Late Neolithic Superimposed Burials in the Qau-Matmar Region: The Final Nail in the Tasian Coffin?

Maarten Horn

The aim of this paper is to re-evaluate the problematic Tasian-Badarian cultural division in the Qau-Matmar region of Middle Egypt, as originally defined by Guy Brunton. The rare phenomenon of burial superimposition is examined, and it is concluded that this was an intentional mode of burial in which both Tasian and Badarian groups participated. This will be used to reject the distinction between the groups and to argue for the integration of Tasian and Badarian remains into a single archaeological unit.

1 Introduction

To some extent, Egypt's prehistory is still conceptualized as a series of bounded, monolithic cultures.[1] This configuration has its roots in a cultural-historical framework that was introduced during the early twentieth century. Within this cultural-historical perspective, cultures are equated with ethnic groups and are defined based on the presence of specific types of artefacts and the absence of others. This view has, however, received strong criticism in the field of archaeology. Specifically, it has been questioned whether archaeological cultures actually existed and whether they directly correspond to ethnic groups.[2] Ethnicity has recently been defined as "that aspect of a person's self-conceptualization and his or her conceptualization by other individuals that results from identification with one or more broader groups, on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and belief in a common descent"[3]. In this definition, ethnicity is understood to be multi-dimensional, situational, and fluid. Ethnic identities are thus not necessarily reflected by variations in material culture. Moreover, this definition of ethnicity is at odds with the construction of archaeological cultures as homogeneous entities with clearly defined spatial and temporal boundaries.[4] Such cultural units can, therefore, hide internal ethnic or cultural variation, or obscure links with other cultural units in space and time.

Efforts to move past such notions of disconnected "cultures" have recently been made by David Wengrow. His model of the "primary pastoral community" relates to the formation in the fifth (and possibly sixth) millennium BC of a consistent set of concepts and practices centred on the body in both life and death that was shared by Neolithic groups across the Nile

1 For a recent example of this, see S. Hendrickx / D. Huyge, Neolithic and Predynastic Egypt, in: C. Renfrew / P. Bahn (eds.), The Cambridge World Prehistory I, Cambridge 2014.

2 S. Jones, The Archaeology of Ethnicity. Constructing Identities in the Past and Present, London / New York 1997; M. Díaz-Andreu, Ethnic Identity and Ethnicity in Archaeology, in: J. Wright (ed.), International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Amsterdam 2015, 102f.

3 M. Díaz-Andreu, Ethnic Identity, 102.

4 S. Jones, Ethnicity, 106–110; M. Díaz-Andreu, Ethnic Identity, 102–104.

Valley.[5] Importantly, this concept does not entail that these groups shared a conscious social identity but rather that they took part in a shared social milieu of cultural exchange. The similarities in Neolithic funerary practices across Egypt, Nubia, and the Sudan are particularly relevant for this paper. This similarity offers a broader frame of reference that will be used here to revisit a long-standing issue in the study of Egyptian prehistory: the Tasian-Badarian cultural dichotomy. Rather than reflecting on the exact character of the Tasian and Badarian groups that produced their respective archaeological remains, the aim of the present paper is to re-assess the justifiability of making a distinction between the two groups.

The definition of the Tasian and Badarian cultures is the result of early archaeological explorations in the Qau-Matmar region, a stretch of land located southeast of Asyut in Middle Egypt. Guy Brunton directed these excavations during eight seasons on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt (1922–1925) and the British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt (1927–1931). The Tasian and Badarian remains were published in three reports, each of which deals with a certain area within the Qau-Matmar region.[6] These areas are here referred to as the Badari, Mostagedda, and Matmar districts. The Tasian culture was first identified in the Mostagedda district, where a small number of graves were set apart from Badarian graves on the basis of their deviating pottery contents. Other distinguishing features included palettes made of stone other than greywacke, burial niches, and a distinct type of skull. These graves, along with a few classes of artefacts that were mainly located in activity areas[7] (e.g. stone celts and Tasian beakers), were classified as part of a new culture that was believed to predate the Badarian culture.[8] The introduction of the Tasian culture initially met with mixed reviews but has subsequently gathered general acceptance in its reinterpretation by Renée Friedman as a desert-dwelling group of people that interacted with the Badarian population in the Nile Valley.[9]

In a soon to be published paper, I re-evaluate the validity of the Tasian-Badarian cultural dichotomy in the Qau-Matmar region.[10] In it, I reject the idea that the two sets of "cultural" re-

5 D. Wengrow, Rethinking "Cattle Cults" in Early Egypt: Towards a Prehistoric Perspective on the Narmer Palette, in: Cambridge Archaeological Journal 11.1 (2001), 95f.; D. Wengrow, Landscapes of Knowledge, Idioms of Power: The African Foundations of Ancient Egyptian Civilization Reconsidered, in: D. O'Connor / A. Reid (eds.), Ancient Egypt in Africa, London 2003, 126–128, 133f.; D. Wengrow, The Archaeology of Early Egypt. Social Transformations in North-East Africa, 10,000 to 2650 BC, Cambridge 2006, 26–31, 44–59; D. Wengrow / M. Dee / S. Foster / A. Stevenson / C. Bronk Ramsey, Cultural Convergence in the Neolithic of the Nile Valley: A Prehistoric Perspective on Egypt's Place in Africa, in: Antiquity 88 (2014), 96, 104–107. See also A. Stevenson, The Egyptian Predynastic and State Formation, in: JAR (2016), 10.

6 G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, The Badarian Civilisation and Predynastic Remains near Badari, London 1928; G. Brunton, Mostagedda and the Tasian Culture, London 1937; G. Brunton, Matmar, London 1948.

7 The term "activity area" is used here in order to refer to archaeological remains that are hard to define on the basis of Brunton's publications. Though classified by Brunton as the remains of "villages", they might be the remains of seasonal camps of mobile herders, mortuary practices, or other types of activities.

8 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 25f., 32f.

9 R. F. Friedman, Badari Grave Group 569, in: W. V. Davies (ed.), Studies in Egyptian Antiquities. A Tribute to T. G. H. James, BMOP 123, London 1999, 1–12; R. F. Friedman / J. J. Hobbs, A "Tasian" Tomb in Egypt's Eastern Desert, in: R. F. Friedman, Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert, London 2002, 178–191.

10 M. Horn, Re-appraising the Tasian-Badarian Divide in the Qau-Matmar Region: A Critical Review of Cultural Proxies and a Comparative Analysis of Burial Dress, in: B. Midant-Reynes / Y. Tristant / E. M. Ryan (eds.), Egypt at its Origins 5. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference "Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt", Cairo, 13th–18th April 2014, OLA, Leuven / Paris / Walpole (MA) 2017, in press.

mains can be linked to two distinct human groups, questioning the validity of the Tasian cultural proxies, and highlighting the lack of evidence for a temporal distinction between the groups. Moreover, I demonstrate that these groups cannot be distinguished based on the items of dress (or "body decoration") they used, namely in terms of their types, spatial distributions, materials, technologies, attributes, burial positions, and potential roles in identity constructions. On this basis, I propose integrating the Tasian and Badarian remains in the Qau-Matmar region into a single archaeological unit. In the present paper, I aim to provide further evidence for this proposal by investigating the phenomenon of burial superimposition in the Qau-Matmar region. I will conclude that burial superimposition was a rare but intentional mode of burial that was performed in Neolithic cemeteries across Egypt, Upper Nubia, and Central Sudan. More importantly, I will demonstrate that the creation and organization of superimposed burials was the collective and concurrent undertaking of single groups of people, and not of the supposedly distinct Tasian and Badarian groups with whom these structures were first associated.

