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Aesthetics and Identity at Qustul and Ballana, Lower Nubia.

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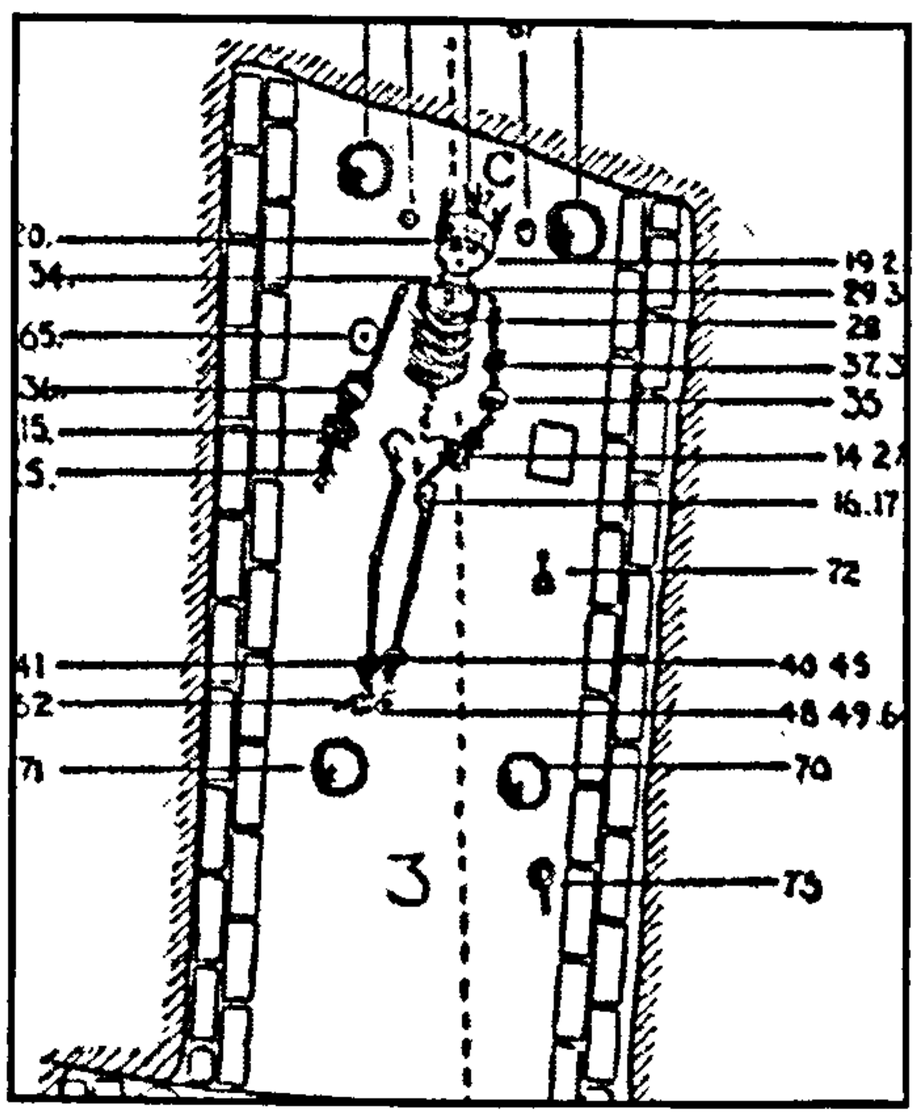
Volume One



Rachael Jane Dann

Department of Archaeology, University of Durham

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.
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Aesthetics and Identity at Qustul and Ballana, Lower Nubia.

Rachael Jane Dann.
Department of Archaeology, University of Durham.

Abstract of Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. April 2006.

This thesis has examined how artefactual remains were manipulated by individuals or social groups to maintain or challenge social organisation. The study is founded upon the mortuary remains from the two X-Group royal cemeteries at Qustul and Ballana. My thesis offers the first interpretation of social life at these key sites and demonstrates the significance of the sensuous nature of artefacts in this particular time and place. This represents a significant departure from previous work which restricted the discussion of life at the sites to a limited debate about tribal groups and chronology. The proposed identity of the inhabitants of the graves was based upon fragmentary Classical sources, and the artefactual remains have been viewed as tools through which to refine a chronology for the period. In contrast, I approached the artefacts from the perspective that they were used dynamically in creating, maintaining and altering the identity of the X-Group. I undertook the study to combat the limited and unsatisfactory set of questions posed by previous debates about the activities at Ballana and Qustul. My research combined a thorough study of the material remains at the site with advances in archaeological theories of aesthetics and identity to develop a more complex interpretation.

In order to examine the material from the tombs a relational database was created. This database enabled me to explore the use of space in tombs, the use of particular materials in particular artefact types; and the aesthetic qualities of artefacts. This quantitative data was the basis from which to build an interpretation of the sites from the perspectives of socio-political organisation, and the relationships between humans, animals and artefacts. This demonstrated how a less stable society, which based control on aggressive public displays, became a more stable state, as power was mediated by magico-ritual performances, festal occasions and the rise of certain individuals. This research revealed a new way to interpret and understand X-Group culture as a materially complex indigenous culture that created and altered identities through time based on the manipulation of materials, colour and pattern which formed the basis of X-Group identities.

Acknowledgements.

This thesis is the final result of work that began in October 2000. Before finally finding the cemeteries at Qustul and Ballana I actually began work on two other projects before finding the material unworkable. In relation to my first project, I'd like to thank the staff at the Museum of Fine Arts and the Peabody Museum in Boston, and in particular Dr Denise Doxey. In relation to the second project, I'd like to thank the staff at the Archaeological Museum in Stavanger, Norway, but particularly the staff in the conservation laboratory. Professor Hans-Åke Nordström made my trip to Stockholm and Uppsala both intellectually stimulating and very enjoyable. I thank him for that, and for the coffee and cake. Madame Thanaa Hassan Moussa of the Nubian Museum in Aswan, Egypt kindly allowed me to photograph the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana.

When I made the decision to return to Durham University to undertake doctoral work, it was largely because I could be supervised by Dr Penny Wilson. I appreciate her having the confidence in me to allow me to develop my research in directions that were not necessarily the kinds of direction that she would have taken. I value that intellectual freedom very highly. Our discussions have always been enjoyable and thought provoking. Thanks also to my second supervisor, Professor Charlotte Roberts (even if I never did get to look at any human remains).

The support of my various colleagues in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Durham has been of especial significance. Over the years my fellow inhabitants of 001 have changed, but they have provided by turns sympathy, help, encouragement and solace. Occasionally, this has actually entailed discussions of our research. Thanks to Beccy Scott, Anne O'Connor, Ed Cork, Tom White, Tom Moore, Matt Whincop and Andy Shaw. In particular I thank Dr Derek Kennet for his advice regarding my database, and for saving me from myself on more than one occasion. I'm especially grateful to Karen Exell for reading and commenting on various chapters, and for sharing these final phases of the thesis, and a number of bottles of wine. I am also grateful to those people who have read and commented on partial drafts of the thesis including Dr Sam Lucy and Dr Robin Skeates.

Over the last few years I have been fortunate to find in Dr David Edwards a sounding board for various ideas. I wish him every success in finding the perfect

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Of course, I am deeply grateful to my parents and to Helen for their unstinting and unquestioning support in various forms over many years of postgraduate study. Not once in all of these years have my parents asked me when I was going to get a proper job, and I hope that the fact that this thesis runs to two volumes will give them an added feeling of satisfaction! Truly, this project could not have been completed without their belief in the value of research, and their belief that I could do it.

Special thanks must go to my new husband Boris, who has put up with the emotional and intellectual highs and lows (or grumpiness and hysteria) that are an inevitable part of the writing up process. It has also been a source of great pleasure, inspiration and a few heated discussions that our research, although on vastly different material, criss-crosses and intersects at various junctions. I also appreciate his close reading of a number of chapters, and the suggestions that he made. Thankfully, now that I have finished, we can at last go on Honeymoon!

The Byzantine period in Nubia is not a particularly interesting one from an archaeological point of view for it affords a very meagre harvest of antiquities, and these of little historical importance

(Wood Jones, 1910, 216).

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Chapter One

Introduction.

1.1. Introduction.

The first dam to be constructed in the region of the first Nile cataract was completed in 1902, in order to safeguard the productivity of the Egyptian cotton crop (Emery, 1948, 1). The building of the first Aswan dam as a means to regulate the Nile inundation, led to the first systematic research expedition to Nubia. In 1907, the Egyptian government made the decision to raise the dam by a further seven meters, which would lead to the flooding of an area along the Nile from the First Cataract to the village of Derr 250 kilometres to the south (Lyons, 1910, 1). Consequently, in 1907 the Archaeological Survey of Nubia was instigated under the direction of George Reisner (and later Cecil M. Firth). The survey discovered and recorded numerous sites of different periods, and cannot be overemphasized in its importance. The history of Nubia had only previously been known through the fragmentary works of certain classical authors, and from its mention in Ancient Egyptian writings. The Archaeological Survey of Nubia, with archaeological exploration at its heart, aimed to investigate the ancient material culture of the region, and the peoples that had produced it. The dam was heightened again between 1929 and 1934, with the effect that sites further to the south of Wadi es Sebua (the limit of the previous survey) were threatened. A further survey was mounted under the direction of Walter Emery and sub-direction of Lawrence Kirwan (Emery, 1948, 2). The largest and most comprehensive expedition was mounted between 1959 and 1969 when it was decided to construct the Aswan High Dam. With the aid of UNESCO, a co-operative effort was launched involving many international teams who surveyed and excavated much of Lower Nubia along the Nile itself (Adams, 1977, 4).

1. 2. The Excavations at Qustul and Ballana.

Although a number of travellers and archaeologists had noted the tumuli of Ballana and Qustul, they were not recognised as monuments of any archaeological importance until Walter Emery and Lawrence Kirwan journeyed into Lower Nubia in 1931. However, this discovery came as a surprise as Weigall's account of the area published in 1907, stated that 'there are no ancient sites here' (1907, 142). Accompanying Emery and Kirwan were a number of Egyptian professionals from Cairo University, and one hundred and fifty workmen from Guft (Quft), whose numbers eventually swelled to four hundred, were brought in as general labourers rather than supervisors as Emery comments that 'the Nubian is quite useless for work of this kind' (1948, 2). Alongside the expertise of the main excavators, Lucas advised on the identification of the small number of textile finds, the human remains were analysed by Professor El-Batrawi, Mohammed Husni Effendi was surveyor and Mohammed Hassenein Effendi was clerk of works. In October 1931, the expedition arrived at the cemetery of Ballana, to be informed of a similar site at Qustul across the Nile on the east bank. The excavators entered tomb three at Qustul via a robber passage in order to make a preliminary investigation of what might be contained under the mounds (ibid, 35). Excavations at Qustul began in November, and on uncovering the remains of horses still dressed in their silver tack in the entrance ramp to Tomb three, the excavators began to realise 'the true value of the discovery' (Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, 2). The excavation of the two sites, even with a large team of workers lasted a total of thirteen months between November 1931 and February 1934. The mounds were excavated by cutting large V-shaped sections through the tumuli, in order to remove the earth in successive slices, rather like the cutting of a cake. The gradual removal of the tumuli enabled the excavators to ascertain whether any objects had been buried in the fill of the mounds themselves. The removal of the earth was also necessary in order to take measurements of the sub-structures, and to draw them.

When the two sites were threatened by the planned raising of the Aswan High Dam and the expansion of Lake Nasser, an Egyptian team returned to

Ballana in 1959 to excavate those tumuli which Emery and Kirwan had presumed to be plundered, and that they had therefore left uninvestigated. These smaller tumuli and tombs did prove to be widely plundered, but Farid's excavation (1963) was important in revealing more information about the site, in particular in terms of tomb development. However, Farid's site report gives no indication of the involvement of any other specialists trained, for example, in the identification of the animal remains.

Finally, a team from the Oriental Institute in Chicago (the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition, hereafter OINE) returned to Qustul and Ballana in the 1970's to undertake widespread excavations of both sites, in an attempt to broaden the scale of previous archaeological activities. This expedition took place before the final flooding of both sites, and was led by Professor Keith Seele. After his death, the excavations were written up and published by Dr Bruce Williams. A separate volume was produced about the many textile finds from the sites. Seele's approach differed to that of the previous excavators, as he cleared broad surface areas at the sites, rather than simply concentrating upon the tumuli as more obvious indicators of archaeological activity. The OINE excavations have made it possible to understand the complex nature of the material at Ballana and Qustul as remains that relate to each other as part of a wider ritual space, incorporating different ritual activities beyond the construction of tombs.

Although the overall survival rate of much of the material from Ballana and Qustul was very high, the sites (Ballana in particular) have suffered from water damage, and some plundering. In some cases, percolating water had caused the roofs of the mud brick substructures of certain tombs to cave in, or the mud brick had become a mass of mud that was melded together. The action of the water has had a detrimental effect on the preservation rate of certain items, in particular any organic material that may have been present in the tombs. It would be expected that the survival and state of the human remains was also affected by the damp conditions, but the excavators (Emery, Kirwan and Farid) and the anatomist el-Batrawi make little mention of this. Although a number of the tombs had been robbed, a sizeable number also survived intact.

When the X-Group tombs of Ballana and Qustul were first excavated by Emery and Kirwan, the excavators planned the remains in situ, so that the human and animal bodies were sketched with associated artefacts in place. In a number of cases the skeletons were found wearing certain items, such as crowns, or sandals, and in other cases the wearing of jewellery is easily inferred by the nature of the remains: in the cases where, for example, beads are found amongst the clavicle, sternum and vertebrae, it is likely that the individual was wearing a necklace. There were no substantial textile remains found in the 'royal' tombs, but a large corpus survived in the graves excavated by the OINE (see Mayer Thurman and Williams, 1979). It is only through the careful and precise drawings and descriptions of the excavators, that such information is known. From the archaeological remains, which demonstrate the close proximity of items of clothing on or near to the bodies, some of the people at Ballana and Qustul seem to have been buried fully clothed. It is due to this fortunate coincidence between the levels of preservation at the site, and the excavators' foresight in recording all that they found, that one may attempt a detailed analysis of all of the remains from the sites.

1. 3. Terminology.

It was Reisner who first introduced the term X-Group to denote the cultural group existing in Lower Nubia between the fall of the Meroitic state and the rise of the Christian kingdoms. Subsequently, much intellectual effort has been expended in trying to identify this cultural group using fragmentary historical sources. It has become a common assumption that the people buried at Qustul and Ballana were either Blemmye or Nobadae. Trigger has argued that the X-Group should be re-named Ballana culture, in order to emphasise the Lower Nubian origins of the culture. Adams (1965, 160), thought that the Blemmye were likely to be the same as, or linked with nomadic Beja tribes (*cf* texts from Qasr Ibrim), who themselves could be identified as the Medjay of Pharaonic Egypt. A similar argument has been made on an etymological basis (Zaborski, 1989). Säve-Söderbergh thought that the rulers at Ballana may have

been the Blemmye (1981, 5). Williams terms the X-Group at Qustul Noba, due to correspondences with historical sources and argues that the X-Group should henceforth be termed 'Noubadian' culture (Williams, 1991c, 3; 158). Edwards also calls the Ballana tombs Nobadian (Edwards, 2004, 206). Sadr suggests that the Red Noba take control of Nubia from the Dodecaschoinos to Dongola, but do not displace Meroites already settled there (Sadr, 1991, 124).

Caught up in this debate over terminology is the problem that certain authors use terms in a manner that collapses racial group identity with cultural identity. In fact Emery demonstrates this point in the site report, in which he uses the term X-Group to both identify material culture with the group of people at Qustul and Ballana, and also to mark a chronological period (1938a, 18-24).

The situation regarding terminology, and the spelling of the various tribal names is therefore rather confusing, and at times, contradictory. Ultimately however, Adams felt that the Blemmye/Nobadae debate was rather pointless, instead preferring a situation within which the X-Group 'are part of a complex transformation – racial, linguistic and cultural – which affected the whole of the Nile Valley from Aswân to the junction of the Niles' (Adams, 1965, 161). The term 'X-Group' will be used throughout this thesis as the terms 'Noubadian' and 'Ballana culture' obscure the complexities involved in the attribution of ethnicities (see Rose, 1992, 3 for a similar argument). The term 'Ballana culture' also privileges the site at Ballana, and this is a poor position from which to begin a reinterpretation of the material from both of the sites.

1. 4. Research Questions and Thesis Outline.

This research is based on the material from the excavations at Qustul and Ballana conducted by Emery and Kirwan, and then subsequently by Farid. The material from the OINE excavations is not the main focus of discussion in this research, and it was not used in any of the quantitative analysis. There are a number of reasons for placing such a limitation on the parameters of this research. Firstly, the excavations conducted by Emery and Kirwan, and Farid concentrated on the larger tumuli that are broadly designated as the royal tumuli.

The OINE research was concerned with non-royal graves. Although the conceptual line that divides 'royal' from 'non-royal' could itself be open to discussion, it was felt that it was more appropriate to focus this research on the 'royal' tombs as a discrete group. As such, this research could focus on intra group cohesion or variation. Secondly, a very detailed level of recording and analysis was devised in relation to the material from the tombs excavated by Emery, Kirwan and Farid (the tombs that contained archaeological material), and it was already clear that this constituted a very significant amount of data. If the OINE material had been included this would have resulted in an enormous dataset. It was more sensible to work with a smaller, but well-defined and well-recorded dataset in terms of applying relevant tests to the data due to time constraints. Furthermore, this research is only the first step in an interpretation of the sites, and by definition, it cannot be exhaustive. Thirdly, the Farid site report is very similar in its layout and content to the original Emery and Kirwan reports, whereas the OINE volume is recorded in a very different manner. As the 1938 and 1963 site reports recorded the same types of information, they could be more easily interrogated as a single dataset.

This central aim of this thesis is to offer a reinterpretation of the X-Group period cemeteries at Qustul and Ballana that is both based on a quantitative analysis of the remains, and that integrates an explicitly theoretical approach. More specifically, this thesis aims to discuss the sites and material from Qustul and Ballana in order to elucidate aspects of material culture and practice that were important in the creation and negotiation of X-Group identity. A further aim is to identify the material culture and related practices that characterised activities at Qustul and Ballana. The reasons for the move to Ballana are little known, and consequently one aim is to clarify aspects of continuity or change between the cemeteries in material terms, and how this created, maintained or changed socio-political arrangements. The first objective was therefore to create a comprehensive database of the artefactual and skeletal remains in order to facilitate a fine analysis of the Qustul and Ballana material. Another objective was to expand upon theoretical positions that could inform the interpretation of the sites and the people who used them. Within such an

investigation, the thesis takes aesthetics as a crucial aspect of identity. This dissertation will approach the material in the following ways:

Chapter two focuses on the historical and cultural background of Lower Nubia following the decline of Meroitic culture. The chapter uses both the written evidence of classical authors and archaeological evidence from a variety of sites in Lower Nubia, in order to provide a contextual backdrop to the development of the cemeteries at Qustul and Ballana. The ways in which authors have approached investigations of X-Group culture is also discussed. The chronology of Qustul and Ballana is also outlined.

Chapter three is concerned with the manner by which funerary remains have been approached, quantified and discussed by archaeologists. Although this discussion includes some references to the Sudan, the discussion is also based on the approaches taken by archaeologists working on other temporal and geographical locations, whose contributions have been important in the development of funerary archaeology. Finally, I elaborate in detail the structure and content of the database that I have constructed to contain the data from Qustul and Ballana, which is a major tool in achieving the aims of this research.

Theoretical debates are the subject of chapter four. I discuss the implications of these theoretical positions for the interrogation of the data from Qustul and Ballana, both in terms of the types of questions that may be asked of the remains, and in terms of the potential for interpretation. The consideration of such theoretical positions is viewed as an important objective, as a means to expand upon the pure data analysis, and to work towards the overall aim of a reinterpretation of the sites.

Chapters five, six and seven are concerned with the data analysis of the cemeteries from a nested perspective. Chapter five deals with the cemeteries on a macro scale and is concerned with the spatial layout of the tombs, and the basic sexing and ageing data regarding the human and animal remains in the tombs.

In chapter six, the next step in the data analysis is an investigation of the artefacts from the tombs. In this chapter, particular attention is paid to the materials from which the artefacts were made. The data in this chapter also

contains a discussion on how processes of manufacture, and the materials used in manufacture create culture.

Chapter seven is concerned with what might be construed as the most ephemeral level of analysis. This chapter examines the colours, decoration methods and decoration designs in the artefacts from the sites.

Chapter eight draws together the theoretical positions expressed in chapter four, and the quantitative analyses set out in chapters five, six and seven in order to advance an interpretation of the burials at Qustul and Ballana, which was the central aim of this research. This chapter also presents an assessment of the nature of X-Group culture, and how it can be defined in relation to Qustul and Ballana.

Chapter nine concludes this thesis. In the conclusion I reflect on the methodology used in the thesis, and suggest future directions for research.

Appendices A, B, and C contain the quantitative data concerning the analysis of colour, decoration methods and decoration designs that are discussed in chapter seven. Appendix D contains some illustrative material relating to pottery types, some decorative designs, and the layout of some of the tombs.

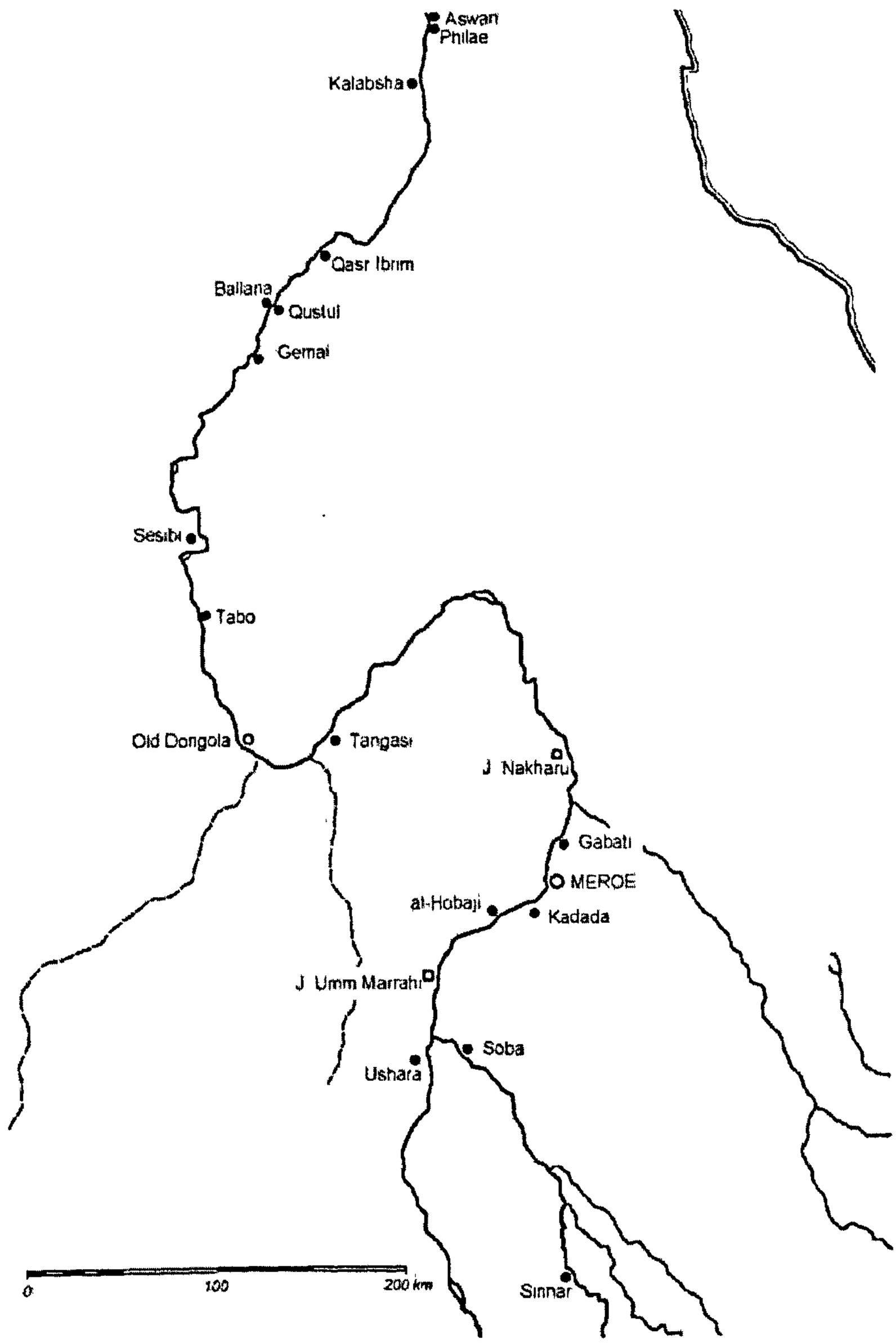


Figure 1.2 after Edwards, 2004, 113.

Chapter Two

Historical and Cultural Background and Chronology.

2.1. Introduction.

The aim of this chapter is to place the cemeteries of Qustul and Ballana into a broad historical and cultural context. To achieve this, the first part of this chapter will be concerned with a discussion of the approaches that have been taken to the interpretation of material within Nubian archaeology. I will then discuss the historical context for the development of the cemeteries, before moving on to consider both the literary and archaeological evidence for Lower Nubia during the 4th and 5th centuries AD. Finally I will present a discussion of the chronological structure of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries. The table below illustrates the chronological of relationship between cultures in the Sudan.

Culture	Phases	Date
Kushite	Napatan	9th-4th century BC
	Meroitic	4th century BC-4th century AD
X-Group	'Ballana Culture'	4th-6th century AD
Christian	Transitional	AD 550-600

Figure 2.1. Chronology of Sudanese cultures (after Welsby, 2002, 13)

2.2. Historical Approaches to Nubian Archaeology.

Following the increased interest in a scientific approach and the uses of scientific methods and techniques as advocated by the processual movement, the human body has become an increasingly explicit category in archaeological research. Egyptology has a long history of interest in bodies, both human and animal, due to the survival of mummified remains. Within Nubian studies, skeletal remains also have a long history of study. Whilst Nubian populations did not produce mummies, the amenable preservation conditions of the hot, dry

Sudan have meant that many skeletal remains have survived and been excavated and analysed. Excavation reports that were published as part of the Archaeological Survey of Nubia from the early 20th century contain detailed information on human remains (Elliot Smith and Wood Jones, 1910). The anatomists working on the skeletal material from the various Nubian sites were always strongly interested in what Elliot Smith refers to as 'The Racial Problem' (Elliot Smith, 1910). However, it was perhaps Petrie, who first raised the question of racial origins, when in his excavation report for Naqada and Ballas (1896) he advances the theory of a (alien) 'Dynastic Race' as the possible founders of Egyptian civilisation. The tone of the discussion is very dated, and at times unashamedly racist by modern standards (see for example Elliot Smith, 1910). The underlying assumption seems to be that the native 'negroid' inhabitants of Nubia were, at different points in history (such as the New Kingdom), enriched by the biological goodness of the Pharaonic stock, which enabled them to advance culturally. The consequence of the withdrawal of Egyptian genetic influence was a relapse into decadence. The skull was the focus of racial discussions and metric measurements of cranial features were taken, and statistical measures of significance and difference might also be employed. However, these mathematical measurements were not necessarily the most important aspect of the analysis: 'it should never be forgotten that chief reliance must always be placed on biological characters rather than on mere metric data. The appreciation of the form of the various parts of the face and skull gives certain information for the determination of racial characters which no measurement can express, and supplies us with irrefutable facts which cannot be set forth by mere figures' (ibid, 21). From this perspective, the subjective attribution of racial attributes from visual inspection is given primacy, and one might question whether the viewer might begin to see what they want to see.

A general theoretical racism can be detected in certain writing on Nubian peoples and cultures, which bases itself upon a kind of biological essentialism. Such a belief underpins the position which equates 'Egyptian' traits with civilisation, and 'Negroid' traits with degeneracy or primitive-ness. Reisner expresses this view when he discusses his findings at Kerma: 'This lagging

behind of the Nubian communities...was accompanied by an increasing change in the racial character of the people. The Negroid element became more marked...I take it that a race which cannot produce or even fully utilize the products of a higher culture must, from an historical point of view, still be counted in its former state. The evidences of the fortuitous possession of the products of a higher culture only deepen the impression of cultural incompetence' (Reisner, 1923a, 7). The physical characteristics of a race, however they were determined were deemed to be directly related to how that race could and would behave. Cultural organisation and potential was limited by racial determinism. In this way, to classify a person or group as a particular race by their bodily remains is to already have an assumption of what they can and cannot 'achieve' culturally. Bodily traits are believed to be the fundamental driver of cultural action. Later authors do not make claims that are based on the biological character of the human remains that are excavated, but they do continue to discuss Egyptian and Nubian culture by juxtaposing value-laden terms such as 'civilized' and 'vigorous' with 'primitive' and 'barbarian' (Adams, 1964, 102, 115; Adams, 1965, 163. See also Parker Pearson, 1999, 32 for a similar criticism relating to the interpretation of mortuary remains in general). These examples are a demonstration of one of the ways in which the body has been approached in Nubian studies, but it is not only the physical body which has come under attack. The manifestations of culture associated with Nubian peoples have also been written about in a detrimental fashion. For example, Török described pottery of the Wadi Qitna Handmade ware, which he believed to have originated with the Noba as 'plebian' (1987a, 235-6).

2.3. Literary Evidence for the Blemmye and Nobadae.

It was George Reisner who first applied the term 'X-Group' to the unfamiliar grave types and burials that he discovered in the eleven graves at Gudhi in cemetery 15 (1910, 149-54). Reisner correctly believed that this newly identified cultural type belonged to a later period in Nubian history than the A and C-Groups, and so he chose the term 'X-Group' to denote a culture which

existed at the latter extent of Nubian history, fully expecting to eventually find the missing alphabetical cultural groups that he believed must have existed in-between the C-Group of the mid second millennium BC, and the X-Group of the post-Roman period. The existence of this newly discovered and mysterious cultural group in Lower Nubia, led to the desire to be able to identify this cultural manifestation with an historically attested people. Both classical and local sources exist regarding the various groups in Nubia at this time, although unfortunately, there is no native written source that describes the situation in any depth. The sources that do exist are sometimes fragmentary, and often written with some degree of bias. Numerous classical writers mention the existence of different peoples in Lower Nubia during this time period such as the Noba, Anouba, Blemmyes, Beja, Nobades, Nobatae and Nubae. The Aezana stela found at Meroe lists the Mangurto, Khasa, Barya, 'the blacks' and 'the red people' (Adams, 1977, 386). Furthermore, it has been possible to identify the names of towns and settlements given in the literary sources with some known archaeological sites. A list of sites was given by Juba in Pliny's *Natural History* written in the early first century AD, in which the sites of Beqe/Boqh and Amod (Meroitic) may be identified as Ballana and Qustul respectively (FHN, 1998, 805-808). Later in the same work Pliny describes Petronius' expedition to Nubia, stating that one of the towns that he conquered was Bocchis, or Ballana (FHN, 1998, 877-879). In Ptolemy's *Geography* of the second century AD the name Abuncis corresponds with Ballana, but Qustul was not mentioned (FHN, 1998, 927-930). In none of these cases is it stated that the towns are inhabited by the Blemmye or Nobadae, but as we shall see, this is perhaps due to changes in Lower Nubia subsequent to the writing of these documents. A brief outline of the details given by Classical authors concerning the Blemmye and Nobadae is presented below (the spellings given in specific translations are used throughout).

One of the earliest specific references to the Blemmyes and Noubai comes from Strabo's *Geography*, written in the early first century AD. Here it is stated that the Blemmyes and Noubai (and also the Troglodytes, Megabaroi and Aithiopians) live to the south of Syene (Aswan) as nomads (FHN, 1998, 828-

830). The fourth century AD stela detailing the activities of Aezana of Axum stated that Meroe island was inhabited by the Black Noba, with the Red Noba to the north. The mid to late third century AD saw some decline in Roman interests in Nubia, not least due to more pressing troubles in other areas of the Empire. According to Procopius, the Romans withdrew during the reign of Diocletian, and from AD 247 there is an almost total lack of inscriptions of any kind at Philae. Written accounts of the Blemmyes at this period indicate that they were involved in making repeated attacks on Roman Egypt. Blemmyes are named as captives after the victory of Aurelian in Nubia, but the Blemmyes managed to capture Coptos and Ptolemais, before being expelled subsequently in AD 274 by the army of Probus (FHN, 1998, 1065-1066). In AD 373 the Blemmyes attacked the Western Oases and Sinai. However, from AD 425-450, the Blemmye and Nobatae appear to join forces in their attacks on Egypt. Appion, Bishop of Syene, appeals to Theodosius II for protection against them (FHN, 1998, 1139-1140). The monk Shenute (AD 383-451) also complains about an extended six-month attack by the Blemmye and Nobatae on the town of Sohag (Vantini, 1970, 51). Epiphanius, writing in the late fourth century mentions that the Blemmye hold territory around Kalabsha as well as emerald mines. In his *Histories* Ammianus Marcellinus states that Lower Nubia is the 'land of the Blemmye' (Ammianus Marcellinus trans Rolfe, 1935, XIV. 4. 1-7). A further group, the Anouba, are recorded in the late fourth century *Historia Monarchum* which places them to the east and west of Aswan (Rose, 1992, 19). It was under Maximinus that decisive action against Blemmye and Nobatae raids was taken, the result of which was a peace treaty sealed at Philae in AD 453. The terms of the treaty forced the Blemmye and Nobatae to release Roman prisoners, return animals that had been captured, and pay compensation 'for those which had been eaten' (Priscus trans Blockley, 1983, 323). Furthermore, the Nubians were required to hand over royal children to the Romans as hostages. In return, the Blemmye and Nobatae would be permitted continued access to the Philae temples and the statue of Isis. This concession to the Nubian tribes is significant given the closure of pagan temples from AD 389, following the declaration of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in AD 312. However, this

treaty did not hold, and on the death of Maximinus, the hostages were rescued and raiding commenced once more. The final recorded raid into Egypt was a joint attack by both groups on Ombos, in response to the final closure of the Philae temples by Justinian between AD 535 and AD 538 (Priscus, trans Blockley, 1983, 323).

Olympiodorus was one of the few classical writers to have actually travelled into Nubia, to the area around the First Cataract. Olympiodorus apparently encountered the Blemmye king, and writes of the existence of *phylarchs* (this is a potential link to the description given in the inscription M194, see below), who might be interpreted as being tribal chiefs or royal princes tied to the ruler, but holding some degree of power over specific geographic areas (Olympiodorus, trans Blockley, 1983, 199). The occupied towns were Phoinikon (el-Laqeita), Khiris (unidentified), Thapis (Taifa), Talmis (Kalabsha) and Prima (Qirta) (Welsby, 2002, 16), although Qirta may aso be identified as Qasr Ibrim (Rose, 1992, 17).

According to the mid-sixth century account given by Procopius, Roman troops withdrew from Nubia to seven days journey beyond Elephantine due to the expense of maintaining the troops in an impoverished area. Diocletian then invited the Nobatae to move from their bases in the el-Kharga and el-Dakhla oases to settle the now unoccupied area of Lower Nubia. This arrangement could have benefited the Romans in two ways; by encouraging the end of raiding whilst also creating a buffer state between Egypt and the hostile forces further south. In showing favour to the Nobatae, and ensuring their loyalty by annual payments in gold, the Romans may have hoped to encourage enmity between the Blemmyes and Nobatae, thus turning their attention away from Roman territory towards each other. However sound this plan was, and however often it had succeeded in other areas of the Empire, Procopius reports that the annuity in gold continued to be paid even though the raids failed to cease (Procopius, trans Dewing, 1914, 187). Procopius' version of events was written approximately 250 years after these events allegedly took place, and may, therefore, be viewed as an attempt to legitimise the situation as it then existed in

mid sixth century Lower Nubia with historical details (Rose, 1992, 18; Welsby 2002, 19).

A number of inscriptions at Kalabsha are of great importance for the historiography of fourth to sixth century date. A fourth or fifth century inscription indicates the appointment of *klinarchs* and other cult officials by an un-named king. A *Comes* was apparently involved in settling a dispute between three pagan *klinarchs* at Kalabsha. The term *'comes'* is a link to the Roman world, and if a *comes* was involved in arbitration at Kalabsha which was under royal control, it may suggest that the ruler of Kalabsha was a Roman client (Rose, 1992, 22). The most famous textual piece is the Silko inscription on the façade of the Kalabsha temple written in Greek, wherein Silko is named as 'King, (*basiliskos*) of the Noubades and all the Ethiopians' (Adams, 1977, 422; Rose, 1992, 21). This inscription gives details of the campaigns of Silko and his victories over the Blemmyes from Prim (Qasr Ibrim) to Telelis (possibly Shellal) (ibid, 423). Olympiodorus recorded that he was taken by the tribal leaders and prophets of the Blemmye to Prima, the first city of the Thebaid saying 'even now it is so called although it, along with four other cities – Phoenico, Chiris, Thapis and Talmis has long been inhabited by the barbarians' (Olympiodorus trans Blockley, 1983, 199).Two further inscriptions on the Kalabsha temple wall give the names of two kings, Tamalas and Isemne. This Isemne may be identified with the Isamni of Meroitic inscription MI94 erected by king Kharamadoye regarding his victory over hostile peoples in Lower Nubia. The inscription states that Isamni instigated attacks against Kharamadoye from his territory between Pilqeye (Philae?) and Shimale (Ibrim?), and mentions the names of disputed areas, although only one, Faras (Kharamadoye's residence), is recognisable. This inscription seems to show a picture of a politically fragmented Lower Nubia, as eight kings of the area are mentioned, and Isamni apparently conquered five groups of people, though only the Nakhabar are specified. Rose argues that these events can be connected with the arrival of a new élite group (probably including Kharamadoye) in Lower Nubia during the early X-Group period, who were linked with Meroitic rulers and who were ultimately buried at Qustul (1992, 23-24).

A further literary source for the period is the Qasr Ibrim letter from King (*basileus*) Phonen of the Blemmye, to King (*basileus*) Abourni of the Nobataes concerning a war between Silko (Abourni's predecessor) and the Blemmyes. The letter states that Silko took land from the Blemmyes, despite the Blemmyes meeting his demands for camels, sheep and silver. King Phonen writes to Abourni to state that he has met his demands, and that Abourni should therefore leave his lands alone. In such a context, identifying oneself as either Blemmye or Nobadae must have been very significant. As this letter was discovered at Ibrim, it raises the question of whether it was received at Ibrim, therefore implying that the Nobatae held Ibrim at this point, or whether an archive was stored at Ibrim, of which this letter was part. Three other fifth century letters were also found that had been written in Coptic. One of these is addressed to Tantani, 'Phylarch of the nation of those who belong to the Nouba or the Anouba'. The recipients of these letters (one of whom was a Byzantine military officer) were all Christian (ibid, 24). We therefore have evidence for the existence of Blemmye and Nobadae kings.

The evidence may suggest that the Nobadae, and perhaps the Blemmye, were client rulers under the power of the Roman Empire based at Constantinople. Diplomatic relations are recorded between the imperial court and the two groups under the reign of Constantine and Constantius in the fourth century (FHN, 1998, 1079-1081). Then in AD524 Justin I was able to offer an army of Blemmye and Nobadae troops to the King of Axum (FHN, 1998, 1185-1188; Rose, 1992, 27).

2.4. Literary Evidence for the Blemmye and Nobadae: Possibilities of Socio-Political Organisation.

The literary evidence concerning Lower Nubia suggests a picture of war-like, belligerent tribes, attacking settled areas of Egypt without provocation. Even when peace was declared and treaties were ratified, the Blemmye and Nobadae betrayed their word as soon as it was advantageous. Furthermore, the Blemmyes have been seen as an artefact impoverished group who moved into

the artefact rich Nile valley (Welsby, 2002, 20). However, it is worth returning to those historical texts that mention the peoples of Nubia, in order to examine further details that were given regarding the manners and customs of the indigenous peoples, and that have been little reported by other researchers.

Writing in the first century AD describing the Ethiopians, Strabo stated that 'The Ethiopians at present lead for the most part a wandering life...[they] wander from place to place with their flocks...whether sheep, goats or oxon...Their largest royal seat is the city of Meroe...The inhabitants are nomads, partly hunters, partly husbandmen...The houses in the cities are formed by interweaving split pieces of palm wood or of bricks' (Budge, 1928, 158). Strabo describes the Nobadae as a large tribe living on the left bank of the Nile who were sub-divided into separate kingdoms. Strabo referred to them as 'nomads and brigands', a term which is later echoed by Ammianus Marcellinus who calls the Blemmyae a 'dangerous tribe' and states that all the members of the tribe are warriors (Ammianus Marcellinus trans Rolfe 1935, XIV. 4.3-7). However Pliny, writing in the last half of the first century AD states that the Nubians inhabit a town on the Nile called Tenupsis. Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the second half of the fourth century AD offers an account of the subsistence, social organisation, and even the appearance of the Blemmyae. The tribe is described as being nomadic, with no permanent base, nor any inclination towards agriculture. Instead the people are said to eat a large amount of game, plants and fowl and drink lots of milk. Their nomadic existence is aided by the possession of both horses and camels. The people themselves are apparently naked apart from the wearing of a dyed cloak worn down to the waist (Ammianus Marcellinus, trans Rolfe, 1935, XIV. 4. 3-7). The greek poetic account known as 'The Blemmyan War' dating from the end of the third century to the middle of the fifth century AD states that an unidentified victor named Germanus attacked the Blemmyes' tents and fences' (FHN, 1998, 1183-1184).

Procopius writes about the Blemyes and Nobatae in book seventeen of his *History of the Wars* which he wrote in his position as the historian to Justinian. Besides the account which Procopius gives of Justinian's invitation to the Nobadae to occupy Lower Nubia, he also relates details of the religious

beliefs of the Blemyes and Nobadae. He details the special position of Philae in the religious life of the Blemye and Nobadae. Procopius states that both groups worshipped the same gods as the Greeks but that they also worshipped Isis and Osiris, with a particular reverence for Priapus. Furthermore, Procopius records that the Blemye made human sacrifices to the sun (Procopius trans Dewing, 1914, 189).

It is still the case that these classical sources should be regarded with caution. However, it is very telling of the preoccupations of Nubiologists that the information offered by particular sources concerning the subsistence, dress or religious practice is rarely (if ever) discussed. Classical sources are used in order to provide particular types of evidence concerning the whereabouts of tribal groups, but information concerning social organisation is ignored. The attempt to equate the archaeological evidence with the historical record has been an overriding theme throughout the development of Nubian archaeology as a discipline (see for example Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, Emery, 1948, Rose, 1992, Török, 1987a). However, this has been done in a selective manner, with archaeologists often being more concerned about only particular types of information.

The historical sources should be viewed with more caution than they perhaps have been previously. In 1965 Adams argued against the continued reliance on these sources, and the attempt to identify material culture with either the Blemmye or the Nobadae as an argument that 'has simmered for years without leading to any fruitful results' (Adams, 1965, 161). Forty years later, I would argue that this is still a pertinent point. The attempt to 'prove' the existence and geographical location of either the Blemmye or the Nobadae via classical sources can be regarded with scepticism due to the lack of first hand knowledge of many of the writers, and due to the fact that it was rare for any of them to have visited the places or peoples that they discussed. The nomenclature 'Nobadae' and 'Blemmye' that recur in the sources have caused Nubiologists to endeavour to find these two tribes. Yet how fruitful is this enquiry? If we could truly pinpoint with certainty the location of either or both of these groups, would this bring us significantly closer to a better understanding of who the X-Group

were? Furthermore, the 'Blemmye', 'Nobadae' and 'X-Group' terms may mask a more complex socio-political situation in Nubia at this time.

2.5. Settlement Evidence and Construction in Lower Nubia.

The lack of settlement evidence in comparison to the abundance of mortuary evidence during all periods of Nubian ancient history remains an unfortunate problem in Nubian studies. This dearth restricts the ability of the archaeologist to reconstruct important aspects of subsistence and daily life in Nubia. Serious gaps in our knowledge of these aspects of the X-Group period still exist, although the situation in Lower Nubia is better than that which presently exists for Upper Nubia. However, the evidence for settlement and construction in Lower Nubia remains sparse in this period, and is restricted to a relatively small number of sites. It is to be hoped that the continuing excavations at Qasr Ibrim may provide more evidence of X-Group use.

The limited amount of settlement evidence has been traditionally explained by the difficulty of the barren landscape in Lower Nubia and the associated poverty of the land making it an inopportune area for habitation. The introduction of the *saqia* as an effective method of extracting water has been viewed as instrumental to the apparent re-settlement of Lower Nubia in the late Meroitic period, promoting what Adams describes as a 'land rush' (1977, 420). The *qadus* pots that were used on the *saqia* are widely found on archaeological sites of this period, including Qustul and Ballana. The use of the *saqia* enabled year-long irrigation and the introduction of new types of crop. At Qasr Ibrim in the late Meroitic period various types of sorghum and wheat, pearl millet, termis beans sesame and peas had appeared (Rowley-Conwy, 1989; Edwards, 2004, 203). Although the *saqia* and the introduction of new agricultural regimes in Lower Nubia made occupation more practicable and therefore more widespread than in previous periods, settlement remains are still quite limited not least due to the probable location of such sites in the flood plain. The elevation of the high dam has now permanently flooded many such sites.

No corresponding settlement site for the cemetery at Qustul has been discovered, but Rose believes that Gebel Adda and Faras may be possible locations (1992, 89), although Millet seemed doubtful that his finds could justify this hope at Gebel Adda (Millet, 1967, 58). A Meroitic period settlement at Ballana only yielded Meroitic finds, but the excavations were very hasty and further excavation may have produced material from the later period (Williams, 1991a, 458; 1991b, 291-293). The inscription on the Aezana stelae mentions that the people encountered by Aezana lived in towns of brick and towns of reeds (Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, 9), and the construction of dwellings from perishable materials that would be unlikely to survive through time should not be discounted (also see the details from other Classical authors in section 2.4 above).

The site of Meinarti at the second cataract, not far from Gammai, has evidence of occupation from the Meroitic through to the X-Group period. The stratigraphic evidence relating to the transitional Meroitic/X-Group, and 'true' X-Group level seem to point towards a possible hiatus in occupation. It is possible to interpret this alteration as part of a longer process of change at a site occupied for more than a thousand years (Adams, 1965, 163). During the X-Group levels, activity moves away from its former focus around the temple and wine press, to flimsier structures crowded together. The tight clusters of thin-walled rooms at Meinarti finds a parallel with the contemporary structures at Gezira Dabarosa (Hewes, 1964, 180-183; Adams, 2000, 99-100). A more substantial group of structures termed the *Weinstuben* were found at Sayala. Nineteen units constructed from dry stone walls set in mud and enclosing a central sunken court were found in six groups. Within the buildings and around the edge of the inner walls was a low bench with stone covered niches. In one case, a small, low, roofed chamber had also been built. The buildings included sculptural elements with designs of Bes and other faces which were not executed in a traditional Egyptian or Roman manner. The buildings also contained hearths and an abundance of ash, whilst artefactual finds included fragments of glass and bronze vessels, beads, mortars, animal bones and teeth and clay bells with clappers and handles. A large proportion of this material

seems to have been associated with eating and drinking and the rooms may have been used for dining or feasting. A *terminus post quem* date of AD408-450 was provided by a coin of Theodosius II found underneath the surface of the steps at the entrance. Parallels for the *Weinstuben* exist at other habitation sites, in particular the X-Group structures that were erected over earlier buildings of the Meroitic period in 'tavern street' at Qasr Ibrim. The buildings in this area show marked differences from previous periods. On both sides of the street the buildings had to be re-floored on several occasions due to the accumulation of debris within the structures. In some cases, refuse had built up to such a level both within the building and on the street that the original doorways in the buildings were rendered unusable. In order to counteract this problem, the occupants simply extended the properties upwards. The people at Qasr Ibrim during the X-Group period did not maintain the defences of the city, as layers of debris were found on top of them. Refuse found in structure X 5 included cups, bowls, goblets, wine amphorae and ash along with both an offering table and a libation table. Such finds are comparable with the *Weinstuben* (although X 5 lacks sculptural elements or furniture) and may suggest feasting, or perhaps a related ritual function (Rose, 1992, 150). The building also featured unusual 'roofed crypts' which were only accessible via a trapdoor. These small rooms contained organic material, ceramics, and sometimes a cat or dog skeleton. Some of the crypts also contained papyrus written in Meroitic, Greek and Coptic. The use and meaning of these crypts is unknown, and it is not clear whether they represent a primary or secondary deposition (ibid). Broadly comparable finds occur at Gebel Adda, where pits were dug into the surface under the Meroitic period temple floor and then roofed with poles and straw. Drinking cups and wine jars of typically X-Group fashion were found in these pits, again underlining the apparent importance of drinking in this social setting. The excavator even goes so far as to suggest, that these pits are enclosed 'clubhouses' for male drinkers (Millet, 1967, 58).

The reuse of previously defined sacred areas is also apparent at Qasr Ibrim during the X-Group period. Temple Six was erected during the sixth century BC and remained in use in the X-Group period. The stone sanctuary

contained glass and faience, stone statuary, Meroitic inscriptions and ceramics and small wooden plaques with drawings of animals on them. The floor of the sanctuary, the doorway and the floor of the inner hall had an oily residue and more pieces of glass and faience were discovered in it. In another temple, Temple 4, oily deposits were also found on areas of the temple floor containing coin deposits embedded in the oil. The coins date to the late second century AD and the late third to late fourth century AD. These are probably the remains of coin offerings and oil libations which are known from late Roman Egypt (Rose, 1992, 144), but it is clear, given the dates of the coins, that the practice persisted for some time afterwards. Shafts cut into the floor of Temple 1 may be Pharaonic in date but were reused by the X-Group according to the ceramic evidence that was found within. This evidence also dates the reuse to the late fourth century. The temple itself does not follow the plan of other temples in Lower Nubia, but its façade has similar proportions to other temples in the Dodecaschoinos. Rose suggests that the Blemmye were living at Qasr Ibrim at this point and may have constructed the temple as a funerary monument to a high-ranking person, in the Roman style (1992, 148). Whether or not this high-ranking person was then deposited in the reused shaft (number 1105), or whether the deposits therein were part of a ritual performed in that person's honour is not known.

2.6. Burial Evidence and Funerary Ritual: Substructures and Superstructures.

The evidence regarding the type and layout of both grave substructure and superstructure offers a variable picture of X-Group practice. The use of tumuli as grave markers has a very long tradition in the Sudan, and can be traced back to the A-Group (Welsby, 1996, 80; 100). The Kushite cemetery of Arminna West shows the reuse of graves, so that some burials of the X-Group period were found beneath pyramid tombs or mastabas. This situation was also the case at nearby Gebel Adda. It is debateable whether the interments at the site are those of a new cultural group, or whether they are the burials of relatives of the original occupants who had adopted a new cultural repertoire. Late Kushite

and X-Group burials excavated at Wadi Qitna were arranged in clusters, and these may represent family groups (Welsby, 2002, 46). A number of these tumuli were enclosed by mud brick walls with small corridors running in between the monuments, sometimes with small gateways. This is further evidence of the close relationship that the tumuli, and the people buried underneath them, had with one another.

Other tombs at Arminna West were topped with stone cairns, a practice that was also used in the region of Kalabsha, whilst other burials were placed in naturally occurring stone crevices (sometimes enlarged to hold the body) with heaps of rubble over the top. At Gamai, graves were often composed of a shaft cut into the earth, with a side-niche at the bottom. Such grave types were also excavated at Serra East (Säve-Söderbergh et al, 1981) and occur in the early phase at Qustul. Another grave type at Gamai comprised a stairway or ramp leading to a hollowed out chamber which might be divided into two chambers by a narrow wall. The layout and construction of many tombs at Gamai, along with the larger tombs at Kosha and Firka, indicate a relationship with later graves at Qustul, and those of the early period at Ballana. At these sites a ramp or stairway leads down to two or three rooms hollowed out from the alluvium often covered with a barrel vault, whilst at the surface, tumuli mark the graves. Whilst the earliest X-Group graves at Gamai lacked a superstructure, they had been positioned in close association with mounds that had been previously constructed. The tombs themselves were less complex than those at Qustul, but the majority had a comparable diameter to the smaller Qustul mounds. However mound E at Gamai was larger than any at Qustul, and is comparable to the largest at Ballana (Bates and Dunham, 73- 82, plate 54). For this reason, mound E is thought to be the latest in the cemetery (Rose, 1992, 101). Many other post-Meroitic cemeteries contain tumuli such as Firka, Kosha, es-Zuma and Hajar el-Beida. Further south, tumuli cemeteries also exist at Tanqasi and el-Hobagi. The el-Hobagi mounds date to the mid-fourth century (Welsby, 1996, 92), or to the very late fourth or early fifth century (Edwards, 2004, 191). The material culture (i.e. weaponry) from the graves suggests a strong martial element to the culture and some continuity with previous Meroitic practices (Lenoble et al, 1994).

Many of the cemeteries of the X-Group period show evidence of the use of grave markers whether in terms of cairns or tumuli of earth, but these monuments show differences in construction. Certain tumuli in cemetery C at Kalabsha south were made from heaps of stone over the stone chambers, whilst some of the tumuli in Cemetery B were encircled by an enclosure wall. However fourth and fifth century graves at Es-Shokan show no evidence of superstructures. The tumuli at Qustul and Ballana were covered with earth tumuli of varying sizes, but there was no evidence for the construction of external walls or the covering of the mounds with stones. The early X-Group interments at Gebel Adda re-used the Meroitic period pyramids that were still standing, though the majority of the burials at the site that dated to this period lay in unmarked pits. It is possible however, that the Gebel Adda burials may represent true X-Group burials and that the pyramids are therefore the latest pyramids in the Nile Valley (Welsby, 1996 92). Burials at Wadi Qitna, dating to between the third and fifth centuries AD were placed beneath stone slab superstructures of an almost circular shape, or under stone cairns both of which made use of the abundant stone in the area (Strouhal, 1984).

The final excavations of the Oriental Institute at Qustul and Ballana led to the discovery of further surface archaeological remains that are associated in some way with the burials, and which took three forms. Firstly, at Qustul, pits containing animal remains to the west of certain tumuli (namely QT03, QT04, QT10, QT26, QT36, QT54 and QT60) were discovered (these will be discussed below, in section 2.10 and in section 5.22 of chapter five). Secondly, rows of small buildings, perhaps single chambered chapels, were found to the north of some the tumuli. Fifty-one chapels were found with QT31, fifty-four with QT48, and fourteen with QT36. A single chapel was excavated to the north of QT56. The chapels were constructed in an east-west row and faced towards the south. The chapels were built in a single consecutive line and appear to have been constructed at intervals of time, because the orientation of the individual buildings varies very slightly. Further pits were discovered to the north of these chapels, and in the chapels at the western end of the line of construction small pedestals for libation tables were found. The chapels were mud-brick structures

with the door in the south end of the two or three meter wide building. They appear to have been unroofed, but it is possible that they had reed roofs which have not survived. In some cases doors to the chapels survived and in other cases their presence is indicated by lintels, door jambs and thresholds. Other associated elements included the remains of a small obelisk and a fragment of small sphinx. Two painted sandstone plaques were also recovered, along with bowls containing white and green pigments, which suggest that the chapels may have been decorated (Williams, 1991c, 26-27). The discovery of these chapels uncovered during the excavations by the Oriental Institute point to a possible continuity with earlier Kushitic funerary cult practices, however, at no other period in Sudanese history have such numbers of chapels been discovered. Thirdly, at Ballana, a large kidney shaped enclosure of mud brick was excavated, although its purpose remains obscure. The enclosure is positioned ninety metres to the east of BT80. The structure showed signs of repair, and so may have been in use for some length of time (Williams, 1991c, 27, pl 1, 404). These finds are very significant as they provide evidence of ritual practice within a wider cemetery landscape, and establishes that the tumuli should not be considered as isolated act of construction and interment but as aspects of a more varied type of cultic practice.

