ideas about the cosmos conveyed by Maya texts and monuments. Employing ethnohistorical accounts, Conrad (1992; Conrad and Demarest 1984) argues that ideology originally created for legitimating purposes provided the motivating force for Inca expansion (*c.* AD 1440–1532) by creating a sense of divine

mission motivating ever-increasing numbers of people. The Inca populace bought into this ideology so completely that it came to drive Inca militarism. In each of these cases, ideology is seen to reflect consensus. In effect, ideological pronouncements are taken at face value, directly indicating the motivations of the elite or even the full breadth of society.

This perspective, however, fails to acknowledge the fundamental dynamics of text and ideology in ancient societies. Carneiro cautions (1992: 192; also Urton 1990), "Could Inca history have been distorted to give a purpose and a motive to early Inca conquests beyond what they actually had? In sum, may not what survived of Inca origins be ideology rather than history?" Ideology is neither objective history nor a shared belief system, but is more appropriately seen in Friedrich's (1989: 301) terms as "a system … of ideas, strategies, tactics, and practical symbols for promoting, perpetuating or changing a social and cultural order; in brief, it is political ideas in action." Thus, as Redford (1979) points out, historical records cannot be taken at face value. They must be approached critically and contextually. The appraisal of any so-called "historical" text must consider the author of the text, the message it was intended to convey, and its intended audience. Far from representing a shared worldview, these texts reflect a constantly shifting dialectic between historical events and constructed realities (Grove and Gillespie 1992: 15–16). The messages created by this construction of historical events served to legitimate fundamental social inequalities: in the case presented here, the great wealth and power of Pharaoh. This does not mean that a population of "dupes" in the classic Marxist view cheerfully absorbed the subordinating message. Indeed, intensive investment in ideology implies insecurity as much as, if not more than, reflecting successful persuasion and secures power (Hodder 1986, and in Kolb 1993). Ideologies are not necessarily successful, and are not passive but proactive, constantly adapting to changing social and political dynamics (Bawden 1995: 257–9).

In support of this ideologically driven model, Kemp (1978) asserts that imperial "profit" in terms of extracted resources was not an important consideration, since the texts never mention this as a motivating factor. He argues, that far from being profitable, Egypt's imperial "balance sheet" would be considerably in the red. Remodeling Nubia in Egypt's image would be costly, requiring considerable expenditure in personnel and infrastructure. For example, the construction of large temple complexes like Abu Simpel would provide a considerable drain on Egyptian resources. The redistributive economy characteristic of these large institutions would absorb most of the increases in food production brought about by the new Egyptianized society and economy. Even most of the Nubian luxuries like gold, ivory, and ebony were consumed by local elites and never reached Pharaoh's court. Thus we are left with only the "theology of expansionism" and acculturation reflected in texts glorifying the military accomplishments of Pharaoh. Kemp takes the ideological *topos* of expanding Egypt's boundaries as a straightforward statement of an expansionist imperial policy, as did Wilson (1951) and Helck (1971) in earlier studies.

But can we really view these ideological pronouncements as a straightforward policy statement? Let us take a closer look at Kemp's "theology of conquest." This motif is an old one: a hymn in praise of Middle Kingdom Pharaoh Senwosret III (*c.* 1850 BC) reads:

> Hail to you Khakaure, our Horus, Divine of Form!
> Land's protector who widens its borders,
> Who smites foreign countries with his crown …
> Who subdues foreign lands by a motion of his hands … .
>
> (Lichtheim 1973: 198)

The theme of widening Egypt's borders is particularly emphasized during the New Kingdom. For example, Ramesses III boasts: "I extended all the boundaries of Egypt … " (Breasted 1906:IV: 201), and points to the pacification and acculturation of foreign captives with pride (Kitchen 1990: 21). Kemp takes this to indicate that imperial policy is also driven by a desire to expand Egypt by acculturating the "barbaric" peoples surrounding Egypt, using the dramatic efforts undertaken to transform Lower Nubia into an image of Egypt as his prime example (Kemp 1978; 1997; cf. Frandsen 1979). If acculturation were an imperative regardless of cost, we would expect the Egyptians to attempt a similar strategy to that adopted for Lower Nubia in Syro-Palestine and Upper Nubia. But this is not the case. In Lower Nubia imperial policy encouraged acculturation, but in Syro-Palestine the Egyptians coopted local polities without serious attempts at acculturation (Higginbotham 2000). Once it was assumed that Upper Nubia was included in the New Kingdom acculturation policy (Trigger 1976), but it is now clear from archaeological evidence that, at least in the region south of the third cataract, native traditions continued with a hegemonic policy. Like Syro-Palestine, the colonial administration overlaid a superstructure on a group of smaller polities, coopting local leaders. Thus the archaeological evidence and even some inscriptions reflect a piecemeal application of different strategies depending on the local situation. How then are we to understand the official ideology of expansion and acculturation?

These texts do speak explicitly of an ideological goal to extend the borders of Egypt (Hornung 1980). Far from a statement of imperial policy, however, their formulaic expressions belong to an idealized realm that often extended the sphere of Egyptian control to abstract, mythical boundaries (Liverani 1990: 44–65; Kemp 1978 8–15; Hornung 1980: 404–5, 413–15). Thus Hatshepsut ruled "as far as the primeval darkness," and Amenhotep III controlled everything "to the supports of heaven." For Amenhotep II, "there are no boundaries set for him towards all countries … they fall instantly because of his Flaming Serpent" (the royal cobra on his forehead), and he rules "that which the sun encircles, all the lands and the countries which he knew … " (Breasted 1906:II: 311). Not only do "heaven and all the foreign lands which god has created serve" Hatshepsut, but "commands are sent to an unknown land, and they do everything that she commanded" (Kemp 1978: 13). This ideology hardly represents a statement of foreign policy, and I doubt that Kemp would argue that Hatshepsut or any of her officials really expected her commands to be obeyed in, say, Babylon or Crete. These declarations refer instead to the limits of royal authority in general, an assertion of the political and cosmological power of the king, rather than an actual policy of expansion.

So why the strong ideological emphasis on warfare in the countless battle scenes decorating the walls of Egyptian temples – not to mention the depictions of conquered foreigners that surrounded the king wherever he went? The boasts of conquest and the

repetition of warfare on royal monuments, although they may reflect real campaigns, also have ideological overtones connected to Egypt's New Kingdom *Ma'at* theology, as does the motif of conquered foreigner (Assmann 1989, 1990; Teeter 1997). When the sun god Re descended into the Netherworld at the end of each day, he fought for *Ma'at* (order, rightness) against the forces of *Isfet* (chaos, evil) led by the snake god Apophis. In the solar theology, Re charges the king with enforcing *Ma'at* against the earthly forces of *Isfet*, the foreign enemies of Egypt. Scenes like those of Ramesses III battling the Sea Peoples at his mortuary temple, Medinet Habu, presented the king in this role. Some scenes showing this Pharaoh battling Asiatics are clearly fictitious, having been copied from the earlier mortuary temple of Ramesses II, which provided a model for Medinet Habu (Kitchen 1982: 226–7; Murnane 1983: 270). Lesko (1980) suggests that even more scenes, this time of Ramesses III battling Libyans, were borrowed from the mortuary temple of Merneptah, Ramesses II's successor. Whether or not the historical "events" depicted in these monumental texts and representations actually happened is largely, if not entirely, irrelevant to the ancient authors. Their importance lies in the messages they convey, reflecting the author's goals in persuading a specific audience or set of audiences through a constructed "reality."

ETHNIC STEREOTYPES AND LEGITIMIZATION

> What will people say, when it is heard of: your deserting me, I being left all alone? And not an officer, captain or soldier came to give me a hand as I fought! I took on millions of foreign lands, alone with Victory-in-Thebes and Mut-is-Content, my great chariot horses! They it was, I found to help me when alone, fighting the foreign armies.
>
> Ramesses II berating his officers after the Battle of Qadesh (Kitchen 1982: 60–1)

Did Ramesses really stand alone with his faithful horses (along with his chariot driver and shield bearer) on the plain of Qadesh at the Orontes river in Syria? Do we simply dismiss Ramesses' assertions as hollow bombast? Muwatallis, king of the Hittites, apparently did. When the Hittite king heard of Ramesses' version of the event, he sent an annoyed note asking if this negative portrait of his brethren was consistent with their new peace treaty, ending with a derisive note mocking the Pharaoh, asking, if Ramesses really *was* alone, where his chariots and his soldiers were. Ramesses replied by assuring his Hittite counterpart of Egypt's goodwill but reasserting his story of single-handedly saving the day (Liverani 1990: 119–20). Why did Ramesses continue to insist in this patently false account that he single-handedly defeated a vast host led by the Hittite king? Liverani (1990) provides a solution to this conundrum. He argues that the ideological *topos* applied to external interactions within ancient Near Eastern states was aimed at legitimizing royal authority to an internal audience, and was therefore often divorced from the practical functioning of empire and international relations. To the inner audience, Egypt becomes the center of the world, and all

the foreign lands bow down to Pharaoh. Whether or not these claims had any basis in fact was irrelevant; the importance of imperial ideologies lay not in actual control, but rather in the ruler's prestige in the central kingdom.

As Hornung points out, in single-handedly fighting off the foreign army at Qadesh, Ramesses fulfills the legitimating role of all Pharaohs. Ramesses is outnumbered by the enemy host, which seems unstoppable "but ultimately falls powerless under the hooves of the king's charging horses. The Pharaoh is the sun who dispels the forces of darkness wherever he appears … " (Hornung 1992: 154). Ramesses II's depiction of this battle, where he fought the Hittites and their allies for control of the northern Levant, illustrates the complexities of interpreting ideological texts depicting the ethnic *topos* of foreignness. In texts and pictures, he lauds his bravery in winning a decisive victory against the Hittites and their Syrian allies. Ambushed by the Hittite army and deserted by his compatriots, Ramesses describes how he is forced to defeat his opponents single-handedly, taking his army to task for their cowardice after the day was won. The Hittite account of the battle, however, states just the opposite – that the Hittites decisively defeated the Egyptians! In reality the result was probably a draw or at best a marginal Hittite victory, since Ramesses left the field with his army largely intact but without taking Qadesh, leaving northern Syria to the Hittites but preserving the Egyptian empire further south. The peace treaty that followed ultimately draws the Hittite–Egyptian frontier along exactly the same lines (Kitchen 1982: 50–65).

