DYING FOR A DRINK ON THE MEROITIC FRONTIER: IMPORTED OBJECTS IN FUNERARY ASSEMBLAGES AT FARAS, SUDANESE NUBIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of imported objects in funerary assemblages at the Meroitic cemetery of Faras in Sudanese Nubia (north Sudan). Excavated at the beginning of the 20th century by Francis Llewellyn Griffith (1862-1934), Faras was situated on the frontier between the Kingdom of Meroë (c.300 BCE – 350 CE) and Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt. Its location granted it access to wide-ranging commercial networks and imported objects were frequently utilised as grave goods. Drawing upon the author's PhD research, this paper offers a nuanced assessment of how imports were selected and used in funerary practice at Faras. It disputes the traditional idea that the Meroitic frontier functioned as an acculturated buffer of the classical world and demonstrates that, despite centuries of material contact with Egypt, the people of Faras maintained a distinctly Meroitic identity expressed through local mortuary tradition.

KEYWORDS

Faras; Meroitic studies; Funerary archaeology; Frontier studies; Identity.

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1. Introduction

The Kingdom of Meroë occupied the ancient territory of Kush, approximately synonymous with Sudan north of Khartoum and Egypt south of Aswan (Figure 1).[2] Conventionally, it dates from c.300 BCE to c.350 CE and its foundation marks a point in Kushite archaeology when the royal burial ground was transferred from the northern site of Napata (Nuri) to the southern site of Meroë (Reisner, 1923; Adams, 1977, p. 306; Edwards, 2004, p. 143; Yellin, 2021, p. 566). This has encouraged a terminological shift in Kushite studies from 'Napatan kingdom' to 'Meroitic kingdom' but does not indicate a marked break in continuity. Instead, the transition should be understood as the culmination of a process whereby the political and economic importance of Meroë gradually eclipsed Napata, without any temporal hiatus (cf. Hakem, 1989; Török, 1997b, pp. 230-34; Wolf and Nowotnick, 2021, p. 518). Hence, for the purpose of this paper, it may be more useful to locate the Meroitic kingdom by simply stating that it was the independent southern neighbour of Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt. Its rulers began to be buried at Meroë shortly after Ptolemy I's transition from satrap to pharaoh (305 BCE), it still occupied Kush when Octavian annexed Egypt (30 BCE), and it began to disintegrate into splinter kingdoms soon after the foundation of Constantinople (324 CE). Its heartland was in the south – a region known as the Butana – but, from the early 2nd century BCE, it was also active in the northernmost area of Lower Nubia.

This northern territory, known to the Ptolemaic regime as the *Triakontaschoinos*, was officially under Egyptian administration and, excluding a short-lived intervention by the Meroitic kings Arkamani and Adikhalamani-Tabirqo in the early 2nd century BCE, lay beyond the jurisdiction of Meroë.[3] However, as the Ptolemaic grip on Egypt dwindled,

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[2] This paper draws upon my PhD research at the Universities of Exeter and Cardiff (UK, 2018-21) where I benefited from the expert supervision of Dr Robert Morkot and Prof. Paul Nicholson. I owe a debt of gratitude to both, and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership for generously funding the project. I also wish to acknowledge the Oxford Griffith Institute for kindly allowing me to study the Faras Archive, Dr Rennan Lemos for inviting me to contribute to this special edition of *Mare Nostrum*, and the anonymous reviewers.

[3] Arkamani and Adikhalamani-Tabirqo are attested on temple inscriptions at Dakka, Debod, Kalabsha and Philae. Their activities in Lower Nubia correspond to a period of sustained crisis in Egypt which saw Thebes break away from Ptolemaic rule under the indigenous pharaohs Herwennefer and Ankhwennefer (206-186 BCE). These two rulers received support from the Meroitic monarchy who, taking advantage of the Ptolemaic loss of Upper Egypt, extended their control into Lower Nubia. Following the reunification of Egypt under Ptolemy V in 186 BCE, however, there is no evidence that Meroë maintained a political presence in the territory. On the contrary, at least the northern half of Lower Nubia was reintegrated into the administration of the Thebaid. For the sources, see Eide *et al*, 1996, nos. 129-35; for concise syntheses, see Hölbl, 2001, pp. 153-59; Török, 2009, pp. 391-93, 400-11.

it acquired a degree of independence and, by the time of Octavian, was involved in an Upper Egyptian revolt. This revolt was quelled in 29 BCE by the newly-installed Roman prefect Cornelius Gallus, who then placed Lower Nubia under Roman control and subjected the region to tax (Eide *et al*, 1996, nos. 163-65; Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2010).

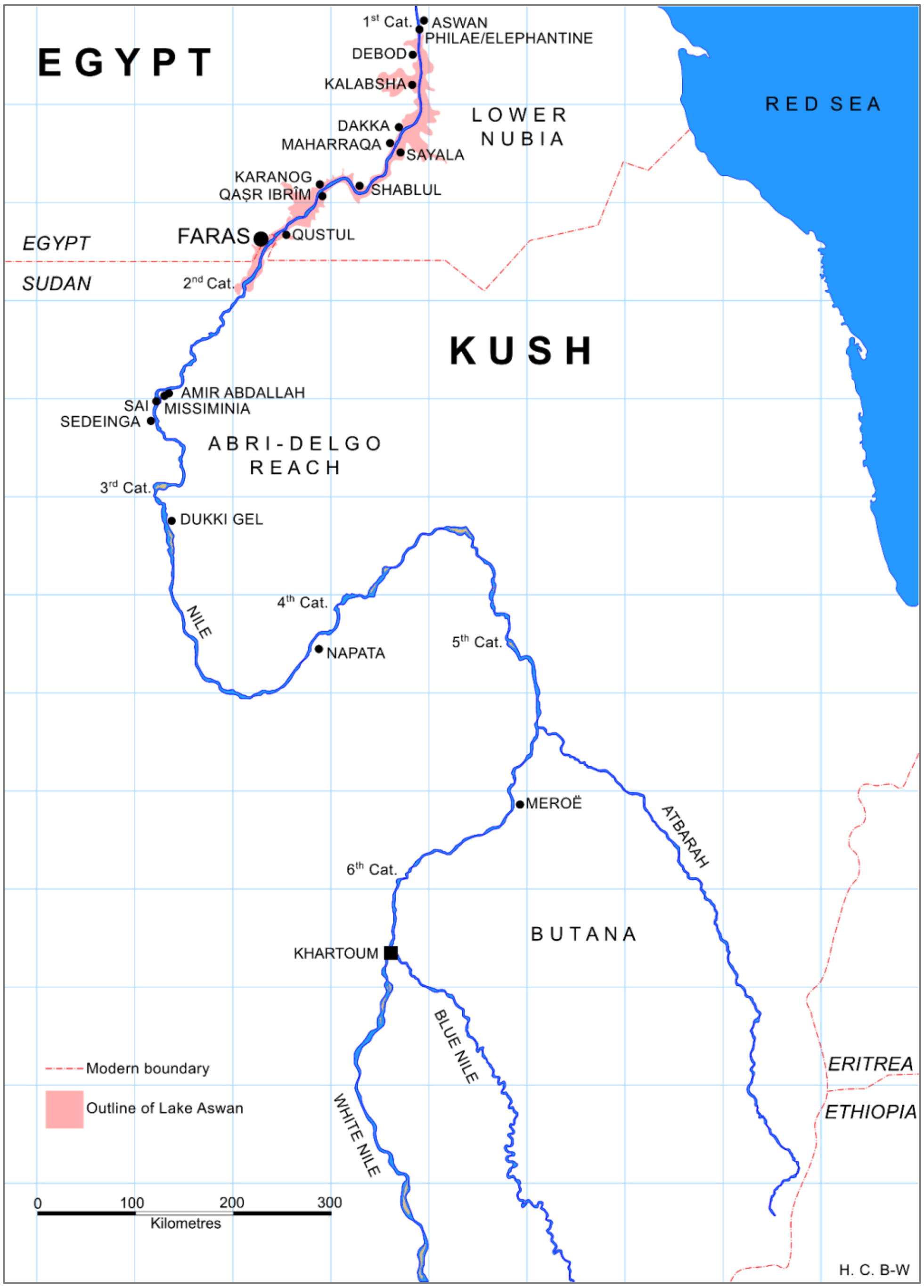

Figure 1. Map of Kush showing the locations of sites and regions mentioned in the text.

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According to Strabo (17.1.54), it was the imposition of Roman rule that triggered a local rebellion and, ultimately, brought Meroë into direct conflict with Rome. The ensuing 'Romano-Meroitic War' is discussed elsewhere, and little need be said here.[4] It probably resulted in the Meroitic acquisition of the well-known 'Bronze Head of Augustus' and *may* have involved a Roman army penetrating Kush as far south as Napata (Opper 2014).[5] In any case, the conflict was resolved in 21 BCE with the result that Meroë maintained its status as an independent kingdom and, until Diocletian's withdrawal in 298 CE, the frontier with Egypt was placed in the northern half of Lower Nubia, at Maharraqa (Procopius, *Wars*, 1.19.29; Kirwan, 1957; Speidel, 1988; Maxfield, 2009). Thus, control of the region was divided between Kush and Egypt, with both powers having a stake in its administration. Having established a political *status quo* that appears to have lasted into the late 3rd century CE, Lower Nubia transitioned into a 'frontier zone' that facilitated sustained material, political, religious and social interaction between Kush and Egypt.