A possible parallel to these practices is found at el-Kurru in Tumulus 6 (generation B), which has a small mud-brick room attached to it on the east side. This room has been interpreted as a chapel. This tradition continues at el-Kurru (890-690BC) with chapels also being constructed from stone, and is still found in the superstructures at Meroe (Welsby, 1996, 100, 110), and was previously in existence at Kerma.

Burials dating to the fourth and fifth centuries AD in Lower Nubia are mostly of the pit and side-chamber type, with some use of a pit and end-chamber construction. Both types were in use during the Meroitic period, and indicate continuity between the Meroitic and X-Group periods. Edwards has argued that the pit and side-chamber form of grave construction became increasingly popular in Upper Nubia during the Meroitic period, which also emphasises continuity in building type, and provides a link between the centre of Meroitic

power in the south and Lower Nubia much further to the north (2004, 175). The substructures at Qustul are unique, as they are the only examples from this period of truly multi-chambered burial places. Superstructures were often constructed, and whilst the smallest constructions may have been of earth, stones, or a combination of the two, the larger tumuli seen at Gamai and Qustul were always earth constructions. The use of tumuli as grave markers is found throughout Nubia, but the possible construction of pyramids is confined to Gebel Adda and Qasr Ibrim, with the possible occurrence of a post-Meroitic pyramid at Soba East (Welsby and Davies, 2002, 2).

The practice of interment within side-chamber and end-chamber tombs continues in Lower Nubia into the later fifth and early sixth centuries, although certain cemeteries, such as Kalabsha, go out of use in this period. However, the large cemeteries, numbered 192 and 193 from Qasr Ibrim and the site at Ballana came into use. An apparent innovation was the use of small pits within the grave structure to receive the body. The Gebel Adda cemetery continued to receive burials under tumuli, but a new grave substructure appeared consisting of a narrow trench covered with stone slabs or a mud brick vault, for example, the burial of the 'blacksmith' (Millet, 1964, pl. 3, figure 8). The graves in Site 25 at Serra East were made up of a ramp or stairway descending to a pit with either a side or an end niche. The majority of the graves at Serra East are of the side niche type, although some of the graves consist of an irregular but vertical shaft with a trench cut into the floor to receive the body. Such graves are believed by the excavators to be late X-Group or early Christian (Säve-Söderbergh et al, 1981).

Some of the burials at Qustul and at Ballana had very large tumuli covering the substructure of the tombs, and it could be suggested that the size of the tumulus may be related to the most elaborate graves (see section 5.3 of chapter five). Pit and side-chamber tombs disappear from use at the sites, but many of the graves excavated by Farid may be a variation on the end-chamber tombs of earlier periods. These tombs usually consist of a ramp leading to a forecourt with a dividing wall that demarcates the chamber. This wall created two distinct areas of space, although both rooms have the same width, and

without the wall would be a single chamber positioned directly at the end of the ramp. The larger tomb substructures were usually built to include a ramp, forecourt and a number of rooms, often covered with a mud brick barrel vault. Ballana is the only cemetery of this period to exhibit multi-chambered substructures (Rose, 1992, 130).

2.7. Burial Evidence and Funerary Ritual: Interment and Grave Goods.

The orientation of bodies within tombs has been used as a possible indicator of ethnic grouping, and as a chronological indicator. Interments of the early Kushite period apparently tended to be crouched, whilst those of the later period were supine and extended, often oriented east-west. X-Group burials differed in being oriented north-south, whilst later east-west burials might indicate individuals who had converted to Christianity (Welsby, 2002, 40). However, this is a generalisation, which does not necessarily hold true and the interments at Qustul and Ballana for example, were arranged in a variety of physical positions and were orientated in different directions (see for example QT03. Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, figure 8). This is an aspect of practice at Qustul and Ballana that will be explored in chapter five (sections 5.9-5.15). The apparent reappearance of crouched burials during the X-Group period is also an over-generalisation, and the practice is not paramount at Qustul or Ballana. Crouched burial was also a minority practice in the X-Group graves at Faras West (Griffith, 1925, 72).

Throughout the X-Group period, the practice of interring the dead with grave goods is found. Fragments of textiles and leather, bead jewellery, metalwork, and pottery were all common depositions in the grave. Throughout Nubian studies, the pottery finds have been used to create a chronological framework given the relative scarcity of other chronological markers, such as coins. Only a single coin was excavated from Qustul, whilst one coin dating to the reign of Constantius II (AD 346-361) was discovered at Wadi Qitna (Rose, 1992, 50) and the single coin from the 1963-4 season at Gebel Adda dates to the reign of Theodosius I (AD 379-391). Other coin finds from Lower Nubia (in a

non-funerary context) occur at Qasr Ibrim, and were discussed above in section 2.5. The most recent and penetrating study of the Lower Nubian pottery was Rose's 1992 study that included the seriation of the pottery finds from the major archaeological sites of this period, including Ballana and Qustul (see for example figures A2.6, A2.8, A2.9 and A2.10). Ceramics of the late Meroitic period show a decline in the number of fineware vessels and a decrease in decoration. The assemblage that Rose terms 'Ptolemaic-Roman' contained many Aswani imports including lekythoi, amphorae, plates, jugs and shallow-footed bowls. This repertoire extended as far south as Qasr Ibrim, south of which it began to include 'Meroitic' elements such as inscriptions, pottery or pyramids. This distribution correlates with the (sometime) extent of Roman Egypt. Accordingly, it would seem that Lower Nubia had no indigenous ceramic tradition of its own during the late Meroitic period (Rose, 1992, 170). This absence may be due in part to the apparent lack of occupation in Lower Nubia during this period, given the harsh environmental conditions. The early X-Group ceramics exhibit a change in shape of jars and shallow footed bowls, and probably took their inspiration from the Ptolemaic-Roman assemblage. The Ptolemaic-Roman assemblage continued in northern Nubia even when early X-Group traits began to appear further south. The X-Group assemblage, including a new range of imported amphora from beyond Egypt, is found from Qasr Ibrim to Gammai, but also at Kosha and Firka. Rose sees this as the reassertion of Meroitic traits and indigenous culture. The pottery assemblage discovered at Ballana might be termed 'classic X-Group' although it also includes a more rare form of bottle. The finewares of this period are more akin to the Ptolemaic-Roman assemblage rather than the Meroitic, and certain Aswani forms that occurred in the Ptolemaic-Roman assemblage were also discovered in the Meroitic Extra-Dodecaschoinos. It would appear that the only widespread imported pottery at this point, are the lekythoi and small amphorae. On this evidence Rose states that the purported geographical correlation between the X-Group and the Dodecaschoinos based on ceramic evidence 'is spurious and must be discounted' (1992, 174). For an analysis and discussion of the pottery from

Qustul and Ballana, see sections 6.17 to 6.27 of chapter six. The pottery therefore seems to have diverse origins and parallels.

As mentioned, the most ubiquitous type of material culture in the tombs is pottery, and in some cases very large quantities were deposited. It would appear, from the spatial location of the pottery within certain tombs, that one of the rooms in the tomb could be used as a storage area. A large quantity of pottery found in BT121 for example, was almost all contained within Room 3. However, it may not have been just the pottery that was being deposited, but the contents of the pottery too. Other items were dispersed throughout the tomb (Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, figure 76).

Like the pottery much of the material from the tombs exhibit a range of influences – Pharaonic, Meroitic, Classical, Byzantine – in their decoration. This is another aspect of the assemblages of the royal tombs at Qustul and Ballana that make them stand out in comparison to other X-Group sites of the period, although small amounts of similar material were found at Gamai and Firka.

2.8. Burial Evidence and Funerary Ritual: Possibilities of Practice.

One of the most immediately striking facets of the interments at Ballana and Qustul is the inclusion of a variety of animals in the graves with human beings. These animals include dogs, cattle, donkeys, camels and horses in varying numbers. At Qustul, the excavations conducted by the OINE revealed pit burials in association with a number of tumuli that contained the remains of animals. These pits were found to the west of tumuli QT03, QT04, QT10, QT26, QT36, QT54 and QT60. The pits contained the assorted remains of various animals. For example, Pit Q5 associated with mound QT03 contained the dismembered remains of three camels that were only represented by their heads, and 58 horses' hooves, nine donkey hooves and nine other hooves. Goods within this pit included ceramics, bronze vessels, a knife, pendant, textiles, silver studs and wooden saddles (Williams, 1991c, 225). The remains in the other pits do not necessarily follow this pattern, Pit Q265, part of the QT36 complex, contained five complete horses. A parallel ritual may have been

enacted at Gammai, where two pits were discovered under mound J (an early tomb) containing dismembered horses and bronze bells. The ramp of mound Y (a late tomb) contained the remains of camel and horse bones with trappings. Again, this evidence points to a further parallel between Qustul and Gammai.

The appearance of such a variety of animals within the tumuli at both Qustul and Ballana is a striking feature of both the cemetery and of the rituals that were enacted at the site. The purpose and significance of the pit burials discovered by the OINE is unclear but it is certain that 'their role was as significant as that of the cavalcade within the tomb' (Rose, 1992, 90). Within the tombs themselves one or two dog skeletons discovered at the top of the ramps of certain tumuli, may have represented guard dogs to oversee and protect the entrance to the tomb. The discovery of a cow skeleton with an associated *qadus* has been interpreted by Kirwan (1938a, 391) as the inclusion in the grave of the draught animal that drove the *saqia* in order that it might resume this important role in the afterlife. However, the animal deposits within the tombs are not wholly uniform. Tomb 3 at Qustul for example was found to contain over forty dogs in Room 1, yet such a deposit was not found in any of the other tombs. It may be the case that the differential inclusion of animals in the burials was partly constrained by the strength and health of the herd or pack at the time of the burial. Personal choice may have also been very significant (this is a point that will be discussed further in section 7.6 of chapter seven). The vast majority of the cattle, horses and camels were mature animals when they were killed, indicating that, at a practical level, the younger animals were spared as they were potentially more productive beasts. The inclusion of the animals themselves within the burial rituals is obviously significant. The actual execution of the animals was particularly violent, as the majority of them showed signs that their skulls had been smashed in. In a particularly striking example, a horse C in tomb QT02 was found with large hole in the skull in which the blade of an axe from the tomb fitted perfectly (el-Batrawi, 1935, 138; plate 5 figure 7).

There is also an obvious difference between the manner in which the animals were killed, and the way in which the humans may have been executed.

The original excavators believed that the tombs contained a main interment (the ruler) who had died, and that the other human remains represented executed slaves or retainers. This is an interpretation that has also been suggested by Lenoble (1996). The evidence upon which this possibility is based, is that the burials in the grave occur as a single deposition. The graves were not re-opened for subsequent burials, the people, animals and artefacts were all interred at once. Furthermore, two female bodies that were recovered show signs of a violent death. In tomb 14 at Qustul a well-preserved and fleshed female was found with a gaping wound on the left side of the neck, that was formed by a cut that was so deep that it reached the fourth cervical vertebra. The vertebra and the edges of the wound had remains of barley, seeds and sand adhering to them. The barley and seed husks were also present in the stomach, and it seems likely that the woman vomited after the cut was made. The sand on the tissues and vertebra occur from the pit into which she was placed. These aspects confirm that the wound was not a post-mortem occurrence, but was likely to be the cause of death (el-Batrawi, 1935, 149). A further well preserved female body, around twelve years of age, was found in the plunderers passage of tomb thirty-six from Qustul. The girl's neck was dislocated at the atlas bone, and the hyoid bone was displaced, by the head having been forcefully twisted to the left to such an extent that all of the ligaments in the area except one, were torn. As the body was discovered in the plunderers passage, it is possible that this damage occurred some time after death, if the body was perhaps dragged into the passage by the head. However, the girls hands were preserved in a clawing action (extended carpo-phalangeal joints, but flexed interphalangeal joints), which could be a further indicator of a sudden and violent death (el-Batrawi, 1935, 159). The other human remains at both Ballana and Qustul do not show any signs of peri-mortem trauma (except a male buried in tomb six at Qustul showing trauma to the ninth and tenth vertebrae which may have been caused by a stab from a spear) (el-Batrawi, 1935, 146). This is an obvious contrast with the smashed skulls of many of the animals, and given the conditions of death of the fleshed bodies, and the fact that trauma was not found in the other human remains, it seems reasonable to suggest that if the people were killed it was

probably by a flesh wound or with poison. In this case, the slitting of the throat is likely to have been the quickest, cleanest and most effective method of execution. Both the poleaxing of the animals and the throat cutting of the humans suggests that there was a large amount of blood letting involved in the burial rites. Other possible means of death are strangulation or poisoning.

There are other pieces of evidence to suggest a history of human sacrifice in Nubia. A parallel can be drawn with the human remains in the tumuli graves at Kerma (see for example Adams, 1977, 409). Many of the tumuli graves at Kerma contained large numbers of human bodies, sometimes in what the excavator termed 'sacrificial corridors' (for example Reisner, 1923a, pl. XVI), however at Kerma, the suggestion that the people were buried alive was the preferred interpretation. As at Qustul and Ballana, the remains were interred in a single deposition but the attitudes and postures that the skeletons exhibited suggested the possibility of suffocation. Bodies were often crouched, with the hands covering the face, or grasping at the throat (Reisner, 1923a, 66). Diodorus Siculus recorded that during the Meroitic period, the priests at Meroe had the power to proclaim when the king should die, and that ritual regicide was practiced according to their divinely inspired proclamations (Diodorus, trans Oldfather, III. 6. 1-4. Welsby, 1996, 32). There is also evidence of multiple burials in the northern cemetery at Meroe, which may be interpreted as sacrifices. Sixteen tombs in the northern and western cemeteries included supplementary, contemporaneous burials. Lenoble has argued that these burials were not human sacrifices, but that the bodies represent the ritual execution of prisoners (Lenoble, 1996).

The discovery of the animal pits and chapels at Qustul are evidence that the ritual acts inside the tumuli were complemented by activities outside the tombs.

2.9. Two Tribes? An Alternative Perspective.

When tracing the writing of Nubian archaeology from the earliest formal expeditions and excavations, to more recent assessments and syntheses of the

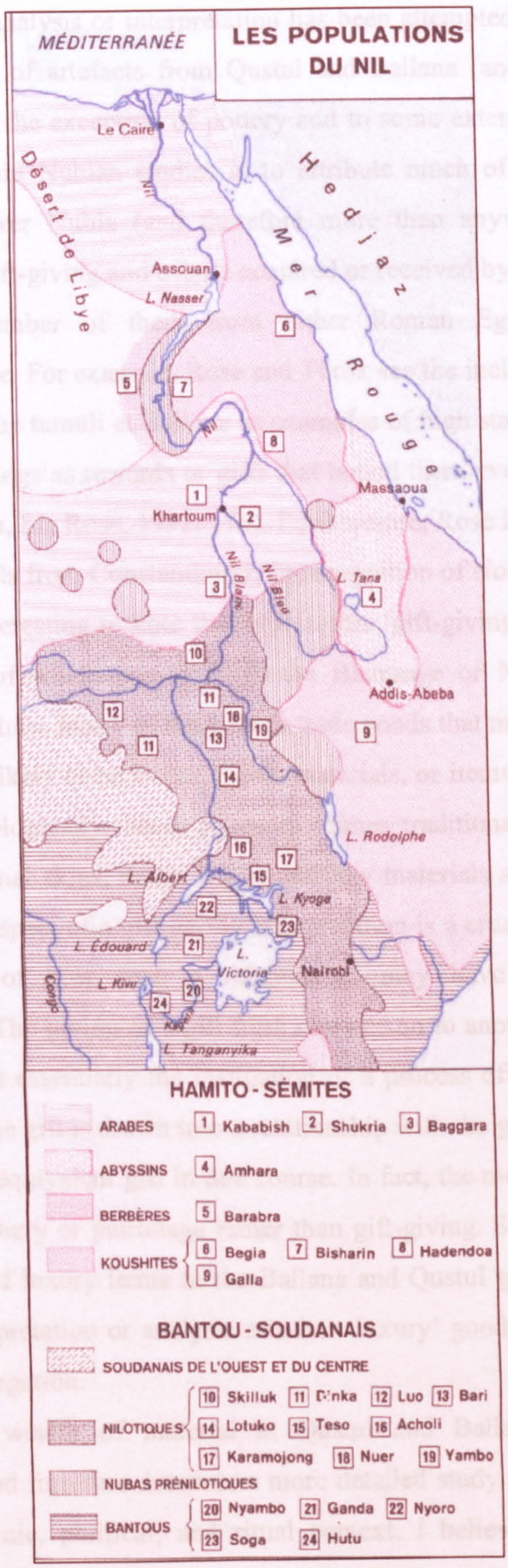
historical literature and the archaeological remains (which permits a more holistic discussion), certain trends seem clear.

The major item of material culture that has been the centre of intellectual activity for the X-Group period has been pottery (see Adams1986a and 1986b, Rose, 1992), and textiles, although the latter have been analysed in different ways and for different ends (see chapters six and seven for a detailed analysis of the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana). As discussed above, this has largely been due to the need to create a relative chronological scheme using a relatively ubiquitous artefact, on which to hang the rest of the archaeological evidence. It has also been used in an attempt to credit or discredit the classical sources that named the groups of people that were apparently to be found in Nubia in the first few centuries AD. In this manner, certain authors have tried to equate the artefactual evidence (in particular the pottery) with one or other of the peoples attested in classical literature. However, it has becoming increasingly clear that the neat picture of two tribes, the Blemmye and Nobadae, occupying two distinct areas of Lower Nubia, each with their own discrete set of material culture does not fit the archaeological evidence.

Figure one below, is a map pertaining to a modern vision of the geographical locations of certain ethnic and tribal groups in Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia. The well-defined pockets of 'nubas prénilotiques' peoples live within the larger areas defined as areas inhabited by 'arabes'. At an area to the east of the Atbara river there is a point at which the locations inhabited by 'nubas prénilotique', 'abyssins', 'koushites' and 'arabes' meet. It is interesting to note the number of different tribal groups that have been identified (24). A large number of groups and tribal peoples have been identified even though Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia would normally be recognised as three politically distinct countries with internationally agreed borders. This map illustrates that even in a modern world where concepts of nation state are well-established, the real picture of ethnic diversity, versions of geographical ownership that are contrary to the dominant discourse, and internal perceptions of belonging, are far more complex than they might at first appear to be. This is a point which is very pertinent to discussions concerning the tribal peoples of the Sudan in the X-

Group period, and our reliance on Classical sources (see section 4.6 of chapter four for a further discussion concerning the interacting notions of cultures, peoples and identities).

Figure .2.2
Ferrieri et al, 1978, 113



Little analysis or interpretation has been attempted with regard to many of the classes of artefacts from Qustul and Ballana (and in Lower Nubia in general), with the exception of pottery and to some extent textiles. The overall tendency within Nubian studies is to attribute much of the 'exotic' material found in Lower Nubia (and therefore more than anywhere, at Qustul and Ballana), to gift-giving and tribute acquired or received by the Nubian people, or a limited number of them from either Roman Egypt or the court at Constantinople. For example, Rose and Török see the inclusion of folding chairs in certain of the tumuli at Ballana as examples of high status objects awarded to the Ballana kings as rewards or gifts that bound them ever closer to the Empire (Török, 1987a, 81; Rose, 1992, 176). Furthermore, Rose interprets the crowns at Ballana as gifts from Constantinople in recognition of Nobadian kingship (1992, 176). It is interesting to note that within this 'gift-giving' scenario, there is no explanation of which commodities the Blemmye or Nobadae gave to their contacts in return. Many of the gifts or trade goods that may have come from the Sudan were likely to be of perishable materials, or items that would leave little trace archaeologically. Since Pharaonic times traditional trade items included feathers, animal skins, dates, slaves and raw materials such as ivory, gold and wood. This aspect of a gift-giving interpretation is a crucial point in offering an explanation of how such a relationship may have been developed and maintained. The giving of a gift from one person to another, or from one group to another, is essentially the instigation of a process of obligation wherein the receiver of the gift is drawn into a relationship with the giver that obligates them to return an equivalent gift in due course. In fact, the model that Rose proposes is one of bribery or patronage rather than gift-giving. Such explanations of the occurrence of luxury items in the Ballana and Qustul graves, coupled with the lack of interpretation or analysis of other 'luxury' goods from the sites deserve closer interrogation.

The wealth of material at Qustul and Ballana such as jewellery, weaponry and furniture deserves a more detailed study as an aspect of the local socio-economic, political, and ritual context. I believe that it is possible to suggest that the lack of investigation of such items is perhaps part of a broader

disinclination to recognise complex or developed technology due to the relative lack of settlement sites in Lower Nubia in this period. The settlement evidence for Lower Nubia is sparse, and the archaeological remains that have been recovered are of a different nature to those of the 'major civilisations' in the area. It remains true that the archaeological evidence for settlement structures of the Dynastic period in Egypt, or the Meroitic period in Nubia is also disproportionately small when compared with the mortuary remains of those periods. However, the presence of other types of complex architecture seen in tomb, temple, fort and palace construction nevertheless provides an impression of a multi-dimensional society with sophisticated forms of organised religion, bureaucracy and labour management as the means of social organisation and control. Accordingly, these grand expressions of cultural erudition are not difficult to understand as the manifestations of intricately acculturated peoples. The modest rock shelters at Serra East of the X-Group period and the re-use of buildings at Qasr Ibrim that were filled with dirt and domestic debris offers a stark contrast to those other eras. One interpretation of this situation is that the Blemmye and Nobadae whose remains we may see at such sites, were nomadic (or semi-nomadic) peoples as suggested by Procopius, who were encouraged to settle in the Lower Nubian Valley. However, as these groups were used to a nomadic lifestyle interspersed with the raiding of settled village populations, they were perhaps unaccustomed to a sedentary lifestyle. In effect, this may have meant that their attempts to build shelters and to occupy them continuously were not particularly well developed and perhaps correspondingly, not well-preserved. However, such a model is filled with the notion that a sedentary settled lifestyle is necessary for complexity of social life and material culture. In this manner, concepts of 'value' and complexity are linked into an evolutionary interpretative perspective which implies (but does not acknowledge), that without settled (= complex) society (within which are found systems of writing, bureaucracy, formalised ritual, the practice of cultivation and so on), the unsettled Lower Nubian X-Group were incapable of producing such goods as metalwork or decorative art. When such artefacts have been discovered they are always therefore interpreted as the products of 'complex' societies, the objects

only being obtained by the X-Group as gifts, bribes or as the products of external patronage for an Egyptocentric approach to Sudanese material see Reisner, 1923a, 94). There has been almost no consideration of these artefacts as the possible products of indigenous craftspeople, or as part of a trading network. There is a sliding scale of interpretative links between the potential for producing complex, exotic or unusual artefacts and the proposed necessity for such things to be produced within a complex 'civilization' with all the attendant implications of the term. The sophisticated object, usually made from precious materials, has come to stand for sophisticated society, the one not only implies the other, but it could not exist without it. These are discussions to which we will return in sections 4.3 and 4.6 of chapter four and 6.3 and 6.4 of chapter six.

That an evolutionary perspective underpins the writing of Nubian archaeology, is particularly apparent once we acknowledge that the most in-depth and detailed works on this period (namely Adams' 1977 classic work '*Nubia. Corridor to Africa*' and Rose's 1992 doctoral work) have continued to assert that the rise of the rulers at Qustul and Ballana should be interpreted as the arrival of a new élite, probably from the south (Adams, 1965, 167; Adams, 1977, 422; Rose, 1992, 111).

2.10. Meroitic Antecedents at Qustul and Ballana?

The nature of the relationship of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries with Meroitic culture of the preceding period remains an unresolved question. In his attempt to re-frame the X-Group debate from one that was concerned with the Blemmye and the Nobadae, Adams argued that 'since evolution rather than revolution is the normal process in cultural development, we must accept as a 'null hypothesis' the idea that the X-Group culture was a direct outgrowth of the Meroïtic' (Adams, 1965, 163). As the sites that form the basis for this study are cemeteries, the question of the survival or influence of Meroitic culture rests largely on questions of religious or ritual practice. The complex material culture found within the graves has also been discussed not simply in terms of Meroitic (or Kushitic) influence, but also in terms of Meroitic or Kushitic origin. What

makes the question more debateable is the apparent lack of a transitional period of development between the cultural forms of the Meroitic states and those that are present at Qustul and Ballana (see comments in Williams, 1991a, 1; 14). Tumuli burials are little attested during the Meroitic period, although the use of tumuli could be regarded as a variation on the pyramid theme in that it is still the use of a large, elevated monument to mark the grave. Emery and Kirwan regarded the use of the tumulus as the direct descendant of the Meroitic pyramid (1938a, 26). In fact the tradition of tumulus burial is earlier than the pyramid and stretches far back into the mortuary practices of the Sudan (Welsby, 1996, 100). Tumuli were found at the Kushite period cemetery at Kawa (Welsby and Davies, 2002, 25). The tumuli over the burials at Qustul and Ballana, plus the tradition of bed burials, and the inclusion of human and animal sacrifices leads to an obvious parallel with the much earlier burials at Kerma (see Reisner, 1923a and 1923b). Such features are also found in both the Napatan and Meroitic periods (Welsby, 1996, 81-82). Bed burials occur in the middle necropolis (tombs M 300-399) at Meroe (Török, 1987a, 266). The royal cemeteries at Meroe were sometimes multiple burials that have been interpreted as human sacrifices. Sixteen tombs in the north and west cemeteries at Meroe contained additional burials. Five such burials were in the tomb of a king, one in that of a queen, and one in that of a prince. Others were in tombs where the status of the owner was uncertain (Welsby, 1996, 89; but see also Lenoble 1996). Animal sacrifices also occurred at Meroe and at el-Kurru, and have been interpreted by Lenoble as an important aspect of Nubian kingship ideology that at Qustul and Ballana maintained a connection to the royal burials at Meroe (Lenoble, 1994, 121-122).

The construction of mortuary chapels, such as those found at Qustul by the OINE expedition also have earlier precedents, and indeed offering chapels can be traced back through Egyptian history to the Old Kingdom. Offering chapels occurred at Meroe, but differ from those at Qustul, as the chapels at Meroe physically abutted the tombs or pyramids (Welsby, 1996, 88). The chapels at Qustul are more closely paralleled by those at Kerma. It is not clear

whether this tradition continued at Ballana, although work around the enclosure that the OINE discovered did not recover any such structures.

Of further interest are the spatial associations between Meroitic and X-Group burials. Both of the X-Group cemeteries at Gamai and Qustul were constructed at previous Meroitic cemeteries, but care was taken not to destroy previous interments (Adams, 1965, 166). Meroitic pyramids were reused during the X-Group period at Wadi Qitna and at Gebel Adda. This suggests that the X-Group peoples conducting these burials were not at all offended by other rituals or belief systems. These practices may be interpreted as evidence of continuity between the Meroitic and X-Group periods, but closer dating of the sites has made this hypothesis less tenable. At the site of Abri, there was a hiatus of over two centuries between the two phases, and at Qustul, the period of abandonment may have been approximately 100 years between the end of Meroitic use and the commencement of X-Group activity (Edwards, 2004, 202). However, there is evidence suggesting the apparent destruction or re-use of sacred areas at Gebel Adda and Qasr Ibrim. At Meinarti at the beginning of the X-Group period, a Meroitic building, perhaps a store room or temple was also destroyed (Adams, 1965, 164). Further evidence of such destruction is found further south at Dangeil and Meroe, but the dating of these events is not secure (Edwards, 2004, 187). This evidence points either to an indifference towards previous ritual sites that were not considered to be in any way sacred, or perhaps to iconoclastic acts, but also to a continuity of activity at such sites.

The relationship between the Meroitic period and the X-Group period and their corresponding cultural traits is not a central aspect to the research presented here. However, a detailed analysis of the material from Qustul and Ballana, and a reinterpretation of the sites certainly has value in terms of a more thorough understanding of the activities at Qustul and Ballana. By implication, this resonates with the question of Meroitic-X-Group continuity or change. Therefore, although an investigation of this matter is not a central research aim, it is a point to which we will briefly return in chapter eight.

2.11. The Chronology of the Tombs at Qustul and Ballana.

At the discovery of a new archaeological site, perhaps the first concern of the excavators is to deduce the chronological limits of the site. At Ballana and Qustul, the cemeteries were in use for too short a period for any absolute dating method to provide meaningful results. The chronologies of the sites are therefore relative chronologies – the information being largely derived from the pottery repertoire (Rose, 1992, appendix 2). The comparison of grave construction has been a further chronological tool, as have the few coin finds from Lower Nubia, the majority of which come from Qasr Ibrim (see above). The only piece of direct dating evidence from either Ballana or Qustul is a coin of the Emperor Valens (AD364-378) found at Qustul in tomb 14. A cameo from tomb 3 at Qustul dates to no earlier than AD350 (Török, 1987a, 78; Rose, 1992, 93). Finally the dice box from QT03 is comparable to that found in a manuscript dated to AD354 (Török, 1987a, 79). The evidence from the cemeteries at Ballana and Qustul indicates that the two sites were not contemporary, but were broadly successive. The reason for this geographical move between the cemeteries is unknown, but the graves at Ballana exhibit certain differences from the earlier ones at Qustul. The actual cultural relationship between Qustul and Ballana, and why the move from Qustul to Ballana took place is a central part of this research.

2.11.i. Chronology: Török 1987a.

Török's work on the chronology of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries is highly detailed and extensive. His explicit aim was to establish a coherent, tightly dated chronology of the cemeteries. Furthermore, he attempted to identify social hierarchies at the cemeteries by classifying tombs as 'royal', 'princely' or 'other'. The major index of a royal burial was the presence of a crown, but other factors were deemed suitable to elevate a burial into the royal category, namely the number of sacrificial retainers and animals, spears, swords, archers' finger looses, bracelets with lion heads and folding chairs. Török

ultimately identifies four royal generations at Qustul, and seven at Ballana (1987a, 81). The first aspect of Török's chronology is the classification of the tomb layouts into six major types (labelled A to F with various sub-types) and a minor type labelled Z. In the discussion that follows, when the orientation of a body is included, the direction of the head is represented by the first compass point, as is common practice when discussing mortuary remains.

Type A is the pit-grave with a lateral niche divided from the pit (as a forecourt) by a mud-brick wall. The lateral niche is orientated North-South, and therefore the body is orientated either the same way, or South-North. In type A/C, the tomb was orientated East-West, and the bodies contained therein were orientated the same way. Török only uses local North in his scheme.

Type B only occurs in QT03, the only tomb constructed from burnt brick on sandstone lower courses. A ramp leads to the forecourt, and the tomb is orientated West-East, with bodies orientated East-West. Side-chambers are accessed from the forecourt and contain animals and retainers (*cf* the layout of tombs at Firka).

Type C is a long-lasting tomb type, and connects Qustul with Ballana. Rooms are orientated perpendicularly to the ramp. The magazine of royal tombs of this type is in a separate pit connected to the burial chamber by a vaulted passage. The burial chamber, magazine and 'tomb owner' are all orientated East-West.

Type D occurs in three phases of the cemetery at Ballana, and the characteristic aspect of this tomb type is the burial of the owner in a pit. The latter tomb type C/4 and tomb types D/1 and D/2 during phase 3b are the first instances of the broken axis layout.

This is also the case in type E.

Tomb type F is characterised by one or two chambers with a perpendicular magazine to the right of the burial chamber.

Tombs of type Z were considered to belong to aristocratic persons, and their date was only assigned by their orientation and the grave goods that they contained (Török, 1987a, 82-89).

Phase	Royal Generation	Type of Royal Tomb	Type of Princes' Tomb	Type of Other Tombs	Approx date A.D.
Ia			A/1 QT14	*A* Q6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15	c.380
Ib	1	*B* Q3		*A/C* Q22	380/90
IIa	2	*C* Q17	*C* Q24, 25 *C/1* Q31		390/400
IIb	3	*C* Q36		*C/2* Q26	400/10
IIIa	4	*C/3* Q2		*Z/1* Q48	410/20
IIIb	5	*C/4* B80	*D/2* B2, 6 *D/1* B90	*Z/1* B49	420/30
IV	6	*E* B47		*Z/2* B53 *Z2/A* B51	430/40
IVa			*D/3* B9	52, 54, 63 *F/4* B84	430/40
Va	7	*D/3* B37	*D/4* B4	*Z/4* B24, 44 *Z/3* B5, *F* B5	440/50
Vb			*D/F* B10	B18, 27, 60, 70 *Z/3A* B28, 1, 13, 14, 22, 31 *F/2* 21, 48 *F/1A* 68	440/50
VIa	8	*F/1* B3			450/60
VIb			*F/3* B73	*F/2A* B72	460/70
VIIa	9	*C/5* B95	*C/5* B121, 122	B76	470/80
VIIb	10	*C/5* B114	*C/5* B111		480/90
VIIc	11	*C/5* B118		*F/2A* B110	490/500

Figure 2.3 (after Török, 1987a, 154).

Further to his development of a typology of tomb layout, Török presents a very thorough study of the grave goods from the tombs in order to build what he terms an 'absolute chronology' (Török, 1987a, 93). Török begins this study from the position that most of the datable objects come from Egypt. In order to date what he considers to be the Egyptian artefacts, Török compares these objects with other finds from the Mediterranean in general, as artefacts from Egypt of the Late Antique period tend to come from poorly stratified excavations with correspondingly inadequate typologies. His approach is therefore explicitly art historical. Török discusses the artefactual finds from each tomb, and suggests parallels for the form or decoration of many of the objects.

He also uses objects that he believes to be imported, namely silver animal trappings, jewellery, plate and church furniture; bronze vessels, burners and lamps; glass and alabaster vessels and African red slip ware to provide further dates via parallels from other countries.

Finally, the crowns from Ballana were used as another form of dating evidence (see figure four below).

No.	Provenance	Owner	Type	Matrix	Stones	Generation
1	BT80	King	Diadem+ Crest+ Uraei	Horus, frieze A large beads	Garnet Carnelian	5
2	BT80	Retainer Queen	Circlet	Pharaoh Offering		5
3	BT47	Queen	Circlet+ 3 crests	Goddess	Carnelian	6
4	BT06	Prince	Circlet	Goddess large beads	Carnelian	5
6	BT95	Retainer Queen	Circlet	Goddess large beads, frieze B		9
7	BT10	Prince	Circlet+ Cobras en face	Goddess large beads, frieze B		7-8
9	BT114	Retainer Queen	Circlet	Goddess Large beads, frieze B		10
5	BT95	King	Circlet+ Crest	King en face, frieze A	Garnet Carnelian Beryl	9
8	BT114	King	Circlet+ Crest	King en face frieze A	Beryl Carnelian Glass	10
10	BT118	Queen	Circlet+ Winged uraei	Uadjet eye	Carnelian Glass	11
11	BT51	Lesser Queen?	Circlet	Rosettes		6
12	BT04	Prince	?	?	Carnelian (and?)	7

13	BT37	King	?	?	Carnelian (and?)	7

Figure 2.4 (after Török, 1987a, 171).

Török draws parallels from representations of the Meroitic period ranging from the second century BC to the second half of the second century AD. Particular aspects of the crowns, such as uraei and Amun plumes provide links to aspects of Egyptian and Meroitic religious iconography. Török's hierarchical designations are also based upon particular designs in the crowns. Crown 11 is believed to have belonged to a lesser queen as it is the most simple crown and has parallels with early Meroitic female crown types (Török, 1987b, 28-29). Crowns 3 and 10, having been discovered in richly furnished tombs, are believed to have belonged to ruling queens. The crowns of retainer queens are separated from those of other classes as they do not contain semi-precious stones. Török concludes that the same matrices were used to manufacture the various crowns of the fifth to the tenth generations. On the basis of the use of Egyptianizing designs, Török concludes that the crowns were from Egypt (or were at least manufactured by Egyptian craftspeople) and that the same workshop also produced silver saddle fittings and sword scabbards found in the tombs (Török, 1987a, 172-175).

Chronology: Williams, 1991c.

During the OINE's excavations at Qustul, new material was excavated from the cemeteries, but of particular note was the discovery of pits containing animal burials and chapels associated with certain tumuli. This evidence was unknown to Török at the time that he constructed his chronology. Equally, Török's chronology was unpublished at the time when the OINE evidence was being interrogated in an effort to construct a chronology. Therefore, the two projects were conducted independently (of the others findings). The OINE chronology is based on a less comprehensive study than that of Török, and is based upon the substructures of the large tombs, changes in the pottery

repertoire and the development of the cemetery at Qustul as a whole (Williams, 1991c, 5).

The discoveries of tomb complexes at Qustul by the Oriental Institute Expedition represented a new source of evidence concerning ritual practice at the cemetery, and they provided the basis for the broad chronology. The first instance of a ritual deposit outside the tomb was the deposition of mud cups outside QT14. Over 50 basic chapels were discovered to the north of QT31, with rows of other, increasingly complex chapels occurring to the north of QT48 and QT36. On this basis, these four tombs were deemed to be successive. The excavators and author of the site report did not attempt to find princely burials in the way that Török did, but it was argued that QT31 and QT48 should be classified as royal tombs due to the row of chapels associated with each of them. Although both tombs lacked wealth in terms of grave goods, and QT48 was comparatively small and unelaborated in structure, this has been viewed as a skewing of the true wealth of the burials due to plundering, and the hasty construction of QT48 (Williams, 1991c, 5).

The development of the tomb substructures was plotted following the broad chronological markers evidenced by the tomb complexes. The mapping of the architectural development correlated well with Török's classification of six major substructure types. The only significant difference was with the placement of BT80, which Török placed in phase 3b, the fifth royal generation (420-430AD) (Török, 1987, 154), but that Williams places in the final sequence of burials at Ballana based on the position of the additional chambers in the tomb (1991c, 5).

Key no.	Török Type	Török Plate	Phasing	Remarks & Tombs
			I	Qustul stages (Török phases 1a-3a)
1			A	Shaft entered from E. with large transv. rectangular pit.
	A	4	1	Structure only a wall QT14
	B	4	2	Construction within a pit with 2 small subsid. chambers[a]. QT03
2			B	Shaft entered from E. with longitudinal pit, axis recurved to N. 2 well-defined chambers

				to N. cb. Lined
	C/3	6	1	Separate corridor to n-e chamber QT02
	C[b]	5	2	N. chamber linked to bent axis QT17
	C	5	3	As 2, but with bed pit QT31 & QT36
	Z/1	6	4	Unfinished QT48
			II	
3	D/1-4	7	A	Axial approach to chamber, indirect to subsid. chambers. Burial pit virtually a chamber, partition partly cut. BT02 (indirect axis) BT04, BT09 (indirect axis), BT06, BT90.
4	E[c]	8	B	Indirect axis, partitions BT47, BT10, BT37 (transitional to IIIA)
			III	Corridor bent or straight, but burial and chamber two are axial (Phases VI-VII)
5	F	9	A	Storage jar chamber transverse to left beyond burial at slight angle BT03, BT48, BT68, BT73
			B	
6	C/5	10	1	Outer burial chamber, inner transv. chamber, longitudinal side chamber parallel BT95, BT114, BT118, BT121
7	C/4-5	6, 10	2	Side chamber(s) long, one double BT80, BT111, BT122.

a. See Meroitic antecedent at Karanog (Woolley and Randall-MacIver, 1910. figs A-B).
b. C/1, C.
c. E, D/F, D/3.
Figure 2.5 (after Williams, 1991c, 10).

Despite their focus on slightly different considerations, and the fact that their research was conducted independently, the two chronologies are remarkably similar with regard to Qustul. In fact 'Only the status of Qu. 31 and Qu. 48, which are considered royal here, and the date of Ba. 80, which is considered late here, are at issue, but neither change overturns Török's outline of X-Group tomb typology or chronology. Other differences of detail that might be construed are herein held insignificant' (Williams, 1991c, 5). The chronology adopted for the OINE volume is therefore that advanced by Török.

Chronology: Rose, 1992.

Rose's work on the post-Roman period in Lower Nubia is not an explicit attempt to construct a chronology, or refine the existing one (Rose, 1992, 196).

However, Rose did undertake a study of the pottery using seriation. Pottery was seriated using both the metric data from shallow footed bowls and goblets, and a typology encompassing all ceramics from the sites in the study (Rose, 1992, 191). Using metric data from the height and diameter measurements of shallow footed bowls and goblets, Rose was able to establish firmly that the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries overlapped in date (*contra* Trigger, 1969, 125; Török, 1987a, 76; Rose, 1992, 94), and that the vessels were similar in Egypt and in the Dodecaschoinos. Sites dating to the earlier phase included Sayala, Wadi Qitna, the élite graves at Qustul and Gammai. The subsequent sites in the seriation, including Ballana, exhibited variations. A seriation of the Qustul and Ballana elite graves was attempted, but was unsuccessful due to insufficient amounts of pottery in the graves, for the type of seriation conducted to be meaningful (Rose, 1992, 192). A seriation based upon ceramic types (their form and fabric) was also undertaken. In investigating the data from Qustul, Rose utilised both the data from the first excavations by Emery and Kirwan, and the later finds by the OINE. Seriation indicated that the élite graves and the smaller graves were contemporaneous, and that the burials took place over a short period of time. Furthermore, the seriation revealed that the élite graves at Qustul were contemporaneous with Kosha and cemetery A at Firka. The Firka cemetery also slightly overlapped with the early graves at Ballana. Interestingly, the cemetery at Qustul continued in use during the period that the élite burials were taking place at Ballana (Rose, 1992, 197). At Ballana, wide chronological variations in the dates of pottery from single graves was sometimes illustrated, although this may be because of problems in the typology itself due to inadequate illustrations in Farid's site report (1963) and the short duration of the cemetery. Some consistencies were noted in the designations of the élite graves as early in the overall chronology of the cemetery. However, the drawback to this finding is that in seriation, by nature of the type of analysis, the data must be placed in sequential order. Contemporaneous data is unrecognised. This means graves that came very close together in the seriation analysis may actually be contemporary (Rose, 1992, 196).

2.11.iv. Chronology: Discussion.

There have been various attempts at constructing a chronology for the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries, with Török's research being the most extensive. Although the research is very comprehensive, there are also certain problems with his approach.

The tomb types are classified under successive alphabetical headings (A, B, C), giving the impression that one major type develops into the next major type. Despite the fact that major changes occur within the sub-types themselves, certain tomb types emerge simultaneously, such as types C/4 and D at Ballana.

The division of Török's tomb typology into seven phases (A-F and Z), is in fact less neat than it at initially appears to be. The major designations contain significant numbers of sub-types within them, presenting in fact 24 different tomb types rather than just seven. The sub-types within the types account for what might be considered to be quite major changes in the morphology of the tomb types. For example, 'Subtype C/3, represented by the royal tomb Q2, differs from subtype C insofar as its magazine is split into two separate rooms in separate pits and designed to be entered separately from the more elongated burial chamber through a doorway (western magazine). The transversal forecourt disappears, leaving only the side-chamber for retainer burials; but the general orientation of the tomb and the body orientation of the tomb owner is unchanged' (Török, 1987a, 84). The division of the magazine into two rooms, the disappearance of the transversal court, and the side chamber for retainer burials can be viewed as quite significant alterations in the design and construction of the tomb. Not only is the tomb different in these practical aspects, they cause an alteration in the experience of the tomb as a person moves through space, and a difference to the possible places and spaces within which bodies and artefacts could be deposited or displayed. The loss of the large forecourt may have also reduced the possibilities for ritual performances in that space, or for the number of people witnessing such an act. Alternatively, this change may have meant the relocation of particular ritual acts.

Török's research on the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana continues the work that Kirwan began in the original excavation reports (1938a, 161-181), but is a more detailed elaboration of it. Kirwan pays particular attention to the bronze and silver objects from the tombs. In his attempt to situate the artefacts from the tombs in a broad chronological context, he compares them to finds from places as distant as Traprain (near Berwick upon Tweed, close to the Scottish border), Syria and Pompeii. Kirwan concludes that the majority of the finds date to the fifth and sixth centuries AD. In Török's attempt to create a very tight chronology of the cemeteries, he is also concerned with artefacts and states that 'I am nevertheless quite confident that recent researches concerning late antique art, in particular silver plate, have provided this investigation with a useful chronological framework' (1987a, 93). He then proceeds to a sometimes lengthy discussion of artefacts exhibiting decorative parallels to those at Qustul and Ballana, finding a link, for example, between a silver jewelled bracelet from QT14 and third century reliefs from Palmyrene, the Bosphorus area and Taxila in India (ibid, 96). Török makes no particularly extensive argument for his reasons for taking this approach, other than that mentioned above whereby he states that most of the material from Qustul and Ballana is from Egypt, but that sites in Egypt have tended to be poorly recorded, and that it is therefore necessary to pursue parallels in other geographical locations. This approach is flawed. The presumption that similar artefacts from places vastly distant to Lower Nubia at this period should bear any relation to the objects at Qustul and Ballana is based upon a simplistic culture-historical paradigm. From this perspective the artefacts are of interest only as passive indicators of a date. How the artefacts were acquired or used is discussed in a limited manner, the possibility of indigenous manufacture is ignored, and the contextual meanings of the artefacts are apparently unimportant. These are all research themes that inform this thesis, and these are points that will be explored in the chapters that follow.

Despite the problems of approach in Török's work, it is interesting to note that both Török and Williams reached almost exactly the same conclusions regarding their relative chronologies. Tomb BT80 proves to be the tomb that is

problematic for Williams (1991c, 5). This fact does have certain implications for Török's chronology, as BT80, classified as subtype C/4, was deemed by Török to be the tomb and type which marks the move over to Ballana (Török, 1987a, 84), whereas Williams places BT80 at the very end of the period of activity at Ballana. It is also interesting to note that the discovery of the kidney-shaped enclosure at Ballana was nearest to tomb BT80 (Williams, 1991c, 27). Török bases his placement of BT80 in the chronology on the layout of the tomb substructure, and the parallel dating of artefacts found within the tomb. Williams also bases his decision to move BT80 to the end of the period of activity Ballana on the layout of the substructure. Therefore, BT80 can be positioned in at least two places in the chronology using tomb typology alone. This fact demonstrates the difficulty in trying to view the Qustul and Ballana graves as developmentary types changing through time. Török's tomb type C4 (phase 3b AD420-430), which includes BT80 and C5 (phases 7a-c, AD470-500), differ typologically in that C4 has a main chamber, an end chamber and two side-chambers, whilst C5 has a main chamber, end chamber and a single side chamber. The rationale behind the tomb typologies remains difficult to reconcile and suggests that tomb BT80 could be successfully placed, on a typological basis, at either the beginning or the end of the Ballana cemetery without appearing to be out of place. It seems to be the case that the development of the tombs at Qustul is more easily followed due to the absolute date of the coin of Valens, and to the Meroitic style of the earlier tomb substructures. The tombs at Ballana, it might be suggested offer a less obviously uniform style of substructure.

2.12. Conclusion.

It is clear that the picture of X-Group culture remains a complex one. Certain recurrent paradigms have guided the types of questions that have been asked of X-Group material, and have framed the answers that have been proposed. Many of the debates surrounding the identification of tribal groups, the possibility of Meroitic origins, the possibility of Egyptian and Kushitic influence on material culture, and the question of chronology have pivoted

around the sites of Qustul and Ballana. If these questions are insufficient or no longer adequate, what types of question, and what kinds of research might be proposed instead? How might their basis be different? In response to these questions the research in this dissertation aims to interrogate the relationships between humans, animals and artefacts; to investigate the creation of identities via ritual (funerary) performance and to explore the significance of aesthetic traits as cultural markers which create X-Group identities. It is to these aspects that I will turn in chapter four.

In order to explore these more theoretical issues, a database has been constructed to interrogate the archaeological remains from Qustul and Ballana, and to provide an 'objective' basis for such questions. This will ultimately enable a reinterpretation of the remains from Qustul and Ballana that engages with the material in a dynamic manner.

Chapter Three

Methodology.

'So the pendulum swings back and forth in an eternal movement, from abstractions in the form of typologies, chronological schemes and sociological generalizations to analyses of the individual and the particular' (Nordström, 1996, 21).

3.1. Introduction.

The overall aim of this thesis is to provide a reinterpretation of the X-Group remains at Qustul and Ballana. In particular, I am concerned with investigating the ways in which X-Group identity might have been constructed through the use of certain artefacts at Qustul and Ballana. The previous chapter investigated the historical and cultural evidence for Lower Nubia in the X-Group period, and discussed the chronology of the Qustul and Ballana tombs. This chapter will review past approaches to the analysis of mortuary remains, and will demonstrate certain problems with those methods. Given the range of information available from Qustul and Ballana, the number of artefacts and remains, and the preservation at the site, it has been necessary to attempt some type of formal quantitative analysis. I will therefore explain the format and layout of the Access database that has been constructed in order to facilitate a study of Qustul and Ballana. I will also outline certain problems that are inherent in the data, and the decisions made with regard to them.

3.2. Approaches to the Mortuary Record.

It has often been repeated that the archaeological record in Egypt is heavily biased towards burial evidence and this is also the case for the remains from Nubia. Yet despite this fact, few studies of Nubian cemeteries exist which attempt to view the remains from an interpretive (i.e. social) perspective beyond that which is necessary for constructing a chronology (but see Näser, 1999; Nordström, 1996; Smith, 2003). Very little explicit reference to the wealth of

work on 'the archaeology of death' has been made and anthropological writings on death have been under-explored within Nubiology (*cf* Kendall, 1989). Classic studies that have shaped the ways in which an archaeologist might approach mortuary remains and the wider funerary sphere, such as the works of Arthur Saxe (1970), Lewis Binford (1972), and Mike Parker-Pearson (1982), have had relatively little effect in Nubiology, despite their important status within the archaeological discipline at large. This has meant that in general, the social aspects of mortuary ritual have been sidelined. This is part of what has been a general lack of interpretation of Nubian material, alongside a lack of engagement with theoretical issues that could prove fruitful in the understanding of the Nubian past, as we have seen in chapter one. Instead, studies of mortuary remains tend to be either osteological or palaeopathological studies of skeletal remains, or broad syntheses of the general types of burial that might characterise a particular cultural group. As stated, this study is an in depth analysis of the royal tombs at Qustul and Ballana. Using evidence derived from the tomb layouts, skeletal remains and artefacts, it is possible to move from detailed description of particular elements of the evidence, to a broader interpretative perspective; from a schematic description of 'X-Group type', to an appreciation of idiosyncrasy and difference that were parts of this culture. Furthermore, it is possible to investigate, placing material culture and social practice as central to meaning, how the X-Group made itself.

Mortuary archaeology has developed as a subject of investigation in its own right within the larger discipline of archaeology. Archaeologists have often felt that they are 'somehow very close to the essence of a past culture when working with burial remains' (O'Shea, 1984, 2). Although it has developed as a sub-category, there is still no truly unified and explicit body of theory that exemplifies how archaeologists should approach the mortuary record. For some (ibid, 3), this lack of a coherent and homogenous approach has been viewed as a failing. However, I would argue that this is in fact one of the strengths of mortuary archaeology, as the lack of a unified interpretative scheme necessitates a flexible approach both to excavated remains, and to the use and development of archaeological techniques and theories. It is certainly the case that a

standardisation in methods and techniques of excavation is needed (with room for flexibility in terms of different conditions present at each site), in order to produce a raw data set which conforms to a set of criteria across sites. One major problem in attempting cross-site analysis of mortuary data can be the differential methods of excavation and fluctuating standards of recording at different sites. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis (section 1.4 of chapter one) this was one reason that I am using the data provided by Emery and Kirwan and Farid, and not that provided by the OINE's work.

The studies produced by Saxe (1970) and Binford (1972) regarding mortuary practices have been hugely influential within mortuary studies, so much so that their theories and findings have been conflated in what has been termed the 'Saxe-Binford Programme'. Both Saxe and Binford attempted to produce a model that could explain variability and change in past mortuary practices. Saxe's doctoral thesis was an explicit attempt to find rules that could be effectively used to make cross-cultural comparisons. He searched for regularities in social interaction of specific social systems, in the hope of finding patterns that would be trans-cultural. He attempted this by the formulation of eight hypotheses with which to test anthropological data from Native American communities. Binford explicitly rejected previous cultural-historical approaches that attributed differences in cultural expression to biological imperatives (a particular race would behave in a particular manner, as was their inherent nature), environmental conditions, or that explained change through diffusion from other cultures (Binford, 1972, 217).

Binford's 1972 work was an attack on traditional diffusionist interpretations of cultural change. His article rests on the premise that cross-cultural regularities between the organisation of living communities exist, and that differentiations in mortuary ritual directly relate to social complexity in those living communities. Differentiations that occurred in mortuary ritual were caused by an individual's position in the hierarchy and the number and rank of those individuals that owed 'status duties' to the deceased. Binford stated that there is a high degree of correlation between the complexity of status structure in a given socio-cultural system and that the complexity of differential treatment

of individuals with different statuses. Due to these facts, social inference from mortuary remains is valid. Binford argued that two types of social phenomena were symbolized at death: firstly, the 'social persona' of the deceased and secondly the size and composition of 'social aggregates' recognising obligations to the deceased. Following Goodenough (1965) Binford utilized the term social persona, explaining the concept as a 'composite of the social identities maintained in life and recognized as appropriate for consideration at death' (Binford, 1972, 225).

Saxe had also used the concept of the social persona to explore how social personae might be represented within a particular mortuary setting and how different social structures were represented between different settings (Saxe, 1970, 65). Although both of these studies attempted to build a cross-cultural model to explain regularities, difference, and change in the mortuary arena, they did so by an increasingly detailed and critical engagement with the evidence. Both Saxe and Binford's ideas were derived from anthropological approaches to death. In opposition to a diffusionist explanation of change, Saxe and Binford explored given populations to investigate within group difference and change. This represented a major change of focus within mortuary studies, as in some sense, cemetery groups could begin to be considered as complex entities reflecting the social organisation of the living population, rather than simply reflecting changes brought about by contact with an outside population. Both Saxe and Binford began to discuss aspects of the social persona that had received little consideration from an archaeological perspective, such as the importance of age, sex, status and occupation within the cemetery group (although no comment is made about the representativeness or otherwise of the cemetery group, see Waldron, 1994). Binford surmised that certain aspects of the social persona would be emphasised within mortuary ritual, depending upon the larger organisation of a society. Based on ethnographic data, Binford hypothesised that egalitarian groups (hunter-gatherers) were expected to express difference by emphasising age and sex based distinctions, with greater elaboration and a larger number of duty-status relationships reflected in the funerary practices surrounding the oldest members of the group. In contrast,

hierarchical societies (agriculturalists) were expected to arrange the elaboration of the mortuary ritual around those individuals occupying the highest status (or rank) positions. In general, egalitarian societies should invest less energy and elaboration in the mortuary ritual as a whole, than hierarchically arranged social groups (Binford, 1972, 237-9). For Binford, the activities of humans were entirely limited and constrained by the overarching social structure within which they were contained.

