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Front cover. Cattle and two goats\gazelle from Site GRD-14 in the Wadi Gorgod (photo Hamad Mohamed Hamdeen).

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Heart scarabs and other heart-related objects in New Kingdom Nubia

Rennan Lemos

Introduction

The archaeology of Nubia in the New Kingdom is strongly marked by the Egyptian colonial presence in the region. Material assemblages from New Kingdom sites across the Middle Nile include a majority of Egyptian-style objects in both settlements and cemeteries. These objects materialised foreign colonisation in local contexts and impacted Nubian populations, while triggering social and cultural change.

Change in New Kingdom Nubia has been traditionally interpreted from an Egyptological perspective. Scholars interpreted Egyptian-style material culture in local contexts as an expression of the Egyptianisation of Nubian populations. However, these acculturation frameworks ignored, for instance, the presence of Nubian handmade pottery at New Kingdom temple-towns (Smith 1995; 2003, 116; Rose 2017, 472; Parkinson and Spencer 2017, 214; Budka 2017a, 123) and the occasional presence of flexed Nubian-style burials in predominantly Egyptian-style cemeteries (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 213, 239; Smith 2003, 162-163). Particularly in cemeteries, the continuation of Nubian traditions can also be identified, e.g. the use of penannular earrings and bangles made of stone or ivory/bone, as well as other Nubian-style jewellery (Smith 2003, 107-108; Lemos 2020, 12-13).

In this paper, I will focus on the New Kingdom corpus of heart scarabs (and related objects) from cemeteries throughout Nubia. I will follow a perspective that emphasises the social role performed by 'global objects' in local 'contact spaces' (Pitts and Versluys 2021; Stockhammer and Athanassov 2018). Recent approaches based on cultural entanglements have focused on Nubian agency in processes of cultural contact (e.g. van Pelt 2013). However, Nubian society's inherent complexity and diversity have remained underexplored in explanations of 'Egyptian' and 'Nubian' interactions. On the contrary, I argue that approaches to New Kingdom Nubia should highlight Nubia's internal variability and the existence of various versions of Nubia, i.e. different social spaces characterised by specific patterns of adoption and use of foreign objects (Lemos 2020). In this perspective, the same artefacts would perform different roles in different social spaces in Nubia; e.g. elite cemeteries associated with large colonial centres versus individual tombs in 'peripheral' zones versus non-elite cemeteries.

In contrast to previous Egyptocentric approaches that emphasised foreign material culture as representing the acculturation of Nubia in the New Kingdom, the corpus of heart scarabs from New Kingdom Nubia allows us to explore the different ways in which foreign, global objects created alternative social relations within Nubia, therefore materialising a variety of social settings in a context of cultural diversity. Heart scarabs were highly restricted in New Kingdom Nubia and most of them seem to have been imported from Egypt. However, this does not mean that heart scarabs performed the same tasks in local contexts as they would have in Egypt, nor did they work in a singular 'Nubian' way that interacted with 'Egyptian' patterns. Different burial communities would have different expectations from these objects, which would then be experienced in distinctive ways (Lemos 2020).

Nubia in the New Kingdom: colonisation through objects

In the New Kingdom, Nubia became an Egyptian colony. At the beginning of the 18th dynasty, fortresses constructed in the Middle Kingdom in Lower Nubia were reoccupied and remodelled (see Emery *et al.* 1979, 15-16; Vogel 2010, 427), while military expeditions were sent to Upper Nubia. With the defeat of the Kerma Kingdom, the Egyptians settled in the Middle Nile as far as the 5th Cataract (Davies 2017; see also Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991). From the end of the 18th dynasty, walled temple-towns were built across

the Middle Nile. These included a main stone temple and other cultic spaces, administrative and storage facilities, and associated cemeteries (Kemp 1978; Vieth 2018; Spencer 2019).

Egyptian colonisation was strongly supported by the Egyptian objectscape that flooded Nubia in the New Kingdom, replacing earlier objects and patterns associated with Nubian practices and displays of identity. The Egyptian global/colonial objectscape included various pottery types and architectural styles in settlements and, in cemeteries, coffins, masks, jewellery, scarabs/seals/amulets, shabtis, cosmetic items, tools and weapons, etc. This objectscape has been traditionally interpreted as materialising the full acculturation of Nubians (e.g. among others, Bietak 1968; Säve-Söderbergh 1989). More recently, scholars have emphasised Nubian agency in encounters with Egypt, which produced cultural entanglements (e.g. among others, Smith and Buzon 2017). In cultural entanglement equations, ‘Nubia’ and ‘Egypt’ were considered as cultural unities that clashed and blended, producing mixed displays of identity and material culture. Most recently, based on different distributions of the same global objectscape, I have stressed Nubia’s internal diversity by demonstrating the existence of distinctive social spaces into which specific burial communities were inserted (Lemos 2020; see also Näser 2017). These communities had different expectations of, and demands for, foreign objects, resulting in varying engagements with Egyptian material colonisation. Instead of materialising colonial homogeneity, the Egyptian-style objects created alternative material realities characterising different versions of Nubia, which interacted differently with Egyptian material colonisation.

The New Kingdom corpus of heart scarabs and related objects from Nubia

Heart scarabs, pectorals and heart amulets were part of the Egyptian objectscape brought to Nubia in the New Kingdom colonial period and have never been studied as a coherent group. A few isolated publications exist, including Vercoutter (1975), who discussed two heart scarabs in the shape of *wesekh* pectorals from Sai, concluding that these are hybrid objects. Thill (1985) published a further example of a pectoral-heart scarab from Sai, whilst New Kingdom heart scarabs mostly appear in reports of excavations in Nubia or exhibition catalogues (e.g. Welsby and Anderson 2004, 117, 291).

In her 1996 overview of New Kingdom material culture in Nubian cemeteries, Thill catalogued 60 heart scarabs from various sites. I have expanded her corpus by including recently excavated examples (e.g. at Sai and Tombos)¹ and objects that traditional Egyptological typologies would not allow us to consider together with ‘pure’ heart scarabs (e.g. a commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III that I suggest became a heart scarab at Soleb; see Fowler 2017 and discussion below).

I have catalogued a total of 71 objects from sites across Sudan (Table 1).² This includes traditional heart scarabs with variations, pectorals with or without scarabs, and heart amulets. These objects have traditionally been considered together due to their similarities – they usually contain a scarab within

¹ I am grateful to Julia Budka and Stuart Tyson Smith for providing information on their recent fieldwork at Sai and Tombos respectively.