These texts and representations are more than just bombastic rival assertions of victory or, in Ramesses' case, a myopic, egomaniacal focus on personal achievement. In between the poetry extolling Ramesses' bravery and majesty, the king is shown as unflatteringly duped by the Hittites and their allies into an ambush from which he barely escapes. Egyptologists have long wondered why Ramesses would allow such a seemingly unflattering portrayal. Liverani (1990) has argued persuasively that Ramesses and his ideologues dwelt on these events in order to show the treachery of the Hittites and their Syrian allies, who had violated the norms of civilized conflict by not sending out champions and prearranging the time of battle. However close this account may be to the actual events that form the basis for these scenes, neither Ramesses nor the authors composed them through any desire to present events as they really happened. Thousands of Egyptians would know of the less than successful result of the campaign. Word must have spread, particularly among the elite. Ramesses and his ideologues constructed a new historical "reality" driven by the necessity to explain the apparent defeat of almighty Pharaoh. In what Assmann characterizes as a "propaganda campaign of heretofore unknown magnitude" (Assmann 1983; translated in Hornung 1992: 34), they created a *topos* of the deceitful foreigner leavened with a good dose of praise for Ramesses triumphantly overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds, taming chaotic foreigners like the sun god Re defeated the demonic forces of *Isfet* every night in the Netherworld. This propagandistic account of events helped explain Ramesses' failure to win a decisive victory through a strong appeal to the foreigner ethnic *topos*, leaving his legitimacy intact. The fact that he placed monumental representations of the battle in temples at Abydos (2), Karnak (2), Luxor (3), the Ramesseum (2), and in Lower Nubia at Abu Simpel (1) (Kitchen 1982: 65; Hornung 1992: 34–6) suggests that he had a lot of

persuading to do! The text also survives on papyrus. Liverani's insight was the product of his critical approach to the text, including a careful consideration of author, message, and audience. He also placed the text in the context of both formalized Near Eastern warfare and Egyptian social dynamics.

Liverani has traced this particular motif, the *topos* of the king defeating a seemingly unstoppable mass of foreign enemies alone, throughout Egyptian history as well as other imperial states in the Near East. Loprieno's study of *topos* and *mimesis*, discussed above in Chapter 2, shows how this ideology is connected to the Egyptian construction of the ethnic "other." The state ideology presents foreigners in the *topos* of uncivilized enemy. Nubia in this *topos* can never be simply "Kush," but becomes "Wretched Kush," perpetually struggling against Pharaoh without hope of success. One of the most common motifs, going back to the beginnings of the Egyptian state, shows the king slaying enemies who beg for mercy (Figure 7.1). Egypt's ideological view of foreigners, expressed in the basic racial divisions discussed above in Chapter 2, reflects different goals and perceptions from the administrative realities of diplomacy, trade, and empire. The ideological *topos* applied to foreign peoples in Egypt reflects a propagandistic manipulation of reality aimed at an inner audience. In the celebrative central ideology, often expressed in monumental art and architecture, Egypt becomes the center of the universe, and foreigners represent chaotic, uncivilized threats to the inner order, ultimately disposed of by the ruler (Liverani 1990; Loprieno 1988; Hornung 1992). Without the king and his constant struggle with *Ma'at*, the whole world would fall into chaos and decay, and would no longer be habitable (Assmann 1989, 1990). The king demonstrated his power over the tamed ethnic "other" by literally standing atop them in the form of statues (Figure 7.2).

The particular dress and physical appearance of each ethnic group was often detailed in Egyptian scenes of battle and the ritual slaying of prisoners (Figures 7.1 and 7.2), emphasizing their ethnic "otherness" in the foreigner *topos*. Far from celebrating the assimilation of foreigners, as Kemp argues, this imperial ideology put a premium on the demonstration of Pharaoh's ability to pacify the ethnic "other" through ceremonies like the annual Presentation of Tribute (Figure 7.3). Archaeology shows that Nubian elites Egyptianized shortly after the New Kingdom reconquest in *c.* 1550BC (Smith 1995). Princes like Djehutyhotep depicted themselves just like Egyptian bureaucrats back in the necropolis of the Theban capital (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991). At Aniba they were buried in the latest style of pyramid tombs with the full Osirian burial equipment, including amulets and *ushabti* figurines (Steindorff 1935; cf. Smith 1992). Under Kemp's patrimonial model, we would expect the central ideology to glorify this achievement, but acculturated foreigners were in fact of little value to the central ideology. Thus the Nubian prince Hekanefer, whose family had been acculturated for well over a hundred years, had to don his "barbaric" ethnic Nubian costume and bow down before Pharaoh as a *topical* Nubian (Figure 7.3; Davies 1926). In his own tomb, however, he appears completely Egyptian (Simpson 1963).

Even the great powers of the day that treated with Egypt were similarly affected, much to their consternation. For example, Kadashman-Enlil, King of Babylon, complains that Pharaoh "put my chariots amid the chariots of the *Khazanu* [the Syro-Palestinian kinglets]: you did not see them separately … You caused them to be brought to the presence of the country [all] alike, in order that they be not seen separately"



Figure 7.1 Thutmose III ritually slaughtering foreign prisoners from Pylon VII at the great Temple of Amun at Karnak (*c.* 1450 BC).



Figure 7.2 Different ethnic groups beneath the feet of King Ramesses III, from first courtyard of his mortuary temple at Medinet Habu in the Theban necropolis (*c.* 1160 BC).

(Liverani 1990: 264–6). Even worse, his sister was mixed in with Pharaoh's lesser wives, daughters of his Syro-Palestinian vassals: "Is she really my sister … ? My messengers did not recognize her, who could recognize her?" (Liverani 1990: 274). To the foreigner *topos* of Egyptian ideology, Babylon was just another example of a "pacified" enemy bowing down to Pharaoh, not an equal "superpower" deserving special treatment.

In contrast, the *mimetical* portrayal of foreigners recognized them as human and part of the Egyptian cultural sphere. For example, foreigners play an important positive role in the Middle Kingdom story of Sinuhe's Levantine wanderings, which was still a popular school text during the New Kingdom (Lichtheim 1973: 222–35). The Prince of the New Kingdom in the *Tale of the Doomed Prince* marries the daughter of the King of Nahrin (the Syrian Mitanni Empire), who later saves her husband's life (Lichtheim 1976: 200–3). On a more practical level, diplomatic correspondence also reveals a *mimetical* point of view. Here interactions between Egypt and the Babylonian court are couched in terms of equality, brother to brother, not father to son, overlord to vassal. Thus when Hattusil III, Muwatallis' successor, felt slighted, Ramesses moved quickly to avoid a diplomatic incident:

> I have just heard all the words that my Brother has written to me, saying: "Why did you, my brother, write to me as if I were a [mere] subject of yours?" … You have accomplished great things in all lands; you are indeed Great King in the Hatti



Figure 7.3 The Nubian princes, including Heqanefer, present tribute to Tutankhamen, from the tomb of the Viceroy of Kush, Amenhotep, known as Huy (TT 40, *c.* 1325 BC, after Davies 1926: Pl. XXVII).

> lands; the Sun-God [of Egypt] and Storm-God [of Hatti] have granted you to sit [enthroned] in Hatti land … Why should *I* write to you as though to a subject?
>
> (Kitchen 1982: 82)

In this vein, Queen Nefertari, chief wife of Ramesses II, writes to her Hittite counterpart:

> Thus says Napetera [Nefertari], the Great Queen of Egypt: To Pudkhepa, the Great Queen of Hatti, my sister, speak thus: With me your sister, all goes well; with my country all goes well. With you my sister may all go well; with your country may all go well … May the Sun-god [of Egypt] and the Storm-god [of Hatti] bring you joy, and may the Sun-god cause the peace to be good, and give good brotherhood to the Great King, the King of Egypt, with his brother the Great King, the King of Hatti, for ever. And [now] I am in friendship and sisterly relations with my sister, the Great Queen [of Hatti], now and forever.
>
> (Kitchen 1982: 80)

"WRETCHED KUSH": THE TRANSMISSION OF AN ETHNIC STEREOTYPE

> Ultimately, the Egyptians used the power of the image as a means of describing and constructing their world in a way that went well beyond the possibilities offered by the written word alone.
>
> Erik Hornung (1992: 34)

Kemp (1997) is skeptical about the legitimizing value of the foreigner *topos*, asking "for whose benefit was the legitimization intended, given that those who mattered subscribed to the same values as the kings themselves?" As noted above, Kemp adopts a normative view of ideology, assuming that Egyptian elites never challenged Pharaoh and that Egyptian ideology was meant only for elites, reflecting consensus in a common worldview. In a similar way, Freidel (1992: 116) conceives "of ancient Maya ideology as the interconnected, fundamental ideas held by elite and commons alike about the order of the cosmos and everything it contains." But to what extent did elites and the general populace share Egyptian state ideology? Adams (1992: 220; also Bawden 1995: 257–9; Metcalf and Huntington 1991: 6) points out that that we cannot assume that ideology was ever fully successful. Ideology is more than just the passive legitimization of an existing order, but rather a dynamic medium for the negotiation of power between different groups within a society.

Scott's (1985: 273–317) study of class and ideology in Islamic Malaysia shows that, even when consensus appears on the surface, behind the façade of compliance acts of ideological resistance challenge the dignity of the ruling class. One of the most common avenues of rebellion in Malaysia was through satirical humor, gossip, and stories. Often masquerading as simple jokes or tales unrelated to politics, they conveyed to those with the right knowledge critiques of the social and political order. We can find hints of this kind of subtle subversive challenge to the social order during the New Kingdom. A number of satirical papyri and ostraca, small bits of limestone or pottery used as notepads, show high officials as mice attended by cat servants (if only the cats knew their real nature!). In one case a mouse army led by a mouse Pharaoh assaults the cat citadel (Figure 7.4; Peck 1978: 49–50, 147). Scott (1985) also notes that individuals do not usually break openly with the dominant ideology, but often subvert its intent by creating a rival interpretation suited to their own needs and goals. Although ideological ritual often seems fixed and immutable, in fact the ambiguity inherent in ritual communication allows for differences of viewpoint or actual dissent through reinterpretation and shifting emphasis within canonical texts (Valeri 1985: 342–3). This phenomenon may be represented in Egypt by large-scale movements among subordinate elites towards the so-called "democratization of the afterlife" and "personal piety" (Silverman 1991: 72–3; Baines 1991: 172–86). Egyptian elites were constantly pushing the envelope of propriety, with or without royal permission. For example, the high official Senenmut placed his image behind the inner doors of the sanctuaries in Queen Hatshepsut's mortuary temple (Figure 7.5), where only Pharaoh should appear, and had astronomical scenes normally reserved for royalty drawn on



Figure 7.4 The mouse Pharaoh attacks the cat citadel (after Lepsius 1842:Pl. 23).

the ceiling of his Deir el-Bahari crypt (Murnane 1983: 262–4; Dorman 1988). These individual and collective religious acts challenged the royal prerogative of divine intermediary, asserting individual responsibility for the afterlife and relations with the gods. Assmann (1989, 1990) argues that these movements represented a serious threat to royal legitimacy, ultimately provoking Akhenaton's short-lived Amarna "revolution" (*c.* 1353–1333 BC) and leading to the eventual triumph of personal piety in the Ramesside period (*c.* 1307–1070 BC).