This paper concerns a Meroitic cemetery in the southern half of Lower Nubia, c.175 km south of the Roman frontier. The cemetery in question – Faras – was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century by Francis Llewellyn Griffith (1862-1934) who uncovered 2220 Meroitic graves and retrieved a vast array of material, much of which was imported from Egypt or, in some cases, further afield. Like all Meroitic cemeteries in Lower Nubia, Faras had been plundered with the result that many of its graves were empty and some material was disturbed: something that Griffith took care to record. The analysis of this paper is based entirely on objects and assemblages that were *in situ* at the time of excavation and, so far as is possible, reflects the original grave conditions.

The excavation of Faras allowed Griffith to propose, at a formative stage in Meroitic studies, conclusions that became paradigmatic in the field. However, the cemetery was only published in a series of preliminary reports and the material evidence was rapidly dispersed between thirteen institutions across three continents, without any attempt to keep objects from the same context together (Griffith, 1924; 1925). Thus, it proved extremely difficult for later academics to assess the validity of Griffith's analysis,

[4] Dio Cassius 54.5.4-6; Pliny, *HN*, 6.181-82; Res Gestae Divi Augusti, 26.5; Strabo 17.1.54; for concise syntheses, see Welsby, 1996, pp. 68-70; Török, 2009, pp. 439-42; for critical analyses, see Jameson, 1968; Hofmann, 1977.

[5] After its excavation by Garstang, the Bronze Head was transferred to the collection of the British Museum (1911,0901.1). For the discovery and context, see Garstang 1912; Bosanquet 1912; Török 1997a, pp. 145-51 (M 292).

particularly that concerning the site's chronology (cf. Fernández, 1983, pp. 660-67; Francigny, 2007). Owing to the incomplete publication and issues arising from the dispersal of material, the full potential of Faras – to date, the largest known Meroitic cemetery – was never realised. Compounding the issue, Faras was located in a region of Sudan (between the 1st and 2nd Cataracts) that, following the 1960s construction of the Aswan High Dam, was lost to the waters of Lake Aswan (Säve-Söderbergh, 1987). It cannot, therefore, be revisited archaeologically as it is now underwater (Figure 1). The only opportunity to reassess the site lies in Griffith's unpublished field records, archived in the Oxford Griffith Institute. These records were the subject of the author's doctoral thesis which offered a comprehensive reassessment of the site and a new chronology demonstrating its use from c.275 BCE – 300+ CE.[6] Drawing upon this research, the present paper discusses the selection and use of imported objects in funerary assemblages at Faras.

2. *Faras in 20th century academia*

When Griffith arrived at Faras in the winter of 1910, the archaeology of Sudan was far from unexplored: Bruce (1730-1794) and Cailliaud (1787-1869) had identified the probable site of Meroë, Ferlini (1800-1870) had ransacked the pyramid of Amanishakheto, and Lepsius (1810-1884) had completed his *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*.[7] However, what would come to be known as 'Meroitic Studies' scarcely existed: work on the Meroitic language was in its infancy (Griffith, 1909; Rilly and De Voogt, 2012, pp. 3-5), formal archaeological work in Lower Nubia had not commenced until 1907 (Reisner, 1910), and the identification of Bruce and Cailliaud's royal city had only just been confirmed (Sayce, 1910). There was, therefore, little published work for Griffith to rely upon and his only points of reference were Woolley and Randall-MacIver's excavation of the Meroitic cemeteries at Shablul and Karanòg, and Garstang and Sayce's work at Meroë Royal City.[8] Neither of these sites produced detailed

[6] Bishop-Wright, 2021 (currently being prepared for publication as a monograph in the *British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan* series).
[7] For summaries of these, and other early European travellers in Sudan, see Budge, 1907, pp. 1-63, 285-307; Garstang *et al*, 1911, pp. 5-6; Priese, 1992; Morkot, 2000, pp. 8-22; Mainterot, 2010.
[8] See, respectively, MacIver and Woolley, 1909; Woolley and Randall-MacIver, 1910; Garstang, 1910; Sayce, 1910; for Garstang and Sayce's later work at Meroë, see Török, 1997a.

chronologies, and the analysis of both often relied upon problematic assumptions surrounding Meroë's relationship with the classical world.[9]

When publishing the Faras preliminary reports, over a decade after the close of excavation in 1912, the chronological and cultural ideas of such influential figures as Woolley, Randall-MacIver, Garstang and Sayce had become standard. Thus, Griffith speaks of the 'simple minded' and 'barbaric' Meroitic inhabitants of Lower Nubia, in contrast to the more advanced Graeco-Roman inhabitants of contemporary Egypt (Griffith, 1925, pp. 72-73). Furthermore, his chronological analysis relied upon a dubious model of Lower Nubian depopulation that had first been proposed by Firth (1915, pp. 21-23. Cf. Griffith, 1924, pp. 115-23) when publishing the results of the 1909-10 *Archaeological Survey of Nubia*. This model asserted that, from the New Kingdom colonial period (16th – 11th centuries BCE), the levels of the Nile had been consistently falling to the point that, by the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, Lower Nubia could not support a population. This was only remedied, so Firth (1915, p. 21) claimed, in the Ptolemaic period when new irrigation technology – the so-called 'Persian Wheel' or '*saqia'* – was introduced. Griffith (1924, pp. 117, 120, 144) accepted this reconstruction and used it as the basis of his chronology which asserted that the Meroitic cemetery at Faras did not predate the 1st century BCE. Owing to Faras' incomplete publication, later commentators were forced to rely on this chronology without the data required to judge its veracity,[10] and without necessarily recognising that it incorporated the tenuous principal of 'hydraulic crisis'.[11]

Despite some resistance from contemporaries (Trigger 1965, p. 113; 1976; Arkell 1976), the hydraulic crisis model was then used by Adams (1976) in his reconstruction of a Meroitic 'North and South'. This important work posited an even later chronology

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[9] Consider, for example, Sayce's (1912, p. 64) derogatory use of miscegenation to justify a 1st century CE Meroitic decline, or Woolley and Randall-MacIver's (1909, p. 38; 1910, p. 52) discussions of Meroitic-made pottery at Shablul and Karanòg. Both rely on the underlying and fundamentally racist principal that classical (western) influence was required to inspire and sustain Meroitic development. Such thinking was not uncommon in 20th century Kushite studies and has been carefully discussed by Morkot (2003) in the context of the origins of the 25th Dynasty. A review of the issue, and its impact on Meroitic studies, is also offered in the author's PhD thesis (*supra*, note 6).

[10] For example, Guinea and Teixidor, 1965, pp. 103-04; Williams, 1985, pp. 175-76; Török, 1987b, pp. 160-61, 193ff.

[11] The 'hydraulic crisis' debate is extensive and can be subdivided into two questions: 1) whether or not the evidence for a 'falling Nile' in the late 2nd and 1st millennium BCE is compelling and, if so, whether it can be used to support a percieved Lower Nubian depopulation; 2) whether or not the *saqia* was introduced in the Ptolemaic (final centuries BCE), early Roman (1st – 3rd centuries CE), or terminal Meroitic (4th century CE) period. These issues are discussed in the author's PhD Thesis (*supra*, note 6). Critical syntheses are also provided by Heidorn (1992, pp. 10-15) and Edwards (1996, pp. 48-58, 80-81; 1999), and thought-provoking comments on the introduction of the *saqia* are offered by Fuller (2014; 2015).

whereby Lower Nubia (including Faras) was not resettled until the 2nd century CE and, crucially for this paper, introduced the idea of a cultural and economic divide between the Meroitic populations of Lower Nubia (the 'North') and the Butana (the 'South'). Drawing upon simplistic theoretical concepts of acculturation, and a centre-periphery model of cross-cultural interaction that was later popularised by Rowlands (1987), Adams (1976, p. 19) argued that Lower Nubia became an 'extension of the classical world' through contact with Egypt. Consequently, the region transitioned from a 'cultural backwater' to a developed buffer zone with an independent market economy, a rich 'bourgeoisie' and a generally prosperous population. Not benefitting from such acute classical influence, the Meroitic heartland, meanwhile, 'remained to the end an outpost of the Ancient World': its economy was based on redistribution, and all wealth and power was concentrated in the hands of a small ruling elite. Thus, Adams' economic and social dichotomy between Meroitic 'North and South' was proposed: Lower Nubia functioned as an acculturated buffer of the classical world, whilst the Butana was a peripheral client that was exploited for its raw materials in return for prestige goods utilised by a minority of the population.

