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## Cemetery U at Umm el-Qaab and the Funeral Landscape of the Abydos Region in the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BC<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Throughout pharaonic times, Abydos in northern Upper Egypt played an important role in religious beliefs and funeral rituals (e.g. O'Connor 2009; Effland and Effland 2013). Presumably during the Old Kingdom, Abydos became the centre of worship of the god Osiris whose tomb had been identified with that of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty king Djer at Umm el-Qaab, a place located ca. 1.5 km to the west of the cultivation in front of impressive limestone cliffs. Situated on a slightly elevated rise in the southern part of a large recess of the limestone plateau – the so-called bay of Abydos – Umm el-Qaab overlooks the entire flat desert of the region. It is surrounded by a broad wadi which originates in the cliffs in the southwest and ends in the cultivation near the Osiris temple (Fig. 1). Since the excavations of E. Amélineau (Amélineau 1899-1905; 1899a) and W.M.F. Petrie (1900; 1901; 1902: 3-8), the site has been known as the location of the Early Dynastic royal tombs. Further excavations were carried out by E. Naville and T.E. Peet in 1910/11 (Naville 1914: 35-39), and during the last 30 years Umm el-Qaab was the focus of re-excavations by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo<sup>2</sup> (see as

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<sup>1</sup> The following is an adapted English version of a paper written in German in memory of Werner Kaiser (see Hartung 2014/2015).

<sup>2</sup> Friendly supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

a summary e.g. Dreyer 2007). Immediately to the north of the royal tombs, Amélineau exposed about 150 Predynastic graves (Amélineau 1899: 75-81) and 32 further tombs were excavated by Peet (1914: 14-16) who labelled this graveyard Cemetery U. As part of the German Institute's work at Abydos from 1985-2001, this cemetery was completely excavated.

## 1. Predynastic settlement remains and cemeteries at Abydos

The archaeological record for settlement at Predynastic Abydos is rather meagre. Although later activities in pharaonic times might have affected the early remains, even a comprehensive survey carried out in the early 1980s (Patch 1991; 2004) identified only a few additional Predynastic sites at Abydos that had not already been known. Settlement remains (Fig. 1) are restricted to a battery of kilns, probably connected to a brewery, north of the monastery of Sitt Damyana (Peet and Loat 1913: 1-7), some vague structures in the area of the later Osiris temple (Petrie 1902: 9-10, 27; 1903: 1, 21; see also Kemp 1968: 151-155), a small area with remains of huts, fireplaces and further kilns of a brewery behind the temple of Seti I (Peet 1914: 1-10) and to the area around the pyramid temple of Ahmose at Abydos-South (Randall-McIver and Mace 1902: 76). At the northern edge of the bay of Abydos settlement evidence was discovered near the village of Salmany (Patch 1991: 426) and a place probably used for flint knapping in the north-west on the low desert (Patch 1991: 423). No precise date for these remains can be given: The brewery in the north might date to the late Predynastic, in the area of the Osiris temple only some scattered late Predynastic finds came to light, and for the remnants behind the temple of Seti I a Naqada IID/IIIA1 date can be assumed (Peet 1914: 4-5; Patch 1991: 437). The settlement near the Ahmose pyramid seems to have been in use during Naqada I and early Naqada II<sup>3</sup>. Most recently, further early settlement traces (Naqada I?) have been encountered to the north-west of the Seti I temple<sup>4</sup>.

These scanty archaeological remains are complemented by several cemeteries, most of them excavated already over 100 years ago (Fig. 1). In 1899/1900 D. Randall-MacIver excavated ca. 170 graves in two small cemeteries (Φ and X)

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Steven Harvey for the possibility to look at the corresponding material from his excavations at Abydos-South, and Rita Hartmann for the dating of the pieces.

<sup>4</sup> Many thanks are due to Yasser Mahmud from the inspectorate of Baljana for showing us the place.



Fig. 1. Predynastic archaeological remains in the Abydos region

which he estimated to have contained not more than 180 graves each (Randall-McIver and Mace 1902: 51, 53-55; for some additional grave inventories see Petrie 1901a: 11-12). Further Predynastic burials are mentioned by W.M.F. Petrie in an already looted Cemetery G which yielded otherwise mainly graves of later periods (Petrie 1902: 34-35). In 1908/09 some tombs were exposed by E.R. Ayrton and W.L.S. Loat who published only some selected finds labelled to be from Cemeteries B and C (Ayrton and Loat 1911: 2 and pl. XXVII), which might be identical with Cemeteries  $\Phi$  and X excavated previously by Randall-McIver. In 1909-1912 T.E. Peet excavated 164 Predynastic graves in Cemetery E, situated not far from

the cultivation north of the temple of Ramesses II. Only 55 graves were published (Naville 1914: 12-17; Peet 1914: 17-19) but tomb cards for more than 90 unpublished graves are preserved in the Lucy Gura Archive of the EES<sup>5</sup>. The total extent of this cemetery cannot be estimated. Six further graves excavated by H. Frankfort in 1925/26 (Frankfort 1930: 213-215) may also have belonged to it, and perhaps even the graves mentioned by Petrie. At the northern fringe of Abydos near the village of Salmany 132 graves were excavated in 1966/67 and published by A. El-Sayed (1979: 249-301) who had already previously exposed a small cemetery with Early Dynastic and late Predynastic burials south of Abydos near the village of Hawashim (El-Sayed 1979: 259-260). A further Predynastic cemetery is indicated on a plan in the mouth of a small wadi near the tomb of Ahmose at Abydos-South (Ayrton et al. 1904: pl. LXI), but it is not mentioned in the text and the survey conducted during the 1980s could not prove its existence definitely (Patch 1991: 384-385).

Thus, at the beginning of the 1980s a total number of ca. 1000 graves (including ca. 180 graves excavated by Amélineau and Peet in Umm el-Qaab) could be estimated for Abydos, situated in several cemeteries and covering the entire Predynastic period. Of these, approximately 700 had been excavated, but only ca. 270 fully published or at least mentioned with their tomb numbers. Hence, the known total number of burials at Abydos, and associated with it, the probable population density, differs not much from the neighbouring regions. Immediately north of the bay of Abydos (Fig. 1), Cemetery L at Beit Allam/Nag el-Alawna might have consisted of 200-300 graves (Garstang 1903: 5; Patch 1991: 397-398). Cemetery H at Mahasna (Ayrton and Loat 1911; see also Eyckerman and Hendrickx 2011) situated about 10 km to the north, is estimated to have contained ca. 600 tombs, of which approximately one half were excavated (Ayrton and Loat 1911: 3) but only 135 published. To the south of Abydos the cemeteries “a” and “b” at El-Amrah consisted of more than 1000 tombs (Randall-McIver and Mace 1902: 3), whilst a third unexcavated and badly plundered graveyard nearby may contain further tombs of the latest Predynastic period (e.g. Patch 1991: 378-381).

