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Colonial Entanglements

Imperial Dictate, Individual Action, and Intercultural Interaction in Nubia

STUART TYSON SMITH

The material correlates of the Egyptian Middle and New Kingdom Empires in Nubia (ca. 2000–1680 and 1500–1070 BCE) seem to unambiguously reflect a heavy-handed approach dictated from the Egyptian core and can be contrasted with a more indirect approach in the Levant. Egyptian colonists in Nubia left a series of massive fortresses, temple-towns, and cemeteries full of Egyptian material culture that would leave us no doubt of Egyptian direct control even without the support of a rich textual record (Figure 2.1). As a result, archaeological and written sources at the macro scale have been used to infer a homogenous empire in Nubia characterized by direct territorial control, colonization, and eventually the Egyptianization of the Indigenous population from Aswan to the fourth cataract of the Nile in Sudanese Nubia. In contrast, Egypt's physical presence in the Levant was minimal in the Middle Kingdom and limited even during the New Kingdom Empire. Direct evidence for stronger influence and enclaves is confined to a handful of key centers such as the ports of Gaza, Jaffa, and Byblos, and during the New Kingdom inland sites, such as Beth She'an, that dominated land routes.

Trigger suggested that these differences—light touch in the Levant and heavy-handedness in Nubia—were the result of the level of respect accorded to Egypt's Levantine vassals versus their Nubian counterparts, who were seen as simple barbarians and so required a stronger intervention (Trigger 1976). Kemp (1978) adopted a similar view in positing a “civilizing” impulse to southward imperial expansion, arguing that the main goal of Egyptian imperialism in Nubia was the expansion of Egypt's cultural sphere through the Egyptianization of the populace. As Dietler points out for the idea of civilizing Roman

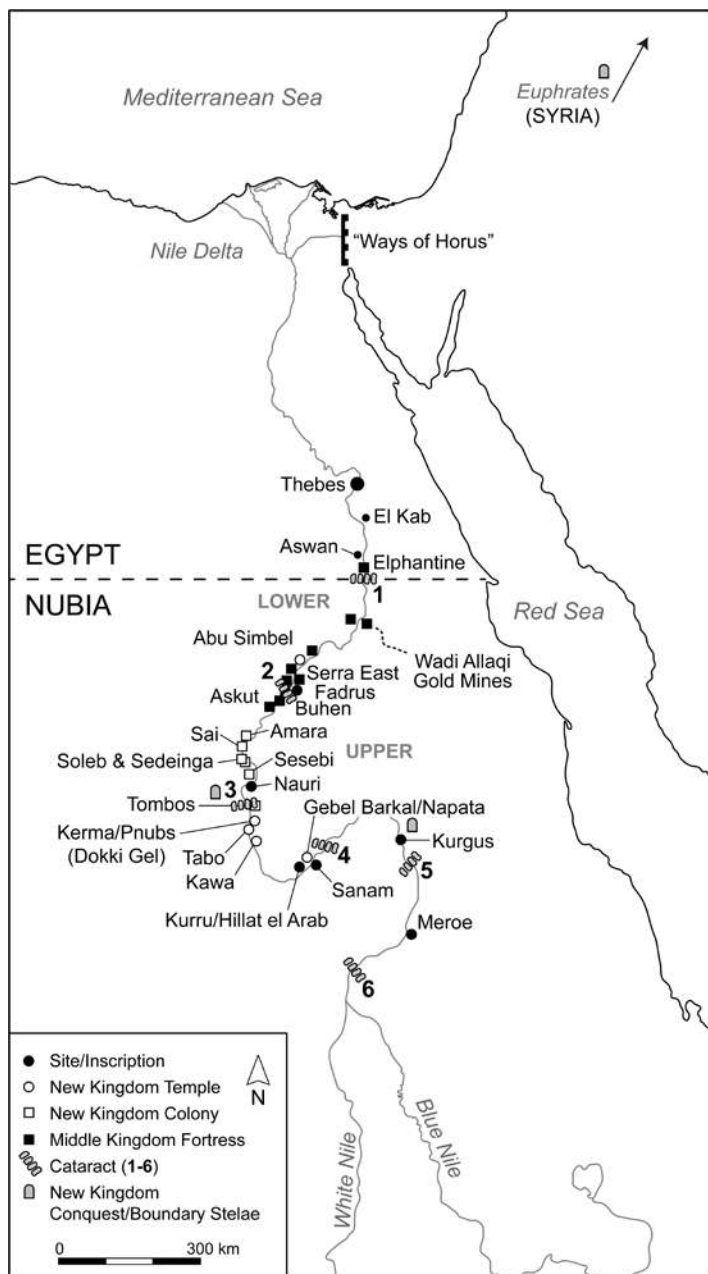


Figure 2.1. Map of Egypt and Nubia showing sites discussed in this chapter. Produced by Stuart Tyson Smith.

Hellenization, however, these models ultimately owe more to legitimizing constructs that justified colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than to any ancient reality (Dietler 2010, 28–43; see also Boozer, this volume, in contrast to Alconini, this volume). The notion of Nubian inferiority also taps into the racial side of scholarship in the last century, which sought to minimize the accomplishments of African civilizations against those of Europe and Western Asia, in which Egypt was and often still is placed, despite its geographic location and cultural roots (Frankfort 1948; Wengrow et al. 2014; S. T. Smith 2018). This bias was reflected in Reisner's characterization of Kerma as an Egyptian colony that eventually declined as Egyptian influence waned, rather than what we now know was a highly complex polity that was throughout its history a credible rival and for a time dominated Egypt (Bonnet 1990; O'Connor 1993; Bonnet and Valbelle 2006).

A more likely explanation for the larger-scale differences lies in the adaptation of imperial strategies to local conditions in an intersection of imperial interests with local infrastructure and willingness to be co-opted (S. T. Smith 1995; also Boozer, this volume), as described by Alcock (1989) for the Roman Empire and Schreiber (1992) for the Wari. Schreiber notes that this dynamic can produce a kind of mosaic of control that might vary over space and time. As Bélisle has shown for the Wari Empire, this can include variability even within a region. Local impacts of the Wari expansion into the Xaquixaguana Plain were minimal outside of the colony. The villagers of Ak'awillay were apparently disinterested in Wari pottery and other material culture, a pattern evident across the plain, in spite of the installation of a colony. Parker's borderland matrix model extends these principles through a study of the Assyrian empire by examining the dynamic interaction between geographic, political, economic, cultural, and demographic dimensions of boundary processes (Parker 2006; see also his chapter in this volume). This complexity is reflected in Nubia, where intercultural dynamics played out differently across time and space, sometimes leading to rejection or indifference and at other times adoption or adaptation of Egyptian practices and material culture.

In spite of larger-scale patterns of assimilation in the New Kingdom, distinctively Nubian cultural practices with roots before the conquest never completely disappear and reemerge toward the end of the empire in a new cultural constellation blending and juxtaposing Egyptian and Nubian features (ca. 1293–1070 BCE). Individuals (and/or their families) chose to signal a more Nubian or Egyptian identity through the selection of burial monuments, practices, and

grave goods, but also interwove elements from both traditions in different ways that resulted in a highly variable pattern both within and between sites and regions within Nubia. Similarly, expressions of foodways and material culture patterning within Egyptian colonies show mutual flows of interaction through the impact of Nubian influence at the quotidian level. Boozer describes a similar dynamic in the Oases in chapter 5. This pattern undermines the notion of homogenous imperial strategies correlated to a simplified stereotype of the dominated cultures—“sophisticated” Near Eastern or “barbaric” Nubian. Instead, imperial strategies and Indigenous responses varied through time and space in both regions, and indeed within those regions, in ways that produced both similarities and differences between the northern and southern Egyptian Empire. Understanding this complicated imperial dynamic requires a nuanced approach that avoids simple explanations based upon large-scale patterning in favor of multiscale models that consider the accumulation of subtle shifts in local interactions and entanglements and their contribution to developments on a regional scale.

A closer diachronic and regional examination along these lines does reveal a more complex and dynamic local and regional variability in imperial control, ranging from more direct to hegemonic. In a similar way, varying degrees of cultural and biological entanglement at different sites throughout the empire belie the state ideology of imperial self and Indigenous other that has too often informed Egyptological narratives of cultural domination and subordination in the empire. This chapter will focus primarily on Nubia, but the same model could be fruitfully applied to the Levant. For example, the New Kingdom Levantine Empire also had both regional and diachronic variability. Egyptian cultural entanglements were particularly strong at Byblos but lacking at other sites, and Egyptian investments in infrastructure and evidence for colonization reflect a more heavy-handed approach in the later New Kingdom during the Ramesside Period. Much of the Egyptian political and imperial investment in the Levant was aimed at managing maritime trade by securing key Levantine ports, but imperial expansion also focused along south-north and west-east routes extending far inland, for example the Jezreel Valley (Megiddo and the colony at Beth Shean) and along the Orontes, securing access to riverine and overland trade via the Euphrates and the Khabur region (Qatna, Qadesh, and earlier influence at Ebla). The boundary stela placed near Carchemish provides a northern correlate to the monumental inscription at the fifth cataract in Nubia. Established by Thutmose I (ca. 1501 BCE) and renewed by Thutmose III

(ca. 1450 BCE) and Ramses II (ca. 1250 BCE), the latter was maintained over a span of at least 250 years. In each case, these boundaries may have been more about asserting a sphere of influence, since there was little or no evidence for direct Egyptian control, not even a light imperial footprint.