The concept of the social persona is a useful one. However, Saxe and Binford put too much emphasis on the individually distinct natures of different elements of the social persona such as age, sex or status. Instead, the complex and imbricated relationships of these different aspects should be recognised. Saxe and Binford treated these parts of the individual as neatly compartmentalised packages that had little or no relationship to one another. This is clearly too simplistic. These packages are at one level apparently clearly defined and self-contained, but what exactly Binford or Saxe meant by age, sex or status remains unclear. In terms of age or sex it is reasonable to assume that for Binford and Saxe, age and sex were considered to be non-discursive scientific facts. There is no explicit consideration of any social aspect to these concepts. In this manner, sex, age and status within the Saxe-Binford programme are rather abstract concepts that are narrowly conceived. How these aspects were distinctly marked within the funerary arena is also unclear, and the actual evidential manifestation of the concept of sex or status within the study group is not discussed. Whether these aspects of the social persona were distinctively defined due to bodily orientation, grave size or elaboration, or differential distribution of grave goods is not made apparent. In effect, we are left without theorisation of what is meant by the terms 'age', 'status', 'sex', 'role', or an indication of the sorts of evidence upon which such designations may have been derived.

The concept of the social persona is a term that has continued to be used, although it has been refined. Peebles (1971), like Saxe and Binford before him, assumed that every individual was interred in a manner that reflected daily life, and that by looking at a range of differences in the depositional data, an

explanation of why differences might occur could be achieved. This idea was developed further in the assertion that there were two dimensions of symbolic representation of the social persona that were significant. Firstly, the *superordinate* in which burials would be ordered through energy expenditure and symbols, but not symbols based on the deceased's age or sex. The *subordinate* was the ordering of graves based partially on sex, age and achievement (Peebles and Kus, 1977). Kus also highlighted the need to consider the archaeological formation processes that shape the archaeological record, as others have also argued (O'Shea, 1984, 24; Kus and Raharijaona, 2001). Peebles also emphasised the problems both with short-life and long-life cemeteries. In the former, diachronic change should be evident but only a small sample group can be retrieved. With a long-term cemetery, the opposite would apply, in that a large data set could be interrogated, but the potential for diachronic distortion would be greater (1971, 72). It might also be the case that small-scale synchronic change would be visible in a short-term cemetery, but that it would be more difficult to identify in a cemetery that was used over a long period of time.

Parker Pearson's early work in the 1980's has been described as heralding a paradigm shift within mortuary studies (Parker Pearson, 1982) and was a major step forward in the development of post-processual mortuary studies. Parker Pearson's major assertion was to state that the ritually deposited funerary remains of an individual and a group do not necessarily have a direct (or even genuine) relationship with a past social correlation, but that instead the link might be idealised. In particular, the dead may be manipulated by the living for a variety of reasons. This is particularly pertinent given the fact that funerary rituals often involve a number of interested parties in their arrangement and enactment, making them an ideal arena for the negotiation of continuity and change by an individual or group before an audience (ibid, 112). Therefore, the mortuary remains that we excavate are not the neat reflection of a past social reality, rather the remains mark out certain social relations. Examining the practice of modern cremation burials, Parker Pearson was able to show that material wealth and social status did not correspond with lavish financial outlays

on lasting monuments (ibid). This is an example of non-representational burial practice.

The recognition of the possible power of ideological manipulation within the mortuary ritual has certain implications for mortuary archaeology. With this realisation, we lose the comfortable belief that archaeological remains accurately reflect social organisation. The evidence is potentially distorted at successive levels by depositional variations, taphonomic processes, and differing standards of excavation and recording. Even if all of these factors have had a minimal effect on the surviving material, accessing its meaning in the original social system, (and its meaning to the individuals that constituted that system), is made more awkward by an added layer of ideological opacity. Archaeologists must accept that burials may take on some sort of political role. Concomitant with the position that mortuary practices are embroiled in broader socio-political schemes should be the recognition that burial is not necessarily a separate arena of practice or display (*contra* Binford, 1972 and Saxe 1970; Lucy, 1998, 23).

The shift in emphasis from role as confined by social and political constraints, to identity as a composite of social practices was to have far reaching consequences for the development of an archaeology that would be called post-processual. With increased awareness of the political/ideological factors that may have been influential in the formation and interpretation of the archaeological record, and with a growing understanding of the complexity of identity, (see chapter 4 for a further discussion of feminism and the body) a more complex approach to the archaeology of death has developed. This has been a development within the broader movement of post-processualism that has been concerned with both the subjectivities of subjects in the past, but also the subjectivities of the archaeologist that interprets that past. In fact such consideration of subjectivity and experience has exposed a fault-line in the post-processual agenda. For Barrett, it is not necessary or desirable (or possible) to attempt to access intentionality in the past but instead the emphasis should be on how material conditions constrain and enable action (1994, 5). Hodder has explicitly critiqued Barrett's position by questioning whether the landscape of

the past (for example) could be created and manipulated if people in the past had no ideas concerning that landscape in their heads (Hodder, 1992, 17 discussing Barrett, 1989). To some extent, this broad discussion has been informed by Giddens' structuration theory (1984) which acknowledges both the structured elements of society and the extent to which individuals formulate and reformulate those structures. The nature of the significance of material culture is therefore culturally specific as 'the meanings of symbols are not intrinsic to them. They become established through cultural tradition; one reads meaning into, not out of, a text' (Richards, 1995, 54).

In terms of subjective approaches to mortuary archaeology, Tarlow has developed a detailed argument concerning the consideration of emotion in the past (1999, but see also Kus, 1992 and Parker Pearson, 1999). She has argued that the consideration of power and its manipulation has become *de rigeur* in interpretation, and particularly in prehistoric archaeologies 'It is an aggressive, hard past, in which suggestions that the past contained cooperative endeavour, shared aspirations, sentiment and emotion are considered fey and romantic, candyflossing the harsh realities of struggle' (Tarlow, 1999, 32). Tarlow's arguments concerning subjectivity have resonance for this research in terms of my consideration of the subjective (or secondary) qualities contained in artefacts and their importance in constructing an aesthetic identity.

3.3. Mortuary archaeology: Ancient Nubia.

From its very beginning, Nubian archaeology has been much concerned with osteology and in particular, craniometry (see for example Elliot Smith, 1910; Wood Jones, 1910; el-Batrawi, 1935). Overall, the homogeneity of the Nubian populations through time has been remarked upon, indicating continuity in population (Van Gerven et al, 1981). The X-Group appear to be the cultural group that exhibit the greatest amount of morphological variability, with the A-Group showing the least. El-Batrawi considered this variability to have been caused by the admixture of a number of 'alien women' into the X-Group population as slaves (el-Batrawi, 1946). The motivation behind much of this

early work has been discussed in chapter two (section 2.2). More recently, change and development from within Nubian populations has been studied. Major changes through time (from the Mesolithic to X-Group periods), in cranial morphology, and a reduction in size of molar teeth, may be tied to subsistence changes from hunter-gathering to an agro-pastoral lifestyle (Goodman et al, 1986; Zakrzewski, 2001, 94-95). More recently, attention has turned to the palaeopathology of Nubian populations. Investigations are often focussed upon trauma, and pathological or dietary indicators. Comparisons of cemetery populations of the Meroitic population at South Argin, and the X-Group population at Serra West and North Argin have indicated a decline in childhood growth disturbance during the later period (Rudney, 1983). However, the evidence from an early Christian cemetery at Kulubnarti (21-S-46) shows a low life expectancy between birth and fourteen years, when compared to a later cemetery from the mainland (21-R-2). Probability of death before the age of fourteen was also higher (Van Gerven et al, 1981, 403). The occurrence of *cribra orbitalia* (an indicator of anaemia) during childhood was 94% for this study group, and the morbidity and mortality levels indicate a number of biological stresses acting upon the group (ibid, 1981, 404-5).

Trauma patterns in the Meroitic to Christian period remains from the Semna South area near to the Second Cataract have also been analysed. Although the bones from the X-Group period amounted to only 9% of the sample under investigation, these bones accounted for 15% of the total number of healed fractures across the combined time periods. Within the X-Group sample size (54), 27.7% showed healed fractures – a larger proportion than either the Meroitic sample (15.86%) or the Christian sample (22.2%), suggesting a rise in trauma during the X-Group period in this area (Alvrus, 1999, 420-421). Evidence from the skeletal remains at Kerma and from Semna South show similar patterns of cranial injury. Injuries to the head included the frequent occurrence of small, rounded depressions in the skull that demonstrated signs of healing. The majority of these injuries were located in the frontal bone of the skull. It is possible that the injuries are the result of socially sanctioned violence

(perhaps using a stick) to settle disputes, with rules surrounding acceptable conduct in the infliction of wounds (Alvrus, 1999, 426; Judd, 2001, 25-26).

The location of the human remains that were excavated from Qustul and Ballana is now unknown, and so there has never been a reassessment of the remains following el-Batrawi's work. A mixture of details concerning non-metric traits, tooth eruption, trauma and pathologies are listed and this recording does not seem very systematic. These details were only given for remains from Qustul and so it is difficult to consider the palaeopathological evidence in any detail in this thesis.

Although palaeopathological studies of Nubian human populations are quite well represented, those of faunal remains, which sometimes formed an important part of Meroitic and X-Group burial practice, are seriously under-represented. Discussions concerning animal burials have centred upon the extent to which their appearance in Nubian graves may or may not demonstrate continuity in burial practice from the Napatan through to the X-Group period (Török, 1987a, 216-217; Trigger, 1969, 122; Lenoble, 1994 and 1996). Some of the animal remains from Qustul were investigated by el-Batrawi, even though he was a Professor of human anatomy. Consequently, his observations, and the data which he chose to record are rather curious. Rather than documenting information such as the sex of the animal, its age, or possible breed, el-Batrawi records details such as the length of the animal when measured from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail (el-Batrawi, 1935). Again, the osteological data is of limited value.

The explicit influence of the Saxe-Binford programme, a belief in burial ritual as an ideological tool, or the possible social, psychological or emotional effects of death have been almost wholly ignored within Nubian studies. Emphasis has been placed upon the classification of burial types, and their identification with particular cultural groups and chronological periods (Adams, 1977; Török, 1987a; Bonnet, 1999; Rose, 1992; Welsby, 2002). Näser's work on the Meroitic cemetery at Abu Simbel North makes some reference to the social context of the burials, although this only forms a small part of the work (Näser, 1999, 24). Török (1987a) provides the most detailed review of the

Ballana and Qustul material in a gazetteer of certain material types, and the reification of internal chronology via a typology of the tombs, but does not build an interpretation of X-Group life and death at the sites. The importance for Nubian studies of developing chronologies, and the limited set of questions that have been posed for Nubian evidence have been demonstrated in chapter two, and this is a theme that will be further explored in chapter four (section 4.2 and 4.4) chapter five (section 5.22) and chapter six (sections 6.2 to 6.5). Against such a backdrop it perhaps becomes less surprising that despite a wealth of mortuary evidence for the Nubian past, approaches that attempt a socio-political interpretation of the evidence are almost entirely lacking. It is true that "it is essential to throw off the straightjacket of a 50-year-old historical tradition. The distinctions made - between pyramids and tumuli, between Meroitic and post-Meroitic, between 'civilized' and 'barbarian', between a literate civilization and one reputed to be unlettered – arose above all from the lack of interpretation of the content of the tombs" (Lenoble and Sharif 1992, 630). Therefore, in order to move on to an interpretation of 'the content of the tombs' at Qustul and Ballana, it is necessary to suggest in broad terms (which will be developed in more detail in chapter four) what an interpretative approach to mortuary remains may encompass, and to detail the practical methodology that has been developed in order to investigate the evidence.

3.4. Mortuary Practices: Changing the Agenda.

Having discussed the developments in the analysis of mortuary ritual and practice over the last forty years, and having suggested that an interpretative approach to the mortuary record informed by post processual approaches is necessary for Nubian archaeology, what aspects of burial should such a project seek to investigate and how can such a project be practically undertaken?

In the previous chapter it was stated that Kendall has bemoaned the lack of use made of anthropological evidence in an archaeological context for the Sudan (Kendall, 1989). Such evidence may offer new directions for research, and even more crucially, examples that offer new directions for interpretation:

'the primary use of ethnographic parallels...is simple. It is to widen the horizons of the interpreter' (Ucko, 1969, 262). Although not directly concerned with mortuary evidence, such a direction of thought has been recently used in Nubian research to suggest lines of interpretation surrounding aspects of life such as oral tradition and the social uses and importance of beads (Edwards, 2004, 259; 282). In terms of mortuary studies, as has been noted above in the groundbreaking studies of Binford (1972) and Saxe (1970), the use of anthropological data and ethnoarchaeology has a long pedigree in this sphere. However, there is an important difference between these studies and the approach advocated here. In contrast to Saxe and Binford, it is not my aim to suggest that using ethnographic analogy as a tool to 'free-up' interpretation of mortuary rituals should generate cross-cultural laws that may then be applied to other cemeteries. Neither is it my intention to provide an inventory of societies with interesting mortuary rituals that therefore frame my investigation – the usefulness of anthropological evidence need not be so explicitly pinpointed. Rather it lies in offering rich sources of inspiration for thinking about how life and death take myriad forms with multiple meanings. The chapters that follow will therefore make use of various anthropological examples.

Suspending temporarily the obfuscating nature of taphonomic processes and the excavator's skill, time and interest which shape the archaeological record, the evidence that survives for us to analyze is that of traces of past human action – what people actually did. This is the level at which we can explain what happened in the past: a person dies and a funeral takes place at Qustul, objects X are deposited in the grave, a tumulus is erected, this probably occurs between X year and X year. Whilst it is satisfyingly neatly and safely disclosed, this version of the past leaves us with little feel of who, what or why such particular actions took place: why was the burial at Qustul? Who prepared the body and the artefacts and who placed them in the tomb? What was the purpose of including humans, animals and artefacts in the graves? Why these particular objects? Each of the questions can be asked about the interments at Qustul and Ballana, and each of these questions feeds into broader enquiries about the significance of certain acts: how do people and artefacts create

meaning? How are rituals performed effectively? How are funerals part of wider social life? In beginning to ask such questions, the investigation into past human actions begins to vacillate between concerns about individual actions and concerns about wider group actions and their inter-relation.

Brown has argued that multiple burials, as a distinct type of burial practice, negate the possibility of an individual orientated approach (Brown, 1995, 5). In fact it may be argued that an individual orientated approach has, in general, been unfashionable within mortuary archaeology. Although Saxe and Binford discuss aspects that make up an individual's social persona, the individual remains hidden behind a cluster of distinct terminologies (age, rank, sex). In fact these terminologies seem to be representations (rather than real 'performances') or roles, which are never reconstructed as parts of an individual or group identity. They are static, monolithic entities. The real emphasis, for Saxe and Binford, is on the attempt to reconstruct predictably the internal structure of a given society (Metcalf and Huntington, 1991, 14-18). In contrast, Brown argues that Saxe and Binford attempted to find the 'social source' of variation rather than explicitly trying to reconstruct social structures (1995, 12). In either case, we can hardly term this an individual oriented approach. The various computer techniques that might be used to interrogate funerary data, use detailed information from individual graves in cemeteries yet, for reasons outlined below, this cannot be considered to be an approach to individuals either. To a certain extent, the paradigm shift relating to ideological manipulation, and the possibility that burial practice could be subversive, has led to a stand off between burial as an expression of group needs, versus burial as an expression of individual needs. The reality of the past situation, is most likely to lie somewhere between these two poles. This study starts from the premise that individuals are embedded in complex social processes, some of which enable, some of which control. These aspects may be juridical, political, economic, aesthetic or ritual. Burials are considered to be a place where we might be able to identify an intersection of identities, situated within a past social milieu. It hardly needs to be said that it is impossible to recover every aspect of such complex relationships. I am offering a multi-layered interpretation of the

individual, sub-group and group identities present in the mortuary remains at Qustul and Ballana, using a wide variety of evidence. As has been discussed above (see also below), many approaches to mortuary remains have concentrated upon the vertical dimension, with little attention paid to the horizontal dimension of personhood. Often these dimensions are discussed as singular positions that a person occupies throughout their lifetime. However we must acknowledge the likelihood that individuals moved between groups during their life, on the basis of distinctions such as, (but not exclusively), age, ritual status, marital ties or the possession of particular skills. It is also the case that an individual may occupy many of these 'identity positions' at any given time. From these perspectives, identity is conceived of as a multi-faceted, dynamic concept, which is subject to change.

In conceiving of the relationship between people and objects as reflexive and malleable, we can begin to wonder about the implications that this has for the enactment of a major ritual, which the burials at the 'royal' tumuli undoubtedly were. Not only does this mean that the rituals become active creations, but they remain open to the possibility of change or re-creation. The unique nature of a funeral and the various rituals and rites that it might encompass, can be viewed as a powerful opportunity to reach the attendant community. A question can be raised with regard to towards whom the funerary rituals are directed, to the living or dead, or to individuals or a group. Furthermore it is pertinent to consider the psychological and emotional effects of deaths within the group, and how this was manifested and resolved (Kus, 1992; Tarlow, 1992; 1999). If the acts of burying the dead at Qustul and Ballana and the attendant rites are more fully conceived of as communicative, integrative and perhaps dangerous ritual practices, present interpretations remain inadequate. The evidence demands a thorough reassessment and interpretation, which should lead towards a more multi-faceted understanding. In order to deal with the vast amount of data at Qustul and Ballana, it has been necessary to employ a database with which to both organise the data, and to interrogate it.

3.5. The Use of Computer Programmes in Mortuary Analysis.

Archaeologists use computer-based techniques in order to investigate a mass of data that it would be impossible to manipulate and understand without the help of a computer programme. In constructing their database, or in entering data into a programme, the researcher must decide on the information that they will or will not include in their study. The researcher must also classify the numerous pieces of data in a coherent and uniform manner in order for the computer programme to be able to run tests (or queries) and find patterns. However in order to achieve this success, in order for the programme to work, the researcher imposes their own ideas about what they deem to be valuable information. In actuality, these decisions at the beginning of the analytical process have a crucial bearing on the final results. Yet researchers are rarely candid with regard to these distorting factors, and the use of apparently scientific methods seems to give an air of (false) objectivity to such studies. This position, that strictly following a testable method will produce certain results, will be discussed further in section 4.3 of the following chapter.

Correspondence analysis, principal component analysis and cluster analysis, have been used by archaeologists attempting to find particular groups within the archaeological evidence (see for example Bard, 1994; Lucy, 1998, Pader, 1982). This is also (to some extent), an aim of this thesis. It is certainly the case that, although one wishes to investigate the construction and negotiation of individual identity in the past, individuals may also be members of certain groups. The problem with the multivariate approaches named above is that whilst they might find groups that exist within the dataset, if the evidence points to anything more complex than easily definable contained groups, then the programme runs into difficulties. Neat groups do not always exist, yet each of these programmes attempts to create clusters, groups of factors or correspondences, at the expense of idiosyncrasies. Those individuals or artefact types that appear infrequently, or that do not correspond to the general model of a cemetery, are weeded-out as noise that detrimentally affects the coherence of groupings. Effectively, this makes them meaningless. However, these may be

the people or the artefacts that had a particularly unusual or special role to play within society, and to ignore them as meaningless extremes or infrequencies is to forget the original purpose of using computer-based techniques: to examine past society and social relationships using every piece of the complicated evidence. A further problem with cluster analysis and principal component analysis, is that whilst they might create relatively coherent groups (or strata), those identities that might cross-cut a number of social groups, or that might co-exist, are also likely to be smoothed out or removed as noise. Unsurprisingly such multivariate methods have usually been employed to investigate status differentiation or rank, at the expense of other aspects of identity. It can be argued that this has sometimes contributed to a rather singular view of identity, which inhibits a multi-dimensional, holistic approach. For all of the reasons outlined above, none of these multivariate techniques have been used in this study.

3.6. The Construction of the Database.

In any archaeological study, the development of the methodology used to investigate the evidence is based upon at least two principle factors: the nature of the surviving evidence that is to be interrogated and the research questions of the subjectively situated researcher. My research questions have been outlined in chapter one. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, we should not assume that the archaeological record exists as a stable, objective resource from which to add our supplementary interpretations (*cf* Boast, 1997 and Thomas, 2004, 244). Given this position, the development of a database, and the encoding of data within such a 'scientific' framework may seem incongruous. For the moment, it must suffice to say that the sheer scale of data that was to be included in this study made the use of a formalised database a necessary part of the project.

My aim in the construction of the database for this project has been to enter as much detail about each artefact and interment as possible, into each form. Rather than simply stating what is present or absent from a particular

tomb, each individual artefact and burial has been accessioned with information on many aspects of their manufacture, type and decoration. It is acknowledged that some of the judgements made regarding the classification of the artefacts is very subjective, but this is necessarily so. In including nuanced details of the appearance and construction of the artefacts, I am attempting to incorporate small details about the burials that may have been meaningful to people at Qustul and Ballana.

The database for this study has been constructed using Microsoft Access 2000. The database contains four separate tables, into which the data has been entered. It contains over 189,000 pieces of data. This database is a relational database. This means that each of the tables, whilst containing discrete sets of information, is linked to another table. One might visualise the tables in a pyramidal formation. The 'Tombs' table contains the smallest amount of data and sits at the top of the pyramid. It is linked to the 'Loci' table below it. The 'Loci' table is, in turn, linked to the 'Bodies' table. Finally, the 'Bodies' table is linked to the 'Objects' table. 'Objects' forms the base of the pyramid, and contains far more pieces of data (over five thousand rows) than any other table. The tables are linked together in a series of 'one to many' relationships. In order for the Access programme to be able to make a link between one table and another, one of the columns in a table has to be designated the 'Primary Key'. Each piece of data in the column which is designated the primary key, is unique and cannot be replicated in that table; the system will not allow it. This is the 'one' end of the 'one to many' relationship. In the next table down the pyramid, the 'many' side of the relationship is formed. The 'many' link is a column of data within which a given entry may appear numerous times. Using an example from this database, the 'Tombs' table has 'Tomb Number' as its primary key and each piece of data can only appear once (the 'one' side of the 'one to many' relationship). The 'Location (Rooms)' column in the 'Loci' table (one step down the pyramid), contains pieces of data that are replicated many times (the 'many' side of the 'one to many' relationship). The other tables are also linked together in this 'one to many' way. Once referential integrity is enforced between the tables in a database, it is possible to perform queries to extract data

that is of interest. It is possible to run queries and find data from within a single table. One could, for example, ask the database to count how many bronze cups were found at Qustul, just using the 'Objects' table. Although some useful information can be gained in this manner, such searches are simple and 'flat'. As the database for this thesis is relational, one is able to create queries across any combination of tables, and across the data under any column heading, even if the columns are not in the same table. In this way, the database is a powerful tool with which to create any number of queries in many different combinations. Once the required data has been filtered and sorted within a Query, it is then exported to Microsoft Excel 2000 where the details can be manipulated to produce summaries in the form of tables or graphs.

In order to make the details of the data included in each table more explicit, a description is given below. The title of each column in a table (reading from left to right in the table) is given in italics, after which follows an explanation of the type of data that was included in that column.

3.6.i. Tomb Table: Data fields.

This table contains data concerning the dimensions and location of each tomb. The primary key for this table is the 'Tomb Number' column.

Tomb Number (Primary Key). The tomb number is given in a combined alphabetic and numerical form. The prefix 'QT or 'BT' refers to either a 'Qustul tomb' or a 'Ballana tomb' and is followed by a number which is the same as the number assigned to that tomb in the Emery and Kirwan (1938a and 1938b) site report. Those tombs that were excavated by Farid have been given their Emery and Kirwan number, rather than those used by Farid (1963).

Phase. Following Török's phasing of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries (1987a, 154 see also figure in section 2.11.i of chapter two), this field records the phase to which the related tomb belongs.

Total Rooms. This field gives the total number of rooms in a given tomb, excluding any robber passage or pit. The forecourts and ramps are each treated as a separate room.

Individuals. The total number of individuals (humans and animals) was recorded in this field.

Approximate tumulus volume. The approximate volume of each tumulus has been calculated from the height and radius measurements found in the appropriate site reports. The formula $\pi (r^2 + h^2)$ was used to calculate the volume of a section from a sphere.

Approximate tumulus area. The approximate area that the tumulus covered has been calculated using the formula πr^2, based on the measurements given in the site reports.

Location in cemetery. Information in this field states where in each cemetery the tomb was located, using the general information given by Emery and Kirwan (1938a).

3.6.ii. Loci Table: Data Fields.

This table contains data concerning each individual space in a given tomb. The room numbers used in the sites reports have been adhered to, and the ramps and forecourts are each considered as a separate space. The 'Location (Room)' is the primary Key in this table.

Location (Room) (Primary Key). Each cell in this column gives the detail of the single room in question.

Tomb Number. This field explains in which tomb the said room belongs. The same notation is used for the tomb number that has been explained above (for example BT80).

Approximate area of room. Using the scale provided in the site reports I have calculated the approximate floor area of each individual space in a tomb. Where a corridor existed to connect one room to another, I have divided the corridor in half, and added its floor area to that of each room, thereby equally dividing the corridor space between the two spaces. This was to allow for a correct calculation of the entire floor area of the tombs. The only exception to this decision, was when remains were discovered in a corridor (for example, QT02), in which case it was necessary to consider the corridor as a distinct area.

Axis alignment. Using the drawings featured in the site reports, this field records the overall axis of the rooms in the tomb if the ramp is considered as the central axis.

Door/Entrance. Information in this field states whether or not the doorway had an arch or a lintel at its entrance. In some cases, no such information was recorded, and so the information 'N/A' has been entered.

Roof. This field contains information on whether or not the room had a barrel-vault. If no information was recorded in the site reports, the value 'N/A' was entered.

3.6.iii. Bodies Table: Data Fields.

This table concerns data relating to each human and animal body that was discovered in the tombs. The primary key for this table is the 'Body Number' field.

Body Number (Primary Key). This field records the specific body in question. An entry reading 'BT02:BodyA' would denote Body A from Ballana tomb 2. The alphabetic designations for each skeleton are those given by Emery and Kirwan. Within this study, I have also included information regarding the animal remains discovered in the tombs, and so these various species are included in this data field. A typical entry for an animal might therefore read 'BT02:SheepB'. In order to make it possible to create a relationship between the 'Bodies' table, and the 'Objects' table, it was necessary to create virtual bodies. These remains do not exist in reality, but are included in the database. Upon excavation, it was discovered that certain rooms and certain objects did not contain or relate to any surviving human or animal remains. However, these spaces and objects remain an important variable in the database and needed to be included if the database was to be fully inclusive. Therefore these objects and places needed to be tied to a virtual body in order for the system to recognise and treat them in a similar way to those rooms or objects containing genuine bodies. A typical entry for a virtual body reads 'BT01:VirtualA'. In conducting queries and tests of the data, these virtual bodies can be removed when necessary because their labelling is different to that of the genuine skeletal remains. These virtual bodies are necessary to the structure of the database. They enable the database to be referential, and it prevents the formation of dangling references that would skew the accuracy and workability of the database system.

Location. Corresponding to the entries in the Loci Table, this field records the general location of a skeleton as 'Room 4', 'Forecourt' and so on.

Preservation. Here, the state of each body as intact, disturbed or disarticulated is recorded.

General Position. Data in this field records whether the body was buried on its right or left side, supine or prone.

SJE Position. Here, the specific body position of the skeletons is recorded, following the schematic codes developed by the Scandinavian Joint Expedition (see figure 21 in section 5.14 of chapter five). Although the excavators often use terms such as flexed, crouched and extended in their reports, the SJE designations allow for a greater accuracy in recording body positions as they take into account varying degrees of flexion in the legs and multiple different positions for the arms and hands. On occasion, a body position was encountered at Ballana and Qustul that had no corresponding SJE equivalent. In such cases a new alphabetic code in alphabetic order was added to those of the SJE. Information on body position was only entered for those remains that were intact.

Sex. In some cases, the human remains have been osteologically sexed, and on the occasions when the information given by Emery and Kirwan differs to that given by el Batrawi, el Batrawi's designations have been preferred (1935). This is simply because el Batrawi was a Professor of anatomy, and therefore more likely to have detailed scientific knowledge of the human remains, and because el Batrawi was not necessarily at the sites when the material was discovered, and may therefore have been less influenced by the type of grave goods found in the tombs. When sex is unknown, 'U' has been entered, when sex has not been assigned (which is usually the case for the animals). If the human remains were examined, but were not assigned a sex, the term 'E' has been used. Definite females and males were assigned 'F' and 'M' whilst probable males and females were assigned 'M?' and 'F?' respectively. Further details on the sexing of the remains are given below.

Age. Animals have been classed as 'mature' unless the excavators have directly commented otherwise in the text. When animals are called calves or lambs, they have been recorded as 'immature'. Whilst a number of the human remains have been assigned an age from their osteological remains, this is not always the case and where the information is missing, the value 'N' has been entered. Frustratingly, when ages are assigned to the skeletal remains, they are

inconsistent. One individual may be classed a 'young adult male' and another as 'seventeen years of age'. Details concerning the problematic aspects of ageing and the criteria for its assignment are discussed below.

Age Group. As el-Batrawi (ibid) assigned ages at death to the skeletal remains in both a very precise manner and rather broadly, I also created this field in order to be able to group the varying ages of the skeletons in a broad sense. Individuals with no given age were assigned the value '0'. Immature and mature animals were classified as 'AI' and 'AM' respectively (animal immature and animal mature). The humans were divided into three broad age categories. 'L' designates the lowest age category, and applies to those individuals that were referred to as 'young', 'child', or had a given numerical age lower than thirteen. 'M' refers to the middle age category, and relates to individuals with a numerical age between fourteen and twenty years (inclusive), or who were termed 'young adult', 'adolescent' or 'puberty'. Finally, 'U' relates to the older individuals from twenty-one years, including the terms 'adult', 'mature' and 'middle aged'.

Pathology? Using the palaeopathological information recorded by el-Batrawi (ibid), this field records any evidence of a pathological condition (such as BT10:Body F 'bloodstains on temporal and parietal bones. 3rd molars unerrupted'), whether this is likely to be the result of disease or trauma. Non-metric data that el-Batrawi mentioned is also included here.

Head. This field records the orientation of the top of the head of the deceased on excavation. In the cases where certain animals have died with their jaw in direct contact with the ground, so that the top of their head points straight up in the air, the value 'X' was entered.

Facing. This field records the direction of the deceased's face on excavation. When humans have been interred in a supine or prone manner (SJE code A, B, or C) the value 'X' has been entered.

Nile Head. Entries in this field are recorded in a similar manner to those in under the 'Head' field, but in this field the compass points relate to those relating to the flow of the Nile (the direction of the river flow is taken to be north).

Nile Facing. This field records data in a similar way to the 'Facing' field, but uses the flow of the Nile to designate local north.

3.6.iv. Object Table: Data Fields.

This table records details pertaining to every object that was found in the Qustul and Ballana tombs. The 'Number' field is the primary key.

Number (Primary Key). The object code is the combination of the cemetery initial B or Q alongside the tomb number (following Emery and Kirwan) and the artefact number that was assigned in the site reports. Therefore BT24: 44 indicates object number 44 found in tomb 24 at Ballana. On occasion, the excavators grouped a number of artefacts under a single number, for example '64. Ten bronze bells. Type 4. (1938a, 268). From Horse U in the forecourt'. In cases such as this, the artefact number has still been used, but with the addition of one or more letters, i.e. BT03:64a, BT03:64b and so on, until the required number of artefacts has been entered.

Location. These entries record tomb number combined with the general location of the artefact within the tomb as, for example, 'Ramp' 'Room 1', 'Tumulus' ('QT02:Ramp' would be a typical entry).

Body. This field uses the letters given to the different skeletal remains by the excavators. In cases where multiple bodies have been grouped under a single letter, I have entered each body separately using consecutive numbers after the letter until the required number of skeletons had been included. For example

'BT03:Y1' to 'BT03:Y40' are the forty dogs from tomb 3 at Ballana, which Emery and Kirwan simply grouped together under the letter Y. Virtual bodies also appear in this field, for the reasons given above.

Description. This entry is a simple description of the artefact itself such as 'Pink ware amphora' or 'fragment of leather garment'.

Material Main. The primary material from which the artefact is made is entered here such as 'Iron type 1'. The 'type' part of the entry refers to the typological designations given to various classes of artefacts including the beads, bronze work and ironwork.

Colour Main. Often, the main colour of an artefact is obvious, for example a 'red ware cup' is entered as 'red', and a 'silver bit' as 'silver'. However, some objects required a subjective judgement on their colour if no further information could be found in the site report, so leather and wood are often entered as 'brown'. In the case of items of jewellery, in particular beads, their colour has been designated as the most obvious colour of a given type of stone, so that carnelian is red, and beryl and agate are green. Quartz and crystal have been classed as transparent unless the excavators stated otherwise.

Surface Finish. The general finish on the surface of the artefact was recorded as either 'dull', 'shiny', 'luminous' or 'sparkly'.

Source. The main material source from which an artefact was made was recorded as 'mineral', 'metal', 'clay', 'composite', 'animal', or 'marine'.

Material B, Colour B, Surface Finish B, Material C, Colour C, Surface Finish C, Material D, Colour D, Surface Finish D, Material E, Colour E, Surface Finish E. When an object has been constructed from more than one material, the material and its corresponding colour and surface finish have been entered in the order that the excavators described them.

Ware. I have converted the original pottery forms given in the excavation reports to conform with the ware classifications devised by Adams (1986a and 1986b).

Form. Entries in this field correspond to the simple overall outline of an object. It has been most useful in describing the form of beads. After examining the illustrations in the bead register I made my own classifications of the bead shapes, to include such terms as barrel, disc, ball, oval, thin pendant drop and so on. Beads with a complex form, not easily classified by a single term, have been grouped as 'fancy' (see Emery and Kirwan, 1935b pl. 43 and pl. 44 for the original bead table).

Decoration Method A. If the excavators have given information regarding decoration methods ('inlaid', for example), I have generally followed them. However, when such information is absent, I have made logical assumptions resting on the information given elsewhere about the same class of object. Pottery decorated with lines, festoons or splashes are believed to be 'painted', and decoration on metalwork is usually cast. Decoration Method A represents the most important or widespread method of decoration on an object.

Decoration Design A. The various designs on an object, such as 'lines (lateral)', 'bands' (bands are thick horizontal lines), 'splashes', 'festoons' are entered in the order in which they appear under the corresponding column title.

Decoration Type A. Following the detailed description of the decoration design given in the previous field, this field records the designs by grouping them together under the designations 'figural', 'freeform', 'linear', 'geometric' or 'integral'.

Decoration Method B, Decoration Design B, Decoration Type B, Decoration Method C, Decoration Design C, Decoration Type C. The decoration methods B

and C, are the second and third methods of decoration described for a given object. The 'Decoration Method', 'Decoration Design' and 'Decoration Type' columns alternate with one another in order to make the relationship between each decorative scheme clear. On a particular type of bronze bell, it is possible to read across the columns that the decoration method used on the bell was incising, and that the decoration design formed by the incising was lines, and that the decoration type was linear. Therefore 'Decoration Method A', 'Decoration Design A' and 'Decoration Type A' refer to each other (and so on through these entries).

Feature: Script. If an object features any writing, the type of writing was entered as 'graffito', 'hieroglyphs', or 'Greek'. This field also contains details of potmarks (Emery and Kirwan, 1935a, 400; Emery and Kirwan, 1935b, pl 115).

Feature: Figure. If an object was designated as featuring a human, animal, floral, or vegetal design motif, the specific design detail is entered here, for example as 'emperor', 'rosette' or 'lion'.

Feature: Figure. If there is more than one class of figure depicted on an object, further details are entered here in the second 'Feature: Figure' column.

Feature: Contents. A number of the artefacts, largely the pottery, was discovered to containing different items that are entered as 'grain', 'unguent' and the like. In some cases, objects were discovered with a carbon deposit on the exterior. This information has been recorded as 'carbon (ext)'.

Zone. I have divided the body into three main areas; the upper zone ('U') relates to the area from the chest upwards, the middle zone ('M') corresponds with the area from the chest to the top of the thighs, and the lower zone ('L') which relates to the part of the body from the top of the thighs to the feet.

L/R/A/C. Artefacts were entered into the database as having been found on the 'Left'(L) or 'Right' (R) of a body, 'Around' (A) or at the 'Front' (F) or 'Back' (B), or 'Central' (C) or 'Above' (Ab).

Object found? This field records where a given object was found on a certain body. It specifies for example 'neck', 'waist', 'back' and the like.

It is necessary to stress that many of the artefacts do not have an entry in every field – only a few objects were found to have three or four colours or designs. When artefacts did not exhibit enough variety to fill every field with a specific entry, 'N/A' was entered instead. This was necessary to avoid dangling references and holes in the database.

3.7. Problems with the Data.

In any study that uses archaeological evidence, there are certain problems with the data. Taphonomic processes, looting, excavation methods, and standards of recording and analysis all affect the integrity of the dataset. However, this is a constant problem that every archaeologist must deal with at a suitable level of inference. Looting was a particular kind of activity that was likely to affect certain artefact types such as jewellery rather than the pottery corpus. Unfortunately, Emery and Kirwan were not always entirely consistent in their recordings and drawings. In the case of the Ballana tombs, the excavators did not draw any animal remains on their plans, and so information regarding their body position is largely lost. This was also the case for some human remains. For example, BT06 was an intact grave containing three human skeletons. Whilst the location and general physical position of the individuals has been written down, there are no corresponding drawings. Only Body C from the burial pit has been fully drawn in. This means that the information that can be gained from queries regarding body positioning of both animals and humans is not as fully comprehensive as it could have been, if the excavators had been consistent in their recording. This is highly frustrating, as it means that potential

comparisons between the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries are already biased by the differential standards of recording applied at the two sites. Certain fields of information in the database are concerned with mathematical measurements, such as the area of each tomb or the volume of earth in the tumuli. However, given the nature of the theoretical basis of this work, and the research questions being posed, many of the pieces of data are quite subjective, for example those fields pertaining to the colour and design on an object. Based on the descriptions given by the excavators, drawings and photographs of the objects, I have subjectively categorised these values.

The anatomical information provided by el-Batrawi's report on the human remains has been the basis for the designation of the sexes of the skeletons. However, not every skeleton was examined, and a number remain unsexed. The method which el-Batrawi used to sex the human remains is unclear, as he gives no information about which system of designation he adheres to, or which selection of bones from a skeleton were the object of study. El-Batrawi gives a list of the abbreviations relating to parts of the bones that he uses in his study. The majority of these measurements related to the various parts of the cranium. Other bones including the femur, humerus, radius and tibia were also measured in order to record the stature of the bodies. The measurements that el-Batrawi took correspond with those recommended in the 'International Agreement for the Unification of Craniometric Measurements' (el-Batrawi, 196) and Wilder's 1920 volume. None of the measurements recorded by el-Batrawi relate to the pelvis, which is the most reliable part of the human body to use in sexing the bones. I would therefore suggest that el-Batrawi used measurements of parts of the skull in order to determine sex. The cranium can exhibit significant sexual dimorphism, but ideally an attempt at assigning sex to human remains should cross-reference measurements from a number of different sites on the skeleton. Due to the lack of information given by el-Batrawi, his designations should be treated with caution. Despite these shortcomings, el-Batrawi's sexing is included in the database for the sake of completeness. One hundred and sixteen skeletons are designated as Female (F),

Male (M), Possible Female (F?) and Possible Male (M?). Out of a total of ninety-one intact human burials, sixty-one are intact, sexed, and aged.

Preliminary caveats regarding the ageing at death of the human remains have been outlined above. el-Batrawi makes no mention of the criteria which he used in order to assign ages to the human remains. Given the degree of attention that he paid to measuring the skulls, it is possible that he used cranial suture closure to assign age. Given his lack of concern with using the pelvis to assign sex, and the absence of pelvic measurements, it is unlikely that el-Batrawi used the pubic symphisis as an aid, even though the procedure was first published in 1920 (Todd). El-Batrawi does mention tooth eruption in his report, and in particular the eruption or non-eruption of the third molars, and this must have informed his ageing of certain individuals as in their twenties, assuming their similarity to modern populations (which may be erroneous). In some cases el-Batrawi also makes oblique reference to epiphyseal fusion: for example, 'the epicondyles of both humera are just joining the shaft' (1935, 152). Yet these instances are the exception rather than the norm, and therefore although el-Batrawi may sometimes have used methods of ageing that were more reliable, such as tooth eruption and epiphyseal fusion (Mays, 1998, 44-47), the opacity of his methods, and consequently of his results, remains. Some of the bodies that are deemed to be children have been sexed, such as 'a child, probably female, eight years old' and 'another child, probably a boy, about puberty' (1935, 158). These designations of sex should be ignored as it is impossible to sex human remains before the onset of puberty without DNA analysis. The two fields in the database that relate to age give the best compromise position. The precise designations of el-Batrawi have been retained in one field, whilst in the other field, the ages are grouped in broad stages. These categories are a basis for inference within the database. We might consider these intact, sexed and aged interments as the core group, from which the most 'valid' tests can be run, and interpretations made. However, the degree of confidence with which the data on sexing and ageing can be utilised is severely limited.

In entering the data into the database, it became clear that certain parts of the site reports do not correspond to one another. It is stated that pottery type 7b,

in tomb QT02 were decorated with potmark number five (Emery and Kirwan, 1935a, 400; Emery and Kirwan, 1935b, pl 115). However, when the register for tomb QT02 is examined, there are no pottery vessels of type 7b mentioned (Emery and Kirwan, 1935a, 30-33). In tomb BT03 there were 76 vessels of type 7b, exhibiting a number of different potmarks. As no information was given with regard to which vessels had which potmarks, I have divided the examples equally between the vessel types, thereby according a potmark class to four groups of nineteen vessels.

The 'Zone' and 'Object Found?' fields within the 'Objects' table contain details about where a given object was found in relation to a particular body. When an individual was wearing a particular item, the relationship between body and object was obvious. However, other items may have been found near to a body. In such cases I have made a subjective judgement about whether or not I deemed it reasonable to associate the object with that body.

3.8. Summary.

This chapter has discussed the ways in which mortuary remains have been approached as a category for study in mortuary studies in general. I have examined the influential positions and theories that can inform a debate about the meaningfulness of funerary remains. It has been argued that approaches to mortuary remains by Nubiologists have been very limited, and that this is due, at least in part, to the intellectual preoccupations of the researchers involved, and due to the types of information that they have sought from the evidence. This has been a limiting factor in investigations of the evidence, and ultimately, to our understanding of the Nubian past. The difference between the approach taken in the course of this research and that of other authors depends upon how the relationships between artefacts and people are understood, and upon how these relationships inform the enactment and meaning of mortuary ritual. These are issues to be explored in greater depth in the following chapter. Finally, the construction of the database that is used to interrogate the data from both cemeteries and the problems that exist in the dataset have been explained. The

next chapter will elucidate the theoretical ideas that frame this thesis, and affect the lens through which the database is utilised to manipulate the data.

Chapter Four

Theoretical Perspectives.

4.1. Introduction.

In the previous chapter I outlined the scientific methodology that I have developed in order to approach the material remains from Qustul and Ballana. This chapter turns to the specific theoretical perspectives which underpin this study. The theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter are important for understanding the research questions that frame this thesis, and for understanding the reasons why the Qustul and Ballana data will be interrogated from particular angles in the chapters that follow. To a certain extent, some of these ideas have already been suggested in chapters one and two. In this chapter, I will provide a more detailed discussion of how the relationships between artefacts and individuals have been perceived, and could be perceived by people. This leads to a discussion about archaeologies of identity. In order to formulate these theories, it is necessary to deconstruct the nature of the terms 'individual', 'body', 'identity'. Drawing on anthropological research, various perceptions of the body and personhood will be outlined. The potential range of relationships between people and artefacts feed into the twin themes of identity and aesthetics, as it is through the creation and use of the body and artefacts that identities and aesthetic values are expressed.

4. 2. Nubian Archaeology: Framing the discipline.

In the previous chapter (section 3.3) it was suggested that the lack of interpretation of some Nubian remains, and in particular the mortuary remains, has acted as a constraining factor on the discipline. For Lenoble and Sharif, it is this lack of interpretation that has allowed stereotypical assumptions and explanations of the Nubian past to persist (1992, 630). I agree with this position, and would argue that interpretation of the remains will prove to be the way to

open up discussions concerning life and death in the Sudan. This lack of interpretation itself needs to be explained. In part, this is due to the specific conditions surrounding the development of archaeological interest in the ancient Sudan, but in other ways this is linked with the wider development of the entire archaeological discipline.

Since its inception then, the history of archaeological activity in Nubia and the Sudan has broadly been that of international cooperation in order to survey, record and rescue material and monuments in the Nile valley. Unsurprisingly, such conditions have necessarily led to an emphasis on practical excavation work, recording, and publishing of archaeological material often in terms of site reports. The research agenda has tended to be reactive rather than proactive. As a related trend, much emphasis has been placed upon developing chronologies of the large sites (see for example Adams, 1986a and 1986b, Gratien, 1978, Lacovara, 1987, Török, 1987a; 1999, Trigger, 1965). This emphasis has been a necessary aspect of Sudanese archaeology, as, without information on the chronological positions of the remains, it is very difficult to apprehend the relative significance of a site, the changes in the country through time, or to proceed to other questions.

I argued in chapter two (section 2.2) that Nubian archaeology has laboured for some time under the mantle of culture history, although of course until the mid twentieth century, this was the case for every aspect of the discipline, whatever the temporal or geographical parameters. However, it is my contention that Nubiology has yet to fully shake off the characteristics of the culture historical approach. These inter-related trends in the development of Nubiology have fostered an academic interest that has been focussed upon empirical data collection and collation. Nubian archaeology has remained largely disengaged in the theoretical and methodological debates that have gained currency within the wider discipline. This has limited the development of conceptual frameworks with which to approach the Sudanese past. Furthermore, it has also had the consequence that the archaeology of the Sudan is a relatively untapped resource within the wider intellectual and pedagogic discipline of

archaeology. As such, Nubia is often only known to students as a colony of Egypt, rather than a country with its own dynamic heritage and cultural history.

Alongside the general neglect of a social archaeology within Nubian studies (Edwards, 1996a, 5), it can be argued that, when approaching mortuary remains, Nubiologists have tended to take a classificatory, or descriptive stance. Meskell (1994, 35) accused Egyptologists of conducting an archaeology of burial rather than an archaeology of death. A similar allegation could be levelled at Nubiologists given their apparently limited view of funerary ritual. I think that it is possible to be a little more explicit about the interpretational limitations that can be found in the study of Nubian funerary remains. Although the classificatory stance provides a helpful chronological indicator, the methodological processes involved in such a project, divorces the object type, grave structure or other material factors from their inter-related contexts. Not only might such classifications lead to smooth trajectories of development (and perhaps 'degeneration'), glossing over idiosyncratic or infrequent manifestations of the material type in question, but the objects or buildings are also removed from their mode of manufacture, method of use, or manner of deposition (this argument relates to the comments that I made in sections 3.6 and 3.7 of the previous chapter). Such factors are the essence of a contextual archaeology. One might argue that when faced with a mass of material objects that we cannot easily assimilate or understand, the creation of lists, chronologies and the development of taxonomies make the data more 'secure' and easier to manipulate. The unruly objects are set in order. What sometimes seems to occur via the archaeological devices of typology and seriation, is not that the objects and the people become entirely disengaged from one another, but rather that they are collapsed together. The X-Group come to be defined by pottery goblets with splash patterns, and one is unthinkable without the other. People are reduced to, and constrained by, the object. Concurrent with this position, is the erasure of human action and involvement in the production of objects, or in their use. The objects occur in contexts signifying a meta-identity 'X-Group', but little else. Other than speaking about the practices of their group owners, objects seem only to speak of their origins – in the case of Qustul and Ballana, folding

chairs from Rome or Kushite insignia from the South. Again, what is lacking is an account of human interaction with, and active use of, the artefacts. In terms of the post-Meroitic period, I would argue that this has occurred due to limited discussions of craft manufacturing and specialisation, socio-political organisation, and funerary practices. Only a limited identification of 'people' might be suggested through the generic terms of '*phylarch*' or '*comes*' that are found in written sources. In order to take steps to redress this imbalance, chapter six will be concerned with approaching the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana from such perspectives. Returning to Török's study of Qustul and Ballana (1987a), his wider agenda is to explore the Ballana and Qustul material for signs of continuity or change between the Meroitic and post-Meroitic periods. Whilst this is certainly a debate that continues to have relevance for this period of Nubian history, I believe that it might be more fruitfully explored via an investigation of practice as mediated by people and artefacts, rather than by comparisons between artefact types that seem to be viewed as objects that express only a date and a geographical location.

Further to this discussion of the limited interpretative framework that exists between the artefacts and peoples of Lower Nubia, I would also suggest that the human body has been viewed from a restricted perspective. Quite apart from the points already mentioned in chapter two concerning the uncomfortable assumptions of certain past researchers, and their belief in the utility of craniometry and its insidious implications, other problems can be mentioned. Various examples of the continuing interest in human remains from Nubian excavations have been cited in chapter three (section 3.3). These studies can provide new insights into cultural practices, the problems and dangers of daily life in the past, and subsistence patterns. But this remains the extent to which the body has been investigated in Nubian studies. It can be argued that the human body has been turned into an artefact class of its own, studied with a particular kind of scientificity and apparent objectivity. Within Egyptian studies, the mummified body has been treated as an object *par excellence*. Since the beginning of Egyptological enquiry the mummified body has been unwrapped, dissected, scanned, sampled, analysed and arranged for public display. There is

a certain pleasure in penetrating these bodies (*cf* Shanks and Tilley, 1989, 72). There has been little interest in moving towards a broader conceptualisation of the body as a changing part and product of cultural life.

In order to understand the implications of this situation, to make clearer the theoretical perspectives that have underpinned much of the development of Sudanese archaeology, and to make apparent the distinctions in the theoretical approaches that underpin my research, it is necessary to turn to the past that has structured the discipline and its debates.

4. 3. Making the Body.

Broadly speaking, the origins of archaeology as a methodical academic discipline can be traced back to the interest in the Classical past during the Renaissance, and subsequently during the Enlightenment. Humanist scholars, at first concerned with texts, gradually turned their attention to the material world and the recovery of novel finds from perfunctory excavations. Thomas has recently argued that the discipline of archaeology could not have developed without acceptance of two central tenets of modernity. Humanity needs to be viewed as the subject of history, and secondly the world can be seen to exist as a set of resources for humans to exploit. Both of these ideas rely upon the supplanting of divine importance with the centrality of the human being. The view that an omniscient deity created the world is replaced by a view in which the world can be apprehended and known through human endeavour. Consequently the world can be perceived as a rich vein of resources that are at the service of humans, rather than perceiving the world as the manifestation of a creator deity (Thomas, 2004, 52-53). These two central principles, (the eminence of human potential and the subjection of nature) lie behind the development of the study of the past and these ideas enable archaeological investigation. For example, the debate concerning the depth of the antiquity of humanity could not have taken place without this shift (see Jensen, 2000 for a related argument). If history is a linear process, traces of prior human actions must underpin the present state of the world. Learning about the past therefore

helps to explain the present. If the world is understood as a passive resource at the disposal of humans, it becomes possible to wonder how and why those resources have been used in different places and at different times. More fundamentally, it is possible to wonder how (and why, and when), humans authored the acculturated world. With a rational approach based on logical reasoning over the evidence, such knowledge of the world is made possible. Following in the vein of modern western thought, the idea that rigorously adhering to a given method will surely produce truthful results and truthful knowledge is one that continues to find resonance in academia, and indeed is a foundational premise of Western science. It is also a premise that many archaeologists accept. The height of the popularity of the primacy of method might be argued to be the development of the New Archaeology which coupled the development of new scientific techniques, including computer software, and the hypothetico-deductive methodologies of middle-range theory (see the discussion in chapter three concerning the use of computer techniques with regard to mortuary evidence: section 3.5). The setting out of the goals of a given research project, the selection and classification of material, the statement of an appropriate methodology, the interrogation of data and the presentation of results are all familiar steps in the production of archaeological narratives – not least in a doctoral thesis!

The belief in human authority exercised over a passive nature is an opposition which was also paralleled in Cartesian dualism. René Descartes theorised that the mind and body were entirely separate entities. The mind was viewed as having independent elements, and did not rely for existence upon the body. The mind was an immaterial substance with abstract properties, whilst the body had more definable physicality, weight and bulk (Cavallaro, 1998). In his *Meditations* Descartes states '[a]s to the body, [however], I had no doubts about it but thought I knew its nature distinctly. If I had tried to describe the mental conception I had of it, I would have expressed it as follows: by a body I understand whatever has a determinable shape' (Descartes, as cited, Cottingham, 1996, 17). Here the body is a lumpish material object that is simply too obvious to necessitate a philosophical enquiry.

Cartesianism is itself predicated on the solitary reasoning of the lone thinker searching for knowledge. The essentially private self can be known from the inside via privileged access. It is this aspect of Cartesianism that resounds in the development of the archaeological discipline in terms of what questions should be asked about the past, how those questions may be posed, and how those questions should be answered. Arising during the extended period of modern philosophy with its dualistic roots, the archaeological discipline had to be based upon rational exploration and therefore strived to be a logical, measurable, evidence based science. The Cartesian split which promoted human mastery over passive nature also facilitated the investigation of natural history as it necessarily separated the two arenas, giving active preference to the former. From such a privileged position the active investigator could scrutinise and classify the passive counterpart. Essentially, Cartesianism performs a manoeuvre by which a subject-object relationship is enshrined, in which the human actor remains coolly analytical. The consequences of such foundational ideas to the discipline are manifold and far reaching, and in many respects their value is beyond doubt. But, if the subjective knowledge and experience of the individual can only be accessed by the individuals themselves, then they are aspects of the past that are irretrievable to the archaeologist. A consequence is that emotive, experiential factors are deemed to be inappropriate concerns for the modern thinker as they are the ephemera of humanity, and are therefore irrelevant to the hard facts of the past (*cf* Kus, 1992 and Tarlow, 1999, 25-33). Therefore the questions that are considered relevant and legitimate in such a perspective are those that concern the fundamental conditions of human life and progress based on the material record such as economics, politics and trade. In the first place these are questions of origins, peoples and cultures (Lucy, 2005b, 86), and this has been the case for Nubiology too (see section 3.4 of chapter three, and also 4.6 below for a further discussion).

As has been discussed above, and in chapter three, the origins of the material culture discovered in the graves at Qustul and Ballana has been variously attributed. Some of the pottery is certainly imported, such as the mica dusted amphorae (Emery and Kirwan type 13a, 1938a, 390; Adams' ware U18,

1986a, 581) Rose has argued that the folding chairs were gifts from the Byzantine Empire (1992, 132). Certain pottery vessels are painted with Greek graffito, whilst hieroglyphic signs and depictions of Egyptian gods and goddesses also exist. In no small part questions concerning the origins of the material culture from the cemeteries lies at the heart of the discussions surrounding the identity of the people in the graves as Blemmye or Nobadae, and the existence or lack of continuity from the Meroitic to X-Group periods. However, the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana must not be reduced simply to signifiers of origins.

Even if we reject the proposal that any of the material from Qustul and Ballana was indigenously manufactured we are still left in a quandary as to how we are to deal with artefacts of such diverse origins. We are presented with a range of material culture that may have been acquired through raiding, gift-giving or that may represent actual heirlooms, or that contain what could be termed 'stylistic heirlooms' in the form of decorative schemes drawn from Kushitic and Egyptian art styles. These exotic artefacts do not seem to signify 'X-Group' (they are too complex), but instead they seem to signify 'Kushite' or 'Egyptian'. This is where the current lack of interpretation becomes so problematic. If the artefacts are not the product of indigenous manufacturing processes, and nor do they incorporate aspects of the symbolic economy of the X-Group, what is their significance? The artefacts are relegated as booty or gifts (a process in which the X-Group never seem to give, only to receive), and as such their potential is stymied. Within this non-interpretational scenario the people who stole or received these items can do nothing with the objects that makes them significant. The people are not considered to incorporate these artefacts into either daily life or ritual practice, they are not deemed to have any preference towards the artefacts, they are not deemed to use or manipulate the artefacts. Neither the people nor the artefacts interact in any kind of meaningful relationship. People and artefacts seem to exist passively alongside each other. This is a discussion to which we will return in chapter six (section 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4) and chapter seven where my manipulation of the data from the sites will suggest avenues through which artefacts were meaningful.