Summarizing this evidence, the fairly moderate settlement remains at Abydos are complemented by a relatively small total number of graves, in a quantity that seems not much different than in the neighbouring regions. Abydos appears to be, especially when compared with Naqada or Hierakonpolis, much more of a pro-

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<sup>5</sup> I thank J. Kyffin for her help and the Lucy Gura Archive in general for providing access to this material.

vincial settlement than an important centre with a large population and flourishing economy. These observations stand in contrast to the existence of the Predynastic ruler's tomb U-j (Dreyer 1998) and other elite burials in Cemetery U and to the political significance assumed for late Predynastic Abydos as a reason for the location of the Early Dynastic royal tombs at Umm el-Qaab. Are there any other considerations which could explain the choice of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty kings to favour this place? The results of the investigations in Cemetery U might perhaps shed some light on this question.

## 2. Cemetery U

The work by the German Institute at Umm el-Qaab was initiated by W. Kaiser as a re-examination of the Early Dynastic royal tombs but soon extended to the Predynastic Cemetery U situated immediately to the north of them. The latest tombs in Cemetery U adjoin directly those of Dynasty 0 and the tomb complex of Aha. Despite the looting and the previous excavations, many of the graves still contained remnants of their inventory from which conclusions can be drawn regarding their original funerary equipment. The approximately 600 graves of Cemetery U cover almost the entire 4<sup>th</sup> millennium, from early Naqada I to Naqada IIIB. From Naqada IIIA onwards, all tombs are brick-lined. The chronology of the pit graves has been established by R. Hartmann on the basis of a seriation of about 200 graves. Complemented by further typological studies, Cemetery U provides a total number of ca. 250 pit graves – sufficiently well-dated for further studies – which can be assigned to two chronological main phases of use of the cemetery, each with several sub-phases (Hartmann 2011; 2011a; 2016). The first main phase corresponds to Naqada I until Naqada IIB of the conventional chronology (see e.g. Hendrickx 2006), the second main phase to Naqada IIC until Naqada IID2, and the brick-lined tombs constitute a third phase dating to Naqada IIIA and IIIB<sup>6</sup>.

Although Cemetery U covers the entire Predynastic period, it was not used with the same intensity during all the phases. Fig. 2a reveals its unbalanced usage with a large number of early tombs (see Appendix 1), a diminishing number of burials during Naqada IIB, almost a hiatus in Naqada IIC, a slight increase again during Naqada IID (Hartmann 2016: 197-207 and table 25) and a moderate

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<sup>6</sup> The publication of the tombs with brick lining is in preparation by G. Dreyer and E.C. Köhler as volume V of the Umm el-Qaab series of the German Archaeological Institute Cairo.

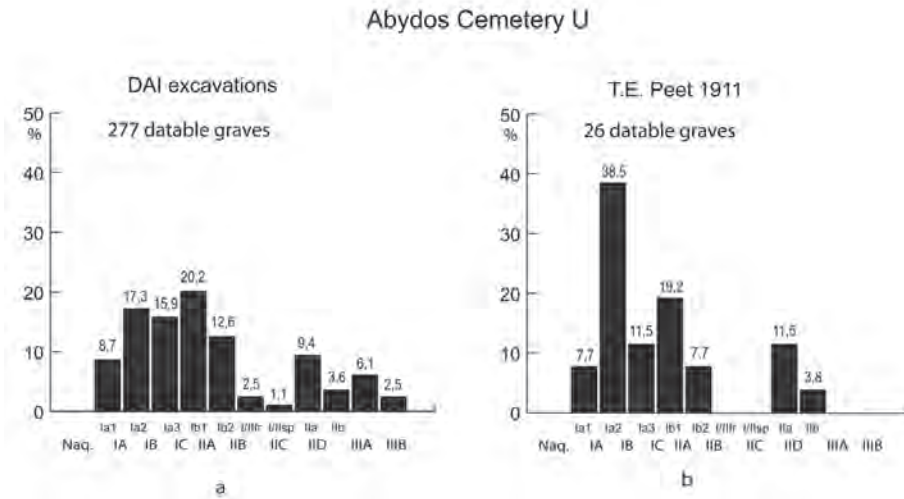


Fig. 2: Chronological distribution of graves in Cemetery U, a: Excavations by the German Institute, b: Excavations by T.E. Peet (cf. Appendix 1; the upper line below the diagrams indicates the chronological phases of Cemetery U, the lower line the traditional chronology of the Naqada culture)

number of graves during Naqada III<sup>7</sup>. An additional 150 graves can be attributed to the first main phase, i.e. to Naqada I until Naqada IIB, but cannot be assigned precisely to a particular sub-phase and are therefore omitted. The tombs excavated previously by Peet yield a corresponding chronological distribution (Fig. 2b) despite their small number. Only Naqada IIIA/B burials are missing as Peet did not excavate any tombs with brick lining.

The utilization of the space within Cemetery U was not continuous in one direction. Until Naqada IIB the graves were located within several separated groups (Fig. 3), presumably burial areas of families or clans, which grew together only during the course of time (cf. also e.g. Buchez 2011: 33-35). From Naqada IID onwards a completely different pattern occurs. The graves were now arranged exclusively around the central part of the cemetery (see already Hartmann 2011: Figs. 10 and 11). The brick-lined tombs of Naqada IIIA1 still follow this schema but afterwards the graves were built loosely in rows shifting more and more to the south, ultimately this trend being continued by the tombs of Dynasty 0 and the burial complex of Aha.

<sup>7</sup> Due to the restricted space basic data of the tombs (dating and size) can only be given for the early Naqada I graves which are crucial for the topic of this paper (Appendix 1 and 2).