2 Superimposed burials

2.1 Superimposed burials: a question of quantity

The Tasian and Badarian mortuary structures in the Qau-Matmar region consist of burial pits that were dug into the low desert ground at the edge of the Nile's eastern floodplain. The great majority of these pits, which amount to about a thousand in total, were found to accommodate primary single burials. Only a small number bore the remains of multiple individuals. In these instances, two to three bodies were placed either in juxtaposition or superimposition. Brunton described a total of 15 Tasian and/or Badarian superimposed burials in his excavation reports (tabs. 1–2). The Mostagedda district was home to 13 of these burials, which were found spread across Cemeteries 300–400, 1200, 2200–3500, and 2800.[11] Two further superimposed burials were recorded in Cemeteries 5100 and 5300–5400 in the Badari district, though their existence would later be denied by Brunton.[12] In addition, six Badarian and/or Naqadian superimposed burials are known from the Mostagedda and Matmar districts (tabs. 1–2).[13] In this paper, I will refer to the latter graves in order to support my main findings.

Brunton's methods of excavation and publication may have obscured the existence of other superimposed burials. Similar to what has been described for British excavations in 1880–1915,[14] the excavations in the Qau-Matmar region, whether as part of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt or the British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt, were facilitated by the financial support of museums. Museums were willing to sponsor excavations in return for archaeological finds. This sponsorship-for-artefacts scheme led to a symbiotic relationship in which archaeologists were forced to focus their attention on artefact-rich areas in order to secure museum sponsorships. Brunton's excavations in the Qau-Matmar region took a similar approach,[15] as suggested by his account of the work in Matmar: "Much of the ground covered was found to be devoid of antiquities, though a very thorough examination was made; some of

11 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 6f., 33, 35–38, 42.

12 G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 9, 11; G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 26.

13 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 70, 73; G. Brunton, Matmar, 14f., 17.

14 A. Stevenson, Artefacts of Excavation. The British Collection and Distribution of Egyptian Finds to Museums, 1880–1915, in: Journal of the History of Collections 26.1 (2013), 89–102.

15 See also U. Dubiel, Amulette, Siegel und Perlen. Studien zu Typologie und Tragesitte im Alten und Mittleren Reich, OBO 229, Göttingen 2008, 12f.

the sites were too poor or too plundered to make their complete excavation worthwhile."[16] As a result, cemeteries may not always have been excavated fully, potentially leaving some superimposed burials undetected.

The emphasis on artefact-rich burials also left its mark on the excavation reports, in which there was usually little space devoted to graves with no or few artefacts. These interments were excluded from the Grave or Tomb Registers, in which the principal details of the graves were recorded. Instead of being assigned individual grave numbers, these "unregistered" burials were often identified by the round number of the cemetery in which they were found. A Roman numeral could be added when they were separately described in the reports.[17] This was also the case for artefact-poor superimposed burials, as exemplified by unregistered superimposed burial 400 in Cemetery 300–400 in the Mostagedda district (tabs. 1–2). This mortuary structure is introduced in an analysis of superimposed burials but is not cited in the general description of Badarian graves. Instead, the general description seems to present the lower deposition as an individual burial.[18] This leaves open the possibility that other superimposed burials were never identified as such in the reports. Our knowledge of the total number of superimposed burials is thus potentially influenced by Brunton's excavation and publication methods. Still, set against the total number of single burials, burial superimposition seems to have been the product of a rare mortuary practice.

2.2 Superimposed burials and their constituent depositions

The superimposed burials that are identified in this research have not been extensively published. The available data primarily relates to the depositions and their associated contents, such as the dimensions and azimuth of the burial pit; the intactness of the skeleton; the sex/age of the deceased; the orientation of the head; the side on which the body was placed; the burial goods and their position *vis-à-vis* the body; as well as the overall condition of the burial (tabs. 1–2). The majority of superimposed burials were incorporated in the cemetery plans, where graves are designated by the outlines of their burial pits. Other visualizations are limited to two photographs, of which one shows the contents of lower burial 2853 and the other a section through superimposed burial 1667 (fig. 1).[19] Aside from this section, there is limited information on the stratigraphic relations between the constituent depositions. Brunton identified the relative depths and locations (i.e., upper, middle, or lower) of the depositions (tab. 1) but did not present grave plans or stratigraphic profiles. This neglect can be related to his rejection of superimposed burials as a distinct mode of burial and to their interpretation as individual burials that, for a variety of reasons, had been placed on top of each other.

The published data shows that the 15 Tasian/Badarian superimposed burials consist of two to three primary[20] interments of adult males and females, and children of various ages. The burials were made in oval to circular burial pits, whose long axes were mostly oriented roughly NNE-SSW. Most depositions incorporated a single individual, whose body had been placed on its left side, its head pointing south and facing west. The position of the bodies was largely left unspecified but was likely the usual loosely contracted position with the hands in front of the

16 G. Brunton, Matmar, 2f.

17 E.g. G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 17; G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 33.

18 Cf. G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 34, 45. On the basis of its BR3f pot, the lower deposition of superimposed burial 400 (cited on page 45) may be identified as the individual burial 400 (vii) described on page 34.

19 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, pl. VI, 2, 4.

20 Burial 1212A contained a few bones and may have been a secondary burial. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 38.

face.[21] Only in the case of superimposed burial 3522 may an individual burial have been covered by a juxtaposed burial, although its description leaves room for doubt: "A large oval grave, with remains of two males above and a female below."[22] Similar circumstances have, however, been reported for Naqadian superimposed burial 3007.[23] The selection and positioning of burial goods differs within each deposition, apart from the regular occurrence of matting and skins. Overall, the constituent burials follow a pattern that is in line with Wengrow's observation for single burials across Neolithic cemeteries in the Nile Valley and its adjoining deserts: "While each burial constitutes a unique configuration of objects and human remains, the great majority follow a similar pattern of depositional practices."[24] The combination of such distinctive burials within superimposed burials serves to highlight the heterogeneity of this type of funerary structure.

2.3 Previous interpretations of superimposed burials

As far as can be seen, grave 5162/5163 in the Badari district was the first superimposed burial to be unearthed and published by Brunton. In spite of the lack of datable contents, both burials were assigned to the Badarian period.[25] Curiously, the reason for burial 5162's position on top of burial 5163 was not deliberated; the two burials appear to have been interpreted as separate constructs rather than as parts of a single funerary structure. This also pertains to Badarian grave 5390, the only other superimposed burial to have been recorded in the Badari district. In this case, Brunton seems to have been inclined to date its unregistered upper burial to a post-Badarian period due to its lack of "the usual Badarian matting"[26]. His view re-emerges in his analysis of Badarian burials in the Badari district, in which he refers to the general absence of multiple burials.[27] This statement seems to reveal that he regarded superimposed burials as the result of unintended accumulations of individual graves, rather than as the outcome of premeditated mortuary performances.

The subsequent exploration of the Mostagedda district uncovered an additional 16 Tasian, Badarian, and/or Naqadian superimposed burials (tabs. 1–2). In contrast to those from the Badari district, these structures were given more thought in the Mostagedda report, which also introduced the term "superimposed burial" for the first time. In developing his earlier ideas, Brunton seems to have felt inclined to relate the formation of these structures to the repeated use of the same burial ground by culturally distinct groups of people over time.[28] This rationalization may have been bound up with his efforts to culturally-temporally divide his newly identified Tasian culture from the Badarian culture. The Tasian was presumed to predate the Badarian on the basis of its "rough" and "primitive" artefacts and their likeness to supposedly

21 This is excluding burials 2829, where the right hand was at the knees, and 1206B, where the body was lying on its back. G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 18; G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 6, 26, 38.

22 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 42.

23 G. Brunton, Matmar, 14f.

24 D. Wengrow / M. Dee / S. Foster / A. Stevenson / C. Bronk Ramsey, in: Antiquity 88 (2014), 105.

25 The underlying reason may well have been the virtual absence of graves from other periods in Cemetery 5100, see G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 4.