The question remains therefore, as to why Nubiology has largely failed to engage with and take advantage of developments in archaeological and anthropological theories in the last twenty years or so, that would have enabled the sorts of questions that are asked, and the sorts of interpretations that are made, to develop in fruitful directions. It may be due to the actual conditions of Sudanese archaeology itself which has tended to prioritise excavation and explanation over synthesis and interpretation. In order to offer an interpretation of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries the three major fields of interpretation (bodies, artefacts and identity) must be defined.

4. 4. Individuality, Identity and the Body.

With the development of the modern perspective from the time of the Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers, and the development of newly scientific ('rational') approaches to investigation, the mind and body became increasingly divorced entities. These thinkers and their philosophies are linked by the fact that they were concerned with defining the mind, intellect, soul or will. They sought to understand the mind's relationship to the body in various ways, whether contingent or otherwise, in the human body. Reasoning, rationality, dynamism and the importance of the mind were individual human traits that were lauded and cultivated at the expense of other aspects. However, in opposition to the mind, the body was not really defined in any philosophical or social way by the pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment scholars. The body is visible, and therefore needs no definition. Although the body seems not to be deemed a worthy subject for philosophical enquiry, exploring the body was of great interest to Enlightenment physicians. It is during this period that the splitting of the sexes occurs – the female body as a variation on the male body begins to be challenged, and the idea of two essentially sexed bodies emerges - as does the concurrent epistemological split between the natural and the social. During the seventeenth century, physicians begin to reduce morality and potential to something that is rooted in the physical body. The body became the biological cause of social behaviour (Shilling, 1993, 154). This point also has

important implications for the development of craniometry and anthropometric methods that would later be used in archaeological enquiries, particularly on human remains from foreign countries (see section 2.2 of chapter two for a further discussion). The body, nature and the feminine were cast as passive elements associated with irrationality, emotionality and disruptiveness (Fowler, 2004, 14). Such a position continued into the twentieth century, during which period we have witnessed a rise in the importance of individuality. Contemporary conceptions of the body seem to maintain the illusion that it is a bounded, definable entity. Individuality and the indivisibility of the body are culturally accepted norms, and in the modern West, values that the indivisible individual might champion and regard as inalienable rights include the freedom to act and express oneself, the exercising of individual will and autonomous self-motivated action (ibid. 16). This position resonates with the development of agency theory outlined below (section 4.8).

The biologically 'given' body has been seen as the base upon which culture has been inscribed (culture being the product of the human mind, and therefore being dynamic, adaptive and holding infinite potential in contrast to passive, inscribable nature). The body has been perceived as a natural, biological given, and culture as a complex, intricate series of strategies that have enabled human civilization. Forms of culture that are particularly pertinent to the body might include the use of clothing and adornment, make-up, body modifications and so on. In this way, culture is seen to civilise the natural body, or to put it another way, culture enables the natural body to enter a civilised state. For example, the Roro of New Guinea practice tattooing in order to transform the un-tattooed 'raw' body, into one that is 'cooked'. The tattooed Roro is perceived as being transformed into a human being through this bodily act. The tattoos therefore create social belonging, and denote individuals who are part of a cohesive (and human) group (Ebin, 1979, 24).

The inscription of culture on top of the passive body has resonance for any discussion about identity. This is because such a position continues to operate along a dualistic division. In this division the body has culture written on top of it, and therefore any aspect of culture or social life concerning identity

such as age, ethnicity or gender is divorced from the basic category of the body. Such divisions have been particularly contentious for feminist writers.

In his study of sex and gender, Laqueur has demonstrated the historical specificity of notions of sex and gender, which have altered through time (1990). In modern times we have become accustomed to referring to 'the opposite sex', and have seen the irreconcilable differences between the sexes as rooted in the body, or more specifically, in the genitalia. However, Laqueur argues that this has only recently become a widespread 'truth': 'To be a man or a woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to *be* organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes. Sex before the seventeenth century, in other words, was still a sociological and not an ontological category' (1990, 8). This serves as an excellent demonstration of the potential importance of gender studies in the past. As Laqueur demonstrates, we cannot assume that the gender roles that we ascribe to biological sex are 'natural', any more than a universal understanding of physical sex is 'obvious'. Nor can we neatly project our own modern understandings of sex and gender into the archaeological past.

Anglo-American postfeminism is fundamentally opposed to biological determinism and has rejected psychoanalysis because of its essentialist basis. French postfeminism stands opposed to these ideas as it celebrates the feminine body and emphasises its difference to the masculine. The French psychoanalyst, Luce Irigaray, has argued that all language is fundamentally masculine and phallogocentric, which makes the female and the feminine unrepresentable. The female eludes representation, becoming a lack, the Other. Irigaray, argues that the female is not a sex, but instead is the masculine sex masquerading as the other, as female (1985). The female is marked with a gender, but even this is part of a masculine system of signification. Only with the instigation of an alternate language and signifying economy can the mark be escaped as 'the feminine is nothing but the phallogocentric erasure of the female sex. Binary oppositions [are] a kind of masculine strategy that erases the feminine' (Butler, 1990, 32). For Irigaray, the power of the feminine is located in the uniqueness of the female body. Its inherent changeability, leakiness and creativity are the very

things that are the root of power and potential for women. As an alternative which defies the dominant regime Irigaray asks, 'Why not enjoy it ourselves? Rather than letting ourselves be subjected to their branding. Rather than being fixed, stabilized, immobilized. Separated' (Irigaray, 1985, 280).

In contrast, Monique Wittig, has stated that in confirming the binary opposition between male and female, Irigaray unwittingly consolidates a myth of the feminine. Wittig has alternately argued that 'women' are linked, defined and constrained by their bodies. Wittig disputes the biological origins of gender. The destruction of the category of sex would necessarily destroy the attribution of sex, which for the female, has come to fully take the place of the person. Contrary to Irigaray, Wittig states that the only gender is the feminine, as masculinity is not a gender (is not attributable), instead masculinity is general and universal. As language is not inherently masculine, only its usage is, there is the potential for activating change. This is one of the reasons that feminist archaeologists have called for the rejection of the use of 'mankind' in academic texts (see the explicit statement in Conkey and Spector, 1984, 2). Wittig's project to destroy the category of sex would allow woman to become a universal, like man. This is a project that requires active contestation and disruption in order to change the order of things that are both universally masculinist and heterosexist. Fundamentally then, postfeminism aims to move beyond a simplistic binary opposition of male and female, masculine and feminine, that proceeds directly in a linear fashion from biological bodies which are themselves binarily opposed. This is exactly what gender archaeologists seek to do.

The binary oppositions between sex and gender, and male and female are just some aspects of the way in which the body and parallel concepts have been scrutinised. The attempt to destabilise discussions surrounding sex/gender/the body is necessary and important: it shakes up the naturalised positions concerning the self-evident nature of the biologically constant body and it allows conceptualisations of identity that do not proceed from a timeless, fixed point. As Thomas succinctly states: 'The crux of the matter is this: *as long as we accept that the body's nature is fixed in biology, and that the character of its*

materiality is unquestionable, we have no option but to maintain the mind/body dualism' (Thomas, 2002, 33 original emphasis). More recently, the body has become a focus for related discussion and deconstruction due to questioning of the basic assumption that the body is simply a biological entity with readily definable boundaries that are static and fixed. These assumptions can be challenged further on two different but related grounds: the conceptualisation of the body, and the materiality of the body.

Drawing on research concerning the construction of the body, the self, and individuality in anthropology in recent years, the image of the bounded, individual body as a Western construction has been thrown into sharp relief against other contrary conceptualisations. Three major different conceptions of the body and the self have been recently introduced to the archaeological literature, although there are surely many more possible manifestations. Writing on personhood in Melanesia, Stratern has argued (1987; 1988) that people in that society are dividual and partible. The dividual person is constituted from a series of parts, none of which come from the person themselves, but instead originate outside of the person in their parents. The components that make up a person are termed 'substance-codes' and these may be subtle 'unseen' codes such as knowledge, learning or language, or they may be material codes such as money or food. Various substance codes are given and received in a continual process of interaction and constitution. The different types of substance codes that are given and received internally alter the self, and the person is always changing. The partible person is also made up of numerous parts. Internal parts can be detached and given away. In giving away a part of the self the person is slightly diminished in scale, whilst the person who receives the part is made larger. In this conceptualisation of the self, both substances and objects are part of the person and can be both extracted from and incorporated into the body. Developing this idea, and forming an interpretation of personhood in India, Busby has suggested (2000), that people are partible and permeable. The permeable person is constructed from different bodily substances such as money and food in a similar way to the dividual. However, the substances involved in the creation of the permeable person cannot be extracted from them. The

substances extend from and through the person, but cannot be isolated, removed or returned (Busby, 1997, 273). In this situation, each substance-code has a fixed meaning and gender. The qualities of the substance-codes move through people, and there are different degrees of permeability that change through the life-course (Fowler, 2004, 24-32). In all of these different conceptions of the body and personhood, the person is fluid, made up of multiple parts and in a constant state of negotiation. Furthermore, these personhoods need not be mutually exclusive, but may instead co-exist (ibid. 33). These are various conceptions of the body and personhood to which I will return in the reinterpretation of Qustul and Ballana.

To return to the very materiality of the body, the uses of body modification serve as an interesting example of the difficulty of understanding the boundaries of the body. The surface of the skin is often cited as the boundary between one body and the next, or the individual body and the world. Yet is this dividing line clearly marked? The skin does not offer a permanent boundary as the skin sheds and renews itself. The skin is also permeable, and can exude substances such as pus and sweat. It is also punctuated by orifices that can alternately ingest and expel. The skin itself is unstable, but the structure of the skin 'allows' tattooing. However, when tattooing or scarification is 'applied' to the skin of the body, the patterns become part of the body, as they are indelible marks. In permanently modifying the physical body, cultural meaning is carved into the flesh and that meaning becomes integral to the embodied self. Such ceremonies may occur at important moments in the life of an individual (after the weaning of a child), or at important moments for the entire society (moving between one social life-stage and another), again demonstrating this movement between the personal and the social. Body modification expresses the belonging (or otherwise) of the individual within the collective.

From the theories and examples presented above it is clear that the unity and boundedness of the body and the person are not natural, unproblematic facts. Chapman goes even further than suggesting a breakdown of bodily boundaries when he proposes that the apparent gulf between people and objects can also be questioned (Chapman, 2000, 5). In my treatment of the Qustul and

Ballana material in the chapters that follow, this suggestion will be followed, and the artefacts, human remains and artefactual remains will all be investigated in a comparable manner.

In the ethnographic examples of personhood outlined above, the constitution of the fluctuating person is often based on the exchange of essences or substance-codes. In terms of the partible person (where parts are extracted from one person and absorbed into another), the objects (in the widest sense of the term) or parts create mediated exchange relationships. Relationships between people are mediated by the parts that are separated and absorbed, detached and reattached, as the part carries their influence. In relationships of mediated exchange, such as exists for the Mount Hagen people of New Guinea, no actual tangible gift is necessarily offered or returned, instead it is essences that are exchanged. Such a process can be described as inalienable exchange as alienable things (objectified, separate types of property over which one has ownership), are not exchanged *per se*. Exchange is therefore inalienable from the people who practice it and the relationships between them. Consequently, personhood is a trace of how exchange relationships are handled, repeated and performed (Strathern, 1988, 172-173). Alternatively, in a scheme in which individuals have direct influence on/over one another, exchange is unmediated. In unmediated exchange, because influence is direct, unequal relationships can be established. (Strathern 1988, 178-179).

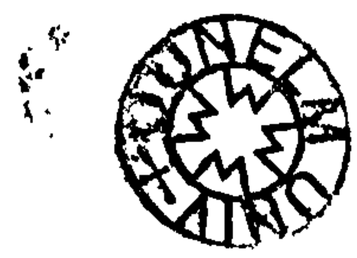
For Chapman then, the imbrication between people and objects in inalienable exchange enacts a process of enchainment (Chapman, 2000, 31-32). Furthermore, the process can take place between people rather than just between people and objects. 'The general enchainment of relations means that persons are multiply constituted. There is no presumption of an innate unity: such an identity is only created to special, transient effect (Strathern, 1988, 165). In the process of enchainment the intrinsic value of an artefact or a set of artefacts is as much about the process of circulation and the inter-personal relationships founded in circulation as the value inherent in the artefact itself. This is a point that concerns the question of how value is created, and how the relationship between humans and objects may be construed. These are points that will be

expanded upon with regard to the material from Qustul and Ballana (see sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 of chapter six, and chapter eight).

4. 5. The Body as a Cultural Artefact.

Further suggestions can be offered that encourage an escape from uncritical uses of the terms 'body', and 'individual'. In the previous sections I have outlined two avenues from which criticisms of normative concepts of the body have arisen: feminism and its continued influence in archaeology, and archaeologist's engagement with accounts of different forms of personhood from anthropological literature. The breakdown of the lines between the individual body and the individual artefact that have been discussed above allow for increasingly fluid conceptions of the two, and increased interaction between the two (and with the wider world). We have also seen evidence that the body should not be perceived as a blank slate upon which culture is layered. The body may be multiply authored and is culturally created and creative.

The obvious consequence then, is that the body is created differently in culturally and temporally specific contexts. It may even be the case that the person is not automatically a full member of the group from birth, and that at a particular point in the lifecourse the person is incorporated into the group via specific bodily practices. For example, the Nuba use vegetable and mineral matter mixed with oil or fat to paint their bodies. For girls, this practice takes place from the age of six, when girls cover themselves in oil and ochre each day until they are married and the marriage is consummated. The colour of the ochre is governed by that of a woman's patri-clan. Whilst nursing a child, ochre is worn only on the shoulders, in the colour of both her father and husband's patri-clan. Males paint their bodies from the age of about twelve, with the youngest men wearing a restricted range of colours. The use of yellow and black is restricted to the older age groups. Faris sees this painting as a celebration of the productive male body through decoration, in contrast to the elders who produce nothing and who are therefore undecorated (Faris, 1988, 59). The use of ochre in



body painting, in the case of the Nuba, draws the newly social six year old female into the social group and outwardly demonstrates her belonging.

Archaeologically, it would be very difficult to identify bodily practices such as body painting, or to suggest the social practices governing its use, without visual depictions. However, this is not entirely impossible. Palettes, for grinding malachite and galena are well attested from Predynastic Egypt. The palettes (and sometimes the minerals for grinding) were perhaps considered to be an important part of a person's identity in this life and the next, as they are usually found in mortuary contexts. Some of the palettes, in the shape of animals such as birds or turtles, have perforations which might indicate that the palettes were worn on the body (at the neck or waist?), as an indicator of group membership, or as a personal totemic or decorative item, which enabled the wearer to touch-up their make-up at any given moment. This gives an impression that always having the ability to 're-decorate' the body was a necessary social practice. The possibility that skin decoration was important is suggested by a C-Group female from Kubban was found with tattoos or cicatrisations (Firth, 1927, 52, pl. 2) and a Meroitic period individual from Aksha with tattoos on the face, limbs and torso (Vila, 1967, 368-377). In a further parallel dating to the A-Group period in Nubia, a number of the female skeletons excavated by the Scandinavian Joint Expedition were discovered with small sharp bronze implements, some with hooked ends, lying between their face and hands. Such items did not occur in male burials. These implements may have been used for creating cicatrices, and the fact that they occur in female burials may indicate a specifically female craft specialisation (practiced on whichever individual or group), or a form of body modification that was practiced by females for females (H.-Å. Nordström, pers comm). If this interpretation is correct, it suggests a gendered bodily practice both in terms of the role and technique of the individual creating the tattoo, and in terms of the people who could appropriately receive and display cicatrices (for a discussion of the Egyptian evidence concerning tattooing see Bianchi, 1988).

Meskell has argued (1998, 145) that, broadly speaking, there have been two attitudes to the investigation of the body within archaeology. For Meskell,

Egyptian, Mediterranean and Near Eastern archaeology has tended to approach the 'body as display', whilst British and European prehistory has tended towards a 'body as artefact' perspective (see also Meskell, 2000, 16). The body as display perspective tends to see the body as a static, stable starting point upon which gender (or status, ethnicity and the like), is socially constructed. The body and the social exist in a causal, linear relationship, with the social being grafted upon the passive body (see for example, Watterson, 1991, Tyldesley 1994 and Zach, 1999). Prehistorians (in particular, Barrett, 1994) have instead viewed the body as existing and interacting within a landscape, and in a relationship with the monuments in it (but see Treherne, 1995, on the masculine body as display in Bronze Age Europe). The actions of these bodies are structured and constrained by networks of power, and as such, represent a corporate social body rather than individual agents. Meskell terms this the 'society in microcosm model', as the bodies reflect larger social processes, but have little power of resistance, change or individuality (1998, 145). I would argue, that to some extent this disagreement exists because of the very different nature of the material evidence with which these archaeologists deal.

A crucial turn in these discussions of the body and identity is the concept of embodiment, often associated with Merleau-Ponty. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is a means of being in the world, where the body is a shifting, unstable form interacting with the world, which shapes the world, whilst being shaped by it. Consciousness never has a pure form, as it is always 'embroiled in a tissue of flesh and blood' (Cavallaro, 1998, 88). Merleau-Ponty sees the body not as a passive object, but as a thing that is crucial in informing our point of view in the world. It is through the body that we come to know and experience the world. The body is a physical, animate, fleshy thing in which particular psychic and social processes intersect (Meskell, 2000, 13, *cf* Grosz, 1995, 104). Embodiment is a means by which to overcome Cartesian splitting of mind/body, nature/culture. However, this very subjective perspective of embodiment is not a quintessential, all-encompassing account of being-in-the-world, because embodied experience is spatially and temporally located. Within this framework, the body becomes central and indispensable to the discussion. Furthermore the

body is not irretrievably divorced from consciousness (or the mind, or the soul). Neither are the mind and body viewed as a-historical constants, because they change, and subjective experience changes in different times and places. The process is reflexive. Embodiment then is a term that encompasses the lived, bodily experience of being human, although this is always historically and culturally contingent. The concept of embodiment is key to this research, as in the chapters that follow, the physical subjective experience of the enactment of ritual and the use of artefacts at the cemeteries of Qustul and Ballana will be explored. In chapter seven in particular, the subjective experiences of seeing and touching will be investigated, and we will return to the concept of embodiment in chapter eight.

4. 6. Identities.

The previous sections have exemplified conceptions of the individual, personhood and the body contrary to those dominant in the modern West, and have also introduced the idea of a breakdown between the person (individual body) and the object as mutually discrete categories. Having introduced the permeable, partible and dividual person, and having discussed the importance of embodiment, it may be useful to explain further some of the terms that have been used in recent archaeologies that may be positioned under the term 'archaeologies of identity', particularly as these are terms that have already been encountered in this chapter, before we turn to a discussion of identities. These terms are 'personhood', 'self' and 'identity'. It is also pertinent to offer a definition of 'individual' which moves away from the manner in which it has previously been used in this chapter to discuss individuality as a modern construct.

Personhood is a continual life process and is the condition of being a person in a particular context. Over the lifecourse, one may move between different states of personhood, particularly at key life moments such as marriage, the attainment of a key calendrical age category, and also at death (Fowler, 2004, 7). In certain stages of life, individuals may be denied

personhood by the attitudes of the wider group. This is particularly the case in the modern west where elderly people can be denied personhood and sometimes infantilised due to popular perceptions of their unproductivity, frailty and dependency (Lucy, 2005a, 57).

The self (or selfhood) encompasses many facets of experience. Selfhood entails a conscious sense of one's place in the world, one's perception, and one's impact on others (Meskell, 1999, 34). It can be argued that the self, selfhood and embodiment exist in rather similar ways, as all three concepts involve embeddedness. However, (at the risk of appearing to introduce an inside/outside binary) selfhood may seem to edge more towards interiority (emic), whilst embodiment, being concerned with bodily experiences may appear to tend towards exteriority (etic). Yet this is really a matter of semantics, as both aspects negotiate with the emic and etic. To be embodied insists on the experience of both internally mediated bodily processes such as menstruation or ageing, and externally mediated bodily experiences such as the perception of inflicted pain. Selfhood is located 'inside' the body in the internal mechanisms that receive and deal with the sensory world and our interaction with others, but it is also 'outside' in as much as interaction in, and negotiation with the world, inform selfhood. Indeed, the term 'embodied self' may be used, which neatly ties these two aspects together.

The individual is the singular person that exists in time and space. However, Meskell is keen to point out, that to be interested in the individual, is not the same as individualism (1999, 19). Nor is it, I would contend, a matter of automatically perceiving the individual as indivisible. In the past few years there has been a growing tension between certain authors concerning their use of the term and the development of archaeological projects that seek to place the individual at the centre of investigation (see for example the debates between Meskell, 1996, 237; 1998; 1999, 38, 50; Thomas 2004, 139; Babic, 2005, 77; Sørensen, 2000). For instance, whilst acknowledging the importance of a critically reflective approach to both gender and sex in archaeology, Sørensen criticises a movement in archaeology towards a focus on sex and sexuality (in for example, some of Meskell's work), particularly when an emphasis is placed

on individual embodied experience. The focus on sex and sexuality is viewed as a move away from the social, highlighting the individual. This is problematic for Sørensen as she believes that this is detrimental to the general archaeological project of understanding social organisation, and that archaeologies which focus on the individual can only offer a limited understanding of the past (2000, 48-9). However, the two projects need not be at odds with one another, and it would seem that these arguments often proceed from the very different material with which these archaeologists are dealing.

The term 'identity' may refer to personal identity – the aspects of one's personality and experience that give a sense of individual 'specialness'. Identity can also refer to those things which foster a sense of sameness in a larger group. These identities are multiple and fluid and subject to constant renegotiation. Therefore identity can change over time. An individual may live through a number of identities at any given time and therefore the body and the self may act as a nexus in which these identities entwine. Identity however, is not just a conceptual term, it relates to lived experience. Identity is continually enacted, and bodies, places, artefacts, other types of material culture and social actions can all be mobilised to create, maintain and alter identities.

Earlier in this chapter, and in chapters one and two, I have discussed the desire of Nubiologists to equate the Qustul and Ballana tombs with tribal groups identified from textual sources, usually as either the Blemmye or the Nobadae. Apart from the argument that this is a rather unhelpful question to ask of the evidence, it is based on a particular conception of the nature of identity and the artefacts used to 'present' an identity. It is the latter definition of identity offered above which relates to the fostering of a sense of sameness, which has seen most extensive application and study in archaeology. Most obviously, the notion of group identity has been a recurrent theme within archaeology, as archaeologists defined peoples and cultural groups via the concentration and spread of particular artefact types. However, this led to the belief that material culture, people and places were involved in a directly attributable relationship. Wolf terms this the 'billiard ball' school of history (Wolf, 1982, 6), in which the past is made up of a number of sharply defined groups 'characterised by

anthropology, language and culture; the true subjects of history, whose destinies could be traced through millennia, spinning off each other in a global pool hall' (Lucy, 2005b, 88).

Arguably, few archaeologists would now accept such an easily readable and mappable account of peoples and cultures. Many studies exist that demonstrate the non-correspondance, or limited correspondence between social groups and their attendant material culture. In his study of the various peoples living around Lake Baringo in Kenya, Hodder was able to demonstrate that the nature of symbolic meanings and the internal organisation of a society affected the distribution of material culture between different social groups (Hodder, 1982, 85). Hodder's research therefore demonstrated that the cultural similarities and differences did not neatly correspond with ethnic boundaries. In such a scenario, it is clear that artefacts are mobilised to create aspects of identity that are not necessarily concerned with demonstrating an ethnic-cultural identity. Instead, contextual considerations regarding gender and age groups are important.

This contextuality poses a challenge for the archaeologist (or anthropologist) as there may well be a difference in within group ascriptions of identity and the ascription of identity from without. Again, archaeologically this point is most pertinent to the identification of peoples and cultures in the past. There may be a variance between how people perceive themselves, and what identities they might profess to hold if questioned, and those identities (often meta-identities) that might be applied from the outside. This is another difficulty with the Blemmye/Nobadae debate in Lower Nubia.

Depictions of foreigners, including Nubians, appear in Egyptian tombs and are creations of ethnic groups from outside that group (see for example the 19th Dynasty depiction from the tomb of Seti I in Wilkinson, 1994, 123). Nubians could be depicted as enemies, as bringing tribute from their homeland, or as one of the 'four races of humankind'. The four races included the Egyptians, the Libyans, the Asiatics and the Nubians. The canonical depictions of the four 'races' (which are always illustrated as male), are macro-representations of their people, and therefore might be expected to exhibit visual

characteristics particular to them. However, these depictions are commissioned by and for an Egyptian audience, and so it can be argued that these depictions are simply stereotypes or propaganda. What we can be sure of is that the four races of 'mankind' were supposed to look different (perhaps even odd) to the Egyptian viewer. In this way, the Egyptians created foreign bodies and foreign identities that were in marked contrast to their own, although they were still depicted in the canonical Egyptian style (see Booth, 2005 for other representations of foreigners by Egyptians). These identities could not encompass the diversity within the entire population of 'Nubians', many of whom are unlikely to have recognised this image or name as part of their identity at all (for a further discussion of Egypto-Nubian identity see Tyson Smith, 2003). However, this kind of categorisation by outside observers can ultimately influence the construction of ethnicity (or other identities) (Lucy, 2005b, 96). For example, by the 1960's, a hundred years after western people had begun to compartmentalize their groups definitively, the 'Yoruba kings looked more "Yoruba", Asante rulers looked more "Asante", and Dahomey monarchs looked more "Dahomey" – like' (Blier, 1998, 39).

Instead of simply reflecting or symbolizing identities, artefacts can be considered as constitutive aspects of a material world, and therefore important in the negotiation of identities. Social relations are produced at the same time as artefacts are produced and used, and therefore whilst the material conditions of life are produced, used and exchanged, group, sub-group and personal identities are created, altered and maintained (Díaz-Andreu and Lucy, 2005, 6). With regard to the material from Ballana and Qustul, this implies that the myriad types and styles of artefacts can be viewed as material which encompassed numerous aspects of social life, and numerous aspects of identity. Chapter six will take up these themes in a discussion of the construction of identity at Qustul and Ballana via material culture. The discussion will involve an exploration of how identity and meaning is produced by material culture that is indigenously produced, or is acquired from an external source.

4. 7. Bodies, Artefacts, Identities.

Bodies and artefacts are integral to creating identities, and these arenas interact with one another. Across Africa, tribes that include the Ibo of Nigeria, the Bete and Dan of the Ivory Coast, the Kenga of Chad, the Kru of Liberia, the Kasena of Ghana and the Fang of Gabon have all traditionally worn anklets. The wearing of metal anklets does not *per se* imply belonging to a single ethnic group. The Kru wear anklets to ward off evil spirits emanating from the ground, whilst Ibo women wear anklets that are hammered into sheet metal and that surround the ankle in a disc shape, with the central point at the ankle. The anklets are replaced by successively larger models as a sign of status, causing the women to walk by swinging their legs outwards in order not to trip. This is an example of how clothing can force an individual to alter a given bodily technique such as walking. The artefact demands a bodily alteration. These anklets were forged onto the legs, and could only be removed by a smith (Fisher, 1987, 88). In this group, it can be argued that the anklets and the special swinging walk become signifiers of femininity. Copper arm rings appear in some graves of the late Neolithic Tiszapolgár culture of the Carpathian basin. The rings were worn on the arms from a young age, and the open ended spiral design of the rings allowed the body to grow. The open end of the spiral armlets is interpreted as a symbol of the unfinished male, particularly as male arm rings were removed at physical maturity (Sofaer-Derevenski, 2000, 399). The artefact becomes an integrated extension of the body in both of these examples, although in the Carpathian basin this was a temporary (yet lengthy) addition. These ethnographic and archaeological examples provide suggestions concerning how the body does not necessarily end at the surface of the skin, and demonstrates how the body may in a very literal sense, incorporate marks of identity. In these examples the interaction of age and gender identities, bodily techniques and the artefact are intertwined.

Clothing appears to be a particularly useful class of artefact for any discussion concerning the interaction of body, material culture and identity. The importance of clothing and its associated accoutrements as a vehicle for the

expression of a range of social and personal messages lies in the visibility and immediacy of clothing. Dress is a public spectacle. Clothing is a category of evidence that is far more wide-ranging and complex than the term might at first imply. Appearance may be sub-divided into three related sub-sections comprising cloth (the textile itself), clothing (designed and/or cut from the cloth) and costume (the assemblage of clothing supplemented by other items) (Sørensen, 1997, 96). Clothing can also encompass the many items that may be worn on the body, and the category must include items such as footwear, jewellery, wigs and the like. Furthermore we should attempt to consider more evanescent elements pertaining to clothing and appearance such as pattern, length, silhouette, drape, transparency and sheen of given items. Therefore, it may be necessary to add another component to Sørensen's categories: appearance. To comment upon someone's appearance is to include much more than just the material forms which enclose the body (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1993, 14). Appearance can be understood as an overall visual image or impression that is apprehended immediately by the viewer in terms of (for example) overall length, colour and silhouette. Appearance is linked to the body and bodily expression as it also encompasses the combination of features, movements and gestures made by the body. Movements of the body will effect the movement of the clothing, and perhaps vice versa. For example, the way one moves would affect the manner and degree to which a long, full skirt or dress swishes and swings around the legs. Such aspects are important parts in the totality of impression that is personal appearance, and which may be a very visually immediate manner through which to express and recognise identities.

In chapters six and seven individual bodies, both human and animal, will be interrogated with an aim to uncovering the aspects of physical appearance that were important at the sites.

4. 8. Artefacts, Identity and Agency.

In relation to identity and the use of artefacts in a mutually creative way, agency should also be considered. Agency relates to notions of the individual

and individual action. As Dobres and Robb state, one of the continuing difficulties with agency theory is that there is little consensus within the discipline about what the term actually means (Dobres and Robb, 2000, 3). Despite this uncertainty, they offer four general principles that frame the concept. These are i) the material conditions of social life; ii) the influence of material, symbolic and social structures, beliefs, habituation and institutions that have an enabling or constraining influence; iii) the importance of the action and motivation of the agent and; iv) the dialectical relationship of structure and agency (ibid, 8). In agency theory, the emphasis has been placed on the power and capacity of the individual to initiate social change. This has led to the collapsing of the actor and the agent. Therefore, evidence of agency has been interpreted as evidence for the existence of 'individuals, subjects or selves' (Moore, 2000, 260). Thomas takes this position further (and criticises Hodder in particular), by stating that not only is agency too frequently conflated with 'the individual', but that society is also too readily conflated with 'structure'. This sets up the agent/individual and structure/society as distinct and opposite things (Thomas, 2004, 121). The emphasis on the power of the individual agent to perform significant actions (or bring about change) may be traced back to Enlightenment philosophers (Dobres and Robb, 2000, 4). From the perspectives outlined above, it might be argued that the recent development of interest in agency theory for archaeologists can be related to the importance of the individual in the modern West. Moore stresses this point emphatically: 'we could not live with ourselves if our archaeology produced accounts of individuals, cultures and societies that left no space for individuality, freedom of choice, will, self-determination, creativity, innovation and resistance. No archaeologist could live with such a view because humans would then have no role, or very little, in the making of our own history. What then would be the point of being human?' (Moore, 2000, 281). In this statement, Moore seems to collapse the concepts of 'individuality' and 'human', and this is perhaps telling in itself.

The use of the term 'agent' seems to further enshrine in modern Western archaeological narratives the importance of individual action. Agency could be

argued to be a further step away from the metanarratives of processual archaeology, exhibiting a desire to explore the past from the micro-scale. In terms of questions concerning identity, agency may be argued to have elaborated notions of individual power and will. Agency theory can also be said to extend the challenge to normative conceptions about 'cultures' and 'peoples', tending as it does, to privilege individual action over group action. However, feminists may have cause for concern about the growing use of the term and the concept. The term 'social agent' has certainly been appearing more frequently in the archaeological literature. Yet, has the concept added much to ideas concerning identity, other than to insert the word 'active' into the collective archaeological vocabulary? If anything, agency has been concerned with issues of power and the freedom to act, both of which are issues that can be linked, in particular, to archaeologies that are concerned with status identities. Yet (as has been argued above), agency is once more based fundamentally in a dualistic conception of the nature of things. The agent/structure binarism perpetuates a long tradition along the lines of culture/nature, mind/body, active/passive and male/female. This concern with oppositions has been important in diverse areas of theory such as structuralism, Marxism and feminism. Furthermore these divisions are not neutral – the first terms in each of the above oppositions take a privileged position over the second (Grosz, 1994, 1995; Strathern, 1996; Meskell, 2000, 14). It has been argued that although the term 'social agent' appears to be a gender neutral term it 'is gendered male by association (first) with traditional western male behaviours emphasizing "action", and (second) with western male-associated personal qualities emphasizing decisiveness and assertiveness' (Gero, 2000, 34 for a similar criticism see Strathern, 1987, 272).

A further development in the theorising of agency can be found in the work of Alfred Gell (1998). Gell's explicit aim was to develop an anthropological theory of art based on breaking down the category of distinctive art objects. The index, (the visible object or thing), allows what is termed 'the abduction of agency': that is, it allows a viewer to make a causal inference about another person or thing (Gell, 1998, 13). More explicitly, the *'index is itself seen as the outcome, and/or the instrument of social agency'* (ibid. 15). As such, (and

as we can recognise from above), the social agent is the cause of intentional actions, although the consequences of such actions may be unintended. The interesting move that Gell makes is to take different forms of agency or 'folk' ideas of agency as centrally significant to illustrating different forms of agency (ibid. 17). More than this, Gell goes on to argue that objects and animals can be argued to exhibit agency. This is not just a belief harboured in animistic societies. Human beings often form relationships with objects, and often attribute intentional actions to those objects. For example, if a multi-media console was to jam part way through an important paper that I was delivering, I may be likely to attribute this (at least to some extent) to the malicious intent of the console rather than solely to my own incompetence in using it, or the neglect of its servicing by the University. The idea that artefacts exhibit agency has come under criticism recently (see Gosden, 2001a, 164). However, Gell was sure to point out that objects do not exercise agency in the same way that people do. Artefacts are only ever secondary agents, and do not exhibit autonomous agency in the manner that humans might, but exist in a relationship with them (Gell, 1998, 17). These are matters to which we will return in chapter seven.

4. 9. Archaeology and Aesthetics.

The study of art has a long history in archaeology. In the earliest excavations it was artefacts with particularly appealing designs, or constructed from especially valuable materials that drew the attention and energies of many treasure hunters. It can be suggested that aspects of the aesthetic qualities of artefacts were the qualities on which fundamental archaeological techniques were founded, namely that of typology (Petrie, 1899). Various formal qualities of an artefact, but in particular shapes, are still utilised as qualities through which relative chronological schemes can be postulated. The culture-history paradigm which dominated archaeology during most of the twentieth century, sought to associate artefacts as the products of ethnic groups via their distinctive qualities that could be tied to particular geographical locations and chronological periods (*cf* Jones, 1996; Lucy, 2005).

It is perhaps the almost unanimous rejection of the art historical approach to artefacts within archaeology (but see Török, 1987a and 1987b for its continued use in Nubiology) that has led to the relative sidelining of discussions concerning art within archaeological discourse in general. Although the art historical approach may be considered to be useful as an approach that considers the origin of artefacts and questions of external influence, it does not offer a contextual approach to the understanding of artefact use and meaning by people in specific times and places. What debate there has been, has been one concerned with 'style' (see papers in Conkey and Hastorf, 1990). In particular the challenge has been set to determine historical identities and social units via an analysis of style, and to better understand the design and production of artefacts so as to produce more thorough and convincing stylistic descriptions of material (Conkey and Hastorf, 1990, 6). Yet, there is also a warning against becoming trapped in a particular methodological or interpretative mindset which treats style as a text that is readable. Conkey and Hastorf term this 'a questionable literary metaphor...[which] promotes a methodological dependence on "reading" the data as "text" as if they were a form of discourse in another language to be decoded' (ibid. 10-11). Apart from the fact that such a scheme suggests that all styles can be approached in the same manner, inherent in the scheme is the idea that if we are able to find the correct translation programme, we will be able to decipher the code and uncover meaning. By implication these translated meanings would be singular and fixed – the same to every viewer at any time or in any place.

An alternative perspective to that of 'readabilty' has been developed with regard to the qualities of clothing. Davis (1992) has argued that if clothing can be construed as a language, it is best likened to the language of music which is a more appropriate metaphor. This is not to deny the complexity of meanings that clothing may convey, rather this theory places additional emphasis on fluidity, emotion and perception - an altogether more phenomenological approach. This is part of a move away from viewing the clothed body as a text, but is also one that can be applied to material culture in general. Instead consideration needs to be made of the seemingly transient or ephemeral qualities

that material culture may have. In terms of clothing this might include aspects such as texture, weight, transparency, drape and silhouette (for a discussion of aural qualities see Dann, 2000). Interrogation of such physical attributes is a move towards a more subjective understanding not only of the use of clothing, but of artefacts in general. Furthermore, it is with this shift of emphasis that we can move towards the consideration of embodied experience. Such an approach fits well with recent attempts to explore material culture from a wider aesthetic perspective (see papers in Gosden, 2001b). Whilst heavily influenced by developments in the anthropology of art, these directions are also influenced by phenomenological and embodied approaches to the past. These are the perspectives from which the finds from Qustul and Ballana will be investigated in chapter seven.

Gell is concerned with developing a theory of art which does not simply correspond with those manifestations of creativity that would be considered (high) art in a western context. As an anthropologist, he is dealing with art that stands outside the western canon, and that is very often art in object form, such as a mask or fetish. The definition of art is therefore made much broader, and can encompass artefacts too. To illustrate this point 'let us suppose that, strolling along the beach, we encounter a stone which is chipped in a rather suggestive way. Is it perhaps a prehistoric handaxe? It has become an 'artefact' and hence qualifies for consideration. It is a tool, hence an index of agency; both the agency of its maker and of the man [sic] who used it. It may not be very 'interesting' as a candidate object for theoretical consideration in the 'anthropology of art' context, but it certainly may be said to possess the minimum qualifications, since we have no a priori means of distinguishing 'artefacts' from 'works of art' ' (Gell, 1998, 16). This statement leads the archaeologist into an interesting situation. Perhaps everyday artefacts can be considered to have art-like qualities, or to operate in art-like ways having similar psychological effects? This is a means by which to broaden the definition of 'the aesthetic' to encompass artefacts which may not appear to be 'beautiful' by modern western standards.

However, it must be noted that this does not necessarily imply an 'elevation' in the status of objects, into a rareified position due to their specialness. Nor does it automatically necessitate the artefact to possess particularly aesthetic qualities. Indeed, there must be certain caveats made with regard to this point. The investigator must be careful not to impose modern, individualised concepts of taste and refinement on the artefacts that they investigate, as this would distort any interpretation. For this reason, the terminology that is utilised in discussing material culture needs to be approached with caution. Describing items with vocabulary such as 'ornamentation', 'deformation', 'adornment' and the like, are value-judgements on the aesthetics of the past, and are likely to reveal more about the author's personal tastes than anything else (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1997, 14; *cf* Layton, 1991, 29). This is precisely the kind of western ethnocentricity that Gell seeks to avoid (Gell, 1992, 40).

I would argue (and this is a point which will be further developed in chapters six and seven) that even the most mundane of artefacts can be approached from an aesthetic perspective i.e. in terms of its sensory properties. What produces specialness in an artefact or assemblage of artefacts may be factors ostensibly unrelated to its beauty or economic value. Indeed, 'specialness' might only be apprehended in certain situations. In part, relationships with artefacts may be very every day and uneventful, particularly if they are the kind of artefact with which we engage on a regular, perhaps daily basis. As such, objects falling into this category appear barely to exist as they are so commonplace and familiar in their appearance, feel and bearing on our lives. Therefore, 'we might argue that we exist in the first instance not as subjects amongst objects but in a state of being-in-the-world, in which we find ourselves embedded in the midst of things. Under these conditions we are likely to encounter entities as doors that we open and pass through, cups that we drink from, or pens with which we write, rather than as objects upon which we focus conceptually. Thus we can draw a distinction between things that are 'ready to hand' (engaged with without necessarily 'thinking' about them at all) and ones that are 'present at hand' (merely subject to contemplative looking and

identification)' (Heidegger, 1962, 98-99). Perhaps however, artefacts can move between being ready to hand and present to hand in different situations, and through their being co-opted and re-cast by particular agents. Within such a framework, the giving, receiving, manufacture, use and display of goods may be commonplace or creative. This creativity interacts to negotiate personhood and identity within the wider group. As such, these acts are also creative of the group.

4. 10. Conclusion.

In this chapter it has been argued that approaches to the body, to the individual, and to identity are inextricably bound up, and that the manner in which they have been apprehended and discussed archaeologically has been structured by the dominant discourse of modernity. The development of post-processual archaeologies, with its much championed multiplicity of approaches to the past and with the self-confessed subjectivities that it embraces, would seem to sit uncomfortably with the modernist paradigms that have been outlined above. This debate is one that is set to continue, particularly as it finds resonance in the wider world with regard to current ideas about individuality and the body. More than this, for many people the project will remain a political one. The importance, for instance, of the feminist debate has already been explored, but if capitalism is a modernist creation, archaeologies of identity and archaeologies of the body that push at the foundational premises of the discipline(?) can also be said to be anti-capitalist (*cf* Thomas, 2004, 235).

Alternative constructions of personhood and individuality, in which social relations exist before people do, are a marked contrast to western notions of the individual who exists ontologically prior to relationships. Discussing dividual and partible concepts of personhood in Melanesia, Strathern states '[t]here is no sense here of an individual self who is the initiator of actions and who creates relationships with others at will, sitting at the centre of their own world' (Strathern, 1988, 269). The integration of such alternative personhoods has much to offer archaeology particularly in terms of problematising

boundaries between persons, bodies, artefacts and animals. These are all themes that will be developed in the following three chapters.

In terms of the scientific methodology advanced in chapter three, including the human (and animal) remains in the construction of the database will enable the investigation of certain funerary characteristics that are often cited as indicative of X-Group practices, such as north-south orientation of the body in the grave (see chapter five). Yet beyond this, the combined recording of the artefactual remains in their spatial relationship with the skeletal remains, enables the exploration of how the body might be understood as an active component in the creation and negotiation of social or symbolic meanings. This is an attempt to view the body and artefacts as existing within a reflexive relationship. Rather than the bodies and the artefacts reflecting singular or limited meaning, they can be construed as actively creating multi-layered presentations. In order to explore this hypothesis the database includes information that concerns the detailed description of every artefact, and the qualities that they embody, such as colour and material (see section 3.6.iv of chapter three). By developing a methodology that actively pursues the apparently insignificant or 'secondary' qualities in the artefacts, we might begin to see elements in an object's design, construction or decoration that were meaningful (for a fuller discussion of primary and secondary qualities see section 7.4 of chapter seven). Combining these elements with information about the bodily remains (artefact position, bodily position, orientation of the face) will enable the formulation of interpretations that inter-cut and enmesh both body and artefact in active (and changing) processes of representation, praxis and performance, which in turn constitute the identities and the self.

Whilst seeing the people and artefacts at Qustul and Ballana as engaged in imbricated and dynamic relationships, this investigation also examines the use of artefacts as objects within, and as objects enabling, the enactment of ritual scenes within the funerary rites at both cemeteries. This is part of a project to situate individuals, and individual objects within the complexities of activities that occur at the sites through time. This contextualizes the archaeological evidence within a broader socio-political state. The evidence gained from the

investigation of bodies and artefacts, their arrangement, use and meaning in the burial rituals, feeds into a larger consideration of the nature of possible social and political structures. The quantitative analysis of the bodies and artefacts from the sites forms the next three chapters, and moves towards a chapter eight in which I will interprets the findings from a perspective informed by the discussions in this chapter.

Chapter Five

The Place and Space of Death.

5.1. Introduction.

In chapter four we have seen the development of the various theoretical themes that underpin this research. The argument has been made that interpretations of the Nubian past may be made that are concerned with the identities of individuals and groups, but that the investigation should be predicated on past practice (i.e. an interpretation of the evidence), whereby roles are not pre-discursive. As a first step in the analysis of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries, this chapter considers the macro-scale and focuses upon the material space of the tombs as the place of death and the place of burial. The spatial dimensions of the tombs and their tumuli will be examined, alongside the general room layouts. Having discussed the physical backdrop of the tombs, this chapter moves on to investigate the skeletal remains from the burials, both human and animal. These concerns are represented in the data from the upper three tables from the database – 'Tombs', 'Loci' and 'Bodies'. It is necessary to give details concerning these physical entities, in order to discuss, in the next chapter, how the artefactual remains might relate to them and fit into the performances at the cemeteries.

5.2. Location of the tumuli at Qustul and Ballana.

The chart below (figure 5.1) shows the general location of the tombs at Qustul and Ballana, as recorded in the site reports (Emery and Kirwan, 1935b) by the phases identified by Török (1987a, 154). The compass points referred to here, once correlated on the maps, appear to relate to local north as defined by the flow of the Nile. In figure 5.2 tumuli identified as being in the south are represented by a circle of solid colour, those in the centre by a cross, and those in the north by a diagonal line. Tomb BT02 was identified as being in an

unknown location, and is therefore marked with a question mark. On the map however, it is obviously in a southerly location.

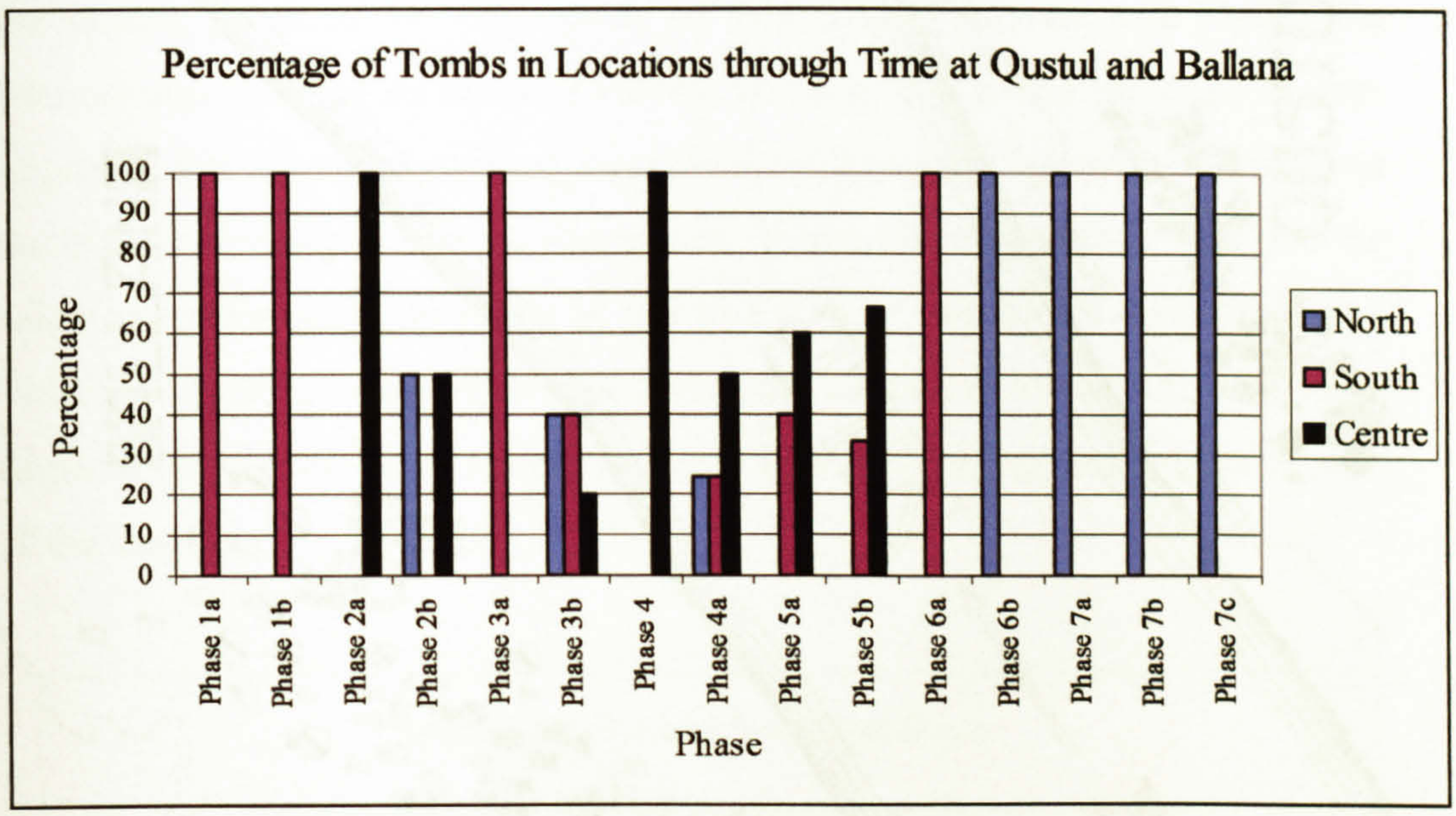


Figure 5.1.

There were a greater number of tumuli at Ballana than there was at Qustul. At Qustul, burial in the north only occurred during phase 2b. The locations of the tumuli at the two cemeteries exhibit different patterns. Numerically, the majority of the tombs at Qustul were located in the southern area of the cemetery, with only one tomb in the north. The rest of the tombs were in the centre of the cemetery. During the first two phases at Qustul, burials only occurred in the south. Numerically, the majority of the tombs at Ballana were in a central location, with the rest of the tombs almost equally divided between a northerly and southerly location. During phase 3b, which is the first period of burials at Ballana, the tombs were constructed in each area. However, in the final four phases of the cemetery at Ballana, there is a wholesale move to burial in the north. It should be noted that during the earliest phases of each cemetery there was no such thing as 'north', 'south', 'east' or 'west', and these locations were gradually defined in relation to the other tumuli.

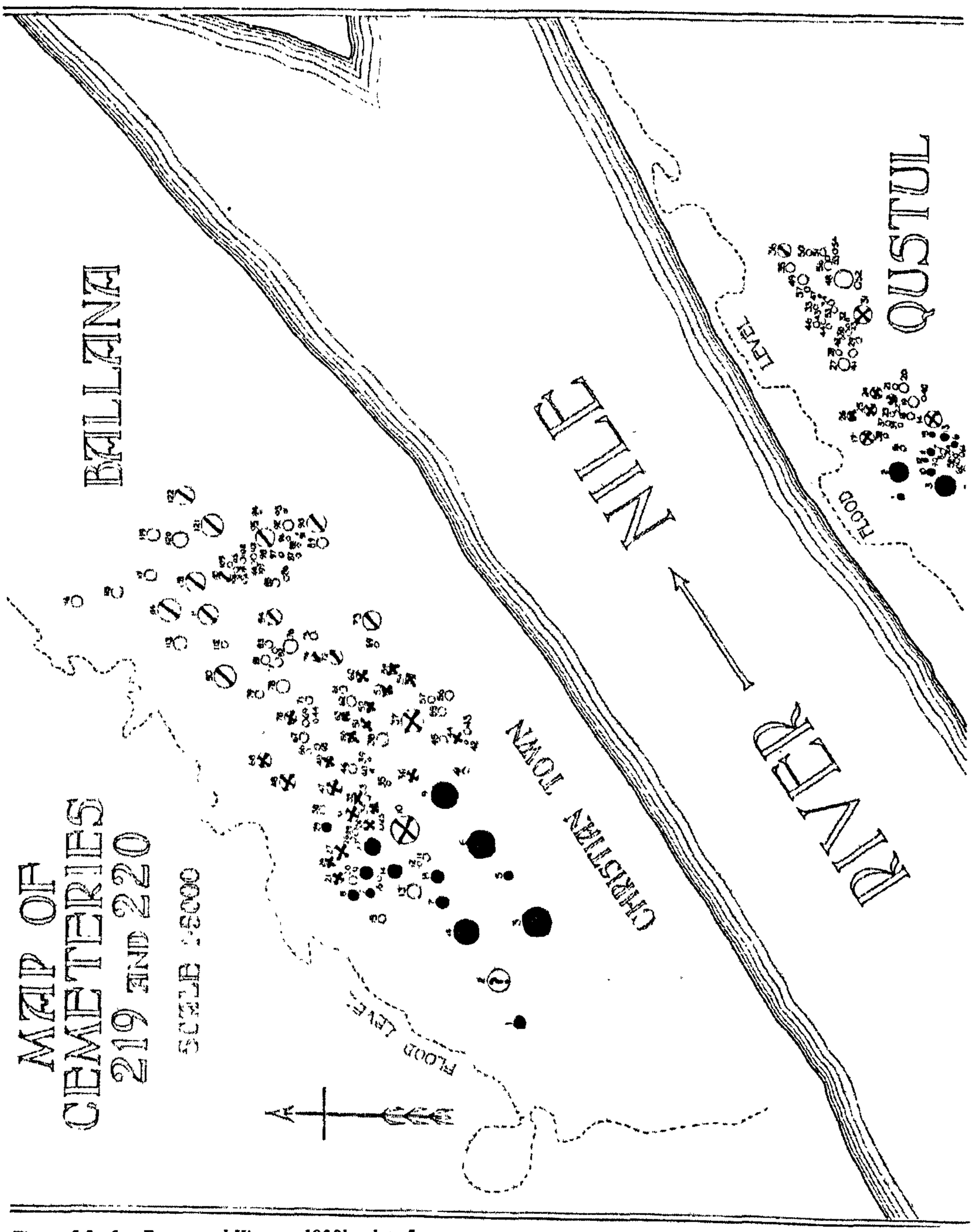


Figure 5.2 after Emery and Kirwan, 1938b, plate 5.

5.3. Approximate volume of the tumuli.

The following figures (figures. 3 – 6), contain bar charts that relate to the approximate area and volume of each of the tumuli investigated in this thesis, at Qustul and Ballana. Both the area of the tombs and the volume of the tumuli reflect the amount of labour and time invested in the construction (although the labour:time ratio is dependent on the number of individuals involved in the

project, and this is an unrecoverable variable), and volume of the tumulus may be a by-product of the area of the tomb that is excavated. The volume of the tumuli has been calculated using the measurements of the radius and height of the tumuli, given in the site reports of Emery and Kirwan, and Farid. The formula used to calculate tumulus volume was p ($r^2 + h^2$). The approximate area of ground that a tumulus covered was calculated using the formula p r^2, based on the measurements given in the site reports. It must be emphasised here that the calculations are approximations of the true size of the tumuli and the tombs. This is certainly the case when considering the volume of the tumuli, as gradual degradation over the centuries has no doubt lessened the original heights of each of the mounds.

