

CHAPTER THREE

THE BEGINNINGS: A-GROUP LOWER NUBIA AND THE EMERGING EGYPTIAN STATE (C. 3700–2800 BC)

Is it Nubians? Then we will protect
ourselves. There are plenty of fighters
to repel the Bowmen.¹

1. *Before Political Frontiers*

The history of the Lower Nubian frontier zone starts in an age in the larger part of which the notion of political frontier does not make sense.² What we may discern in the archaeological record of the Neolithic of the Middle Nile Region³ are cultural entities (i.e., socio-economic, technological, and ideological complexes) confined within a certain geographical range. We also may discern contacts or transitions between such entities and influences exerted by one cultural entity on another one.

¹ *Admonitions of Ipuwer* 14.13, Lichtheim 1973: 161.

² In this chapter, I repeat calibrated radiocarbon dates provided in the recent literature: cf. the chapters on Nubian prehistory in Welsby and Anderson (eds) 2004. On dates in Egyptian prehistory, see S. Hendrickx: *Analytical Bibliography of the Prehistory and the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt and Northern Sudan*. Leuven 1995; Hendrickx 1996; Wilkinson 1999; Wilkinson 2000; Shaw (ed.) 2000; S. Hendrickx: Predynastic-Early Dynastic Chronology. in: Hornung, Krauss, Warburton (eds) 2006: 55–93; cf. S.W. Manning: Radiocarbon Dating and Egyptian Chronology. in: Hornung, Krauss, Warburton (eds) 2006: 327–355. I also shall note eventual contradictions between radiocarbon dates presented by the same authors in different publications. BP (i.e., before AD 1950) refers to uncalibrated radiocarbon dates.

³ For the Neolithic of Lower and Upper Nubia, see the surveys presented by Wendorf 1968; Nordström 1972; Adams 1977: 101 ff.; R. H. Land: Problems in the Mesolithic and Neolithic Culture-History in the Central Nile Valley, Sudan. in: Hagg (ed.) 1987: 47–74; A.S.A. Mohammed-Ali: The Neolithic of Eastern Sudan and its Implications for the Central Nile. *ibid.* 75–86; Caneva (ed.) 1988; J. Reinold: Neolithique soudanais: les coutumes funéraires. in: Davies (ed.) 1991: 16–29; A.E. Marks: Relationships between the Central Nile Valley and the Eastern Sudan in Later Prehistory. *ibid.* 30–39; Krzyżaniak 1995; Midant-Reynes 2000a: 100 ff.; Krzyżaniak, Kroeper, Kobusiewicz (eds) 2000; J. Reinold: *Archéologie au Soudan. Les civilisations de Nubie*. Paris 2000; Jesse 2004; Edwards 2004: 38 ff.; Honegger 2005, all with further literature.

Egyptology and African archaeology adopted the concept of Neolithic of nineteenth and twentieth century European archaeology. This concept is based on the occurrence of at least three out of four traits, viz., polished stone implements, pottery, agriculture, and the domestication of animals. More recently, students of African archaeology strongly argue against the use of the concept and the term of Neolithic. They suggest that the term as a time marker became irrelevant with the advent of radiocarbon dating. Yet they also warn that

[i]t is not to be supposed that, by dropping the term neolithic and substituting phrases such as pastoral, agricultural, farming, crop-raising, food-producing or any other expressions, all problems will be solved. Such terms only relate to one aspect of one parameter of living. The understanding of the complex issues involved in sedentism, semi-sedentism, nomadism, territorial occupancy and the myriad forms of food production and food usage cannot be assisted by oversimplifying terminology.⁴

While one can only agree with this, so far no new terminology has been suggested that could adequately describe the prehistoric cultures of the Middle Nile Region (presumably because we do not know them sufficiently). Therefore I shall use Neolithic for orientation as a chronological/archaeological term under the presumption that the deviations of Middle Nile Neolithic cultures from the traditional notions of European and Near Eastern Neolithic are nevertheless obvious to the readers of the more recent literature.

Unlike the course of Neolithization in other parts of the world, cereal-based agriculture played only a limited role, and only in certain areas, in the transition from hunting and gathering to food-producing.⁵ Sedentism developed in several different forms on the Middle Nile and in the interior.⁶ The motor of the transition was animal husbandry the spread of which was part of the long-distance exchange connecting the cultures of the Middle Nile Region with each other and with those of the Lower Nile, the Eastern Sahara, and the Kassala region. The direction(s) and manner(s) of the spread of animal husbandry in Egypt,

⁴ Sinclair *et al.* 1993 7f. Cf. also Wengrow 2006 1ff.

⁵ Cf. Sinclair *et al.* 1993 16ff.

⁶ Cf. R. Haaland: Sedentism, Cultivation, and Plant Domestication in the Holocene Middle Nile Region. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 22 (1995) 157–174; *ead.*: Emergence of Sedentism: New Ways of Living, New Ways of Symbolizing. *Antiquity* 71 (1997) 374–385; M. Ariotti C. Oxby: From Hunter-gathering to Herder-hunter-gathering in Prehistoric Times (Saharo-Sudanese Region). *Nomadic Peoples* 1 (1997) 98–119; Edwards 2004 43ff., 56ff.

the Sahara and the Middle Nile Region are far from being established. According to the majority view, livestock was introduced to the Middle Nile from the Eastern Sahara where it arrived from the Lower Nile. Muzzolini suggests, however, that

[t]he lack of correspondence in the emergence of domestication between the Middle East, the Nile valley and the Sahara was not due to time differences caused by an assumed cultural diffusion and for which there is, in any case, no direct evidence. Nor was it due to differences between nuclear areas, which, in any case, cannot be identified in Africa; nor is it attributable to the colonization of tension zones. The differences were solely due to the potentialities that each group recognized in its own territory in terms of its own culture. The territory thus formed a unit that was both ecological and cultural at one and the same time.⁷

With the spread of stockbreeding from the Early Neolithic onwards⁸ not only the patterns of subsistence changed. Population growth and the growth of economic productivity, the development of new technologies and forms of material culture, the unfolding of social differentiation, permanent social roles and structured social relations determined the formation of traditions and practices articulating the relations between the individual and the community, between the community and the world.⁹

The Upper Nubian Mesolithic culture (c. 8000–4900 BC) named Khartoum Mesolithic after the site excavated in the 1940s, and the subsequent Khartoum Neolithic¹⁰ (c. 4900–3800 BC, Pl. 8) and Late Neolithic (c. 3800–3000 BC)¹¹ represent a long and slow development towards food producing. Excavations at the carbon-dated (c. 5700 BC) Mesolithic settlement site of Saggai 40 km north of Khartoum yielded high-quality pottery and stone and bone implements. The hunting and fishing community constituted part of a particular pattern of Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic (c. 6000–4100 BC) hunter-gatherer settlements in the region comprising

⁷ Muzzolini 1993 239.

⁸ Cf. Clutton-Brock 1993 66f.; R. Blench: Ethnographic and Linguistic Evidence for the Prehistory of African Ruminant Livestock, Horses and Ponies. in: T. Shaw *et al.* (eds) 1993 71–103 73ff.; C. Ehret: Nilo-Saharan and the Saharo-Sudanese Neolithic. *ibid.* 104–125.

⁹ Caneva 1991 6ff.; cf. B.E. Barich: *People, Water and Grain: The Beginnings of Domestication in the Sahara and the Nile Valley*. Roma 1998.

¹⁰ Identified first at esh-Shaheinab, A.J. Arkell: *Early Khartoum*. Oxford 1949; *id.*: *Shaheinab*. London 1953.

¹¹ For the chronology, see Krzyzaniak 1995 119.

functionally specialized settlements distributed over a vast territory, which extended from the Nile to at least 40km inland. The characteristics of these sites differed, with permanent sites along the river being used in the winter, the dry season, and long-term camp-sites in the hinterland in the summer, the rainy season. Both settlement areas were complemented by a number of hunting locations, on top of the small jebels scattered throughout the area. These cultures are characterized by a complex site and territorial organization, with permanent settlements, containing graves, seasonal transhumance and functionally specialized sites.¹²

Recent excavations conducted at el-Barga *c.* 15 km east from the Nile in the neighbourhood of Kerma at a Mesolithic settlement (carbon-dated to *c.* 7300 BC) with burials (dated to *c.* 7000 BC) and at a Mesolithic-Early Neolithic cemetery carbon-dated to *c.* 6000–5500 BC¹³ yielded information on the development of sedentarization and stockbreeding besides hunting and food-gathering at a considerably earlier time.¹⁴ The Mesolithic burials are without furnishings and there is no sign of any hierarchical organization of the community. *C.* one millennium later, the burials in the Early Neolithic-type cemetery indicate the emergence of social distinctions determined by the introduction of animal domestication. The richest grave furnishings belong to burials of women, which may perhaps be interpreted as indicative of the distinguished role of matrilinearity in the emerging hierarchical structure of society. Radio-carbon samples from the burial of a man and a child and containing the skull of a domesticated ox provided dates of *c.* 5750 BC. Apparently, this is not the earliest case of animal domestication in the Kerma region, however. At two settlement sites situated 5 km from el-Barga circular stone structures, probably huts, were discovered. At these settlements bones of domesticated oxen were found together with ostrich eggshells and shells which were carbon-dated to *c.* 6900 BC, *i.e.*, about one millennium before the el-Barga Early Neolithic cemetery. An early date for an independent domestication of cattle which lived in the wild in the Lower (Egyptian) Nile Valley¹⁵ and for the beginnings of

¹² I. Caneva: The Saggai Region. in: Welsby Anderson (eds) 2004 29–30 29. For Saggai, see also I. Caneva A. Zarattini: Saggai: A Settlement of Hunter-Fishers North of Khartoum. in: Krzyzaniak Kobusiewicz (eds) 1984 301–306; I. Caneva: Da cacciatori residenti a allevatori nomadi: il neolitico pastorale Centro-Sudanese. *Origini. Preistoria e protoistoria delle civiltà antiche* 14 (1988–1989) 513–524.