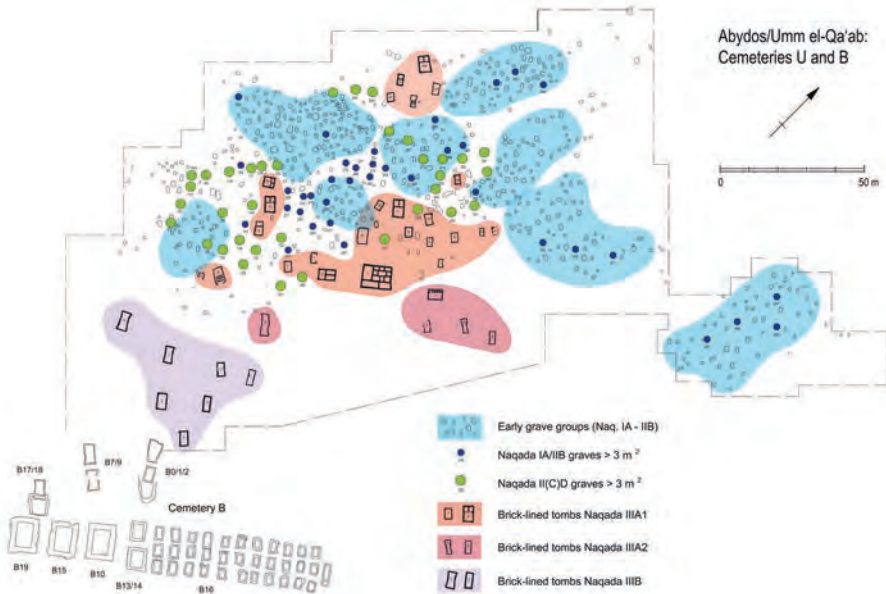


Fig. 3: Spatial distribution of graves in Cemetery U

Despite the looting of the cemetery and two previous excavations, Cemetery U yielded a surprising number of finds, which clearly indicate the presence of elite tombs from earliest times onwards<sup>8</sup>. Beside prestige items, such as flint knives, stone vessels, mace heads, ivory objects and imported jars (e.g. Hartung 2001; Hartung 2010; 2011; 2016), C-ware vessels from Naqada I tombs (e.g. Köhler in Dreyer *et al.* 1998: Fig. 12 and 13; Hartmann in Dreyer *et al.* 2003: Fig. 5-7) and Naqada IID ivory carvings (e.g. Dreyer 1999) with depictions of hippopotamus and desert hunt, the presentations of prisoners and tribute bringers provide a sequence of motives which are forerunners of the later pharaonic iconography (e.g. Hartung 2010; cf. also Hendrickx 2010; 2011; Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2010; 2012). Seal impressions (Hartung 1998; 2001: 216-238), inscribed jars and labels (Dreyer 1998: 47-91, 113-145) underline the connections of the tomb owners to the administrative network and official magazines from which parts of the tomb equipment seem to have originated since Naqada IID.

<sup>8</sup> The full publication of the tomb inventories is in preparation by the author of this paper as volume III of the Umm el-Qaab series of the German Archaeological Institute.

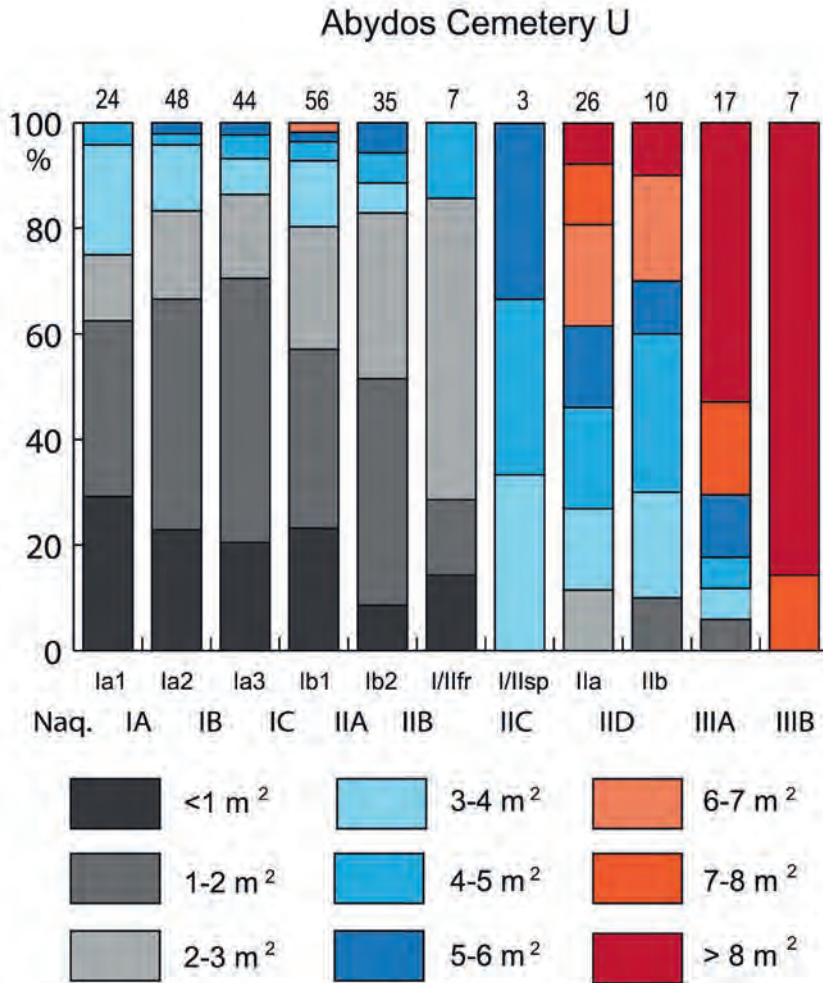


Fig. 4. Grave sizes in Cemetery U during different chronological phases (cf. Appendix 1; the upper line below the diagram indicates the chronological phases of Cemetery U, the lower line the traditional chronology of the Naqada culture; the number above the columns refers to the total number of graves of each chronological phase)

The presence of elite burials is also reflected in the size of the tombs. As a parameter for the effort made by the community for the burial, grave size constitutes a social indicator which is widely unaffected by looting. Already during the early phases of Cemetery U a clear social stratification can be observed (Fig. 4). In addition to a large number of smaller graves, several tombs of more than 3 sq. m are



present from the beginning, and from Naqada IB onwards graves of even more than 5 sq. m occur (cf. Appendix 1). From these large tombs derive, among other things, clay figurines of hippopotami and bulls (Hartung 2011: 470-472), and also the remarkable C-ware jars with figural decoration. Whilst some individual large tombs are found within the particular grave groups, most of them cluster in the middle of the cemetery (Fig. 3). During the second chronological main phase of the cemetery (Naqada II(C/D)) a different picture emerges. The graves are now almost exclusively larger than 3 sq. m, and often more than 6 sq. m. They are arranged, as mentioned above, around the centre of the cemetery, i.e. around the large tombs of presumable Naqada I/early Naqada II chiefs. The brick-lined Naqa-