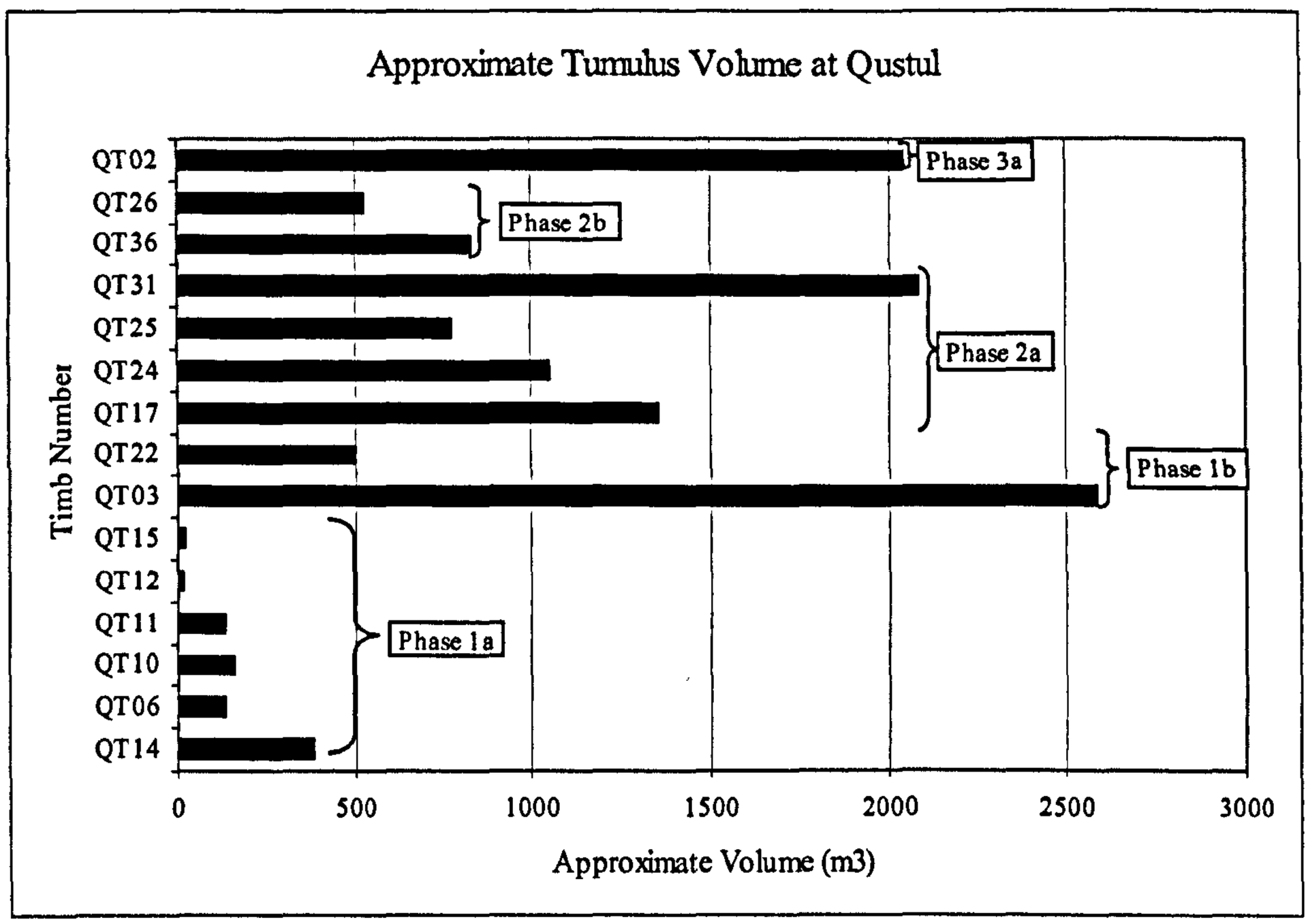


Figure 5.3

The tumuli dating to phase 1a are the smallest in volume from Qustul. At the end of phase 1a two particularly small tumuli – QT12 and QT15 – were built, and these are followed by the construction of the largest tomb at Qustul, QT03. During phases 1b to 3a, all of the tumuli are larger than those of phase 1a. The tumuli covering QT31 in phase 2a and QT02 in phase 3a are almost

exactly the same size. The tumuli exhibit a vastly varying range of sizes from only 10.12m^3 over tomb QT12, to 2585.53m^3 over tomb QT03.

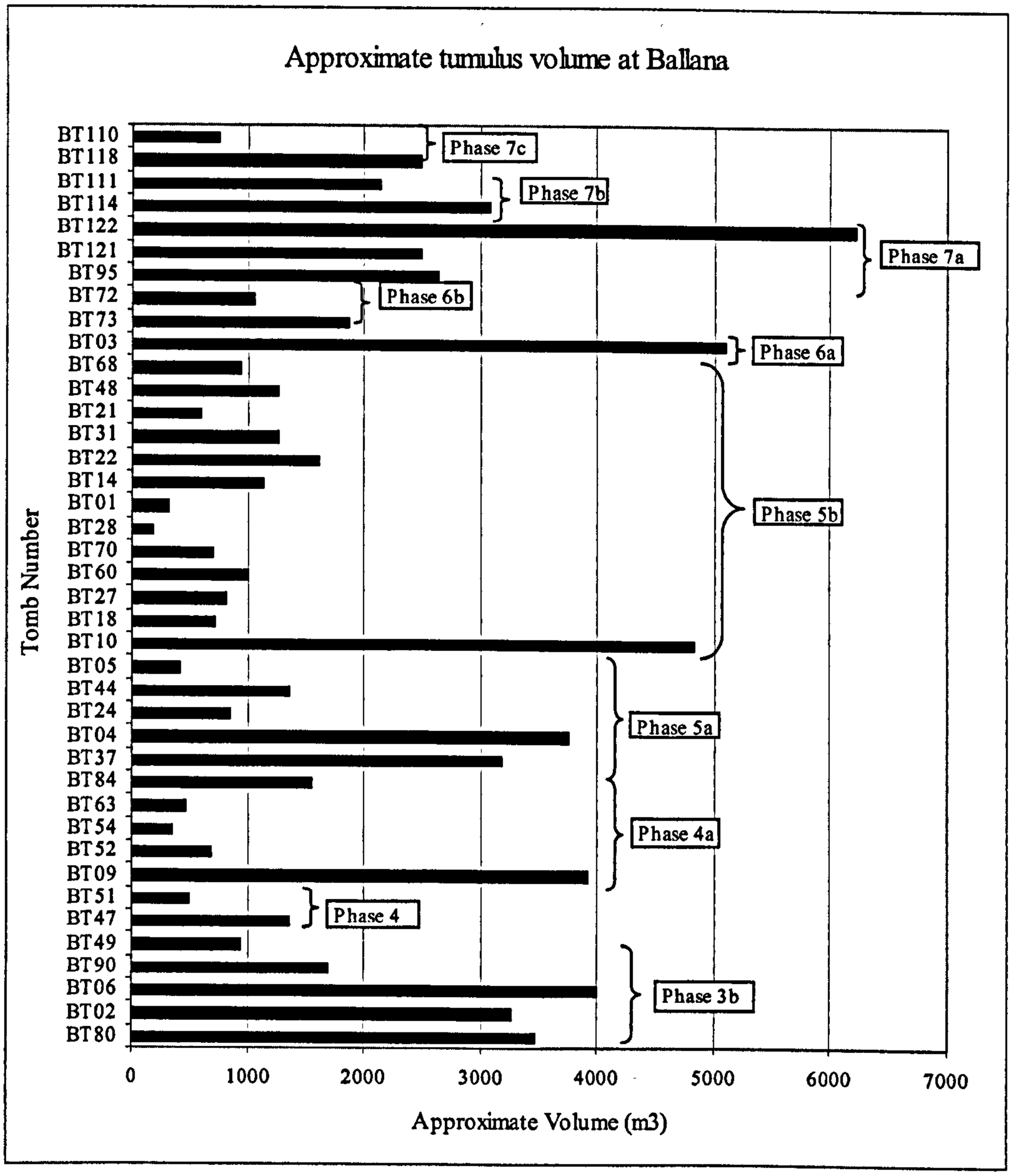


Figure 5 4

The volume of the tumuli in the first phase of building at Ballana is much greater than any of the Qustul tumuli. During phase 5b, there is an overall decline in the volume of the tumuli. Although the tumulus over BT10 contains 4831.76m^3, the other tumuli from the phase are much smaller, and phase 5b includes the smallest tumulus from the whole cemetery, the tumulus covering BT28. However, this phase does contain one larger tumulus and a number of

smaller ones, and this is the general trend in every phase. The pattern is perhaps slightly misleading as phase 5b contains more tombs than any other phase therefore making the 'decline' seem more evident. The possible trend for smaller tumuli is reversed in the following five phases. The largest tumulus, BT122 occurs in phase 7a.

5. 4. Approximate Tomb Area.

Using the scale provided in the site reports, I have calculated the approximate floor area of each individual space in a tomb. Where a corridor existed to connect one room to another, I have divided the corridor in half, and added its floor area to that of each room, thereby equally dividing the corridor space between the two spaces of the rooms. The only exception to this decision, was when remains were discovered in a corridor (as for example in, QT02), in which case it was necessary to consider the corridor as a distinct area.

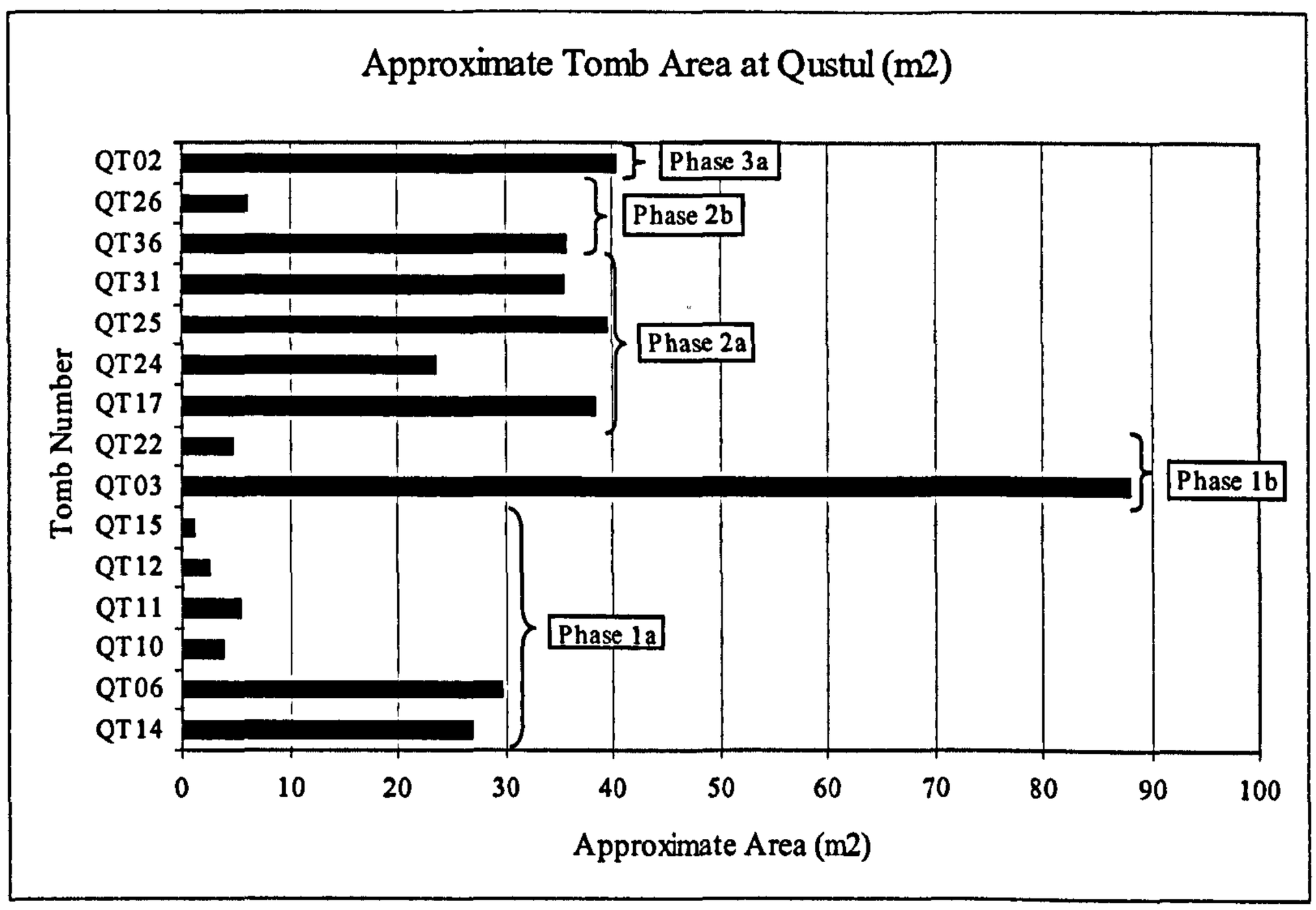


Figure 5.5

During phase 1a at Qustul, the first two tombs from the cemetery cover a far wider area than the four other tombs in this phase. In phase 2b, tomb QT03

was constructed. The size of QT03 stands in very marked contrast to the size of the other tomb built in this phase, QT22. Furthermore, QT03 is by far the largest tomb in the entire cemetery as it covers more than double the area of any other tomb. During phases 2a to 3a, the floor area contained within the tombs levels out.

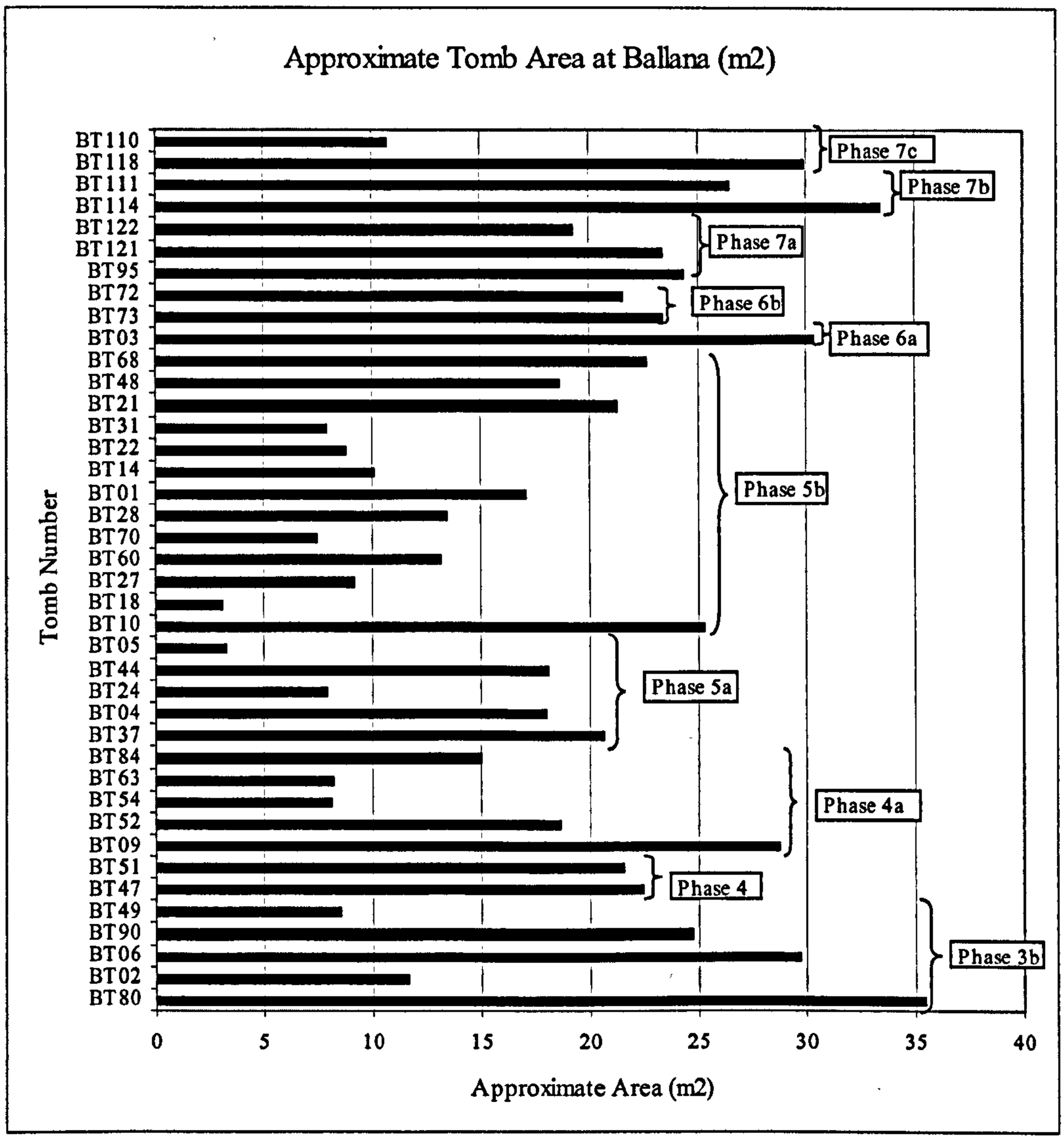


Figure 5.6

The tomb with the largest area at Ballana is BT80, which is the first tomb at the cemetery, and occurs in phase 3b. The smallest tombs were found in phases 5a and 5b, where tombs BT05 and BT18 measured 3. 24m^2 and 3.05m^2, respectively. As has been noted with regard to the volume of the tumuli at Ballana, there appears to be a corresponding decline in the area of the tombs

during phase 5b, but in terms of the area of the tombs, this decline extends back into the previous phase 5a. During the final five phases from 6a to 7c there is a general rise in the area of both the larger and smaller tombs in these phases. However, the area of BT110 (phase 7c), the final tomb at Ballana, is smaller than any other tomb in the preceding four phases (*i.e.* from phase 6a).

5.5. Comparison of the Number of Rooms in the Tombs at Qustul and Ballana.

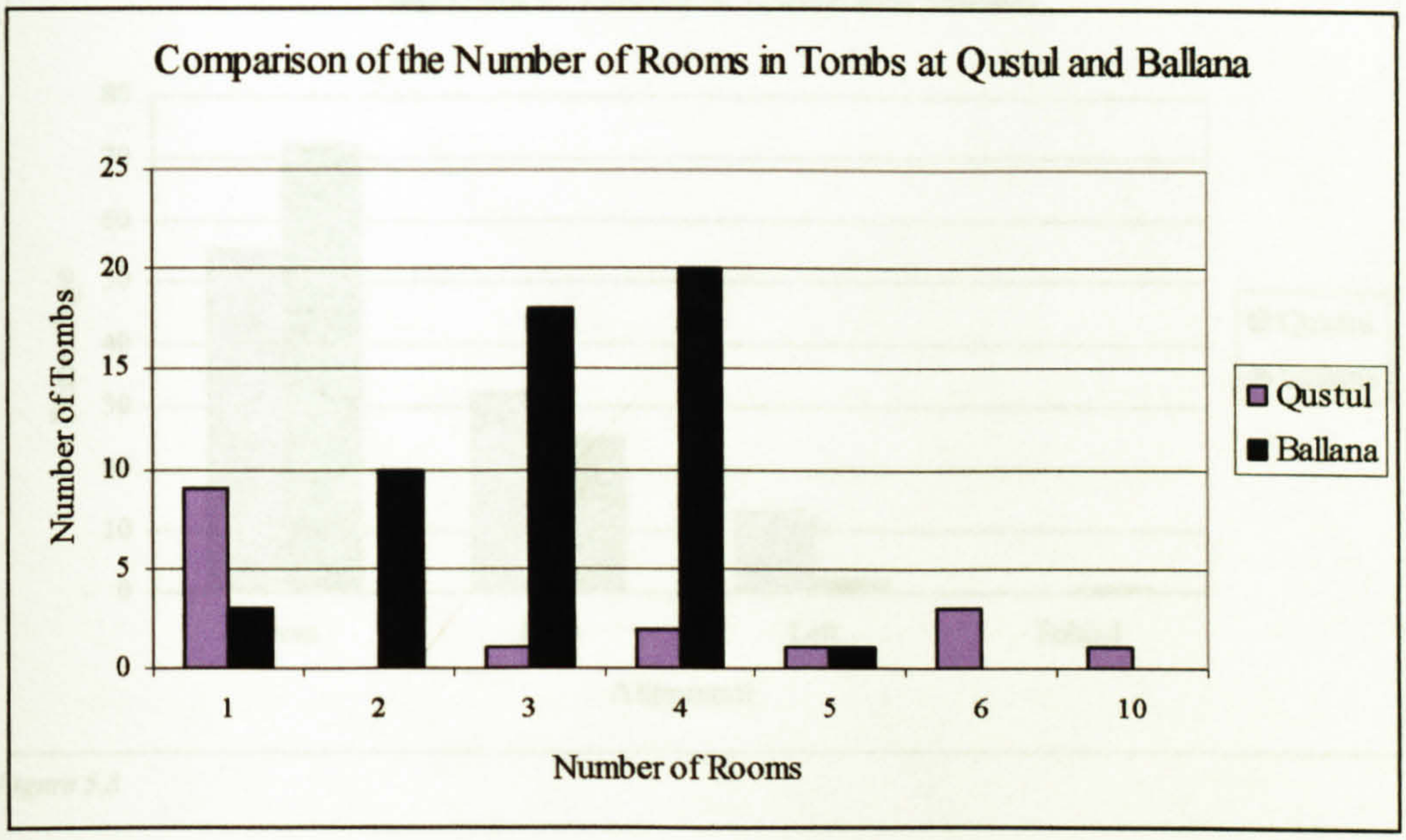


Figure 5.7

When entering information into the database concerning the individual rooms in the tombs at the cemeteries, the ramps, forecourts and pits have been considered as different rooms, as each of these areas were separately delineated as specific spatial areas, in terms of their construction. Robber passages were not counted as rooms, as these were later changes to the morphology of the tombs, and were not part of the original constructions. The data concerning the number of rooms in the tombs is quite different at the two cemeteries. At Ballana, the majority of tombs had four rooms, whilst at Qustul, the majority of tombs had only one room, and were constructed as simple chambers. However, the most complex tombs, in terms of the number of rooms, were found at Qustul – two tombs of six tombs and one tomb with ten rooms. Tomb QT03, which

contained ten rooms, was also the tomb which covered the largest floor area of any tomb. Therefore, whilst on average the tombs at Ballana were more likely to have three or four rooms, the largest tombs with the most rooms were found at Qustul.

5.6. Alignment of rooms at Qustul and Ballana.

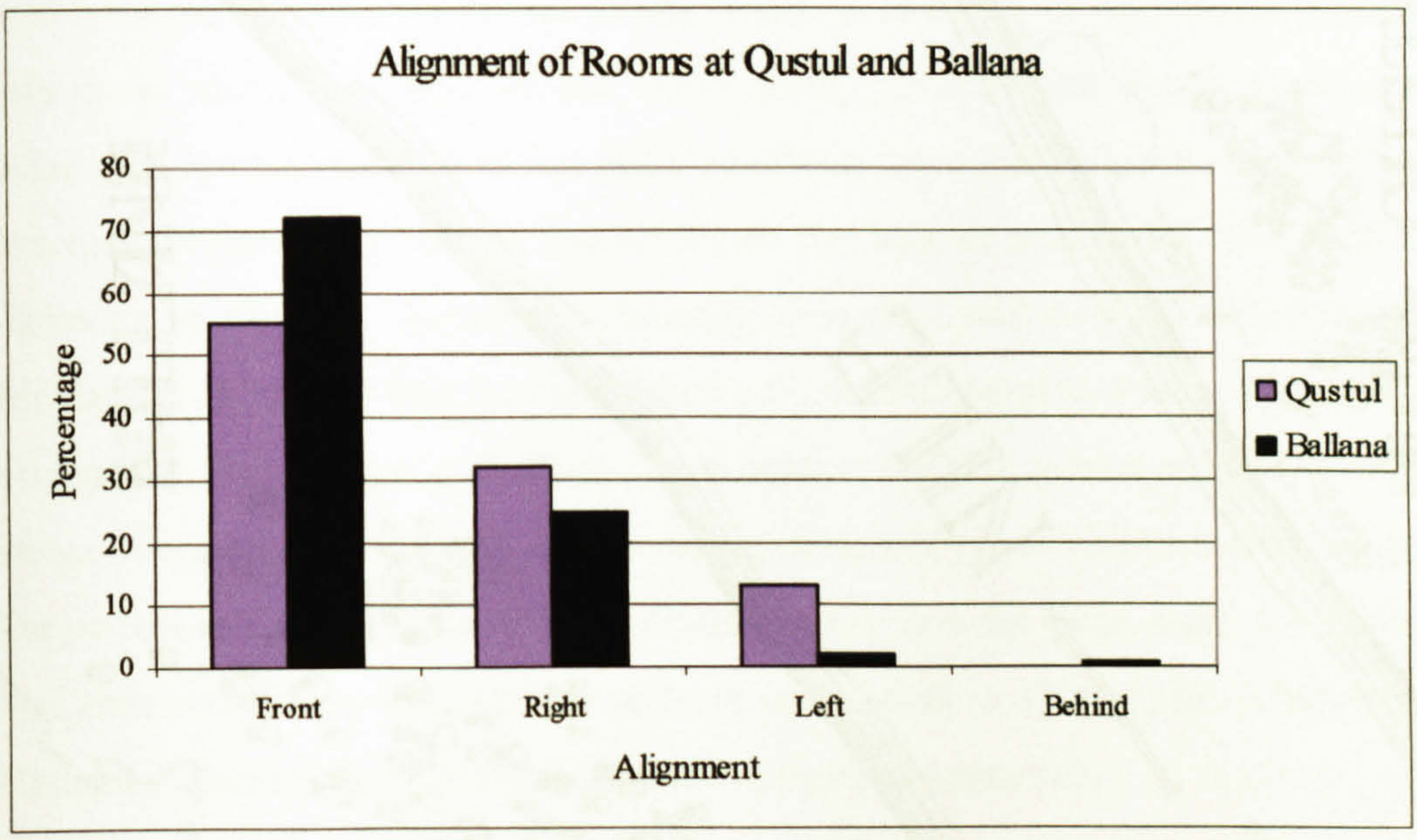


Figure 5.8

This graph relates to the alignment of rooms in the tombs at Ballana, relative to a central axis. The ramp in any tomb is deemed to be the central axis, and so is not included in the room count. The majority of tombs have a room directly in front of the ramp. In the simplest tombs, comprising a ramp and chamber, the chamber is directly in front of the ramp. This division into two distinct spatial areas is what makes the tomb a tomb, and not just a pit or chamber. Effectively, these tombs are elaborated end-niche tombs (rather than side-niche), in which the chamber may be brick lined. If a tomb has more than one room, then it is most likely that an extra room will be on the right side. Only tombs from Ballana had rooms 'behind' the main axis, and these accounted for only a very small percentage of the constructions. These tombs were those with a broken axis.

5. 7. General Orientation of the Tombs at Qustul and Ballana.

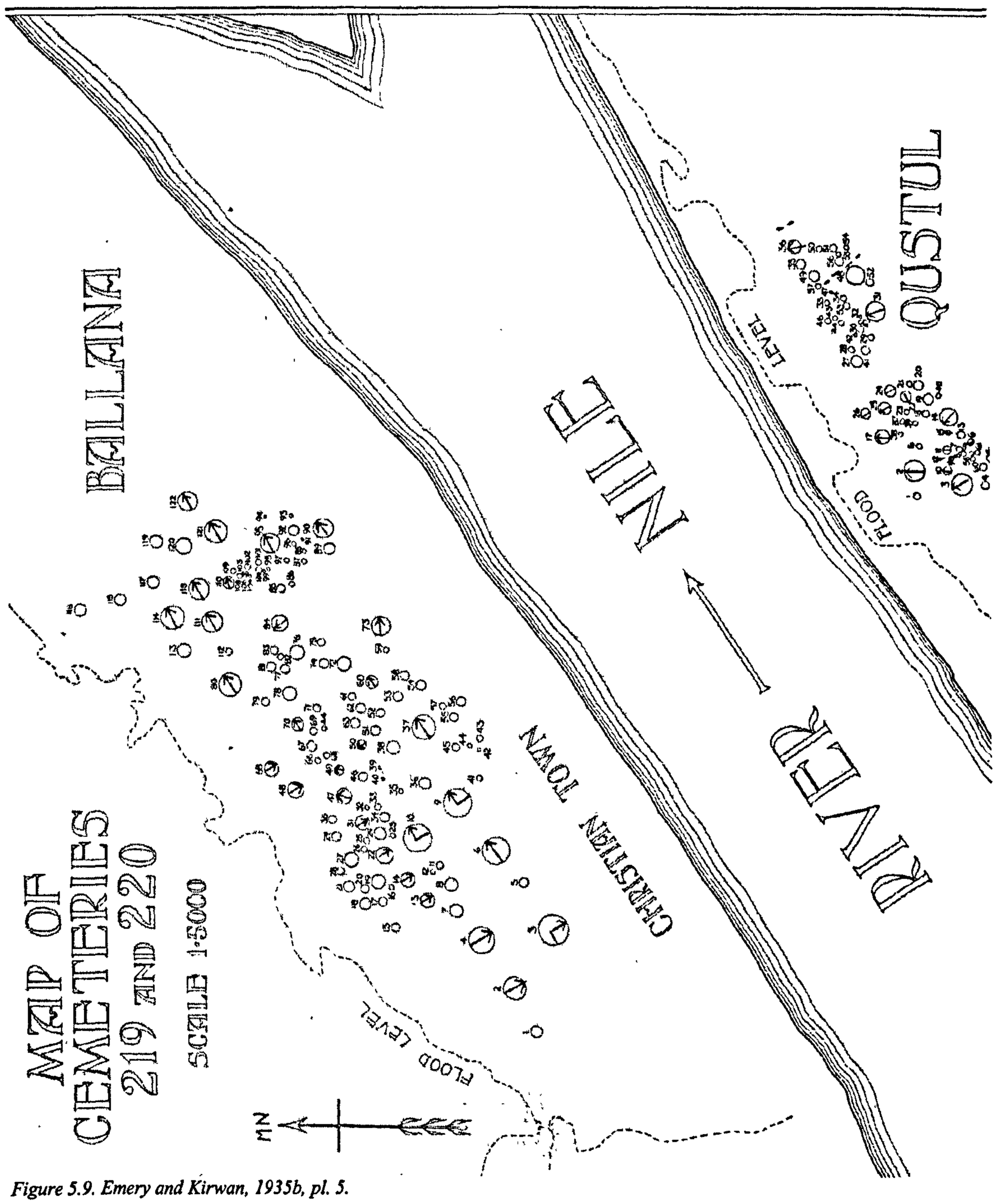


Figure 5.9. Emery and Kirwan, 1935b, pl. 5.

The map above (figure 5.9) indicates the general alignment of the Ballana and Qustul tombs. The arrows within the circles representing the tombs, demonstrate the direction from which the tombs could be entered. The tombs at

Qustul tend to be aligned towards the Nile, so that on walking down the ramp of the tomb, one would have been heading towards the Nile in a direction that is broadly towards local west. The situation at Ballana seems to be quite different. The tombs to the east of the Ballana cemetery are orientated towards local north (following the flow of the Nile), so that when walking down the ramp of the tombs, one would be directly facing local north. Some tombs in the local south-west end of the cemetery are also orientated in this direction, but include a ninety-degree turn in the layout of the tomb. A number of the smaller tombs which lie along the edge of the flood plain, towards the desert edge, are orientated towards the Nile (local east). In effect, these tombs are also orientated towards Qustul. Only one of the tombs at Ballana, is orientated in a similar direction as those at Qustul (i.e. broadly towards local west). This seems to indicate quite clearly that the orientation of the tomb layouts does not continue unchanged from Qustul to Ballana. The tombs at Ballana exhibit a more diverse range of orientation patterns, and orientation either towards local west following the pattern at Qustul, or continued orientation towards the river, ends. Given the fact that orientation towards the river is so marked at Qustul, this change at Ballana indicates a significant difference in mortuary practice.

5. 8. Volume, Area, Layout and Alignment at Qustul and Ballana: Discussion.

At Qustul, QT03 is the tomb that covers the largest area (almost 90 metres), and also contains the largest volume of earth in the construction of the tumuli (over 2,500 metres^3). This is perhaps unsurprising as the earth excavated in order to create the tombs was probably used to create the tumuli. At Ballana the largest tumulus (BT122) contains over 6,000 metres^3 of earth. However, unlike Qustul, it is a different tomb that covers the largest area: BT80, at just over 35 metres^2. Overall, the tumuli with the greatest volume were found at Ballana, whilst the tombs that covered the largest area were at Qustul. In fact, the tomb of QT03 covers double the area that the tomb BT80 did. On average, the areas of the tombs at Qustul (21.66 metres^2) are larger than the average areas of the tombs at Ballana (15.61 metres^2). However the figures concerning the

average volumes of the tumuli show the opposite trend. At Qustul, the average volume is 712.77 metres^3, whilst at Ballana the average is 2399.01 metres^3. This indicates that the mounds at Ballana must have stood higher than those at Qustul. This suggests a concern at Qustul with constructing large and sometimes internally spacious substructures. At Ballana, although the tombs have different and unusual layouts (i.e. the broken axis tombs), large substructures are not the focus of investment. Instead, very large tumuli were constructed over tombs that indicate a public and lasting show of expenditure. However, it must be stressed that the figures presented above are unlikely to be wholly accurate as the tumuli mounds may have suffered from considerable erosion over the years, although wind blown sand may have to some extent protected the mounds.

The tumuli in the four latest phases at Qustul were larger than those erected during phase 1a. The final tumulus constructed at Qustul covers QT02 and was the third largest from the cemetery containing just over 2,000m^3 of earth. The first phase of tumulus building at Ballana (phase 3b) contains slightly larger mounds by volume.

The majority of the tombs in phases 2a to 3a exhibit a more commensurate size in terms of area. Therefore when the shift to Ballana took place, there was not a sudden escalation in the size of tumuli in comparison to Qustul. This development took place after the cemetery has been founded for a number of years.

When considering the areas of the tombs, the volume of the tumuli, and the average number of rooms in the tombs in combination, we might begin to consider the complex question of the amount of energy expended in the construction of the graves. This is not a simple matter of the largest tomb (area, volume, number of rooms) indicating the largest amount of expenditure in terms of quantity of materials. A large tomb constructed by a large workforce might have been completed more quickly and easily than a very simple structure built by only a couple of people. The question of the creation of value, and its basis at the cemeteries will be explored further in the following chapters.

Most of the tomb structures that had rooms built to the front of the central axis, i.e. at the end of the ramp. In cases where the tomb had multiple

rooms, there was a tendency at both Qustul and Ballana for the room(s) to be built on the right of the main axis.

Most of the tombs at both Qustul and Ballana had rooms to the front (effectively, at the end) of the ramp. If a tomb has more than one room, it is most likely, at both Qustul and Ballana, to be on the right. The main alteration in this pattern occurs at Ballana with the development of broken axis tombs, with a room behind the ramp, but they only appear in small numbers.

5.9. General Burial Positions of Humans at Qustul and Ballana.

The following tables contain the data concerning the body positions of the human remains, firstly a comparison of the males (M), females (F), possible males (M?) and possible females (F?) at both sites. The information here concerns the general bodily position of an individual, whether they were discovered on their right side or left side, prone or supine. A limitation to this discussion is that only a small proportion of the human remains from Ballana and Qustul were sexed. An investigation of the sexed remains, however limited their number, it is still considered to be of some value, although the problems regarding the validity of the sexing of the remains (see chapter three section 3.7) should not be forgotten.

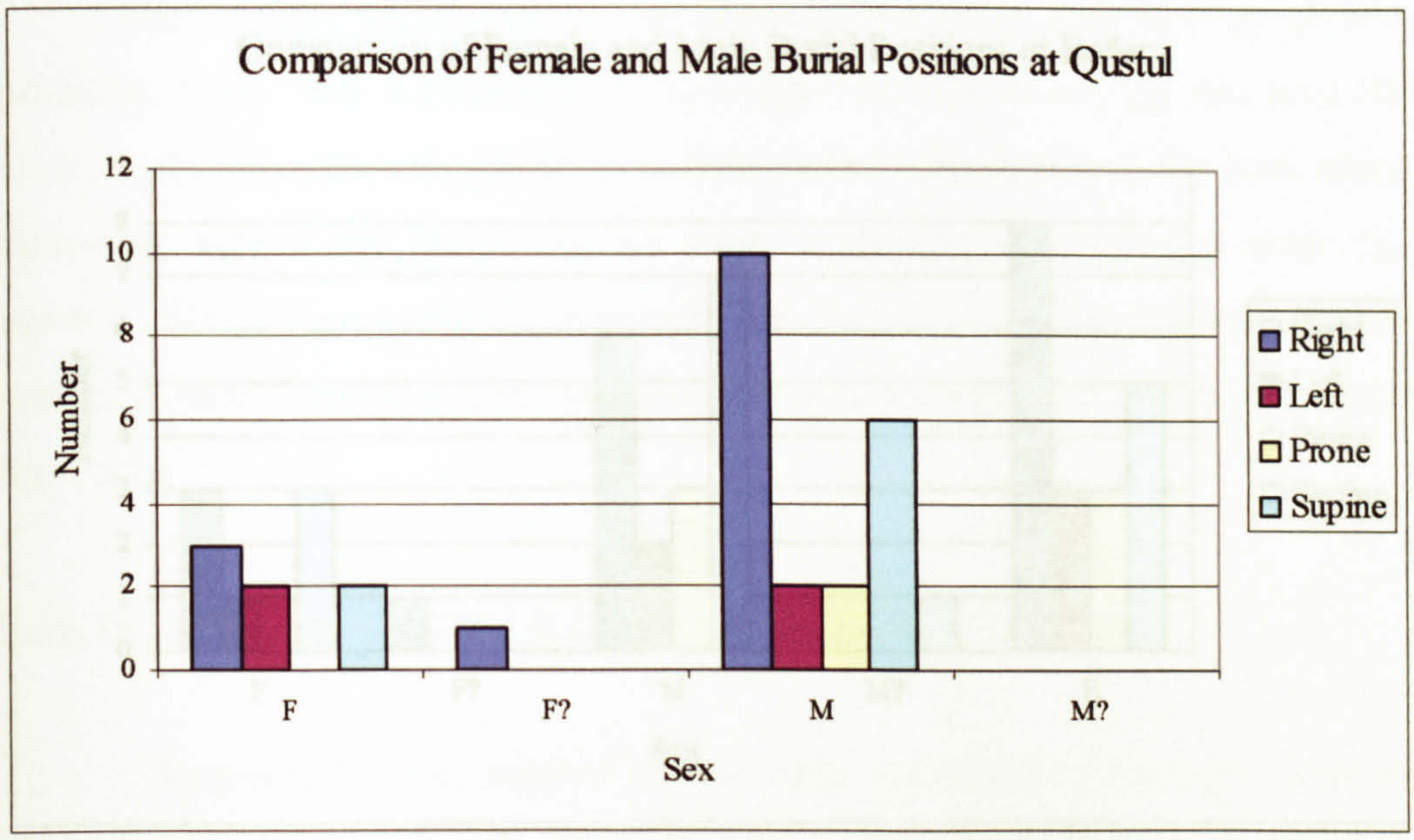


Figure 5.10

It is fortunate that whilst there are more sexed and possible sexed male individuals than female individuals from the two sites, like the female remains, the male remains from Ballana and Qustul exist in almost equal numbers (19 and 20 individuals respectively). At both Ballana and Qustul, most male and possible male burials were buried on the right side of the body. Supine burials were the second most common form, with almost identical numbers of both left side and prone burials at Ballana and Qustul. Only male skeletons were buried prone.

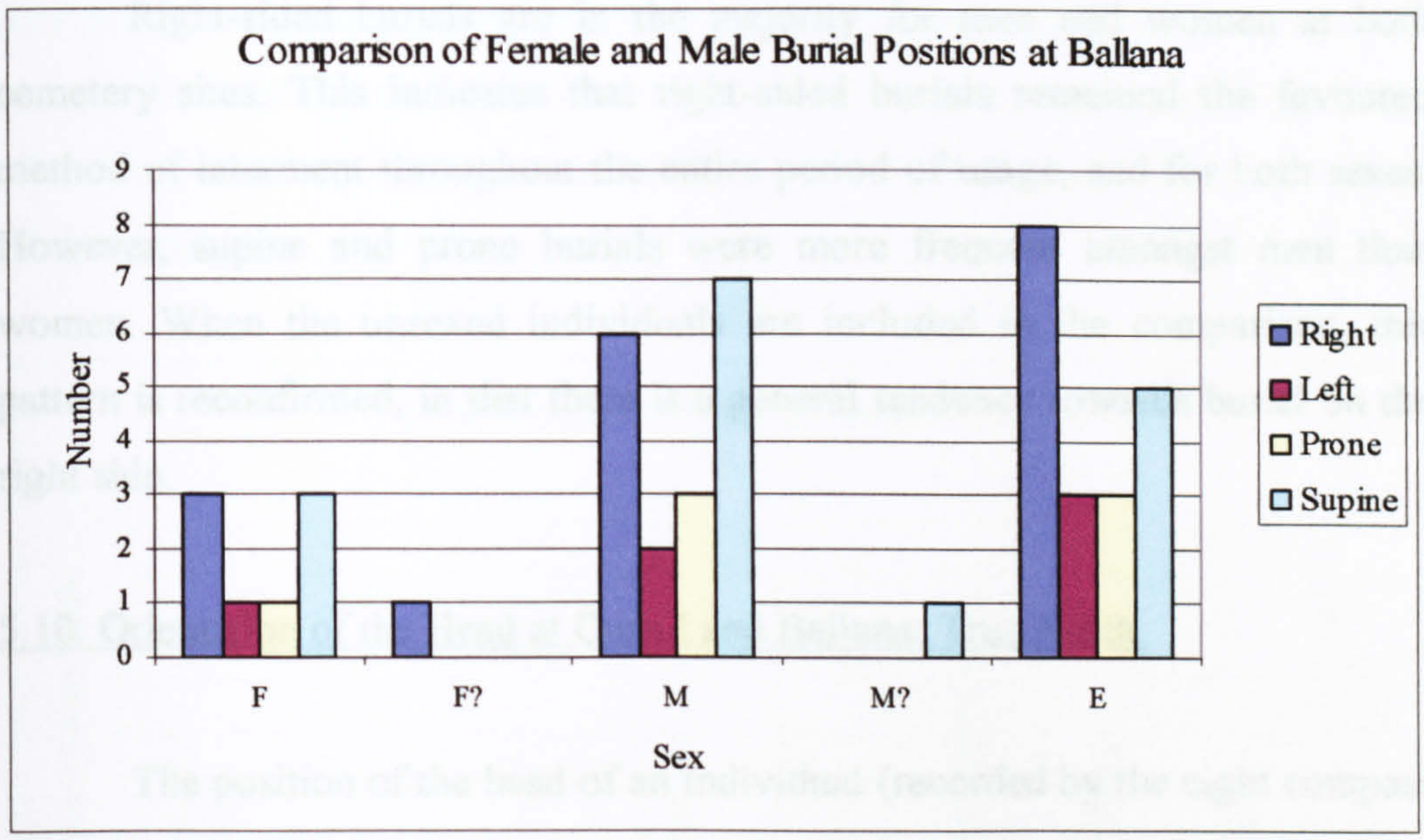


Figure 5.11

All of the human remains that were examined, but that it was impossible to assign a sex to, were from Ballana (designated 'E' in the graph). Right-sided burials were prevalent in this group, with supine burials being the next common. Equal numbers of left-sided and prone burials occurred, and unlike the practice at Qustul, some females were buried prone.

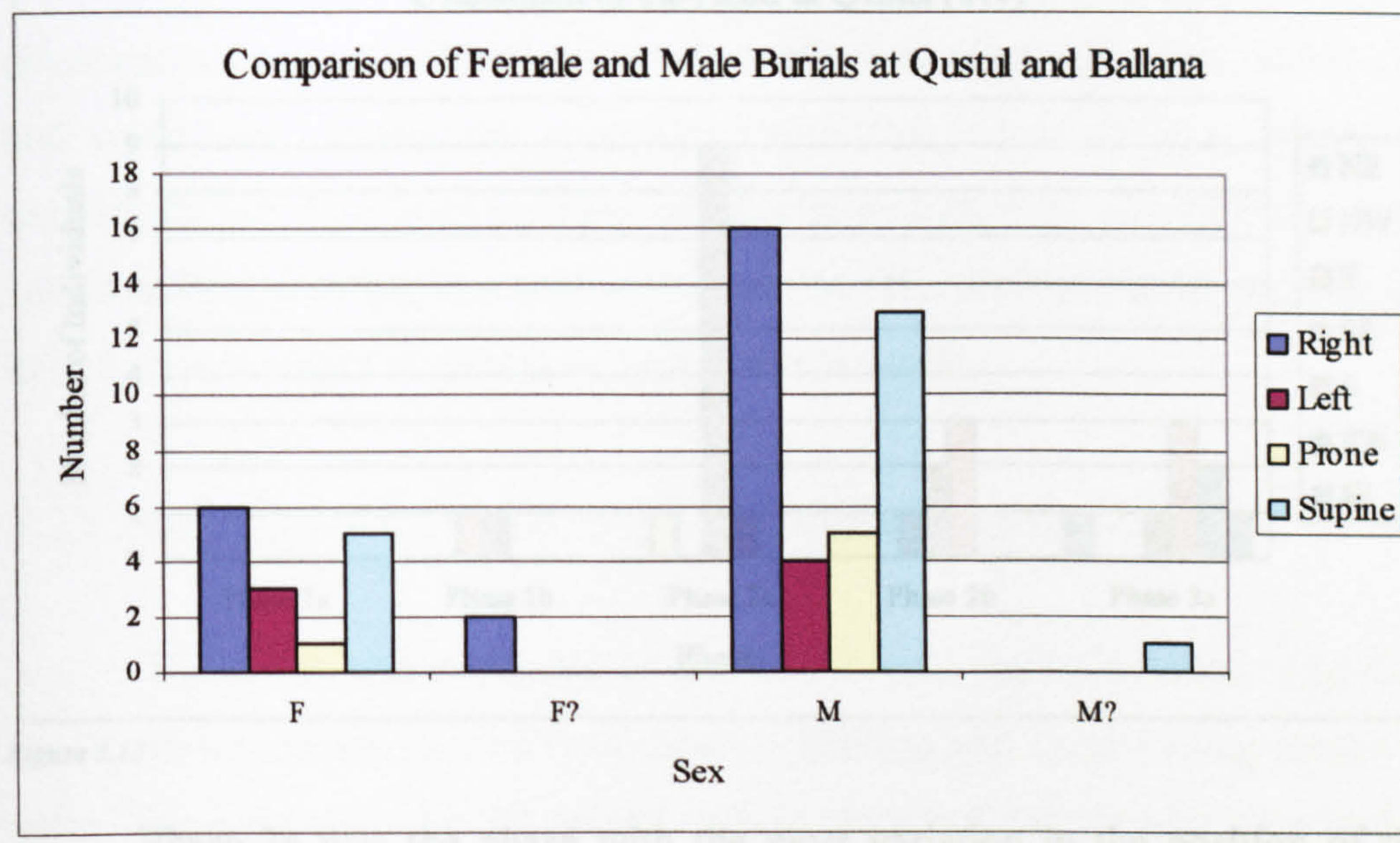


Figure 5.12

Right-sided burials are in the majority for men and women at both cemetery sites. This indicates that right-sided burials remained the favoured method of interment throughout the entire period of usage, and for both sexes. However, supine and prone burials were more frequent amongst men than women. When the unsexed individuals are included in the comparison, this pattern is reconfirmed, in that there is a general tendency towards burial on the right side.

5.10. Orientation of the Head at Qustul and Ballana: True North.

The position of the head of an individual (recorded by the eight compass points, and using true north), has only been included in the analysis for those individuals whose remains were deemed to be intact. The direction of the head that is given here relates to the position of the crown of the head. It is possible that in those individuals who were interred supine or prone, the head may have moved to the right or to the left as the body decayed.

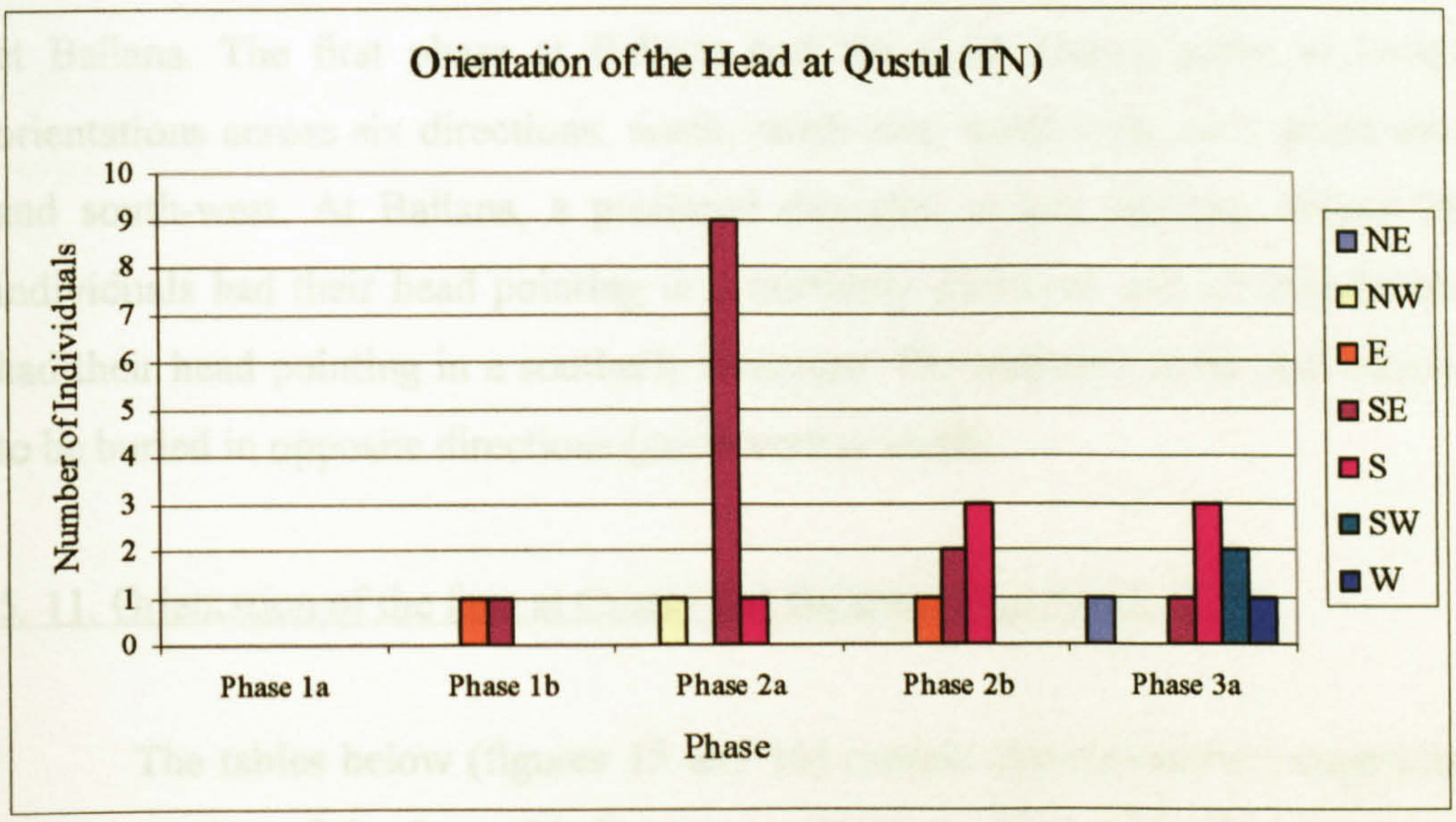


Figure 5.13

Phase 3a was the phase with the most variation in the position of the head, with individuals being buried with the head to the south, south-west, south-east, west and north east. Burials in a south-easterly direction occurred in

four of the five phases at Qustul, and burials to the south in three out of five phases. Therefore at Qustul, burials were most likely to be made with the heads of the individuals pointing in a generally southerly direction (22 burials out of 28 individuals).

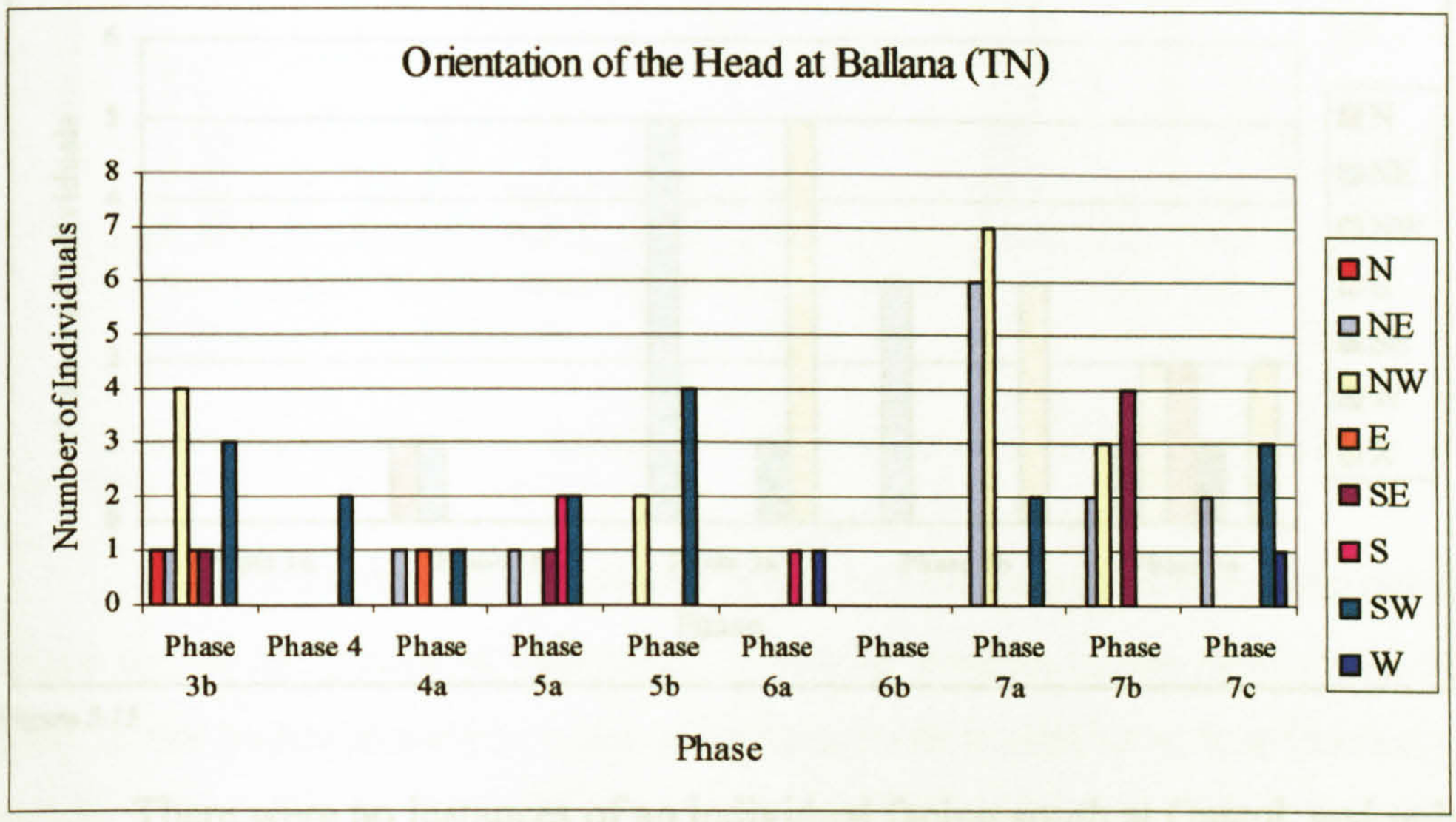


Figure 5.14

Burials in a south-westerly direction occurred in seven out of ten phases at Ballana. The first phase at Ballana had the most diverse array of burial orientations across six directions: north, north-east, north-west, east, south-east and south-west. At Ballana, a preferred direction is less obvious, where 28 individuals had their head pointing in a northerly direction, and 25 individuals had their head pointing in a southerly direction. The tendency is for individuals to be buried in opposite directions (north versus south).

