

## Abstract

### A Bioarchaeological Perspective on State Formation in the Nile Valley

by

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Culture contact between past populations has traditionally been investigated by using a paradigm of unidirectional change forced on a subordinate group by a dominant power. However, recent studies have suggested that such power relations are often more dynamic and bi-directional. In this research, the culture contact between two ancient populations of the Nile River Valley is examined using a bioarchaeological approach.

Nubians and Egyptians have had a long history of interaction. The events that occurred around the time of the Egyptian New Kingdom occupation of Nubia are especially significant. It is during this time that the foundations of the Nubian Napatan Kingdom, which ruled Egypt as the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, were being built. Scholars disagree about who controlled Nubia during this important time: Egyptian colonists or native leaders.

In this dissertation, ideas concerning the culture contact that took place during the New Kingdom conquest of Nubia are addressed through the study of human skeletal remains and archaeological data. The people buried using Egyptian and Nubian burial ritual at the site of Tombos in Nubia are the focus of this research (N=100). In addition, 1,287 individuals from contemporaneous Egyptian and Nubian sites are examined in order to comparatively assess the Tombos population. Multivariate statistical analyses of cranial measurements and cranial non-metric traits are used to evaluate the genetic relationships between Tombos and these Nubian and Egyptian populations. Paleopathological and paleodemographic data are used to gain insight into the health effects of this colonial interaction.

The analyses of genetic affinities suggest that the cranial morphology of the Tombos population is more heterogeneous than that of the Egyptian populations. This heterogeneity, however, is also characteristic of populations in Nubia. Combined with the mixed ethnicity portrayed through archaeological indications of burial ritual, it is clear that Tombos was comprised of an ethnically and biologically mixed group of people. The paleopathological analyses indicate that while the people at Tombos appear to have been affected by many of the same stressors as the comparative populations, the higher frequencies of certain conditions suggest that children at Tombos endured a higher degree of nutritional and disease stress.