² Two other objects could be possibly considered. The first is a human-head/ba bird heart scarab (T8p2) from Soleb (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 148, 378). The excavators dated this heart scarab to the Meroitic period, although I believe a New Kingdom date is more likely. However, I could not locate it in the Sudan National Museum to determine its date (I am grateful to alHassan Ahmed Mohamed for his assistance). New Kingdom pyramid tombs at sites like Soleb were essentially collective and reused throughout the New Kingdom and later periods (see Spence 2019). However, results of recent excavations in Tomb 26 at Cemetery SAC5 on Sai Island suggest that earlier heart scarabs could move to upper layers, usually associated with later uses or plundering of tombs (Budka in press), which might be the case with Soleb object T8p2. The second is a crude faience ‘plaque’ from Amara West, now in the Petrie Museum (UC43384; EES Object Card AW.OC.38-39.0213a). Coarse, probably locally produced heart scarabs were used in New Kingdom Nubia. An undecorated example made of a material similar to the plaster used to smooth the walls of mortuary chambers has been recently excavated at Sai Tomb 26 (Budka in press). Simpler plaques have also been used as heart scarabs at Aniba (e.g. Steindorff 1937, plate 48, 8). Object UC43384 at the Petrie Museum comes from a vaulted magazine in the southeast part of the Amara West temple. Mortuary objects occasionally appear in urban sites in New Kingdom Nubia, where they were probably produced from the beginning of the 19th dynasty.

Site		Total	Reference
Dakka	Cemetery 96/1	1	Firth 1915
Sayala	Cemetery 135	1	Firth 1927
Kuban	Cemetery 110	2	Firth 1927
Aniba	Cemetery S/SA	33	Steindorff 1937
Toshka	Tomb of Hekanefer	2	Simpson 1963
Debeira	Site 37	1	Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991
	Site 185 (Fadrus)	1	
Buhen	Cemetery H	2	Randall-MacIver and Woolley 1911
Sai	SAC5	20	Minault-Gout and Thill 2012; Budka in press
Soleb	New Kingdom Cemetery	6	Schiff Giorgini 1971
Tombos	New Kingdom Cemetery	1	Tombos Project Website

Table 1. Corpus of heart scarabs and related objects from New Kingdom Nubia.

their decorative scheme – and ritual significance as protective objects, in Egypt mostly related to the idea of rebirth associated with the Sun god (e.g. Minault-Gout and Thill 2012). I have decided to consider all these together because they seem to have performed similar tasks as foreign objects in local contexts. Heart scarabs have been predominantly found in elaborate tombs. However, these were also found in other types of tombs. Rock tombs, pyramid and courtyard tombs or multi-chambered shaft tombs – which originally might have included a pyramid and/or courtyard superstructure – are usually associated with elite groups in Egypt (Smith 1992), and in Nubia (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991; Spence 2019). However, heart scarabs have been found in end and double end niches, mud-brick chamber tombs in pits, and simpler shaft tombs, which would indicate, among other contextual factors, a non-elite status. These objects were restricted in Nubia, and within each cemetery, as I have demonstrated in my analysis of distributions of the Egyptian global/colonial objectscape in New Kingdom Nubia (Lemos 2020). Therefore, access to such objects outside elite contexts would have involved specific consumption strategies, as I will discuss below.

The distribution of heart scarabs across New Kingdom cemeteries shows that the adoption of these objects was unequal. Aniba shows the highest concentration of heart scarabs and related objects from New Kingdom Nubia (33), followed by Sai (20) and Soleb (6).³ At other sites, heart scarabs either appear in the tombs of high-ranking officials, such as the tomb of Hekanefer at Toshka, or were sporadically adopted under specific circumstances in non-elite or ‘peripheral’ contexts; e.g. Fadrus (see discussion below).

Typology

Heart scarabs from New Kingdom Nubia follow the same overall typology as those from Egypt. Based on the results of French excavations at Sai, Minault-Gout and Thill (2012, 199) proposed a typology, which I have followed, excluding one of their subcategories (Id) and adding two others (classes V and VI) to accommodate types that were not found at Sai and only appear at other sites (Figure 1). The types excavated in New Kingdom Nubia find parallels in Egypt, although some categories appear more frequently than in Egypt; e.g. composite heart scarab-pectorals in the form of a *wesekh* collar,⁴ while other types are unique

³ I believe that the number of heart scarabs from Soleb would be considerably higher had the tombs been found intact. Compared to other sites, Soleb is characterised by a larger number of restricted objects (Lemos 2020).

⁴ The only Egyptian example of a composite heart scarab-pectoral comes from the tomb of Aperel at Saqqara (Zivie 1990, 131).



Figure 1. Classes of New Kingdom heart scarabs and related objects from Nubia. Classes Ia, Ib, Ic, IIa, IIIb, IVa, IVb (Minault-Gout and Thill 2012, pls 117-118); Class IIIc (Steindorff 1937, pl. 50); Classes IId and VI (photos by Ägyptisches Museum Georg Steindorff, Leipzig); Classes IIb, IIc, IIIa, V (photos by R. Lemos; courtesy of A. Minault-Gout and F. Thill, and the Ägyptisches Museum Georg Steindorff, Leipzig).

Class	Type	Description
I	Ia	All the elements of the beetle are present
	Ib	Striated elytra
	Ic	Winged scarab
II	IIa	Absent prothorax and striated elytra
	IIb	Smooth body
	IIc	Striated elytra
	IId	Vulture shaped obverse
III	IIIa	Traditional heart with flat base
	IIIb	Heart with human head
	IIIc	Traditional heart
IV	IVa	Shoulders ending in falcon heads
	IVb	Shoulders ending in snake heads
V	V	Flattened plaque
VI	VI	Naos-shaped pectoral

Table 2. Types of heart scarabs and related objects in New Kingdom Nubia.

to Nubia; e.g. type IId heart scarabs, the only example of which was found at Aniba (Steindorff 1937, plate 48, 18).

My proposed typology includes 6 broad classes: I) traditional scarabs; II) scarabs with a human head; III) heart amulets; IV) pectorals in the form of a *wesekh* collar with a heart scarab in the centre; V) flattened plaques; VI) naos shaped pectorals with a heart scarab in the centre. Classes V and VI do not appear in Minault-Gout and Thill's typology. Fourteen types of heart scarabs and related objects were found in New Kingdom Nubia (Table 2).

Types IId, IVa and IVb are particularly unusual, and are combinations of Egyptian-style objects in vogue in the New Kingdom (e.g. Lilyquist 2003, 196; Roehrig *et al.* 2005, 212). Living in a colony would have imposed various material challenges to local communities consuming foreign objects.