¹³ Honegger 2006 4 ff.

¹⁴ Honegger 2005 243 ff.

¹⁵ According to Clutton-Brock 1993 66, the earliest securely dated finds of cattle

Neolithization has also been suggested on the basis of finds from the Nabta region¹⁶ located near the southeastern edge of the Western Desert *c.* 100km west of Abu Simbel and *c.* 30km north of the modern Sudanese border, where, besides domesticated cattle, also sheep and goat are supposed to have appeared around *c.* 6000–5600 BC.¹⁷ Such an early episode of the independent domestication of cattle in the Eastern Sahara is, however, doubted by several writers.¹⁸ In Wengrow's view, at Nabta Playa domestic sheep and goat does not appear before the advanced sixth millennium.¹⁹

The Early Neolithic settlement at Kerma, dated to *c.* 4700–4500 BC,²⁰ covered *c.* 1500m². Its circular huts (with a diameter of about 4m) were enclosed by palisades. Traces of two rectangular buildings

in a cultural context come from Cap Letti in Algeria and date from the seventh to the sixth millennium BC. Other early finds have been recorded from sites in the Sahara and in west Africa. Whether these cattle originated from western Asia, through Egypt or were domesticated in Africa, cannot be determined. [It has been] postulated that the remains of cattle from early neolithic sites, dated to 9000 BP, in the Bir Kiseiba region of the eastern Sahara could be from domesticated animals derived from wild *Bos primigenius* in the Nile valley. For the issue, see also Abbas S. Mohammed-Ali: Evidence of Early Food Production in Northeast Africa: An Alternative Model. in: Krzyzaniak–Kobusiewicz (eds) 1984 65–72.

¹⁶ According to F. Wendorf R. Schild: Conclusions. in: F. Wendorf R. Schild A.E. Close (eds): *Cattle-keepers of the Eastern Sahara: The Neolithic of Bir Kiseiba*. Dallas 1984 404–428 404ff. and W. Wetterstrom: Foraging and Farming in Egypt: the Transition from Hunting and Gathering to Horticulture in the Nile Valley. in: T. Shaw *et al.* (eds) 1993 165–226 182, there were three major moist periods in the region: *c.* 10,000–8200 BP; 8100–7900 BP; 7700–5400 BP or later. Others date the Neolithic Wet Phase to the period between 6500–4500 BP when territories abandoned during the preceding dry phase were reoccupied and true neolithic societies emerged, see Muzzolini 1993 234. More recently, the onset of the arid climate is dated between 4900–4400 BC, see Hendrickx–Vermeersch 2000 35.

¹⁷ A. Gautier: Quaternary Mammals and Archaeozoology of Egypt and the Sudan: A Survey. in: Krzyzaniak–Kobusiewicz (eds) 1984 43–56 50ff.; Wendorf *et al.* 2001; F. Wendorf: Forty Years of Archaeological Research in Sudanese and Egyptian Nubia. *Sudan & Nubia* 7 (2003) 2–10 7ff. The evidence from el-Barga either shows that the early animal domestication found at Nabta sites was not an isolated phenomenon, or that it is a question of the interpretation of the archaeological finds, as opposed to the views of, e.g., K. MacDonald: African Livestock: Indigenous or Imported. in: R. Blench–K. MacDonald (eds): *The Origins and Development of African Livestock. Archaeology, Genetics, Linguistics and Ethnography*. London 2000 (*non vidi*); D. Wengrow: On Desert Origins for the Ancient Egyptians [review of Wendorf–Schild 2001]. *Antiquity* 77 (2003) 597–601; Wengrow 2003 126. See also Hendrickx–Vermeersch 2000 32ff.

¹⁸ Wengrow 2006 47ff., with further literature.

¹⁹ Wengrow 2006 25.

²⁰ Honegger 2004a 85; 2006 7f.

were also found (Pl. 9).²¹ Largely ignoring the development of the site during the subsequent centuries, by the late fourth – early third millennium BC we find an archaic-type walled (?) urban settlement at Kerma in which habitation, religious and administrative functions seem to have been spatially separated.²² Although we know that this Pre-Kerma settlement is the ancestor of the town of Kerma, the centre of the state of Kerma emerging around 2500 BC, it remains to be established whether the development of the Pre-Kerma settlement may be compared to the early urbanization occurring in Upper Egypt in the second half of the fourth millennium BC.²³ Pre-Kerma settlements were identified between the Second Cataract and the Dongola area and dated to the period between the mid-fourth millennium BC and c. 2500 BC. Early and Middle Pre-Kerma pottery displays similarities to Lower Nubian Middle and Late A-Group pottery²⁴ (see Chapters III.4–7). The contacts between Egypt and the Middle Pre-Kerma territory were mediated by the Lower Nubian A-Group (see below).²⁵ Claude Rilly identified recently the Nubian names preserved in the Papyrus Golenischeff²⁶ as Proto-Meroitic²⁷ and suggested that the emergence of the Pre-Kerma culture was connected to the immigration of a Proto-Meroitic speaking population from the Wadi Howar Region in the mid-fourth millennium BC²⁸ caused by the desiccation of the savannahs following the Neolithic subpluvial.²⁹ Similarly, the emergence of Kerma would have been connected to the arrival of a large population from the same region in the middle of the third millennium BC, the period

²¹ M. Honegger: Evolution de la société dans le bassin de Kerma (Soudan) des derniers chasseurs-cueilleurs au premier royaume de Nubie. *BSFE* 152 (2001) 12–27; Honegger 2004a 85 ff.; Jesse 2004 39 f.

²² Honegger 2004c; Honegger 2005 242 f.; Honegger 2006 8 ff.

²³ Cf. Kemp 1977 *passim* and esp. 198 f.; Kemp 1989 31 ff. For the problem, see recently Honegger 2006 12 f.

²⁴ Honegger 2004b 61 ff.

²⁵ Honegger 2004b 63.

²⁶ From the Hyksos period. A. Erman: *Hymnen an das Diadem der Pharaonen aus einem Papyrus der Sammlung Golenischeff*. Berlin 1911.

²⁷ Rilly 2007 3 ff.; C. Rilly: The Earliest Traces of Meroitic. in: D. Payne M. Reh (eds): *Advances in Nilo-Saharan Linguistics 2001. Proceedings of the 8th Nilo-Saharan Linguistics Colloquium Hamburg August 22–25, 2001*. K. ln, in print.

²⁸ For an introduction to the archaeology of the Wadi Howar Region, see B. Keding: *The Yellow Nile: New Data on Settlement and the Environment in the Sudanese Eastern Sahara*. *Sudan & Nubia* 2 (1998) 2–12; Jesse 2006a.

²⁹ Cf. also Wilkinson 1999 45 f.; Jesse 2004.

of the desertification of the Lower Wadi Howar.³⁰ Rilly's hypothesis provides an explanation for the Pre-Kerma-Kerma continuity and it also partly explains the socio-economic background of the differences between the urbanization in Egypt and in the Upper Nubian Pre-Kerma polity.

2. *The Emergence of Elites*

The existence of a social elite is prevalent by the later fifth millennium, in the age of primary pastoralism,³¹ at all sites investigated between the Khartoum region and the Third Cataract. From the excavated 200 Early Neolithic graves at Kadero in the Khartoum region,³² c. 8–10% was found to contain a rich and high-quality tomb furnishing. Their pits were deeper than the poor burials and they occurred in clusters. The seventeen cemeteries³³ and the c. thirty settlement sites investigated so far in the region of Kadruka³⁴ (north of Kerma in the Wadi el-Khowi, a palaeochannel of the Nile constituting the eastern border of the Kerma Basin) visualize the socio-economic processes of the transition from Early to Late Neolithic. In the oldest cemetery KDK 21,³⁵ situated on a man-made funerary mound, some grave pits were bordered by stone stelae. The main tomb was that of a woman whose burial also contained the body of a sacrificed man. Around the main grave (a woman) of the later cemetery mound KDK 18³⁶ twelve individuals were buried in a circle. The most recent cemetery KDK 1³⁷

³⁰ Rilly n.d.a. I am grateful to Dr. Rilly for granting me insight into the manuscript of his paper.

³¹ Cf. Wengrow 2003; Wengrow 2006 26ff.

³² J. Reinold: Kadero. in: Welsby Anderson (eds) 2004 49–51.

³³ Reinold 2004; Reinold 2006 151ff. According to Reinold 2004 44 note 3, they are dating from a period of c. one millennium between c. 4620+/-80BC–3340+/-60BC.

³⁴ J. Reinold: Les fouilles françaises et franco-soudanaises. Kadruka. in: Gratien Le Saout (eds) 1994 70–86; Reinold 2006 151ff. Cf. cemetery R12 c. 5km to the north-north-east of Kawa, S. Salvatori D. Usai: First Season of Excavation at Site R12, a Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach. *Sudan & Nubia* 5 (2001) 11–20.