Inherent in Kemp's argument is that the texts and representations on temple walls, and by extension the rituals taking place within them, were aimed at the literate elite, since the rest of society had neither the opportunity nor the ability to understand them. Baines makes a similar case, noting that, since only a small minority of Egyptians could read and write, any ideological message would be restricted to this group (Baines 1996). He estimates that at most around 5 percent of the population were literate, and more likely as low as 1 percent (Baines 1983). Papyrus Reisner, an administrative account book listing working crews from the Middle Kingdom, supports this reconstruction: from 2–3 percent of the participants are scribes, 7–8 percent are overseers in charge of work gangs, and 89–90 percent actual laborers. The overseers were titled *Kherep* and *Tjeset*. If a *Kherep* or *Tjeset* was a scribe it was specified in the account book, so we can assume with reasonable confidence that the rest were not literate.

The literacy rate would, however, increase in an urban population where the main temples and palaces that conveyed the imperial ideology lay. For example, Kemp (1989: 314) estimates that around 15 percent of the houses at Amarna belonged to officials. One of the Ramesside tomb robbery papyri includes a census of the town of Maihunehes, which was associated with the mortuary temple of Ramesses III (Kemp 1989: 306–8; Peet 1930: 93–102). A little over 40 percent of the 155 heads of household held positions that indicate that they were literate. Thirty-two of these were priests, not surprising in a temple, but Kemp argues that priests may have been quite common, especially considering that many served part-time. A list of 937 individuals sharecropping on temple lands lists 112 priests. If one includes the priests, at least around a third were literate. If only scribes are considered, this number drops to a bit more than 3 percent, consistent with Baines' estimate of overall literacy. The comparatively large number of scribes at Maihunehes may reflect its importance as an administrative center for the west bank at Thebes, managing a number of state institutions. The high proportion of military from Papyrus Wilbour no



Figure 7.5 Senenmut worships in the Hathor chapel at Hatshepsut's mortuary temple of Deir el-Bahari in the Theban necropolis (*c.* 1470 BC).

doubt reflects the settlement of demobilized soldiers on state lands, and the larger proportion of priests their greater access to temple lands. Still, it probably provides a good indication of the overall social makeup of the Egyptian countryside.

Baines (1983, 1996) rules out the possibility that the middle class of low-level functionaries and craftsmen might have understood enough of hieroglyphs to play a role in literate society. Thus the monuments and their combination of art and writing were a setting for the literate elite and not the broader society. Yet Goody points out that:



Figure 7.6 Hieroglyphs commonly used in art and as amulets.

> the influence of the book is not confined to literate contexts alone. For example, the format of a table may itself be internalized as a part of visual memory, which is in many ways more "literal", more precise, than oral memory, being dominated by the reconstitution of a total image rather than a set of less articulated sounds; a tabular layout may structure verbal memory, influence classification and recall … they can be used to organize information of a wide variety and great quantity without the use of pen and paper.
>
> Goody 1977: 156

Hornung argues that, given the highly visual nature of Egyptian hieroglyphs and iconography, "the Egyptians used the power of the image as a means of describing and constructing their world in a way that went well beyond the possibilities offered by the written word" (Hornung 1992: 34). Symbols like the *ankh, djed,* and *udjat* appear both in and out of writing as symbols and talismans (Figure 7.6). Indeed, much of the symbolism found on the great monuments of Egypt did not require an ability to read hieroglyphs to receive their basic message. In this way, the legitimizing ideology of the ethnic foreigner *topos* was transmitted through verbal, visual, ceremonial, and artifactual (including architectural) channels (Smith 1997). Most often the setting for these activities was in the very monuments where we find texts and representations of Kemp's "theology of expansion."

Texts, images, and rituals conveyed messages that operated on a number of levels depending on the observer. Kemp and Baines rightly note that only the literate elite could understand the most esoteric level of these ideological expressions. This group in itself, however, was a key audience and perhaps the most dangerous potential threat to the very small number who truly ruled. For example, those who plotted, perhaps successfully, to assassinate Ramesses III consisted of members of that literate elite (Breasted 1906:IV: 208–21), and the account of the earlier assassination of Amenemhet

I related in the *Story of Sinuhe* and *Teaching of Amenemhet* implies the same. Their number was also not insignificant. Baines (1996) notes that they numbered above 10,000, but his estimate is low. By the New Kingdom, Egypt's population consisted of approximately 3.5 million. If the literate elite ranged from 3–5 percent of the population, they numbered from 100–175,000! As Helck (1991) notes, Egyptologists tend to overlook the reality of political factionalism and competition among the so-called ruling elite of ancient Egypt. Baines rightly argues that access to restricted knowledge and inaccessible parts of monumental temples may have played a more important role in establishing prestige, both within the elite and between the elite and commons, than the detailed propagandistic value of the often difficult-to-read texts and representations in the inner sacred spaces of temples. Yet the materialization of ideology through the symbolism embodied in monumental architecture, large-scale state ceremonies, jewelry, regalia, and similar objects would allow a less precise transmission reaching far down the social ladder (Valeri 1985; Liverani 1990: 28; Kolb 1993, with comments; DeMarrais et al. 1996). The huge temple complexes of the New Kingdom, financed to some extent by Nubian and Syro-Palestinian wealth, emphasized royal power in their decoration, including massive scenes on the exterior pylons of temples showing the king victorious in battle, ritually slaying foreign enemies depicted in the stereotypes of the ethnic foreigner *topos*. Gigantic statues of Pharaoh not only provided a physical materialization of royal power understandable to anyone in Egyptian society who came anywhere near the monument, but also placed Egypt's defeated enemies beneath the feet of the king, clearly visible to anyone who approached the temple's entrance (Figure 7.7).

In contrast to this view, Baines (1991, 1996) also argues the great temples of Egypt as essentially empty of people, in effect huge cosmological machines that were operated by a small coterie of priests. Access to this restricted knowledge and ritual space was the point of Egypt's massive temples. Even the great outer courtyards were never meant for large assembled crowds. Against this notion, there is strong evidence that the populace was routinely allowed into some areas of temples, particularly the open courts (Sadek 1987). Inscriptions in the large outer courtyards of major temples show lapwings with human arms raised in worship, a reference to access by the masses during the many festivals that punctuated the Egyptian religious calendar. When the villagers of Dier el-Medineh left work to protest arrears in the payment of wages, they went to a courtyard at the mortuary temple of Ramesses II and staged the world's first recorded sit-in (Figure 7.8). If this area was restricted, then surely they would have been expelled, but instead they won their point after prolonged negotiation. The very fact that they were allowed access, presumably before their intentions were known, implies that their presence in the courtyard was not unusual. There were even attempts to draw larger numbers of people into the temple to worship, perhaps an attempt to counteract the growing trend towards personal piety. For example, special chapels for manifestations of the gods like "Amun who hears prayers" provided special areas where anyone could worship and leave votive offerings at even the largest temple complexes. Thus the decoration and inscriptions that covered Egypt's temples, especially the outer parts where ethnic stereotypes occur, would have an important propagandistic value legitimizing royal power (Simpson 1982; Bleiberg 1985–6).



Figure 7.7 Ramesses II dominates a variety of *topical* Asiatics at Abu Simpel in Lower Nubia (*c.* 1250 BC).



Figure 7.8 The outer courtyards at the Ramesseum, where the workers at Deir el-Medineh held their strike and sit-in.

Baines argues, however, that even if people did have access to the temples, the scenes like the Battle of Qadesh on the pylon of Luxor temple were too high up to be viewed and for the inscriptions to be read, and thus they would have limited value as propaganda. Instead, they were intended to convince the gods that the king was doing his duty – propaganda with a higher audience. The inscriptions may be hard to read today, but when originally painted in bright colors against a white background, even details and inscriptions high up the wall of the temple could be read and understood by assembled onlookers. Even if some passages were hard to read, Baines (1996) himself acknowledges that texts in this context were part of an overall composition with art in an architectural setting. The texts still had an iconic value that could be understood by both elite and commoner as part of the overall composition, regardless of the legibility of the inscription or ability of the observer to read it. These outer pylons and courtyards are exactly those spots where the ethnic *topos* of the foreigner was most dramatically represented. This suggests that, far from being out of the loop, the larger population was an intended target of the ideology of the ethnic "other." Indeed, the fact that the Hittite ambassador knew the details of the Egyptian account of the Battle of Qadesh glorifying Ramesses II's single-handed valor shows that the full account was well known and aimed at an internal Egyptian audience, since scribes quickly reassured the Hittite king of Egypt's good intentions in response to his protest over Ramesses' biased account of the conflict.

The king himself was surrounded by such imagery in both intimate and public settings. When he rewarded officials in large ceremonies at the "window of appearances" in temples like Medinet Habu (Figure 7.9), he rested on a balustrade supported by *topical* images of



Figure 7.9 Courtyard containing the Window of Appearances (between the central columns) at Medinet Habu.

the heads of foreign enemies, flanked by images of himself depicting the ritual slaying of prisoners (Figure 7.9). This kind of symbolism was exploited at every opportunity. As mentioned above, statues of the king rested upon those of ethnic foreigners (Figures 2.1, 7.2, and 7.7). Four of Tutankhamen's walking staves had *topical* representations of a Nubian and Asiatic on the base (Reeves 1990), so that he could grind his enemies in the dust. Processional ways and footstools had similar images, so that the king trod upon his enemies as he walked and rested his feet upon their backs when he sat down (Ritner 1993). Tutankhamen is "the Perfect God who appears in *Ma'at* and who smites the nobles of all the foreign lands … all brought together beneath his sandals." And so naturally his sandals had Nubians and Asiatics on their soles (Reeves 1990)! Whenever the king made a public appearance, his own accoutrements and surroundings emphasized his role as the defender of order against the *topical* enemies of Egypt, both to the elite and larger population.