Types Ia heart scarabs are the most common type in New Kingdom Nubia. The other types represent contingent preferences where they were excavated (Figure 2). Types IId, IVa and IVb are particularly unusual, and are combinations of Egyptian-style objects in vogue in the New Kingdom (e.g. Lilyquist 2003, 196; Roehrig *et al.* 2005, 212). Living in a colony would have imposed various material challenges to local communities consuming foreign objects.

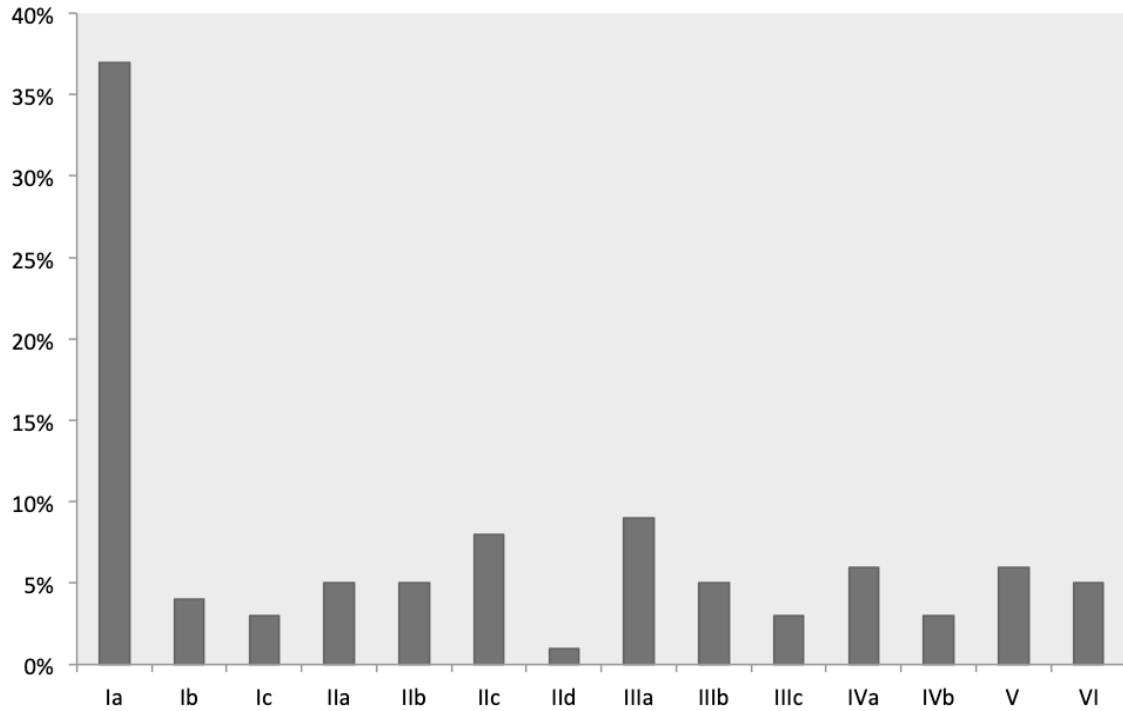


Figure 2. Frequency of types of heart scarabs and related objects in New Kingdom Nubia.

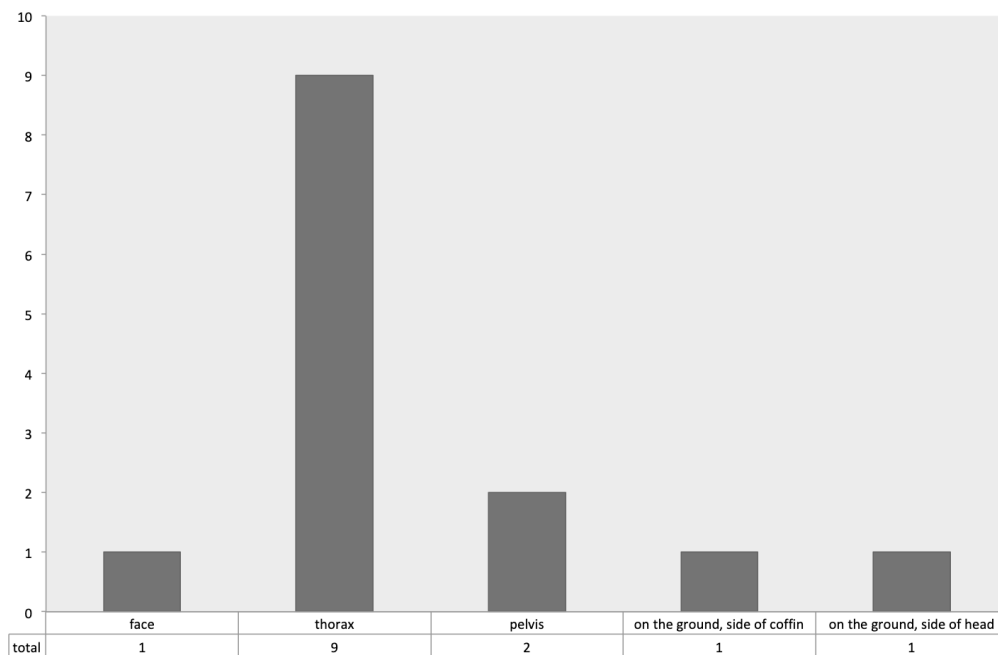


Figure 3. Position of heart scarabs and other heart related objects found *in situ* (n=14).

Creatively combining objects into a single item would have made it more feasible for local elites to import desired goods. The fact that most composite pectoral-heart scarabs were found in Nubia supports this interpretation, even if they were manufactured in Egypt.

Most of the heart scarabs are made of stone (86%; n=69). Only 14% (n=69) of the analysed corpus are made of faience or plaster. Most of the stone types used to manufacture heart scarabs are not found in Sudan. This further suggests that these objects were imported.



Figure 4. A serpentine heart scarab was found beside the coffin/body of Overseer of Goldsmiths Khnummose in an intact chamber inside Tomb 26 at Sai (adapted from Budka 2017b, 75; courtesy of the AcrossBorders Project).

Uses

Only a few intact contexts have been excavated in Sudan, which makes it difficult to determine with certainty how people used heart scarabs and similar objects (Figure 3). However, the intact contexts available suggest that they were mainly used around the chest of the deceased – a possible indication of an attempt to display cultural affinities with Egypt (see Malaise 1978, 64).

Fourteen intact contexts, including heart scarabs and similar objects, have been excavated at New Kingdom sites in Nubia. Most were found in the thorax area of the deceased, which suggests an Egyptian-style use of heart scarabs suspended around the neck. Two examples were found on the pelvis, and another on the face. These might represent taphonomical processes that resulted in the movement of burial features – including the later placement of interments in burial chambers housing earlier burials (see discussion below). Two other examples (from Soleb and Sai) were found on the sides of the body/coffin (Figure 4). Malaise (1978, 66) believes that, in Egypt, heart scarabs were originally placed on the mouth of the deceased. However, based on the positioning of other examples from Nubia, I believe this is unlikely.