For Nubia, I will first provide a critical discussion of Egyptianization models and instead suggest *cultural entanglement* as a better framework for understanding intercultural interactions in an imperial context. An overview of Egyptian imperialism from a macrohistorical perspective follows, examining the historical and archaeological evidence touching upon imperial policy from the Middle to New Kingdom, emphasizing the latter. Next, I will shift to a microhistorical approach through case studies focused on the Egyptian colony at Tombos and native colonial era cemetery at Hillat el-Arab. Focusing on localized shifts in cultural relations between Egyptians and Nubians within this larger historical context can allow for a better understanding of the complex interactions that characterized imperial Egypt's southern frontier and ultimately influenced the course and afterlife of empire. I conclude with a consideration of the role of agency in the dynamics of entanglement, transculturation, and hybridity that emerged in the aftermath of empire.

Egyptianization or Entanglement?

Although as discussed above, a number of scholars have considered the military, economic, and political underpinnings of the rise and consolidation of Egypt's Middle and New Kingdom Nubian Empires (Emery 1965; Kemp 1978; Frandsen 1979; Morkot 1987; S. T. Smith 1995; Morkot 2001, 2013), reconstructing the cultural dynamics of the colonial venture has proven more challenging. Egyptologists typically either ignore or deny the possibility that the conquered Nubians might have mounted any effective cultural resistance during the New Kingdom (e.g., Grimal 1992, 334; Bianchi 2004, 99–130). George Andrew Reisner's unfortunate view of Kerma as an Egyptian colony colored early perspectives of Nubia as a "simple" chiefdom-level society, a periphery easily dominated by Egypt (Edwards 2004). The frequent translation of the Egyptian term *wr*, literally "great one," as "prince" for the Levant and "chief" for Nubia, is telling. Recent excavations at the site of Kerma in Upper Nubia have transformed our view of the Kingdom of Kush from simple chiefdom to complex, centralized state with a major urban center at Kerma (Bonnet and Valbelle 2006). The Kushite state of the Middle and New Kingdom was a geopolitical rival of Egypt,

not an easily dominated periphery ripe for the extraction of resources. As for the Levant, the Egyptian state had the possibility of co-opting local leaders in order to exercise control over key resources and trade routes (see below). At first glance, Nubian culture does seem to have been wiped completely away in the face of overwhelming Egyptian cultural domination in much the same way as some have argued that contemporary globalization is destroying native cultures (King 1991). Although this idea has been deconstructed in the postcolonial literature (e.g., Bhabha 1994), Egyptologists nevertheless often still place interactions between Egypt and the Nubian Kerma civilization (ca. 2400–1500 BCE) within a classic relationship of dominant core and subordinate periphery (e.g., Emery 1965, 167–68, 177–78, 224; Grimal 1992, 334; Bianchi 2004, 74, 99, 126, 260; Redford 2004; Van der Mieroop 2014, 163, 225–27).

The general adoption of Egyptianization models was reinforced by the macro-historical pattern of assimilation seen in Lower Nubia during the New Kingdom (but see below). This notion was then projected uncritically to the Kerma culture farther south. Once Egyptian military dominance was established, Egyptian cultural assimilation would naturally follow. Breasted (1909, 331) adopts a typically Egyptocentric point of view with the comment that after the Egyptian conquest, “everywhere the rude barbarism of the upper Nile was receiving the stamp of Egyptian culture.” Egyptian ideology lends additional support to this model (Figure 2.2), since Nubians are consistently depicted as inferior and helpless to resist Egyptian hegemony (S. T. Smith 2003a, 10–29, 167–88). Trigger (1976, 109–10) used this evidence to argue that lack of respect for Nubian traditions drove an Egyptian policy of cultural assimilation in contrast to a more indirect imperial strategy toward the more culturally acceptable peoples of Western Asia, in spite of the fact that Asiatics are represented in the same negative terms (Figure 2.2 shows Tutankhamen as a sphinx trampling representatives from both ethnic groups). Echoing the globalization model noted above, Barry Kemp drew upon this notion of Nubian as “barbarian” when he concluded that “Egyptian culture must have had a considerable glamour in the eyes of Nubians. . . . It is not hard to understand how, in an age innocent of the esoteric delights of ‘folk culture,’ many of the local products, such as the decorated hand-made pottery and mother-of-pearl trinkets, did not survive the flood of cheap mass-produced Egyptian wares.” In line with his idea that ideological considerations drove Egyptian imperial policy (discussed below), Kemp concludes that “some recognition, at least, should be given to the positive side of this early attempt to extend what, to the Egyptians themselves, was a civilized way of life” (Kemp 1978, 34–35, 56).



Figure 2.2. Tutankhamen as a Sphinx trampling an Asiatic and Nubian (Egyptian Museum, Cairo). Photo by Stuart Tyson Smith.

Using a borderlands approach that emphasizes theories of cultural entanglement, I take an alternative view of the cultural dynamics of the Egyptian New Kingdom Empire. I refer here to Dietler's consumption-based model aimed at understanding intercultural interaction rather than Hodder's more far-ranging conceptions of material entanglements (Dietler 2010, 55–74, drawing on Thomas 1991, 2002; cf. Hodder 2012). I agree with Dietler's critique of concepts like hybridity, creolization, and *métissage* as overly reductionist by virtue of their reliance on biological and linguistic models (Dietler 2010, 51–53; also Silliman 2015), although I agree with Liebmann that hybridity (and by extension the other concepts) might apply in narrow contexts (see below; Liebmann 2015). Cultural entanglement allows for a more nuanced characterization of the adoption and adaptation of cultural traits that also takes into consideration indifference to and rejection of cultural influence (e.g., for Nubia, see Smith 1998; for the Wari Empire, see Bélisle 2015). It also facilitates a robust consideration of the multidirectional flows of intercultural influence and borrowing. The limited

evidence for mixed cultural practices during the New Kingdom goes against models stressing assimilation, instead reflecting a process of entanglement and transculturation resulting in an interweaving of different cultural threads through intercultural consumption that transformed both colonial and native culture (see below for further discussion). The key to understanding this phenomenon lies in adopting a bottom-up, agent-centered focus rather than a top-down normative view drawn from a historical record that emphasizes imperial power (S. T. Smith 2003a; and see in particular Boozer, Yao, and Overholtzer, this volume). Nubia can be seen from a borderlands perspective as a crosscutting zone of interaction rather than a conquered territory that was ultimately incorporated into the Egyptian world (cf. Lightfoot and Martinez 1995).

As Parker (2006) points out, a borderland can be seen as a geopolitical space where boundaries are contested but can also be permeable. Boyarin (2005) views the Mediterranean world in similar terms as a contact zone in the context of religious interaction and the creation of Christian orthodoxy. Barth (2000, 31–32) argues that “we need to distinguish between the cognitive processes that construct the boundary—by what I might call acts of imposition—and the sociology of people living and acting around that boundary and thereby shaping an outcome.” In spite of the creation of a rigid cognitive and political boundary between Egypt and Nubia at the first cataract and symbolic and political borders marking the limits of direct and indirect control at the third and fifth cataracts of the Nile, conquered Nubia ultimately provided an arena for transculturation, a synthesis of different cultural features in a multicultural colonial setting, rather than a complete acculturation to Egyptian norms (S. T. Smith 1998; 2003a, 197–202). Nubians and Egyptians met and negotiated questions of difference and power, ultimately forging new, entangled identities, a dynamic and selective blending of cultural features as a result of the colonial experience (cf. Ortiz 1940; Pratt 1992, 5–7; Davis 1995; Deagan 1998; S. T. Smith 1998; Buzon, Smith, and Simonetti 2016).

Archaeologists tend to think of agency in terms of somehow actually finding individual actors, which for us is difficult in the absence of historical records. But this represents a rather elitist view of agency, since the texts used to reconstruct agency tend to be written by men and in an imperial context are often ideologically charged and reflect imperial interests, especially in antiquity (S. T. Smith 2010; see Yao, Overholtzer, this volume). For most people, practice theory can help us find individuals in the more mundane archaeological record that reflects the materiality of everyday activities and encounters

(Bourdieu 1977; Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998; Barrett 2001). Grounded in the material expression of culture, a practice approach can provide a window into the everyday interactions and negotiations between colonists and natives that could have allowed Nubian society to survive and thrive once native political control returned, albeit to some extent as a colonial hybrid (in the narrow sense of Bhabha 1994, see below). Practice theory solves the inherent tension between social structure and agency by positing a constant dialectic between the constraints of habitus: cultural predispositions to some extent shared by other members of society, and the pressure of individual adaptation and innovation (Bourdieu 1977). The tension between individuals and habitus is particularly heightened in situations of intercultural interaction. As Barth notes, “Each move made by someone will affect the nature of the connections that arise along the boundary, and thereby affect the ‘rich image’ of the boundary that is retrieved” (Barth 2000, 31).