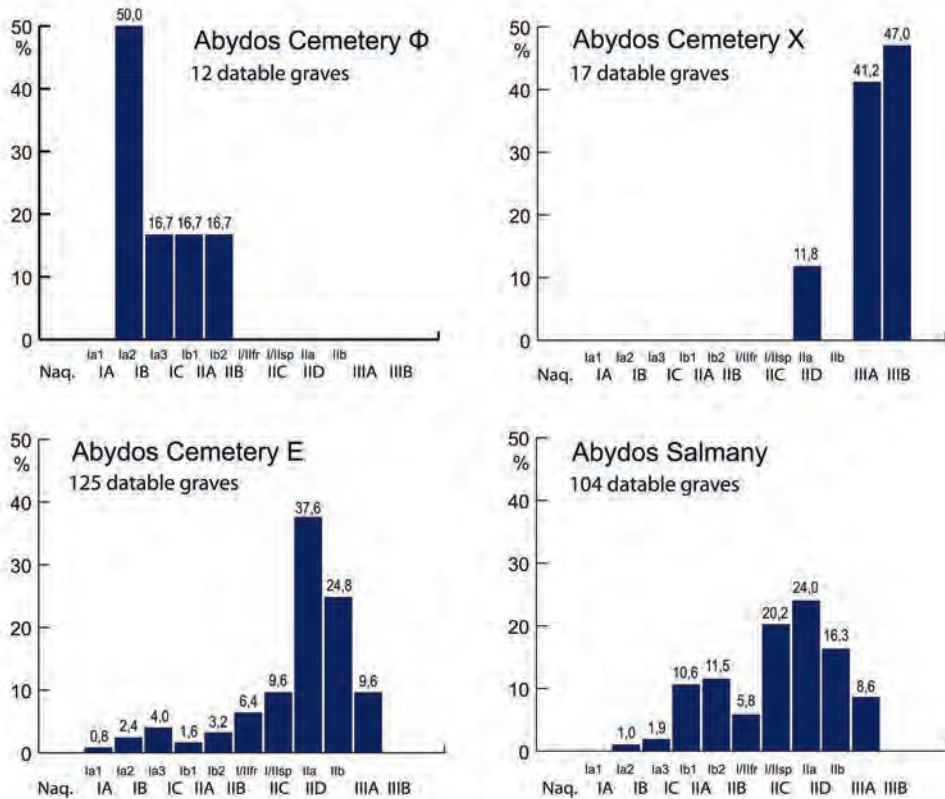


Fig. 5. Chronological distribution of graves in cemeteries at Abydos (cf. Appendix 1; the upper line below the diagrams indicates the chronological phases of Cemetery U, the lower line the traditional chronology of the Naqada culture)

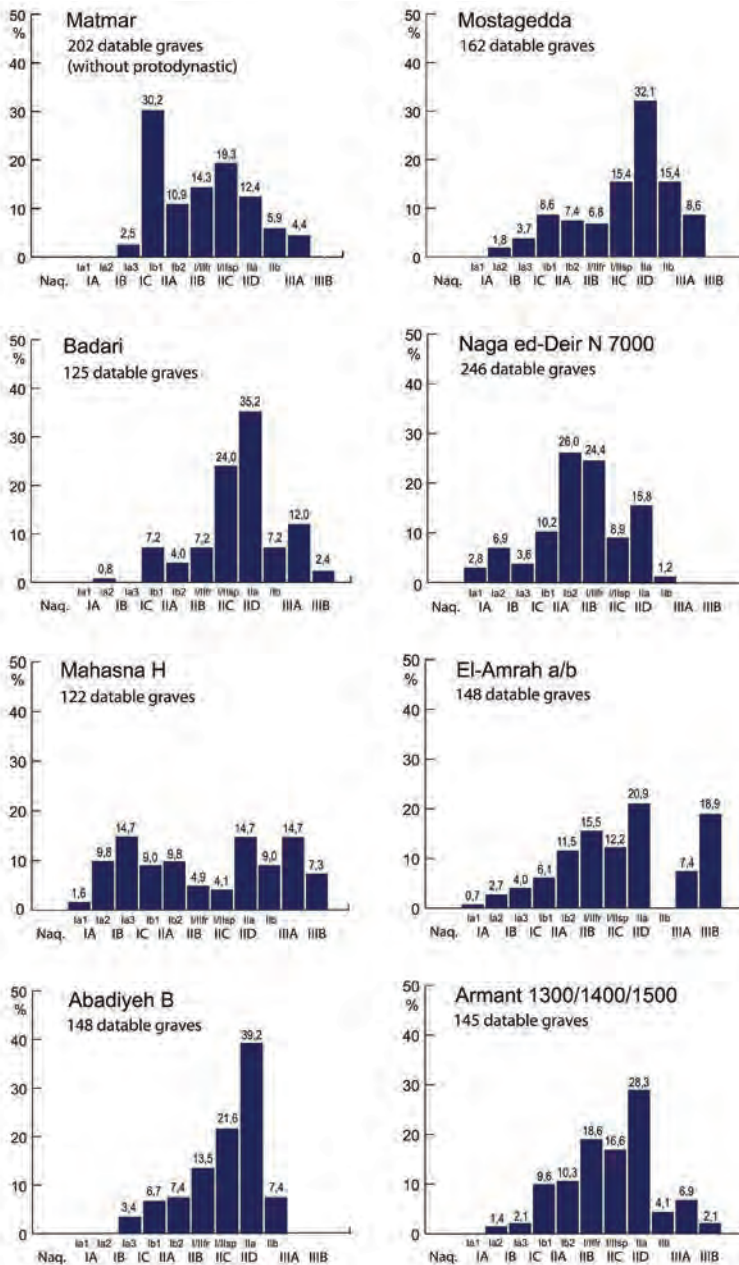


Fig. 6. Chronological distribution of graves in other cemeteries (cf. Appendix 2; the upper line below the diagrams indicates the chronological phases of Cemetery U, the lower line the traditional chronology of the Naqada culture)

da IIIA/IIIB tombs exceed mostly 10 sq. m with U-j of more than 60 sq. m as an exception. There can be no doubt that Cemetery U was the burial place of several socially stratified groups and their chiefs during Naqada I and early Naqada II, but from Naqada IID onwards the cemetery seems to have been used exclusively for burials of the highest elite.

### 3. Cemetery U and other Predynastic cemeteries

The comparison with other Predynastic cemeteries – as far as it is possible with respect to the limited records of old excavation reports – reveals some noticeable differences.

