

**Lower Nubia from Chiefdom to State:
The Development of A-Horizon Royalty and its Relations with Early Egypt
Through the Analysis of the Cemeteries of Sayala and Qustul**

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This contribution is extrapolated from wider research, focused on the A-Horizon civilisation in Lower Nubia and its relations with Proto-Dynastic Egypt, through the analysis of two main Nubian necropolises: cemetery 137 of Sayala (and the associated Cemetery 142 of Naga Wadi) and cemetery L of Qustul, respectively belonging to Classical and Terminal A-Horizon, both pertaining to the main centre of a sub-regional or cantonal political entity.

Lower Nubia is an interface area between two different cultures, which followed diverse paths during the crucial ages of the State formation, subjected to creolisation and hybridization phenomena.

Excavations in the region have mostly been conceived in the framework of salvage archaeology, due to the threat of flooding Lower Nubia underwent since the Aswan Dam was built in 1902; despite the attempts to develop a scientific method to approach the excavations while struggling with water rising, which however led to quantum increases in our knowledge of cultural history of the whole area and its cultural *facies*, still enormous lacunae remain: the current state of research suffers from a general lack of data and the impossibility to reprise the excavations in most sites, which are now submerged by Lake Nasser – like Sayala and Qustul.

This contribution approaches the topic from two main standpoints: first, an overall introduction on A-Horizon culture and its relations with Proto-Dynastic Egypt from the socio-economic point of view will be highlighted.

Then, the analysis of both Sayala and Qustul's cemeteries will be outlined, displaying both similarities and differences in the development of funerary customs as a reflection of social dynamics.

The following section will retrace the commercial and political interactions between the two Nubian chiefdoms and the rising Egyptian élite, and its consequences on both social and ideological aspects. The conclusions will analyse the development of chiefdoms in Lower Nubia and their attempts to reach a status of kingship, with the purpose to explain why Lower Nubia cantonal proto-states never fully developed as mature and formed statal entities like the Egyptian Crown, by providing hypothesis on a revision of the A-Horizon cultural context.

Keywords: Lower Nubia, A-Horizon, Sayala, Qustul, State Formation, Interface Region, New Perspectives.