MACROHISTORY: THE CONQUEST AND COLONIZATION OF NUBIA

After a series of raids, Egyptian Middle Kingdom pharaohs conquered northern (Lower) Nubia in ca. 2000 BCE, building an impressive series of fortresses over a period of around a hundred years. This construction campaign culminated in the reign of Senwosret III (ca. 1878–1841 BCE), who created an impressive hardened frontier at the second cataract of the Nile (see Figure 2.1). Their massive scale and elaborate defenses led William Adams (1977) to argue for an ideological purpose for the construction of the fortress system in an example of hyper monumentality similar to the construction of royal pyramids. Although these massive imperial constructs would have inscribed the landscape with a strong materialization of Egyptian imperial power and coercive force, this model was developed before recent excavations at Kerma, the capital of the contemporary Kingdom of Kush. Ongoing excavations led by Charles Bonnet since 1977 have revealed the existence of a strong centralized polity that would have posed a serious threat to Egyptian interests during the contemporary Middle Kerma Period (ca. 2050–1700 BCE; Bonnet 1990; Bonnet and Valbelle 2006). As I have argued elsewhere, evidence from the fortresses themselves suggests they had a multifaceted role (S. T. Smith 1995, 25–50), among which was securing Egypt’s southern frontier, both from the growing Kerma threat of raids and invasions, but also to keep in fugitives fleeing Egypt to escape the *corvée* or for political reasons (Williams 1999). A series of reports known as the Semna Dispatches

Table 2.1. Periodization of Lower and Upper Nubia

Date BC	Egypt (Dynasty)	Lower Nubia	Upper Nubia
2050–1680	Middle Kingdom (11–13)	Egyptian Colony	Middle Kerman Kushite State
1680–1550/1500	Second Intermediate Period (14–17)	Kerman/Kushite Empire	Classic Kerman Kushite State
1550/1500–1070	New Kingdom (18–20)	Egyptian Colony	Egyptian Colony
1070–747	Third Intermediate Period (21–24)	Early Napatan Polity?	Early Napatan Polity?
747–656	Nubian/Kushite Dynasty (25)	Napatan/Kushite Dynasty	Napatan Kushite Dynasty

documents the elaborate system of patrols that radiated out from the fortresses during the Thirteenth Dynasty (the later Middle Kingdom), including the minute attention to the movements of even small groups across the frontier (Kraemer and Liszka 2016).

These imperial outposts were also placed at strategic points to facilitate riverine traffic through the rapids formed by the cataracts, granite outcrops that cross the bed of the Nile and create natural strategic chokepoints. The southern frontier was established at the second cataract in a particularly tricky spot for navigation, and it included a slipway at Mirgissa to move boats and transship goods past the worst rapids (Vercoutter 1970). The fortresses were also sited to support resource extraction locally, with a particular emphasis on gold. There is direct evidence for gold mining and extraction at Askut (S. T. Smith 1995). Other fortresses supported mining and quarrying expeditions into the desert, including at Ikkur and Kuban at the entrance to the Wadi Allaqi gold fields (Emery and Kirwan 1935). These fortresses also facilitated the collection of other materials, such as semiprecious stones like amethyst and carnelian and hard stone for the construction of royal monuments (for the connection between empires and resource exploitation, see also Boozer and Williams, this volume).

The Kingdom of Kush continued to increase in complexity and power, coming to dominate Egypt in the Classic Kerma phase (ca. 1700–1500 BCE;

O'Connor 1993, 46–57; Edwards 2004, 94–99; Bonnet and Valbelle 2006). Kush took control of all of Nubia by about 1680 BCE and even launched raids deep into a fragmented Egyptian state (Davies 2003). Initially divided between a group of rival dynasts, the civil war in Egypt eventually coalesced around the northern Syro-Palestinian fifteenth and southern native Egyptian Theban seventeenth dynasties. The Kushite state came to an abrupt end with Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose I's conquest of Kerma in 1502 BCE (Bonnet 1990, 13), although the royal line and periodic Kushite resistance to Egyptian control seems to have lasted until the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (ca. 1460 BCE, O'Connor 1993, 60; Morkot 2001, 233–39; 2013).

The ancient Egyptians established a far-reaching and complex empire during the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 BCE). The territory was incorporated into the Egyptian administration through the office of the viceroy (literally, “king’s son”) of Kush. This hierarchical structure provides a point of contrast with the north, where there was no similar office. Texts particularly emphasize the viceroy’s importance in the collection and exploitation of gold mining, which may help explain the difference, gold being a critical resource for the Egyptian state (below and S. T. Smith 1995). An elaborate imperial bureaucracy initially included the heir of the king (*hq3*, literally, “ruler”) of Kush and groups of *wrw* (literally, “great ones” or “princes”), three from Wawat (Lower Nubia) and five from Kush (Upper Nubia) during the reign of Tutankhamen.

The King of Kush eventually rebelled, and the office was eliminated around 1450 BCE, but the more localized princes proved more durable. So long as they remained loyal to Egyptian interests, they would have reaped the benefits of membership in Egypt’s elite. The fact that they consciously emphasized those ties in their tombs in Nubia suggests that this was a very successful strategy, even on a local level (S. T. Smith 2015). Most of the old Middle Kingdom fortresses were refortified, and a series of Egyptian rulers sponsored the construction of massive new temples in the Nubian colony, including the famous rock-cut complex of Ramses II at Abu Simbel (Figure 2.3, ca. 1250 BCE; Edwards 2004, 101–7).

Farther south in newly occupied Upper Nubia, the Egyptians established colonial settlements with large cemeteries at Amara and later Amara West (later seat of the southern deputy of the viceroy), Sai Island (an important former Kushite center and earlier seat of the deputy), Soleb, Sedeinga, Sesebi, and Tombos (see Figure 2.1, page 22). Enclosing an area over four hectares, a recently discovered fortification system places Tombos as the southernmost and one of the largest, if

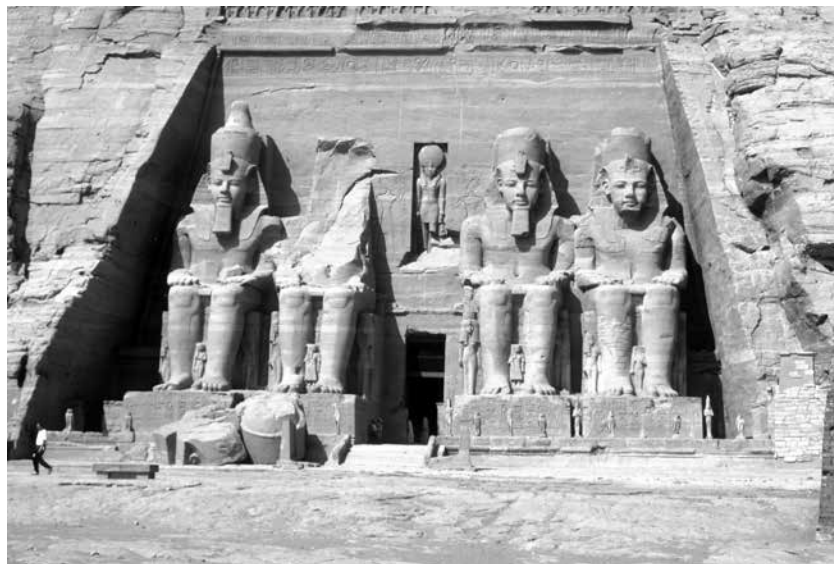


Figure 2.3. The temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel in Lower Nubia.
Photo by Stuart Tyson Smith.

not the largest, of the fortified temple-towns established in Upper Nubia after the New Kingdom conquest. Documents like the endowment stela of Seti I at Nauri show that in the early Ramesside Period (ca. 1300 BCE), and probably before, the reach between the second and third cataracts was thoroughly incorporated into the Egyptian state economic system (Morkot 2013). The Egyptian New Kingdom empire in Nubia thus provides another, earlier example of an imperial state crossing the so-called Augustan threshold, discussed for the Assyrians by Düring in this volume.

Initially aimed at resecuring Egypt's southern frontier and eliminating a powerful rival in the kingdom of Kush, Egyptian imperial policy increasingly turned to resource extraction employing a staple and wealth finance system (D'Altroy and Earle 1985; S. T. Smith 1995). The recolonization of Lower Nubia involved the creation of temple-centered institutions that as in Egypt would have played a central role in the collection of taxes and incomes on royal lands in the form of staple goods that would have helped to underwrite the extraction of wealth goods, especially gold, by providing a local source of food to supply the colony and support its extractive activities. Self-sufficient colonial settlements

would in this way mitigate a significant part of the costs of resource exploitation (see also Boozer, Alconini, Düring, Yao, and Williams, this volume).