The New Kingdom ceremony of "viewing the tribute" provides perhaps the most dramatic example of the transmission of the foreigner *topos*. The ceremony was depicted in scenes from the tombs of officials, most notably the tomb of Amenhotep called Huy, the Viceroy of Kush under Tutankhamen (Figure 7.3; Davies 1926:Pls. XXIII–XXX). The dramatic procession of contrite foreigners presenting their tribute to Pharaoh must have made an impressive manifestation of royal power and authority, connecting the king to the cosmological battle between order and chaos, *Ma'at* and *Isfet*. A student's model letter from Paser, the Ramesside Viceroy of Kush, to a Nubian administrator describes both the spectacle and large audience of this event (transcription in Gardiner 1937; my translation, cf. Caminos 1954: 437–46):



Figure 7.10 Detail of the balustrade from which the king distributed favors to loyal officials.

> Take care! Think about the day when the Tribute is sent, and you are brought into the presence [of the king] under the window [of appearances], the Nobles to either side in front of his Majesty, the Princes and the Envoys of every foreign land standing, looking at the Tribute … Tall Terek-people in their leather garments, with fans of gold, high, feathered hairstyles, their jewelry of ivory, and numerous Nubians of all kinds.

Both Egyptians and foreigners presented "tribute" to Pharaoh in these festive ceremonies. As Carneiro (1992) points out, ideology attempts to persuade people to want to do what they have to do, in this case render tribute or taxes to the king. Similar festivals connected with tax collection are attested in other cultures. For example, Fijian tribute was invested with elaborate ceremony reminiscent of the earlier Egyptian events:

> The time of its taking place is a high day; a day for the best attire, the pleasantest looks, and the kindest words; a day for display: whales' teeth and cowrie necklaces, … the newest style of neckband …. The Fijian carries his tribute with every demonstration of joyful excitement, of which all the tribe concerned fully partake. Crowds of spectators are assembled, and the king and his suite are there to receive the impost, which is paid in with a song and a dance, and received with smiles and applause. From this scene the taxpayers retire to partake of a feast provided by their king.
>
> (Williams 1870: 31–2; as quoted in Carneiro 1992: 194–5)

The external contacts and luxury goods displayed on these and other occasions also provided ideological tools for strengthening royal legitimization (Hodder 1982b; Liverani 1990; Earle 1990; 1991; Helms 1992; and variously in Schortman and Urban 1992). Wealth from Egypt's empire in Nubia and Syro-Palestine helped finance these and other ideological, political, and socio-economic activities. In particular, the foreign preciosities distributed at the rewards ceremony would have both reinforced the state's ideological message and served to cement patronage relationships between king and elites, and ultimately the broader society. Nubian gold also fueled Egyptian foreign relations in Western Asia. As noted above, Edzard (1960) argues that so much gold was exported during the New Kingdom that Kassite Babylon shifted from a silver to a gold standard. And Egypt had such a reputation as a source of gold that a disappointed Babylonian king could complain in one of his requests: "There is no gold! … In Egypt gold is more plentiful than dust … What kind of man is he who loves but does not send anything but this stuff?" (Liverani 1990: 214).

Kemp (1997) also asks if Egyptian imperialism was about gain and not ideology: "Why did those concerned not say so? Why was the economic rationale not made explicit instead of being concealed beneath layers of theology?" The short answer is that they did. Scenes of foreign tribute like that from the tomb of Huy emphasized the exotic wealth produced by Egypt's empire (Davies 1926). The annals of Thutmose III at Karnak include long lists of booty and tribute from his campaigns dedicated to the temple to Amun-Re, and the annual Presentation of Tribute ceremony displayed the considerable wealth derived from Egypt's empire and external connections (Redford 1967: 120–8; Bleiberg 1984; Liverani 1990: 256–62). Several autobiographies boast of the wealth gained in military campaigns and the imperial bureaucracy (such as Ahmose son of Ibana, Lichtheim 1976: 12–14). A hymn of praise to Middle Kingdom Pharaoh Senwosret III has many expressions of the ideology of expansion, but also includes these lines:

> How the people rejoice in your guidance,
> your might has won increase for them!
> … you have enlarged their holdings!
> … you have made them prosper!
> (*Chorus*) Horus extender of his borders,
> may you repeat eternity.
>
> (Lichtheim 1973: 199)

Nonetheless, Kemp is right in pointing out that textual references to foreign conquest tend to emphasize an expansionist ideology. Egyptian economic goals are concealed beneath layers of theology because the texts that survive are predominantly theological. They come either from the walls of temple complexes, or in idealized preambles to administrative documents. Structures made of stone endure, while the many fragile papyrus letters, ledgers, daybooks, and other mundane administrative documents that must once have filled Egyptian state archives are mostly lost to the ravages of time (Redford 1979, 1986). On the face of it, monumental texts with their portrayal of the



Figure 7.11 Bound and kneeling Nubian captive of bronze, perhaps a decorative element from a chair (eighteenth dynasty, Saqqara, Brooklyn Museum 37.267E, Wilbour Fund).

ethnic *topos* conflict with the picture of practical day-to-day relations between Egyptians and Nubians that emerges from archaeological and more prosaic textual sources for Egypt's empire. The conclusion that ideologically charged inscriptions from Egyptian monuments either reflect policy or end up somehow irrelevant misunderstands their very purpose. The key to understanding these texts is in contextualizing them. The ideology promulgated by these texts and representations was not a passive reflection of a shared consensus, or even a sign that that the subordinate masses and/or elites had been duped into compliance. It was a dynamic force in the negotiation of power between the king and elites, within elite factions and between the elite and subordinate population. Reality was not the purpose of these texts – indeed, as noted above, the historicity of events portrayed in these texts and scenes was mostly irrelevant to those who composed them. The ideological ethnic *topos* reflects a specific worldview, tied more to cosmology than the day-to-day operations of state and empire and the interactions of individuals on the colonial frontier (Figure 7.11). We can either see these as two competing views, or as an opportunity for reaching a greater understanding of the role of ideology and nature of historical texts and archaeology. Ethnicity played a central role in this legitimizing ideology. Understanding the dynamics behind the state construction of ethnicity can help us understand the interplay between individual agency and ethnic identity on Egypt's southern frontier, which may or may not correspond to the strong black and white divisions of the foreigner *topos*.

Chapter 8

Ethnicity, agency and empire

> Don't be proud of your knowledge …
> Good speech is more hidden than greenstone,
> Yet may be found among the maids at the grindstones.
> Ptahhotep to his son, *c.* 2300 BC
> (Lichtheim 1973: 63)

> The work of the archaeologist is to save lives; to go to some senseless mound of earth, some hidden cemetery, and thence bring into the comradeship of man some portions of the lives of this sculptor, of that artist, of the other scribe … to resuscitate them again, and make them live.
> W. M. Flinders Petrie (1904)

The founder of modern Egyptian archaeology, W. M. Flinders Petrie, realized the potential for archaeology to reveal not just cultural generalities, but insights into the lives of individuals, most of whom left no written record behind. Reliance on history alone would leave us with an incomplete and one-sided view of Egyptian imperialism, culture contact, and the construction of ethnic identities. There is a tendency to frame studies of ethnicity in terms of groups rather than individuals, and to view individual variation as epiphenomena (Royce 1982: 10–31), but the situational nature of ethnicity means that individual action is critical to the formation, maintenance, and transformation of ethnic identities. Ethnicity often reflects individual choice more than adherence to inflexible tradition like the Egyptian foreigner *topos*. Ethnic groups may attempt to portray a uniform face to outsiders, but internally they can have divisions and a surprising degree of heterogeneity. In a similar way, the history of ancient Egypt tends to be written from one point of view, that of a very narrow segment of elite men (Gardiner 1961; Clayton 1994). Egyptian ideology presents a uniform face to outsiders (Baines 1996), but, as the quote from Ptahhotep illustrates, the ancient Egyptians themselves realized that elite men were not the limit of Egyptian civilization. This book is an attempt to take Ptahhotep's advice and try to listen not only to the cream of Egyptian society, who speak to us directly through texts, but also to the

men and especially women who formed the bulk of the ancient Egyptian population and the colonial society at places like Askut and Tombos. Almost a century ago, in his call for a systematic approach to excavation, Petrie recognized that archaeology has the potential to reveal individual action, even if we can't necessarily put a name to the actors (cf. Hodder 1986: 7). The following sections bring together the evidence discussed above in a consideration of the role that agency and gender play in ethnicity through discussions of foodways at Askut, burial at Tombos, and how we can reconcile individual action and the state ideology of the ethnic "other."

WOMEN AND FOODWAYS AT ASKUT

> Do not control your wife in her house,
> When you know she is efficient …
> Let your eye observe in silence,
> Then you should recognize her skill.
> Ptahhotep to his son, *c.* 2300 BC
> (Lichtheim 1973: 143)

Santley *et al.* (1987) attribute the mixed assemblage at Matacapan to cultural homogenization, a kind of inevitable mixing through contact with the local culture. This approach is not very dynamic and leaves little room for individual agency. As discussed above in Chapter 5, Nubian pottery comes to dominate the cooking assemblage at Askut, and the preliminary results of an analysis of absorbed residues using GC/MS point towards the association of different foods with Nubian and Egyptian cookpots, especially during the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom. In contrast, Teotihuacan pottery never made up a majority of the ceramic assemblage in the enclave at Matacapan (ibid.1987). Similarly, Bietak (1997) found that only around 40 percent of the pottery at the Syro-Palestinian Hyksos capital at Avaris (modern Tell el-Dab'a in the Nile delta) came from a Middle Bronze Age ceramic tradition. Askut seemingly follows the transplanted culture more than either of these enclaves, since Egyptian styles and forms dominate the overall material assemblage. Yet eventually nearly all of the cookpots at Askut were Nubian in style. Rather than assuming some sort of cultural homogenization, a better point of departure focuses on the agents of contact. In our case, who produced the patterns of material culture at Askut and why do Nubian cookpots come to dominate the cooking assemblage, while at the same time service and storage vessels remain predominantly Egyptian? The following discussion considers the role of gender in this process, focusing on the more domestic *habitus*-based role women played through cooking and foodways, and the more instrumental role of men through the use of serving vessels.