³⁵ Radiocarbon dates between 3900+/-70 and 3960+/-60BC: Reinold 2004 44 note 4. Reinold 2001 9 gives, however, dates ranging between 4790–4720BC.

³⁶ Radiocarbon dates between 3630+/-70 and 3520+/-70BC: Reinold 2004 45 note 6. Reinold 2001 6 gives, however, radiocarbon dates between 4470–4250BC.

³⁷ Radiocarbon dates between 3250+/-70 and 3640+/-60BC: Reinold 2004 45 note

was opened with the burial of a man (Tomb 131, Pl. 10). Among other artifacts, his grave contained stone macheads, two bucrania, an anthropomorphic gurine of sandstone (Pl. 11, right),³⁸ further a caliciform pottery beaker used for funerary libations (Pl. 12)³⁹ (for the caliciform vessel, cf. Chapter VIII.2). According to Jacques Reinold,

[t]he spatial organization of the burials presents a division into two groups. The one located on the summit [of the burial mound] develops in concentric circles around Tomb 131 and includes the individuals (all ages and sexes mixed) with the greatest number of grave goods. The further from the centre of the circle, the poorer the grave goods. The other group, which is located on the slope, presents a higher percentage of females. The grave goods are poorer than those of the first group and certain prestige goods are completely absent.⁴⁰

Communities combining stockbreeding with hunting, food gathering and fishing, i.e., exploiting the resources of increasingly large territories in the Nile Valley and the interior, were thus living around their socially stratified ancestral cemeteries, which they used for several generations. In the course of the fourth millennium BC the developments in social stratification also seem to have been similar in the populations living in the region of Kadero⁴¹ and Geili⁴² south of modern Khartoum and at el-Kadada in the Shendi Reach.⁴³ Their semi-nomadic patterns of subsistence did not bring about the development of large permanent settlements. According to Reinold, the settlements and cemeteries of the region of Kadruka belonged to communities of agriculturalists and were organized as chiefdoms.⁴⁴ It would be mistaken, however, to associate the development of more complex forms of social organization exclusively with agriculture and permanent village life and

7. At the same time and in the same publication, objects from KDK 1 grave 131 are dated to 4228 BC by the same author on the basis of a radiocarbon datum, Reinold in: Welsby Anderson (eds) 2004 Cat. 22. The same dating appears in J. Reinold in: *Nubia. Los reinos del Nilo en Sudán*. Barcelona 2003 Cat. 120.

³⁸ J. Reinold in: Welsby Anderson (eds) 2004 Cat. 273.

³⁹ J. Reinold in: Welsby Anderson (eds) 2004 Cat. 22.

⁴⁰ Reinold 2004 43.

⁴¹ L. Krzyzaniak: Early Farming in the Middle Nile Basin: Recent Discoveries at Kadero (Central Sudan). *Antiquity* 65 (1991) 515–532; Krzyzaniak 1992 270.

⁴² Caneva (ed.) 1988; I. Caneva: Post-Shaheinab Neolithic Remains at Geili. in: Krzyzaniak Kroeper Kobusiewicz (eds) 1996 315–320.

⁴³ J. Reinold: Les fouilles françaises et franco-soudanaises. El-Kadada. in: Gratien Le Saout (eds) 1994 51–66; Reinold 2006 145 ff.

⁴⁴ Reinold 2004 44.

maintain the view in which cultural complexity is inconsistent with pastoral economy.⁴⁵

Social stratification in the cemeteries at el-Kadada was also articulated by a particular burial custom occurring in rich graves and interpreted as human and animal sacrifice. According to the excavator's observations, in a number of graves the main grave owner was placed in a flexed position in the centre of the pit and was accompanied with rich funerary equipment also including the body of a sacrificed person buried in a bag. In many cases a bucranium is placed between the two bodies. In one of the cemeteries the secondary body is that of a child or an adolescent buried in an extended position. In later (?) cemetery sections the place of the secondary body was taken by the burial of a dog.⁴⁶

3. *Late Mesolithic and "Abkan" Lower Nubia*

Turning now to the Lower Nubian evidence, Mesolithic sites around Wadi Halfa in the region of the Second Cataract display cultural features of the Khartoum Mesolithic. The presence of common traits with the material culture of the Khartoum Mesolithic and of culturally related contemporary communities in the Dongola Reach

does not, in itself, demonstrate the movement of peoples but rather indicates that certain design elements and techniques of decoration spread widely along the Nile by diffusion to local and quite autonomous groups of people.⁴⁷

The communities of the semi-sedentary Lower Nubian Khartoum Variant culture⁴⁸ lived in small camp-sites along the river, produced pottery and microlithic tools and practiced fishing, hunting and food-collecting. They buried their dead in the settlements.⁴⁹ The Late Mesolithic (c. 6500–5500 BC) Khartoum Variant evolved into early Abkan

⁴⁵ Caneva 1991: 7f.; cf. also Wengrow 2006: 26ff.

⁴⁶ J. Reinold: *Les fouilles pré- et protohistoriques de la section française de la Direction des Antiquités du Soudan: les campagnes 1984–1985 et 1985–1986*. *ANM* 2 (1987) 17–56, 39ff.; Reinold 2006: 146f.

⁴⁷ A.E. Marks, J.L. Shiner, T.R. Hays: *Survey and Excavations in the Dongola Reach, Sudan*. *Current Anthropology* 9 (1968) 319–323, 323, and cf. Nordström 1972: 11.

⁴⁸ For a survey, see Midant-Reynes 2000a: 142ff.

⁴⁹ Nordström 1972: 8ff.; E.A.A. Garcea: *The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic*. in: Welsby, Anderson (eds) 2004: 20–24, 23.

(after the modern settlement of Abka south of Wadi Halfa where the first sites of the culture were identified).⁵⁰ Small, scattered fifth millennium BC settlement sites of the early Abkan culture were discovered around Wadi Halfa and in the Batn el-Hagar region south of the Second Cataract. Early Abkan strongly resembles Khartoum Neolithic,⁵¹ while later, fourth millennium BC Abkan material culture is already considered to represent a local variant of the above-discussed Late Neolithic of the Kerma region.⁵² Though later Abkan sites produced only a few bones of cattle and goat,⁵³ there may be little doubt that the Abkan communities lived a semi-settled existence. The minimal subsidiary role played by domesticated animals in the Khartoum Variant and Abkan cultures may be explained as a consequence of the rich potential of hunting and fishing rather than a constant retardation of socio-economic processes. Discussing the similarities in the Neolithization of Upper Egypt and Nubia, Butzer concludes that

[t]he persistence of strong hunting, gathering and fishing components, as well as the only gradual displacement of Epi-Paleolithic technology, argues that the new economic modes were adopted slowly and selectively during a millennium or more, rather than dramatically.⁵⁴

The coexistence of different modes of subsistence to the north and south of the Second Cataract, in the Khartoum region, the Eastern Sahara and the desert east of the Nile promoted the development of long-distance exchange on the Middle Nile and beyond. E.g., the aforementioned female anthropomorphic gurine from grave 131 of Cemetery 1 in the region of Kadruka (Pl. 11, right) was made from veined sandstone found at a source situated at a distance of over 150 km from Kadruka. At Saggai, Red Sea shells were found at a fifth millennium BC Early Khartoum site, while Khartoum Variant communities at the Second Cataract imported Egyptian flint from several hundred kilo-

⁵⁰ For a survey, see Midant Reynes 2000a 145f. Cf. M.C. Gatto: The Khartoum Variant Pottery in Context: Rethinking the Early and Middle Holocene Nubian Sequence. *ANM* 10 (2006) 57–72.

⁵¹ O.H. Myers: Abka Re-excavated. *Kush* 6 (1958) 131–141; *id.*: Abka Again. *Kush* 8 (1960) 174–181; Nordström 1972 12ff.; and cf. T.R. Hays: Predynastic Development in Upper Egypt. in: Krzyzaniak–Kobusiewicz (eds) 1984 211–219.

⁵² Cf. A. Vila: *La prospection archéologique de la vallée du Nil, au sud de la Cataracte de Dal (Nubie soudanaise)* V. Paris 1977.

⁵³ Nordström 1972 16.

⁵⁴ Butzer 1976 11.

meters for making their tools.⁵⁵ It may well have been long-distance exchange that also promoted the spread of domesticated animals and Neolithic food producing in the Middle Nile Region.⁵⁶

Around 4700BC a new pottery style emerged in Wadi Shaw and Wadi Sahal in the Laqiya Region, a wadi system in the northwestern Sudan *c.* 300km to the west of the Third Cataract and *c.* 150–200km south of the modern Egyptian-Sudanese border. This style corresponds to the style of Abkan pottery from the Nile Valley and Late Neolithic pottery from Bir Kiseiba in the Nabta region,⁵⁷ indicating thus close relations between Lower Nubia and the regions to the west. According to Lange, the emergence of this style

could possibly be seen in connection with the spread of animal domestication and the change of cultural traits throughout northern Sudan.⁵⁸

The contacts between Lower Nubia and the Eastern Sahara, in particular the Laqiya Region, would be maintained during the remaining part of the fifth millennium as well as in the fourth millennium BC (see below).