For example, intensification and control over local staple surpluses would feed the laborers that extracted the resources while providing bases for trading expeditions that would at this time have relied on a combination of boats in riverine settings and donkeys in surprisingly far-reaching desert expeditions (Cooper 2012; S. T. Smith 2018). Staple finance would also have provided surpluses that supported the officials who managed the empire, especially those with titles connected to the extraction and collection of gold who were very active in Nubia (Vercoutter 1959; cf. D'Altroy and Earle 1985). They were based both at the colonial capital, situated in the renovated Middle Kingdom fortress colony of Miam (Aniba), and at other sites such as Tombos, where the owner of the largest tomb at the site held the title Scribe-Reckoner of the Gold of Kush. Gold also appears as a prominent theme in the artwork and texts from the tomb of Amenhotep Huy, viceroy under Tutankhamen (Davies, Cummings, and Gardiner 1926). In particular, the scenes of his investiture and the texts accompanying them show that the viceroy's reach extended to the administration of southern Egypt's gold resources, extending his authority as far north as Edfu in Egypt (S. T. Smith 1995, 178–84).

The new, renovated, and for the most part self-sustaining colonial infrastructure would also provide a base for collecting semiprecious stones and access to trade routes used to acquire exotica from the savannahs that lay to the south, including ivory, ebony, incense, and other valuables. Imported pottery attests to flows of commodities coming from Egypt, especially wine. Even before the conquest, Egyptian transport vessels appear increasingly over time at Kerma (Lacovara 1987). Kushite influence and/or imports can also be seen in leatherwork associated with the Egyptian military. Kerma fine wares, in particular their distinctive polished blacktopped tulip-shaped cups, also appear in Egypt throughout the Second Intermediate Period, pointing toward mutual flows of products (Bourriau 1981). Even after the Egyptian conquest, long-distance exchange was not focused solely on the extraction of raw materials in exchange for finished products. The presence of ebony stools in Huy's presentation scene (Figure 2.4, upper right) point toward the presence of artisanal communities who not only helped support a local elite lifestyle, but also supplied finished goods to Egypt.

Large amounts of wealth extracted from Nubia in the form of gold, other exotica, and high-value subsistence goods such as cattle were central to Egypt's

New Kingdom political economy. Cattle are situated between D'Altroy and Earle's (1985) categories of staple and wealth goods. On the one hand, they were raised locally and served to support the colonial infrastructure in line with staple finance, but on the other, they were easy to transport and valuable enough to be exported to Egypt in large numbers as wealth goods. At home, wealth finance supported royal display and the creation and maintenance of patronage relationships. Abroad, wealth goods were a key component of the international system of gift exchange that also had important diplomatic implications and gave Egypt access to exotica from the north. This was especially the case with silver, which could be exchanged equally for gold with both sides profiting, but also valuable stones like lapis lazuli and high-value staples like olive oil and wine.

However, Barry Kemp has argued against an economic motivation for this imperial consolidation, asserting that cultural assimilation and royal ideology, not economic gain, was in fact the main purpose of imperial expansion during the New Kingdom. He cites the Egyptian ideological royal imperative to "extend the existing" that sought to expand Egypt's cultural reach through imperial conquest and assimilative acculturation (Kemp 1978, 1997). As I have pointed out (S. T. Smith 1997), as have Liverani (1990) and Loprieno (1988), it is important not to confuse ideological topos with actual policy. The trope of "extending the existing" may have provided some ideological impetus for military campaigns and *razzia*, but it quickly devolved into a hyperbolic convention of naming places, such as the Aegean, that Egyptian armies never reached and were clearly not ever under Egyptian control. 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). These statements represent Said's "discourses of exceptionalism" discussed by Lisa Overholtzer in the introduction to chapter 7 in this volume, emphasizing the creation of order from chaos through conquest and the subduing of foreign enemies. The everyday actions of the bureaucracy and more prosaic texts reflect a very different and more realistic view of foreigners that belies the ideology of Pharaoh's universal authority (Loprieno 1988; Liverani 2001a).

Events like the New Kingdom presentation of Inu reflect this dynamic. The term is often translated as "tribute" but was in reality a more complex concept implying a degree of reciprocity that applied to both Egyptians and foreigners, both those within and outside of the empire (Bleiberg 1996; Spalinger 1996; S. T. Smith 2017). The annual presentation ceremony reinforced the topos of

the king as universal monarch for a mainly internal audience, creating a false impression of Egyptian dominance over regions far outside Egyptian control (Liverani 2001a). The fact that the Lower Nubian princes, who depicted themselves as Egyptian officials in their own tombs, are shown in Nubian regalia in depictions of the event from officials' tombs at Thebes also contradicts the notion of the ideological value of assimilation (Figure 2.4). Darnell and Manassa (2002), Török (2009), and Van Pelt (2013) have argued that this apparent contradiction reflected a celebration of ethnic diversity within the empire. While this interpretation might be valid in some comparative cases, for example the Achaemenid Empire with its creation of an imperial identity that celebrated diversity as a vehicle to create a universal empire (Gates-Foster 2014), more often this kind of imagery represents the construction of a topos emphasizing an ordered inner ethnic self contrasted with a chaotic outer ethnic other (Loprieno 1988; Liverani 1990). It is this ideological trope that explains many similar depictions of the foreign other within imperial ideologies, both



Figure 2.4. Scene of the Inu ceremony from the tomb of Amenhotep Huy in Thebes. The Upper Nubian princes and their entourage are shown on the upper register, a group of Upper Nubian princes on the lower (cf. the Nubian depicted in Figure 2.2, after Davies 1926, plate XXVII, Copyright The Egypt Exploration Society).

ancient and modern (e.g., Liverani 1990 for Assyria and S. T. Smith 2017 comparing the Egyptian Inu ceremony with the British imperial Durbars).

The notion of a positive imperial celebration of ethnic difference is contradicted for Egypt by the theology of *ma'at* (order, right). The Nubian princes appear in the iconographic *topos* of Nubian, their ideological value as a foreign enemy of Egypt, a force of chaos (*isfet*) subordinated and tamed into order (*ma'at*) by Pharaoh (S. T. Smith 2015). Moreover, had the conversion of Nubians, especially the elite, to Egyptian norms been an imperative, we would expect them to appear at such events as Egyptian officials, as they do in their own tombs in Nubia, broadcasting the empire's success at "extending the existing" at an important, ideologically charged ceremony. Instead, they represent a fictional performance of the king's creation of order out of chaos that bore little resemblance to the realities of colonial society.

In the same way, the king of Babylon's gift of chariots was presented to the Egyptian king along with the gifts of his Levantine vassals, in spite of the fact that Babylon was Egypt's geopolitical equal. When Kadashman Inlil's emissary reported this slight to him, the Babylonian king sent a curtly worded complaint to Pharaoh (Liverani 2001a). In his response, Amenhotep III quotes from the Babylonian king's letter and tries to deflect the king's outrage over the breach in protocol with an assurance that the chariots had indeed been received, while adding an implied counter complaint about the necessity of supplying the horses himself (Rainey 2014, 65):

(88–95) As you spoke, saying, "He placed my chariots among the chariots of the city rulers, you did not review them separately! You humiliated them before the throng which is thus and (?) you did not rev[ie]w them separately." Verily the chariots are here; verily the horses of my country are here! All the chariot horses had to be supplied!

The reconstruction of an overarching strategy like Egyptianization has the problematic effect of homogenizing the empire in Nubia by proposing a top-down program of assimilation covering the entire colony. The reality on the ground was, however, far more complex and resulted in the kind of mosaic of control driven by administrative efficiencies and adaptation to local conditions seen in other imperial contexts where economic or geopolitical concerns were at the forefront (Schreiber 1992; S. T. Smith 1995; cf. Alcock 1989; Parker 2006 and Parker, this volume). Assimilation was one among several strategies that

adapted to different local contexts in Nubia and evolved over the five-hundred-year course of the Egyptian empire.

Securing Egypt's borders and neutralizing a powerful enemy in Kush provided a powerful motive for the initial expansion. Lower Nubia, with its long history of colonization, was quickly brought into Egypt's cultural, political, economic, and religious sphere, but south of the second cataract in Upper Nubia, there are indications that more ephemeral garrisons were established at sites like the former Kushite center at Sesebi and Sai Island (Spence et al. 2009; Rose 2017). As noted above, the Kingdom of Kush was allowed to continue to exist with the status of a vassal in a pattern of indirect control reminiscent of Egypt's imperial strategy in the Levant, where the local infrastructure of city-states led by *wrw* (princes, or local leaders) was co-opted in order to meet imperial needs.

After a series of rebellions, this approach was abandoned, and the king of Kush was removed and replaced by a colonial bureaucracy similar to the system already in place in Lower Nubia, where *wrw* were supervised by a deputy to the viceroy. A new program of infrastructure building resulted in the creation of a system of territorial control between the second and third cataract through a series of permanent colonies with Egyptian settlers. Some of these imperial establishments were placed at preexisting population centers, Sai Island in particular, but in the case of other sites such as Amara, Sedeinga, Soleb, Sesebi, and Tombos, the logic of their location is not so clear.

Adams (1977) argued that they were not viable and must have been short lived, but this is contradicted by new excavations and reassessments of archaeology that show that the temple-towns were all occupied for extended periods of time. In some cases, occupation continued long after the end of the New Kingdom, as at Amara West and Tombos. The extraction of resources, especially gold, may have been a critical reason for the position of some colonies, in particular Sesebi, which has ample evidence of groundstone of a type used to process gold ores, as well as evidence of ancient mining nearby (Spence et al. 2009). Located at the headwaters of the third cataract and the end of the fertile Kerma basin, Tombos may have been sited at a key geopolitical frontier (Morkot 2013), an internal imperial boundary positioned for monitoring the remains of the Kushite kingdom and marshaling gold and other resources for the annual presentation of Inu, effectively tribute (for this ceremony, see S. T. Smith 2017).