In addition to the position of heart scarabs within burials, the methods of fixing or positioning such objects can help us understand their use in burials in New Kingdom Nubia. Twenty-eight heart scarabs were pierced. They could be suspended horizontally, from the sides (Figure 5), or like a pendant. In all cases, the idea was to hang the object from a string/wire on the neck of the individual, which would position the object on the chest area of the body.

Uses of heart scarabs in New Kingdom Nubia suggest an alignment with Egyptian standards regarding the placement of heart scarabs in burials (see Smith 1992, 48). Alongside materials, decoration and the



Figure 5. Anonymous serpentinite heart scarab from Tomb 60 at Aniba (Steindorff 1937, plate 49, 19). A space reserved for a name and title in the first line of the inscription was usually left blank, which further suggests that these objects were imported from Egypt (courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum Georg Steindorff, Leipzig).

desire of some individuals to possess such objects in an environment with limitations suggest that the individuals who included such objects in their burials were trying to align themselves with Egyptian burial customs. Emphasising the inclination of some individuals towards Egyptian burial customs does not explain the social role of foreign heart scarabs in local contexts, as it imposes foreign logics upon local communities, therefore denying Nubia its status as a complex and diverse society. Heart scarabs offer a basis for us to discuss the complex relationships behind their usage in burials beyond Egyptianisation or the excessive cultural focus of entanglement approaches, which sees objects as representative of ethnic identities.

Shaping up alternative material realities through standardising heart scarabs

The fact that heart scarabs were mostly restricted to elite cemeteries and that uses in New Kingdom Nubia suggest cultural affinities with Egypt would make us think that these objects materialised the acculturation or Egyptianisation of local populations. However, the examples below prove that the same heart scarab could act alternatively,

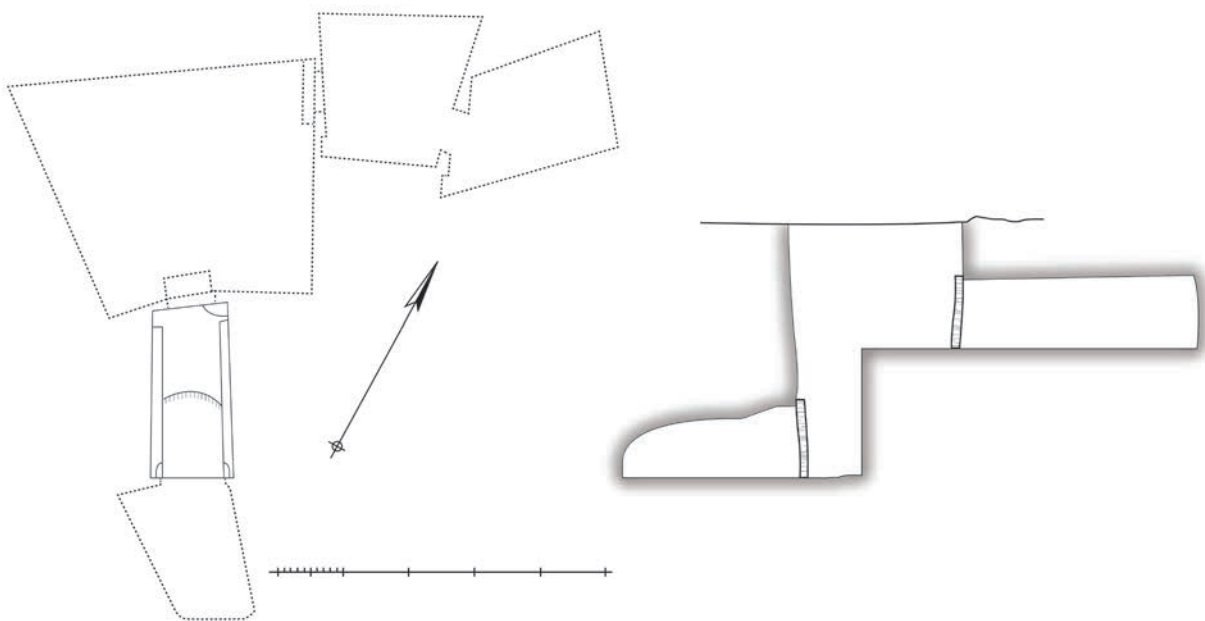


Figure 6. Plan and section of Tomb S91 at Aniba. The section drawing was not included in Steindorff's original publication of Cemetery S/SA (after Steindorff 1937, plan 33; Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler 2019, 62; courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum Georg Steindorff, Leipzig).



Figure 7. The heart scarab of Taneferet from Tomb S91 at Aniba (photos by R. Lemos; courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum Georg Steindorff, Leipzig).



Figure 8. One of the heart scarabs belonging to Weser from Tomb S91 at Aniba (photos by R. Lemos; courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum Georg Steindorff, Leipzig).

creating distinctive material realities within New Kingdom Nubia.

Case study 1: Colonial elites at Aniba

It is difficult to access individual experience through the archaeological record. However, sometimes the past allows us to glimpse how specific individuals behaved, and what they thought of and expected from life (and death). Tomb S91 at Aniba provides an example of individual engagement with material culture that informs us about society. The eastern chamber of Tomb S91 was the only intact context excavated at Cemetery S/SA. This was because the chamber was cut at a deeper level than the disturbed western chambers, which concealed it from looters (Figure 6).

The chamber housed the burials of the scribe Weser and the lady of the house Taneferet. Both were placed in black-painted wooden anthropoid coffins with yellow decoration typical of the 18th dynasty in Egypt. Different types of objects were deposited in the chamber, including 28 vessels of different types. Based on its ceramic assemblage, the tomb seems to have been used from the early 18th to the 19th dynasty (Helmbold-Doyé and Seiler 2019, 62). Due to limited space, all objects seem to bear a close relationship with the bodies, although some objects were placed on or inside the coffins, such as heart scarabs.

Taneferet possessed a type IIB human-head heart scarab made of dark serpentinite, which was found on her chest. The heart scarab is inscribed with Chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead (Figure 7). Her name and title were inscribed on an alabaster vase

placed next to her coffin (Steindorff 1937, 200, 251). The hieroglyphs on the base of Taneferet's heart scarab were carved then painted yellow, possibly to match the decoration of the coffin. Based on my first-hand examination of the object in Leipzig, I believe that her name was possibly later painted in a blank space in the first line of the inscription. The name would have eroded, as it was only painted instead of carved. A similar theory has been proposed for some of the shabtis belonging to Ranefer found in Tomb SA34 at Aniba (Olson 1996, 330), although my interpretation of Taneferet's heart scarab remains

speculative.