This core-periphery model recalls early-20th-century assumptions that Kushite society was reliant on foreign influence for its development, and demonstrates the perpetuation of racist ideas concerning Africa's relationship with Europe.[12] It also parallels the dominant thinking of contemporary Roman studies – 'Romanisation' – which, in the last three decades, has been rejected in favour of more nuanced concepts of cultural interaction (Woolf, 1997; Wells, 1999; Mattingly, 2004; Wallace-Hadrill, 2008; Pitts and Versluys, 2015; Witcher, 2017). A further issue is that 'North and South' was produced prior to extensive publications of Meroitic sites between the 3rd and 4th Cataract: namely, Dukki Gel (Bonnet, 2019), Sedeinga (Rilly and Francigny, 2018; Rilly *et al*, 2020), Sai (Francigny, 2014), Missiminia (Vila, 1982) and Amir Abdallah (Fernández, 1983; 1984). This 'middle region' of the Meroitic kingdom was, therefore, absent from Adams' analysis which necessitated his problematic comparison between the royal monuments of the Meroitic Butana and the non-royal remains of Lower Nubia. The result

[12] Here, it is well to consider Adams' (1977, p. 295) unfortunate comment in his seminal work *Nubia Corridor to Africa*: 'Meroitic civilization is no more the simple and direct culmination of Napatan civilization than is Ptolemaic Egypt the climax of the pharaonic ages. Each represents a major cultural renaissance after centuries of stagnation and decline. The revitalizing force in each case was the same: contact with, and partial integration into, the classical world.' For discussion of academic racism in the archaeology of Sudan, see Trigger (1994) and Matić (2018).

was an artificial, and ultimately unhelpful, contrast that continued to influence later studies of Meroë's interaction with Graeco-Roman Egypt.[13]

This brief review of scholarly thought is pertinent to the present paper as it reveals two prior assumptions concerning Meroë's place in Lower Nubia:

i. 1st millennium BCE Lower Nubia did not support a significant population until it was 'resettled' by Meroë in the mid-late Ptolemaic (Firth, 1915; Griffith, 1924) or early-Roman period (Adams 1976).
ii. The Meroitic population of Lower Nubia was acculturated by material contact with Graeco-Roman Egypt.

A primary focus of the author's doctoral research was to challenge these assumptions by reassessing the unpublished records and objects of Lower Nubia's premier Meroitic cemetery, Faras. The first task was to produce a reliable chronology of the site that was based on quantitative data, not empirical observation relying on assumptions concerning Meroë's activities in Lower Nubia. This was accomplished using correspondence analysis to complete a seriation of pottery which was then tested against stratigraphic data, imported objects with absolute dates, and historical reconstruction. The result was a sequence of eight archaeological phases beginning c.275 BCE, lasting throughout the Meroitic period, and concluding with a limited post-Meroitic phase in the 4th or 5th centuries CE (Table 1).

Table 1. The author's chronology of Faras and its corresponding periods in Kush and Egypt.

Faras		**Corresponding epoch**	
Period	**Approximate date range**	**Kush**	**Egypt**
0	275 – 200 BCE	Early-mid Meroitic	Ptolemaic
1A	200 – 100 BCE		
1B	100 – 21 BCE		
2A	21 BCE – 75 CE	Mid-late Meroitic	Roman
2B	75 – 150 CE		
3A	150 – 250 CE		
3B	250 – 300+ CE		
4	4th/5th century CE	Post-Meroitic	Late Roman

[13] The influence of Adams' economic separation and reliance on 'gift exchange' to explain the presence of imports in the Butana is apparent in Török's (1989) Kush and the External World, although Török (1987b) did reject the wider North-South model. Despite over privileging visually-impressive material from royal graves at the expense of humbler imports from non-royal contexts, Török's 1989 paper is still the most comprehensive and widely-referenced discussion of Meroë's material interaction with Egypt.

Having established this chronology, it was possible to present a nuanced assessment of material connectivity at Faras and, through the lens of funerary tradition, challenge the assumption that its inhabitants were acculturated by sustained contact with Egypt. It is the question of material and cultural change on the Meroitic frontier that is addressed in this paper. To commence, a chronological overview of the types of imported objects appearing at Faras is presented.

3. *Imported objects – a chronological overview*

Faras' location on the frontier with Egypt granted it access to wide-ranging commercial networks and imported objects were regularly utilised in funerary assemblages. The first imports appeared in graves belonging to Period 0, the earliest phase of the author's revised chronology (c.275-200 BCE). Graves assigned to this period were axial chambers with entrances orientated to the southeast and small, aceramic assemblages that often included a single bronze vessel and pair of heavy bronze anklets. Their structure, arrangement and lack of pottery parallels early 3rd century BCE graves at Amir Abdallah, c.200 km further south in the Abri-Delgo Reach (Fernández, 1983).[14] Reflecting proximity to the frontier, most of the bronzeware present at Faras, however, was imported from Egypt. Amongst these were a decorated bowl (Figure 2a), two lotiform beakers (Figure 2b), two mirrors, and a series of carinated vessels corresponding to a well-known type that is often referred to as an 'Achaemenid deep bowl' (Figure 2c). This distinctive shape was popular during the Persian rule of Egypt and continued to be produced into the early Ptolemaic period (Strong, 1966, pp. 99-101). Closely comparable examples, often of silver, are published from 4th – 3rd century BCE contexts in Egypt and are also known from contemporary sites elsewhere in Kush (E.g. Dumbrell, 1971, Fig. 2; Dunham, 1957, Fig. 18).[15] The earliest imports at Faras were, therefore, orientated towards drinking and reflect a point in the site's chronology when its inhabitants entertained close commercial links with Upper Egypt that facilitated access to luxury metalware, but had not yet adopted pottery as the mainstay of funerary assemblages.

[14] Graves of Amir Abdallah 'Generation 1': see Fernández, 1983, pp. 764-66, 1143-80 (grave nos. 394, 398, 399, 404, 407-428).
[15] A spectacular example from Meroë South is now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (no. 24.1041).

The arrival of pottery, and a general shift towards 'typical' Meroitic mortuary practice associated with Osirian beliefs (Yellin, 1995, p. 2885; Francigny, 2016, pp. 103-05), came in the 2nd century BCE (Period 1A) and corresponds to Arkamani and Adikhalamani-Tabirqo's move into Lower Nubia (*supra, note 3*). A new emphasis on liquid storage was introduced and most graves assigned to this phase contained a locally-produced ceramic jar and cup arranged at the head of the interment. This combination of vessels set the pattern of funerary ritual at Faras for the next five centuries and continued the emphasis on drinking that was already apparent in Period 0. The gourd-shaped jars correspond to typical early Meroitic forms and are widely paralleled in the pottery of contemporary Amir Abdallah (Fernández, 1984, pp. 57-59). Reflecting this political and material shift south, the availability of imports declined: the rare inclusion of Upper Egyptian pottery (Figure 2d), a bronze *mastos* of typical Ptolemaic type (Figure 2e), a *klepsydra* strainer (Figure 2f), and a bronze ladle with a bird's-head terminal represent the only exceptions (Figure 2g).

In the final century BCE (Period 1B), Egyptian imports became more common. The availability of Upper Egyptian ceramics produced in 'Aswan Pink Ware' increased, and imported goblets (Figure 2h), jugs (Figure 2i), *askoi* (Figure 2j), *amphorae* (Figure 3a), *klepsydrae* and lug-handled jars (Figure 3b) frequently augmented the typical combination of local cup and jar. The *amphorae* were particularly popular and often painted with solid black 'Silhouette Style' designs comprising bands, wavy lines, sprigs, stars and vine scrolls (Figure 3a).[16] They would have been imported as containers for liquid commodities, namely wine, to be redeployed as an alternative to water, milk or locally-produced beer (Francigny, 2016, pp. 105-08; Bashir, 2019, p. 79). Whilst the availability of such vessels certainly increased in the late Ptolemaic period, it was not, however, until the Roman annexation of Egypt that a significant material shift at Faras occurred.

[16] For the 'Silhouette Style' in Meroitic ceramic studies, see Török, 1987a, pp. 78-80; 1987b, pp. 190-92; 1994.