In contrast, there is comparatively little archaeological or textual evidence for direct control above the third cataract, in spite of boundary inscriptions

by Thutmose I (ca. 1502 BCE), renewed under Thutmose III (ca. 1450 BCE) and Ramses II (ca. 1235 BCE), far upstream at Kurgus that threaten dire consequences for any violation of Egypt's new southern border (Morkot 2001; Davies 2003; S. T. Smith 2003a, 86–96; Welsby and Sjöström 2007). The Egyptians invested heavily just upstream of the third cataract, building large stone temples at Pnubs (Dokki Gel), just north of the ruins of the old Kushite capital at Kerma, Tabo, located nearby on Argo Island, and farther south at Kawa and Gebel Barkal (MacAdam 1949; Dunham 1970; Jacquet-Gordon 1999; Bonnet and Valbelle 2006, 27–33). Surveys from the third to fourth cataracts, however, have failed to identify any evidence for a substantial Egyptian presence or Egyptianization upstream of the third cataract during the colonial period (Grzymski 1987; Welsby 2001, 589–91; S. T. Smith 2003a, 87–94; Zurawski 2003, 524–25; Welsby and Sjöström 2007).

At the same time, the Egyptian monuments at Pnubs were accompanied by a round, Nubian-style temple, along with other architectural features, including royal tombs (Bonnet 2000, 144–56; Bonnet and Valbelle 2006) that suggest a lack of direct colonization. This evidence supports Morkot's (1987; 2001, 238) argument that the area between the third and fourth cataracts was "left in the direct control of indigenous rulers who received military support for their regimes along with economic and other benefits." He goes on to suggest that the region was not incorporated into the temple-town economy that prevailed through the third cataract and was controlled through a more indirect imperial system akin to the contemporary Egyptian strategy toward the Levant. In Liverani's (1988) terms (discussed in detail by Parker in this volume), this could be characterized as a thickened colonial network running from the first to third cataracts that was firmly embedded in and transformed the cultural landscape, but with thinner links connecting colonial administrative/military nodes upstream and across desert routes that linked the colony to resource rich areas like the Wadi Allaqi and trading partners perhaps as far west as the Ennedi Mountains.

The Afterlife of Empire

Originally, scholars posited that the New Kingdom Empire collapsed completely, ushering in a kind of "dark age" with the Egyptian colonies recalled to Egypt and local society breaking down into a series of small-scale chiefdoms and reverting to Nubian cultural practices. Later Egyptian interventions

brought “civilization” back to Nubia with a second round of Egyptianization that led to the emergence of the Nubian Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (Dixon 1964). However, historical evidence from the end of the New Kingdom contradicts this model, indicating that the last viceroy, Panehesy, split the colony away from Egypt, resisting any attempt at re-conquest. Recent archaeological evidence and reevaluations of older excavations support continuity at colonial centers like Tombos and Amara West (e.g., Williams 1990; S. T. Smith 2013; Spencer 2014). Instead of a dark age, a successor state of some kind is more likely, one that led to the emergence of the Nubian Dynasty and their assumption of the Egyptian throne in 747 BCE. The model of a dark-age gap is giving way to a more complex picture of the emergence of a new polity to some extent taking advantage of the previous imperial infrastructure through a program of renewal at former colonial centers.

MICROHISTORY: EGYPTIANIZATION, ENTANGLEMENT, AND PERSISTENCE
AT TOMBOS, HILLAT EL-ARAB, AND LOWER NUBIA

Tombos lay far downstream of the official border. Instead, the New Kingdom colonial cemetery, settlement, and fortress lay upon an internal boundary marking the transition between territorial and hegemonic imperial zones, marked through a series of stelae immediately after the conquest by Thutmose I (ca. 1502 BCE) and later by Viceroys Inebni (Thutmose III, ca. 1450 BCE) and Merymose (Amenhotep III, ca. 1350 BCE; Morkot 2001; S. T. Smith 2003a; cf. Hassig 1988; D’Altroy 1992). Excavation at Tombos has established the existence of a substantial wealthy Egyptian colonial community that initially seemed to support the Egyptianization model discussed above (S. T. Smith and Buzon 2017).

Likely named Taroy, the southernmost fortress from which Merymose recruited soldiers for a military campaign, the settlement was enclosed by a massive dry moat fortification extending over 215 meters east-west and at least 230 meters north-south along the river. Strontium isotope analysis demonstrates that at least some individuals buried at Tombos had emigrated from Egypt, although most were born locally (Buzon, Smith, and Simonetti 2016). Funerary architecture (mud-brick pyramids, chapels, and chamber tombs), burial placement (supine with head to the west to receive the rejuvenating rays of the rising sun), and grave goods such as painted and inscribed mummiform coffins and specialized funerary objects including inscribed Ushabti figurines

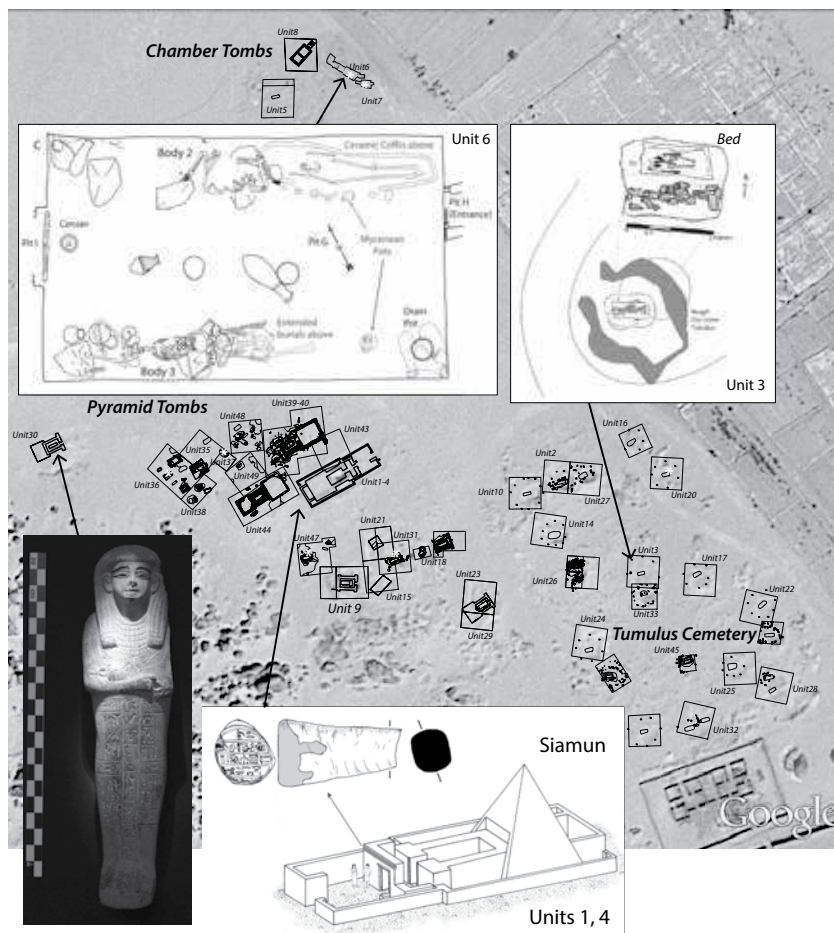


Figure 2.5. Tombos cemetery plan with the Ushabti of the scribe Tiy (white asterisks indicate flexed burials). Prepared by Stuart Tyson Smith.

and a variety of amulets, strongly reflect ancient Egyptian funerary beliefs and practices (Figure 2.5; S. T. Smith and Buzon 2014).

Nevertheless, at least six Nubian-style flexed burials, all of women, appear in Egyptian-style tombs alongside traditionally Egyptian style burials (see Figure 2.5). At least two of the women were placed upon a bed, another long-standing Nubian practice. All of the women were on their side facing north, and all but one of the women were positioned with head toward the east, in

contrast to the usual Egyptian orientation but consistent with Nubian practice (S. T. Smith and Buzon 2017). This burial practice continued into the Third Intermediate Period with three women buried in flexed position facing north, two on beds, two with the head to the east and one to the west. All of those tested have a local strontium isotope signature (Buzon, Smith, and Simonetti 2016).

Scarabs and pottery place the New Kingdom Nubian-style inhumations on a time scale ranging from the earliest use of the cemetery, either late in the reign of Thutmose III/Hatshepsut or early Amenhotep II (ca. 1480–1450 BCE), to the later New Kingdom around the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1350 BCE), long after the assumed disappearance of Nubian culture in the Egyptian colony but consistent with similar evidence from other sites. For example, flexed burials from the later New Kingdom appear along with Egyptian-style burials in tombs T37 and T38 at Soleb (Schiff, Robichon, and Leclant 1965, 305–21, figs. 603c and 616n), one of the colonial temple-towns established in the New Kingdom (O'Connor 1993, 60–62; Morkot 2001, 234–38). A radiocarbon date of 1121 plus or minus sixty years BCE taken from T37 initially would seem to point to a late Ramesside date (Schiff, Robichon, and Leclant 1965, 305), but when calibrated shifts to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty through the Nineteenth Dynasty (1454–1188 BCE, with a 96 percent probability at two standard deviations using the radiocarbon calibration program OxCal, Reimer et al. 2016), around the same time as the Nubian-style burials at Tombos.