On the one hand, it sounds a bit trite to stress women's role in cooking, but the quote from Ptahhotep demonstrates the emphasis Egyptians placed on women's control over

the household and, by implication, foodways (Robins 1993). Food preferences and preparation procedures provide a strong cultural, and thus potentially ethnic, marker (Yoffee and Kamp 1980; Crabtree 1990; Emberling 1997; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; McGuire 1982; McKee 1987; Stein 1999). Goody focuses on the nature of continuity and change in foodways, noting that different aspects of meals can change differentially (Goody 1982: 150–3). He notes that the actual food employed and to some extent the technology used to cook it (e.g. baking, roasting, or boiling) is more dependent on environment, in other words the foods and technologies that are available. These factors are not really a concern at Askut, since the kinds of food and technologies for preparing it were essentially the same in the Nilotic and desert environments that characterize Egypt and Nubia. Even given this concern, Goody concludes that foodways tend to be more conservative than many other features of society:

> Continuity has other components which emerge more clearly when one considers the consumption of food; the nature and order of meals and courses, and the etiquette of eating, that is the table manners, are much less dependent upon the technology and upon the components of cooking, though they are clearly not independent of the status system nor yet of the organization of social life at the domestic level. These "rituals of family living" are marked by formality and continuity … The conservative nature of these actions is partly due to the fact that they are learnt by direct experience, at an early age, at home, in the domestic group. As a consequence, their staying power is great … the relative conservatism of specific dishes could be a reflection of their relative lack of entailment with the rest of the socio-cultural system. It would then be the autonomy of certain aspects of cooking that gave it a very special importance for individuals in situations of social change, especially of rapid, revolutionary change.
>
> (Goody 1982: 151–2)

Nubian cookpots increase steadily at Askut, starting at around 20 percent in the early Middle Kingdom, rising to half by the end of the Middle Kingdom, and accounting for over two-thirds in the New Kingdom, up to 90 percent in some contexts (Figures 5.7–9). This presents a very different pattern from the ups and downs of the serving and storage assemblages. If we compare the change in each functional sub-assemblage over each key transition, the increase and then decrease in Nubian service and storage vessels contrasts with the steady increase in Nubian cookpots before and after the Egyptian New Kingdom reconquest (Table 5.3). If we look at the relationship between service, storage, and cooking vessels within each cultural assemblage these differences are further highlighted. Within the sub-set of Egyptian pottery at Askut, the service assemblage consistently dominates the cooking assemblage, with a decline starting in the Second Intermediate Period that is no doubt due to the sudden increase in Nubian serving vessels (Figure 8.1). In contrast, Nubian serving vessels account for less than a third of Nubian pottery in the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom (Figure 8.2). The only time that Nubian service vessels rise to dominate the

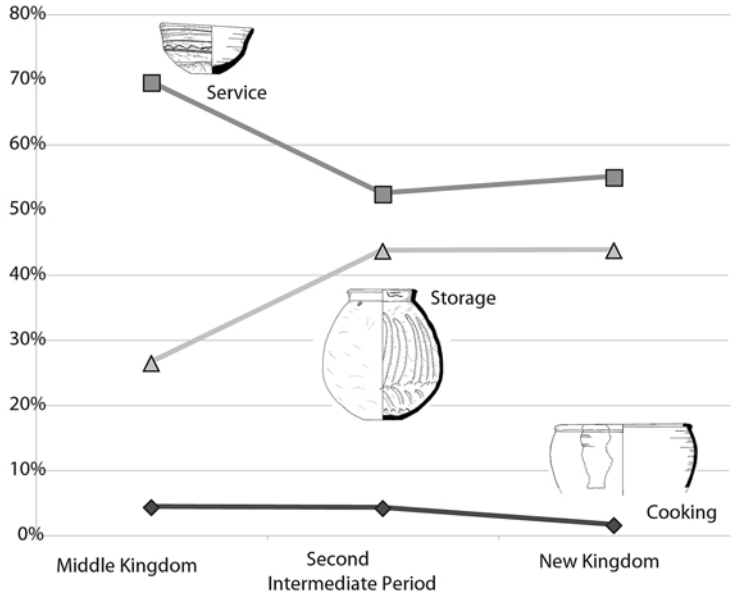


Figure 8.1 Proportions of the different functional assemblages of Egyptian ceramics at Askut.

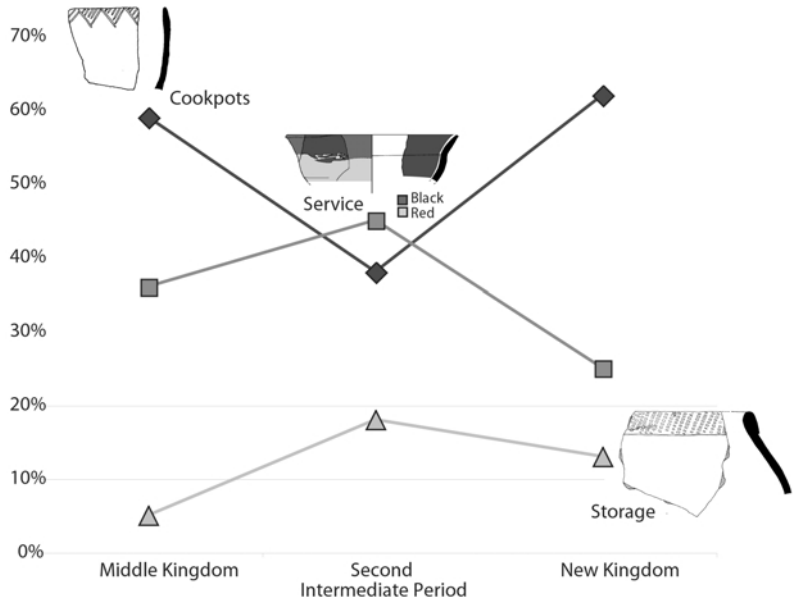


Figure 8.2 Proportions of the different functional assemblages of Nubian ceramics at Askut.

assemblage is during the Second Intermediate Period, when the occupants of the fortress owed their allegiance to the Nubian king of Kush.

The fluctuating use of Nubian fine wares may indicate shifting adjustments in ethnic identity, paralleling larger political changes as the community adapted to a new geo-political order. Kerma pottery would serve to demonstrate links between the colonial communities and their Nubian overlords. Kerman fine wares would also provide an important source of display during small- or large-scale feasts, more consistent with Nubian than Egyptian cultural practice (cf. Dietler 1990). Nubian serving vessels drop to their lowest percentage of the Nubian sub-assemblage during the New Kingdom. This coincides with a time when Egyptian replaced Nubian culture in a deliberate imperial policy of acculturation. Egyptian-ness would have been at a premium, and so the use of Nubian serving vessels is muted. This pattern is consistent with the instrumentalist model that ethnic identities are fluid, dynamic, and contested (Jones 1996,1997; Fardon 1987; Handler 1988; Eriksen 1992). If we take Kemp's (1989) more formalist view of the Egyptian economy, then individuals at Askut, probably mainly men, adapted to meet the instrumental needs of specific situations for economic and political advantage rather than through loyalty to immutable ethnic groups like "Egyptian" or "Kerman." At the same time Nubian cookpots, presumably the purview of women, follow a completely different trend, steadily increasing as they come to dominate the cooking assemblage.

The differences between the distribution of Egyptian and Nubian service and cooking pottery over time at Askut may correspond to Goody's distinction between foodways connected with larger systems and those that remain independent of the larger political situation. In this case, the serving assemblages would reflect the dynamics of external relations, while cookpots would represent the internal dynamics of the fortress community. Since foodways are less susceptible to external pressures, they might provide women at Askut with a means of maintaining a key element of Nubian lifeways within the household. This inner–outer dichotomy is supported by the generally conservative nature of cookpots cross-culturally (Rice 1987). The initial relatively high level of Nubian cookpots and gradual rise over the occupation at Askut may reflect an initial diversity and gradual acceptance of Nubian foodways at the household level, particularly if Nubian women intermarried with Egyptian soldiers and bureaucrats. Residues from the GC/MS pilot study support this interpretation, since they showed a possible overlap between foods cooked in Egyptian and Nubian pots during the Middle Kingdom, but a more exclusive pattern in the succeeding periods, perhaps indicating less willingness to accommodate Egyptian foodways by cooking Egyptian dishes in Nubian pots. If, as is likely, the Egyptian fortress communities were disproportionately male, then Nubian women might well have come into the frontier population in large numbers. Again taking a more formalist view, the colonists might have been motivated by more than just a desire for family life. Intermarriage would forge ties between the Egyptian colonists and their Nubian neighbors, in this case their Kushite trading partners rather than the local C-Group culture (Smith 1995,1997). In a similar way, Deagan (1983) attributes the adoption of native ceramic forms and foodways to the widespread presence of native women in households at Spanish St Augustine. Lightfoot and Martinez (1995) also found a strong native presence in the organization of space

and foodways within the households with native women at Fort Ross, a nineteenth-century Russian fur-trading post in northern California. In Goody's and Bourdieu's terms, the use of Nubian cookpots may thus reflect an underlying Nubian identity or *habitus*, which, unlike the use of pots in the more public areas of the house for display in meals, was not important to the rest of social system (that is, the demonstration of status and external and/or imperial relations/ties), thus avoiding the more dramatic fluctuations of the other pottery groups. Whether or not the gradual ascendancy of Nubian cooking pottery and foodways reflects an active assertion of ethnic identity by Nubian women at Askut is discussed below.

MONUMENTALITY AND DISPLAY AT TOMBOS

> Although we do not doubt that rituals are invariably caught up in relations of power, what is overlooked … is the uncertainty of the outcomes. Rituals may make a show of power, but they run the same risk as other shows: They may fail.
>
> Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington (1991: 6)

Siamun, Weren, and almost all of the individuals buried at Tombos presented an unambiguously Egyptian identity at death. Siamun's funerary monument in particular stands out as one of the largest and most elaborate Egyptian tombs ever built in Nubia. Since the days of Morgan (1877), monuments have been seen as a marker of complex societies, reflecting the power and authority of a hierarchical elite. The size and elaboration of large-scale public architecture provided an index of development in unilinear evolutionary frameworks (Johnson and Earle 1987; e.g., Steward 1955; Morgan 1877). These scholars used monuments as a passive measure of the scale of organization and labor achieved by elites (Childe 1936; Adams 1966). Although more sophisticated, recent studies also tend to look at monumental architecture as providing an index of social differentiation within a society reflected in the energy and organizational capabilities materialized in architecture (McGuire and Schiffer 1983; Sanders and Santley 1983). This characterization of monuments as a *reflection* of existing social relations, representing the creation of social solidarity and maintenance of consensus, is at first glance appealing. Monuments and rituals materialized an ideology that reinforced the dominant position of elites (Kolb 1993; DeMarrais *et al.* 1996).