5. 11. Orientation of the face at Qustul and Ballana: True North.

The tables below (figures 15 and 16) contain the information regarding the orientation of the face of individuals at Ballana and Qustul using magnetic north. The compass point 'X' corresponds to those individuals who were buried supine or prone, and whose faces are in effect orientated straight at the ground, or straight at the roof. As should be expected from the number of supine and

prone burials indicated in the previous tables, a reasonably large number of interments were facing in this direction (10 individuals).

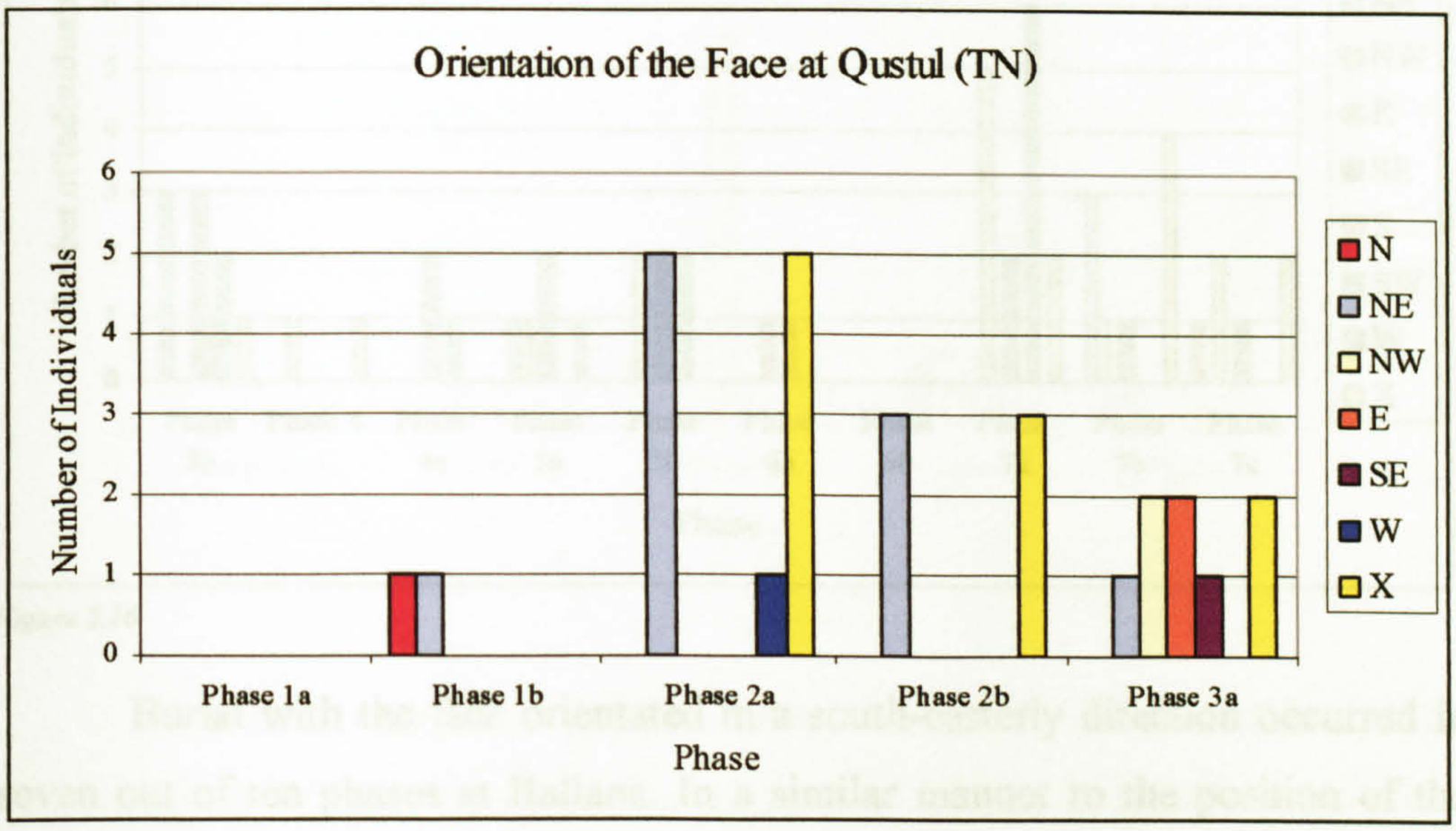


Figure 5.15

There were no instances of an individual facing south at Qustul, and only two individuals facing in a generally southerly direction. At Qustul, there is a definite tendency towards individuals facing in a northerly direction (13 individuals). Ten individuals were buried facing due north, and ten burials were buried facing direction X.

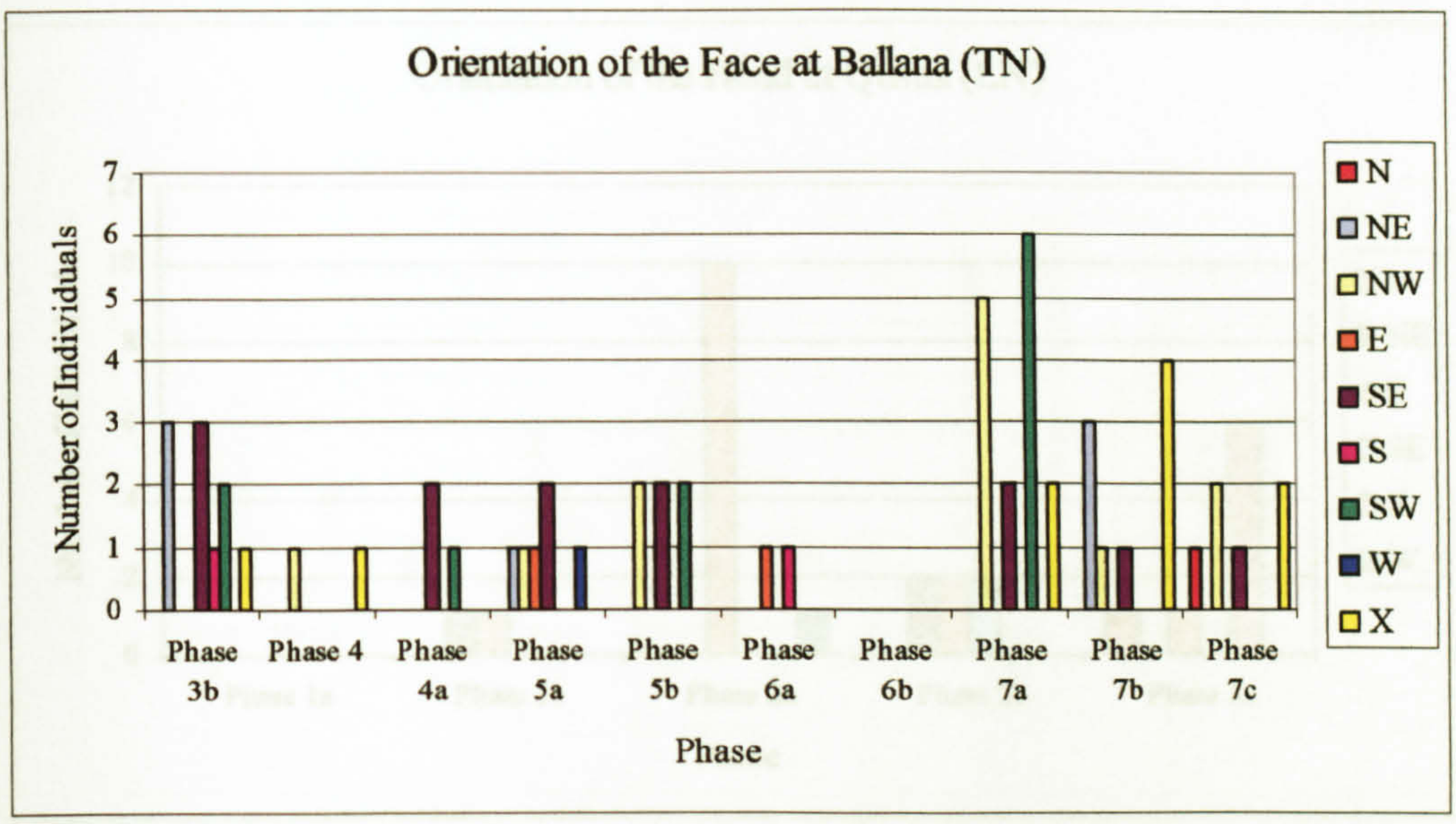


Figure 5.16

Burial with the face orientated in a south-easterly direction occurred in seven out of ten phases at Ballana. In a similar manner to the position of the head of the bodies at the two sites, at Ballana there is relatively little interest in rigidly orientating the face towards the true cardinal points. Overall, a southerly orientation (25 individuals) seems preferable to a northerly orientation (20 individuals). As was the case at Qustul, ten of the bodies were orientated to the 'X' position. These were individuals who were buried either prone or supine.

5.12. Orientation of the Head at Qustul and Ballana: Local North.

Having discussed the orientation of the bodies using true north, it was decided that a consideration of the positions relative to local north (i.e. the flow of the Nile) might prove to be interesting, and to exhibit a more explicit patterning.

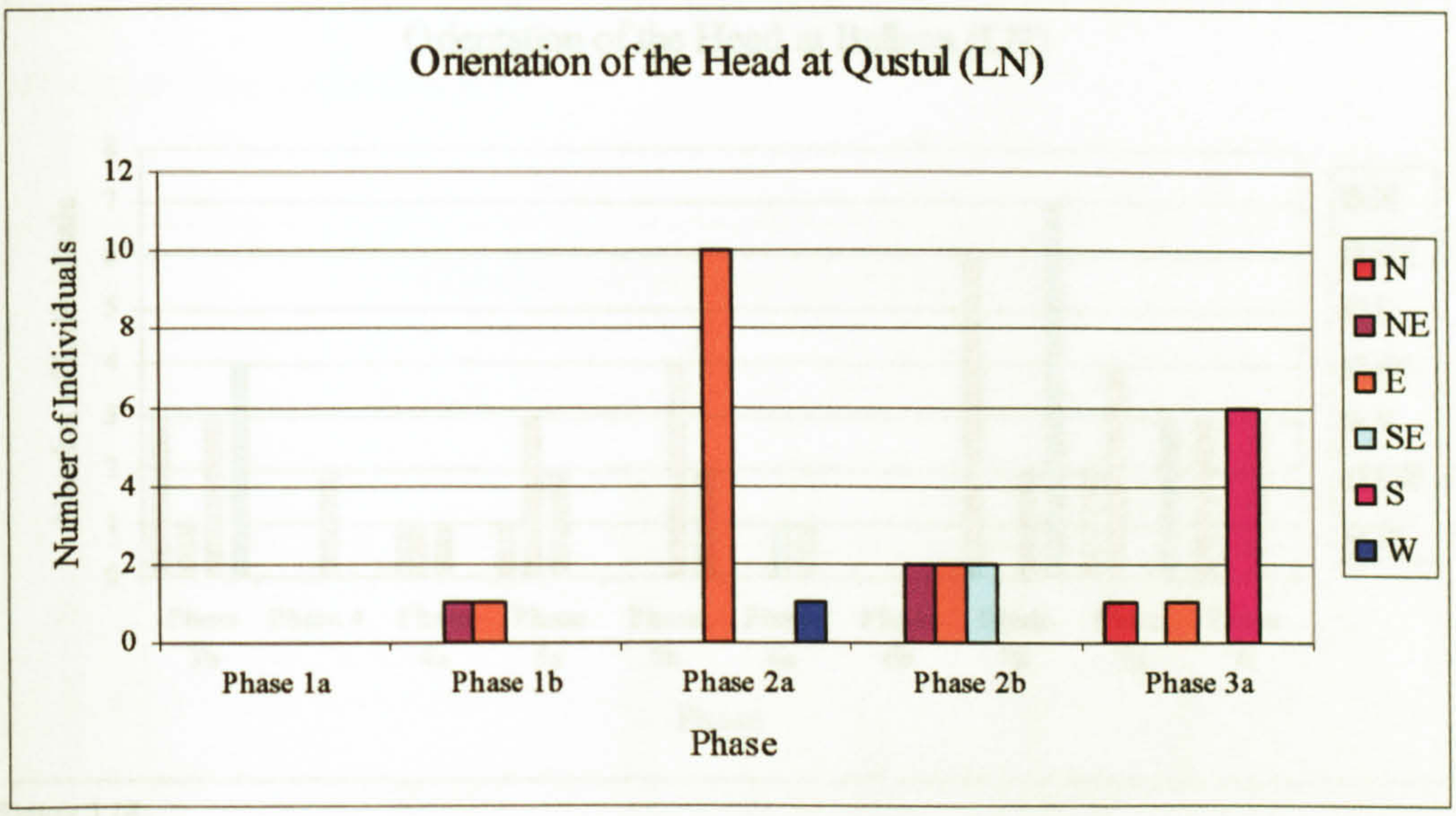


Figure 5.17

None of the burials from phase 1a were intact, and there is therefore no information regarding the orientation of the head at Qustul. Orientation to river east occurred across every phase, and is therefore the most enduring trend in orientation at Qustul. The remains of humans during phase 1b were equally orientated to the north-east and the east. Orientation in a north-easterly direction occurs in two phases, and orientation to the south-east occurs in one phase. During phase 2b, the burials are equally placed with the head to the north-east, east and south-east. There is therefore a tendency towards placing the deceased with their head pointing in a generally easterly direction. In the final phase of burial at Qustul, although there are a small number of burials in an easterly direction, burials in a northerly and southerly direction also appear. Significantly, the burials in a southerly direction form a large percentage of those burials in the final phase.

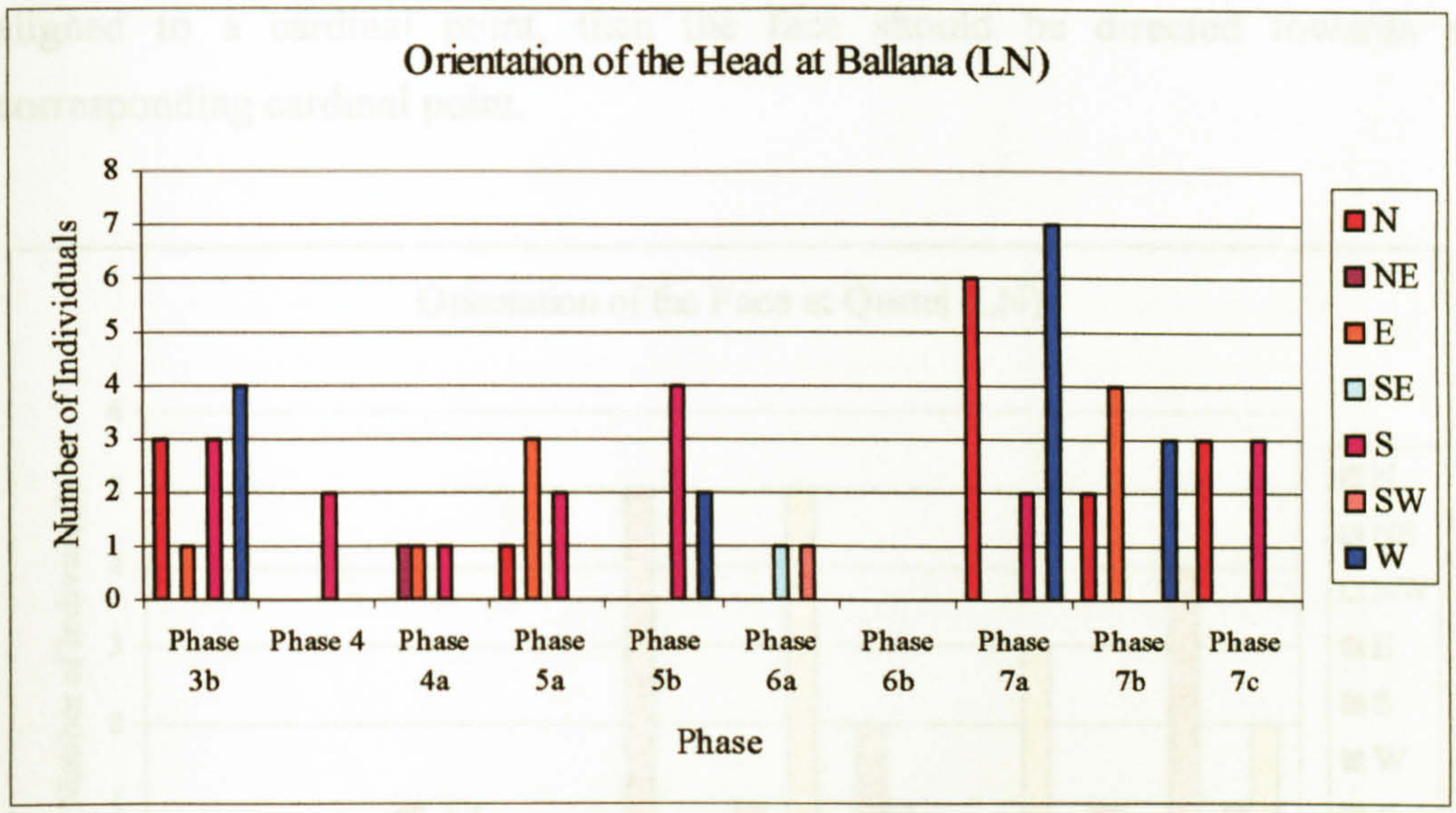


Figure 5.18

None of the burials in phase 6b at Ballana were intact, and so are not included in this graph. In contrast to the overall trend at Qustul, burials with the head to the east only occur in four of the ten phases at Ballana. Three of these occurrences are during the first four phases. Burials orientated to the south were found in seven out of ten phases and so this is the most enduring trend at Ballana. In phase 6a, although no southerly burials were found, the burials that were intact were equally orientated to the south-east and the south-west. Therefore, a preponderance for burial in a generally southerly direction persists across eight phases. Burials in a northerly direction were also a frequently occurring practice across five phases at Ballana.

5.13. Orientation of the Face at Qustul and Ballana: Local North.

There is no data available for the orientation of the face of individuals during phase 1a at Qustul or phase 6b at Ballana due to the disturbance of the burials. As a result of the data concerning the orientation of the heads of individuals using local north, and the preponderance of alignment towards the corresponding cardinal points, a similar preference was expected in the alignment of the face. It is logical that the direction of the face is at a ninety degree angle to the orientation of the crown of the head, and so if the head is

aligned to a cardinal point, then the face should be directed towards a corresponding cardinal point.

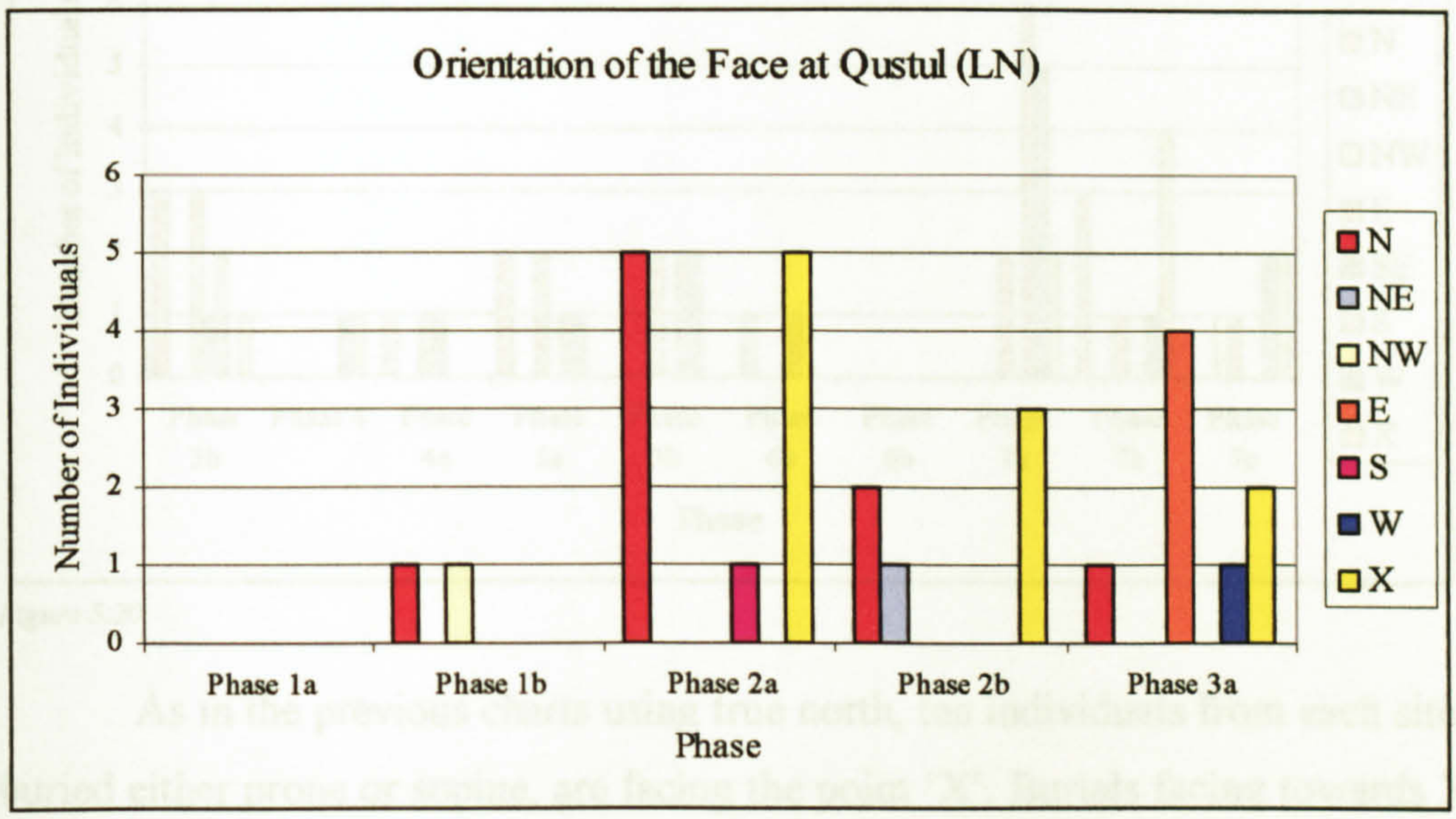


Figure 5.19

In every phase at Qustul, orientation of the face towards the north occurred. During phase 1b the faces of the interred are equally positioned towards the north and the north-west. Bodies with the face to the north and the north-east also occurred together in phase 2b. Therefore, there is a tendency for burial with the face in a northerly direction. Burials with the face in position X (either face down, which occurs in prone burials, or face up, which may occur in supine burials), begin to emerge in phase 2a, and in that phase and in phase 2b, burials with the face orientated towards X are the most frequent.

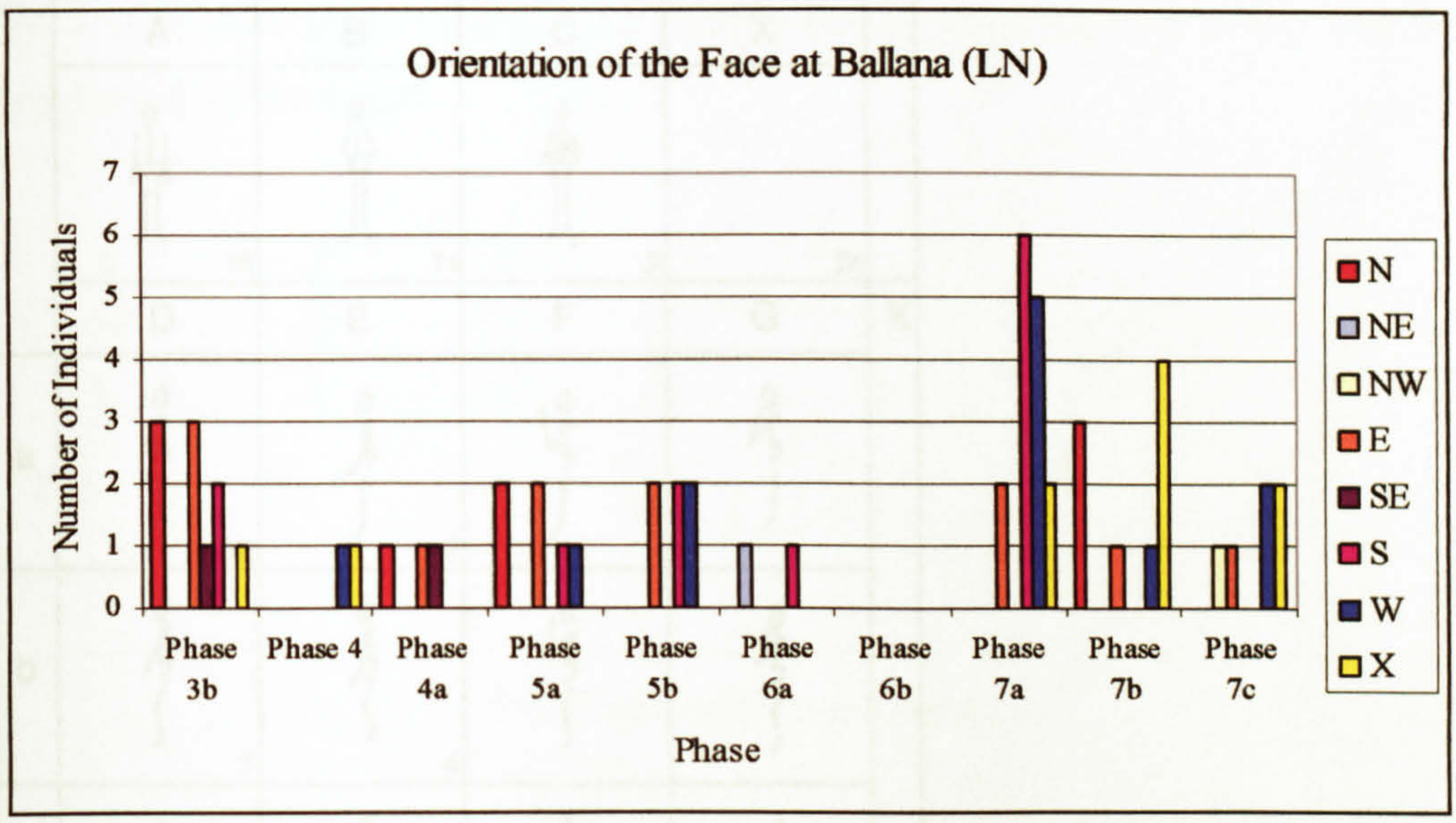


Figure 5.20

As in the previous charts using true north, ten individuals from each site, buried either prone or supine, are facing the point 'X'. Burials facing towards X are found in both phase 3b and 4, but then disappear between phase 4a and phase 6b, before recurring in the final three phases at Ballana. Burials with the face to the east occurred in seven out of ten phases, and is the trend which is most long lasting at the cemetery. Burials with the head to the west appear next most frequently.

5.14. Scandinavian Joint Expedition Positions at Qustul and Ballana.

The more detailed bodily positions of the human remains were recorded using the system published by the Scandinavian Joint Expedition and the table is reproduced below (figure 21, Säve-Söderbergh et al, 1981, 16). The capital letters A, B, C and X represent supine extended, supine with hands over pelvis, supine with hands at the chest or face, and prone burials. The lower case letters refer to the degree of flexion of the arms and legs. Therefore an inhumation designated as 'Bc' is a supine flexed burial, with the hands at the face. It should be noted that those burials recorded with the lower case letters 'd' or 'e' may be described as crouched burials, rather than flexed burials.

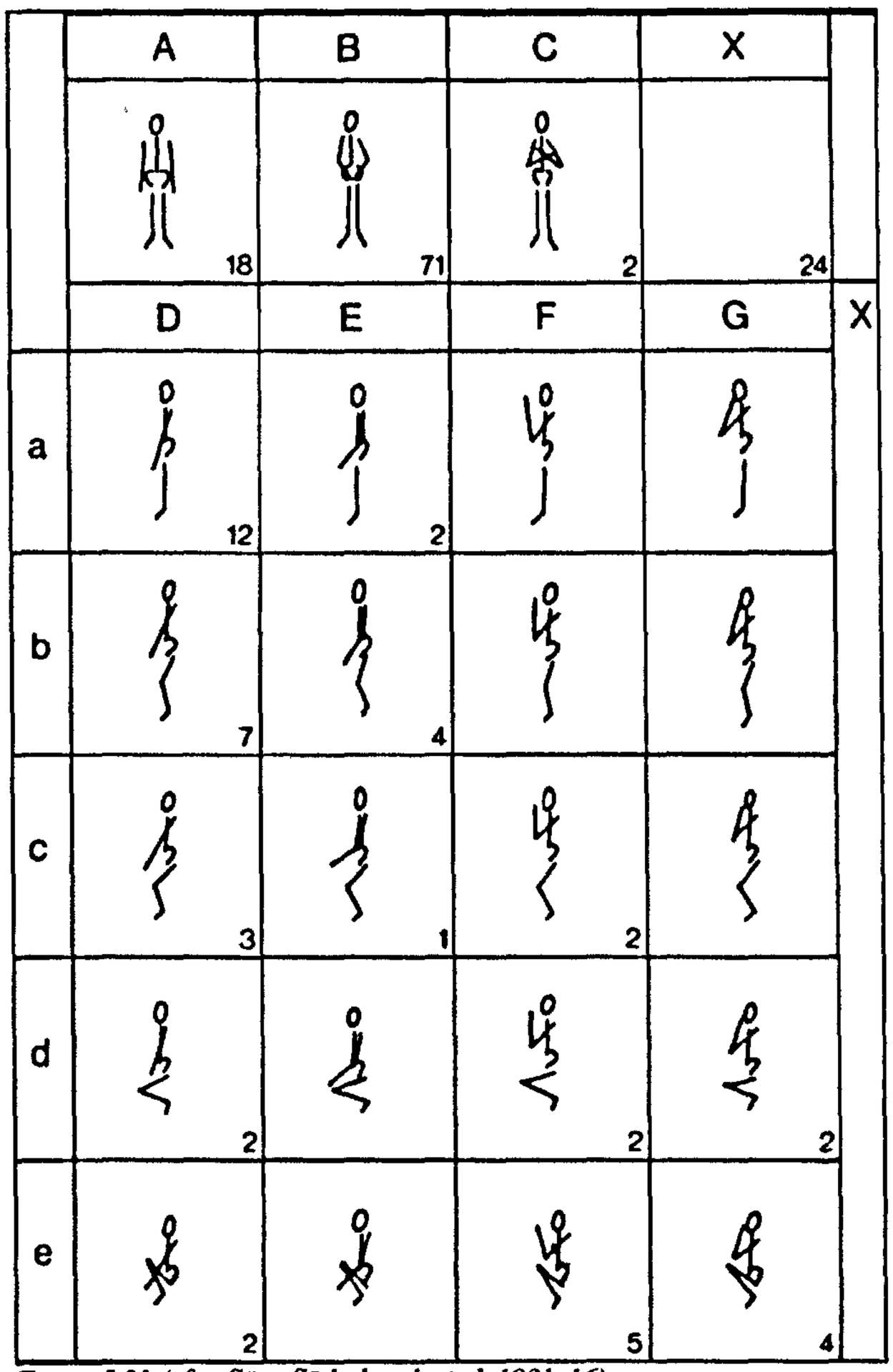


Figure 5.21 (after Säve-Söderbergh et al, 1981, 16)

The majority of the inhumations at Ballana and Qustul were readily attributed to one of these forms, but a very small number occupied different positions. These were classified as 'Dbi' (BT118:Body D whose torso was in a supine figure but with the legs crouched and to the left and with the left arm flexed and the right extended), 'Dc' (BT37:Body F and QT36:Body S, lying on the right side with the legs flexed and both arms extended towards the knees), 'H' (BT09:Body A who was lying in an extended position on the left side with the arms extended at 90 degrees to the body), 'Ia' (BT80:BodyJ lying supine and extended with the left arm extended above the head) 'Ii' (BT114:BodyF, BT114: Body G, BT118:BodyE, prone, but with the head to the left). 'M'

(BT95:BodyB supine, with left leg sharply flexed, right hand at pelvis and left arm flexed by the head).

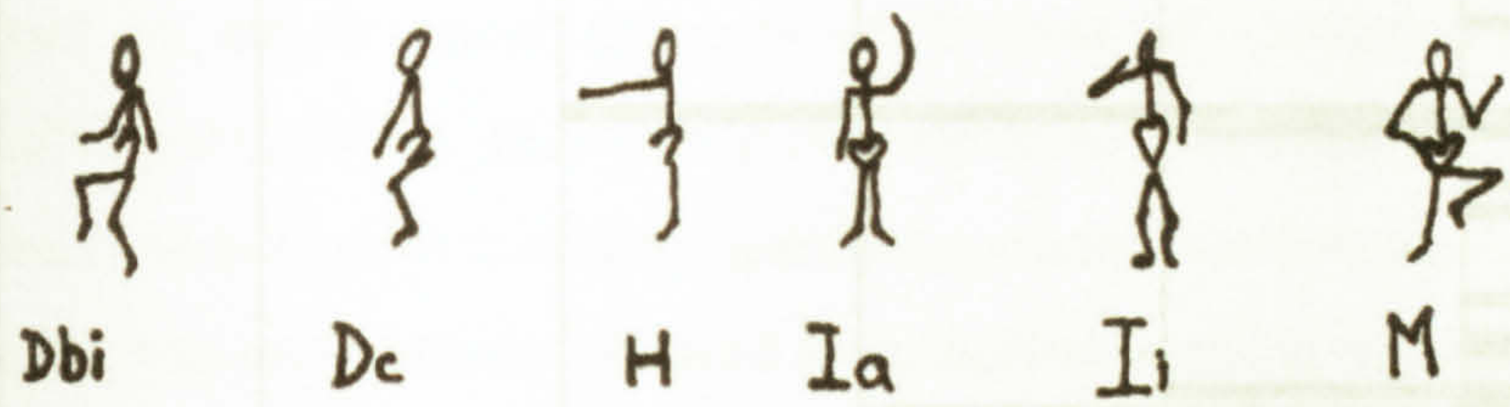


Figure 5.22

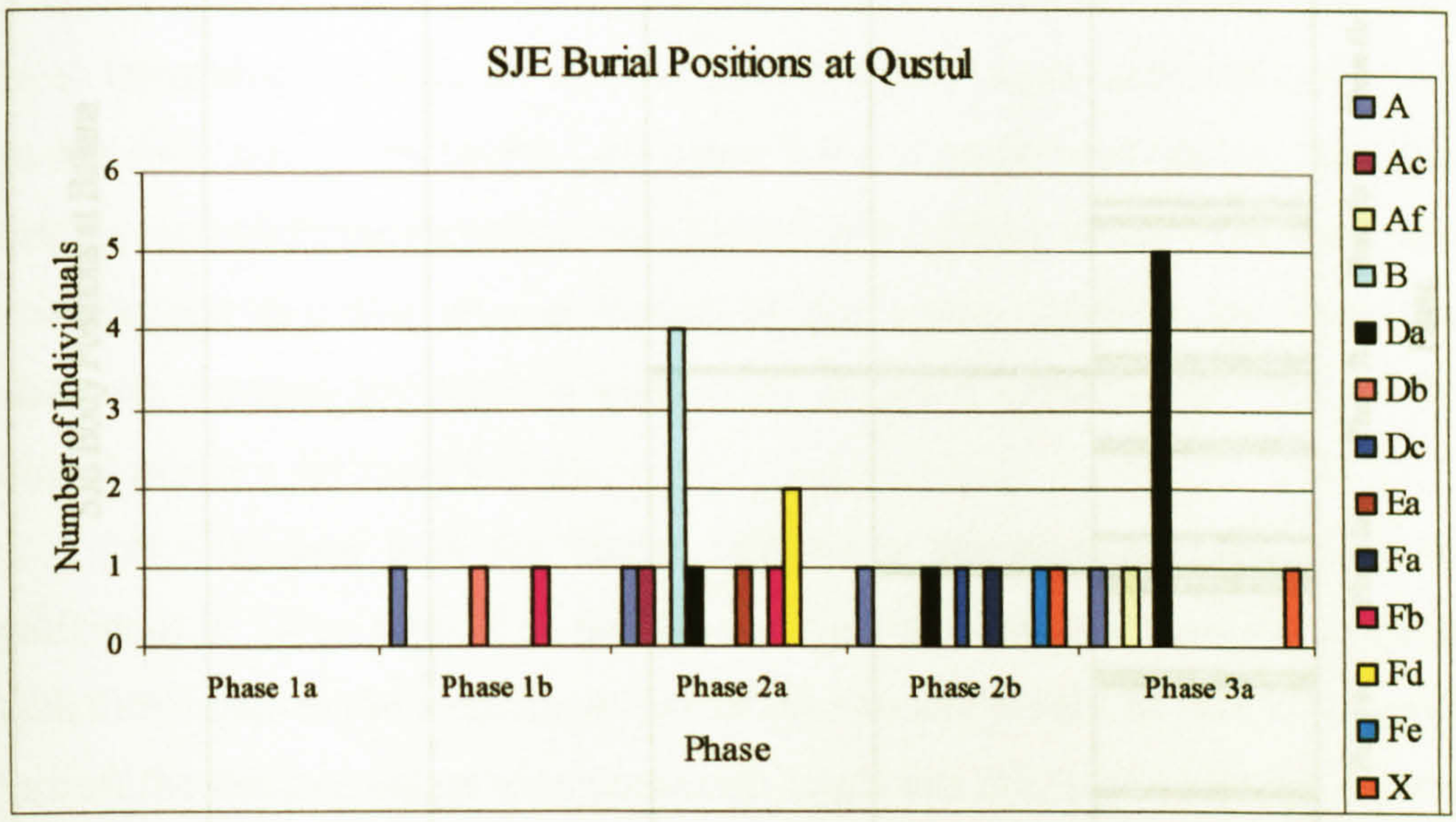


Figure 5.23

There were 14 different burial positions found at Qustul. Supine extended burials (designated 'Da') were most common, with seven recorded occurrences. Phase 2a was the period with the most diverse array of burial positions, with six different positions recorded. Most of the bodies in this period were found in position 'B'. In many cases only a single individual was placed in a given position. This was the case for positions Af, Db, Ea, Fd, Dc, Fa and Fe.

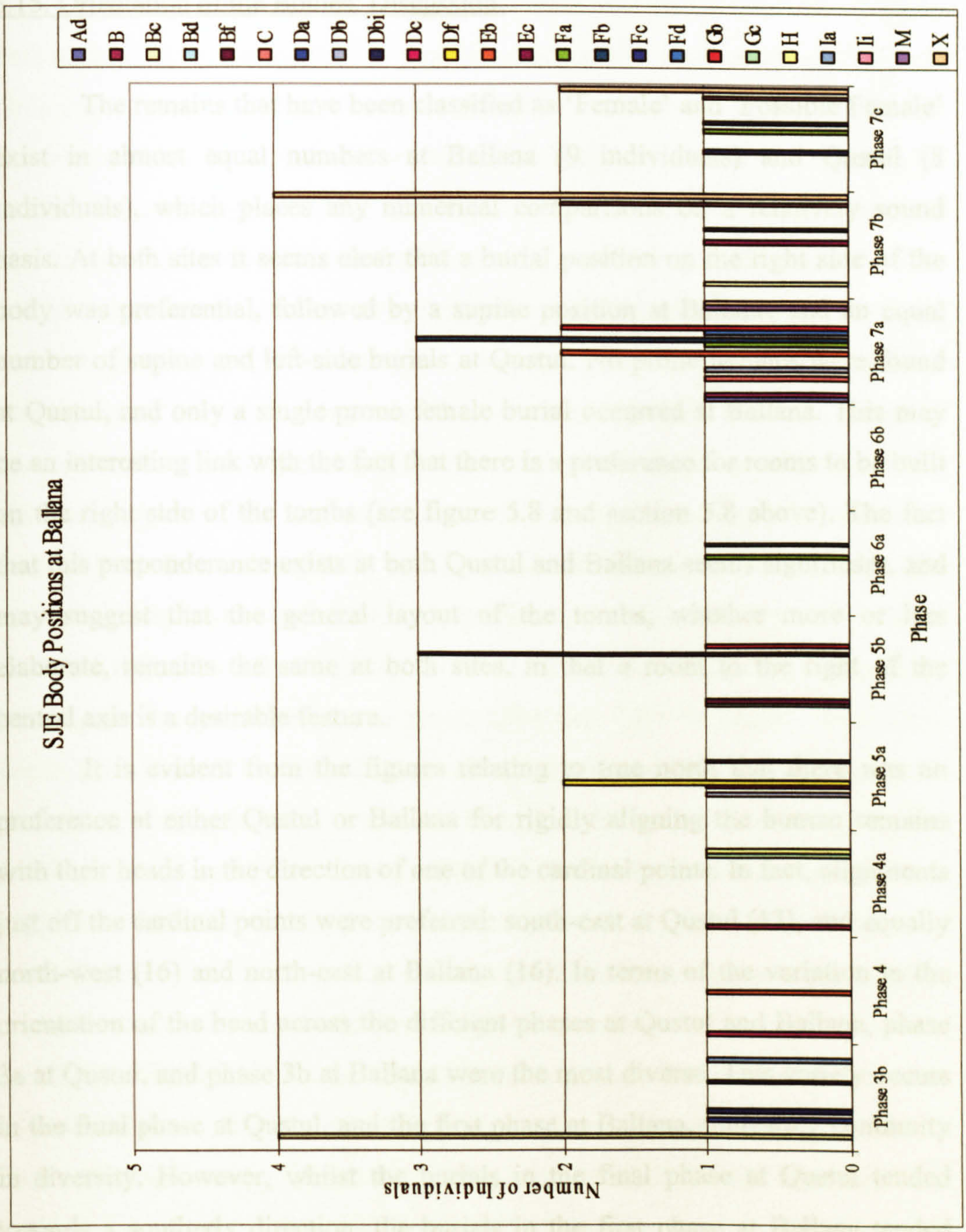


Figure 5.24

There were 24 different burial positions recorded at Ballana. At Ballana, the positions 'X' (prone), 'Fc' (flexed, with the hands in front of the face), were the most frequent, both occurring seven times. As was the case at Qustul, many of the positions only occurred in relation to a single individual. These positions were Ad, Bd, Bf, C, Da, Dc, Ec, Gc, H, Ia, and M.

5.15. Orientation of the Bodies: Discussion.

The remains that have been classified as 'Female' and 'Possible Female' exist in almost equal numbers at Ballana (9 individuals) and Qustul (8 individuals), which places any numerical comparisons on a relatively sound basis. At both sites it seems clear that a burial position on the right side of the body was preferential, followed by a supine position at Ballana, and an equal number of supine and left-side burials at Qustul. No prone females were found at Qustul, and only a single prone female burial occurred at Ballana. This may be an interesting link with the fact that there is a preference for rooms to be built on the right side of the tombs (see figure 5.8 and section 5.8 above). The fact that this preponderance exists at both Qustul and Ballana seems significant, and may suggest that the general layout of the tombs, whether more or less elaborate, remains the same at both sites, in that a room to the right of the central axis is a desirable feature.

It is evident from the figures relating to true north that there was no preference at either Qustul or Ballana for rigidly aligning the human remains with their heads in the direction of one of the cardinal points. In fact, alignments just off the cardinal points were preferred: south-east at Qustul (13), and equally north-west (16) and north-east at Ballana (16). In terms of the variation in the orientation of the head across the different phases at Qustul and Ballana, phase 3a at Qustul, and phase 3b at Ballana were the most diverse. This variety occurs in the final phase at Qustul, and the first phase at Ballana, indicating continuity in diversity. However, whilst the burials in the final phase at Qustul tended towards a southerly direction, the burials in the first phase at Ballana tended towards a northerly direction.

The production of the graphs relating to local north produced a more recognisable pattern, even though burials do occur in many different directions. Burials orientated towards direction X have a long-lived tradition that crosses between the cemeteries. The burials at Qustul tended to face the north whilst the burials at Ballana tended to face to the east or the west. Therefore there seems to be a tradition of burial towards cardinal points defined in relation to local north.

The information gained regarding the orientation of the bodies clearly demonstrates that the overriding consideration in the positioning of the dead bodies was local north based on the direction of the flow of the Nile. Although this feature in the landscape was not visible to those in the tomb who laid out the bodies, the data suggests that this orientation was important. This may suggest that in terms of a world view, the River was a more important element of X-Group cosmology or ritual practice than other natural features such as the rising and setting of the sun, in which case a stronger preference for true north (and correspondingly, east or west) would have been expected. The importance of local north is further augmented by the position of the chapel rows at Qustul, the vast majority of which face a (local) northerly direction. The complexes were entered from the southerly side, and in certain structures, an offering table had been placed against the north wall. In performing a ritual act, the individual(s) involved would have been facing, at least for the act of offering, or perhaps libating, to the north (see for example QB4 and QB5 Williams, 1991, 183). Although the use of local north as an orientating feature in the landscape can be reasonably suggested, it was not the case that the bodies at either site were preferentially placed either facing north or with the head to the north. At both Ballana and Qustul, and in terms of the head and the face, one of the other cardinal points was preferred. Therefore, the River seems to have provided an anchor point for orientation. In fact, a significant number of the bodies at Qustul and Ballana have their heads towards local south. At Ballana this is also true with regard to the direction of the face. It is unfortunate that the number of intact human remains, particularly from Qustul, is so small. Apart from making clear the importance of the flow of the Nile (in both directions) as an orientating feature that defined the other compass points, the directions in which the heads and faces of individuals were positioned are too disparate to suggest a strong case for orientation in a certain direction. The lack of a topographical map of the area near Qustul and Ballana prevents the identification of other geographical features such as wadis or hills (but see Butzer and Hansen, 1968, figure K-1 for a modern map of prehistoric Nile deposits in the area). The discovery of the

possible importance of the River may instead have implications for the framing of a mental topography for the X-Group.

The figures relating to the more detailed bodily positions recorded using the detailed scheme provided by the SJE show that a large range of different burial positions were encountered at the sites. It would seem that there was no real normative burial position at either Ballana or Qustul. Many of the burial positions that have been recorded were only represented by a single burial. It can be noted that crouched burials (those with the second letter 'd', 'e', or 'f') only occurred 11 times across the two sites (out of 85 burials). The high number of prone burials at Ballana, and the fact that the majority of the burials are either supine or flexed, is interesting as this trend does not correspond with the generally accepted pattern of X-Group burials, where interments apparently tend to be crouched (see section 2.7 of chapter two). This alleged marker of X-Group identity cannot be applied at Qustul or Ballana. However, it may be the case that other writers have used the term 'crouched' as equivalent to 'flexed'. The wide distribution of bodily positions indicates that there was no rigid pattern in the arrangement of the dead bodies at either of the sites. It would seem therefore, that it was the position of the head and face that was a more regulated and perhaps a more significant concern, than the regular placement or laying out of the body.

5. 16. Age and Sex of Humans at Qustul and Ballana.

The graphs that follow concern the sex, and the age at death of the humans at Qustul and Ballana.

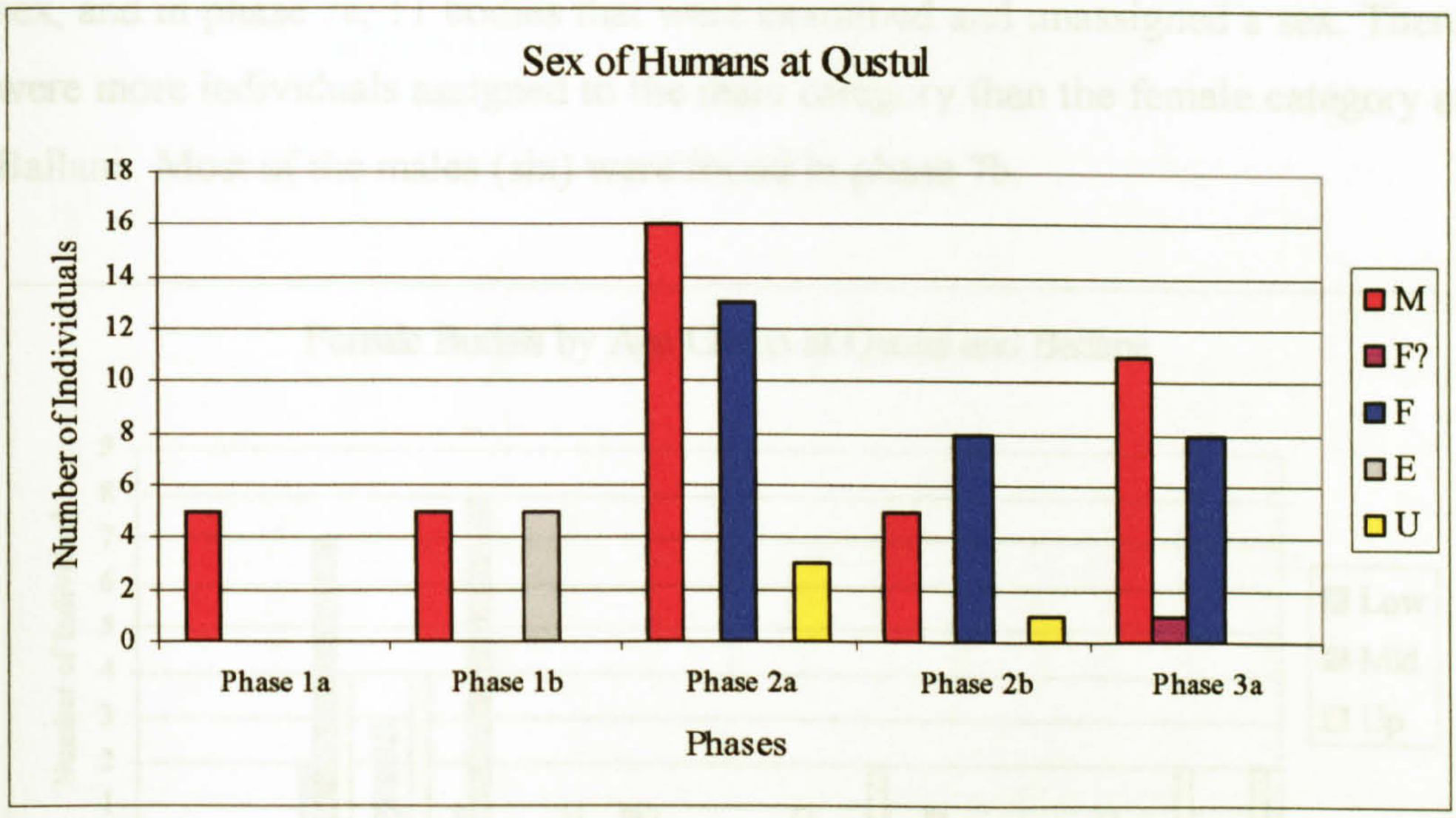


Figure 5.25

It is noticeable that when examining the human remains from Qustul, no skeletal remains were assigned to the possible male category (M?), whilst only one entry appears in the possible female category (F?). Six skeletons were examined and then remained unassigned to any sex at Qustul. Most of the sexed remains from Qustul date to phase 2a (32). In every period except phase 2b, there were more male individuals recovered than females.

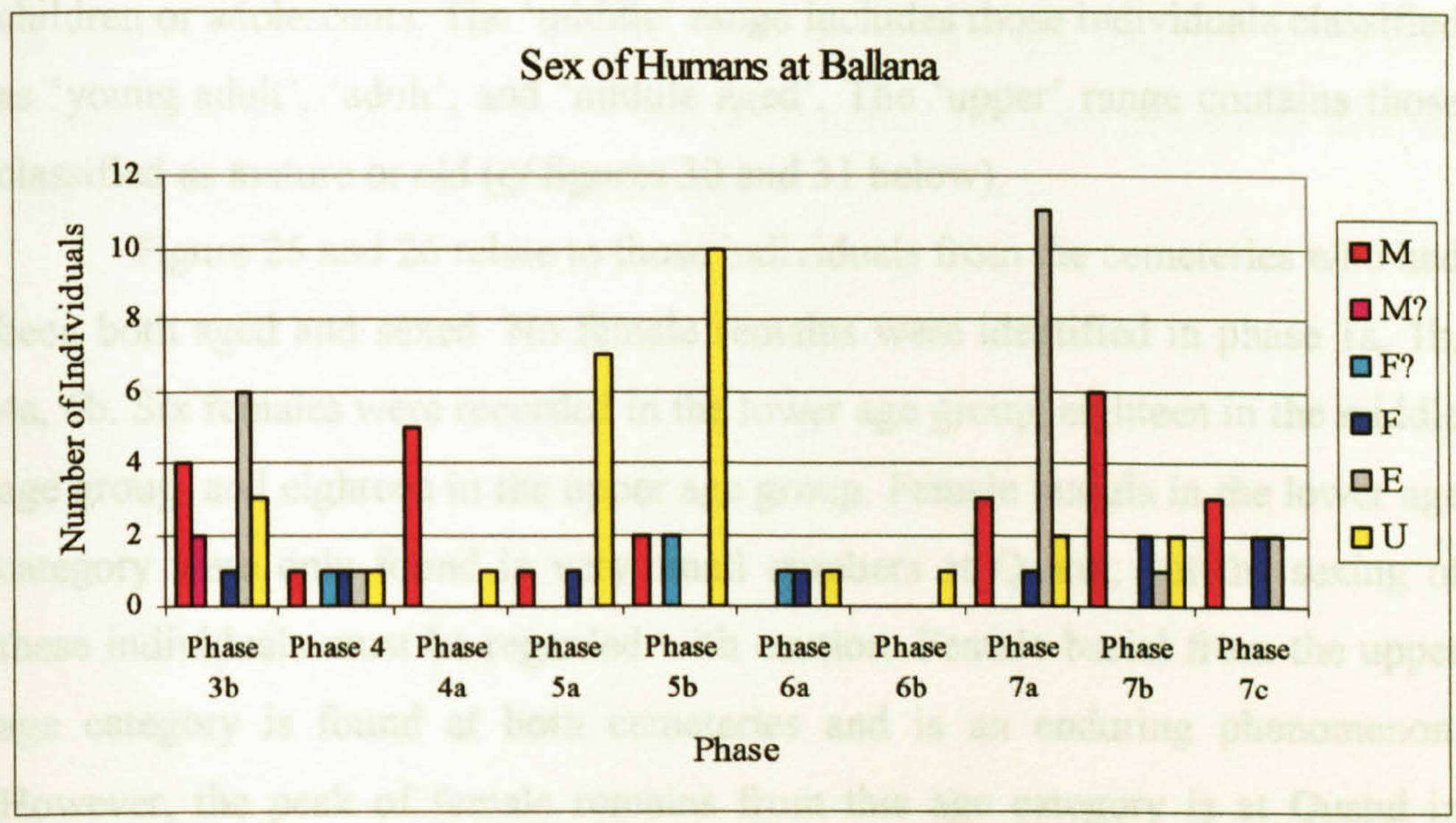


Figure 5.26

There were twenty individuals at Ballana that were examined, but that were not unassigned a sex. In phase 5b there were ten individuals of unknown

sex, and in phase 7a, 11 bodies that were examined and unassigned a sex. There were more individuals assigned to the male category than the female category at Ballana. Most of the males (six) were found in phase 7b.