A similar pattern of coexisting Egyptian and Nubian traditions also appears in Lower Nubia, arguably the most intensively assimilated part of the empire. Although like at Tombos and Soleb, the majority of burials reflect Egyptian practices, several burials in otherwise Egyptian-style tombs at Qustul, a rural cemetery, and at Serra East, one of the Middle Kingdom fortresses, contained Nubian-style flexed inhumations (Williams, Murnane, and Seele 1992; Williams, Hughes, and Knudstad 1993). The large colonial-era cemetery at Fadrus, like Qustul far from Egyptian colonial centers, predominantly reflects Egyptian burial practice, but a small number of burials there were also placed in Nubian-style flexed position (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991). All of the contracted burials that were sexed were male, but given that hardly any of the burials at Fadrus were sexed, the significance of this pattern is unclear. This cemetery reflects a strong Egyptianizing trend that extends beyond the Indigenous elite in a more rural setting than the major colonial centers, where high officials were buried with all of the elaborate grave goods and practices of Egyptian elites (S. T. Smith 1998, 2015). The flexed burials at Fadrus include examples from the latest phase of the cemetery, roughly

contemporary with the group of flexed burials at Tombos (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991; Török 2009).

It is possible that the complete suite of Nubian funerary traditions never completely disappeared in the north. Säve-Söderbergh (1989, 10) concluded that several cemeteries in the Scandinavian Joint Concession near the second cataract “show that Nubian cultural elements, especially burial customs, continued well in to the Eighteenth Dynasty, maybe in some cases even much later.” These cemeteries and the evidence from Tombos and elsewhere could represent a small number of nativist holdouts resisting imperial hegemony (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 13; S. T. Smith 1998). The strongly gendered pattern at Tombos represents the presence of women drawn from local groups, rather than immigrants from the north or the desert groups like the Medjay, since their strontium isotope signatures are all local. Had they spent a significant amount of time outside of the cataract’s distinctive geology as children while their permanent teeth were forming, they would appear as non-local. Citing similar evidence of mixed Nubian and Egyptian burial practice at Sanam, which runs from the later New Kingdom into the Third Intermediate/Napatan Period (Griffith 1923; Lohwasser 2010), Shinnie (1996, 103) goes farther, concluding that Nubian culture never completely disappeared during the Egyptian occupation, that “there had been a steady continuum of indigenous culture throughout the five hundred years of pharaonic rule stemming from the better known peoples of the Kerma and C-group cultures.”

A closer look at the material from the Scandinavian Joint Concession excavations supports Shinnie’s observations. Cemeteries 176, 218, and 229 had large amounts of Egyptian New Kingdom pottery, but contained tumulus tomb superstructures, the characteristic form of Nubian burial monument. The pottery from Site 176 in particular points to a later Ramesside date (Säve-Söderbergh 1989, plate 36). For example, a large rounded amphora with a funnel neck is of a type ranging in date from the reign of Ramses II through the Twentieth Dynasty (ca. 1290–1070 BCE; see Hope 1989, 94, fig. 2; cf. Aston 1998, 494–97, nos. 2487 and 2498). A large elongated bag-shaped jar finds parallels at Piramessa (modern Qantir) dating to the Ramesside Period (ca. 1293–1070 BCE; e.g., Aston 1998, 311, no. 999). A group of pilgrim flasks from the site also appears in the Ramesside assemblage, matching examples dating from the Twentieth to Twenty-First Dynasty (ca. 1185–945 BCE; Aston 1998, 549, nos. 2235–38).

Nubian funerary traditions were, however, not unaffected by interactions

during the Egyptian occupation. Cemetery 218, for example, contained no Nubian pottery, and although badly looted, it did include some indications of Egyptian influence, including the possible remnants of coffins (Säve-Söderbergh 1989, 222–23). Nubian-style flexed inhumations placed under tumuli attest to the survival of Nubian traditions in the fourth cataract region near Gebel Barkal/Napata, but they also had Egyptian pottery (Welsby 2003). The presence of amulets of Egyptian deities at Tombos reflects similar cultural entanglements. In particular, one of the Nubian-style burials still wore a group of amulets of the popular Egyptian dwarf god Bes (Figure 2.6), who protected the household from spiritual and physical harm. Apart from a few typically Nubian nerita shell beads, other jewelry and amulets associated with the two flexed burials of women in this tomb were Egyptian, including a plaque with the solar gods Khepri and Nefertum, manifestations of the god Re who symbolize the rebirth of the sun at dawn, a central theme in both Egyptian cosmology but also funerary beliefs (Wilkinson 2003).



Figure 2.6. Jewelry and amulets of the dwarf god Bes and a plaque amulet showing the gods Khepri and Nefertum from the flexed Nubian-style burials in Unit 6 at Tombos (see Figure 2.5). Photos by Stuart Tyson Smith.

On the domestic side, Nubian pottery appears regularly at all of the Egyptian colonial sites throughout the New Kingdom. Small amounts of Nubian pottery appear in both the cemetery and the poorly preserved settlement at Tombos, around 2 percent overall in the cemetery. One red-topped black-ware bowl was carefully placed next to two of the Nubian-style burials, demonstrating that Nubian ceramic traditions had not completely disappeared. The greatest frequency appears in the courtyard of the largest pyramid complex, including cooking pottery, which would have been used during the preparation of funerary feasts. This is consistent with the distribution of ceramics at the fortified settlement of Askut, one of the old refurbished Middle Kingdom fortresses located at the second cataract, the southern boundary of Lower Nubia and the limit of Egyptian control in the Middle Kingdom (Figures 2.1 and 2.7). Nubian pottery makes up a small percentage overall, only about 10 percent, but Nubian cooking pottery accounts for over 80 percent of its sub-semblage in the New Kingdom, rising steadily from about 40 percent in the Middle Kingdom to as much as 93 percent in the New Kingdom. Similar pottery appears in the other Lower Nubian forts (e.g., Shalfak and Dunham 1967, plate LXIV, F; Semna, Dunham, and Janssen 1960, plates 113, 11, 12, 15; Emery, Smith, and Millard 1979, 185–88, figs. 5, 7, 33, 36, 47, plate 78; Bestock and Knoblauch 2014, fig. 2), as well as Upper Nubian temple-towns like Sesebi (Rose 2017) and Amara West (Spencer 2014). If we suppose that women did most of the cooking in Egyptian colonial contexts, then Nubian women influenced colonial culinary practices by maintaining and extending elements of their own ethnic cuisine.

Women are often neglected in studies of empires, but they commonly enter into colonial communities, crossing cultural boundaries (e.g., Deagan 1996; Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998). The disproportionate representation of Nubian cooking pottery at Askut and Amara resonates with the gendered patterning in funerary practice at Tombos, suggesting that Nubian women played a central role in negotiating intercultural interaction in both the funerary and domestic sphere. Barbara Voss (2008) rightly cautions that this kind of argument for a gendered Indigenous influence connected with colonial households and cuisine should not be assumed or universalized; gendered and sexual relationships in colonial contexts are complex and variable. However, there are good reasons to think that such a pattern would be consistent with Egyptian colonial societies on the Nubian frontier. Egyptian historical sources indicated that women's social roles were tied to the household. For example, the Maxims of Ptahhotep state, "Do not control your wife in her house, when you know she

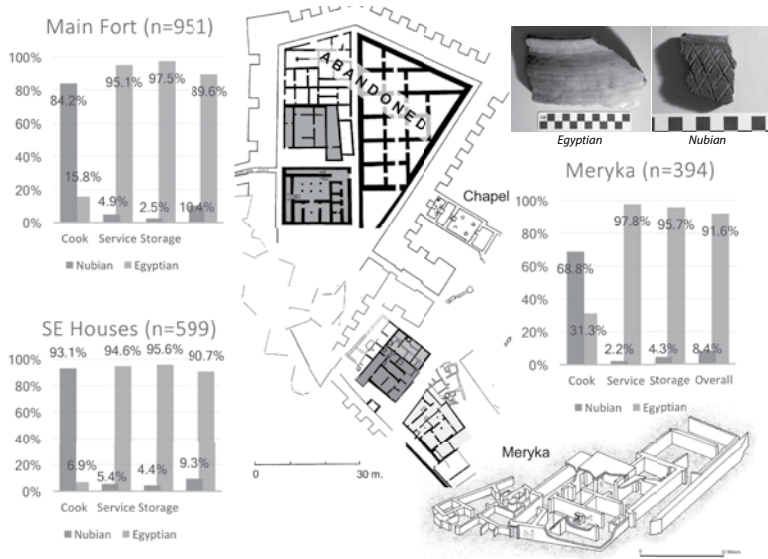


Figure 2.7. Proportion of Nubian pottery from different areas at Askut in Lower Nubia. Prepared by Stuart Tyson Smith.

is efficient. . . . Let your eye observe in silence, then you should recognize her skill” (Lichtheim 1973, 143). Framed as advice from an official to his son, this text was a popular classic during the New Kingdom, given to scribal students as both a writing and moral exercise. This gendered role is explicitly signaled at Tombos through the use of title Mistress of the House for elite women in the cemetery. These and other points of evidence demonstrate the emphasis that Egyptians placed on the gendered construction of household responsibilities, which would include foodways (Robins 1993).