In this case, Siamun's elaborate preparations for life after death would simply reflect his power and authority in the Egyptian hierarchy. But monuments also convey messages. They are imbued and encoded with strong meaning content, ranging from very subtle to simple and direct, often in a multi-layered way. The focus on energetics in effect depopulates monuments, seeing them only as we do today – as masses of masonry, not as living and dynamic, invested with meaning and often filled with people. Although people rarely bury themselves, Siamun, like other Egyptian elite, built his monument and even collected some of his grave goods in advance. He would not benefit directly from his own funerary procession and feast, but he could have used his pyramid to send a message about

himself and his role at Tombos during the burial of relatives, like the children and adults placed in the enclosed spaces surrounding the pyramid itself. If members of the Kerman community were invited, Siamun's displays on these occasions would go beyond internal cues intended for the colonial community.

Very likely these considerations played at least a part in the thoughts that lay behind Siamun's construction of such an extraordinary tomb. Thinking in terms of ethnic identity and taking the larger political situation into account, we can see that Siamun's actual motivations were very likely more complex and dynamic than a simple assertion of social position. Metcalf and Huntington (1991) argue that mortuary ritual should not be reduced to a highly mechanistic role as a simple device for social regulation. As the quote above points out, the message of power and authority conveyed in monuments and rituals was not necessarily successful. The desire to construct large monuments represents not the reinforcement of a continuing consensus, but rather the need to create an impression of power and authority. Monuments and the rituals performed in them reflect the desire to persuade rather than successful persuasion (Hodder in Kolb 1993). Far from being a simple reflection of existing power, funerary monuments represent a medium for the *negotiation* of power. As a result, dramatic peaks in monumentality should point to critical political situations.

On the basis of this discussion, we can try better to understand Siamun's motivations, the intended audience for his funeral display, and its probable effect. First of all, his pyramid represents a kind of hyper-monumentality in both its scale and embellishments. As an Overseer of Foreign Lands, his role in the colonial administration was perhaps more important than the two deputies that controlled Lower and Upper Nubia respectively, second only to the colony's military commander and perhaps reporting directly to the Viceroy. With a pyramid 8 m to a side and a decorated T-shaped chapel, the scale of Siamun's tomb rivaled those of the deputies and imperial elite, like the residents of the large temple town at Soleb (Figure 8.3). Yet the cemetery, and presumably settlement, at Tombos was smaller than the fortified settlements at places like Sai or Soleb with their stone temples and large cemeteries. Thus, although on one level the scale of his monument reflects his position in the ancient Egyptian administrative and social hierarchy, on another level it reflects Siamun's need to project an image of power and authority beyond what one would necessarily expect of a provincial bureaucrat. One could see him echoing the words of Sinuhe after his own tomb was completed: "There was no commoner for whom the like had ever been done" (Lichtheim 1973: 233). Why would this strong expression of Egyptian identity appear here and not at one of the temple towns or even the colonial capitals at Aniba and Amara?

The answer may lie in the location of Tombos at the boundary between Egypt's territorial and hegemonic imperial rule (Figure 8.4). As noted above, the headwaters of the third cataract lay at a strategic position at the northern end of the Dongola Reach and Kerma Basin, the center of the conquered kingdom of Kush. Thutmose I symbolically reinforced this internal imperial boundary by carving triumphal stelae into the granite boulders of the cataract's headwaters. In them he boasts of his overthrow of Kush, physically marking Egyptian ascendancy, but also symbolically delineating the limit of

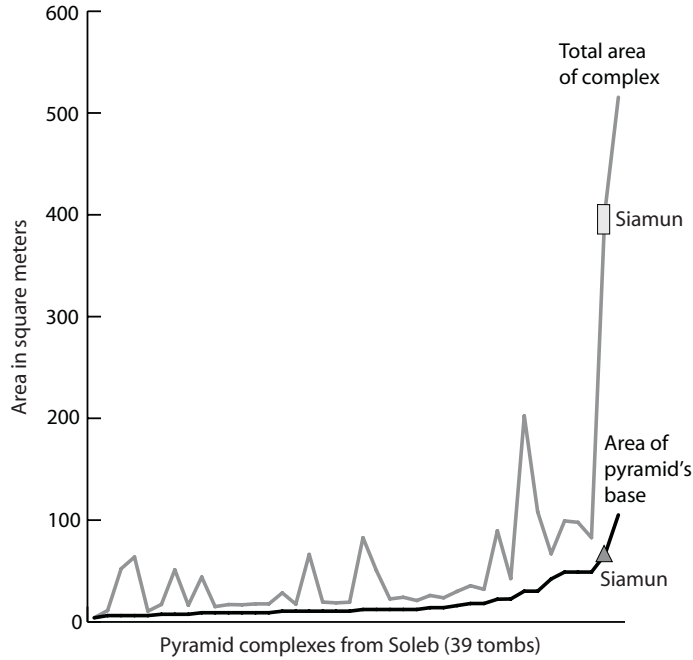


Figure 8.3 Size of tomb complexes at Aniba, Soleb, and the Tombos pyramid.

Egyptian territorial control. The Dongola Reach probably supported a population of around 200,000. Unlike Lower Nubia, the Kerman population had not been assimilated into Egyptian culture. Archaeologically, sites throughout the Dongola Reach retained a Nubian character in spite of the construction of Egyptian temples at Kerma, Kawa, and Gebel Barkal. A Kerma settlement lay just across the river from Tombos at Hannek. Kerma, the former capital of Kush and still a major urban center, lay a mere 10 km away. The Kerman princes through whom the Egyptians ruled the region could rise against Egyptian hegemony, as they had in the past.

The political position of Siamun and his community was therefore precarious. No one likes the tax collector. Siamun's job as enforcer of the annual payment of tribute would not have endeared him to the Kerma elite. Bluster was his best defense. The nearest Egyptian settlement was likely at Nauri, but the best hope for relief in case of trouble would come from Sesebi and the other temple towns, which lay far to the north past treacherous rapids and rugged terrain (Figures 1.1 and 8.4). Tombos was isolated from Egyptian power, outnumbered and perhaps surrounded by a foreign culture. Given Egypt's more hands-off, hegemonic imperial policy, colonial administrators like Siamun residing in the Kushite heartland must have found it necessary to present an unambiguous face to their Nubian subjects. The construction of impressive funerary monuments like Siamun's pyramid would serve a dual role. On the one hand, pyramid-tombs demonstrated the colonist's connections to the

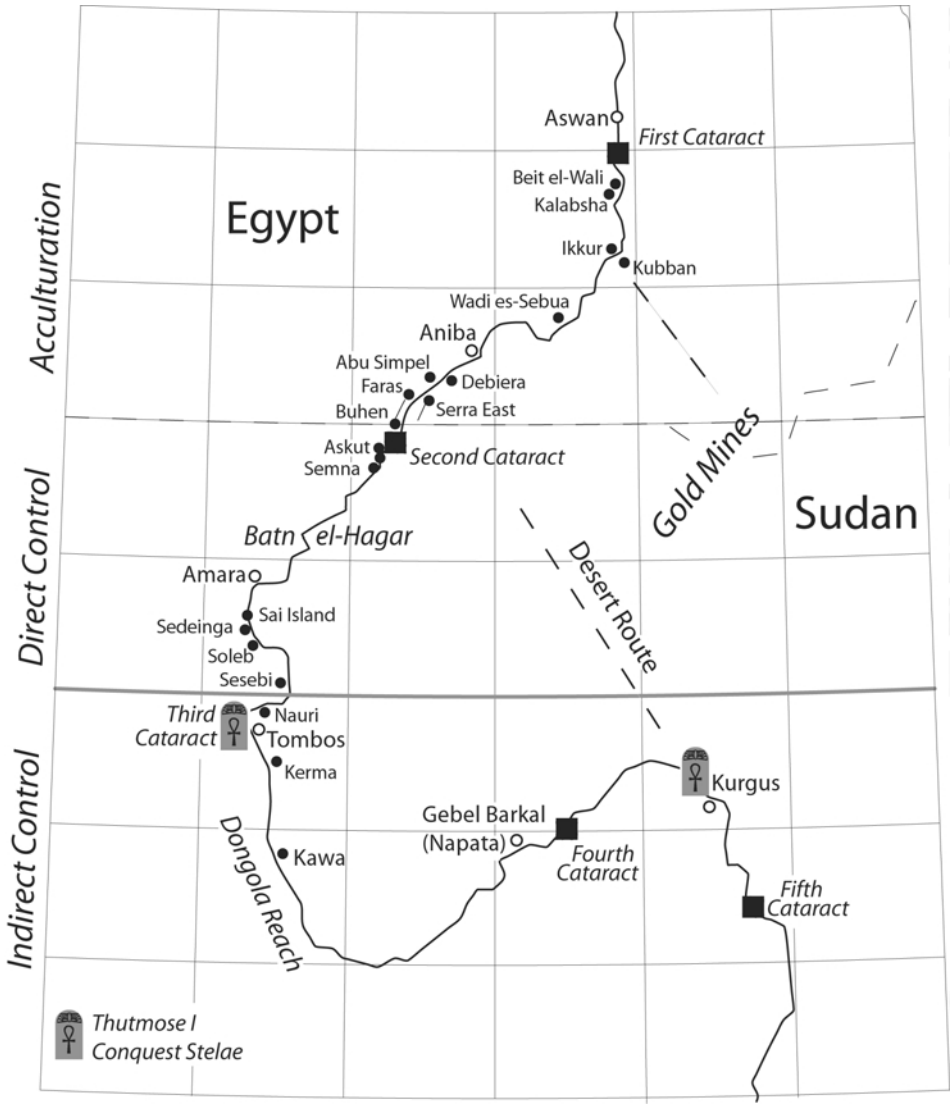


Figure 8.4 Map showing the distribution of Egyptian sites in Upper and Lower Nubia.

powerful colonial core through the construction of impressive funerary monuments. On the other, the emphasis on Egyptian ethnicity through a strict adherence to burial practice promoted in-group solidarity in the face of a perceived or real Kerman threat.

Would Nubians have accurately received this message? Very likely they would have. Of course, the size of the tomb would make its own statement about power and

authority. The presence of Nubian pottery in the forecourt of Siamun's tomb implies that Nubians participated in the burial rites, which included a funeral feast in front of the tomb's entrance. Tombos lay just 10 km north of Kerma, the ancient capital of Kush, which remained a key center in spite of Thutmose I's sack in 1500 BC. Important members of the Kerman elite might therefore have attended. These same individuals went yearly to Thebes for the tribute ceremony (Bleiberg 1984; Redford 1967; Smith 1997), and so would have passed by Tombos when traveling north. The pyramid tombs of Tombos, in particular that of Siamun and Weren with its Theban-style cones and T-shaped chapel, would have resonated with those of the Theban elite, establishing a direct link in the minds of the conquered Nubians between the colonists and all the power and panoply of the Egyptian state.