26 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 11.

27 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 19.

28 This theory counters Brunton's earlier interpretation of burial 5162/5163 in the Badari district as two graves that date to the same period. This, in turn, may have impelled Brunton to completely deny the existence of superimposed burials in the Badari district. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 26.

early Badarian objects.[29] This idea of temporal precedence could be confirmed by interpreting a selection of superimposed burials as Tasian graves that, at some later stage, had been overlain by Badarian graves. In the same vein, a small number of other superimposed burials could be used to support the Badarian-Naqadian cultural-temporal division.

The latter burials provide a starting point for exploring Brunton's explanation for the creation of superimposed burials.[30] Grave 1667 in the Mostagedda district was described as a Naqadian burial that was found on top of an unregistered Badarian burial.[31] Whilst the upper burial can be dated on account of its Naqada IIC pottery vessels, the lower burial was noted to have been robbed and to lack pottery (fig. 1). Hence, its Badarian date seems to have been established solely on the basis of its subjacent position. This also applies to grave 200 (iv), which was defined as a Badarian burial underneath a Naqadian burial. In this case, the lower burial contained only matting, an item that is commonly found in both Badarian and Naqadian burials.[32] Again, subjacency was taken as the key piece of evidence.

Brunton experienced more difficulties in classifying superimposed burials that consist of Badarian graves on top of Tasian graves. This is exemplified by his analysis of Cemetery 300–400, in which he not only identified Tasian and Badarian single and juxtaposed burials but also the largest quantity of superimposed burials across the Qau-Matmar region. The Tasian graves in this cemetery were mostly recognized on the basis of their pottery contents.[33] Despite the fact that the same technique had been used to identify most other Tasian graves, Brunton raised concerns over the status of the Tasian burials in Cemetery 300–400 as such. The underlying reason for this was the close spatial intermixture of Tasian and Badarian graves in this cemetery, a feature that is in contrast with their supposed cultural-temporal distinction. Moreover, the pottery vessels in these Tasian graves were classified as "either true Tasian or more Tasian in feeling than Badarian".[34] Such remarks reveal his uncertainties in separating Tasian from Badarian pottery and partly expose the dubious evidence base for his Tasian culture. In fact, Brunton directly opposed these pottery-based dates as a result of his analysis of superimposed burials in Cemetery 300–400. Whilst he was able to identify Badarian upper burials and Tasian lower burials, these were never found to be part of the same burial structures. Hence, the superimposition of Badarian burials on top of Tasian burials could not be directly proven for this cemetery. In fact, the discovery of four Badarian subjacent burials in Cemeteries 300–400 and 1200 made Brunton doubt the dating of all Tasian burials in Cemetery 300–400, including those that contained "true Tasian" pottery.[35] These reservations did not compel Brunton to reconsider the dating of superimposed burials elsewhere. Structure 3509/3533 continued to be perceived as a Tasian burial underneath a Badarian burial, despite the lack of datable objects in the upper

29 G. Brunton, The Beginnings of Egyptian Civilization, in: Antiquity 3.12 (1929), 465–467; G. Brunton, Guide to Egyptian Antiquities from Mostagedda, Badari District, Middle Egypt. 1928. Exhibited in the Nineveh Gallery, British Museum. July 9th to July 27th, 1929, London 1929, 2.

30 Superimposed burial 1896 is not discussed here, since Brunton did not offer an explanation for its formation.

31 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 70, pl. XXIX.

32 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 27, 33, 82.

33 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, pl. VII.

34 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 26.

35 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 26, 44f.

burial.[36] In several other cases, Brunton appears to assign entire superimposed burials to a single culture, but without delving into the potential cause of their creation.[37]

In his excavation report on the Matmar district, Brunton offers a different explanation for the construction of superimposed burials.[38] The three examples found here were reported to include either Naqada IIB or IIC pottery. Their burial descriptions do not allow vessels to be assigned to specific depositions. Nevertheless, Brunton related their creation to the reuse of graves soon after the instalment of the primary burials, thus implying that the subsequent burials dated to a similar period. This interpretation suggests that the people that were responsible for the subsequent burials were knowledgeable of the primary burials. Even so, it only implies intent at the time of the second interment, thus preventing superimposed burials from being construed as purposively designed funerary structures from start to finish.

2.4 The intentionality behind burial superimposition

Superimposed burials have not been subjected to any major reinvestigation since their initial analysis in Brunton's reports.[39] Yet their existence may serve as an argument against the Tasian-Badarian cultural-temporal dichotomy. Interestingly, Friedman has not considered these burials in relation to her theory in which the Tasian and Badarian are seen as two contemporary but culturally unrelated groups.[40] This is in spite of the fact that this theory is clearly incompatible with the lapse of time that was thought to have given rise to the formation of superimposed burials. A reinvestigation of these mortuary structures is, therefore, pivotal to the analysis of the Tasian-Badarian division in the Qau-Matmar region.

In several publications, Wengrow has demonstrated the existence of a shared form of mortuary practice across a large area of the Nile Valley, extending from the Qau-Matmar region to modern Khartoum, during the fifth and possibly the sixth millennium BC.[41] This claim can be further substantiated by identifying burial superimposition as another recurring funerary rite across Neolithic cemeteries.[42] In Egypt, this burial mode has been attested in the northeastern part of the Rayayna Desert, situated just west of Rizeiqat in the Nile Valley.[43] The "burial feature" located here has been linked to the early Predynastic Rayaynan culture and consists of a series of superimposed burials that were once covered by a dry stone superstructure. The practice of burial superimposition has also been documented in the Final Neolithic cemeteries at Gebel Ramlah in the southern part of the Western Desert, dated to the middle of the fifth

36 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 7, 26, 42.

37 Namely superimposed burials 400, 1206A/B, 1212A/B, 2829/2853, and 3522, see G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 6f., 37f., 42, 45.

38 G. Brunton, Matmar, 14f., 17.

39 An exception is formed by E. Baumgartel, The Prehistoric Cultures of Egypt I, Oxford 1955, 20.

40 Cf. R. F. Friedman, 569, 1–12; R. F. Friedman / J. J. Hobbs, "Tasian", 178–191.

41 D. Wengrow, in: Cambridge Archaeological Journal 11.1 (2001), 95f.; D. Wengrow, Landscapes, 126–128; D. Wengrow, Early Egypt, 26–29, 50–59; D. Wengrow / M. Dee / S. Foster / A. Stevenson / C. Bronk Ramsey, in: Antiquity 88 (2014), 104–107.

42 Burial superimposition may have been practiced as early as the Mesolithic period in Central Sudan, see L. Suková / L. Varadzin, in: SudNub 16 (2012), 124f.

43 Both primary and secondary burials were included. D. Darnell, The Rayayna Crossroads: Life, Death and the Divine in the Upper Egyptian Desert, in: R. Friedman / L. McNamara (eds.), Abstracts of Papers Presented at the Third International Colloquium on Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, London 2008, 42f.; J. C. Darnell, Iconographic Attraction, Iconographic Syntax, and Tableaux of Royal Ritual Power in the Pre- and Proto-Dynastic Rock Inscriptions of the Theban Western Desert, in: Archéo-Nil 19 (2009), 86.

millennium BC.[44] Further south in Upper Nubia, superimposed burials have been reported as early as the first half of the sixth millennium BC in an Early Neolithic cemetery at el-Barga.[45] In the same region, this burial mode resurfaces in the fifth millennium BC in Cemeteries L14 and R12.[46] Although this region lacks cemeteries from the fourth millennium BC,[47] the practice of burial superimposition is known to occur at this time in the Final Neolithic Cemetery C at el-Kadada in Central Sudan.[48] In all instances, superimposed burials have been interpreted as the result of intentional mortuary acts that were coordinated by the same group of people. The multiple depositions were effectuated either as part of a single burial ceremony or through successive stages of burial that required the reopening of the burial pit. These later interments are sometimes cited to have affected the original layout of the primary burials. Superimposed burials have also been interpreted as a burial form that was distinct from intentionally intercutting burials. These findings are not only important with regard to a reinterpretation of the superimposed burials in the Qau-Matmar region but also with regard to the overall validity of Brunton's Tasian-Badarian cultural-temporal division.