At Abydos (Fig. 5, cf. Appendix 1 and Hartmann 2016: table 25) only Cemetery  $\Phi$  has predominantly early tombs whilst in Cemetery E and in Salmany the climax of use dates to around Naqada IID. Cemetery X was used exclusively during the latest part of the Predynastic. The general trend visible in Cemetery E and Salmany – which stands in contrast to the chronological distribution of graves in Cemetery U (and  $\Phi$ ) – seems to be typical for most of the other Predynastic cemeteries. A corresponding picture (Fig. 6; cf. Appendix 2 and Hartmann 2016: table 26) can be observed in the cemeteries of Middle Egypt (Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928; Brunton 1937; 1948), Naga ed-Deir (but with a rather large number of early graves, see Lythgoe and Dunham 1965; Friedman 1981), el-Amrah (Randall-McIver and Mace 1902), in the Abadiyeh-Hu region (Petrie 1901a)<sup>9</sup> and in Armant (Mond and Myers 1937). Only Mahasna appears to be an exception with a fairly balanced distribution and a relatively large number of early tombs. All the other cemeteries were apparently increasingly used only from late Naqada I onwards. Near Naga ed-Deir, the cemetery at Mesaed (Reisner 1936: 1-4, 371-377) seems to have contained a number of early Naqada I burials, and a small cemetery at Abadiyeh (Cemetery C) is mentioned by Petrie (1901a: 34) as the oldest cemetery he had excavated, but in both cases only little information was published. Although other early graves or even cemeteries may have been overlooked by the early excavators or have not yet been discovered, the overview on the basis of the current state of research reveals a clear concentration of early Naqada I tombs in the region of northern Upper Egypt, including

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<sup>9</sup> I thank Alice Stevenson to provide the possibility to use the Petrie slips (by courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London) as additional grave inventories.

Abydos, Mahasna and Naga ed-Deir (Fig. 7). Hence, this region must have been the main area of occupation of the earliest Naqada culture, perhaps apart from smaller groups of people which might have locally gained a foothold elsewhere (see, e.g. Vermeersch *et al.* 2004). This evidence corresponds with the spread of the Naqada culture from northern Upper Egypt to the north and the south proposed by W. Kaiser already during the 1950s (see Kaiser 1956: Abb. 5; 1957: Taf. 26). The new evidence from Cemetery U allows us to refine the picture chronologically and shows that Abydos, with the largest (so far known) number of early Naqada I burials<sup>10</sup>, was the presumable core area of this development.

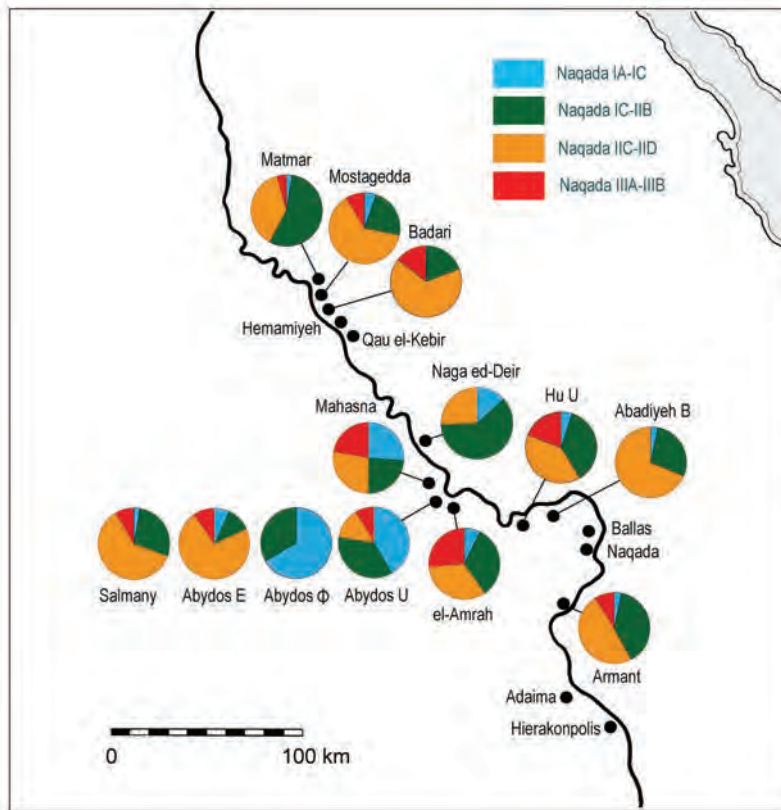


Fig. 7. Chronological position of selected Upper Egyptian cemeteries

<sup>10</sup> The minimum number of 116 Naqada IA-IB/C graves in Cemetery U and 20 additional burials in other cemeteries at Abydos (see Appendix 1) face at least 32 early graves at Mahasna, 33 at Naga ed-Deir and 11 at el-Amrah, but only 21 contemporaneous graves in all Middle Egypt and, e.g., 14 graves in the Abadiyeh/Hu region and 5 early burials in Armant.

The comparison of grave sizes in different cemeteries reveals still another feature of Cemetery U. Although this comparison must remain incomplete as many old excavation reports give no measurements of the graves, nevertheless, some information is available. In Abydos (Fig. 8 and Appendix 1), for the cemetery at Salmany and for some individual tombs of Cemetery E grave sizes are indicated. At Salmany most of the graves measure 1-2 sq. m, with only 5 graves measuring 2-3 sq. m and only one grave (grave 110, dating Naqada IID) more than 3 sq. m. Early graves do not exceed 2 sq. m. The sizes of the graves correspond to their fairly poor equipment in general (El-Sayed 1979: 260-273). Although in Cemetery E several graves were equipped with a large number of pottery vessels, only one grave larger than 2 sq. m is indicated (E 4580) which dates to Naqada IIIA1 (Peet 1914: 14). For only two early graves measurements (of less than 1 sq. m) are given. The presence of other larger tombs would probably have been noted by the excavator. Beyond Abydos (Fig. 8 and Appendix 2), at el-Amrah, measurements are widely missing, one early grave (b 144) measures 1 sq. m and two Naqada IID graves between 3 and 5 sq. m are described as typical for this later time (b 154 and 221, Randall-McIver and Mace 1902: 8). Also in the well documented cemeteries of Armant early tombs do not exceed 1 sq. m whilst larger tombs (3-4 sq. m) date not before Naqada IID (e.g. 1446, 1468, 1494, 1541 (4.2 sq. m), 1542, 1560 and 1580; Mond and Myers 1937: 27-31). The same evidence is found in Middle Egyptian cemeteries (Brunton and Caton-Thompson 1928: 42-61, pl. XXX-XXXIII; Brunton 1937: 69-91, pl. XXIX-XXXI; Brunton 1948: 12-23, pl. IX and X). Exceptional is grave 1805 (Naqada IA/B) at Mostagedda with a size of 2.6 sq. m. In Naga ed-Deir four early graves measure 2-3 sq. m (7016, 7045, 7130, 7179, 7394), and altogether only 20 graves are larger than 3 sq. m, one of them dating to Naqada IIA/B, the others to Naqada IIC/D (Lythgoe and Dunham 1965; Friedman 1981: Appendix III; Delrue 2001: 42-45). The Naqada IIC/D grave 7540 (13 sq. m) has to be especially mentioned as it is larger than contemporaneous graves in Cemetery U. Mahasna seems to be an exception again with individual large early tombs (e.g. H29, H30, H33, H45, three of them double burials) and noticeably, lacking large Naqada IID tombs (Ayrton and Loat 1911: 10-19).