4. *The Rise of the A-Group Chiefdoms*

The terminal Abkan culture of the Second Cataract region was contemporary with the emergence of an indigenous Late Neolithic culture in northern Lower Nubia. It is called (Nubian) A-Group, a particularly uncommunicative term based on George Andrew Reisner's cultural chronology.⁵⁹ The A-Group was the first of the so far unrecorded cultures that Reisner discovered at Shellal and

identified as the earliest occupation of Nubia. Noting the resemblance of A-Group pottery to that of the Predynastic Egyptians, as well as the seeming absence of older remains in Nubia, Reisner quite understandably conceived of a southward migration of Egyptian settlers into a previously uninhabited land. The weight of modern evidence indicates

⁵⁵ Krzyzaniak 1992: 269.

⁵⁶ Caneva 1991; Krzyzaniak 1992: 269.

⁵⁷ Lange 2006: 109ff.; cf. Schön 1996; M.C. Gatto: Early Neolithic Pottery of the Nabta-Kiseiba Area: Stylistic Attributes and Regional Relationships. in: K. Nelson (ed.): *Holocene Settlement of the Egyptian Sahara II. The Pottery of Nabta Playa*. New York 2002: 65–78.

⁵⁸ Lange 2006: 113.

⁵⁹ Reisner 1910.

that both culture and society were unmistakably Nubian, and related to those of earlier and later times in the same area. In the beginning, a connection with the Neolithic Abkan tradition⁶⁰ now seems evident.⁶⁰

In time, A-Group culture spans the period between *c.* 3700–2800 BC, which is subdivided into an Early (*c.* 3700–3250 BC), a Classical or Middle (*c.* 3250–3150 BC) and a Terminal or Late phase (*c.* 3150–2800 BC).⁶¹ This chronology was established mainly on the basis of the chronology of the Egyptian artefacts occurring in A-Group assemblages.⁶² Accordingly, the Early A-Group is contemporary with the second half of the Naqada I phase (*c.* 4000–3500 BC) and the Naqada IIb–IIc–IIId1 phases (*c.* 3500–3250 BC);⁶³ the Classical or Middle A-Group with Naqada IIId2–IIIa2 (*c.* 3250–3150 BC); the Terminal or Late A-Group with Naqada IIIa2/Dynasty 0 (*c.* 3150–3000 BC) and with Dynasty 1 and early Dynasty 2 (*c.* 3000–2800 BC).⁶⁴ A-Group habitation sites and cemeteries were found between Saras south of the Second Cataract and Kubaniya north of the First Cataract. The chronological distribution of the culture's cemeteries shows a southward expansion with time.⁶⁵

Early A-Group habitation sites and cemeteries were found only in northern Lower Nubia between Kubaniya⁶⁶ and Dakka.⁶⁷ The pres-

⁶⁰ Adams 1977: 118f.; cf. Wendorf (ed.) 1968: II 1053.

⁶¹ Cf. Smith 1991: 92f.; C. Bonnet: A-Group and Pre-Kerma. in: Wildung (ed.) 1997: 37–39, 37; Nordström 2004: 134. For the end of the Terminal or Late phase I adopt here Bonnet's dating which does not contradict Nordström's dating (*c.* 2900 BC) which was established on the basis of the latest Egyptian imports dating from the early First Dynasty.

⁶² See first of all Nordström 1972 and Smith 1991.

⁶³ For the chronology of the Naqada culture, see W. Kaiser: Zur inneren Chronologie der Naqadakultur. *Archaeologia Geographica* 6 (1957): 69–77; *id.*: Zur Entstehung des gesamt gypsischen Staates. *MDAIK* 46 (1990): 287–299; Hendrickx 1996; Wilkinson 2000.

⁶⁴ Cf. Wengrow 2006: 273f., Tables 2 and 3.

⁶⁵ Nordström 1972: 29; Midant-Reynes 2000a: 220f.; Nordström 2004. In Rampersad's view, this may be contradicted by the distribution of the habitation sites: Rampersad 2003: 97ff. Our knowledge of the settlement sites and their chronology is not sufficient, however.

⁶⁶ Early A-Group presence as far north as the region of Kom Ombo is argued for by M.C. Gatto: Nubians in Egypt: Survey in the Aswan-Kom Ombo Region. *Sudan & Nubia* 9 (2005): 72–75.

⁶⁷ M.C. Gatto: Ceramic Traditions and Cultural Territories: the Nubian Group in Prehistory. *Sudan & Nubia* 6 (2002): 8–19, 16 hypothesizes that the A-Group originated in the Dakka-Sayala area. This seems to be contradicted by the chronology of the cemeteries which, as already noted above, supports a southward expansion of the culture starting from the First Cataract area, cf. Smith 1991; Nordström 2004.

ence of an A-Group cemetery at Kubaniya,⁶⁸ a place *c.* 10 km north of Aswan on the west bank, seems to indicate that in this period the ethnic frontier between Egypt and Nubia lay at Gebel Silsile rather than Aswan.⁶⁹ It must be added, however, that indigenous Nubian A-Group pottery was recovered at Kubaniya only in the cemetery sections contemporary with Naqada Ic through IIc (*c.* 3600–3300 BC), while the later burials contemporary with Naqada IId IIIa2 and Dynasty 0 (*c.* 3300–3000 BC) contained no Nubian artefacts and did not differ in any respect from contemporary Upper Egyptian burials. An Early A-Group centre emerged in the earlier part of the phase in the region of Khor Bahan south of the First Cataract,⁷⁰ where the richest cemetery of the phase was excavated. It is here that the first copper artefacts appeared in Nubia. Another centre emerged at a later stage of the phase. The location of this latter is indicated by a special site at Khor Daoud (see below), furthermore by a number of cemeteries around Dakka with *c.* 20–100 burials and by some smaller grave groups discovered between Dakka and Afya. Trigger⁷¹ and Rampersad⁷² suggested that Early A-Group settlement was not confined to northern Lower Nubia, since a group of habitation sites around Saras,⁷³ with a material culture displaying features of the Early Khartoum culture, may signal an expansion from the south. This expansion did not reach beyond the Second Cataract, however, and its connection with the northern Early A-Group remains unknown.

The found material from Early A-Group cemeteries and habitation sites is dominated by Egyptian pottery, siltstone⁷⁴ palettes, stone maceheads and flint knives. While also the tombs resemble contemporary Upper Egyptian graves—contracted body on its left side, head to the south, wrapped up in matting, buried in an oval or sub-rectangular pit—the Egyptian imports in the grave inventories occur, as a rule, in the company of local pottery.⁷⁵ This clearly indicates that neither the Early A-Group cemetery at Kubaniya north of the First Cataract nor

⁶⁸ Junker 1919.

⁶⁹ Smith 1991: 94.

⁷⁰ Reisner 1910: 115 ff.; cf. Nordström 1972: 28.

⁷¹ Trigger 1965: 69.

⁷² Rampersad 2003: 97.

⁷³ R.S. Solecki *et al.*: Preliminary Statement of the Prehistoric Investigations of the Columbia University Nubian Expedition in Sudan, 1961–1962. *Kush* 11 (1963): 70–92.

⁷⁴ In the earlier literature the definitions schist or slate were preferred, cf. Wengrow 2006: 51.

⁷⁵ Already recognised by Junker 1919.

the dominant presence of Egyptian artefacts at this cemetery and other A-Group sites do mean that the Early A-Group represents an expansion of Upper Egyptians into Lower Nubia⁷⁶ or that its culture was an outgrowth of the Amratian phase [i.e., Naqada I] in Upper Egypt.⁷⁷

During the Early A-Group phase stone vessels, siltstone palettes, combs and hairpins; beads and pendants, flint knives and pigments; beer and wine were imported in increasing quantities from Upper Egypt.⁷⁸ The Nubian goods bartered included ebony and ivory, ostrich eggs, exotic skins. From c. 3500–3400 BC the A-Group may also have started to acquire gold and semi-precious stones from the nomads living in the Eastern Desert.⁷⁹ Yet pottery vessels imported from Nubia also occur in the late Naqada I (c. 3600–3500 BC) princely Tomb 6 at Hierakonpolis, Locality 6.⁸⁰ From around 3500–3400 BC onwards there existed a trading or redistribution centre at Khor Daoud c. 9 km north of the entrance of the Wadi Allaqi on the east bank of the Nile. At Khor Daoud 578 storage pits were excavated, many of which contained pottery vessels from different periods and holding originally oil, wine and beer, the earliest ones dating from the Naqada IIa, the rest from the Naqada IIb–IIc phases. This centre seems to have survived until the Naqada IIIa phase, i.e., the emergence of the united Egyptian state.⁸¹ Another trading centre existed at Elephantine from the Naqada IIc

⁷⁶ Cf. W.A. Fairbairn: *Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile*. New York 1962 71.

⁷⁷ Trigger 1965 68ff.; Nordström 1972 28.

⁷⁸ Cf. Wengrow 2006 34; and see B.G. Aston: *Ancient Egyptian Stone Vessels: Materials and Forms*. Heidelberg 1994.

⁷⁹ Smith 1991 108. Gold, doubtless originating from the south, was worked in Egypt from the late Badarian period (c. 4400–4000 BC) onwards, cf. A. Lucas J.R. Harris: *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*. London 1962 257ff. R. Klemm D.D. Klemm: Chronologischer Abriss der antiken Goldgewinnung in der Ostwüste Ägyptens. *MDAIK* 50 (1994) 189–222 found only limited evidence for gold mining in Predynastic times. Wilkinson 1999 172 suggests that the scattered mining sites were exploited by the local population. According to K. Sadr: The Wadi Elei Finds. *CRIPPEL* 17 (1997) 67–76, gold mining was practised in a primitive manner in the Nubian Desert during the 5th millennium BC and there were contacts between the populations of the Egyptian and Nubian Nile Valley and the Eastern Desert. Cf. in general S. Aufrère: *L'univers minéral dans la pensée égyptienne*. Le Caire 1991 353ff.; J. Vercoutter: Or et politique dans l'Égypte des origines. in: Berger Clerc Grimal (eds) 1994 403–410; Nicholson Shaw (eds) 2000.