Several factors appear to support a similar intentionality behind burial superimposition in the Qau-Matmar region. As discussed, Brunton experienced major difficulties in proving that Tasian burials were overlain by Badarian burials. He initially sought to date these burials on the basis of their artefactual contents, amongst which pottery would have been of prime importance. Yet pottery was not included in every burial. In fact, there appears to be no superimposed burial in which Tasian pottery is found within the lower burial and Badarian pottery within the upper burial (tab. 2). The rare instances in which the constituent burials can be dated on the basis of their artefactual contents reveal that both burials can be assigned to the same cultural complex, at least as understood from Brunton's cultural-historical perspective. This concerns structure 1212A/B, in which Badarian pottery was included in both the upper and lower burials, and structure 2829/2853, in which the upper burial contained Tasian pottery and the lower

44 Both primary and secondary burials were included. E.g. Burials 11/13 in Cemetery E–01–2, and Burials 3/6/8, 5, and 9 in Cemetery E–03–2. See M. Kobusiewicz / J. Kabaciński, Cemeteries, in: M. Kobusiewicz / J. Kabaciński / R. Schild / J. D. Irish / M. C. Gatto / F. Wendorf, Gebel Ramlah. Final Neolithic Cemeteries from the Western Desert of Egypt, Poznań 2010, 13, 42–44, 47–49, 67, 74–80, 88–92; M. Kobusiewicz / J. Kabaciński, Conclusions, in: M. Kobusiewicz / J. Kabaciński / R. Schild / J. D. Irish / M. C. Gatto / F. Wendorf, Gebel Ramlah. Final Neolithic Cemeteries from the Western Desert of Egypt, Poznań 2010, 256f.

45 M. Honegger, Settlement and Cemeteries of the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic at el-Barga (Kerma Region), in: SudNub 8 (2004), 4.

46 Both primary and secondary burials were included. See S. Salvatori / D. Usai, First Season of Excavation at Site R12. A Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach, in: SudNub 5 (2001), 13; S. Salvatori / D. Usai, The Second Excavation Season at R12. A Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach, in: SudNub 6 (2002), 2; S. Salvatori / D. Usai (eds.), A Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach. Excavations at Site R12, London 2008, 7, 161–283; D. A. Welsby, South from Kadruka: The Neolithic in the Northern Dongola Reach, Sudan, in: L. Krzyżaniak / K. Kroeper / M. Kobusiewicz (eds.), Recent Research into the Stone Age of Northeastern Africa, Studies in African Archaeology 7, Poznań 2000, 133.

47 M. Honegger / M. Williams, Human Occupations and Environmental Changes in the Nile Valley during the Holocene: The Case of Kerma in Upper Nubia (Northern Sudan), in: Quaternary Science Reviews 130 (2015), 149.

48 F. Geus, Rescuing Sudan Ancient Cultures, Khartoum 1984, 30–36; F. Geus, Burial Customs in the Upper Main Nile. An Overview, in: W. V. Davies (ed.), Egypt and Africa. Nubia from Prehistory to Islam, London 1991, 58; J. Reinold, Kadruka and the Neolithic in the Northern Dongola Reach, in: SudNub 5 (2001), 4; J. Reinold, Le problème des sacrifices humains: Cas du néolithique Soudanais, in: Archéo-Nil 10 (2000), 91–95.

burial a Tasian palette. Interestingly, the lower burial 496B was mentioned as including both Tasian and Badarian pottery but was nonetheless identified as Tasian.[49]

The intentionality of superimposed burials is supported by the corresponding pit areas of most upper and lower burials (tab. 1). This detail seems to suggest that the same pit was used for the simultaneous interment of multiple individuals, or, alternatively, that at some time after the primary interment the pit was fully reopened for the addition of another burial. One scenario may have followed the other in the case of three constituent interments. Importantly, Brunton never stated that the lower burials had been cut by the upper burials, although he did frequently mention that Roman graves had affected Badarian graves in this manner.[50] In fact, Tasian-Badarian graves were rarely reported to intercut in general,[51] which may testify to the use of grave markers. This adds weight to the interpretation of burial superimposition as a distinct mortuary practice. In this regard, it may be interesting to refer to grave 3080, which was located near three superimposed burials in Naqadian Cemetery 3000.[52] This grave had partly coalesced with another grave, whose floor level was located 10 cm lower. Despite these features, these graves were not identified as parts of a superimposed burial. This may support the idea that superimposed burials were not composed of intercutting burial pits but rather utilized the same burial pit or took an existing pit as their starting point.[53] The latter possibility may explain two cases in which deviating pit areas are cited. For structure 2829/2853, the upper burial was recorded to have a smaller pit area. This is likely to be related to its inclusion of a 5-year-old child, whilst an adult had been included in the lower burial. The dissimilarity in pit areas supports the later interment of the child, at which time it may not have been necessary to re-dig the full area of the primary burial pit in order to accommodate the smaller body of the child and its limited set of grave goods.[54] For structure 5162/5163, the pit area of the upper adult burial was larger than that of the lower adult burial. In this case, the upper part of the primary burial pit may have been expanded during the process of re-digging.

The idea that superimposed burials are premeditated funerary structures is reinforced by their spatial clustering within certain cemeteries. This seems to indicate that people repeatedly returned to selected areas in order to perform funerary rites that would result in the creation of superimposed burials. This is most clearly attested in Cemetery 300–400, where the majority of superimposed burials have been found. In its northeastern section, five out of seven superimposed burials are grouped together with a number of individual burials (fig. 2).[55] Superimposed burial 496A/B is located to the east of this cluster on the same low desert spur. It is not possible to pinpoint the exact location of superimposed burial 400, since it was not given a unique grave number. Several unregistered "400" graves are located southwest of the burial cluster. The inclusion of these unregistered graves in the cemetery plan provides the opportunity to examine

49 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 6f., 36, 38.

50 This was, for instance, reported for several Badarian graves in Cemeteries 5700 and 5800 in the Badari district, see G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 14–17, pl. IX, nos. 4, 28.

51 Only graves 448A/B and possibly 2224 were reported to intercut, see G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 5, 40.

52 G. Brunton, Matmar, 14f.

53 This may be supported by the fact that the cemetery maps do not present superimposed burials as partly overlapping burial pits, as is shown for intercutting graves 448A/B. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, pl. III.

54 See, for a parallel difference in pit sizes, superimposed burial KDD 76/1–2–3 in: F. Geus, Rescuing, 33, fig. 72.

55 In Brunton's cemetery plan, this cluster includes two burials labeled 472. It is uncertain which of these burials can be identified as superimposed burial 472A/B/C, and thus only one of these has been marked as such in fig. 2. The cluster also includes disturbed grave 470, which may or may not have been a superimposed burial on account of its incorporation of two skulls. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 35, pl. III.

the usage of space on the low desert spurs in between the wadis.[56] These spurs still seem to have had ample space for the construction of graves in spite of the potential presence of ephemeral structures above ground. As such, it seems unlikely that burial superimposition would have been caused by the overcrowding of the cemetery area.