The cemeteries at Naqada also seem to start moderately during Naqada I (e.g. Bard 1994: 80-85, 97-102, 119-120; Hartmann 2016: Table 26), with earlier tombs generally smaller than 3 sq. m. Large tombs, some of them brick-lined, are found especially in the elite Cemetery T. At least two of them, namely T 4 (6.8 sq. m) and T 5 (10.9 sq. m) are larger than corresponding graves at Abydos and date to Naqada IIC, i.e. to the span of time which is almost not represented in Cemetery

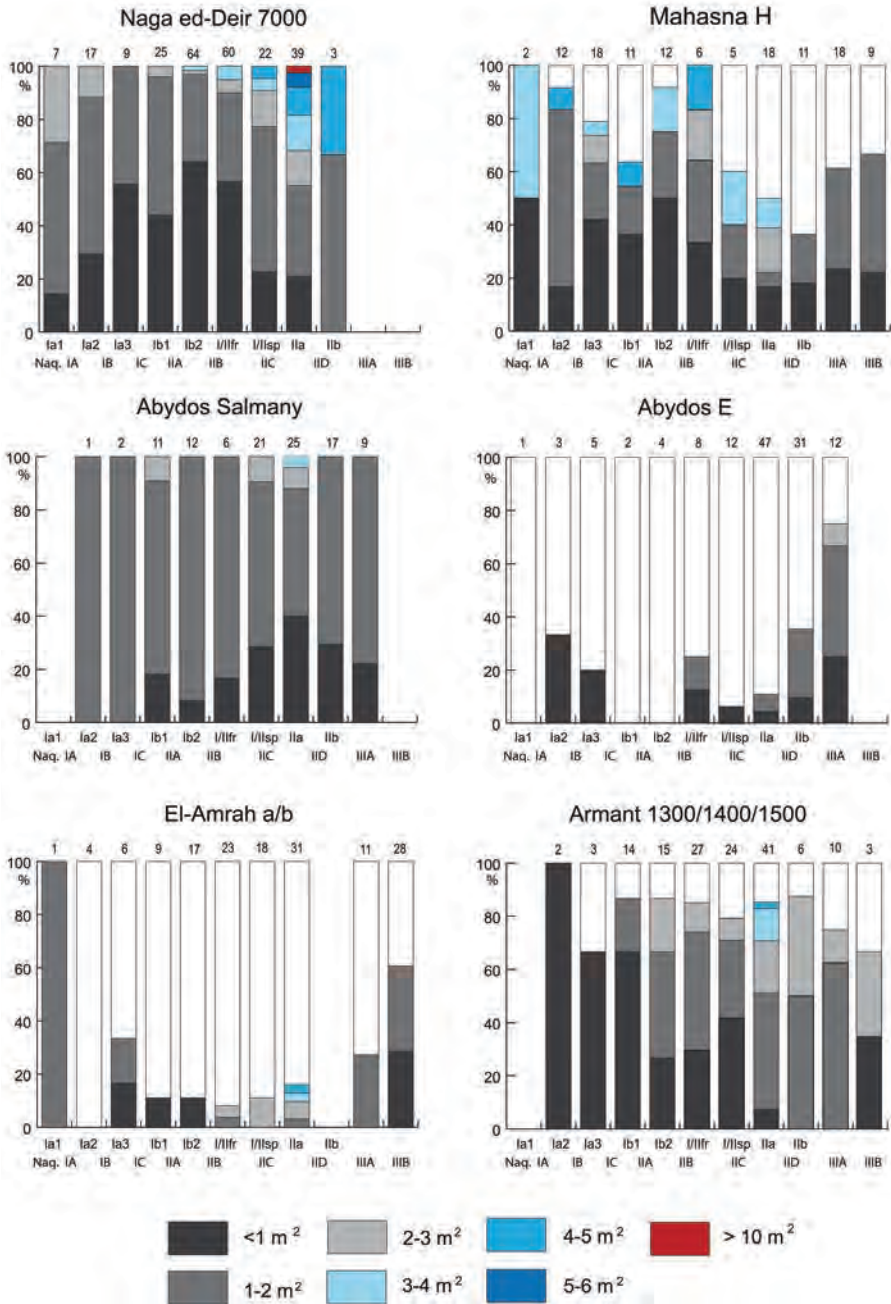


Fig. 8. Grave sizes in selected Predynastic cemeteries (cf. Fig. 4 and Appendix 1 and 2)

U. Slightly later large tombs (e.g. T10 with 5.13 sq. m, T11 with 7.81 sq. m or T16 with 4.14 sq. m) match the range of Naqada IID grave sizes in Cemetery U (Petrie/Quibell 1896: pl. LXXXII; see also Kemp 1973: 38-43; Kaiser and Dreyer 1982: 242-245).

At Hierakonpolis, as far as it is known today, substantial activities apparently did not start before late Naqada I (see e.g. Friedman 2008: Table 1). The recent excavations in the elite cemetery of this period, HK6, revealed impressive funeral complexes with superstructures made of wood and matting, and exceptional hitherto unknown finds such as multiple burials of humans and wild and domesticated animals (e.g. Friedman 2004: 131-168; 2008: 11-20; 2008a: 1157-1194; Friedman et al. 2011: 157-191; Droux 2014). The complex is only partly excavated so far and its significance is not yet completely clarified. The elite character of the construction is obvious, but it eludes the comparison with other “traditional” cemeteries, including Cemetery U. During Naqada IIC funeral activities of the elite seem to have shifted especially to HK31, where a group of other tombs seems to have surrounded the decorated tomb 100 (with almost 15 sq. m) (e.g. Quibell/Green 1902: 20-22; Kaiser 1958: 187-192; Case/Payne 1962; Payne 1973; Kemp 1973: 36-38; Adams 1974: 86-93; Kaiser and Dreyer 1982: 242-245; Friedman 2008: 10-11, 23). Only during Naqada III, the HK6 complex was re-used as an elite cemetery (e.g. Adams 2000; Friedman 2008: 23-26) with grave sizes (e.g. Friedman 2009) comparable to those of contemporaneous tombs at Abydos.