⁸⁰ B. Adams: Elite Graves at Hierakonpolis. in: Spencer (ed.) 1996 115–5; Wilkinson 2000 381. Cf. also R. Friedman: Pebbles, Pots and Petroglyphs: Excavations at Hk 64. in: Friedman Adams (eds) 1992.

⁸¹ For the archaeological evidence, see B.B. Piotrovsky: The Early Dynastic Settlement of Khor-Daoud and Wadi-Allaki, the Ancient Route of the Gold Mines. *Fouilles en Nubie (1961–1963)*. Le Caire 1967 127–140; Nordström 1972 26.

phase (from *c.* 3300 BC). The early settlement at Elephantine was partly inhabited by an A-Group population.⁸² The suggestion that it was a trading outpost of the Naqada II proto-state centred at Hierakonpolis⁸³ requires further proofs.

5. *The Contacts of the A-Group with Egypt in the Naqada Period*

The southward shift of Early A-Group settlement and the emergence of a bartering or redistribution centre at Khor Daoud may be interpreted as an evidence for the unfolding of the trade contacts between Upper Egypt, the nomads of the Eastern Desert and sub-Saharan Africa in which the A-Group, controlling a key section of the routes of communication between these territories, acquired the lucrative role of middlemen. The successful organization of long-distance exchange presupposes an organized society. Indeed, hierarchical differences and different social/age/gender roles are clearly indicated by the quantitative and qualitative differences occurring in Early A-Group grave equipments.⁸⁴ It is, however, an oversimplification of the developments in A-Group Nubia when Midant-Reynes interprets the impact of trade as follows:

[t]here can be no doubt that the A Group was a product of the Naqada-culture explosion. The development of commerce along the Nile and the consequent emergence of high quality craftsmanship led to the creation of anchorage points – trading posts – the purpose of which was to ensure that the Naqada potentates were able to transfer raw materials from the south to the north, and this transversal at first took place in terms of reciprocity, but later, under the first rulers of dynastic Egypt, became more radically aggressive.⁸⁵

⁸² W. Kaiser *et al.*: Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht. *MDAIK* 55 (1999) 63–236 187f.; Raue 2002.

⁸³ Cf. Kaiser 1999 283.

⁸⁴ For the analysis and ranking of the mortuary evidence, see Nordström 1972; J.A. Brown: The Search for Rank in Prehistoric Burials. in: R. Chapman I. Kinnes K. Randsborg (eds): *The Archaeology of Death*. Cambridge 1981 25–37; Smith 1991; H. • . Nordström: The Nubian A-Group: Ranking Funerary Remains. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 29 (1996) 17–39; M.C. Gatto: A-Groups: A Complex Society of Lower Nubia (Egypt, Sudan). in: F. Alhaique *et al.* (eds): *Proceedings of the VIIth Congress IUSSP Workshops I*. Forlì 1998 515–519; Nordström 2004.

⁸⁵ Midant-Reynes 2000a 223.

Midant-Reynes disregards here the inner dynamics of the changes brought about by the establishment of long-distance exchange. The absence of Egyptian objects in contemporary archaeological contexts outside the Early A-Group landscape is conspicuous and it suggests that direct trade with Upper Egypt remained an A-Group monopoly until *c.* 3100–2800 BC, i.e., the Late A-Group phase.⁸⁶

Modern terminology is frequently misleading. So are the traditional terms Classical and Terminal A-Group and also their recently introduced equivalents, i.e., Middle and Late A-Group. Even if one keeps in mind that these terms combine a typology of burials and material culture with Upper Egyptian chronology as it is reflected in imports to Lower Nubia, they inevitably suggest that the brief Classical or Middle A-Group (contemporary with Naqada II_d–III_a₂, *c.* 3250–3150 BC) represents the peak of A-Group history, while the Terminal or Late A-Group (contemporary with Naqada III_a₂/Dynasty 0, *c.* 3150–3000 BC, and with Dynasty 1 and early Dynasty 2, *c.* 3000–2800 BC) was a prolonged period of decline terminated finally by early dynastic aggression.

The reality was probably different. It may be argued with good reasons that the Middle and Late phases constitute together one single period of evolution⁸⁷ in the course of which a more complex form of chiefdom emerged in Lower Nubia. As it is reflected in the archaeological evidence, the unfolding of long-distance trade contacts ran parallel with the process of differentiation in grave inventories and with a southward expansion of A-Group settlement. Behind these processes one may suppose changes in subsistence patterns, first of all a growing importance of agricultural activities besides cattle-breeding and hunting (similarly to what may be observed in late fifth and fourth millennium Upper Nubia); the increase of surplus production and population growth.

By *c.* 3250 BC, the beginning of the Classical or Middle phase, A-Group settlement extended over the entire Lower Nubian Nile Valley between Kubaniya north of the First Cataract and Saras in the Second Cataract region, also incorporating in the south what was formerly the territory and population of the Abkan culture.⁸⁸ The settlements and cemeteries concentrated in three Nile Valley sections, viz., between

⁸⁶ Honegger 2004b 63.

⁸⁷ See Nordström 2004 141.

⁸⁸ For the transition between Abkan and Middle A-Group, see Mills 1967 1968 201f.

Kubaniya and Debod, Gerf Hussein and Sayala, and Arminna and Saras. Habitation sites of some importance may be identified in all of them: in the first, at Meris Markos;⁸⁹ in the second, at Dakka;⁹⁰ and in the third, at Faras⁹¹ and Saras.⁹² The fertile zones in Lower Nubia were not entirely continuous and varied from small plots to patches several km long and 1–1.5 km wide, the three most important ones being in the regions of Dakka, Aniba/Karanog, and Faras, respectively (from north to south). The Nile Valley section between Kubaniya and Debod included the First Cataract region, i.e., the gate to Egypt. The region between Gerf Hussein and Sayala included the fertile Dakka plain, while the region between Arminna and Saras included the fertile Faras area and the Second Cataract area, i.e., the gate to Upper Nubia; and it also may have controlled the Aniba/Karanog region. While it cannot be decided if these three concentrations of Middle A-Group settlements and cemeteries represent three separate polities, it seems that the Terminal phase saw the emergence of two territorial political units,⁹³ i.e., two separate complex chiefdoms (see below).

6. *The Emergence of Territorial Political Units*

The overwhelming majority of the habitation sites of the Early, Middle and Late A-Group phases had a temporary/seasonal character with dwellings, which consisted probably of a reed hut built on a wooden framework. The settlements were built on eroded silts or platforms at the river edge.⁹⁴ Trigger argues that

[d]espite the appearance of unsettled, virtually nomadic, conditions [in these settlements], there is other evidence suggesting considerably more stability. In particular there are secondary burials in a large number of graves, which appear to have been made some time after the original burial. This seems to indicate that a band or family was able to use the same cemetery over a long period of time. Perhaps each of these groups tended to keep a limited section of the river, a way of life more in

⁸⁹ Reisner 1910 215 ff.

⁹⁰ Firth 1915 9 f.

⁹¹ Nordström 1972 134 ff.

⁹² G.W. Hewes: Prehistoric Investigations on the West Bank in the Batn el Hagar by the University of Colorado Nubian Expedition. *Kush* 14 (1966) 25–43–39.

⁹³ Cf. Geus 2006 347 f.

⁹⁴ Cf. Midant-Reynes 2000a 220.

keeping with at least a partial dependence on agriculture than nomadic wandering. Since the habitations were very flimsy the settlements could be moved fairly often. During most of the year the camps were probably located along the edge of the river, and it was only during the flood period that their inhabitants retreated to the edge of the flood plain.⁹⁵

Due to new archaeological discoveries, the semi-nomadic way of life of a considerable part of the A-Group population and the importance and dimensions of pastoralism are now seen in a different light. Before the early 1980s A-Group settlement was thought to have been restricted to the Nile Valley. Excavations and surveys carried out in the Wadis Shaw and Sahal in the Laqiya Region⁹⁶ have demonstrated that from the second half of the fourth millennium BC, i.e., from the later part of the Early A-Group phase onwards, A-Group pottery also occurs in considerable quantity at settlements in the Laqiya Region.⁹⁷ At Wadi Shaw cattle, sheep and goat bones were found in association with A-Group pottery, indicating the presence of A-Group herders in the region. An A-Group pottery depot was also discovered at Bir Sahara c. 200 km west of Nabta Playa in the Eastern Sahara.⁹⁸ Such a large extension of A-Group settlement may be explained with the seasonal movement of semi-nomadic pastoral groups leaving the Lower Nubian Valley during or shortly after the rainy season when the grazing areas were flooded there by the annual inundation. Though the climate of the Eastern Sahara became drier in the fourth millennium BC, due to the still high ground water influx the Laqiya Region and the Selima Sandsheet north of it could nevertheless offer excellent pasturage and sufficient watering holes.⁹⁹

While the majority of the Lower Nubian A-Group population continued to live in temporary/seasonal settlements, also a more permanent habitation type emerged in the course of the Late A-Group phase (c. 3150–2800 BC).¹⁰⁰ Remains of settlements with houses built from

⁹⁵ Trigger 1965 71 f.