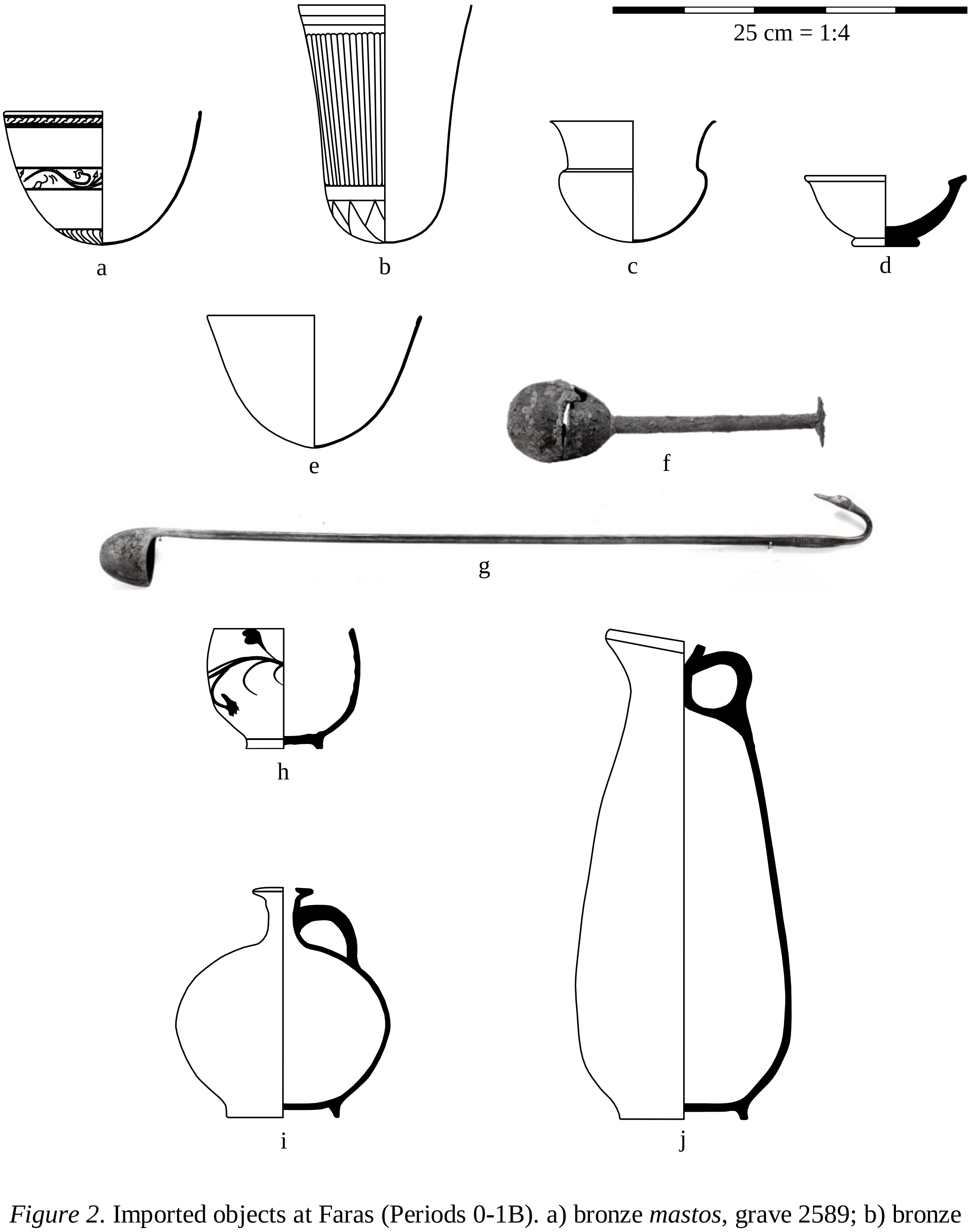

Figure 2. Imported objects at Faras (Periods 0-1B). a) bronze *mastos,* grave 2589; b) bronze beaker, grave 2588; c) bronze Achaemenid Bowl, grave 365; d) ceramic bowl, grave 2040; e) bronze *mastos*, grave 596; f) bronze *klepsydra*, grave 2323; g) bronze ladle, grave 2881; h) ceramic goblet, grave 2888; i) ceramic jug, grave 2468; j) ceramic *askos*, grave 804.

Drawn by the author (© H. C. Bishop-Wright), excluding f and g which are reproduced from Griffith, 1924, Pl. LV.2/9.

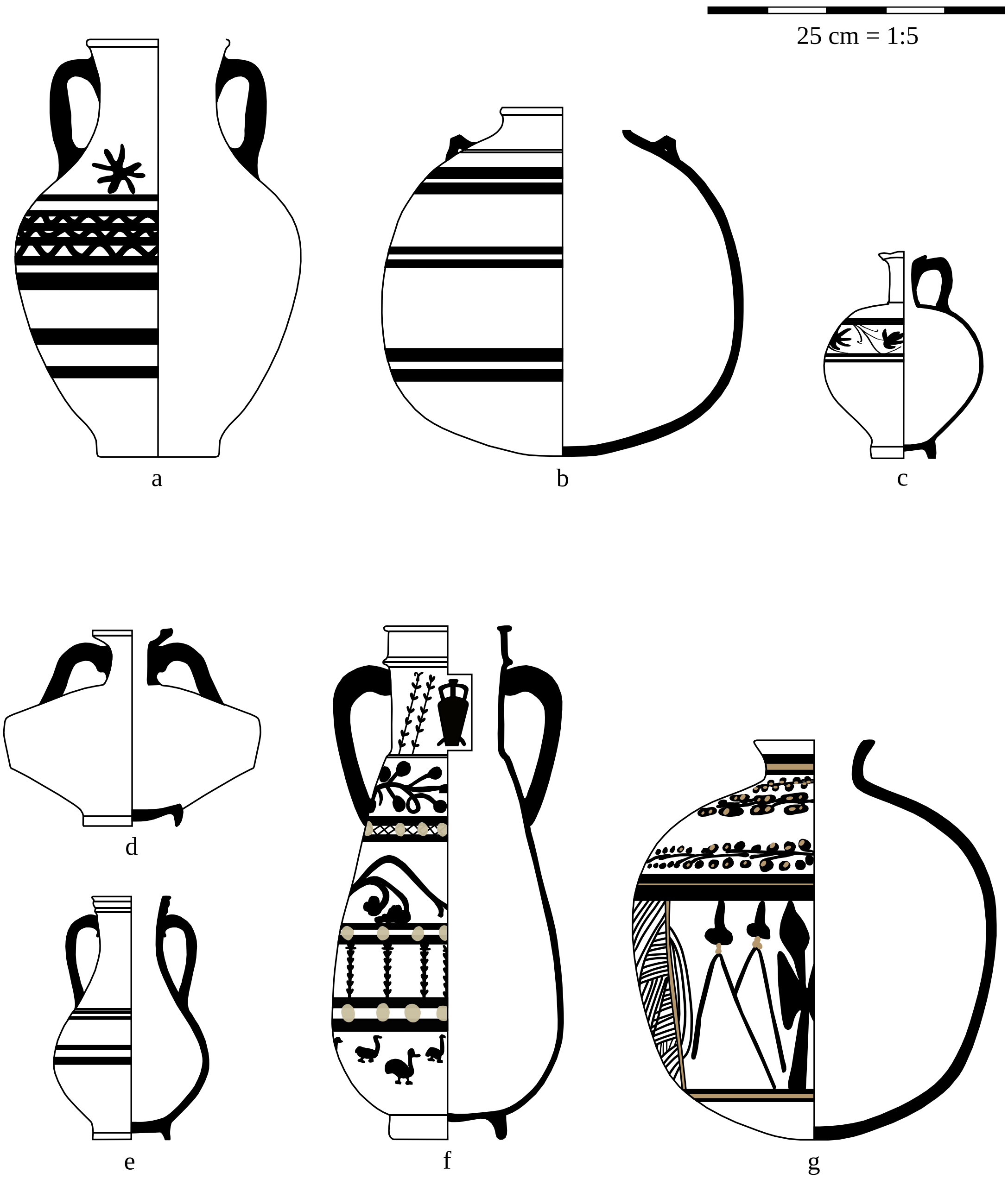

Figure 3. Imported objects at Faras (Periods 1B-2B). a) ceramic *amphora*, grave 2872; b) ceramic jar, grave 2468; c) ceramic jug, grave 1092; d) ceramic *amphora*, grave 2006; e) ceramic *amphora*, grave 2606a; f) ceramic *amphora*, grave 1226; g) ceramic jar, grave 1091.

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The peace treaty that concluded the Romano-Meroitic War of the 20s BCE heralded a period of political stability in Lower Nubia and increased commerce between Kush and Egypt. The establishment of Rome's southern frontier also resulted in the stationing of three auxiliary cohorts at Aswan, with forward command posts set up as far south as Maharraqa (Speidel, 1988; Hölbl, 1990; Maxfield, 2009, p. 77). For at least part of the 1st century CE, an additional Roman outpost was maintained at the hilltop fortification of Qasr Ibrim, c.100 km upriver of the frontier in what was technically Meroitic territory (Adams, 1983, pp. 196-97; Adams *et al*, 1983, pp. 57-59; Wilkins *et al*, 2006).[17] Its primary function may have been to safeguard against local uprising but, considering the lack of evidence for further conflict, its 'day-to-day' role was probably that of an *emporium* within easy distance of major Meroitic settlement. The existence of such a commercial hub in the southern half of Lower Nubia, combined with the territory's refreshed role as an economic corridor, resulted in an explosion of imported objects at Faras that lasted into the middle of the 2nd century CE (Periods 2A-B).