Although in large parts incomplete, the presented comparison reveals at least tendencies. Beside the largest number of early (Naqada IA/IB) tombs so far known, Cemetery U seems also to provide a larger number of big and richly equipped early Naqada I graves than any other of the contemporaneous cemeteries. Only at Mahasna individual early tombs of similar size and wealth are found. However, the size and equipment of the graves during the second chronological phase of Cemetery U, i.e. during Naqada IID, and those of the later brick-lined tombs also find only few parallels in other cemeteries. The revival of Umm el-Qaab as an outstanding burial place of the elite during this time must have had an important reason.

## Conclusions

The evidence from Cemetery U allows to draft at least a rough picture of the development at Abydos in the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium: The prominent, slightly elevated area of Umm el-Qaab was obviously chosen by connected groups

of early Naqada I settlers as the collective burial place for their clans and chiefs. A little later, and probably connected to the growth of the area used for agricultural activities and habitation, places situated closer to the cultivation came into use as additional graveyards, such as Cemetery  $\Phi$  and the oldest graves of Cemetery E and Salmany. However, elite burials seem to be absent from these small cemeteries. Beyond the bay of Abydos, the establishment of Cemetery L near Beit Allam, and probably also of the cemeteries at Naga ed-Deir and El-Amrah probably reflect the same development. In contrast, the isolated and slightly elevated location of Cemetery H at Mahasna, within the next recess of the limestone plateau to the north of Abydos, resembles the situation in Umm el-Qaab and might have been a primary cemetery of other arriving groups.

Until early Naqada II Umm el-Qaab remained the main burial place of Abydos. As no changes in the original pattern of grave distribution can be observed nor do additional grave groups occur in the course of time, Cemetery U seems to have been reserved for burials of old-established – i.e. probably locally dominant – families or clans until early Naqada II.

The diminishing number of graves in Cemetery U during Naqada IIB, and especially the lack of a large number of Naqada IIC tombs may indicate that the cemetery (and the old clans?) became gradually less important during this time. In contrast, graves of this time can be found in remote Salmany and in a moderately growing number in Cemetery E, which now starts to replace Umm el-Qaab as the main cemetery of Abydos. However, in contrast to Naqada and Hierakonpolis, elite tombs are missing so far at Abydos during this time.

The otherwise known archaeological remains at Abydos (see above) fail to offer an explanation for the return of funeral activities at Umm el-Qaab from Naqada IID onwards. Even considering that settlement remains might have been overlaid, destroyed or not yet discovered, any evidence of sudden economic or political growth is missing at Abydos. If not traceable directly by settlement remains, such a development would have been surely reflected in the equipment of graves, especially in a considerable number of well-equipped middle class burials. But this seems to be not the case. Although there are several well-equipped Naqada IID/IIIA graves in Cemetery E, neither their number, their size, nor their wealth especially exceeds those of the tombs in neighbouring cemeteries, e.g. in el-Amrah or Naga ed-Deir. The evidence from Umm el-Qaab remains isolated, and the transformation of Cemetery U into an exclusive elite cemetery must have had another background. If Umm el-Qaab was (one of) the first large burial place of the Naqada culture after its arrival in the Nile valley, the location where the



earliest Naqada chiefs were buried must have been of outstanding interest for the cultural identity of the descendants. The intention to tie in with this tradition in order to obtain legitimacy and magical protection from the ancestors might have been an essential reason for the Naqada IID elite to return to this place. A burial close to the chiefs of the forefathers would symbolize roots and identity. The same idea probably formed the background of the re-use of the elite complex of HK6 during Naqada III (Friedman 2008: 23), and it can still be observed later in pharaonic times. The presence of the old graves of Cemetery U and – embedded in oral tradition, religious beliefs and cultic activities – its mythification might have given Abydos a special significance as a kind of social-funeral centre of the Naqada elite, independent from the actual economic importance of Abydos or any political rivalries.

This same basic idea of legitimacy through connection with the remote ancestors might still have been active and accepted at the beginning of the Early Dynastic period and could have been the impetus for the kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> dynasty to build their tombs in Umm el-Qaab far away from their political business in Memphis (cf. Kemp 1966: 19-22). It must also be considered that already during Naqada IID, when this development was initiated, the individuals buried in Cemetery U need not necessarily have come from Abydos. They may have resided in Naqada, Hierakonpolis or elsewhere (cf. Kemp 2006: 91). The connection to the location of the tomb of Osiris at Umm el-Qaab during pharaonic times seems obvious. Noticeably, the situation of pharaonic Abydos resembles the Predynastic evidence. Abydos remained a marginal provincial town throughout its history and was at the same time the most important centre of funeral cult in pharaonic Egypt.

It is not possible to say whether the physical presence of the spirit of the ancestors was in itself sufficient to initiate the reactivation of the old burial tradition at Umm el-Qaab, or if other factors, e.g. the particular landscape, may have also played a role. Afterwards, the royal tombs provide some evidence that the large wadi which surrounds Umm el-Qaab, especially its outflow from the cliffs of the limestone plateau, was considered to be the mythical entrance to the afterlife. Niches in the south-western corners of the burial chambers, a special annex of the tomb of Dewen and gaps in the rows of subsidiary tombs are orientated towards this wadi entrance and might have been installed to help the dead king to leave the tomb and to find his way to the netherworld (Dreyer *et al.* 1990: 78; Dreyer 2007: 200-201; cf. also Effland and Effland 2013: 10-12). It cannot be excluded that this mythical role of the wadi entrance has a longer tradition and is of Predynastic origin.

However, if the funeral significance of Abydos during Predynastic times is accepted, one would expect indications of cultic activities and funeral ceremonies. Against the background of recently uncovered evidence for the production of beer, bread and meat at Hierakonpolis, probably for the provision of funeral festivities (e.g. Friedman 2008: 23; Takamiya 2008: 187-202; Baba 2013; 2014; van Neer and de Cupere 2014), the remains of breweries are striking which represent – but perhaps only accidentally – a prevailing part of the known settlement remains at Abydos (see above and Fig. 1). They could have been connected to funeral ceremonies with regard to Cemetery U, which took place already in Predynastic times near the cultivation as in case of the Early Dynastic royal tombs in Umm el-Qaab and their funerary enclosures (as a summary see O'Connor 2009: 159-181). Individual finds from the area of the later Osiris Temple might even indicate a Predynastic forerunner of this temple.