⁹⁶ For a summary, see R. Kuper: Prehistoric Research in the Southern Libyan Desert. A Brief Account and Some Conclusions of the B.O.S. Project. in: *Actes Lille I* 123–140.

⁹⁷ Lange 2006 109 ff.

⁹⁸ M.C. Gatto: Two Predynastic Pottery Caches at Bir Sahara (Egyptian Western Desert). *Sahara* 13 (2001); Lange 2006 113.

⁹⁹ Lange 2003 121 ff.; Lange 2006 110 f.

¹⁰⁰ For a typology of A-Group settlements, see Rampersad 2003 90 ff.

sandstone rubble survived at Dakka,¹⁰¹ Afya,¹⁰² El Riqa,¹⁰³ Argin West¹⁰⁴ and Abu Simbel West.¹⁰⁵ At Afya, houses of rectangular plan were also found.¹⁰⁶ In a house, which contained six rooms and covered about 200 m², mortar (Nile mud mixed with sand) and traces of wall plastering were discovered. Though the archaeological record does not permit far-reaching conclusions, it is worth noting that these settlements, inhabited probably by an elite which led a more sedentary life than the rest of the population, lie in more or less equal distances along the west bank of the Nile between the First and the Second Cataract. Provided that the archaeological record is not too accidental (which, given the intensity of the archaeological surveys conducted in Lower Nubia, is fairly unlikely), such a pattern would support the suggestion that these settlements also functioned as stations of an organized and centrally controlled long-distance trade and that it was this trade that was the principal motor of social, political and cultural developments in Middle and Late A-Group Lower Nubia. The archaeological evidence does not permit a more precise estimation of the life span of the individual settlements. A well-maintained mud-brick house in pharaonic Egypt could be inhabited for a century or so.¹⁰⁷ Such a life span may also be supposed in the case of A-Group houses with stone walls strengthened sometimes with mortar and with a wood-and-mat (?) roof construction.

The geographical distribution of the aforementioned elite settlements may give the impression that the whole of Late A-Group Lower Nubia constituted one single polity extending from the First to the Second Cataract. However, mortuary evidence from two significant sites, viz., Qustul and Sayala, contradicts this impression. In Cemetery L at Qustul, where twenty-five Terminal A-Group graves were excavated, eight extraordinarily large tombs were identified as burials of rulers of what Bruce Williams identified as a monarchy,¹⁰⁸ O'Connor and

¹⁰¹ Firth 1915 9f.

¹⁰² B.B. Lal: Indian Archaeological Expedition to Nubia, 1962: A Preliminary Report. *Fouilles en Nubie, 1961-1963*. Le Caire 1967 95-118.

¹⁰³ Smith 1962 71.

¹⁰⁴ H.-•. Nordström: Excavations and Survey in Faras, Argin and Gezira Dabarosa. *Kush* 10 (1962) 34-58 44.

¹⁰⁵ Smith 1962 45.

¹⁰⁶ For a rectangular Naqada I house at Hierakonpolis, see Midant-Reynes 2000b 52. Of Naqada II towns, rectangular houses and enclosure walls are typical, *ibid.* 57.

¹⁰⁷ D. Arnold: *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*. Zürich 1994 99f.

¹⁰⁸ Williams 1986.

Wilkinson as a proto-kingdom,¹⁰⁹ Adams and Nordström as a complex chiefdom.¹¹⁰ It seems that the most likely definition is this latter. The existence of a second polity of a similar character is indicated by one of the burials at the rich cemetery of Cemetery 137 at Sayala¹¹¹ and further by a number of burials at the related Sayala Cemetery 142.¹¹² As it is also supported by the chronology of the finds from these burials, Qustul Cemetery L as well as the Sayala cemeteries served for the burial of several generations of chieftains.

At the badly plundered Cemetery L of Qustul an abundance of imported stone vessels and pottery was recovered alongside a wealth of fine Late A-Group eggshell pottery (Pl. 13),¹¹³ a refined painted and burnished luxury pottery type produced probably in the Qustul area.¹¹⁴ The Egyptian objects and pottery vessels from Syria or Palestine¹¹⁵ attest extensive long-distance trade connections. The most outstanding object was found in tomb L 24. It is a stone incense burner,¹¹⁶ an object type occurring in Nubian A-Group contexts but not known from Egypt. The badly damaged burner was decorated with the incised representation of a *serekh* fa•ade and the procession of three boats.¹¹⁷ In one of the boats a royal figure wearing the Upper Egyptian White Crown was depicted. The design also includes other motifs that are familiar from late Predynastic, Early Dynastic and later Egyptian iconography such as the Horus falcon, the rosette/star sign,¹¹⁸ and standards.

Williams argued in his analysis of Cemetery L that tombs of this size, wealth and date in Egypt would have been immediately recognized as royal¹¹⁹ and used the decorated incense burner as the starting point for his hypothesis, according to which Cemetery L was the burying ground of Lower Nubian rulers who conquered and unified Egypt

¹⁰⁹ O Connor 1993 20; Wilkinson 1999 177.

¹¹⁰ Adams 1985; Nordström 2004.

¹¹¹ Firth 1927; Smith 1994.

¹¹² Firth 1915 213ff.; Smith 1994 372ff. Cf. also Zibelius-Chen 2001 22f.

¹¹³ Type Groups AII and AVII of Nordström 1972 84, 87f.

¹¹⁴ Williams 1986 27, 81f.; Edwards 2004 68; Geus 2006 348; Wengrow 2006 167ff.

¹¹⁵ Smith 1991 107f. (Cemetery 111); Williams 1986 Pl. 25 (Qustul).

¹¹⁶ From tomb L 24, Wenig 1978 117 Cat. 4; Williams 1986 Pls 34, 38. Its provenance was doubted by Bothmer 1979 179f. note 6.

¹¹⁷ Cf. A.A. O'Brien: The Serekh as an Aspect of the Iconography of Early Kingship. *JARCE* 33 (1996) 123–138.

¹¹⁸ By the First Dynasty, the rosette/star sign was associated with the king and in archaic writing was used as an alternative for the word *hꜣrw*, Horus, i.e., the king, see Loprieno 1995 20.

¹¹⁹ Williams 1980 16.

and created the early pharaonic state, symbols of which already existed in their native polity.¹²⁰ However, the great majority of the Nubian pottery vessels from Cemetery L may be dated to the period of Late A-Group contemporary with Dynasty 0 (c. 3200–3000 BC).¹²¹ The earliest known examples of Egyptian royal iconography, such as, e.g., the representation of the Red Crown on a late Naqada I (c. 3500 BC) pottery vessel from Abydos¹²² or the triumphal scenes in the painting from Hierakonpolis Tomb 100 (c. 3400–3300 BC) are much older than the Qustul censer.¹²³ It seems thus that it was the Qustul rulers who adopted symbols of royal authority developed in Egypt and not vice versa. But even if the symbols on the Qustul censer must lose their supposed significance as forerunners of pharaonic symbols, the censer preserves its importance as a marker of political developments in Nubia. Ceremonial incense burners of the type found in A-Group graves were used only in Nubia. The occurrence of Egyptian images of rulership on an object made for a Nubian chieftain hardly means anything else than that these images were, at least partly, understood in Nubia and adopted as signs that also possessed some sort of a Nubian reading.¹²⁴

The influence of the Upper Egyptian polities on the eve of their unification and the emergence of the pharaonic state¹²⁵ is also obvious in the case of another Lower Nubian polity formed more or less contemporarily with the polity around Qustul.¹²⁶ As already noted above, evidence for this second polity comes from Cemeteries 137 and 142 at Sayala. The funerary equipment of the richest grave (tomb 1) at Cemetery 137 contained stone vessels, copper axes and chisels, palettes with bird heads, a lion head of glazed quartz,¹²⁷ a mica plaque (mirror?) and two Egyptian maces. The handles of the latter were sheathed in gold. The

¹²⁰ Williams 1980; Williams 1986 163 ff.

¹²¹ Adams 1985 187 ff.

¹²² J.C. Payne: *Catalogue of the Predynastic Egyptian Collection in the Ashmolean Museum*. Oxford 1993 94, g. 34-774; Baines 1995b 95 f., g. 3.1.

¹²³ Quibell Green 1902 Pls LXXV LXXIX; B.J. Kemp: Photographs of the Decorated Tomb at Hierakonpolis. *JEA* 59 (1973) 36–43; for its dating, see W. Kaiser G. Dreyer: Umm el-Qaab: Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof, 2. Vorbericht. *MDAIK* 40 (1982) 211–269 242 f.

¹²⁴ Smith 1994 376 argues even more confidently: the Seyala princes were cognisant of and imitated Naqada rulership ideology, and [the] Naqada rulers were conscious that this was so.

¹²⁵ Kemp 1989 31 ff.

¹²⁶ For the dating, see Smith 1994 369 f.

¹²⁷ Firth 1927 38, Pl. 18; Lacovara 1998 g. 1.

sheathing of the smaller mace, with a pink quartz mace head,¹²⁸ was decorated in low relief with five registers of animal figures (wild animals and a stork),¹²⁹ among them an elephant trampling two serpents (Pl. 14).¹³⁰ It is supposed that the animal figures appearing on Late Predynastic, i.e., Naqada IIIa (c. 3200–3100 BC), prestige objects (combs, knife handles, ivory sickles), on votives such as siltstone palettes, and on symbols of authority such as ceremonial maces were emblems of spiritual forces which could also act as signifiers of groups of people.¹³¹ While these meanings were probably irrelevant for the Lower Nubian viewer, the mace itself as a sign of authority was not – neither for the A-Group chieftain who received it as a diplomatic gift nor for the Upper Egyptian ruler who sent it to him.