Similarly, the three superimposed burials in Cemetery 2200–3500 were found close to each other in the northern part of the burial ground (fig. 3).[57] Overcrowding does not seem to be able to explain their formation, in spite of the fact that not all unregistered burials were incorporated in the cemetery plan.[58] In contrast, Cemetery 1200 does not show a dense clustering of its two superimposed burials, although, unlike the previous cemeteries, the cemetery itself could be described as a more compact group of graves.[59] Again, overcrowding does not seem to apply to Cemetery 1200, nor to Cemeteries 5100, 5300–5400, and 2800, in each of which only a single superimposed burial was recorded. Lastly, although no maps were published for the cemeteries that contained the Badarian and/or Naqadian exemplars, the numbers of structures 3069 and 3074 suggest that these too may have clustered.

2.5 The formation of superimposed burials

The above-presented evidence challenges the idea that superimposed burials are not a distinct mode of burial. This notion is the common thread linking Brunton's analyses of these structures, in which he revealed his inclination to interpret them either as inadvertent constructions by unrelated groups of people over time or as graves that were made and then reused by a single human group. The first interpretation can possibly be ruled out on account of the contents of the constituent burials.[60] In the few cases in which each burial contained datable material, both could be ascribed to the same cultural-historical unit. However, even though this suggests that a single group of people was responsible for the complete construction of superimposed burials, it does not fully verify their interpretation as a distinct mode of burial. Moreover, the superimposed burials themselves are still dated according to an outmoded cultural-historical framework. In order to confront these issues, it is worthwhile to further explore the formation processes of these funerary structures.

As noted, more recent excavations of Neolithic cemeteries in Egypt, Upper Nubia, and Central Sudan have found that the superimposed burials there were constructed during either single or multiple funerary rites. The formation of the Qau-Matmar exemplars is more difficult to grasp due to the limited amount of available data. The stratigraphic links between the depositions were merely expressed in terms of their relative depths and locations. To boot, Brunton failed to record the exact points of depth measurement and did not usually divulge whether the depositions were in any physical contact.[61] All the same, knowledge of these facts would be insufficient to determine whether superimposed burials were formed during single or multiple

56 The 11 unregistered "400" graves that were described by Brunton are equivalent to the number of unregistered graves that appear in the cemetery plan. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 34, 69, pl. III.

57 This cluster includes grave 3527, which contained the remains of two bodies. Curiously, the head of A was situated close to the feet of B, even though both heads were pointing south. This grave has not been identified as a multiple burial, and may have been a superimposed burial. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 42, pl. X.

58 The number of unregistered "2200" and "3500" graves described by Brunton is somewhat higher than the number of unregistered graves that appear in the cemetery plan. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 40f., 73, pl. IV.

59 Disturbed burial 1208 may have been a superimposed burial on account of its inclusion of a male body and a second skull. Interestingly, burial 1208 is located next to burial 1206. See G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 38, pl. IV.

60 Brunton himself seems to have realized this to some degree, see G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 26, 44f.

61 For grave 3074, the upper body is stated to have almost rested on the lower, see G. Brunton, Matmar, 15.

funerary acts. The intermediate layer of detritus in grave 1667 could thus have been created by partly covering the primary burial prior to installing the second burial or by reopening a previously sealed burial pit (fig. 1). Whilst the suggested use of the same pit could point to the creation of superimposed burials during a single ceremony, this seems inconsistent with those structures that are characterized by intact upper burials and disturbed lower burials, as in the case of burials 496, 1212, and 3007. This shows that the two depositions were separated by a hiatus, during which time people were able to interfere with the primary burials. In these instances, it thus seems plausible that the upper burials were interred during a separate mortuary rite. In fact, the disturbance to the lower burials may have arisen during the process of re-digging, although similar disruptions to single burials show that these could have been independent events. Moreover, the reopening of the grave is not necessarily interlinked with a disturbance to the primary burial's contents, as demonstrated by structure 2829/2853.

The intentionality behind burial superimposition is corroborated by the clustering of superimposed burials in Cemeteries 300–400 and 2200–3500. This feature is inconsistent with the supposedly accidental creation of these structures by unrelated groups of people over time. It also counters the notion that burial superimposition was simply caused by the construction and later reuse of graves by the same community. Instead, it indicates a conscious act by a single human group to repeatedly construct superimposed burials in a designated area. These structures were most likely formed as part of multiple funerary ceremonies, which would have necessitated repeated returns to specific cemetery areas. This demanded prior knowledge of the existence and location of these areas, which may have been facilitated by the use of grave markers or other conspicuous indicators above ground.[62] The existence of these clusters not only allows burial superimposition to be recognized as a distinct mode of interment but also calls into question the tenability of the Tasian-Badarian cultural-temporal division.

According to Brunton, each superimposed burial cluster was composed of both Tasian and Badarian depositions (tabs. 1–2; figs. 2–3). He thus identified these clusters as the products of two distinct groups of people, a claim that seems unsuited to explaining their creation. Rather, it appears to highlight the fallacy of an already problematic Tasian-Badarian cultural-temporal division, one that was ultimately based on a dubious distinction between two pottery corpora. Some burials within the clusters (i.e., 474A, 487B, and 3533) were thus identified as Tasian on the basis of the same types of pottery that had been used to classify single Tasian burials. In addition, these pottery types were crucial to the definition of other proxies for the Tasian culture[63]. Yet, the idea that these Tasian and Badarian pottery types should relate to two distinct groups of people is at odds with their co-occurrence in clusters of superimposed burials, which I claim were created by single groups of people.

2.6 Superimposed burials in the Naqada period

The idea that Tasian/Badarian superimposed burials were formed by single groups of people invites a similar reconsideration of the exemplars that were dated to the Badarian and/or Naqadian periods. The former understanding of superimposed burials 200 (iv) and 1667 as Badarian bu-

62 E.g. the superimposed burial cluster in the Rayayna Desert was either covered by a dry stone superstructure or encircled by a stone enclosure. The visibility of this burial feature was further enhanced by surrounding it with boulders bearing pecked images. See D. Darnell, Crossroads, 42f.; J. C. Darnell, in: Archéo-Nil 19 (2009), 86.

63 Namely palettes of stone other than greywacke, burial niches, and a specific type of skull. For a full discussion of this topic, see M. Horn, Re-appraising.

rials that were overlain by Naqadian burials is undermined by the absence of Badarian artefacts in the lower depositions. These structures rather seem to have been the intended product of funerary practices that were undertaken by single human groups, a claim that gains further support from the potential clustering of Naqadian superimposed burials in Cemetery 3000. Hence the practice of burial superimposition seems to have persisted from the Badarian into the Naqada period in the Qau-Matmar region. This local continuation is corroborated by the pottery contents of the superimposed burials, which demonstrate a continuous performance of this practice from the Naqada IC until the Naqada IIC–D period, except for an interval during the Naqada IIA phase (tab. 2). Its absence during the Naqada IA–B period can be explained by the general absence of Naqada IA burials and the presence of relatively few Naqada IB burials in the Qau-Matmar region.[64] While beyond the bounds of this paper, a survey of the literature may reveal other Naqadian superimposed burials outside the Qau-Matmar region.