Weser, on the other hand, possessed two heart scarabs inscribed with his name and Chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead. I have examined one of these heart scarabs in Leipzig (Figure 8). It is a type IIc human-headed heart scarab with an *ib*-shaped base. The hieroglyphs were carved. The other is type Ib and has a similar *ib*-shaped base (Steindorff 1937, plate 48, 15). According to Steindorff, both were placed on the right side of the man's chest, but on top of his coffin's lid (Steindorff 1937, 199).

The number of heart scarabs is, overall, greater at Aniba, and access to these objects was more difficult at sites such as Sai and Soleb, where more adaptation took place, including the use of similar objects as heart scarabs. But even at Aniba these objects seem to have been more restricted than others. That Weser had two heart scarabs placed on his coffin's chest generates two explanations.⁵ They either indicate his desire to display his exceptional ability to access restricted objects, or his ability to establish powerful connections in life with those who offered him two heart scarabs, placed on top of his coffin after his body was sealed inside. In either case, those involved were able to access restricted objects to a greater extent than the average elite person in New Kingdom Nubia, and this would have been displayed at the moment of burial, therefore being an effective way of negotiating local power through foreign objects (see Smith and Buzon 2014).

The burial of Weser and Taneferet reinforces the fact that heart scarabs were restricted and unequally distributed in New Kingdom Nubia, and that this drove individuals to either adapt to access objects or to display their greater ability to consume Egyptian-style objects as a materialisation of their power. However, would this desire to display their affinities with Egyptian burial customs be appreciated by an Egyptian living in Thebes? In New Kingdom Egypt, heart scarabs were individual objects used to magically protect the deceased's heart – the centre of one's individuality – and elite individuals only possessed one inscribed piece (see Smith 1992). In Nubia, a colonial necessity to display power through one's ability to consume restricted objects resulted in alternative roles for heart scarabs, which could be doubled by second-generation settlers or indigenous people living and dying in the colony, outside of the mainstream of Egyptian mortuary culture.⁶ However, such a practice would probably make little sense in Egypt.

Case study 2: Adapting to possess at Soleb

A commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III was found in Tomb 4 at Soleb (Figure 9). The disturbed pyramid tomb included a vertical shaft leading to three subterranean chambers, which were in use from the late 18th dynasty until at least the reign of Rameses II (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 112). The archaeological context and grave goods suggest that the people buried in Tomb 4 had access to more restricted items such as shabtis, canopic jars, stirrup finger rings and heart scarabs – another example from the same tomb is a schist heart scarab bearing the name of Mekhu (Schiff Giorgini 1971, 120). Objects were found either associated with bone clusters or on the ground.

Commemorative scarabs appeared in the late 18th dynasty and were used almost exclusively during this period. Most of these objects were manufactured under Amenhotep III and celebrate his achievements (Blankenberg-van Delden 1969; Demarée 2011). These large scarabs can probably be considered among the greatest examples of global objects, as they were specifically manufactured to be sent to all parts of the Egyptian empire.

⁵ If this is actually the case, Weser's use of heart scarabs embodied an alternative, colonial ritual practice of foreign objects, suggesting innovation in the context of the ancient Nile valley mortuary landscape.

⁶ Strontium isotope analysis of human remains from New Kingdom Tombs proved that both Egyptian settlers and indigenous individuals were buried together (Buzon and Simonetti 2013). Recent strontium isotope analysis also demonstrated that all sampled individuals buried alongside Egyptian-style objects in Tomb 26 at Sai, some of which bore Egyptian names, were native to Nubia (Retzmann *et al.* 2019).

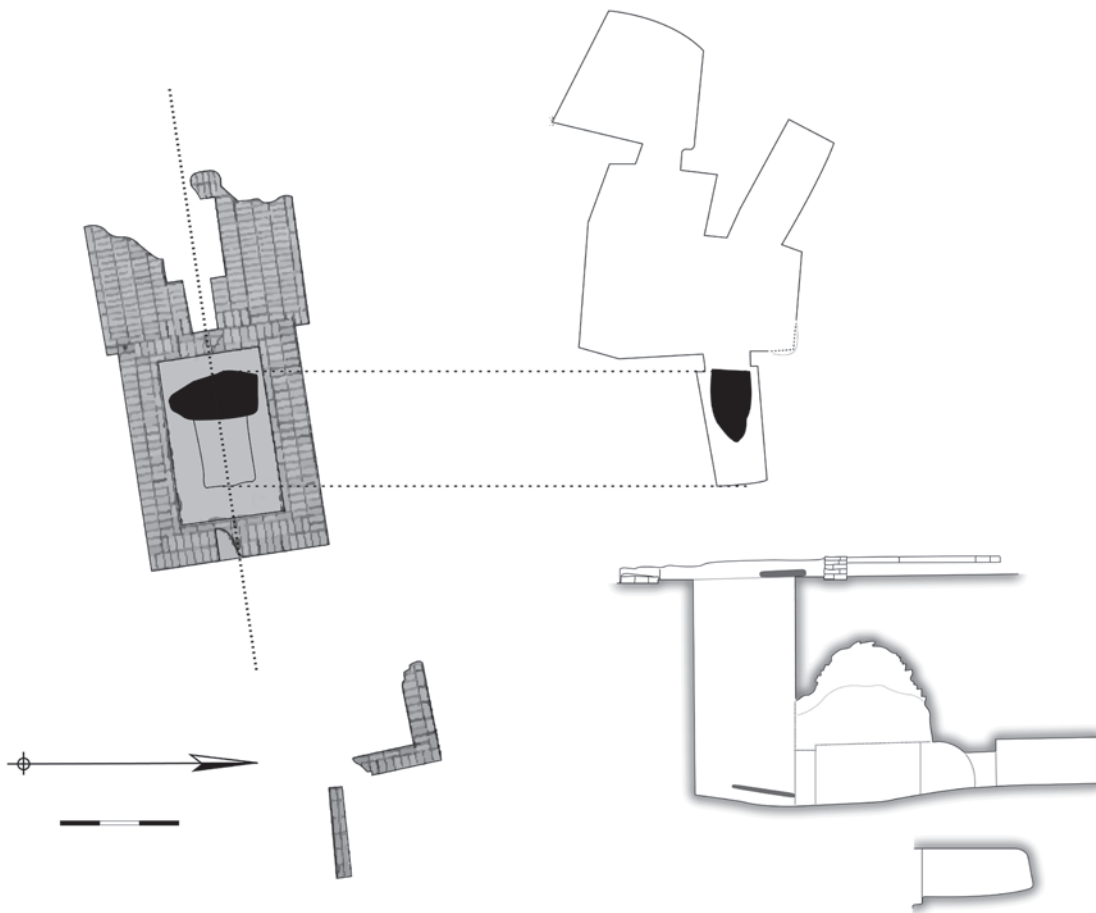


Figure 9. Tomb 4 at Soleb showing details of the remaining pyramid superstructure and subterranean chambers (after Schiff Giorgini 1971, 112-114; courtesy of the Schiff Giorgini Foundation).