Imported pottery increased and up to 50% of ceramics from graves of this period were of Upper Egyptian origin. Consistent with the 2nd and 1st century BCE assemblages (Period 1A-B), imports were restricted to vessels functionally associated with the consumption, service, storage or transport of liquids: namely, jugs (Figure 3c), *amphorae* (Figure 3d-f), globular storage jars (Figure 3g) and goblets (Figure 4a-c). Although predominantly plain, these were occasionally painted with complex 'Silhouette Style' schemes that focussed on vegetal motifs and, for later examples, included cream-coloured highlights (Figure 3f-g). From the end of the 1st century CE, an unusual form of raised-slip decoration commonly termed 'barbotine' was also found on squat goblets produced at Aswan (Figure 4b-c).[18] Beyond ceramics, the Roman annexation of Egypt introduced glassware to Faras which, from the mid-1st century CE, began to appear in assemblages (Bishop-Wright, 2023). Excluding a single mould-blown beaker, such vessels were restricted to utilitarian *unguentaria* (Figure 4d-e) associated with the trade of powdered kohl (eye makeup) or scented oils (Hofmann, 1978, p. 201; Silvano, 2012, p. 48; Francigny and David, 2013, p. 111). Regarding metalware, the simple hemispherical

[17] For a summary of archaeological work at Qaṣr Ibrîm, see Rose, 2011; for doubt over the longevity of Roman occupation after the Romano-Meroitic War (*supra*, note 4), see Török, 1987b, pp. 163-66; Horton, 1991, p. 271; Welsby, 1998, p. 167.
[18] For Aswani Barbotine Ware, see Rodziewicz, 2005, p. 79; Tomber, 2006, pp. 25-26.

bronze bowls that were relatively common at Faras were likely Meroitic productions,[19] but several bronze mirrors, saucepans and jugs of recognisably Graeco-Roman form were certainly imported (Figure 4f).

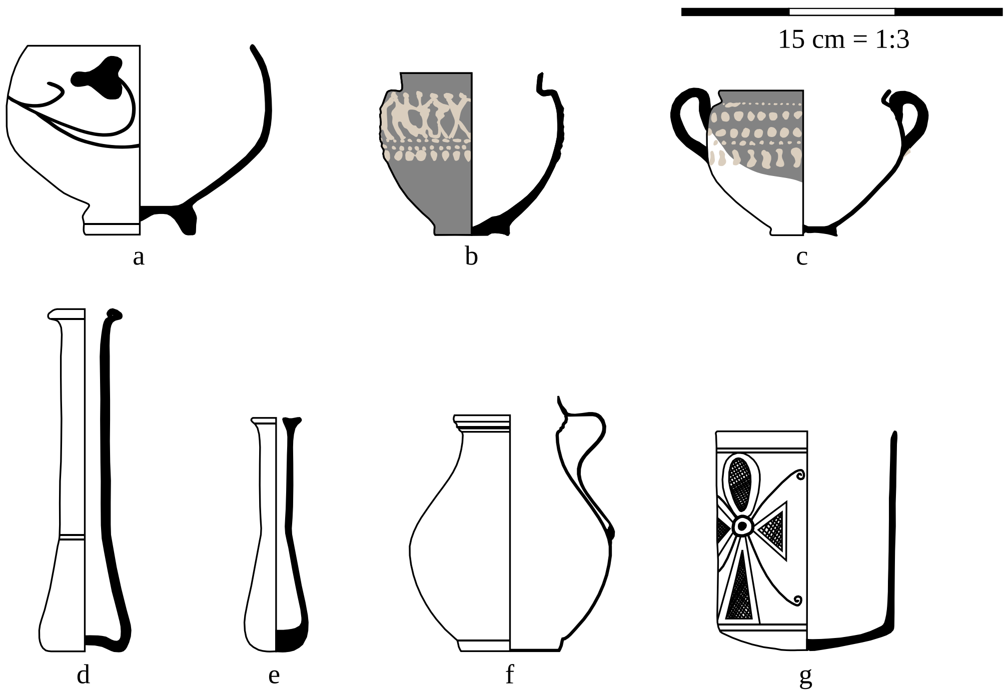

Figure 4. Imported objects at Faras (Periods 2A-2B). a) ceramic goblet, grave 2676; b) barbotine goblet, grave 2065; c) barbotine goblet, grave 2698; d) glass *unguentarium*, grave 2606a; e) glass *unguentarium*, grave 706a; f) bronze jug, grave 2041; g) ceramic 'Academic School' beaker, grave 2097.

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In sum, the period following the Romano-Meroitic War was characterised by a marked increase in both the quantity and range of imported objects at Faras. A further result of this conflict was that, for the first time since the early 2nd century BCE, Meroë entertained an active political presence in Lower Nubia. Indeed, by the end of the 1st century CE, Faras was an important regional capital that hosted the burials of at least two Meroitic viceroys (Griffith, 1922, nos. 21, 43).[20] This encouraged a growth in material contact with the Butana which is clearly evidenced by the arrival of thin-walled pottery

[19] There is surprisingly little published research on Meroitic bronzeworking, particularly that concerning the production of utilitarian vessels. However, the presence of bronze bowls on early Meroitic sites that predate the arrival of imports (Fernández, 1984, pp. 60-62), combined with the existence of a bronze workshop at Dukki Gel (Bonnet, 2019, p. 182), recommend that these Faras vessels were either local productions or traded north from the Fourth Cataract.
[20] Tasamerekh and Khalalacharer. Cf. Rilly and De Voogt, 2012, p. 54, Table 2.3 (REM 0521, 0543).

corresponding to southern Meroitic ceramic styles (Figure 4g). These high-quality vessels were painted according to Wenig's (1978, p. 95, pp. 291-92, nos. 239-41) 'Academic School' and, based on the use of white kaolin, at least some examples from Faras must have been imported from the Butana (Robertson, 1992, p. 47). To reach Lower Nubia, these vessels travelled considerably further than the Upper Egyptian products of Aswan and indicate Faras' prominence within the Meroitic kingdom as a key mediator of trade with Egypt.

From the mid-2nd century CE (Period 3A), the importance of Faras as a major centre continued to increase and a new area of the cemetery dedicated to elite Meroitic burial practice was inaugurated. This is evidenced by the introduction of pyramidal superstructures that replicated the royal tombs at Napata and Meroë, and the use of inscribed offering tables and stele that are palaeographically dated to the 2nd – 3rd centuries CE.[21] From these inscriptions, we learn that various individuals buried at Faras held important political offices in Lower Nubia and entertained familial relationships with other Meroitic centres stretching at least as far south as Sedeinga (Griffith, 1912, no. 129; 1922, no. 4; Rilly and Francigny 2018, p. 74). The arrival of this Meroitic elite corresponds to the standardisation and mass-production of local ceramic jars and cups, and a decrease in imported objects. Upper Egyptian jugs (Figure 5a), goblets (Figure 5b), *amphorae* and jars were still available, and several new types of glassware also appeared (Figure 5c-d), but the relative frequency at which such imports were utilised in assemblages decreased markedly.[22] Combined with the standardisation of local pottery forms, this resulted in a far more homogenous *objectscape* than that of the 1st and early-2nd century CE.[23] Thus, regardless of assemblage size or wealth, graves of Period 3A were characterised by the inclusion of standardised local 'bag-shaped' jars, often capped by squat cups that fitted neatly over the jar's mouth as if to enhance the appearance of a drinking set (Figure 6). Significantly, this functional pairing of vessels for liquid storage

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[21] This dating is based on Rilly and De Voogt's (2012, pp. 51-56) work on palaeography and corresponds to the original dating proposed by Griffith (1922). The only inscriptions to predate the 2nd century CE are those of the two Meroitic viceroys (*supra*, note 20) which correspond to Rilly and De Voogt's 'Transitional B' phase of Meroitic cursive (1st century CE). All other inscriptions from Faras are assigned to 'Transitional C' or 'Late A' (2nd – 3rd century CE).

[22] A possible explanation for this decrease in imports is that the cost of Egyptian commodities (and their transport) increased owing to economic disruption in Egypt which, in the late 2nd century CE, suffered the 'Antonine Plague' and a series of poor inundations (Scheidel, 2002, pp.103-04; Elliot, 2016; Duncan-Jones, 2018). These issues are fully discussed in the author's PhD thesis (*supra*, note 6).

[23] The term '*objectscape*' is adopted from Pitts (2019, p. 7) and, for this paper, denotes the total objects from any single period at Faras (cf. Table 1).

and consumption reinforced the mortuary tradition that had defined graves at Faras since the 2nd century BCE (Period 1A).