Not only emblematic symbols of rulership were imported from Egypt. Cylinder seals and impressions of seals of A-Group manufacture from Middle and Late A-Group contexts (Pl. 15)¹³² indicate that elements of the centralized administrative structure evolving in Late Predynastic Egypt were also adopted. The seals indicate that state goods were identified, controlled and redistributed using official markers the designs of which may have been connected to individual chieftains. At the same time, these designs may have represented the first steps towards the development of a Nubian writing system made under the inspiration of the evolving hieroglyphic writing.¹³³ Any such development was, however, halted for good by dramatic changes in the relationship between Egypt and the A-Group politics (see below).

From the Early A-Group phase onwards, Lower Nubian grave structures, burial positions and the composition of the grave inventories show the influence of Egyptian burial customs.¹³⁴ At the same time, Nubian influence may also be pointed out in the Egyptian mortuary

¹²⁸ Formerly JE 43883. The object was stolen in 1920 from the Cairo Museum.

¹²⁹ Firth 1927 204ff., g. 8, Pl. 18; Trigger 1976 42f., g. 10; Smith 1994 g. 1. The animals are identified and analogous representations listed by Smith 1994 365ff.

¹³⁰ I. Hofmann: Zur Kombination von Elefant und Riesenschlange im Altertum. *Anthropos* 65 (1970) 619–632; Smith 1994 365; Midant-Reynes 2000a 238.

¹³¹ Kemp 2000 236, with reference to A.M. Roth: *Egyptian Phyles in the Old Kingdom: the Evolution of a System of Social Organization*. Chicago 1991 199ff. For the associations between rulership and the scenes representing fighting animals cf. Williams Logan 1987.

¹³² For a discussion of the finds, see G. Björkman T. S. Ve-Sederbergh: Seals and Seal Impressions. in: Nordström 1972 117–118.

¹³³ Cf. Loprieno 1995 20ff.

¹³⁴ Cf. Williams 1991a 77ff.

complex: viz., Nubian-type cattle burials, known from the Middle/Late A-Group cemeteries at Qustul,¹³⁵ occur in the elite cemetery at Hierakonpolis, Locality 6.¹³⁶ However, while the cattle burials at Hierakonpolis may be explained as a consequence of the presence of a Nubian colony, it cannot be excluded that the adoption of Egyptian grave structures and burial customs may also imply a Nubian adoption of Egyptian mortuary beliefs. It cannot be decided, however, whether the occurrence of seated female pottery figures in A-Group graves¹³⁷ was influenced by the funerary statuettes of standing or seated men and women in Naqada I, II and III burials¹³⁸ or by terracotta female figurines (of different types, however) found in Late Neolithic (around 3500 BC) graves e.g. at el-Kadada¹³⁹ or does it indicate the independent emergence of native A-Group conceptions connected to fertility and afterlife.¹⁴⁰ The religious (?) background and meaning of the rather frequent finds of pottery strainers associated (?) with ostrich eggs in children's graves¹⁴¹ are similarly obscure.

Secondary burials found in a great number of Middle and Late A-Group tombs indicate that the tombs were marked on the surface. The stone circle superstructures discovered in Cemetery 268 at Tun-gala West-Afya¹⁴² are exceptional, but stone circles and other, even less solid kinds of grave superstructures may have been destroyed by erosion. Grave superstructures as well as the spatial hierarchy of tomb groups within individual cemeteries are expressions of social status and may also have been intended to secure the inheritance of status. Cemeteries with a hierarchically determined spatial structure and used for many generations may well have developed into sacred areas and places of tribal/group/family identity. In theory, an ancestral burial place is a place of ancestor worship and of associated mortuary offerings. The eventual religious connotations of A-Group grave superstructures remain nevertheless obscure. Due to the eroded surface of most cemeteries and/or the lack of minute observations, the evidence for

¹³⁵ Williams 1986 176.

¹³⁶ M.A. Hoffman: *The Predynastic of Hierakonpolis—An Interim Report*. Giza-Macomb, Ill. 1982 55f.; B. Adams: Hierakonpolis. in: Bard (ed.) 1999 371–374 373f.

¹³⁷ Cf. Nordström 1972 27.

¹³⁸ So Midant-Reynes 2000a 222 and cf. Midant-Reynes 2000b 49f.

¹³⁹ E.g., Welsby–Anderson (eds) 2004 45 Cat. 20.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Ucko 1968 405ff.; Wenig 1978 24.

¹⁴¹ Nordström 1972 27f.

¹⁴² Smith 1962 64ff.; Nordström 1972 27.

mortuary offerings performed at the tombs is limited. Offering places were observed on the west or south side of A-Group tumuli¹⁴³ and decapitated bovines were buried close to mounds covering rich burials.¹⁴⁴

On the whole, there is only scarce evidence that may be confidently interpreted as a manifestation of A-Group religious conceptions. But again, such evidence may have been destroyed by erosion. At a site at Nabta Playa dated to the Late Neolithic period (c. 5100–4700 BC) a megalithic complex consisting of an alignment of ten large stones, a circle of small upright slabs, and two slab-covered tumuli was discovered. A chamber under one of the tumuli contained the burial of a long-horned bull.¹⁴⁵ It was supposed by the excavators that the megalithic complex was oriented to the cardinal points and the summer solstice.¹⁴⁶ Independently from the interpretation of the complex as a whole, the bull burial, similarly to other cattle burials in the Nabta area, may be considered a testimony of some sort of a cow/bull cult

pre-gauging both the emergence of such cow-goddesses as Bat and Hathor and the very strong associations between Egyptian kings and bulls.¹⁴⁷

Other interpretations of the stones of the megalithic complex as symbols of a divinity or representations of ancestors are, however, more likely.¹⁴⁸ We shall see below (Chapter IV.3) that early C-Group cemeteries were guarded by worked upright-standing stones and also other, non-mortuary (?) sacred spaces were marked out in a similar manner.¹⁴⁹ Similar megalithic monuments in Egypt represent the roots of the stela tradition and may be regarded as ancestors of early cult precincts with complexes of standing stones (Hierakonpolis,¹⁵⁰ around 3300 BC?) or

¹⁴³ Smith 1962 64ff.

¹⁴⁴ Firth 1927 217; Williams 1986 (tombs L 3, 6, 7, 20, 25–27).

¹⁴⁵ F. Wendorf R. Schild N. Zedeno: A Late Neolithic Megalith Complex in the Eastern Sahara: A Preliminary Report. in: Krzyzaniak Kroeper Kobusiewicz (eds) 1996 125–132; Hendrickx Vermeersch 2000 34.

¹⁴⁶ For even more ambitious explanations, see F. Wendorf J.M. Malville: The Megalithic Alignments. in: Wendorf *et al.* 2001 489–502; R. Schild, unpubl. main paper submitted at the *Eleventh International Conference for Nubian Studies, Warsaw 27 August – 2 September 2006*. But see the doubts expressed by Wengrow 2006 57.

¹⁴⁷ I. Shaw: *Ancient Egypt. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford 2000 131f.

¹⁴⁸ J.C. de Moor: Standing Stones and Ancestor Worship. *Ugarit-Forschungen* 27 (1995) 1–20; Kemp 2000 231f.

¹⁴⁹ Steindorff 1935 38ff., Bietak 1968 24f.

¹⁵⁰ For the temple complex at Locality Hk29A, see Quibell Green 1902; B. Adams: *Ancient Hierakonpolis: Supplement*. Warminster 1974; *ead.*: *Ancient Nekhen. Garstang in the City of Hierakonpolis*. New Malden 1994 4ff.; Kemp 2000 228ff., g. 12.

statues (Coptos,¹⁵¹ around 3150 BC). A round-topped stone stela was found at Qustul, Cemetery L, yet its actual significance and connection with a burial remain obscure.¹⁵²

The aforementioned cattle burials at Qustul may indicate that there existed a cattle cult among the Lower Nubian cattle herders too. It is in this sense that the drawing of a bull or cow incised on an imported Naqada IIIa b (c. 3500–3200 BC) jar¹⁵³ from Aksha (Pl. 16) may be interpreted. The jar was found in a rich Terminal A-Group (c. 3150–2800 BC) grave, it was thus buried after a long period of use. The incised drawing may well have been made in connection with the burial.

An early form of cult place may also be identified. Caves or rock shelters with rock paintings on their walls or with rock drawings in their close neighbourhood discovered at Sayala/Khor Nashriya,¹⁵⁴ Korosko East¹⁵⁵ and Serra West¹⁵⁶ seem to have been places of domestic and perhaps also local religion, the nature of which remains obscure, however, before the significance of the paintings and drawings representing longhorned cattle, giraffes, elephants, and ostriches is properly understood (cf. Chapter VIII.2.1 and p. 30). These caves were associated with habitations or were habitations but part of the finds made in them, such as grinding stones with traces of red ochre, human and animal bone, may refer to religious activities as well. It is worth noting that all these sites seem to have been (re-)inhabited in C-Group times. During the C-Group new paintings representing cattle were added to the A-Group paintings on the ceiling of the Felsmalerei-Höhle at Sayala/Khor Nashriya.¹⁵⁷

In a recent paper, Hans-Joachim Nordström presented the preliminary results of his ongoing analysis of the cemeteries of the A-Group, concluding that

[t]he correlation of data from Middle A-Group and Terminal A-Group respectively, shows an increase in the number of burials reflecting a growth of the population and also a very clear advancement of the material culture—the Terminal phase represents indeed *the affluent A-Group*

¹⁵¹ Kemp 2000 230ff.