The commemorative scarabs of Amenhotep III can be divided into five categories based on the long inscription on the reverse of these objects (Blankenberg-van Delden 1969, 4): (1) Marriage scarabs, commemorating the marriage between the Pharaoh and Queen Tiye and describing the limits of the Egyptian empire, dating from the beginning of the reign; (2) Wild-bull hunt scarabs, dating from Year Two; (3) Lion hunt scarabs, dating from the first ten years; (4) Gilukhepa scarabs, commemorating the arrival of the Mitannian princess, dating from Year Ten; and (5) Lake scarabs, celebrating the digging of an artificial lake in homage of Queen Tiye, dating from Year Eleven.

One lake scarab in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection (object 35.3.1) includes an inscription on its obverse: 'The good god, Nebmaatira, beloved of Horus Lord of Buhen' (Hayes 1959, 233). The inscription demonstrates that commemorative scarabs were sent to far regions of the Egyptian empire (Lansing 1936, 14; Hayes 1959, 231), although most of the known commemorative scarabs have no identified provenance, as the majority of these objects came from the antiquities market. Later excavations have changed this, and proved that the commemorative scarabs fulfilled their propagandistic function outside Egypt. For instance, a Gilukhepa scarab was excavated at Beit Shean (Goldwasser 2002) and others were also attributed to Syria-Palestine (Blankenberg-van Delden 1969, 129-133). The Soleb example also offers information on archaeological context and is the only contextualised example from New Kingdom Nubia



Figure 10. A commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III transformed into a heart scarab from Tomb 4 at Soleb (Collezione Schiff Giorgini, inv. 240; courtesy of Collezioni Egittologiche, Università di Pisa).

177; Malaise 1978, 50). However, I would argue that what defines a heart scarab is the object's materiality, and it is that which establishes how these objects were understood and used. This view is supported by the existence of anepigraphic heart scarabs, which seem to have fulfilled the same ritual role without bearing any texts.

Both heart scarabs and commemorative scarabs have material similarities. These objects are large, measuring between 50-110mm and shaped in the form of a beetle, with a flat base where a long hieroglyphic inscription would be inscribed. Occasionally, these bear inscriptions on the obverse of the beetle as is the case with the heart scarab of Paheri found in Tomb SA17 at Aniba, which reads 'For the ka of Paheri' (Steindorff 1937, 87).

The large scarab from Soleb Tomb 4 measures 83x56mm and belongs to the Lion hunt class of scarabs (Figure 10). It was made of blue/green faience⁸ and bears a bronze tube fixed transversally on top of the beetle's head by wires fixed through the original longitudinal hole (Blankenberg-van Delden 1969, 47; Schiff Giorgini 1971, 120). Blankenberg-van Delden (1969, 10) notes that a longitudinal hole running through the scarab's body is the rule for those objects. The only example in the Blankenberg-van Delden corpus bearing this feature is the one from Soleb (Blankenberg-van Delden 1969, 97). This also presents traces of gold leaf (Bresciani and Silvano 2018, 48, pl. IV, 46), a characteristic of 18th dynasty heart scarabs that does not appear on commemorative scarabs (cf. Winlock 1948, pl. XXII). I would, therefore, argue that this large scarab has been repurposed, presumably for someone unable to read the original hieroglyphic inscription locally, or for someone for whom texts were not considered important.⁹ The reuse of the Soleb scarab indicates that local expectations for heart scarabs were developing in Nubia leading to adaptations

(Schiff Giorgini 1971, 119-120).⁷

Unlike other commemorative scarabs found in Egypt and Syria-Palestine, the Soleb scarab was found in a funerary context. The tomb was reused and plundered and the commemorative scarab was found lying on the ground. I would suggest, however, that the object in question was no longer a commemorative scarab by the time it was deposited in Soleb Tomb 4 – it had been locally transformed into a heart scarab.

Heart scarabs were considered important by the individuals buried in Soleb Tomb 4, as attested by the heart scarab of Mekhu from the same tomb. Scholars have proposed that what essentially characterises a heart scarab is the spell from the Book of the Dead found on the reverse of these objects (Miniaci *et al.* 2018,

⁷Commemorative scarab 35.3.1 at the MET possibly came from Buhen, as its inscription would suggest. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the object was indirectly bought from a dealer near Wadi Halfa (Blankenberg-van Delden 1969, 143). A further fragmentary commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III was retrieved at Meroe by Garstang at Palace M294 (Török 1997, § 38, § 97.1, figure 118). The role of earlier objects in later Nubian contexts is still to be studied (see Knight *et al.* 2019).

⁸Both Schiff Giorgini (1971, 120) and Blankenberg-van Delden (1969, 97) describe the scarab as glazed faience. However, in the revised version of the Schiff Giorgini collection at the University of Pisa, the authors describe the material as glazed stone (Bresciani and Silvano 2018, 48). It is difficult to determine the difference between glazed steatite and glazed faience in the absence of any cracks in the object's body.

⁹The role of textual objects and inscriptions generally is still poorly understood in New Kingdom Nubia, especially taking into account that texts had not played a major role in social organisation prior to the New Kingdom.



Figure 11. The heart scarab from Fadrus Tomb 511 (Säve-Söverbergh and Troy 1991, figure 36, plate 31, 4. Photo by G. Eriksson. Drawing by B. Eriksson. Courtesy of L. Troy, on behalf of the Scandinavian Joint Expedition).

that triggered creativity and alternative meanings attributed to objects in a context of material limitations such as a colonial situation.

Due to physical similarities of form and material, a commemorative scarab could be transformed into a local heart scarab by second-generation settlers or indigenous people. To achieve this, a bronze fitting was added to the top of the head of the faience beetle so that it could be placed on a string or wire around the neck of the deceased (Bresciani and Silvano 2018, 48), similar to various pierced heart scarabs from New Kingdom Nubia, including the other example found at Soleb Tomb 4.