The terminal Meroitic phase at Faras commenced c.250 CE (Period 3B) and lasted into the early 4th century CE whereupon the cemetery was abandoned. The same standardised ceramics that characterised Period 3A continued to be used, as did limited Egyptian jugs, goblets, and glass vessels. Several large assemblages even yielded Mediterranean transport *amphorae* (Figure 5e-g).[24]

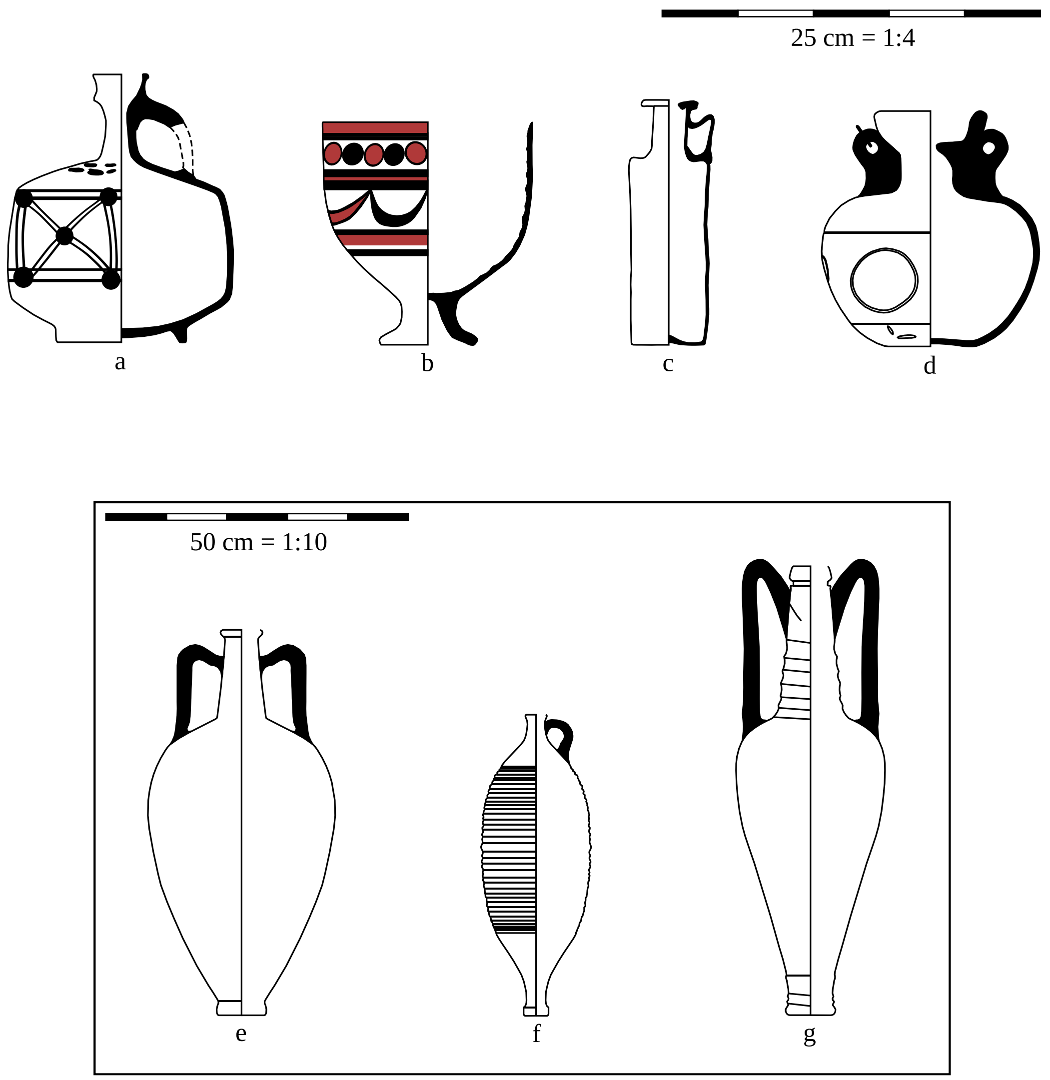

Figure 5. Imported objects at Faras (Periods 3A-3B). a) ceramic jug, grave 2486; b) ceramic goblet, grave 2096; c) glass flagon, grave 2498; d) glass *aryballos*, grave 2643; e-f) Mediterranean transport *amphorae* (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Classes 42, 45, 47).

Drawn by the author (© H. C. Bishop-Wright).

[24] Griffith, 1924, Pl. XXIII-XXIV (forms XLV, XLVIIIk and XLIXb). Cf. Peacock and Williams, 1986, pp. 180-81 ('Class 42'), 188-90 ('Class 45'), 193-95 ('Class 47'); Hofmann, 1991, p. 241 ('Typ 7/8'), 242 ('Typ 12').

Figure 6. A photograph of Faras grave 1028 (Period 3A), taken during Griffith's excavation of the site c.1911. The standardised ceramic jars and cups arranged around the burial's right arm are Meroitic productions and characterise mid-2nd to 3rd century CE assemblages at Faras.

Reproduced with permission of the Griffith Institute, University of Oxford (F. 470).

In general, however, Period 3B saw a decrease in imports and, by the end of the 3rd century CE, Faras no longer functioned as a major regional centre. This decline was a result of broader changes in Lower Nubia – plague, increasing desert raids, changing subsistence patterns, commercial competition with Aksum – and foreshadowed the territory's entrance into its post-Meroitic phase (Hofmann, 1978, pp. 187-90; Török, 1987b, pp. 178-79; Eide *et al*, 1998, pp. 948-53; Fuller, 2014). Contemporaneous with these Lower Nubian issues, Meroe lost territory in the Butana to independent desert groups and suffered a series of military incursions from Aksum that culminated with Ezana's invasion c.350 CE (Kirwan, 1960; Burstein, 1981; Török, 1987b, pp. 176-78). This event traditionally marks the 'end of Meroë' and resulted in the disintegration of Kush into various independent splinter kingdoms, the northernmost of which emerged in late-4th-century CE Lower Nubia with new centres of power at Kalabsha, Sayala and Qustul (Williams, 1991b, pp. 17-19; Edwards, 2004, pp. 182-211; Török, 2009, pp. 515-30).

4. *Funerary tradition at Meroitic Faras: 'Dying for a Drink'*

This outline of imported objects at Meroitic Faras offers a broad chronological overview of material change from the early 3rd century BCE to the 4th century CE. Throughout this period, imports were consistently utilised in funerary assemblages, particularly in the century that directly followed the Romano-Meroitic war (Period 2A-B). Here, the availability of imports increased dramatically and amounted to what has been described as a material explosion resulting in a far more heterogenous *objectscape* than that which characterised the preceding three centuries (Periods 0-1B). Returning to Adams' (1976) model of Meroitic 'North and South', this phase of increased material connectivity should have encouraged cultural change that supports the broader notion of Meroitic Lower Nubia becoming a 'civilised' buffer of Roman Egypt. As discussed, this relies on a 'centre and periphery' model of cultural interaction popularised in late 20th century conceptions of Rome's early imperial expansion (Hedeager, 1987. Cf. Egri, 2017). A key aspect of this model is the assumption that sustained exposure to Roman material culture by non-Roman groups resulted in changing behaviours encapsulated by the term 'Romanisation'. For example, the uptake of standardised Roman pottery within non-Roman groups might be interpreted as evidence of cultural change – a desire to 'become Roman' – without necessarily considering *how* this material was used and whether its uptake really encouraged new practice.

To a certain extent, this model has merit. An influx of morphologically and aesthetically exotic pottery, combined with some knowledge of its associated function, would provide new opportunities to express status and identity that might lead to modifications in practice. Such transformations are perceivable, for example, in mortuary assemblages of Northwest Europe where the adoption of *terra sigillata* tableware in the Augustan-Tiberian period evidences a shift away from previously drink-orientated funerary ritual to an emphasis on the display of solid food (Pitts, 2019, p. 83). This does not necessarily equate to 'Romanisation', but it does indicate adaptation to the new socio-political Roman landscape where previously unavailable classes of object could be used as tools to reinforce status. Thus, a local elite in post-conquest Gaul might wish to be buried with a set of imported tableware in an attempt to garner prestige by showing awareness of Roman dinning tradition (Pitts, 2019, p. 85). Without subscribing to Adams' acculturation-based model of frontier exchange, it would not, therefore, be unreasonable to hypothesise a change in funerary practice at Faras that parallels the 1st century CE increase in imported objects. Curiously, this transition is not apparent.

From its early 3rd century BCE foundations, the dominant aspect of funerary ritual at Faras was drinking and libation. This is evident in the earliest graves of Period 0 which, although predating the use of ceramics, often contained an Achaemenid deep bowl suited to the consumption of heavily sedimented beverages (cf. Hamilton, 1966, p. 2). From the 2nd century BCE this focus became more acute and, corresponding to the Meroitic push north under Arkamani, assemblages at Faras began to incorporate vessels for liquid storage. Hence, graves of this period usually contained some form of locally-produced ceramic jar and drinking vessel. From the 2nd century BCE, a further change occurred: imported pottery began to be utilised. Reflecting the local taste for drinking, however, most imports were associated with the storage, consumption, or service of liquids. Hence, throughout the use-life of Faras, the most popular vessel types were jars, *amphorae*, jugs, bowls, cups and goblets (Table 2). Indeed, of the 2859 diagnostic ceramic vessels recovered from the cemetery, the only examples associated with solid food are two imported plates.

The combination of local jar and cup that emerged in the early 2nd century BCE occurred before imported objects were widely available and was maintained even after the early Roman object explosion of Periods 2A-B. It also aligns with 'typical' Meroitic mortuary ritual focussing on drinking and libation, and corresponds to contemporary funerary assemblages further south in the Abri-Delgo Reach (*supra*). It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that this shift was a consequence of Meroë's increasing political presence in Lower Nubia during the reigns of Arkamani and Adikhalamani-Tabirqo.