2.7 Motivations behind burial superimposition

The interpretation of burial superimposition as a distinct mode of burial leads one to ask what the underlying motivation(s) for the practice were. A study of this topic certainly does not benefit from the limited amount of data that is available on the superimposed burials in the Qau-Matmar region. Yet, even in the case of more recent excavations, scholars have struggled to come to terms with the raison d'être of this particular form of interment. This is to the exclusion of five superimposed burials in Cemetery C at El-Kadada in the Central Sudan. In each of these, one individual was simultaneously interred with another through an act of human sacrifice.[65] The main individual was buried in the centre of the pit in the usual contracted position and was associated with a large quantity and wide variety of grave goods. Stratigraphic evidence suggests concurrent interment with the second individual, who was placed in an unusual bodily position that is not observed in single burials. In three cases, the body was highly contracted and placed over an object-free area around the main individual. In two other cases, the body was extended and laid to rest against the edge of the pit, where it was later covered by artefacts. In each grave, the second body occupied a position *vis-à-vis* the main body that demonstrated its status as part of the latter's set of grave goods. On this basis, it is argued that the main person was an important individual, whose burial rites had involved the sacrifice of a human being. Some superimposed burials were later reopened for the instalment of a third individual. Their exact significance cannot be ascertained due to their burial in the usual contracted position and their provision with a small set of grave goods.[66]

The features that have allowed human sacrifice to be identified at El-Kadada cannot be clearly observed in the superimposed burials in the Qau-Matmar region. The absence of grave plans and stratigraphic sections prevents the formation of a full picture of the relative positions of human bodies and objects. Still, the constituent burials are not consistently characterized by a major difference in burial good quantity or variety (tab. 2). Also, their bodies do not appear

64 Cf. M. Horn, A Badarian-Naqadian Cognitive Link? A Possible Insight on the Basis of a Hippopotamus-Shaped Pendant from Egypt, in: A. Golani / Z. Wygnańska (eds.), Beyond Ornamentation. Jewelry as an Aspect of Material Culture in the Ancient Near East, PAM XXIII.2, Warsaw 2014, 44.

65 F. Geus, Rescuing, 32–34; J. Reinold, in: Archéo-Nil 10 (2000), 93f.; J. Reinold, Les cimetières préhistoriques au Soudan – Coutumes funéraires et systèmes sociaux, in: I. Caneva / A. Rocatti (eds.), Acta Nubica, Rome 2006, 146f.

66 F. Geus, Rescuing, 34; J. Reinold, in: Archéo-Nil 10 (2000), 93f.; J. Reinold, Coutumes, 146f.

to have adopted unusual positions.[67] An exception is burial 1206B, where a male was buried in supine position and a pot supplanted his absent head. Yet both of these practices have also been reported for single burials[68] and, as such, cannot be interpreted as direct indicators of human sacrifice. The existence of a male with a head injury in upper burial 474A, a female with no arms in upper burial 3509, and a female with a damaged shoulder-joint in lower burial 3533[69] may likewise be related to causes other than human sacrifice. Finally, the factor of burial synchronicity is at odds with those superimposed burials where the second person appears to have been deposited at a later stage.

The limited knowledge of the superimposed burials in the Qau-Matmar region makes it difficult to understand the motivation for their creation and to what extent these can be related to the motivation behind superimposed burials in other spatial and temporal zones. In spite of their formal similarities, there may have been different reasons for their creation. This may even hold true for the superimposed burials within the Qau-Matmar region. In any event, burial superimposition in this region seems to emerge as a rare funerary performance that was in clear contrast to the usual mode of single burials, where each person was given his/her own spatial area within the cemetery. The act of superimposing the dead within the same area thus seems to point to specific relations between them, though potentially different from those in juxtaposed burials.

3 Discussion and conclusion

The data gathered in this paper suggests that superimposed burials were caused by intentional mortuary performances. The clustering of superimposed burials, coupled with the notion that at least some of these burials were constructed during multiple funerary ceremonies, shows that people repeatedly returned to specific cemetery areas in order to create these mortuary structures. This implies prior knowledge of both the existence and location of these areas and thus suggests that these structures were the products of single human groups. This observation opposes the idea that the depositions within superimposed burials, or superimposed burials within the said clusters, should be assigned to distinct Tasian and Badarian groups. In fact, the realization that these Tasian burials were identified on the basis of the same cultural proxies (i.e., pottery and non-greywacke palettes) as Tasian single and juxtaposed burials seems to invalidate the overall division between the two groups within the Qau-Matmar region. In line with my conclusions in another paper[70], I thus propose integrating Tasian and Badarian material assemblages into a single "Badarian" archaeological unit, though without claiming its correspondence to a single social entity that shares a cultural or ethnic identity. The consequence of this merger is that it further aligns the Late Neolithic peoples in Middle Egypt with other Neolithic groups in Egypt, Nubia, and Sudan that fall within the model of the primary pastoral community. This not only applies to their shared use of burial superimposition as a distinct mode of burial

67 The tightly contracted position has sporadically been attested in Tasian-Badarian cemeteries, but only in single burials. See, for example, G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 18, pl. IX, 1.

68 The practice of replacing the head with a pot is similarly found in grave 5766 in the Badari district. The supine position has also been adopted in graves 203, 5744, and 5752 in the Badari and Mostagedda districts. G. Brunton / G. Caton-Thompson, Badarian Civilisation, 16f., pl. IX, 2, 28f.; G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 37f., 44.

69 G. Brunton, Mostagedda, 6, 27, 42.

70 See M. Horn, Re-appraising.

but also to their collective use of specific artefact classes, such as caliciform beakers and stone celts (or axes).

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Alexandra Verbovsek for inviting me as a speaker to the BAJA 2015 conference, and for giving me the opportunity to publish this paper. I am also grateful to Stan Hendrickx for providing me with the Naqada dates of the superimposed burials, as well as the Griffith Institute, Oxford University, for giving me permission to use a photograph from its Brunton archive.

Figures

Fig. 1: Brunton Matmar photo 306#3700, Copyright Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.
Fig. 2: Map made by author using QGIS, based on G. Brunton, Mostagedda, pl. III.
Fig. 3: Map made by author using QGIS, based on G. Brunton, Mostagedda, pl. IV.

Bibliography

Baumgartel, E., The Prehistoric Cultures of Egypt I, Oxford 1955.
Brunton, G., The Beginnings of Egyptian Civilization, in: Antiquity 3.12 (1929), 456–467.
Brunton, G., Guide to Egyptian Antiquities from Mostagedda, Badari District, Middle Egypt. 1928. Exhibited in the Nineveh Gallery, British Museum. July 9th to July 27th, 1929, London 1929.
Brunton, G., Matmar, London 1948.
Brunton, G., Mostagedda and the Tasian Culture, London 1937.
Brunton, G. / G. Caton-Thompson, The Badarian Civilisation and Predynastic Remains near Badari, London 1928.
Darnell, D., The Rayayna Crossroads: Life, Death and the Divine in the Upper Egyptian Desert, in: R. Friedman / L. McNamara (eds.), Abstracts of Papers Presented at the Third International Colloquium on Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, London 2008, 40–44.
Darnell, J. C., Iconographic Attraction, Iconographic Syntax, and Tableaux of Royal Ritual Power in the Pre- and Proto-Dynastic Rock Inscriptions of the Theban Western Desert, in: Archéo-Nil 19 (2009), 83–107.
Díaz-Andreu, M., Ethnic Identity and Ethnicity in Archaeology, in: J. Wright (ed.), International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Amsterdam 2015, 102–105.
Dubiel, U., Amulette, Siegel und Perlen. Studien zu Typologie und Tragesitte im Alten und Mittleren Reich, OBO 229, Göttingen 2008.
Friedman, R. F., Badari Grave Group 569, in: W. V. Davies (ed.), Studies in Egyptian Antiquities. A Tribute to T. G. H. James, BMOP 123, London 1999, 1–12.
Friedman, R. F. / J. J. Hobbs, A "Tasian" Tomb in Egypt's Eastern Desert, in: R. F. Friedman, Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert, London 2002, 178–191.
Geus, F., Burial Customs in the Upper Main Nile. An Overview, in: W. V. Davies (ed.), Egypt and Africa. Nubia from Prehistory to Islam, London 1991, 57–73.
Geus, F., Rescuing Sudan Ancient Cultures, Khartoum 1984.
Hendrickx, S. / D. Huyge, Neolithic and Predynastic Egypt, in: C. Renfrew / P. Bahn (eds.), The Cambridge World Prehistory I, Cambridge 2014, 240–258.
Honegger, M., Settlement and Cemeteries of the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic at el-Barga (Kerma Region), in: SudNub 8 (2004), 1–6.
Honegger, M. / M. Williams, Human Occupations and Environmental Changes in the Nile Valley during the Holocene: The Case of Kerma in Upper Nubia (Northern Sudan), in: Quaternary Science Reviews 130 (2015), 149.