Case study 3: Non-elite strategies of negotiation at Fadrus

While some people had to be creative and adapt their resources in a context of material limitations brought by colonisation, others changed traditional burial customs based on their ability to access objects that were restricted to very few individuals in New Kingdom Nubia. However, people in both contexts managed to consume restricted objects in one way or another. The bulk of society in New Kingdom Nubia had no access to objects such as heart scarabs, so were unable to benefit from cultural entanglements since social structures determined the limits of cultural interactions. Non-elite groups with less ability to consume restricted goods, and therefore negotiate positions and identities, usually possessed many objects such as pieces of jewellery and scarab seals or tools and weapons, objects not usually found in elite cemeteries, but characterise working people at the bottom of society (Lemos 2020, 20).

The Fadrus cemetery is the most representative site for the majority of the population in New Kingdom Nubia (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991). People buried at the cemetery could either not afford or access any objects, not necessarily because these objects were expensive, but due to the social and material constraints of colonisation. Almost 700 graves of non-elite individuals were excavated at Fadrus dating from the beginning of the 18th dynasty to at least the reign of Amenhotep III. The large number of graves from Fadrus cannot be compared with the number of tombs at sites such as Aniba, Sai and Soleb, even if pyramid and shaft tombs at those sites have a strong collective character and housed a great number of individuals.

The population of Fadrus did not seem to attribute importance to heart scarabs in the same way as people at Aniba, Sai and Soleb. This perspective follows Malaise's assumption that if they were desirable, heart scarabs would have been purchased, as they were mass-produced or, in the case of Nubia, copied using local materials (e.g. the plaster heart scarab from Sai Tomb 26; Budka in press). However, this would

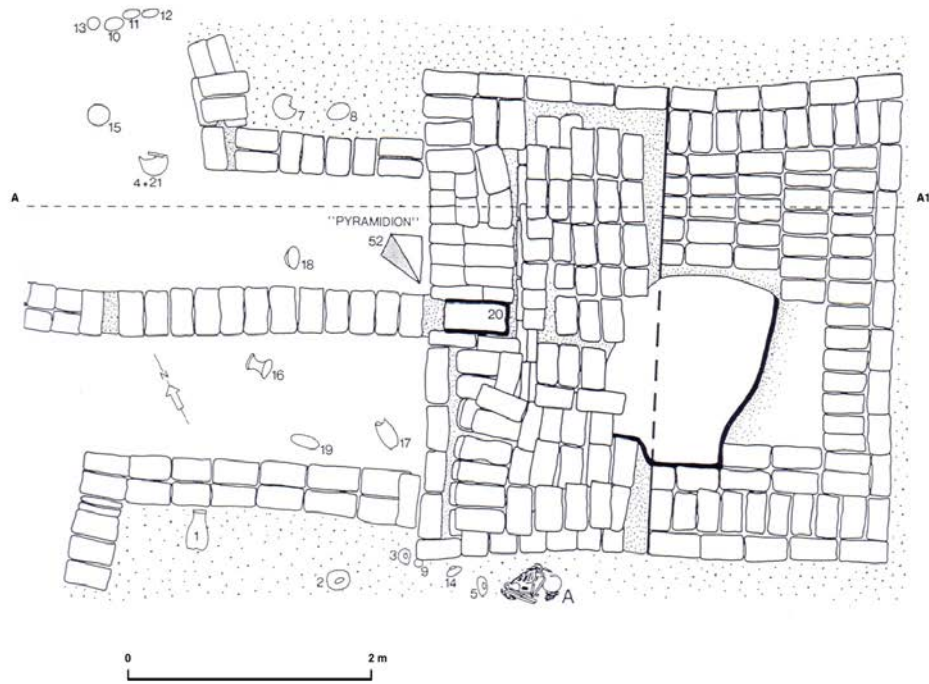


Figure 12. Tomb 511 at Fadrus (after Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 176; courtesy of L. Troy, on behalf of the Scandinavian Joint Expedition).

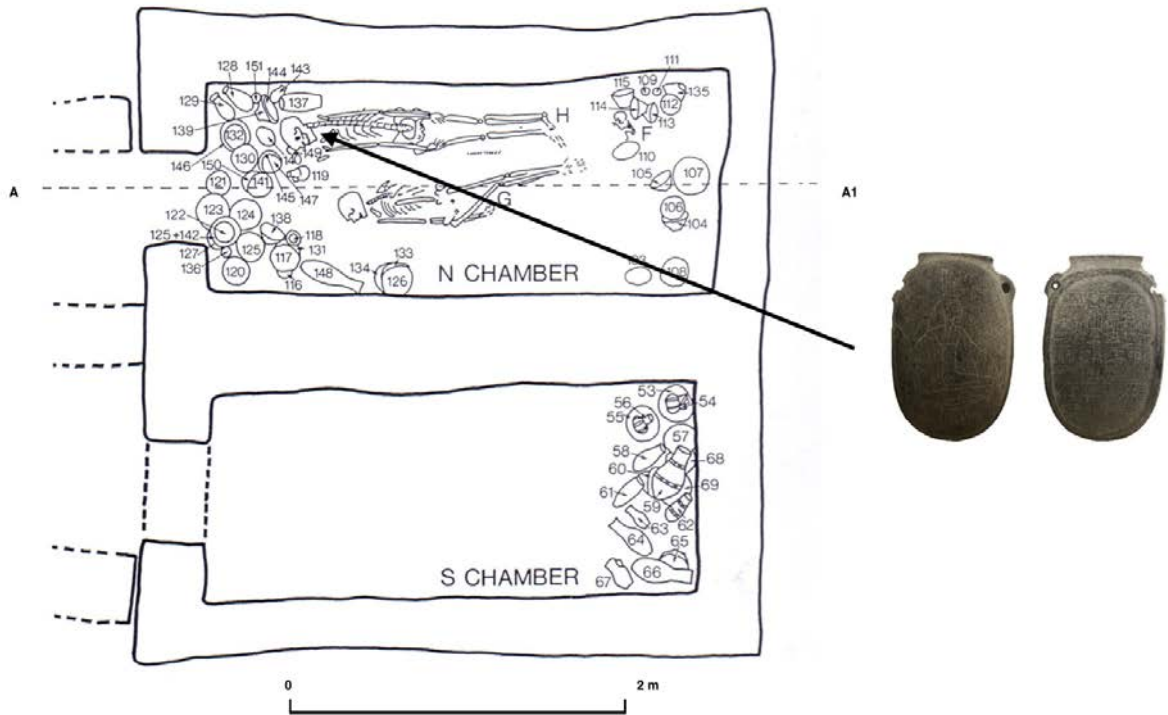


Figure 13. The mortuary chambers (primary level) of Tomb 511 at Fadrus showing the position of their shared heart scarab (after Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, plates 176 and 177; courtesy of L. Troy, on behalf of the Scandinavian Joint Expedition).

be true from a colonial, elite perspective. Among non-elite groups, the supposed lack of interest in heart scarabs derives from the fact that such objects were difficult to obtain, which is supported by the fact only heart scarab was excavated at Fadrus amongst the cemetery's almost 700 burials.