This reconstruction is consistent with the heightened role of ethnic identity upon competitive boundaries (Barth 1969a). As noted above, funerals provide an opportunity for the negotiation of social identities, allowing for the reinterpretation of relationships between individuals in a redefinition of the role of the dead constructed through funerary rites (Hodder 1982a). Egyptian death rites had a strong public dimension, including funerary banquets and processions displaying grave goods. Additionally, chapels like the one attached to Siamun's pyramid served as foci for continuing ancestor veneration, providing a particularly powerful source for demonstrating primordial ethnic ties. The wealth and cultural cues embodied in funerary monuments and grave goods did not simply reflect the position of the deceased, but had a prospective value, in this case projecting the picture of Egyptian identity and power that the colonists wanted to portray. Thus Siamun's large tomb and use of funerary cones established his Egyptian identity and the authority of the Egyptian state that lay behind it.

Yet at the same time Nubian women at Tombos subverted that message by insisting on a burial that asserted their Kerman ethnic identities within this otherwise strongly marked Egyptian cemetery. The Nubian pottery found in association with the pyramid might in this context represent native resistance rather than acceptance of Egyptian power, an assertion of Nubian identity during funeral feasts for Nubian women living at Tombos, or even a cultural and ethnic counterpoint during the funerals employing Egyptian burial practice. Since only early burials in Units 6 and 7 were made in Kerma style, however, it is not clear whether or not Nubian burials continue at Tombos, although disturbance from looting could have destroyed evidence of later Nubian-style burials in Unit 6. In Ghana, ethnic ties replaced kinship relationships when individuals moved from the countryside into an urban setting, although this use of ethnicity only lasted for a single generation (Schildkrout 1974). A similar dynamic may exist at Tombos.

Nubian burial practice was not, however, entirely forgotten during the New Kingdom empire, since the Napatan and Meroitic culture revived features like tumuli and bed burials with some differences in later periods (Welsby 1996b: 80–98). There is still very little evidence to establish the nature of burial practice outside of the Egyptian colonial communities. Nubian practices survived at Kerma into the New Kingdom, since Bonnet found a large post-conquest, circular royal burial that



Figure 8.5 *Topical* Nubians talking from the façade of the Aten temple at Sesebi (*c.* 1350 BC, gift of the 1936–7 season of the Egypt Exploration Society excavations, Brooklyn Museum 37.413).

originally had a large tumulus-like superstructure (Bonnet 1990: 86–7). The later Napatan residents of Kerma placed a cemetery in a former Kerma cult area within the secondary settlement, suggesting a conscious connection with earlier religious beliefs. Although Egyptianized, extended, coffined burials were the most common type of inhumation, some burials were placed Nubian-style in a contracted position (Bonnet 1997: 112). Liverani (1997) found a cemetery of Nubian elite from the late New Kingdom with continuity into the Napatan period at el Dati near Gebel Barkal. These burials blend Nubian and Egyptian practice, with extended position but without any trace of coffins. As at Tombos, most of the pottery was Egyptian, but some Nubian blacktopped styles also appear.

At the large Napatan cemetery of Sanam, burial practice was mixed between flexed inhumations in Nubian style and Egyptian-influenced extended burials with hands to the side or across the pelvis (Griffith 1923: 79–88). Some but not all of the latter were mummified. Most were positioned head to the west as in Egyptian practice but many were oriented with head to the east in a more Nubian fashion. Several tombs had a contemporaneous combination of both flexed and extended burials, as was the case in Units 6 and 7 at Tombos. For example, in grave 221, the man was extended with head to the west, but the woman was flexed with head to the east and on her side facing north. Griffith (1923: 87–8) suggested that the retention of flexed burials for women at Sanam reflected a gendered difference, with women holding to tradition and men



Figure 8.6 Napatan cemetery at Tombos.

to a new Egyptianized fashion. Perhaps women at Sanam chose the more traditional position for similar reasons as I suggest for the flexed burials at Tombos. In this case, women's adherence to Nubian practice might convey their resistance to the dramatic changes taking place in Kushite society, in contrast with the instrumental transformation by the male Kushite elite to an Egyptianized ethnic identity in order to legitimize their conquest of Egypt and to further centralization at home through an adaptation of elements taken from pharaonic ideology (Smith 1998).

This gendered dialectic may have antecedents in New Kingdom colonial communities like Askut and Tombos. As was the case in the New Kingdom, Nubian cookpots and Egyptian service and storage vessels dominate their respective sub-assemblages during the Napatan period at Askut, although it is not clear whether the site was occupied during the intervening Third Intermediate Period. A Napatan cemetery (91.118) lies just to the south of the main colonial cemetery at Tombos (Figures 6.2 and 8.5). Tentatively identified as a settlement by Edwards and Salih (1992), our excavation determined that the series of irregular drystone circles are actually tumuli similar to those from Sahaba discussed above (cf. Figures 4.16 and 8.6). Only one tomb has been excavated so far, revealing a single inhumation in a northern side chamber at the bottom of a deep pit (Unit 3, Figure 8.7). Although disturbed by looters, much of the burial remained *in situ*, showing an Egyptian-style extended burial, head to the west and hands to either side, but placed Nubian-style on a bed. A simple pinched bowl with an undulating surface associated with the superstructure may also represent Nubian tradition. Modern Nubian cemeteries still feature bowls placed next to the



Figure 8.7 Unit 3 tumulus.

grave, a practice that goes back to Kerman times (Gratien 1985). Unfortunately, no diagnostic pots were found *in situ,* but the pottery from the surface and in the shaft's fill is consistent with a Napatan date (*c.* 750–350 BC). Additionally, the style of the burial matches Napatan practice (Welsby 1996b). An intact tomb of this date from Sai provides a close parallel (Gues 1997: 100–1, Figure 2). Like our burial, this individual lay in a sealed northern chamber on a bed extended in east–west orientation and hands to either side, but head towards the east, not the west. This new burial practice represents a synthesis of Nubian and Egyptian elements. Nubian features include the use of a tumulus superstructure and bed. Egyptian elements include the extended position and orientation, although more of the burials at Sai were oriented head to the east like earlier Kerma burial practice.

There are some indications of an overlap between these tumuli and the New Kingdom cemetery at Tombos, opening the possibility that the transformation in Nubian burial practice could be connected to the interactions and intermarriage between Egyptians and Nubians during the colonial occupation. Napatan period ceramics were found on the surface and within the overburden at the pyramid. An extended burial with head to the east and hands across the pelvis in a side-chamber pit tomb from Unit 5 contained a pilgrim flask that is post-New Kingdom (Figure 8.8; cf. Aston 1996). This tomb probably dates to the transitional Third Intermediate Period that fills the gap between the end of the New Kingdom and rise of the Napatan kingdom. The exact nature of any connection between the New Kingdom and Napatan burials at Tombos is still an open question that requires more fieldwork to answer, but the mixed practice here and at Kerma, el Dati, Sanam, and Sai could

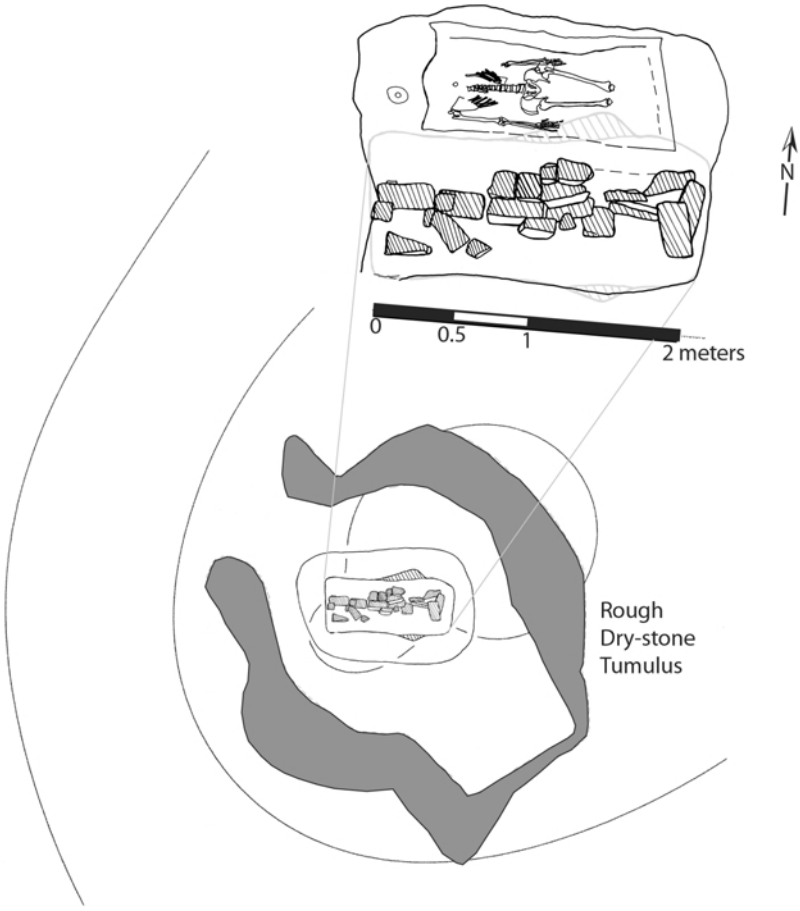


Figure 8.8 Plan of Unit 3 bed burial.

reflect a process of transculturation coming out of the colonial encounter analogous to the Nubian influence in a domestic context at Askut.

WAS KUSH "WRETCHED"?

> Copy of the decree which His Majesty prepared with his own to hands to [the viceroy Usersatet …] You have taken up residence [in Nubia], a brave who made captures in all foreign countries and a chariot warrior who fought on behalf of His Majesty, Amenhotep [II]. O you possessor of a woman from Babylon, a maidservant from Byblos, a young maiden from Alalakh, and an old woman

> from Araphkha, the people of Takhsy [in Syria] are all of no account. Of what use are they anyway? Don't be at all lenient with Nubians! Beware their people and their sorcerers!
>
> Pharaoh to his new viceroy, *c.* 1420 BC (Wente 1990: 27–8)

In spite of an extensive anthropological and sociological literature exploring the inherent complexities of ethnicity, there is a tendency for archaeologists to gravitate, explicitly or implicitly, towards an essentialist perspective. For example, while Shennan (1994) acknowledges some of the complexities involved in ethnic dynamics, he and most of the other contributors to his edited volume still treat ethnic groups as discrete, bounded entities that can be "found" in the archaeological record, albeit with some difficulty. Perry and Paynter (1999: 306–7) attribute this predisposition to the nature of ethnicity itself. Individuals and groups define their ethnic identities in primordial terms, dividing the world into neat, homogenous units. Thus both archaeologists and historians develop an expectation that this "emic" classification will be represented on the ground. But in fact, constructions of ethnicity by nature gloss over differences and are situational and context-driven, not absolute. Archaeologists and historians must attempt to capture the dynamism of ethnicity by situating it within the field of social relations, not essentializing ethnicity or primordializing ethnic identities by conflating ethnicity and race. The individual actor is lost in the search for ethnic groups. Yet without thinking about individuals, we cannot really understand ethnicity in the past. Archaeology belies expectations because people act in ways that often contradict seemingly immutable ethnic categories.