Table 2. Diagnostic ceramic vessels from Meroitic Faras, organised by functional group.

Functional group	Count
Jars	1352
Bowls/cups/goblets (drinking vessels)	959
Jugs	330
Amphorae (table)	107
Amphorae (transport)	81
Bottles	15
Klepsydrae	8
Censers	5
Plates	2
Total	**2859**

The inclusion of vessels for liquid storage lasted until the end of Meroitic Faras and continued the pre-existing focus on drinking. Indeed, from Period 1A-3B, at least 73% of assemblages per period contained a ceramic jar, and at least 42% contained a drinking vessel (Figure 7). Imported jugs and *amphorae* were less common and, reflecting the availability of Aswani pottery, only widely utilised in Periods 1B-2B. More nuanced analysis also demonstrates that these imported vessel types were seldom included in an assemblage unless the traditional requirement for a jar and cup was met.

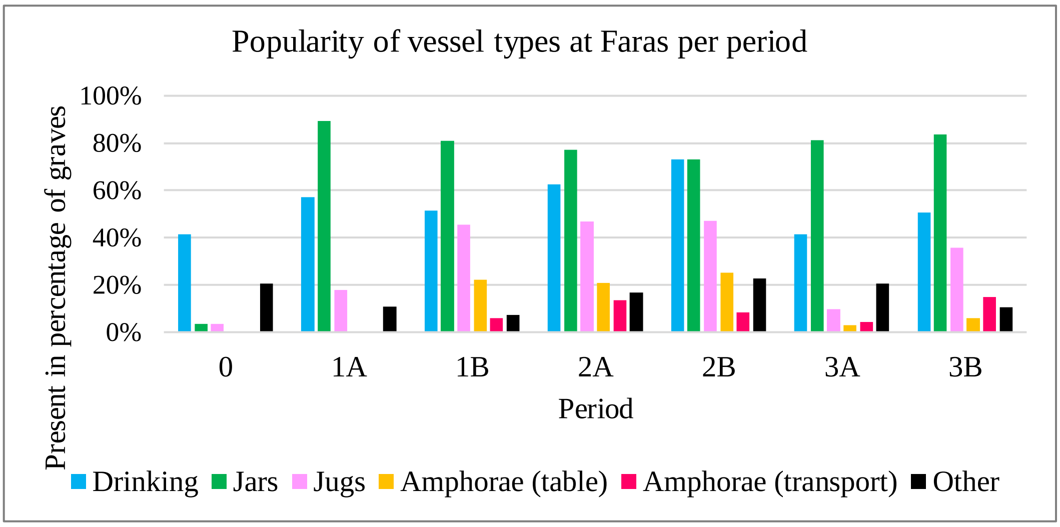

Figure 7. Popularity of different vessel types in assemblages at Faras through time. For vessel types, see Table 2.

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Figure 8 shows how frequently, and in what combinations, the three most popular vessel types at Faras (jars, drinking vessels and jugs, see Table 2) appeared in assemblages. Regardless of date, jars and drinking vessels were frequently combined and, particularly in Periods 2A-B, a jug may also have been included. The presence of all three vessel types resulted in an assemblage accommodating liquid storage, consumption, and service. Jugs, however, were seldom utilised unless a jar and drinking vessel was present, and drinking vessels were only popular if a jar was present. Thus, there is a perceivable hierarchy of functional desirability at Faras:

- Vessels for liquid storage (jars) were essential.
- Drinking vessels were desirable, particularly when paired with jars.
- Service vessels (jugs) were also desirable, but only when combined with storage and drinking vessels.

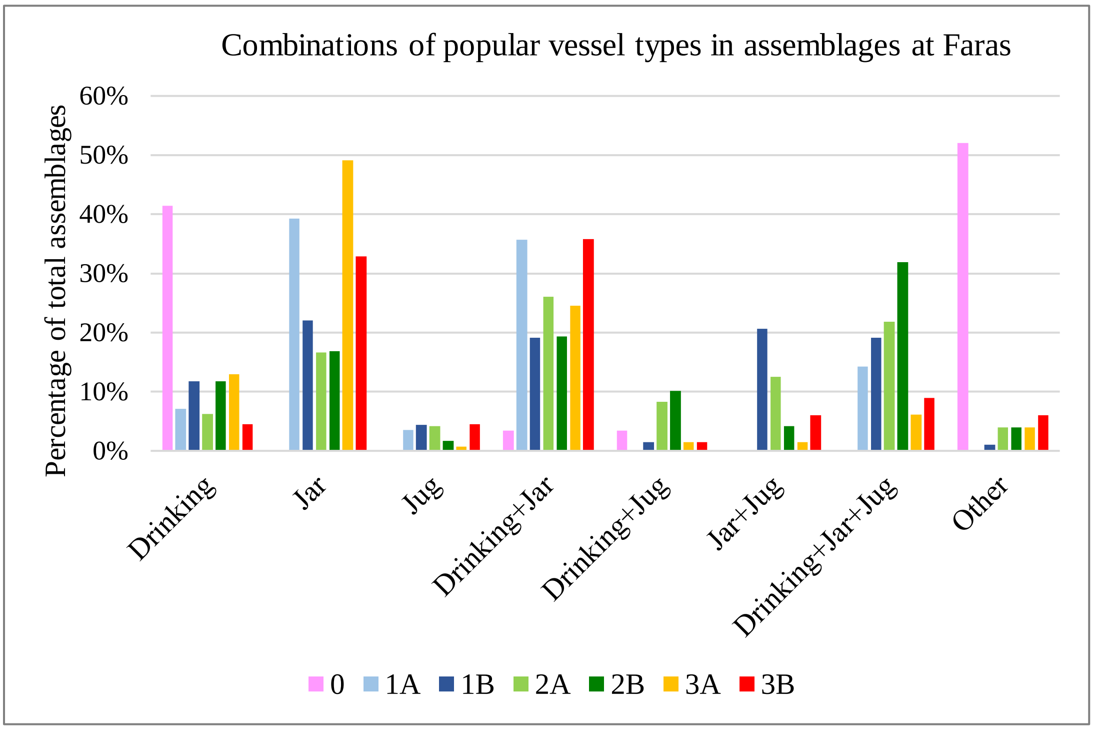

Figure 8. Combinations of popular vessel types in assemblages at Faras through time. For vessel types, see Table 2.

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Based on this model, jars were the fundamental component of funerary assemblages, and it was highly desirable to combine them with a bowl, cup or goblet. Thus, the basic combination of vessels for liquid storage and consumption was achieved.

A jug might augment this to create an 'ideal drinking set' that also comprised a vessel for liquid service, but its perceived value was dependent on the presence of storage and consumption vessels. Hence, it was extremely unlikely to be included in an assemblage without these components (Figure 8). This material formula was consistent from c.200 BCE to 300 CE and, despite prolonged contact with Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt, Meroitic funerary practice at Faras maintained its focus on drinking.

The influx of imported objects that characterised the 1st century CE did little to change this tradition. Indeed, c.150 CE the combination of storage and drinking vessels was reinforced by the appearance of locally-produced, standardised, bag-shaped jars and squat cups that came to dominate the material repertoire of Periods 3A-B (Figure 6). The appearance of these forms coincides with the arrival of a Meroitic elite class (Period 3A) and directly follows a period of intense contact with Roman Egypt that resulted in unprecedented material choice at Faras (Periods 2A-B). Considering these observations, I suggested in my PhD thesis that the standardisation and local production of the two fundamental components of funerary ritual – the jar and cup – was a reaction against the 1st century CE influx of imported objects by the newly-installed Meroitic elite. It resulted in a homogenised *objectscape* that promoted a single mortuary identity by reasserting the traditional reliance on vessels for liquid storage and consumption. If correct, this hypothesis of 'standardising death' at Meroitic Faras occurred at a point in the site's chronology when intense material contacts with Roman Egypt began to compromise the conservatism of funerary ritual. Had this process continued into the late 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, it is possible that Faras may have undergone a similar process of change to that discussed above in post-conquest Gaul. Instead, the standardisation of jars and cups reinforced tradition and can be viewed as part of an active process whereby Meroë sought to assert its presence in the frontier region by perpetuating a distinctly non-Roman identity through mortuary tradition.

5. *The use of imported objects in funerary assemblages*

Having established that the fundamental funerary tradition at Faras was based on the storage and consumption of liquids, it is instructive to consider how imported objects were selected and utilised.