Horn, M., A Badarian-Naqadian Cognitive Link? A Possible Insight on the Basis of a Hippopotamus-Shaped Pendant from Egypt, in: A. Golani / Z. Wygnańska (eds.), Beyond Ornamentation. Jewelry as an Aspect of Material Culture in the Ancient Near East, PAM XXIII.2, Warsaw 2014, 41–70.

Horn, M., Re-appraising the Tasian-Badarian Divide in the Qau-Matmar Region: A Critical Review of Cultural Proxies and a Comparative Analysis of Burial Dress, in: B. Midant-Reynes / Y. Tristant / E. M. Ryan (eds.), Egypt at its Origins 5. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference "Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt", Cairo, 13th–18th April 2014, OLA, Leuven / Paris / Walpole (MA) 2017, in press.

Jones, S., The Archaeology of Ethnicity. Constructing Identities in the Past and Present, London / New York 1997.

Reinold, J., Les cimetières préhistoriques au Soudan – Coutumes funéraires et systèmes sociaux, in: I. Caneva / A. Roccati (eds.), Acta Nubica, Rome 2006, 139–162.

Reinold, J., Kadruka and the Neolithic in the Northern Dongola Reach, in: SudNub 5 (2001), 2–10.

Reinold, J., Le problème des sacrifices humains: Cas du néolithique Soudanais, in: Archéo-Nil 10 (2000), 89–96.

Salvatori, S. / D. Usai, First Season of Excavation at Site R12. A Late Neolithic Cemetery in the Northern Dongola Reach, in: SudNub 5 (2001), 11–20.

Stevenson, A., Artefacts of Excavation. The British Collection and Distribution of Egyptian Finds to Museums, 1880–1915, in: Journal of the History of Collections 26.1 (2013), 89–102.

Stevenson, A., The Egyptian Predynastic and State Formation, in: JAR (2016), 1–48.

Suková, L. / L. Varadzin, Preliminary Report on the Exploration of Jebel Sabaloka (West Bank) 2009–2012, in: SudNub 16 (2012), 118–131.

Welsby, D. A., South from Kadruka: The Neolithic in the Northern Dongola Reach, Sudan, in: L. Krzyżaniak / K. Kroeper / M. Kobusiewicz (eds.), Recent Research into the Stone Age of North-eastern Africa, Studies in African Archaeology 7, Poznań 2000, 129–136.

Wengrow, D., The Archaeology of Early Egypt. Social Transformations in North-East Africa, 10,000 to 2650 BC, Cambridge 2006.

Wengrow, D., Landscapes of Knowledge, Idioms of Power: The African Foundations of Ancient Egyptian Civilization Reconsidered, in: D. O'Connor / A. Reid (eds.), Ancient Egypt in Africa, London 2003, 121–135.

Wengrow, D., Rethinking "Cattle Cults" in Early Egypt: Towards a Prehistoric Perspective on the Narmer Palette, in: Cambridge Archaeological Journal 11.1 (2001), 91–104.

Wengrow, D. / M. Dee / S. Foster / A. Stevenson / C. Bronk Ramsey, Cultural Convergence in the Neolithic of the Nile Valley: A Prehistoric Perspective on Egypt's Place in Africa, in: Antiquity 88 (2014), 95–111.

District	Burial	Position	N.	E.	D.	Azimuth	Head	Side	Sex/age	Condition
Badari	5162	Upper	54 in.	72 in.	48 in.	166	S	L	M	N
	5163	Lower	34 in.	36 in.	67 in.				F	Q
	5390	Upper			30 in.		SE	L	F	
		Lower	40 in.	40 in.	40 in.		S	L	F?	N
Mostagedda	200(iv)	Upper								
		Lower							C	
	400	Upper								
		Lower								"Plundered"
	471A	Upper	90	122	105	165			M	Q
	471B	Lower	90	122	130	165	S	L	M	N
	472A	Upper	140	150	75	155			F	Q
	472B	Middle	140	150	100	155	S	L	M	N
	472C	Lower	140	150	115	155			C	N
	473A	Upper	105	150	90	165	S	L	M	P
	473B	Lower	105	150	110	165	S	L	M	N
	474B	Upper			60				C	"Plundered"
	474A	Lower	110	140	120	160	S	L	M	N
	487A	Upper	70	85	80	165	S	L	C	N
	487B	Lower	70	85	100	165	S	L	C	N
	496A	Upper	75	130	110	155			M	N
	496B	Lower	75	130	125	155	S	L	F?	Q
	1206A	Upper	90	140	90	140			F	Q
	1206B	Lower	90	140	110	140	S		M	N?
	1212B	Upper	150	105	80	125	E	L	F	N
	1212A	Lower	150	105	110	125				Q
	1667	Upper				110	E	L	F	N
		Lower								"Robbed"
	1896	Upper	70	70	95	5	S	L	C	N
		Lower								"Plundered"
	2829	Upper	63	113	89	150	S	L	C (5)	N
	2853	Lower	85	140	140	146	S	L	F?	N
	3507	Upper			50				C	N
		Lower	80	100	90					"Empty"
	3509	Upper	120	175	145	165	S	L	F/C	P
	3533	Lower	120	175	160	165	N	L	F	N
	3522	Upper							M	P
		Upper							M	P
		Lower							F	P
Matmar	3007	Upper	100	110	150	140	S	L	F	N
			100	110	150	140	S	L	M	N
		Lower							M	'Robbed'
	3069	Upper/	100	110	140	170	S	L	M/	Q
		Lower							M	
	3074	Upper/	180	250	230	135	S/	L/	M/	P
		Lower					S	L	M	

Tab. 1: List of superimposed burials and their constituent depositions in the Qau-Matmar region; based on information published by Guy Brunton.