To individual Egyptians like the residents of Askut and Tombos, was Kush *really* wretched? If we take Egyptian ethnic ideology at face value, then we would conclude that Egyptians adhered to strong ethnic stereotypes. Amenhotep II clearly was a bit worried about Usersatet's view of foreigners, however, acknowledging that even key members of the Egyptian elite did not necessarily buy into the foreigner *topos*. Usersatet's acquisition of women from Egyptian-controlled Syro-Palestine, and even exotic Babylon, apparently made Pharaoh question whether his new viceroy took a proper view of foreigners. Amenhotep himself even grudgingly allows the prowess of his Nubian subjects, alluding to their considerable reputation as sorcerers. This is a far different view from that presented by Senwosret III on his boundary stela. This leads back to the fluidity and contextual nature of ethnicity. To Egyptian ideology Nubians *were* wretched. But to those living on the frontier Nubians were associates, friends, family, and a respected potential enemy. The cemetery at Tombos does reflect a divide between conquerors and vanquished consistent with the foreigner *topos*; in the architecture of their pyramid tomb, Siamun and Weren projected a self-consciously Egyptian identity that set the colonists apart from what remained of the local Kerman civilization. But even here the presence of Nubian pottery and four Nubian-style burials of women lend a degree of ambiguity to the message of ethnic exclusiveness projected in the tomb's monumental setting. The archaeological evidence from Askut indicates that in other places and different contexts, individual colonists had



Figure 8.9 Pilgrim flask from pit and side chamber burial in Unit 5.

considerable flexibility and room for individual agency in their interactions crossing imperial and ethnic boundaries.

In an even more dramatic example of this phenomenon, Maya social networks and culture extended across the official Spanish colonial boundary. Maya culture was influenced on both sides by the Spanish, but remained essentially the same in spite of the official insistence upon assimilation and Christianization (Farriss 1984: 75). In a similar but less dramatic way, the evidence for intermarriage and cultural transformation at Askut stands at odds with the highly regulated system implied by royal edicts like the boundary stela of Senwosret III and ideological categorizations like the construction of a "barbaric" Nubian *ethnos* in the Egyptian foreigner *topos*. Based on only a limited reference to reality, the ideological *topos* of the foreigner reflects an idealized set of categories emphasizing difference to meet the political and religious goals of the Pharaohs, making Kush perpetually "wretched" (Figure 8.9). Egyptian ideology reflects the tendency of individuals to define ethnicity in essentialist terms. Egyptologists tend not only to believe these ideological categorizations, but also actively to subscribe to them (Baines 1996: 360–1). I would argue that this is not only due to an Egyptocentric mentality and a tendency to privilege written sources, but also because the Egyptian definition of distinctive, bounded groups meets our own expectations. As Royce points out (1982: 1, see quote above), ethnicity is a powerful phenomenon. The dynamic nature of ethnicity, however, belies such simple models. For example, Emberling (1997), searching for distinctive ethnic boundaries in third-millennium Mesopotamia, found a lack of correlation between burial practice and

pottery distributions in the Diyala border region between north and south Mesopotamia, thus contradicting Barth's suggestion that ethnic markers should be strongest at a boundary. Emberling resists coming to the easy conclusion that it is impossible to discover ethnicity in the archaeological record, but argues instead, and I think correctly, that the differences might point towards negotiations in the construction of identities that reflect the flexibility of ethnicity and its openness to situational manipulations.

In our case, material culture and cultural practice apparently supply strong ethnic markers for Egypt and Nubia, but a closer, contextual examination of the archaeological record at Askut and Tombos, aided by the juxtaposition of text and archaeology, reveals the underlying complexities and ambiguities that mark the nature of ethnic identity and the dynamism of frontier situations. Funerary practice at Tombos reflects the overt assertion of ethnic identity, in this case both Egyptian and Nubian, in situations where changing relations of domination result in a new social ordering (Parker Pearson 1982: 104–9; Hall 1997: 131). Like Tombos, the architecture of Askut overtly projects an Egyptian identity. Cookpots and other domestic artifacts present a more ambiguous picture of ethnicity. But does the adoption of Nubian cooking reflect a deliberate construction of ethnicity by Nubian women, or was it merely a passive *habitus*-based practice maintained more through the force of habitual tradition than as an overt expression of identity? McGuire (1982) notes that in the mixed ethnic situation on the mid-nineteenth century Mexican–American frontier, there was intermarriage and much overlap in material culture while the settlers faced a common enemy, the Apache. With the threat of raids eliminated by the late nineteenth century, competition driven by increasing Anglo-American and Chinese immigration resulted in ethnic polarization reflected in distinctive food refuse and ceramic assemblages for all three groups. Thus the *habitus* creates tendencies but is not entirely passive. Hall (1997: 133) notes that Bourdieu (1977) uses the notion of fields as a context for individual social negotiations that can transform *habitus*. In this case, foodways, though rooted in *habitus*, nevertheless play an important role in establishing, negotiating, and perpetuating social identity. In a context of colonial dominance, expressions of "traditional" lifeways can represent a form of resistance to imperial and cultural hegemony. At Fort Ross, Lightfoot and Martinez (1995: 485–6) suggest that native women who resented their arranged marriages with Russian colonists continued to assert their native identity through domestic activities within inter-ethnic households. In a similar way, slaves in the United States used foodways to establish control over at least some aspect of their daily lives on southern plantations. Distinctive foodways are still central to African-American ethnic identity (McKee 1999: 235). The maintenance of Nubian foodways and use of Nubian jewelry, figurines, and other household objects may represent a subtle strategy of resistance and ultimately a process of transculturation that resulted in the adoption of Nubian foodways and religion within a putatively Egyptian colonial society.

This interpretation supports the instrumentalist notion that ethnic identities are created to the advantage of individual agents, and thus are mutable and manipulated depending on the individual situation. The constitution of ethnic identity is not, however, an arbitrary selection of features meeting instrumental contingencies. Ethnic

identities, although mutable and situational, bear relevant meanings that shape the course of interaction between individual social agents in specific social contexts. Thus both intermarriage and changing politics could fundamentally alter the ethnic identity of colonial communities like Askut, but would affect different social contexts differently. In public contexts, Egyptian architecture and material culture including pottery predominate, possibly partly from *habitus* preferences of Egyptian male members of society, but mainly in order to assert an Egyptian ethnic identity. At the same time, Nubian women used Nubian pottery in private spaces. Burmeister (2000) emphasizes this inner–outer dichotomy in immigrant communities, with the public outer sphere stressing assimilation or adaptation to the surrounding social situation and the private inner sphere reflecting a more conservative *habitus*-based social practice. Similarly, Yoffee and Kamp (1980) argue that when production occurs at home tradition is maintained and domestic material culture will correlate strongly with ethnic preferences. In our case, however, the private sphere represents an active context for interaction, with households as a zone of ethnic negotiation. By maintaining and extending Nubian foodways, Nubian women created a counterpoint against discrimination and a loss of worth by referring to their own culture and identity (cf. Burmeister 2000: 546). This process would also both create ties within the community for Nubian women, and help to maintain their connections with home (Yoffee and Kamp 1980).

Egyptian and Egyptianized frontier communities did more than simply implement central policy. Individual agency weighs more heavily than the dictates of administrators and ideologues in the day-to-day interactions that characterize frontier life. In spite of the politically charged ideology of separation and "otherness," Egyptians and Nubians interacted and apparently intermarried at Askut and Tombos. Some Nubians, like the royal favorite Mahirper and the Prince of Tekhet Djehutyhotep, acculturated to Egyptian society while others like the inhabitants of the Dongola Reach remained Nubian. Lightfoot and Martinez point out that core–periphery models often marginalize the critical role of indigenous–native interactions in colonial situations, instead positing the transmission of core cultures to peripheral societies. In this view, "peoples on the periphery give up their traditional lifeways and assimilate the traits of the dominant culture over time" (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995: 475). They argue to the contrary that contemporary communities, even along militarized boundaries, establish social, kinship, and political ties across national borders. In particular, colonial populations, often containing a large number of single men, are vulnerable to manipulation by native peoples. At Fort Ross, local leaders actively established kinship ties between their community and the colonists by arranging marriages between their daughters and single men from the colonial community. Lightfoot and Martinez argue that subtle assertions of ethnicity took place through seemingly innocuous activities like the day-to-day consumption of foods and arrangement of living space. These individual actions can result in the construction of new identities that are more than simple blends of colonial and native lifeways (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995: 484–86).

In a similar way, the men and women who forged frontier communities like Askut influenced the trajectory of Egyptian–Nubian relations by adapting to changing geo-

political developments and forging ties that crossed the seemingly absolute boundaries established by colonial administrators. At the same time, the colonial community at Tombos projected a strong Egyptian identity at the edge of Egyptian territorial control, meeting expectations for greater ethnic polarization on competitive boundaries (Barth 1969a; Hodder 1979). Colonists like Siamun reinforced their vulnerable position by establishing primordial ancestral ties with Egypt through the construction of a strong symbolic ethnic contrast with their more numerous Kerman counterparts, although whether or not their domestic situation reflects the same degree of ethnic emphasis must await further fieldwork. Yet even here some women made a public assertion of their Nubian ethnic identity by insisting on a Nubian-style burial that stood in marked contrast to Siamun's dramatic projection of an Egyptian identity through his monumental pyramid tomb, reflecting the important role that individuals play in the negotiation of ethnic identities. The use of Nubian cuisine, pottery, jewelry, and figurines at Askut reflects a more subtle assertion of ethnic identity within the household. Nubian women ultimately transformed colonial society through a process of transculturation that synthesized Egyptian and Nubian features in a far more profound way than the more transitory and public instrumental manipulations of male ideologues, bureaucrats, and community leaders.

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