Throughout the use-life of Faras, numerous objects were imported from Egypt and, as summarised in Section 3, they incorporated significant morphological and decorative range. Tableware (plates, platters and dishes), however, was extremely rare and the only well-documented example is a fragmentary Eastern Sigillata A platter whose sherds were distributed amongst the disturbed remains of three different graves.[25] The absence of such flat vessels is significant as it was evidently not a result of supply issues: they are known from Roman military deposits north of Maharraqa (Firth, 1915, pp. 25-29), and were produced in the ceramic factory on Elephantine (Rodziewicz, 2005, p. 63, Pl. 49-54, 57-60). Considering the evidence for sustained material exchange on the frontier, and the ubiquity of other Upper Egyptian pottery at Faras, there is no reason that plates and platters could not also have been imported. That they did not function as containers for trade commodities may have been a deterrent, but this is unlikely to be the explanation as Aswani goblets equally unsuited to the transport of goods were widely used at Faras (Figure 4a-c). Supply issues discounted, the reason for their absence must, instead, relate to demand.

If the imports at Faras are considered holistically, a recurring theme is that they were almost always associated with drinking. Thus, despite their morphological and decorative range, from a functional perspective they were not particularly diverse. The common Upper Egyptian jugs and *amphorae* have already been considered within the context of liquid service, storage, and transport. But less-frequent imports were equally well suited to a funerary practice focussed on drinking. For example, the distinctive barbotine goblets of late 1st – early 2nd century CE Aswan were employed as alternatives to local drinking cups, the bronze saucepans and ladles were used to serve wine (Strong, 1966, p. 145), and the peculiar *klepsydrae* that appeared in both ceramic and bronze functioned to serve heavily-sedimented beverages in much the same way as the popular 19th century 'Toddy Lifter' was used to serve punch (Devries, 1973).

Whether for consumption, service or storage, these imports could all be employed in drinking or libation. In contrast, flat vessels such as plates and platters could hardly be used in conjunction with liquids and were clearly associated with the consumption and display of solid food. Since this had no significant part in funerary ritual at Faras, they found no demand, were never imported, and local craftsmen did not attempt to replicate their form. They were alien objects without functional or conceptual utility and, consequently, were rejected by the inhabitants of Faras who only imported objects that

[25] This platter is illustrated by Hayes (1997, p. 53, Fig. 18) and is now held, partially reconstructed, in the collection of the British Museum (EA51512). Its constituent fragments were recovered by Griffith (1925, pp. 161-163) in disturbed contexts associated with Faras grave nos. 2746, 2782 and 2800.

could be redeployed in their local mortuary practice. Such imports then took on new meaning within the Meroitic system without any indication that they 'acculturated' their new owners.

That imports were selected according to their ability to align with existing practice accounts for the consistent popularity of vessels for liquid storage, service, and consumption. It also explains the absence of flat tableware associated with solid food, and demonstrates that the Meroitic occupants of Faras exercised a high degree of agency in their material interactions with Egypt. A minority of imports, however, do not have a clear association with drinking and appear to problematise this conclusion. These atypical objects comprise a range of cosmetic items, namely the majority of glassware (*unguentaria* and *aryballoi*) which would have been imported as containers for aromatic oils or powdered kohl.

Kohl was a familiar product in the Meroitic kingdom used as eye makeup and was usually stored in cylinders of turned wood commonly termed 'kohl tubes' (Williams, 1991a, pp. 152-55). Owing to the generally poor state of preservation at Faras, these objects did not survive, but compressed cylinders of kohl whose containers had rotted were frequently recovered from assemblages (cf. Griffith, 1925, p. 90, 92). Complete examples of turned wooden tubes, sometimes ornamented with ivory inlay, are also known from other Meroitic sites where conditions were more favourable to the survival of wood (Woolley and Randall-MacIver, 1910, Pl. 23).[26] It would seem, therefore, that alongside the dominant place of drinking and libation, there was an allowance for cosmetic products in Meroitic funerary ritual. Hence, kohl and bronze mirrors predate even the use of pottery at Faras and were present in the earliest graves of Period 0.

The blown-glass *unguentaria* available at Faras from the mid-1st century CE are remarkably similar in form to the traditional wooden tubes and, if imported as containers of kohl, served the same purpose. This functional and morphological similarity meant that, despite their unusual material (glass), the *unguentaria* could be absorbed into local practice without necessitating a change in behaviour. The glass bottles simply represented an exotic alternative to an accepted class of object with an established function in funerary ritual. A similar statement is also true of glass *aryballoi* and thinner-walled *unguentaria* that were imported as receptacles for aromatic oils. In addition to aligning with funerary

[26] A superb example from Karanòg is held in the collection of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia (E7514).

ritual's sub-focus on cosmetics, such commodities were an established part of Meroitic mortuary preparation and were used to embalm and sanitise the body prior to its interment (Francigny, 2016, p. 102.). The glass oil containers that appeared at Faras in the early-Roman period merely supplemented the diminutive pottery *lekythoi* that were already imported for the same purpose (cf. David, 2019, p. 889).

Considering these observations, it is difficult to identify any class of imported object at Faras that was consistently deployed in funerary ritual and did not align with the dominant focus on drinking and libation, or the sub-focus on cosmetics. It is possible to isolate specific imports that do not align with these themes: for example, a set of millefiori glass gaming pieces and a pair of ivory dice from Grave 2581, or the aforementioned Eastern Sigillata platter.[27] However, these objects had no function within the extremely conservative mortuary tradition at Faras and represent little more than isolated curios: they did not encourage systemic change and were not widely used. From the perspective of funerary practice, therefore, there is no evidence that the inhabitants of Faras underwent any significant cultural transition as a result of material contact with Egypt. On the contrary, imports were consistently selected according to their ability to be redeployed in local practice and, *contra* Adams (1976), the evidence from Faras refutes any notion that Meroitic Lower Nubia functioned as an acculturated buffer of the classical world.

6. *Conclusion*

Following a concise introduction to the archaeology of Meroitic Kush (Sections 1-2), this paper summarised specific conclusions from the author's doctoral research that concern the use of imported objects at Faras. It is impossible to comprehensively present the arguments and evidence of a 100,000-word thesis in a relatively short journal article. Consequently, elements of this discussion, namely the new chronology of Faras introduced in Section 2 and the hypothesis of 'standardising death' in Section 4, were necessarily brief. The paper, instead, focussed on how imported objects were deployed in assemblages and what impact they had on funerary practice. It was demonstrated that the basic mortuary tradition at Faras centred on the consumption and storage of liquids and, with some allowance for cosmetic items, this determined the selection and use of imports.

[27] The gaming pieces and dice were not published by Griffith. They are now divided between the collections of the Oxford Ashmolean (AN1912.835) and the British Museum (EA51419; EA51695-6).

The focus on drinking is referenced in the paper's title – 'Dying for a Drink' – which was intended to emphasise the fundamental aspect of funerary practice at Faras. Despite centuries of sustained contact with Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt, evidence for a significant shift in this practice is absent. Instead, the people of Faras selected or rejected foreign objects based on their ability to function within the local drink-orientated funerary system. The material repertoire certainly underwent significant changes over the six centuries that the cemetery was in use, particularly in the 1st century CE (Periods 2A-B) when the volume and range of available imports was at its greatest, but the fundamental reliance on a vessel for liquid storage and consumption was maintained. In the mid-2nd century CE (Period 3A), this combination was reinforced by the standardisation of local jars and cups. The increasingly homogenised *objectscape* that emerged reasserted the dominance of traditional drinking forms and, through the lens of mortuary practice, perpetuated Meroitic identity.

Based on this assessment, it is difficult to accept Adams' notion that Meroitic Lower Nubia was an acculturated buffer of Roman Egypt. Evidence of 'Romanisation' is not apparent, and the artificial dichotomy between Lower Nubia and the Butana that is fundamental to the 'North-South' model merely reflects a time when little published work was available from the Abri-Delgo Reach. This situation continues to be rectified by current excavations at the important Meroitic sites of Sai and Sedeinga and, as the understanding of this region develops, the Meroitic kingdom will be seen to have entertained far greater socio-economic interconnections than has traditionally been accepted. Meanwhile, the evidence from Faras demonstrates the continued existence of a distinctly Meroitic identity on the northern frontier, even after centuries of contact with Ptolemaic-Roman Egypt.

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Morrendo por uma Bebida na Fronteira Meroítica: Objetos Importados nos Conjuntos Funerários de Faras, na Núbia Sudanesa

Resumo

Este artigo examina o uso de objetos importados em conjuntos funerários do cemitério meroítico de Faras, na Núbia sudanesa (norte do Sudão). Escavado no início do século XX por Francis Llewellyn Griffith (1862-1934), Faras estava situado na fronteira entre o Reino de Meroë (300 AEC – 350 EC) e o Egito Ptolomáico-Romano. Sua localização lhe garantia acesso a uma ampla rede comercial e objetos importados eram frequentemente usados como bens funerários. Com base na pesquisa de doutorado do autor, esse artigo oferece uma avaliação matizada de como as importações eram selecionadas e usadas nas práticas funerárias de Faras. Ele contesta a ideia tradicional da fronteira meroítica funcionando como uma zona tampão aculturada do mundo clássico e mostra que, a despeito dos séculos de contato material com o Egito, o povo de Faras manteve uma nítida identidade meroítica, expressa por meio da tradição funerária.

Palavras-chave

Estudos Meroíticos; Arqueologia Funerária; Estudos de Fronteiras; Identidade.