There are hints at internal variability at Askut that may reflect the complex nature of gendered relationships within the former colonial communities in Lower Nubia. For example, the association of sherds from peripheral trash disposal with different domestic complexes suggests that Nubian cuisine was strongest in houses in the older main fortified enclosure and outer group of houses. The variability in proportions of Nubian pottery between households could be the result of the different histories and relationships of their inhabitants but may also correspond to their ties to the larger political structure.

In particular, the household of the descendants of Meryka (an ancestor

from the Second Intermediate Period), stands out from the pattern prevailing throughout the fortress. The cooking assemblage, although heavily Nubian, retained a larger Egyptian component, and Nubian serving vessels almost disappeared. This residence was the largest at Askut and had a number of architectural features that mark it as an elite residence, including the overall layout, with its expansive floorplan arranged around a central columned room, fragments of a grilled window indicating the presence of a clerestory, a formal household shrine dedicated to Meryka, and a section of taurus molding indicating a stone-framed entry. The greater emphasis on Egyptian ceramics used in the preparation and consumption of food by the most prominent family at Askut might therefore correspond to Goody's (1982, 51–52) notion that the elements of culinary practices can be impacted by larger political contingencies. If men were more engaged with the external political situation, as is likely given the overwhelming role of men in the Egyptian bureaucracy in both Egypt and Nubia, then this pattern could reflect a male strategy expressed through a greater emphasis on Egyptian foodways in the context of the colonial bureaucracy.

Voss also points out that relationships between men and women in an interethnic frontier setting vary, including concubinage and domestic labor as well as marriage. Unlike the Spanish colonies, however, there was no bar to interethnic marriage from an Egyptian perspective, and there is no evidence for the kind of racial prejudice seen in modern times (S. T. Smith 2003a, 24). Bioarchaeological analysis at Tombos does strongly suggest that whatever their formal status, Nubians and Egyptians engaged in intimate relations, producing mixed offspring (Buzon, Smith, and Simonetti 2016). Military expansion and imperialism are also often accompanied by sexual violence, but in our case, there is very little evidence of interpersonal violence of any kind. This pattern contrasts with a relatively high incidence of such trauma at Kerma sites, suggesting that the empire may in fact have brought with it advantages, at least for those who collaborated (Buzon and Richman 2007).

One of the women who was buried in Nubian style was disturbed by thieves targeting a necklace not long after her burial. This act of desecration could be taken as a sign of disrespect, but tomb robbery, even by burial parties, was an all too common phenomenon in Egypt itself. Given the social sanctions against the practice, the robbery instead points to the presence of a valuable piece of jewelry that was worth the risk of detection and punishment (S. T. Smith 2010, 180–38). Similarly, another very old woman buried in Nubian style was paralyzed in her lower limbs. The atrophied bones show that she had been well

cared for over a period of many years. In contrast to the polarizing ideology of civilized Egyptian self and barbaric Nubian other, these examples point toward a social environment of mutual respect and a degree of tolerance of cultural choices that would allow for the kind of cross-cultural interaction that ultimately transformed colonial society. Drawing on Deagan's (1996) earlier work, Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff (1998) argue similarly that Native women in California's Russian colony at Fort Ross used cuisine and the organization of domestic space to assert a California Native identity within a pluralistic society akin to that prevailing at Askut and Tombos. More generally, McKee (1999, 235) notes that foodways and burial practice allowed slaves on southern plantations to maintain a separate ethnic identity, and cuisine continues to play a key role in African American ethnicity. The gendered dynamic at Askut, Tombos, and potentially other New Kingdom sites suggests that women played a key and previously unexpected role in Egyptian-Nubian intercultural interactions (S. T. Smith 2003a).

Hillat el-Arab

Evidence of mixed burial practices at Hillat el-Arab extends our picture of cultural entanglement during the New Kingdom Empire and beyond. The cemetery lies in the zone of indirect imperial control adjacent to Napata, which became the capital of the dynasty whose rulers eventually became pharaohs of Egypt's Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (Vincentelli 2006). The site is not far from the royal necropolis at el-Kurru, which probably began after the end of the New Kingdom but also includes mixed burial practices (Geus 1991). It was likely the seat of one of the princes and lies opposite the large settlement and cemetery at Sanam, which as noted above like Hillat el-Arab, ranges in date from the late New Kingdom to the Napatan Period. All that remains at Hillat el-Arab are substructures cut into the sandstone bedrock. The tombs that date to the New Kingdom clearly take their inspiration from contemporary Egyptian architecture with shafts leading to multiroom burial complexes containing multiple inhumations (Vincentelli 2006). In contrast, single inhumations characterize Nubian burial practice (Geus 1991). Painted decoration in the first tomb, however, is very un-Egyptian and most closely resembles Nubian rock art, including a striking set of boats and a number of cattle with parallels at places like the extensive rock-art site of Sabu at the third cataract (Vincentelli 2006, color plates I and II).

The evidence for funerary ritual at Hillat el-Arab reveals a number of departures from the Egyptian practices seen at contemporary colonial sites north of the third cataract (Vincentelli 2006, 169–70). Although the individuals are placed extended on their backs, their orientation is variable compared to the standard Egyptian position with head toward the west. Traces of beds were found underneath burials in the inner rooms, which Vincentelli attributes to the local prince. As noted above, bed burials are a long-standing practice within the Kerma culture and reappear in the Kushite royal burials at el-Kurru (Geus 1991). There is also a lack of specialized funerary objects such as heart scarabs and Ushabtis that one might otherwise expect in an elite tomb. I have argued against the idea that the absence of these items is an indication of a lack of real cultural assimilation in non-elite Lower Nubian cemeteries such as Fadrus (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 9, 248; cf. S. T. Smith 2003a, 155–58; 2015). However, the lack of these items in the tombs discussed here is telling, since these kinds of objects are strongly correlated with elite social status (S. T. Smith 1992). Even more revealing is the absence of coffins, a ubiquitous practice in New Kingdom Egypt from the highest elite, who often had multiple coffins, through the middle and even lower classes, although the poorest people might be buried without them (S. T. Smith 1992, 197–98). Thus, as a suite of material, the absence of heart scarabs, ushabtis, and coffins in an elite tomb is certainly striking and each absence from one category reinforces the significance of absences in other categories.

Another departure from Egyptian practice is the importance of pottery indicating a continuing prominence of provisions as grave goods, a practice that was extremely common in the Kerma culture prior to the conquest in Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty but was in decline by the Ramesside Period and largely disappeared by the Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1070–656 BCE; S. T. Smith 1992, 220; Aston 2009). In contrast, pottery offerings actually *increase* during the same period at Hillat el-Arab. Vincentelli concludes that “the community took its models from the Egyptian world, which was well established in the north of the country, but imitation was never complete or perfect” (2006, 169). I would add that the Nubians of Hillat el-Arab not only imitated, but also actively transformed Egyptian funerary practices into a Nubian cultural context, blending elements of both cultures into a new hybrid coming out of the colonial experience that transcended the binary categories of Egyptian and Nubian so heavily emphasized in Egyptian ideology.

The revival of Nubian-style tumuli in a separate cemetery at Tombos starting



Figure 2.8. A tumulus superstructure at Tombos; Egyptian amulets and Nubian jewelry from the burial of a woman in another tumulus. Prepared by Stuart Tyson Smith.

in the Ramesside Period and continuing into the Third Intermediate Period represents a break from the apparently exclusive use of Egyptian superstructures during the earlier New Kingdom (Figure 2.8, and see Figure 2.5). Tumuli also appear during the same period at Amara West, but alongside mud-brick pyramid tombs instead of in a segregated cemetery as at Tombos (Binder et al. 2011; Spencer 2014). At Tombos, a circular mound made of rough granite stones and boulders consistently tops burial shafts, which with one exception lead down to a northern side chamber sealed with mud bricks, an architectural style adapted from earlier Egyptian tombs in the cemetery.

The tumuli at Amara West also had Egyptian-style substructures leading from rectangular east-west oriented shafts, but unlike Tombos, they lead to chambers to the east and west used for multiple inhumations, similar to New Kingdom pyramid and chapel tombs at Tombos and other colonial sites like Soleb and Sai. Apart from one flexed burial of a woman dating to the early Third Intermediate Period, the bodies buried under tumuli at Tombos were in Egyptian extended position, head to the west to face the rising sun (S. T. Smith and Buzon 2014). The New Kingdom burials at Amara West are more typically

Egyptian in spite of their Nubian superstructures—supine and likely mummified and coffined—although flexed burials do appear in the aftermath of the New Kingdom Empire (Binder et al. 2011).