The present state of research does not allow more than tentative conclusions but the results of the excavations of Cemetery U in conjunction with even the limited information from previous excavators may perhaps help to illuminate Egypt's remote past.

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Appendix 1.  
Dating and grave sizes of early Naqada I tombs from the Cemetery U and other cemeteries at Abydos

Cemetery U Phases	Naqada IA			Naqada IB		Naqada IC
	Ia1	Ia2	Ia3	Ia2	Ia3	Ia3
Abydos U (DAI excavations)	129 (0,8); 143b (0,7); 249 (2,5); 280 1,1); 287a (0,9); 300 (2,5); 324 (1,5); 350 (1,8); 367 (3,6); 368 (3,0); 380 (1,5); 391 (1,6); 395a (0,6); 397 (2,3); 419 (1,0); 447 (1,2); 468 (3,3); 468a (0,6); 500 (4,8); 505b (0,8); 519a (1,0); 603 (1,9); 623 (3,1); 627 (3,3)	129a (0,9); 138 (2,3); 142 (2,0); 143a (0,7); *146 (1,4); 148 (1,1); 178 (4,6); 235 (3,5); 250 (3,3); 253 (1,4); *277 (3,4); 282 (1,4); 284a (1,4); *288a (1,0); 291 (3,4); *294a*(1,2); 303 (3,3); 306 (2,1); 307 (2,5); 329a (1,6); *341 (2,2); *345 (1,1); 348 (1,2); *381*(1,7); 389 (2,5); *390a (0,5); *392b (0,9); 407 (0,4); 415 (3,3); 417 (2,6); *423* (1,9); *501 (1,0); 503b (0,7); 506 (1,3); *506c (1,0); 507a (1,2); 507b (1,0); 529a (2,3); 531 (1,9); 532 (0,8); *533 (0,9); *535 (1,3); *539 (1,3); 559 (1,6); *628 (1,4); *629 (1,1); 637* (2,0); 647 (5,8)	141 (5,6); *152*(1,3); 168 (1,4); *215* (1,3); *232 (3,9); 237 (1,9); 239 (4,2); 248 (1,3); 252 (1,5); 263 (2,3); 265 (3,1); 268 (0,8); *275 (1,3); *284 (1,7); *295* (0,8); 332 (4,0); 339 (2,6); *381a*(0,9); 383 (1,2); 384 (2,3); 408 (2,2); *412 (1,0); 416 (2,6); 420 (0,6); *425*(1,7); 432 (2,7); *442* (1,2); *448*(1,9); *451* (1,3); *473*(1,4); 502 (0,9); 505 (1,0); 505d (1,4); *508*(2,4); *511*(1,0); *530*(0,8); 541 (1,8); 548a (1,1); 549 (1,6); 551 (1,6); 556 (1,4); *558*(1,0); *613*(3,0); 653 (0,9)			
Abydos U (Peet excav.)	3 (2,0); 27	1; *9; 11; 13 (1,6); 16 (1,6); 20; *24; *29; 30; *32*				*14*, *15*(0,5); 21
Abydos Φ		3; 22; 23; 31; 55; 60				*44; 29
Abydos E	179	*132; 163 (0,5); *182				44; *120*; *127*; 168 (0,9); 181
Salmany		*45 (1,7)				25 (1,7); *43*(1,2)

Dating of tombs is based on seriation and additional typo-chronological analysis of pottery types by R. Hartmann (2016: Table 25 and 26). If long life spans of vessel types do not allow the precise dating of a grave into one of Cemetery U sub-phases, possible chronological range has been averaged and the grave is indicated by \*grave-no.\*; in the case of only two possible sub-phases the tomb has been assigned to younger phase and marked by \*grave-no. (in brackets) are given in sqm and are taken from corresponding publications



Appendix 2.  
Dating and grave sizes of early Naqada I tombs from selected Upper Egyptian cemeteries

Cemetery U Phases	Naqada IA			Naqada IB			Naqada IC		
	Ia1	Ia2	Ia3	Ia2	Ia3	Ia3	Ia2	Ia3	Ia3
Matmar									*2608*(1,0); *2654*(1,4); *2673*(1,4); *2688*((0,6); *2725*(0,7)
Mostagedda				*1805 (2,6); *1878 (0,8); *1896*(0,5)					*1836*; *1843*; *1858*(0,8); *1865*(0,3); *1892*(1,0); *5210*
Badari				*3828*(1,1)					
Hemamieh				*1666*; *1713; *1743*					
Qau el-Kebir				*120 (0,8); *133*(0,6)					*130*(0,8)
Naga ed-Deir N 7000	7014*(1,6); 7036 (1,2); 7130 (2,8); 7179 (2,8); 7260 (1,3); 7365 (1,3); 7627 (0,9)			7016 (2,6); 7037 (1,5); 7045 (2,0); 7047 (1,4); *7052*(0,7); *7061*(0,8); *7124 (0,3); 7128 (1,9); *7134*(0,5); 7155 (1,8); *7269 (0,8); *7274 (1,0); 7375 (1,8); 7377 (1,6); 7394 (2,5); 7429 (1,6); *7626*(1,1)					7004 (1,4); 7015 (0,8); *7143*(1,3); *7189*(0,8); *7229*(1,0); *7362*(0,7); *7364*(0,9); *7393*(1,2); *7439*(0,7)
Mahasna H	26 (0,9); 30 (3,3)			5 (0,5); 29 (4,5); *35*(1,9); *36 (1,7); 37 (1,1); 40 (1,1); *46 (0,8); 53(1,3); 90 (1,6); *96*; *99 (1,1); *134 (1,2)					10 (1,1); *13; *14; 17; *19*(0,7); *20* (0,7); *24*(0,9); 32 (1,3); 34 (0,6); 39; 42 (2,3); 45 (3,6); 49 (2,4); *50 (1,1); *52* (0,8); 55 (0,6); 88 (0,9); 135 (1,0)
El-Amrah	b144 (1,0)			a90; b117; b202; b212					a85; a86; a104; *b127; b132; b184
Hu U				*229*; *266*; 272; 336; 338					*142; 160; 280; *399
Abadiyeh B									37; *88*; 123; 143; 148
Armant				1414 (0,7); 1432 (0,8)					1417; 1427 (0,7); 1457 (0,5)