¹⁵² Williams 1989 137ff.

¹⁵³ Welsby–Anderson (eds) 2004 Cat. 242.

¹⁵⁴ Bietak–Engelmayer 1963.

¹⁵⁵ Smith 1962 79ff. Bietak–Engelmayer 1963 27ff. refer to the site as Wadi el-Arab.

¹⁵⁶ G.J. Verwers: The Survey from Faras to Gezira Dabarosa. *Kush* 10 (1962) 19–33 22.

¹⁵⁷ Bietak–Engelmayer 1963 38ff.

society. This affluence can be noted in practically all the ordinary village cemeteries from this period. Furthermore, as in Predynastic Egypt, one finds a shift towards a more complex structure with clear social inequality developed during the Terminal A-Group.¹⁵⁸

7. *The Contacts of the Late A-Group
with Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt*

Developments in the social, political and intellectual structure of Predynastic (Naqada III-Dynasty 0, c. 3200–3000 BC) and Early Dynastic (Dynasty 1–early Dynasty 2, c. 3000–2800 BC) Egypt and Terminal/Late A-Group Lower Nubia were, however, not collateral. The fertile sections of the Lower Nubian valley had a limited subsistence potential and sustained a small population¹⁵⁹ of agriculturalists and cattle herders living in scattered villages. While the scatters of small villages were replaced in Late Predynastic-Early Dynastic Egypt by agricultural towns which grew into centers of state administration, redistribution, and cult,¹⁶⁰ the size and geographical distribution of the productive areas in Lower Nubia and the extension of pastoral activities in the Eastern Sahara did not render possible the spontaneous emergence of larger A-Group settlements developing into towns.¹⁶¹

At the peak of the development of their socioeconomic and cultural structure, the A-Group polities reached the stage of complex chiefdom. As we have seen, long-distance trade created surpluses and brought about the development of specialized production and social inequality. By the period contemporary with Naqada III-Dynasty 0 we also see signs for the development of a more advanced social/economic organization. Though the chieftains of the complex chiefdoms emerging in the Middle–early Terminal A-Group phase ruled over a population the majority of which lived in tiny villages and camp-sites, these chiefdoms, with whom Late Predynastic Egypt maintained regular contacts, begun to display signs of acculturation and political concentration which were easily perceived by their Egyptian trading partners. The prosperity of the A-Group polities depended entirely on their trade—rst

¹⁵⁸ Nordström 2004: 139.

¹⁵⁹ For population estimates, see Trigger 1965: 156 ff.; Törk 1997a: 44 ff.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Kemp 1977: 189 ff.; Kemp 1989: 64 ff.; see also Bard 1994.

¹⁶¹ Cf. K.A. Bard, R.L. Carneiro: Patterns of Predynastic Settlement Location, Social Evolution, and the Circumscription Theory. *CRIPEL* 11 (1989): 15–23, 21.

with the rulers of Hierakonpolis and then with the Upper Egyptian Predynastic proto-kingdom which emerged in the early Naqada III phase around 3200–3150 BC from the united polities centred around This-Abydos, Naqada and Hierakonpolis.¹⁶² Not quite to the same extent, also the prosperity of the Upper Egyptian proto-kingdom depended on the long-distance trade mediated by the A-Group, especially since imported materials and their transformation into prestige goods by a growing class of artisans played a central role in the formation process that led to the emergence of the pharaonic state.¹⁶³ While the unification of the Upper Egyptian polities demanded a constant increase of the import, the independence of the affluent A-Group chiefdoms threatened with negative changes in the rentability of the trade.

Two rock drawings at the southern end of the Second Cataract at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman indicate that Late Predynastic rulers¹⁶⁴ sent military expeditions to Lower Nubia. One of the drawings (Pl. 17) depicts

[a]n empty *serekh* Immediately in front of the *serekh* is a prisoner, his arms bound behind his back with a bow, the sign used in later periods to write the name for Nubia (Ta-Sety). In front of the prisoner are three signs, the meaning of which remains uncertain. A pool of water, the hieroglyphic sign for the letter *ṣ*, may indicate the name of the prisoner or his territory. Two town signs surmounted by birds may also be symbols or names of defeated settlements. The end of the scene shows the prostrate bodies of victims, underneath a high-prowed vessel. This last element probably stands for the ships which bore the Egyptian expedition southwards into Lower Nubia.¹⁶⁵

Another drawing (Pl. 18)¹⁶⁶ shows a large scorpion holding a bound prisoner on a rope, a second figure brandishing a weapon and a third one shooting arrows towards the prisoner. The prisoner who wears a feather on his head is probably a Lower Nubian enemy while the scorpion may be the representation of a ruler wearing the title

¹⁶² Kemp 1989 35 ff.; Bard 1994; Wilkinson 1999; Wilkinson 2000; Midant-Reynes 2000a 231 ff.; Bard 2000; Warburton 2001 114 ff.

¹⁶³ Cf. Midant-Reynes 2000a 236 ff.

¹⁶⁴ For the dating of the drawings to the Late Predynastic period (Dynasty 0), see W. Helck: Zwei Einzelprobleme der thinitischen Chronologie. *MDAIK* 26 (1970) 83–85; W.J. Murnane: The Gebel Sheikh Suleiman Monument: Epigraphic Remarks. in: Williams Logan 1987 Appendix C 282–285.

¹⁶⁵ Wilkinson 1999 177 ff.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. W. Needler: A Rock-drawing on Gebel Sheikh Suliman (Near Wadi Halfa) Showing a Scorpion and Human Figures. *JARCE* 6 (1967) 87–91 Pl. I g. 3.

Scorpion¹⁶⁷ or perhaps King Scorpion of Dynasty 0 who is depicted on the famous macehead dedicated in the early temple at Hierakonpolis.¹⁶⁸

Further campaigns against *T3-sjy*, Ta-Sety,¹⁶⁹ are recorded on a wooden label of King Aha, the first ruler of the First Dynasty (c. after 3000 BC)¹⁷⁰ and a fragmentary limestone stela of King Khasekhemwy, the last ruler of the Second Dynasty (before 2686 BC).¹⁷¹ It is traditionally assumed that the expeditions recorded in the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman rock drawings were directed to Lower Nubia in order to establish direct control over the southern trade by destroying the power of the A-Group rulers.¹⁷² It is also supposed that the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman drawings actually mark the violent end of the A-Group chiefdoms. This is contradicted by the aforementioned monuments of Aha and Khasekhemwy, which indicate the existence of some sort of polity or polities in Lower Nubia continuing to control Egypt's access to southern goods. The latest burials at Qustul Cemetery L seem to be contemporary with the first half of Dynasty 1 (c. 3000–2890 BC) and Egyptian imports of this period also occur in other Late A-Group and assemblages.¹⁷³ The Gebel Sheikh Suleiman rock drawings attest thus only the beginnings, and mark the territorial goals, of the expansionist policy developed by the rulers of the First and Second Dynasties who were increasingly aware of the advantages of direct trade contacts with the territories south of the Second Cataract. As suggested by Bruce Trigger,

It is likely that Egypt for the first time possessed the economic organization to carry on direct trade with the south, thereby circumventing Lower Nubian middlemen and toll masters. An increasing demand for raw materials from the south also may have made direct contact with that area more urgent than it had been formerly.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ For King Scorpion, see Wilkinson 1999 56 f., 179.

¹⁶⁹ The toponym is translated 'Bow-land' by R.H. Pierce in the volumes of the *FHN*. A similar translation was already suggested by Griffith 1922 78. More recently, the translations 'Country of the Three-Curved-Bow' or 'Land of the *St*-Bow' were suggested with reference to the special Nubian type of bow used in the toponym as hieroglyph for *st* instead of the standard Egyptian sign for 'bow', see A.K. Vinogradov: On the Rendering of the Toponym *T3 STJ*. *CdE* 75 (2000) 223–234.

¹⁷⁰ Wilkinson 1999 180, g. 5.3.3.

¹⁷¹ Wilkinson 1999 180, g. 5.3.4.

¹⁷² Cf. Smith 1991.

¹⁷³ Nordström 1972 28 f.

¹⁷⁴ Trigger 1976 45.

It seems that the introduction of a new, aggressive Lower Nubian policy in the Early Dynastic period was preceded by the withdrawal of Egyptian presence in Palestine around the end of the First Dynasty: the comparison of the advantages of the two sources of exotic wares, the Near Eastern and the Nubian, was apparently in favour of the latter.¹⁷⁵ It was shown by Hans-Joachim Nordström¹⁷⁶ that northern Lower Nubia between the Dakka region and the First Cataract was only sparsely populated in the Late A-Group period (c. 3150–2800 BC). It may also be supposed that towards the end of the Late A-Group period this area was already under Egyptian control. The fact that the production of Late A-Group pottery ceases around 2800 BC concurrently with the end of the influx of Egyptian imports signals the collapse of Late A-Group social and economic structure and the end of the A-Group polities in all Lower Nubia. Egypt's southern trade was going to be established in a way that there was no place in it for a native Lower Nubian population.

¹⁷⁵ Wilkinson 1999: 180; for the connection between the withdrawal from Palestine and the rise of Byblos, see *ibid.* 160ff.

¹⁷⁶ Nordström 2002; 2004.