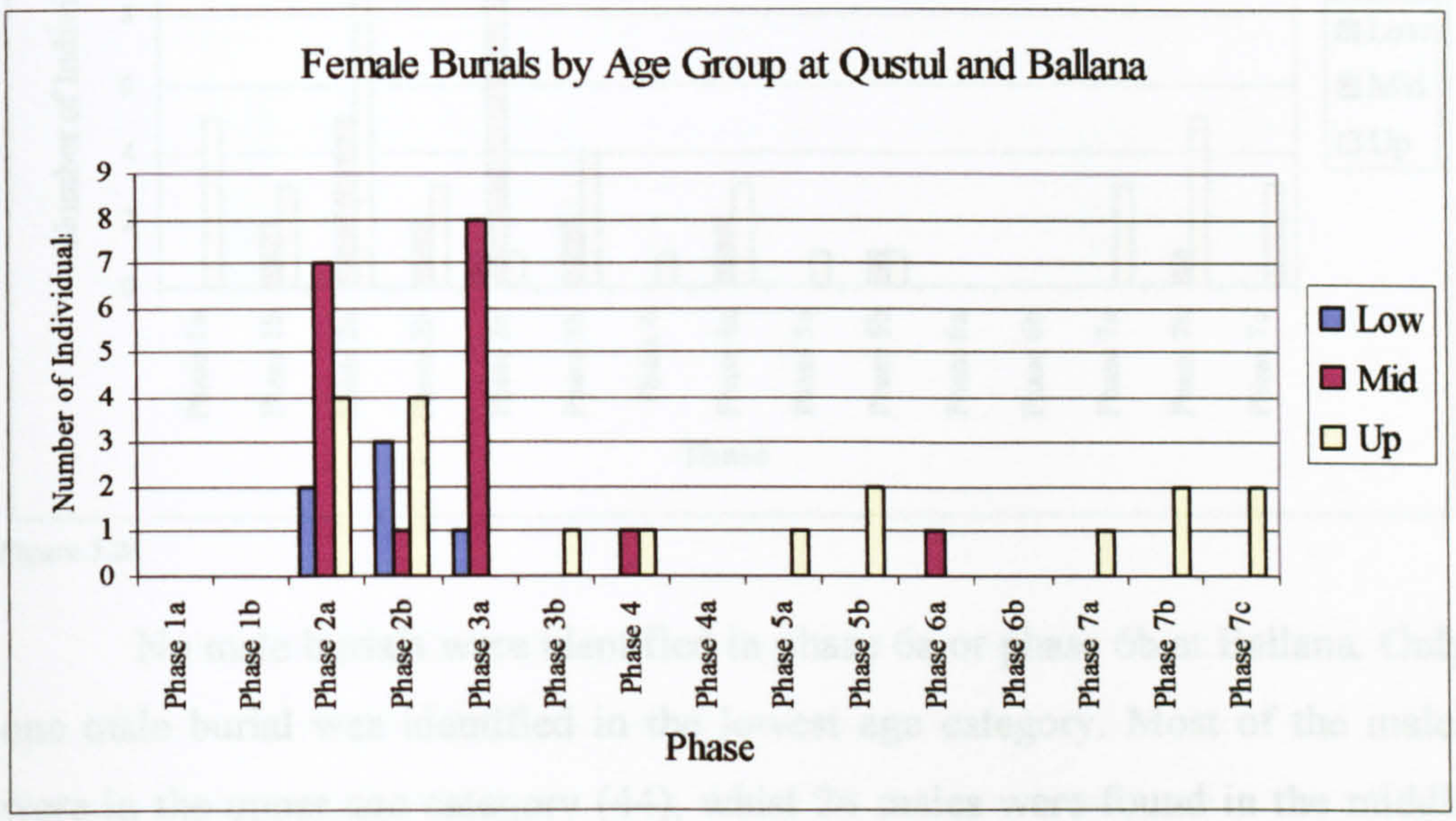


Figure 5.27

As a first stage in the analysis of the sexed remains by age, the human remains were divided into 'low', 'middle' and 'upper' age ranges. The 'low' range includes all those human remains designated by el-Batrawi (1935) as children or adolescents. The 'middle' range includes those individuals classified as 'young adult', 'adult', and 'middle aged'. The 'upper' range contains those classified as mature or old (*cf* figures 30 and 31 below).

Figure 25 and 26 relate to those individuals from the cemeteries who had been both aged and sexed. No female remains were identified in phase 1a, 1b, 4a, 6b. Six females were recorded in the lower age group, eighteen in the middle age group, and eighteen in the upper age group. Female burials in the lower age category were only found in very small numbers at Qustul, but the sexing of these individuals must be regarded with caution. Female burial from the upper age category is found at both cemeteries and is an enduring phenomenon. However, the peak of female remains from this age category is at Qustul in phases 2a and 2b.

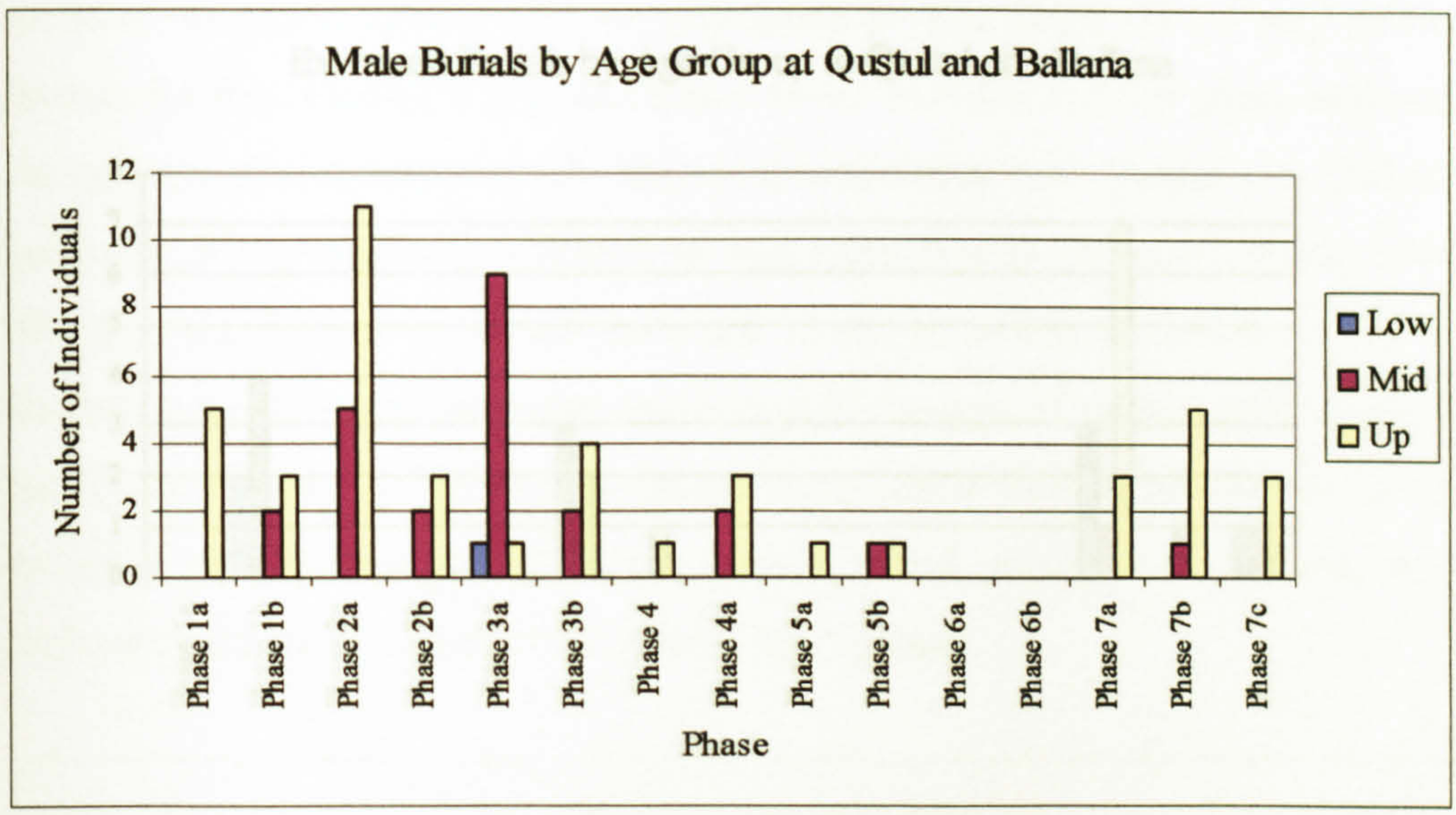


Figure 5.28

No male burials were identified in phase 6a or phase 6b at Ballana. Only one male burial was identified in the lowest age category. Most of the males were in the upper age category (44), whist 24 males were found in the middle age category. Only a single male individual from the lower age category was identified at Qustul, from phase 3a. Burials of males from both the upper and middle category continue between the two cemeteries. The peak number of burials (upper category) occurred in phase 2a, but this trend is reversed by phase 3a, when most of the male burials are from the middle age category. There is an overall decline in the number of males identified between phases 3b and 6b, only peaking again in phase 7b at Ballana.

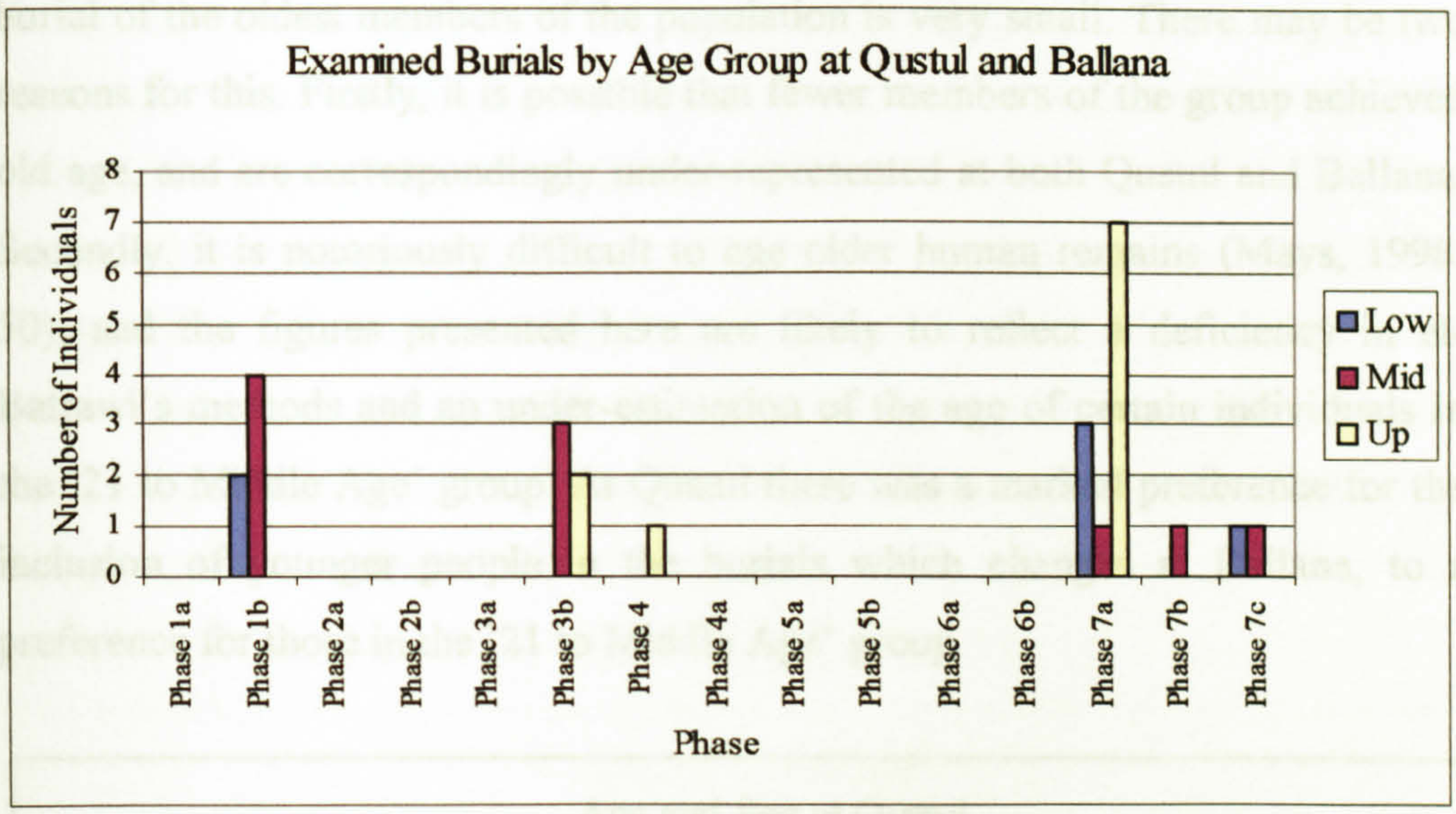


Figure 5.29

Figure 28 details the remains designated 'examined' but not assigned an age ('E' in the database). These are those remains that were examined by el-Batrawi (1935), and that were aged, but that were not assigned a sex. Those individuals that had been aged but unassigned to a sex category peak during phases 1b, 3b and 7a.

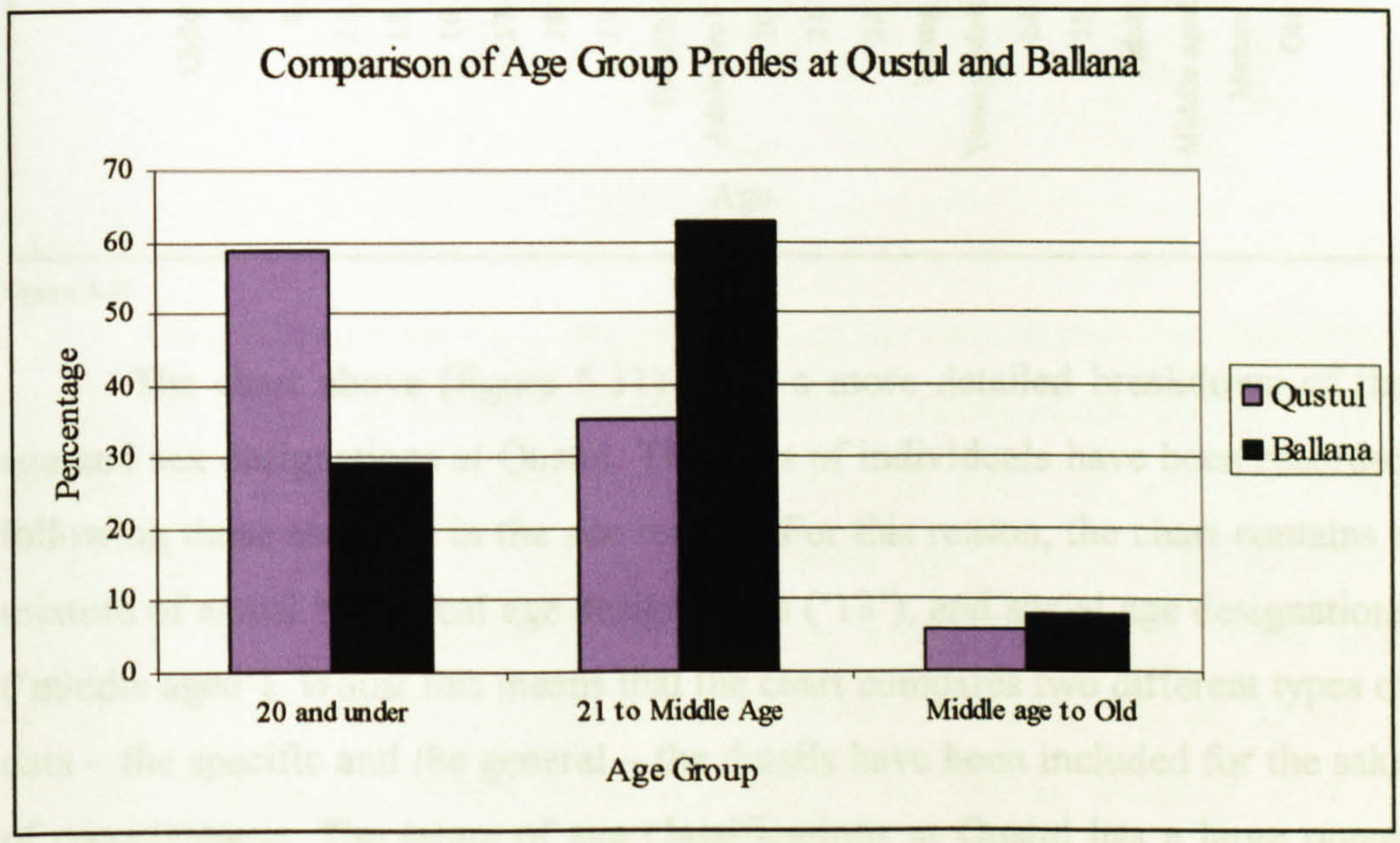


Figure 5.30

Figure 29 compares the burials at Qustul and Ballana that were assigned an age by el-Batrawi (but without a consideration of sexing). At both sites, the

burial of the oldest members of the population is very small. There may be two reasons for this. Firstly, it is possible that fewer members of the group achieved old age, and are correspondingly under-represented at both Qustul and Ballana. Secondly, it is notoriously difficult to age older human remains (Mays, 1998, 50), and the figures presented here are likely to reflect a deficiency in el-Batrawi's methods and an under-estimation of the age of certain individuals in the '21 to Middle Age' group. At Qustul there was a marked preference for the inclusion of younger people in the burials which changes at Ballana, to a preference for those in the '21 to Middle Age' group.

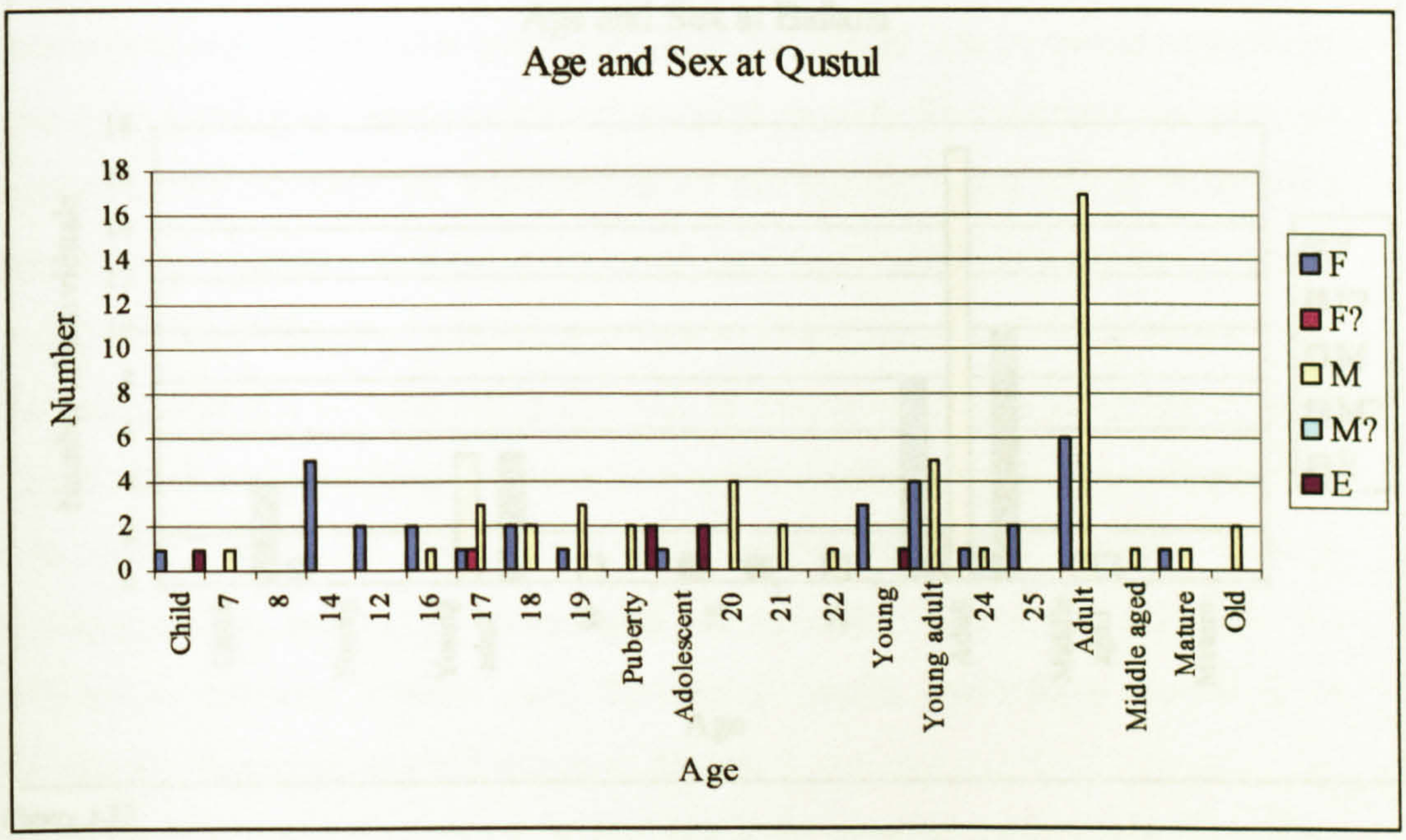


Figure 5.31

The chart above (figure 5.31) gives a more detailed breakdown of the age and sex designations at Qustul. The ages of individuals have been recorded following those assigned in the site reports. For this reason, the chart contains a mixture of actual biological age designations ('18'), and social age designations ('middle aged'). Whilst this means that the chart compares two different types of data – the specific and the general – the details have been included for the sake of completeness. The range of age classifications at Qustul has a large range. The sex designations in the pre-pubescent age categories can be disregarded as unreliable. Males appear in the adult category in a significantly larger number

than in any other category, and in a significantly larger number than the women. However, when the numbers of males from the teenage and young adult categories are added together, they form a larger numerical group than the male adults. There are also more female individuals in the teenage and young adult categories once they are counted, than there are in the adult female category. At Qustul, the majority of male and female burials appear in the teenage and young adult categories. Only a small number of individuals appear in the highest age categories, and only one of these is female.

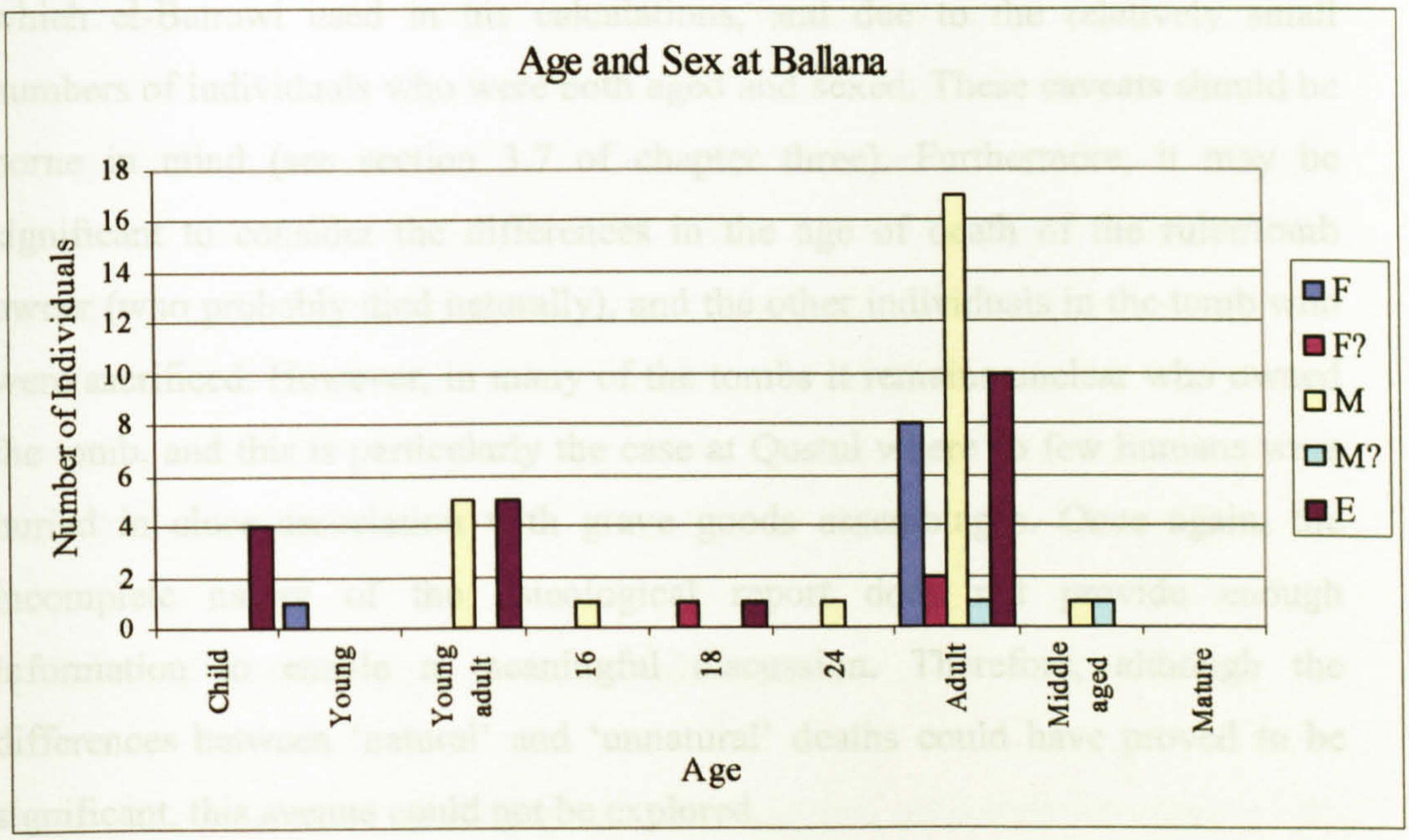


Figure 5.32

The same caveats regarding the form of the data in the 'Age and Sex at Qustul' bar chart can be made about the corresponding chart (figure 5.32) at Ballana. The bodies that were examined, but that were not assigned a sex, appear across three age groups and one specific age – 'child', 'young adult', '18' and 'adult'. At Ballana, the majority of individuals appear in the adult category. It is interesting to note that female burials only appear as 'adults' at Ballana. Although a female burial appears in the 'young' category, it is not possible to be sure that a child of this age was either male or female. It would be very interesting to know whether those 'examined' bodies in the 'young adult' category that were not assigned a sex, were male or female. If they were male

(or mostly male), a significant trend could be noted: females (whilst they may have appeared in the graves as children), may only have been included in the burials at Ballana as adults. Only a very small number of individuals (2) appear in the middle aged range, and none are in the mature range.

5. 17. Age and Sex at Qustul and Ballana: Discussion.

It must be reiterated that the sexing and ageing of the burials from the cemeteries is not particularly sound both due to the opacity of the methods which el-Batrawi used in his calculations, and due to the relatively small numbers of individuals who were both aged and sexed. These caveats should be borne in mind (see section 3.7 of chapter three). Furthermore, it may be significant to consider the differences in the age of death of the ruler/tomb owner (who probably died naturally), and the other individuals in the tomb who were sacrificed. However, in many of the tombs it remains unclear who owned the tomb, and this is particularly the case at Qustul where so few humans were buried in close association with grave goods assemblages. Once again, the incomplete nature of the osteological report does not provide enough information to enable a meaningful discussion. Therefore, although the differences between 'natural' and 'unnatural' deaths could have proved to be significant, this avenue could not be explored.

At the cemeteries, more individuals were categorised as male, than were categorised as female, or that were left unsexed. At Qustul and Ballana, the majority of the male burials were individuals in the upper age category. At Qustul, the majority of women occur in the middle category, in opposition to the trend at Ballana, where the majority of women were in the upper category. Therefore at Ballana, the majority of the individuals that were buried there were older people. Although there were equal numbers of females in the middle and upper age categories, their inclusion in the burials changes through time. The number of female burials peaks during phases 2a and 3a at Qustul, and these peaks were formed in both cases by females from the middle age category. Only a single female from the middle age category was found at Ballana. Therefore

the burial rite that allowed for the inclusion of women from the middle age category in the tombs appears to be strongly created at Qustul, but then almost entirely abandoned at Ballana. Male burials also peaked during phases 2a and 3a, but in phase 2a these were males from the upper age category, whilst in phase 3a, they were males from the middle age category. There was therefore a correspondence during phase 3a between a peak of middle age females and a peak of middle age males.

Adult males appear to form the largest age/sex category at both Qustul and Ballana. However, when the numbers of males from the teenage and young adult categories are added together, they form a larger numerical group than the male adults. At Qustul, there are also more female individuals in the teenage and young adult categories once they are counted, than there are in the adult female category. These trends in the male and female burials at Qustul, stand in direct opposition to the case of female remains at Ballana. At Ballana, the only female burials found were those of adult females - the single female in the 'young' category at Ballana could be disregarded on the grounds of the unreliable sexing of pre-pubescent individuals.

5.18. Animal Remains from Qustul and Ballana.

The animal burials from Ballana and Qustul are a striking aspect of the mortuary rituals. For this reason, the animal remains were included in the database alongside the human remains in the 'bodies' table, in order that they might be investigated in some meaningful manner. As is the case for the human remains, this chapter is concerned with the practicalities relating to the inclusion of the animals within the tombs. A more nuanced investigation will follow in the subsequent chapters.

The animal remains differ from the human remains in that the majority of animal remains were found in the ramps of the tombs, rather than within the burial chambers. The evidence concerning animal remains from the two cemeteries cannot be considered on an equal basis as the remains from Qustul far outnumber those from Ballana. In a number of their plans within the site

report, Emery and Kirwan simply labelled the ramps at Ballana with the term 'animal burials', but went no further in describing the finds. In fact, the extent to which the ramps themselves were excavated remains unclear. As the excavators found themselves under increasing time pressures, they may not have fully excavated the ramps at Ballana, perhaps in the belief that they would contain artefacts and animal remains that would be largely similar to those already uncovered at Qustul. However, as the easiest way to enter the tombs was via the entrance at the bottom of the ramp, the ramps may have been cleared. The animal remains that may have been recovered were rarely recorded in any detail, and no finds from the ramps were recorded. If the excavators had found animal trappings of silver and bronze, it would be unlikely that they would have failed to include them in the excavation reports. Even if they lacked enough time to plan and draw the finds, they would surely have included the items in their find lists for each tomb, particularly because a classificatory system for the trappings and bells had been previously developed for the finds from Qustul. It therefore seems reasonable to presume that, apart from the occasional recorded find, no animal trappings were recovered from Ballana. The discrepancy between the two sites is very unfortunate, as it prevents any equitable comparison of the animal remains. However, for the sake of completeness, the figures from Ballana have been included here.

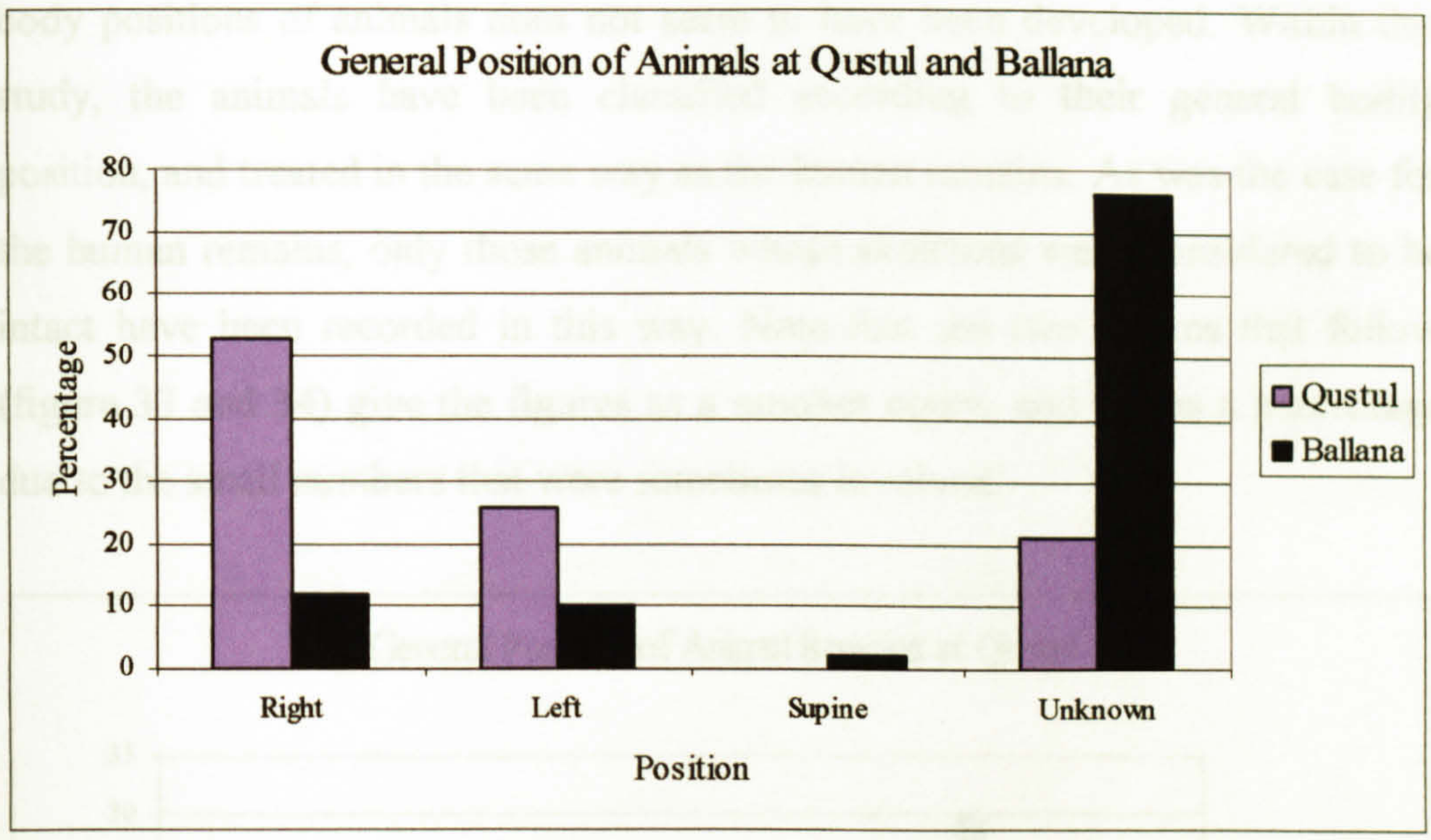


Figure 5.33

There is a marked trend towards burial of animals on their right side at Qustul. Almost equal numbers of animal interments on the right and left sides were recorded at Ballana. There are almost equal numbers of animals in an unknown position from the two sites, but proportionally, the majority of animals were in an unknown position.

5.19. General Position of Animal Species at Qustul and Ballana.

Previous excavators of Nubian sites have not developed a system for classifying the body positions for animals in a manner similar to that developed by the SJE for human remains. Arguably, the wide range of bodily positions which may be found in human remains is unlikely to be found in animal remains. However, it seems to be the case that animal remains have rarely been considered as aspects of mortuary ritual deserving of the same depth of investigation that is afforded to human remains. To my knowledge, a study of animal interment by a mortuary archaeologist has yet to be conducted. Animal remains have remained the preserve of the archaeozoologist, who is arguably likely to ask different questions of the remains than a mortuary specialist might. It is probably due to this disciplinary division that a method for classifying the

body positions of animals does not seem to have been developed. Within this study, the animals have been classified according to their general bodily position, and treated in the same way as the human remains. As was the case for the human remains, only those animals whose skeletons were considered to be intact have been recorded in this way. Note that the two figures that follow (figure 33 and 34) give the figures as a number count, and not as a percentage due to the small numbers that were sometimes involved.

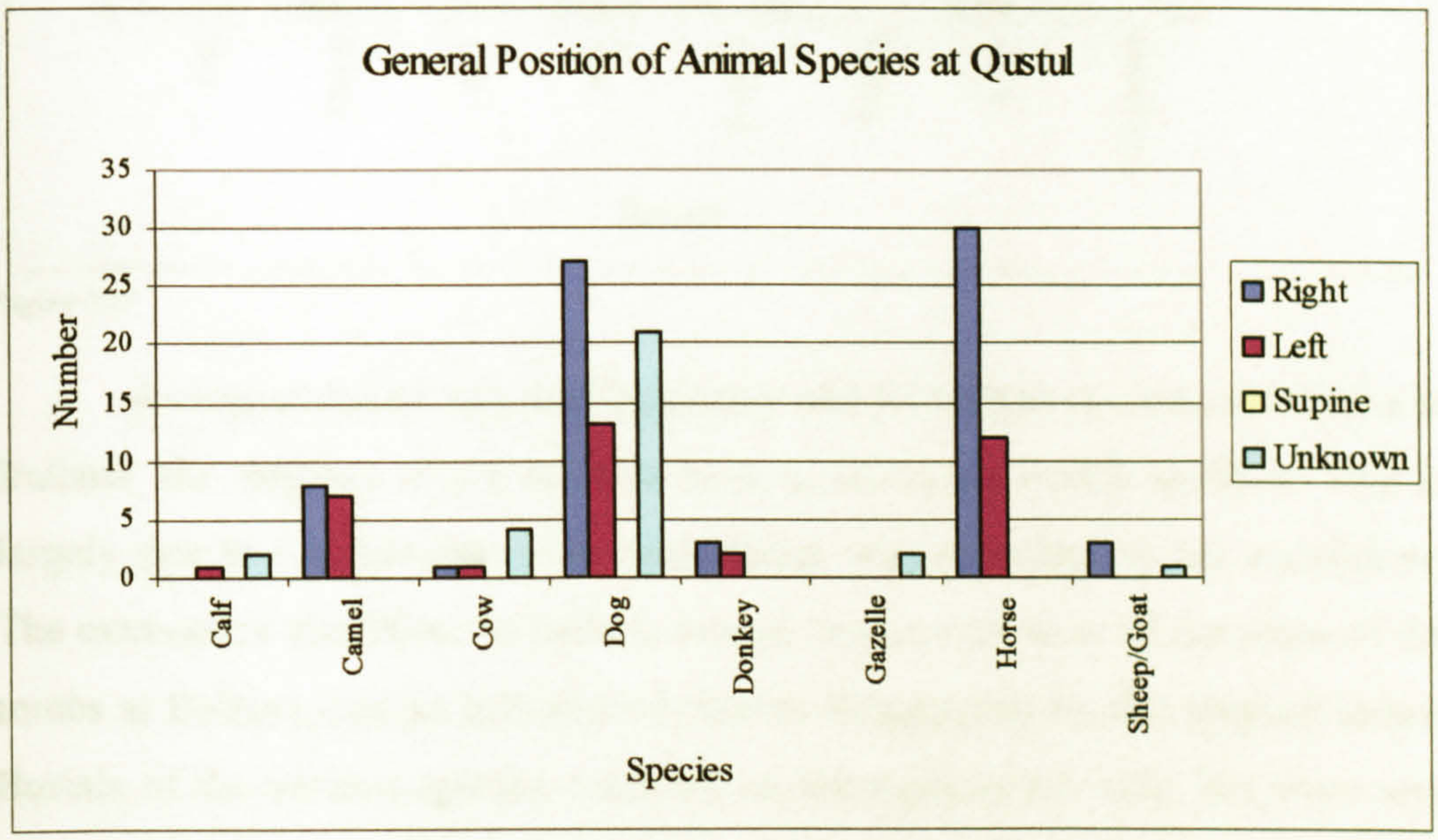


Figure 5.34

The figures concerning the animals from Qustul give a representative picture of the treatment of animals from the sites. Horses form the largest number of animals at the site with dogs following closely behind. Cows and calves were rare inclusions in the tombs, and only a single calf specimen was recovered. In a total of four cows found at the sites (two at each cemetery). The large number of dogs in unknown bodily positions were found in Room 1 of QT03 that contained around forty dog skeletons.

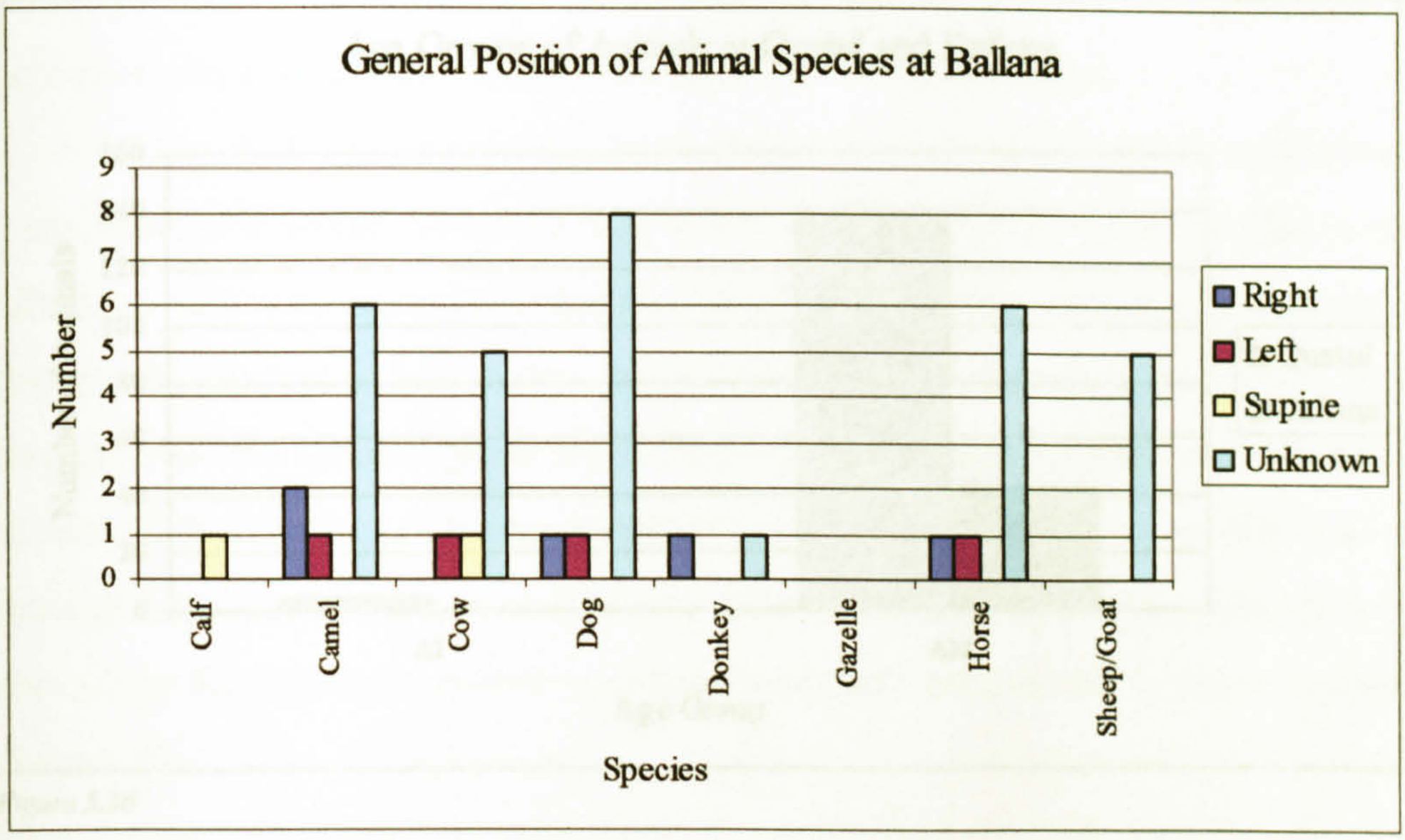


Figure 5.35

As less attention was paid by Emery and Kirwan to the animal remains at Ballana, the majority of the animals have an unknown bodily position. This is largely due to the fact that little information was recorded by the excavators. The excavators also failed to include animal remains on most of the plans of the tombs at Ballana, and so information cannot be gathered by this method either. Burials of the various species occurred on the right or left side, but there was one more instance of burial on the right side than burial on the left side. There was only a single occurrence of supine burial (see section 5.21 below).

5.20. Age Groups of Animals at Qustul and Ballana.

The graph below shows the information concerning the general age groups of the animals at Qustul and Ballana. The animal remains were not the subject of any detailed osteological investigation, and were not sexed or aged in any methodical way. Therefore, the animals have only been classified into two broad divisions – immature (AI) and mature (AM).

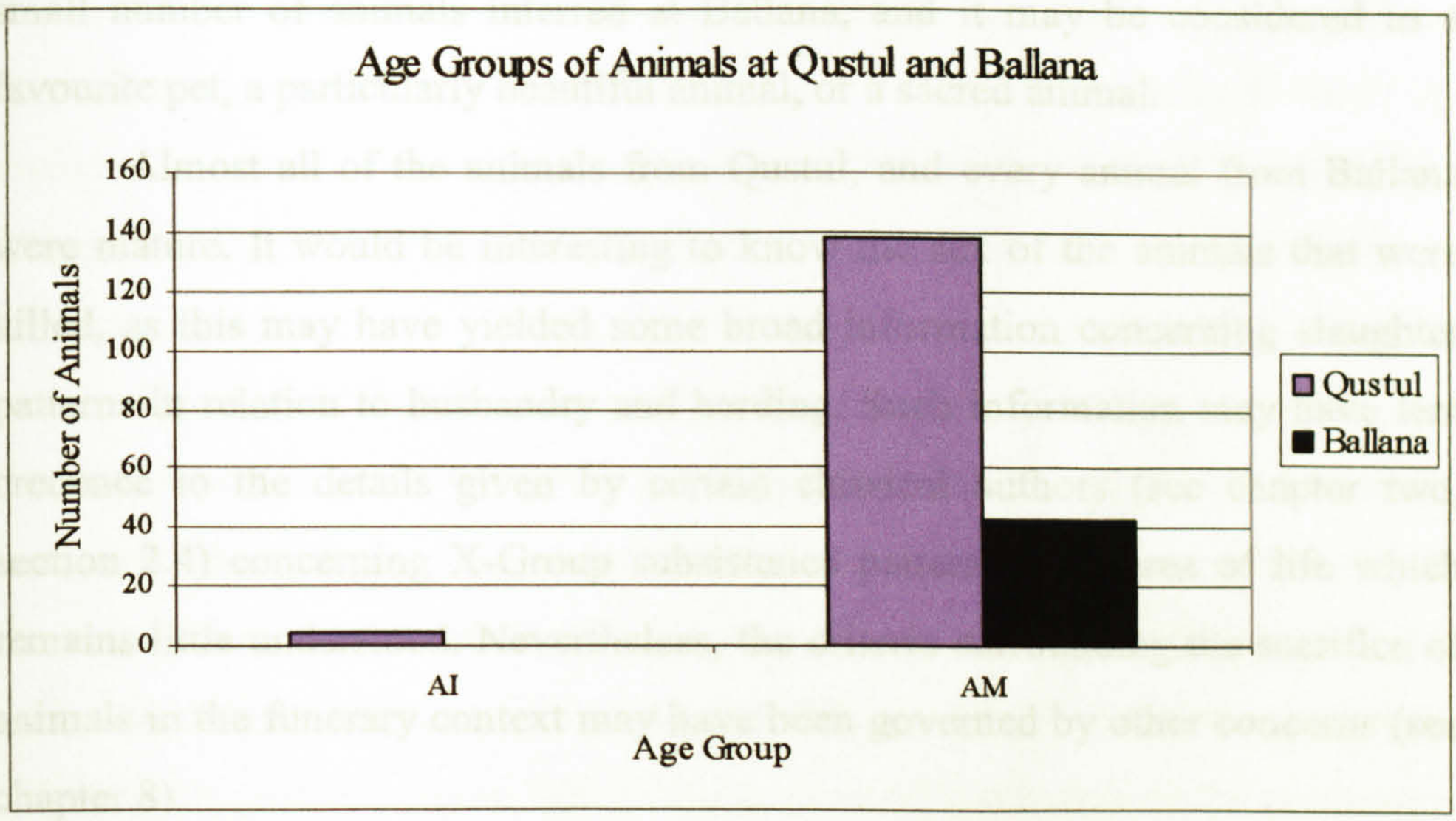


Figure 5.36

A small number of immature animals (five) were included in the graves at Qustul. There were no immature animals found at Ballana.

5. 21. The Animals: Discussion.

In investigating the body positions of the animals it is interesting to note that the majority of animals were buried on their right side. This is the case at both sites and across the various breeds. This trend also corresponds with that found in the human remains, and it is clear that right-sided burial was the predominant and preferred mode of interment for both animals and humans.

The cow entered as BT95:CowJ from Ballana is of particular interest. This cow skeleton represents the only supine animal burial of any species at the cemeteries, and represents a highly unusual burial both due to its breed and its bodily position. Other factors also make this interment stand out from that of other animals. The vast majority of the animals were buried in the shafts and forecourts of the tombs, at Qustul and Ballana. However the burial BT95:CowJ was interred in Room 2 of the tomb, in association with three humans. Two of these human individuals were both wearing silver crowns, and would seem to be royal individuals. The treatment of this cow is particularly significant given the

small number of animals interred at Ballana, and it may be considered as a favourite pet, a particularly beautiful animal, or a sacred animal.

Almost all of the animals from Qustul, and every animal from Ballana were mature. It would be interesting to know the sex of the animals that were killed, as this may have yielded some broad information concerning slaughter patterns in relation to husbandry and herding. Such information may have lent credence to the details given by certain classical authors (see chapter two, section 2.4) concerning X-Group subsistence patterns – an area of life which remains little understood. Nevertheless, the criteria surrounding the sacrifice of animals in the funerary context may have been governed by other concerns (see chapter 8).

5.22. The Creation of Ritual Space at Qustul and Ballana.

The evidence presented above covers basic aspects of cemetery analysis in terms of the physical construction of the tombs, and basic information regarding age and sex that are fundamental things that an archaeologist might be interested to know about any cemetery. It is already clear that there is a high degree of variation between the constructions and the remains in the cemeteries. Perhaps this should not be surprising because the cemeteries are actually two different places, two different sites, and cover two time periods. Even though the cemeteries exist in relation to each other, and bear some physical similarities, the archaeological evidence is already suggesting substantial variation between the two (*cf* Pader, 1982).

A fundamental question may be asked upon the discovery of a cemetery – why this place? In the case of Qustul, ritual activity at the site has a long history, and a cemetery was in use at the site during the Meroitic period. Therefore, to some extent the X-Group cemetery at Qustul represents a continuity of space and place, and a continued connection to the landscape. This is not a practice that was unique to the X-Group at Qustul, and the reuse of earlier funerary monuments or the close association between X-Group and earlier Meroitic graves can be seen for example at Gammai, Wadi Qitna and

Gebel Adda. Edwards has suggested that there may have been a gap of approximately a century between the end of Meroitic activity and the commencement of X-Group activity at Qustul (Edwards, 2004, 202). The length of time that the site at Qustul had been used may have been a crucial factor in its selection.

The sites of the cemeteries were valued places, as interment continues at the sites for some years. Chapman has suggested ways in which a place or thing becomes valued. Presencing is a means by which the absent is brought into the present context, so that an artefact, or a tumulus in a cemetery brings past time into present time. Material culture can presence the other – it can presence what is lost, gone, past (Chapman, 2000, 30). In terms of the burials at the cemeteries, the mounds act as a means of presencing all of the past deaths and burial rites that took place there. Grounding is a concept that is particularly relevant to creating meaningful locations. Although grounding can refer to 'the formation of links through social practice between particular artefact categories and specific contexts of social practices' (ibid, 31), it is also concerned with the incorporation of symbolic referents in/to a particular place. This is a reflexive process in which the attributes of an artefact are simultaneously created and reinforced by their association with a particular place, and the symbolic qualities of a place are augmented by its relationship with artefacts. Effectively, Qustul and Ballana are meaningful places because of the rites enacted there and the material deposited, but the performance, use and deposition of humans, animals and artefacts are also made meaningful because this happens (repeatedly) at Qustul and Ballana. The rites were enacted both over a period of time (over the duration of the cemeteries), and at particular moments (on the occasion of a funeral). These are points to which we will return in chapter six and chapter seven.

Barrett has argued, in relation to prehistoric Europe, that mound burials offer a focal point for the definition and redefinition of genealogical status, and that the body itself is unimportant (Barrett, 1990). It is certainly the case that the continued visibility of the mounds in a cemetery (rather than just burial in a pit) would be a constant reminder of the past of a particular group of people. In fact

this is the case for any kind of monumental marker in a cemetery. The presence of the chapels at Qustul may represent a more formalised remembrance of the dead, if they were used as focal points in which to present offerings, to pray or otherwise commune with the dead. The chapels are likely to have been constructed over a period of time, as the chapels were not constructed in unified alignment. Such constructions perhaps represent a re-visiting of the sites between burials. As two different but related types of monuments, the tumuli and chapels may be viewed as physical loci for the continued interaction with the dead. Furthermore, the enduring constructions develop a historicity and age through which group identities concerning the ancestors and a mythical past could be grounded. The monumentality of the mounds could have suggested and created group cohesion via joint endeavour that consequently enhanced feelings of group identity and unity in a common cause. Yet the structures are not solely concerned with group identity. The small size of these chapels suggests practice based on individual performances in private spaces (some of the chapels have doors that could be closed). The personal enactment of ritual in a small enclosed space may have held particular power, particularly if this was a community in which groups of people lived together alongside their animals with only limited opportunity or need for privacy. The individual had personal access to the gods or the ancestors which they negotiated alone and unwatched in a private transaction. Indeed, the chapels may have been constructed for one's own sole use, further augmenting the space as that which was intimately one's own.

The burials themselves would have appeared fairly uniform in that the mound was the visible marker, and although some were larger than others, the mounds do not reflect the complexity of tomb layout below or the quantity or type of artefacts that were buried within. The mounds may also have become the focus of myth-making and story-telling concerning the dead. This would further imbue the cemetery location and particular tumuli with added power. In such a process the identities of the dead were re-created and perhaps altered. As such the ancestors may have become stereotypical individuals, known solely by particular qualities or acts, whether real or created. In effect the cemeteries could become locations inextricably bound up with narratives of past burials and

past individuals that could have only been developed by the fact that the cemeteries themselves existed. The ancestors are consequently 'petrified' as they are incorporated into the landscape (Pluciennik, 2002, 176).

At Ballana no chapels were excavated but instead a large enclosure was uncovered. The disappearance of the chapels and the construction of a large structure may indicate a decline in personal ritual practice and the rise of group ritual. Although the burials at Qustul were certainly group performances, there seems to have been the opportunity for private or small group (family?) veneration. Yet at Ballana, this possibility was apparently eradicated in favour of a spatially defined communal space. The enclosure at Ballana is not easily identified as a temple or chapel, and so it is therefore impossible to be sure whether or not the space was used only for communal gatherings of a ritual nature, or whether it was used for other practical or political ends such as a cattle corral, market place or a group meeting place for the dispensing of justice. If the latter was the case, the location at Ballana would have acquired a more explicit political legitimising alongside the association with death, burial and ritual.

Shields has suggested that there are three possible ways that identities are created in connection with space: mythology, place-myth and place-image. Place-image is based on a simplified mental image of a place has been visited, and that image remains unchanged. This is a reduced core image of the essential nature of the place. For the cemeteries, it can be suggested that the core place-image is that of a generic mound. Place-myths may be formed by various myths that are contradictory, but that are based in the place-image. This allows for different people and different groups to have their own place-myths, but they are based in part on a communal set of place-images. Mythology is based on place-myths, but takes a very broad view of the landscape, a it is based in the group knowledge of all known places and their common features and idiosyncrasies (Shields, 1991). This is shared cultural knowledge in a landscape setting, and can be looked on as cosmological in that it creates a particular world view, and which contributes to a close relationship between place and identity. These ideas

suggest ways in which a place becomes special to a community, and also to individuals.