The Fadrus example is a type IIIa heart scarab with an *ib*-shaped base (Figure 11). An Isis figure over a *nbw* sign was later carved on its obverse. The representation of Isis was probably carved later, although it is difficult to determine. On the base, it is possible to read part of Chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead, although the first line was left blank. Non-elite users would have had access to religious iconography, but remained illiterate.

The heart scarab was excavated in Tomb 511, which was the largest tomb in the non-elite cemetery (Figure 12). Most of the graves were single and consisted of pit burials (with variations) (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 214-220; cf. Spence 2019, 547). However, larger tombs at Fadrus include multiple interments, and I would suggest that those bear more similarities with elite tombs at sites such as Soleb or Sai, which housed elite, but also sub-elite groups.¹⁰ Single pit burials with few associated objects and little pottery are the norm at Fadrus. However, when it comes to large graves, the number of objects increases exponentially, as does the quality of grave goods.

Scholars have discussed how social changes in Egypt during the Middle Kingdom affected the composition of burials in Egypt. According to Miniaci, an increase in the number of multiple burials affected the way objects were deposited in tombs (Miniaci 2018, 13-14). As later burials were deposited in tombs containing the bodies and objects of previous deceased persons, it led to a reduction in the number of items in burial assemblages and funerary rituals, which, according to Bourriau (1991, 16), works as evidence for a simpler burial being available to more people. Miniaci (2019) argues that this change towards burials with fewer specialised objects relates to a strong sense of cohesion and continuity, reinforced by the collective character of multiple burials (Miniaci 2018, 14).

In the same way that collective tombs in late Middle Kingdom Egypt can be interpreted as an expression of social change (Bourriau 1991, 3), society in New Kingdom Nubia produced various categories of burials that engaged with material colonisation in a variety of ways. Different conceptions and methods of organising burials were related to phenomena, such as importing goods, the possibility of locally producing desired, usually Egyptian-style objects, and local forms of creating and expressing social differentiation. All these phenomena were constrained by the structural limitations of colonial society, which led several people to opt for collective modes of burying the dead. This was especially important when people attributed importance to restricted types of objects that were more difficult to acquire.

In the same way that the crisis of Middle Kingdom Egyptian society influenced changes in burial composition, with the choice of grave goods taking into consideration the existence of objects previously deposited in the tomb, New Kingdom society in Nubia led to the widespread use of collective graves. This was driven by the social limitations characteristic of colonial societies, where collective action worked as a way for people to access desired Egyptian-style objects, which in this context were effective tools of social negotiations (see DeMarrais and Earle 2017).

Fadrus Tomb 511 is a collective tomb containing several individuals. The bodies were deposited in two separate chambers (Figure 13), although the desire to be buried together can be seen in the existence of a single niche on top of the wall separating both chambers, dedicated to the deposition of common funerary offerings (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 291). The chambers were found plundered. The south chamber was still sealed, although robbers had entered through a hole in the mud-brick ceiling. Only bone fragments were found in the south chamber, alongside pottery vessels. In the north chamber, the

¹⁰ A paper I published in 2017 remains useful regarding the terminology I adopt here (Lemos 2017).

bottom layer contained the burials of two adults (primary burials) in black-type coffins and an infant burial. The upper layer contained three other child burials and a subsequent adult burial, whose legs were left by the doorway. It seems that the child burials in the upper layer blocked the way for the subsequent adult burial. The tomb also received attention from individuals outside the group buried there, as can be demonstrated by the child burial later deposited outside the main mud-brick superstructure (Säve-Söderbergh and Troy 1991, 281).

The Fadrus heart scarab was found on the face of one of the earlier adult burials in Tomb 511 – it might have been moved from the chest during the deposition of subsequent burials. Consumption limitations in colonial society, the later burials and the presence of satellite burials around the (pyramid?) tomb suggest that people from both inside and outside the social group to which the individuals in Tomb 511 belonged considered it ideologically attractive and efficient to be buried with an individual who possessed a heart scarab – by far the most distinctive object in the whole cemetery. Satellite burials surrounding the Pharaoh's burial are usually interpreted as benefitting from the resources provided for the king (Bourriau 1991, 7). Similarly, the materiality of burials such as Tomb 511 was attractive to people who could not individually access a heart scarab, which was the only 'uncommon' object within the tomb's assemblage. In a colonial situation posing limitations, the existence of collective burials was stimulated and the social and ritual efficacy of restricted objects was shared among individuals occupying the same social space, as suggested by the only heart scarab excavated at the large Fadrus cemetery.

Conclusion: Standardising objects, alternative material realities

The Egyptian global/colonial objectscape flooded Nubia in the New Kingdom as a supporting pillar of colonisation. However, instead of completely fulfilling the homogenising Egyptian colonial project, well expressed in contemporary textual sources, the Egyptian objectscape materialised differently within Nubia across internal social borders.

Some individuals had easier access to restricted objects such as heart scarabs and expressed this in the materiality of their burials. Others had to materially adapt other objects to make them effective as a heart scarab. But there were also some who could not benefit from the efficacy of a heart scarab unless they were buried with a person who possessed one. In this context, the efficacy of objects could be shared, but it also created local hierarchies in the sense that an individual with two heart scarabs would be more powerful than several individuals sharing one. Both practices created complexity and diversity within Nubia, but would have been considered equally inappropriate through the lens of New Kingdom Egyptians.

The study of foreign, Egyptian-style objects in New Kingdom colonial Nubia allows us to create a picture of an internally complex and diverse society that can not be explained through acculturation or cultural interactions alone. Firstly, because a global objectscape reached a diverse array of local communities inhabiting the Middle Nile prior to Egyptian colonisation. Secondly, because not all communities could take part in cultural entanglements as their occurrence depended on local social structures that would either allow or limit people's ability to consume. If specialists want to rewrite historical narratives beyond previous problematic colonial perspectives and emphasise Nubian agency, we need to highlight the striking variability that characterised Nubia in the New Kingdom as a complex society in its own terms. Decolonising New Kingdom Nubia is about understanding those past actors that were silenced by the ancient Egyptians and missed by modern Egyptologists, which cannot be done if we only focus on those individuals and communities able to partake in cultural interactions through their ability to consume foreign objects. Narratives of reparation need to include all past actors as producers of history.

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