The preservation of organic materials at Tombos is generally poor, but the fact that many of the burials had their legs tight together suggests the kind of binding consistent with simple mummification, a reconstruction supported by the presence of occasional fragments of linen. Decayed wood and rare scraps of paint indicate the provision of both Egyptian-style coffins and Nubian-style beds, sometimes appearing together with a coffined burial on top of a bed. This placement and orientation contrasts with the earlier Nubian-style flexed burials at Tombos, but this mixed practice of extended bed burial is attested in an early Third Intermediate Period cemetery at Sai and may have been widespread (Geus 1997). Several of the burials at Tombos also contained amulets of Egyptian deities, including Bes, Isis, Pataikos, Hathor, and the Eye of Horus (Figure 2.8).

The construction of Egyptian-style tombs and Egyptian burial practice continued in the older part of the cemetery long after the end of the empire into the period of the Nubian Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, which controlled both Egypt and Nubia. Like the tumulus cemetery, these tombs reflect mixtures of Egyptian and Nubian burial practices and material culture, including the reuse of older tombs as well as the construction of new pyramid and other mud-brick tombs. Burials included both flexed (still all female) and extended burials and indications of both coffined and bed burials. At least at Tombos, only women were buried in the traditional flexed position, although most women, whether of Nubian or Egyptian ancestry, were placed in Egyptian supine position, head to the west to face the rising sun. Other Nubian features, such as bed burial, appear with both men and women, so the intersection of ethnicity and gender was complex and nuanced.

The nearly intact tomb of a soldier highlights this dynamic of cultural entanglement coming from the colonial experience (S. T. Smith 2007). He was placed in an Egyptian-style mud-brick vaulted chamber tomb, supine and coffined with evidence of mummification, but upon a bed in long-standing Nubian fashion. One of the pots from the tomb was decorated in the old polished blacktopped redware style, even retaining the purplish white scum line characteristic of the latest Kerma phase, but was thrown on a wheel in a new vessel form, reflecting the integration of Nubian decoration with Egyptian technology adapted to a new shape.

Jewelry also reflects the integration of different cultural forms, with Egyptian

amulets combined with biconical quartz and black hematite beads evocative of Kushite traditions. The weaponry from the tomb included iron spear and harpoon points, reflecting the latest technology, but combined with microlith-tipped arrows, a local tradition that extends back into the Neolithic. Finally, three copper alloy bowls and a wooden cosmetic box were elaborately decorated with motifs tied to the Iron Age International Style (Feldman 2014), signaling the tomb owner's cosmopolitan ties, but the prevalence of cow imagery may reflect a kind of Nubian sensibility, given the long-standing importance of cattle in Nubia (Frankfort 1948; Emberling 2014a). The box is most likely a local product that adapts Egyptian themes in innovative combinations. A small perfume or oil vessel found within was decorated with figures of the Egyptian god Bes (Figure 2.9). Bes was particularly popular at Tombos and more broadly in Nubia from early in the New Kingdom (see Figure 2.6 and above). The selection of this vessel, and perhaps its creation if it was made in Nubia, reflects the integration and elaboration of this Egyptian deity into a local context.



Figure 2.9. Bes vase and frog lid from a cosmetic box found in the Unit 9 soldier's tomb at Tombos. Photo by Stuart Tyson Smith.

CONCLUSION: AGENCY AND IMPERIAL DICTATE

While archaeological and textual sources at the macro scale have been used to infer the complete assimilation of Nubians and disappearance of Nubian culture under Egyptian colonial rule (1500–1070 BCE), archaeological evidence at the local scale suggests the persistence of some practices, even in colonial settings, with a cultural hybrid blending Egyptian and Nubian elements eventually emerging in archaeological evidence. We can reach a more nuanced understanding of colonial encounters and their outcomes by recognizing that individuals fundamentally have choices, including in situations where social and political constraints may limit their options. As Boozer, Düring, and Yao discuss in their chapters, the decisions of imperial agents and local people drive imperial outcomes. Even in the context of the dramatic shift toward Egyptianization that characterizes the New Kingdom Empire, the material record reflects a complex and often subtle mix of cultural influences negotiated by Nubian and Egyptian women and men, transculturation rather than a wholesale assimilation by a hegemonic power, or even strict native maintenance and revival as a means of resisting conquest.

Colonial outcomes in Nubia varied by region and period but also within communities, with Nubian women marrying into Egyptianized communities, members of the Egyptianized communities selectively incorporating some Nubian elements in their burials, and Nubian cemeteries in which Egyptian artifacts and/or practices are used in both canonical and non-canonical ways. Over time, these uses included, first, juxtaposition in an earlier colonial context, with Nubian-style burials in otherwise Egyptian cemeteries, at Tombos in a highly gendered pattern; second, at the same time, Egyptian elements taken up in local cemeteries like Fadrus, resulting in the broadly Egyptianizing pattern in Lower Nubia but with some continuation of Nubian traditions along the lines of the juxtaposition at Tombos; and, third, Nubian elements adopted and adapted in Egyptian colonial cemeteries in a diachronic pattern, appearing at Hillat el-Arab outside of the main zone of territorial incorporation and starting later in the empire during the Ramesside Period at colonies like Tombos and Amara West. At the same time, the religious and domestic spheres were subject to interpenetrating influence. The appearance and relative abundance of Nubian cooking pottery at Askut and other colonial contexts reinforces the gendered pattern seen in the cemetery at Tombos. The construction of massive Egyptian-style temples in Nubia from the first to fourth cataracts created an

Egyptianizing sacred landscape in the conquered territory, but Nubian influence on Egyptian theology is reflected by the incorporation of ram imagery for Amun, rock-cut shrines like Abu Simbel, and a new origin myth for Amun centered on the sacred mountain of Gebel Barkal, the capital of the Nubian kings who later became pharaohs of Egypt's Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (Török 2009).

Entanglement, Hybridity, and the Afterlife of Empire

At the individual level, Egyptians and Nubians transformed and were transformed by the colonial encounter. This is not to say, however, that the participants were entirely unaware of the origins of those cultural threads that when combined created new, polyvalent identities. In using the term *hybrid* to characterize some situations, I do not mean a phenomenon analogous to the biological concept, a model that has rightly been criticized as too reductionist (Dietler 2010; Liebmann 2015; Silliman 2015). In Nubia, this cultural interweaving was highly diverse, allowing individuals to generate new, polyvalent identities within pluralistic societies (cf. Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998). Innovative cultural constellations appear in diverse entanglements that in some cases resonated with Egyptian and in others with Nubian origins. There was no single hybrid pattern; instead, the result was highly variable, depending on the region, the specific site, and even personal decisions made by women and men living at those sites.

As Silliman (2009) points out for the more recent North American colonial encounter, it is also important to recognize that to at least some extent, the combinations of different cultural threads were at some point internalized, ceasing to be marked as Egyptian or Nubian by their practitioners—in Bourdieu's terms becoming part of their habitus. In some contexts, the widespread if variable adoption of Egyptian practices and material culture, both quotidian and religious/funerary, should be acknowledged as an Egyptianizing trend covering different social spheres, if not the kind of comprehensive Egyptianization discussed above. This is not to say, however, that Egyptian colonists, Nubians, and their descendants were unaware of the intersection of cultural identity, the memory of countervailing Egyptian and Nubian pasts, and the larger geopolitical picture that provided the context for interaction (S. T. Smith and Buzon 2014). The Nubian-Egyptian hybrid that emerged during the empire occupies Bhabha's (1994) liminal space between colonizer and colonized, creating ambivalence for the colonial venture, confronting the imperial ideological

structures of Egyptian self and foreign, Nubian other. This colonial hybrid was not, however, a simple blending of cultures, but rather an innovative interweaving of cultural features resulting from “the complex webs of economic, political, social, and cultural linkages that can result, often inadvertently, from the consumption of alien material culture” (Dietler 2010, 53).

The cultural ambivalence that this hybridity produced paved the way for the Nubian cultural and political revival in the aftermath of the Egyptian Empire that produced a powerful second Kingdom of Kush, whose rulers became pharaohs of Egypt’s Twenty-Fifth Dynasty in 747 BCE. As Bhabha (1994, 110–11) points out, hybridity’s creation of ambivalence can be seen as a strategic act of resistance within the deferential relations of colonial power (cf. Boyarin 2005). Liebmann (2015) argues that the ambivalence of hybrid forms can also serve the needs of the colonizer. For the New Kingdom Empire, the incorporation of new theological and iconographic elements drawn from Nubia, such as the adoption into Egypt of the ram manifestation and other Kushite features surrounding the cult of Amun (Török 2009), could have played a role in the integration of the colony into the Egyptian world (see also Boozer, this volume), but with the unintended consequence of assisting in the upending of the self and other dichotomy reflected in the topos of Egyptian order (*ma’at*) and Nubian as chaotic foreign other (*isfet*). In this way, the ambiguities created through the colonial experience could have contributed to the emergence of the Kushite Dynasty as both distinctively Nubian and the legitimate successors of pharaonic kingship in spite of their foreign origin and mixed cultural practices. These interactions played out partly as a result of imperial policy at the macro scale during the New Kingdom and royal dictate in the Nubian polity that succeeded it, but also though a microhistorical accumulation of individual choices that ultimately created a new and diverse Kushite society in Nubia.

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