Burial	Position	Period	Condition	Burial goods
5162	Upper	Badarian	N	Matting
5163	Lower	Badarian	Q	Scraps of malachite, beads of shell and slate (?), 1 *Ancillaria* shell
5390	Upper			
	Lower	Badarian	N	Matting, skins, Badarian BB61k pot, 4 alabaster and ivory beads, 1 *Nerita* shell, 2 ivory vases, 2 bone combs, 1 bone needle, 1 hippopotamus tusk, 4 small flint flakes, 1 dark red pebble
200(iv)	Upper	Pred. [N.IIC-D]		[dated to S.D. 52–55, probably contained pottery]
	Lower	Badarian		Matting
400	Upper	Badarian		
	Lower	Badarian	"Plundered"	Badarian BR3f pot
471A	Upper	Badarian	Q	Matting
471B	Lower	Tas./Bad.?	N	Skins
472A	Upper	Badarian	Q	Skins, flint implements (in filling)
472B	Middle	Badarian	N	Matting, skins, cloth, Badarian BR31m bowl, beads, shells
472C	Lower	Tas./Bad.?	N	Matting, string of *Nerita* shells
473A	Upper	Badarian	P	Matting, skins, Badarian SB27d pot
473B	Lower	Tas./Bad.?	N	Matting, skins, traces of cloth
474B	Upper	Badarian	"Plundered"	Matting
474A	Lower	Tasian	N	Matting, black skins, 2 *Nerita* shells, 4 bone hooks, 1 Tasian pot with organic contents covered by a platter of basketry
487A	Upper	Tas./Bad.?	N	Matting and black skins
487B	Lower	Tasian	N	Matting, skin with yellow hair, Tasian rough bowl with sherd for lid
496A	Upper	Badarian?	N	Skins
496B	Lower	Tasian	Q	Skins, Tasian bowl, sherds of 2 Badarian BB pots, beak of spoon-bill, 1 *Ancillaria* shell, 1 *Mutela* shell for malachite paste
1206A	Upper	Badarian	Q	Matting, flint implement
1206B	Lower	Badarian	N	Skins, cloth, 1 Badarian BR34c pot
1212B	Upper	Badarian	N	Reed matting, yellow skins, cloth, sherd of 1 deep BB bowl
1212A	Lower	Badarian	Q	Badarian BR3d pot
1667	Upper	Pred. [N.IIC]	N	Matting, Naqada IIC pots: B47, F14, L12g, P40h (2×), R22, R63m, R94h (2×), malachite with cloth (bag?), pebble, *Spatha* shell filled with malachite
	Lower	Badarian	"Robbed"	
1896	Upper	Pred. [N.IC]	N	Traces of cloth, C26 bowl, malachite, basket, bone needle (?), horn hook, human hair.
	Lower		"Plundered"	
2829	Upper	Tasian	N	Reed matting, skins (folds of leather), cloth, ivory bangle, bone bead, Tasian pot & bowl
2853	Lower	Tasian	N	Reed matting, skins (folds of leather), traces of cloth (?), alabaster palette, piece of ostrich egg-shell
3507	Upper	Badarian	N	4 pots, possibly dating to late Badarian or early Amratian period
	Lower		"Empty"	
3509	Upper	Badarian	P	Matting. *In filling above the body*: oval grinder of grey igneous rock, very rough celtoid implement of hard limestone, as well as Badarian and Amratian pots
3533	Lower	Tasian	N	Matting, skins, 1 Tasian pot

Burial	Position	Period	Condition	Burial goods
3522	Upper	Badarian	P	Matting and skins with the lower adult female burial. *Not assigned to a specific burial*: blue glazed steatite beads [of a girdle?] & 1 ivory hippopotamus-shaped vessel
	Upper	Badarian	P	
	Lower	Badarian	P	
3007	Upper	Pred. [N.IIC]	N/N	Matting, B53a, B55b, B57b, F14, and R81 pots, resin, malachite
	Lower	N/a	"Robbed"	
3069	Upper	Pred. [N.IIB]?	Q	*Not assigned to a specific burial*: matting, B1b, B4, B35a, B76m, R69, R82b, R7, L12f, L12p pots, beads
	Lower	Pred. [N.IIB]?		
3074	Upper	Pred. [N.IIB]?	P	*Not assigned to a specific burial*: B35e, B74b, D4, R1b, R81d pots, butt of fishtailed knife, part of basket lined with gazelle skin
	Lower	Pred. [N.IIB]?		*Lower burial*: bier of sticks, papyrus matting, cloth

Tab. 2: List of superimposed burials and their constituent depositions in the Qau-Matmar region, with information on their original dating by Brunton, based on information published by Guy Brunton. Naqada dates provided by Stan Hendrickx in personal communication.

Key: dimensions of burial pit in N.E.D.=North side, East side, Down, in cm, unless otherwise stated; the azimuth of the burial pits and the orientation of the head of the deceased in cardinal directions; the side on which the body was positioned (L.=Left, R.=Right); sex/age of the deceased (M=adult male, F=adult female, C=child); the condition of the burial (N=undisturbed, P=partly disturbed, Q=quite disturbed; period of the burial: Tas.=Tasian, Bad.=Badarian, Pred.=Predynastic, N.= Naqada)

Fig. 1: Photograph of superimposed burial 1667, showing section through and (partial) contents of its upper and lower depositions.

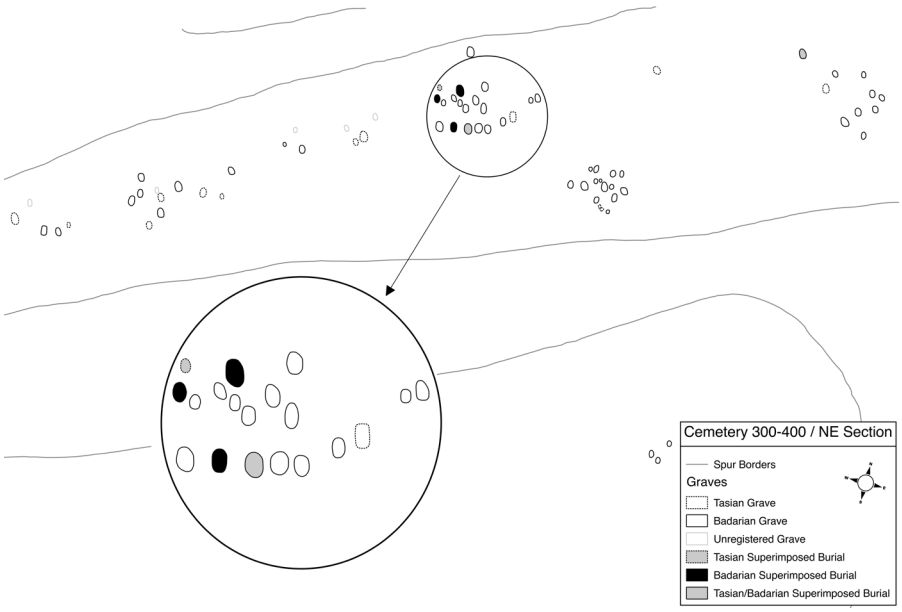

Fig. 2: Map of northeastern section of Cemetery 300–400, showing the location of its superimposed burials. Dating of superimposed burials was done on the basis of Brunton's Tomb Registers.

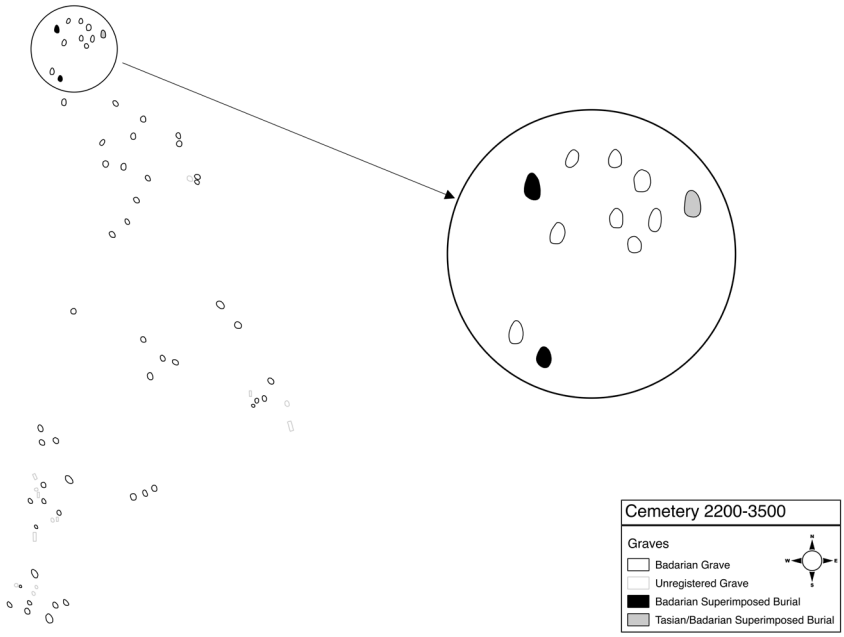

Fig. 3: Map of Cemetery 2200–3500, showing the location of its superimposed burials. Dating of superimposed burials was done on the basis of Brunton's Tomb Registers.