On the basis of the ideas outlined above, the move to ritual practice across the river at Ballana must have been a very significant move in terms of how this change re-figured certain aspects of practice, and what impact this had in terms of the collective memories perhaps associated with Qustul. This is not a simple question to ask or to answer simply on the basis of the layout and orientation of tombs, or the presence of males, females or animals within them. It is necessary to incorporate further evidence based on the artefacts and the qualities that they embody.

5. 23. Conclusion.

This chapter has presented the first step in the analysis of the Qustul and Ballana cemeteries from the perspectives of space and place in the tombs. The tombs at Qustul and Ballana are the physical backdrop for the human, animal and artefactual remains that were ultimately interred inside. The locations and orientations of the tombs have been discussed. Basic information concerning the ageing, sexing and orientation of the humans and animals within the tombs has also been presented. The following chapter moves on to an investigation of the materiality of the artefacts found within the tombs. This will be a more detailed level of analysis, which starts to explore the themes developed in chapter four regarding the relationships between humans, animals and artefacts, and the importance of production methods and materials in the creation of identities.

Chapter Six

Artefacts, Identity and Materiality.

6.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the artefactual remains from Qustul and Ballana and the technologies involved in the construction of a number of artefact classes. Due to the fact that there is no available settlement evidence which corresponds directly with the cemeteries, archaeological evidence will be drawn upon from a number of areas. Anthropological data will also be considered, as a possible method through which to gain analogous information about ancient technologies. The first part of this chapter is concerned with the amounts of different artefact types that occur through time at Qustul and Ballana. The artefacts from the two cemeteries are made from a wide range of materials, and a totally exhaustive study of every type of material and technology is beyond the scope of this study. Whilst acknowledging this shortcoming, this chapter focuses on particular materials, namely metalwork and pottery, and methods of construction. This chapter is concerned with the practical construction of artefacts, and the processes involved. As mentioned in chapters three and four, relatively little attention has been given to the technologies involved in the manufacturing of artefacts due to the belief that 'complex' artefacts were either stolen by the X-Group, or acquired as gifts. This chapter raises the possibility that some of these artefacts may have been indigenously manufactured. The preliminary analysis of the artefacts given in this chapter provides a basic conception of identity, based on the artefactual evidence. The social, psychological, symbolic and aesthetic qualities of the artefacts and their role in the construction of identities will be considered in the following chapter.

6.2. The Origins of X-Group Culture.

In order to discuss the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana, an unresolved question must be considered: where do the artefacts come from? There seems to be three distinct possibilities. Some of the material may have been imported, and this is certainly the case with regard to particular pottery types, which will be discussed below. Other types of material may be considered to be imports due to their design or manufacture. The second possibility, which has been discussed in chapter four, is that the material found its way into the graves either having been stolen, or having been received as gifts or bribes from the Empire. The third possibility is that some of the artefacts were indigenously manufactured. This possibility (with regard to the 'complex' items often of precious materials) has been largely ignored in previous research. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to be able to successfully resolve this issue, but it is possible to consider what implications these ideas have for our understanding of X-Group culture.

The first and second possibilities – that artefacts were imported, or that they were loot or the products of bribery – revolve around the premise that the artefacts are external examples of a different material culture that were acquired by the people at Qustul and Ballana. These two different means of external acquisition (which, in reality, need not have been mutually exclusive) casts the X-group in opposing roles. If the artefacts were imported into Nubia, we appear to be dealing with a culture actively and successfully engaged in trade relations with Egypt or with further afield (particularly in the case of certain pottery wares). In the other scenario, artefacts were obtained (probably from Egypt) by brute force and perhaps little discernment, or were passively accepted as 'gifts' (although we have no idea about what the X-Group gave back, if in fact it was anything material) or represent bribes. These scenarios are those which many Nubiologists might find the most plausible. Indeed, these scenarios may represent a true picture. However, even if this was so, we are left with a limited view of what these artefacts did, or what they meant to the people that acquired them – a limited view of their function and value. If the artefacts (or some of the artefacts) were exotica due to their unusual materials, mode of manufacture,

supposed mode of use, or design, what happened when a culture wholly unused to such items, secured them? This aspect of X-Group culture has been under-theorized and under-interpreted. If anything, it would seem that the items were thoughtlessly stacked up in certain tombs, and if they were important for anything, it was as simplistic indicators of status – a kind of artefactual body count.

The possibility that some of the artefacts may have been indigenously manufactured is an alien idea, except with regard to certain pottery types, and this possibility has been largely unexplored in relation to Qustul and Ballana. In particular, the adoption of metallurgy is often unnecessarily characterised as a particularly complex and difficult kind of technology (Budd and Taylor, 1995, 134). Accordingly, the X-Group has been largely cast as an a-technological culture, disinclined towards manufacture. This position is also based on the fact that some artefacts exhibit features that appear to be Kushitic, Egyptian or Classical in inspiration, and are therefore unlikely to have been produced by X-Group peoples. This relates to the questions posed above: what does a culture make of artefacts exhibiting designs that are alien and wholly meaningless to it? This is a question to which we will return. The practical possibilities of indigenous manufacture will be discussed below, but first an elaboration on the significance of casting artefacts as manufactured or acquired, and the consequences of these positions for the understanding of culture will be explored.

6.3. The Manufacture of Culture.

The study of technology is an archaeological mainstay, as being the study of material culture, archaeology (and archaeologists) is fundamentally concerned with the processes of modification that produce manufactured 'cultural' items. As we have seen in chapter four, the identification of peoples through the material culture that they made has been a feature that underpinned culture-historical explanations of the past, that linked together people, places and objects. More recently however, archaeologists have returned to the

question of technology, but have begun to explore it from a social perspective, often informed by anthropological enquiry (see for example Herbert 1984 and 1993, Gell, 1992, Dobres, 1995 and 2000). Such approaches have emphasised the inter-relations between technology, the material world and social production.

The processes involved in manufacture are not just those that manipulate and alter a natural product in order to make it a cultural product, the processes involved in manufacture make and shape people and culture. In the process of producing that which is material, that which is social is also produced. The process of manufacture could create meaning and value in itself. Artefacts are not simply the by-product of a particular technological process, there is intentionality in their manufacture.

Technological working is itself a physical processes. Technology is therefore not simply concerned with things, it is very much about the body. Physical actions and bodily techniques are obviously involved in technological production. The process of technological manufacture is therefore an embodied process. It has been recently argued that archaeologists need to develop a framework which encompasses all aspects of technological practice, as technology is based in the intersection between bodily engagement, agency and practice. The incorporation of bodily experience in this scheme is important 'because the corporeal body is the mindful and social link between the making and use of things, the making and use of practical and cultural knowledge, the making and unmaking of subjects, the making and breaking of social relations, and the making and transformation of the body politic' (Dobres, 2000, 128). Physical actions, techniques and gestures themselves become enmeshed in techniques of production, and these are likely to be culturally specific. For example, the bodily technique that an Italian chef uses to flip and rotate bread dough is necessary to the production of dough of the required lightness and size. The flick of the wrist is a particular bodily technology associated with this type of production. The acquisition of such skills may take many years, and specific training in the manipulation of materials, an understanding of specialised knowledge and the learning of bodily postures must all be undertaken. People at different life stages are therefore crucial to the continuation of knowledge and

practice. Older members of society pass on their technical knowledge, which may not be easily separable from magical knowledge (see below with regard to metalworking). As we have seen, this is embodied knowledge that intersects with the social world of agents. Children can be an important part in the process of the continuation of technical knowledge (indeed, any type of knowledge) as they learn skills, and appropriate and inappropriate ways of doing things. They may also have the power to transform the normative system by virtue of occupying a particular life-stage, but their potential to do so must be constrained by the particular social conditions of the group (Lucy, 2005a, 60-61).

The induction of individuals as craftspeople may be more complex than simply deciding to learn a trade. The apprentice may be gradually confronted with further levels of knowledge to master and skills to refine, with successive revelations governed by deeper initiation into a particular technological expertise. This may be based on gradual initiation into a small group who share sacred or dangerous knowledge. Technological manufacture can be deeply suffused with magico-ritual meaning, and the production of the desired end product may be predicated on the correct performance of each aspect of the task.

The process of manufacture, from the division of labour, the gathering of materials, the training of apprentices and the physical acts of production may be deeply rooted in (if not inseparable from) cosmological processes. In Azrou, in Morocco, textile production is thoroughly invested with meaning. Short toothed brushes and a large leg twirled spindle are used to prepare the weft threads, and a long toothed comb and small drop spindle are used to prepare the warps (*c.f.* Newberry, 1893, pls XIII, XV for an Ancient Egyptian example). The spindles are called *'izdi'* and *'tizdit'*, which are the berber words for male and female. The textile on the loom is considered to be a developing male child, and the weaver is his mother. Whilst the loom is prepared, the relationship is one between mother and immature son, but the textile on the loom is a mature son. People that pass by the warp give coins in order to 'whiten' the warp. After the warps have been stretched between posts, they are beaten to give them fear. Sugar and a coin are placed nearby to bless and sweeten the weaving, and also the child. When the finished textile is cut from the loom, the cloth is said to

experience a second birth into mature manhood, and the weaver loses control over the textile, just as a mother looses control over her adult son (Messick, 1987, 212-213). A number of aspects are particularly interesting in this example. The artefact in progress is a vulnerable thing that must be protected and nourished in the same way that a pregnant woman or child would be. Once the piece of cloth is finished and cut from the loom it exists in the same state as an adult male, and so from the beginning to the end of the weaving process, the cloth is created as a person. Secondly, the artefact in process is potentially disruptive, particularly as the weaver 'looses control' of it. In this sense, agency is attributed to the artefact. The cloth itself is also a cloth which is identifiably the work of the female weaver. Her skill and care are invested and materialised in the cloth just as they would be in a child. The finished cloth is testimony to her skills as a mother/weaver. In this manner the line between the person and the object is blurred: 'valuable items take on part of the qualities of their makers, just as their makers embody qualities of skills and resourcefulness in the manufacturing process (Chapman, 2000, 30).

The qualities that inhere in an artefact as an agglomeration of technological processes of manufacture performed by one or more people in themselves lend significance to an object. For Marx, artefacts are 'congealed masses of human labour' (1970, 39), and in a non-capitalist society this is recognised. Further to its production, the artefacts can be manipulated by individuals or groups who may hide, display or use the artefact(s) within strategies of social negotiation, and thereby add additional significance to the object(s). Therefore we might discuss the meanings constructed in the arena of production, and the meanings constructed in the arena of use, although the two realms are not entirely divisible, and the accrual (or lack thereof) of meaning, or the form that the object took during the manufacturing process may mark it out as more or less suitable for certain kinds of presentation and use. Within the particular field of that object class, objects may contrast with other objects within the same class. For example, one of the crowns in BT80 is decorated with rosettes and a male figure (king?), and contrasts with the crown in BT47 which is decorated with horns and Isis figures, but both are recognizable within the

object class 'crown'. A particularly significant aspect of the crowns from Ballana may be the basic construction of the crown in silver which never varies. A crown made of wood, or straw might not only be inappropriate, it may be completely unthinkable because 'crown' always equals 'silver'.

These are some of the ways in which all of the processes involved in the manufacture of artefacts may take on and create social significance and meaning – they are already embedded in a culturally specific web of meaning.

6. 4. The Incorporation of Culture.

How might we approach artefacts that may not have been indigenously produced, and therefore lie outside this web of cultural embeddedness? Did such artefacts remain as curiosities?

The finds of artefacts with Classical, Kushitic and Egyptian motifs at the sites may represent the continued popularity of artistic styles (particularly in terms of the Kushitic and Egyptianizing motifs) that were well established in the preceeding Meroitic period. This popularity may be based on the motifs being particularly powerful or meaningful designs, or on their being aesthetically pleasing, although we should not consider these positions to be mutually exclusive. The artefacts may have been construed as important heirlooms that were a material link with the past. Such artefacts may therefore have accrued particular life histories. They may have been artefacts central to the telling of stories concerning group origins, and perhaps an heroic, mythical past. In this sense, such objects may have represented a locus for both a past and a place which had become distant. Objects construed as such represent loci of spatio-temporal meanings. This is another form of presencing (Chapman, 2000, 30) – bringing the past into the present – which has been discussed in chapter five in relation to the tumuli at the cemetery. Whilst the presencing that the tumuli perform in relation to earlier acts of burial at the sites, the artefacts with Kushite or Egyptian motifs presence and recall a more distant past both in terms of time and place.

Imported items may have held a certain value due to their exoticism in terms of material, mode of manufacture or design. Although this might seem a basis for the construction of value that is shrouded in a non-knowing, or non-understanding of how the item was produced, such an argument can also be made for indigenous products whose manufacturing processes are shrouded in secrecy.

Although the X-Group may have been familiar with aspects of Meroitic iconography and ritual practice as seen further south in the continued Kushite funerary practices at el-Hobagi (Lenoble, 1994 and 1997) it should also be suggested that certain artefacts, even if they contained an Eye of Horus design or a representation of Amun, were totally 'unreadable' to the group that acquired them. The figure of Amun may have been figurally recognisable as a ram, but not as a supreme god previously worshipped in complex civilizations all over Egypt and the Sudan. The embossed silver casket from BT03 may not have been a piece of furniture with illustrations representing the apostles, but an elaborately produced box with pictures of men engraved on it.

However unreadable items came to be in the possession of the X-Group, or particular members of the culture, we should not presume that their response to, and classification of the artefacts and their designs, were the same as those in the culture from which they came, or the same as those produced by the archaeologist (see comments regarding classification in chapter three). Instead, we should see the artefacts as being transformed within this new cultural milieu. The artefacts were incorporated into existing schemes of power, domination and resistance across individual and group identities. Through the use of the artefacts, they became embodied features of the landscape of material culture. We could suggest that 'new' items may be particularly appropriate artefacts with which to challenge or expand current meanings and uses of objects within the group due to their novelty. Whilst this may be the case, it is also the fact that the artefacts must be actively incorporated into cultural practice, and so may come to fulfil alternative roles, and thereby alternative identities. New meanings are invested in the objects. This is not a matter of meaning being layered on top of a pre –existing essential artefact. In its incorporation in culture, the artefact is

effectively re-made. It is re-manufactured with different significance and different purpose. As Dobres puts it '[m]eaning does not miraculously hover above everyday material practices any more than it exists as some intangible substrate structuring action from below' (2000, 131). Through its use, the artefacts create and gain meaning, and so does the subject or subjects using and viewing the object. Such a model stresses the changing nature of the subject and culture, and whilst the two are distinct, they are also bound together within this reflexive, creative condition. This is altogether a more dynamic view of people and their material culture.

6. 5. Material Culture and Materiality.

Two different conceptions of the origins of artefacts have been outlined above. It is not possible to present one case of origins as more or less plausible than the other. I have also outlined ideas concerning how artefacts become meaningful to a society, whatever their origin. It must be vehemently stressed that the programmes outlined above are unnaturally divorced. The two lines of discussion have been disassociated in order to tease out some of the potentials in these different positions. It is perhaps most convincing to suggest that the artefacts had myriad biographies, and 'arrived' at the sites in different ways. However, it was deemed necessary to disentangle these lines of argument as if distinct from one another in order to explore the possible building blocks of cultural production and practice at the sites. Certain themes do however, recur in each scenario, and these are the themes of meaning, significance and practice. In order to try to approach these themes, the remainder of this chapter will focus in particular on the materials from which the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana were constructed. The artefacts, whether manufactured or acquired were ultimately incorporated into highly significant ritual performances. To try to get closer to understanding how objects acquired meaning and significance their physical properties are the basis for investigation in the rest of this chapter. In particular, we are concerned here with the materials and forms of the artefacts. These are primary qualities in the objects. In the next chapter, this approach will

be expanded to address those qualities in the artefacts that might be construed as more ephemeral – their secondary ('aesthetic') qualities.

6. 6. Chronology and Materials.

In the graphs that follow, the occurrence of materials in the fifteen phases identified by Török (1987a, 154) at Qustul and Ballana are presented. BT80 is included as part of phase 3b. The different types of material found in each of the phases are presented as percentages of the total occurrences of that material in a particular phase. It should be remembered that the materials that have survived in the tombs may not be fully representative of those that were originally placed in the tombs. Some organic materials and other perishables such as food and drink would not have survived.

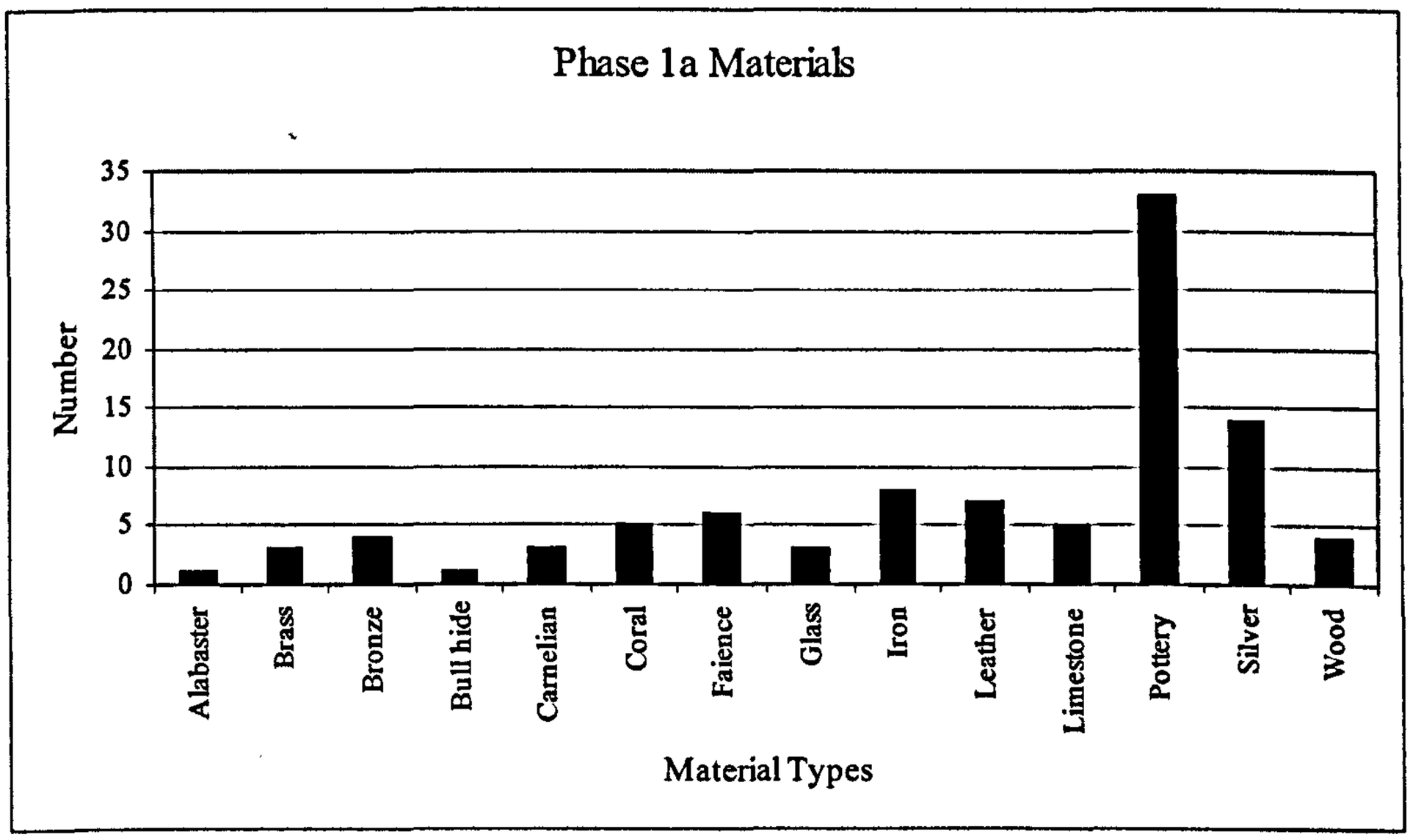


Figure 6.1

14 material types occur in phase 1a. Pottery was found more frequently than any other type of material during phase 1a, other than silver. Alabaster and bull-hide are the most infrequent material types, accounting for only 1% each of the total materials found.

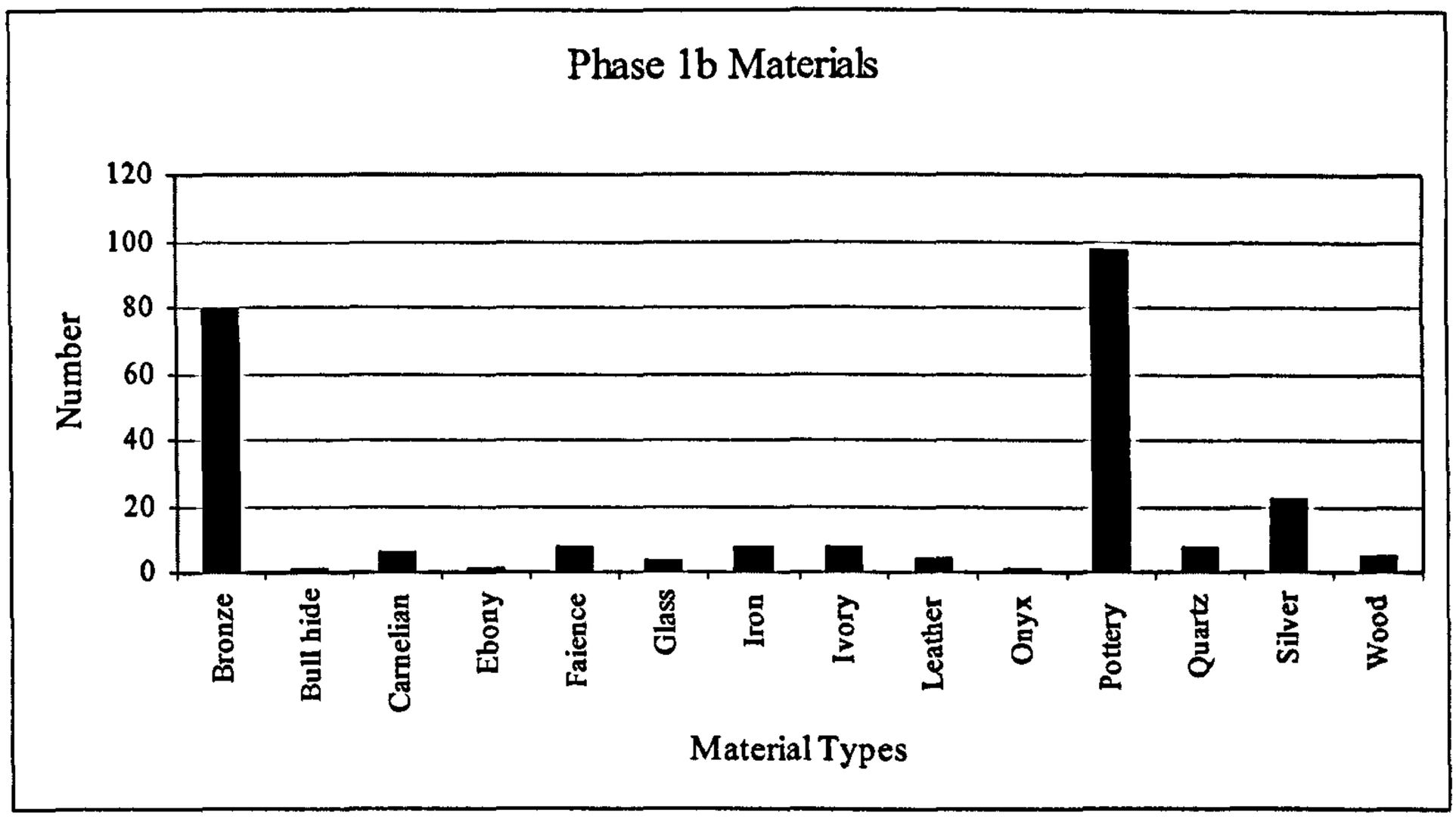


Figure 6.2

In phase 1b, pottery makes up the majority of finds in the tombs, followed by bronze. Onyx and bull-hide appear lest frequently, accounting for only 0.4% each of the total materials during this phase. The appearance of the bull-hide represents continuity between phase 1a and 1b.

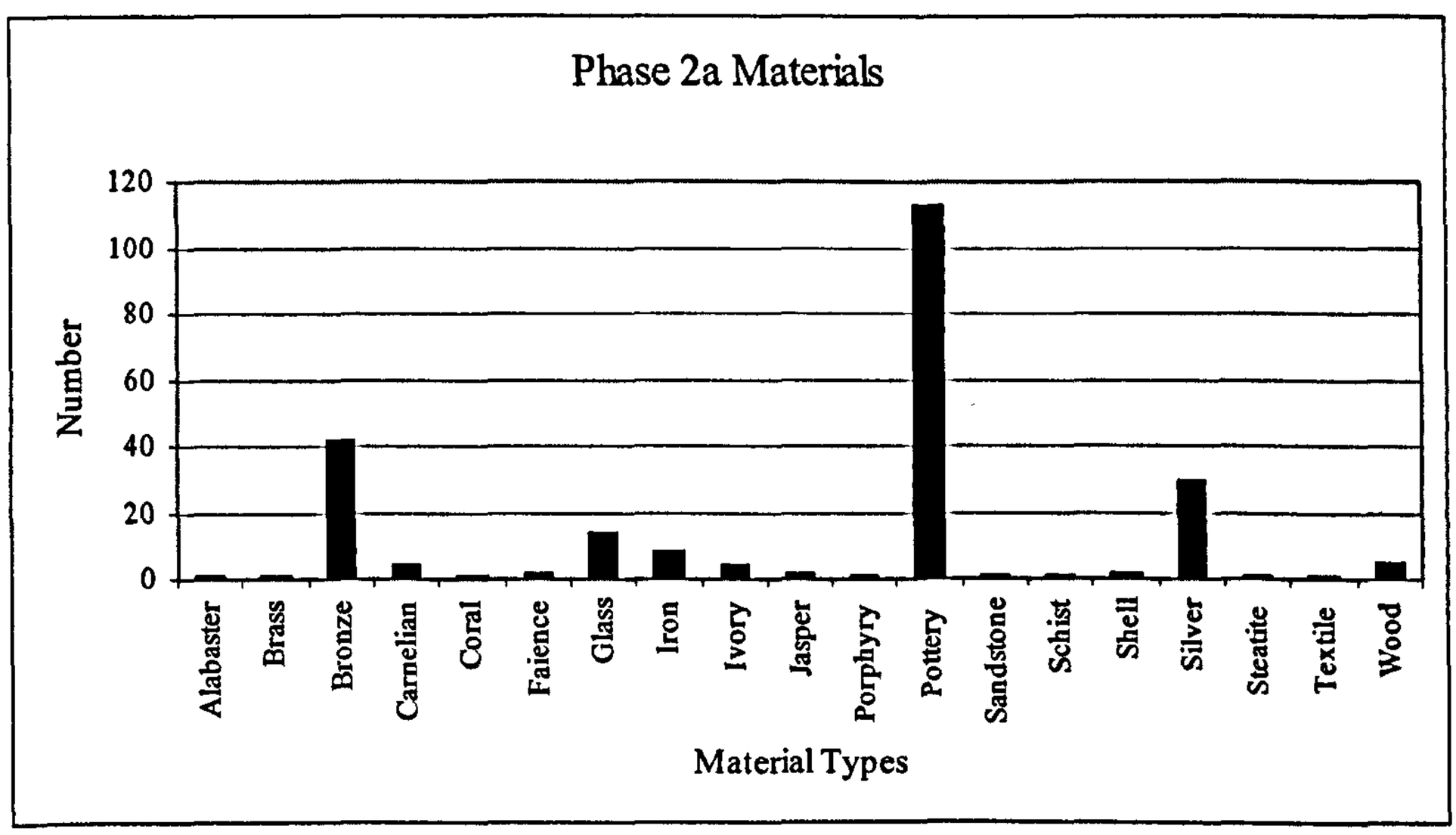


Figure 6.3

In phase 2a, 19 materials were found, with pottery being the most abundant. Very small amounts of alabaster, brass, coral, porphyry, sandstone, schist, steatite and textile were found, with each material only representing 0.4% of the total materials found.

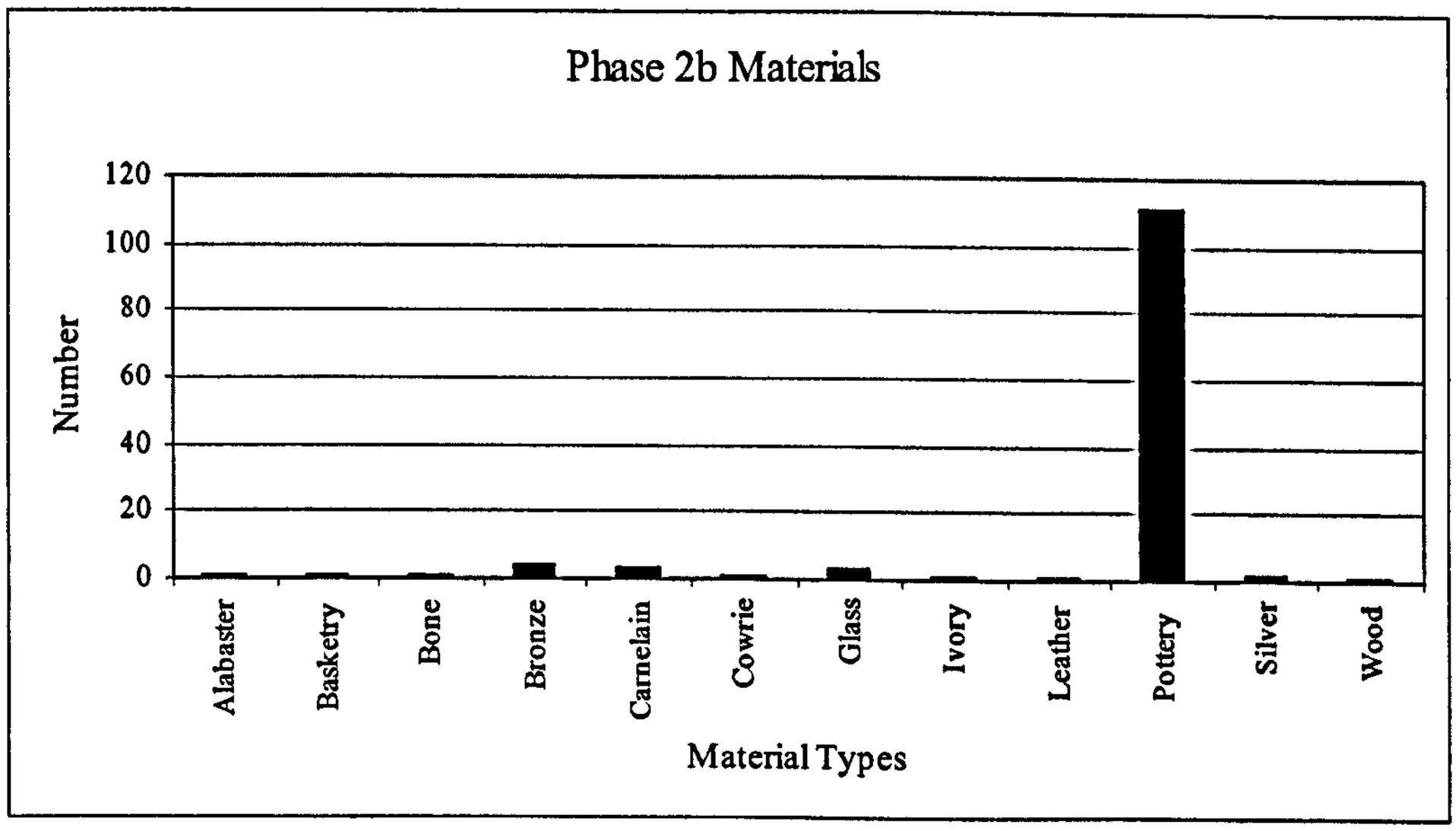


Figure 6.4

Pottery accounts for just over 85% of the materials that occurred in phase 2b, the other materials each account for less than 3%.

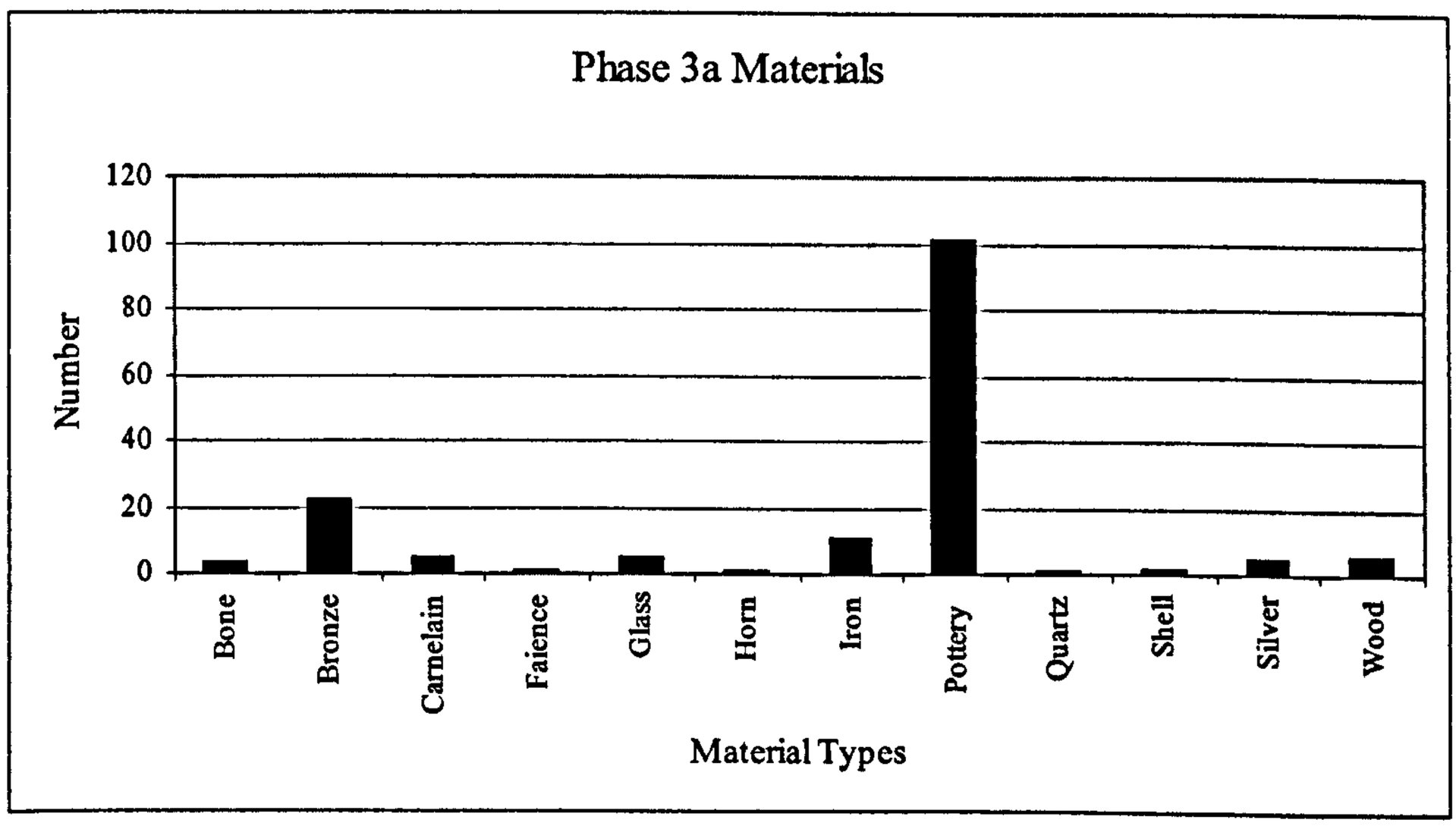


Figure 6.5

12 material types occurred in phase 3a. Pottery is the most frequently found material, followed by bronze. Faience, horn and quartz account for 0.6% each of the total materials.

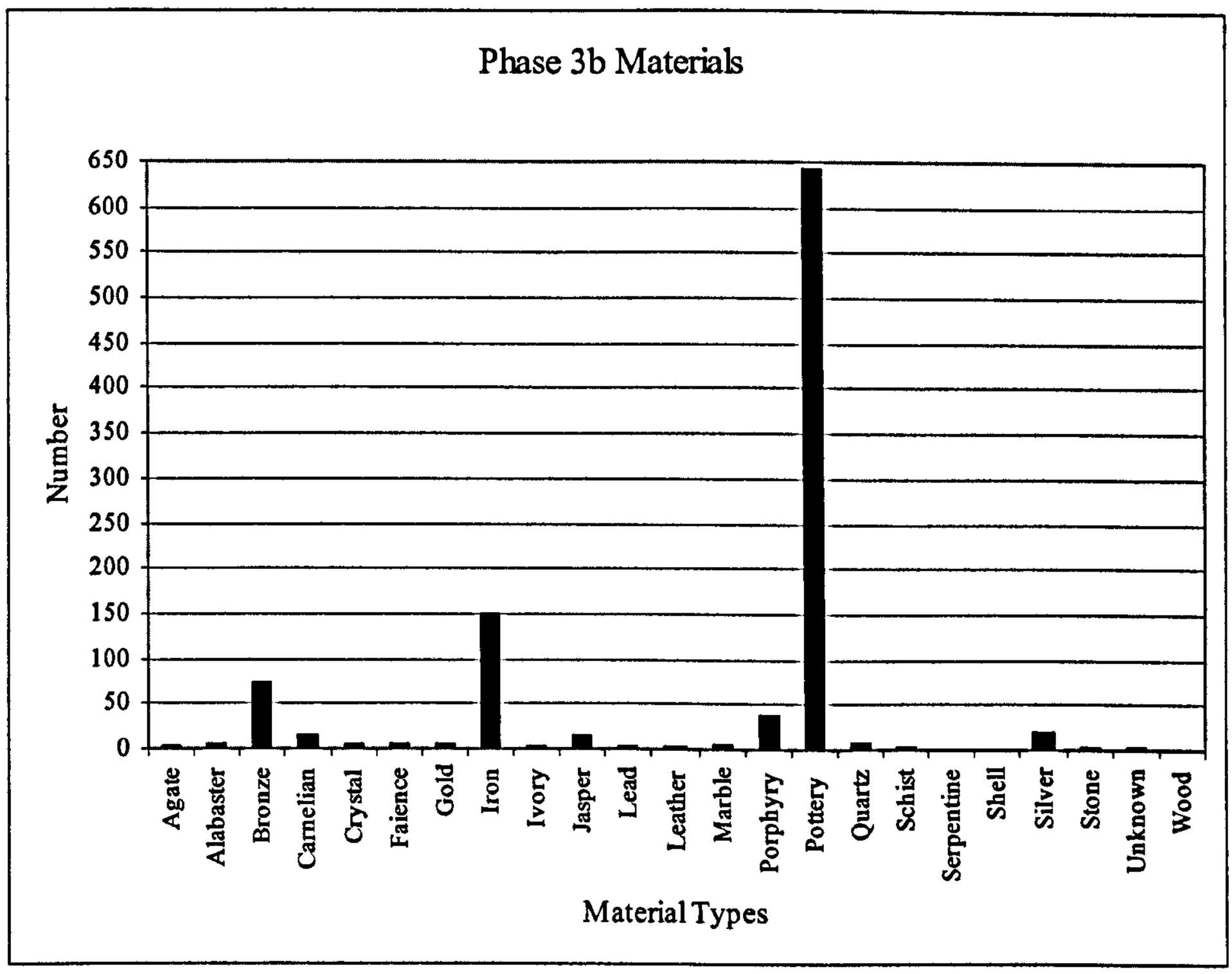


Figure 6.6

24 material types occurred in phase 3b, with pottery in the majority followed by iron and bronze. Agate, leather, schist, serpentine, shell, stone, wood and unknown material types make up only 0.2% each of the total.

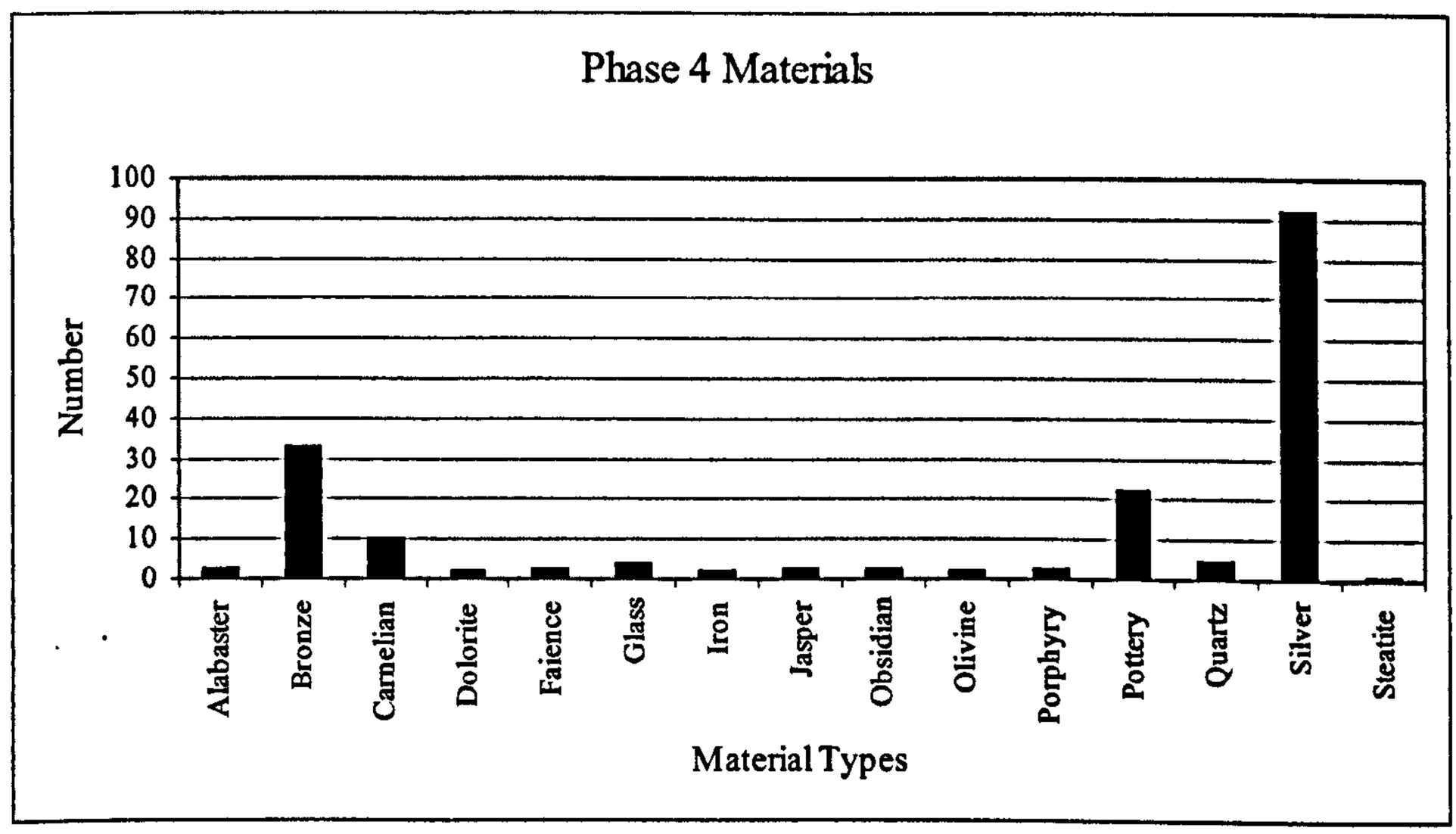


Figure 6.7

Silver is the most frequently occurring material in phase 4, followed by bronze and pottery. 15 different materials were found in this phase. Unusual materials include dolomite (1%) and olivine (1%).

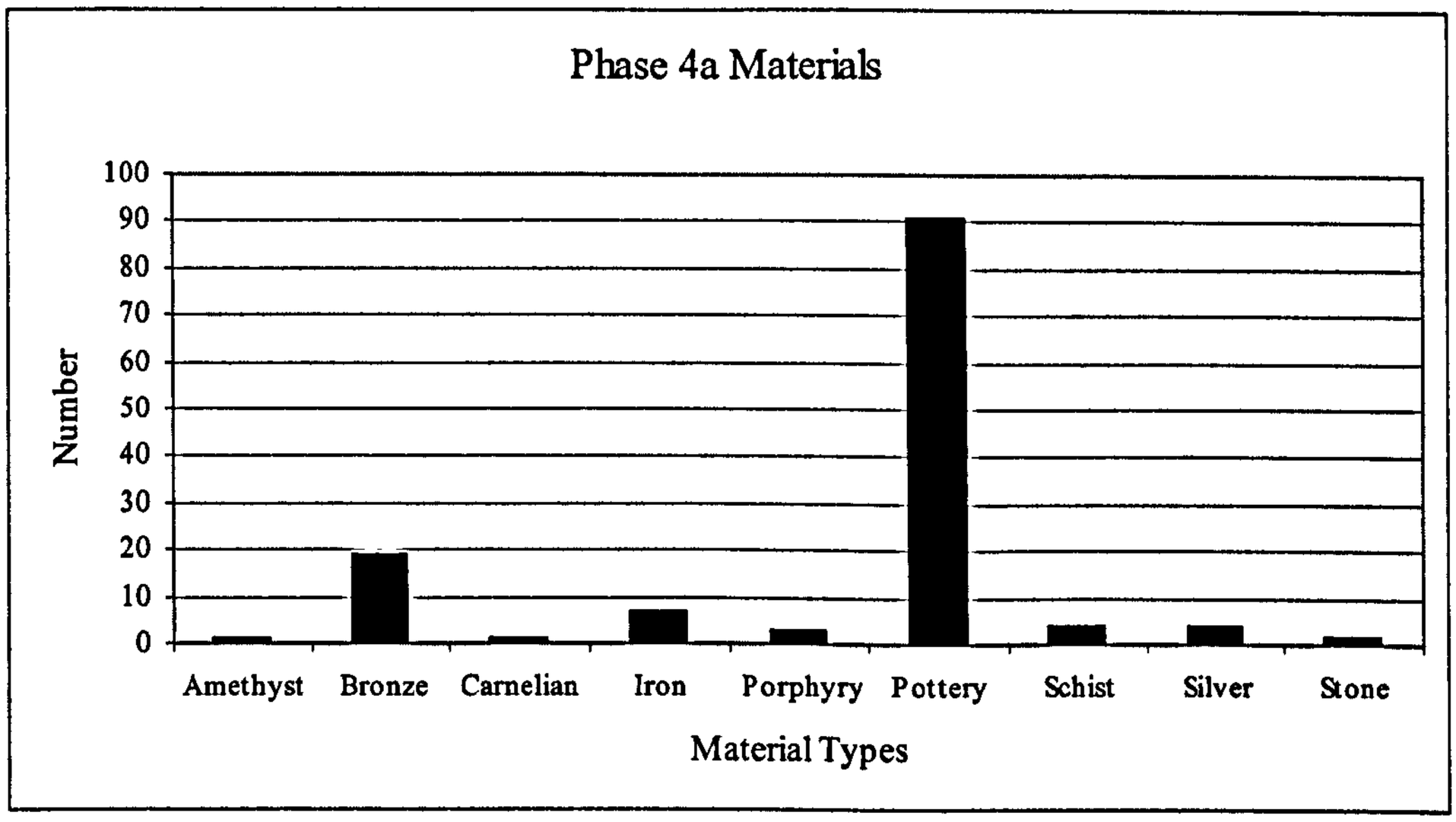


Figure 6.8

Almost 70% of the nine different materials found in phase 4a was pottery. Bronze appeared next most frequently. Amethyst and carnelian amounted to the smallest quantities of materials found in the period (0.7% each).

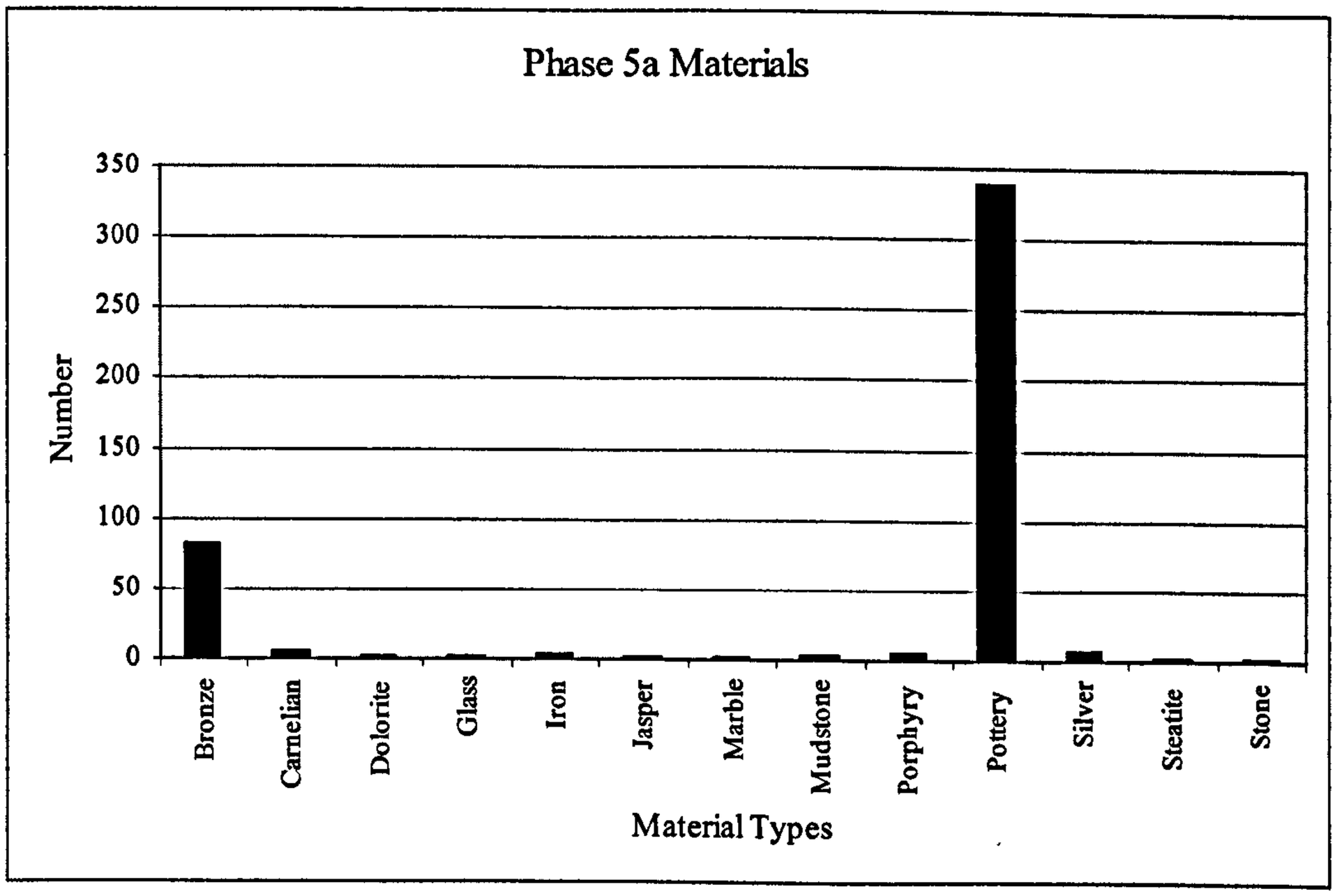


Figure 6.9

Most of the 13 different materials only make up 2% of the total materials found. Pottery and bronze account for 75% and 18.1% respectively.

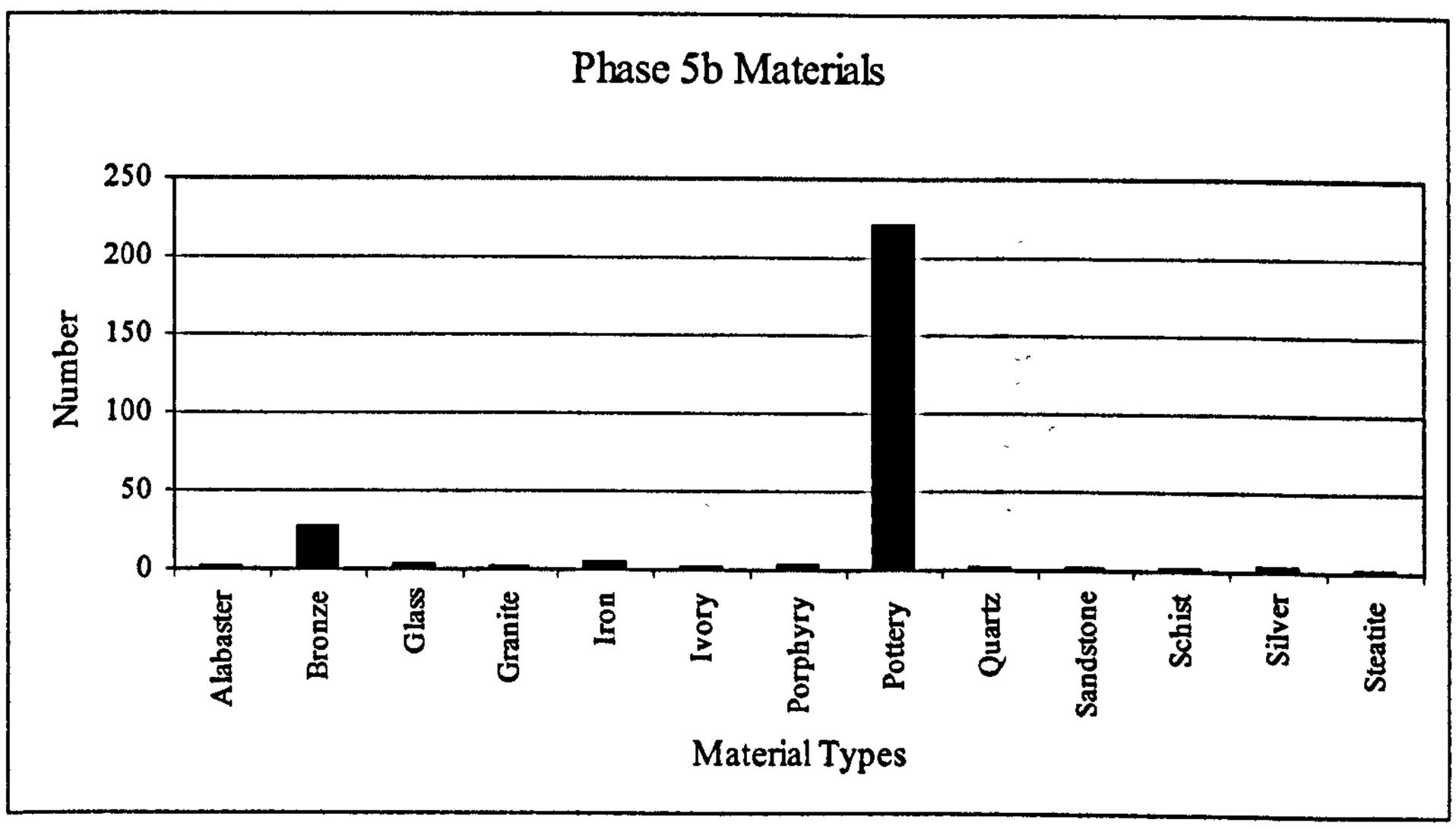


Figure 6.10

80.9% of the material from phase 5b was pottery. Bronze appeared second most frequently at 9.8%, whilst the other materials made up 1.5% or less of the total finds.

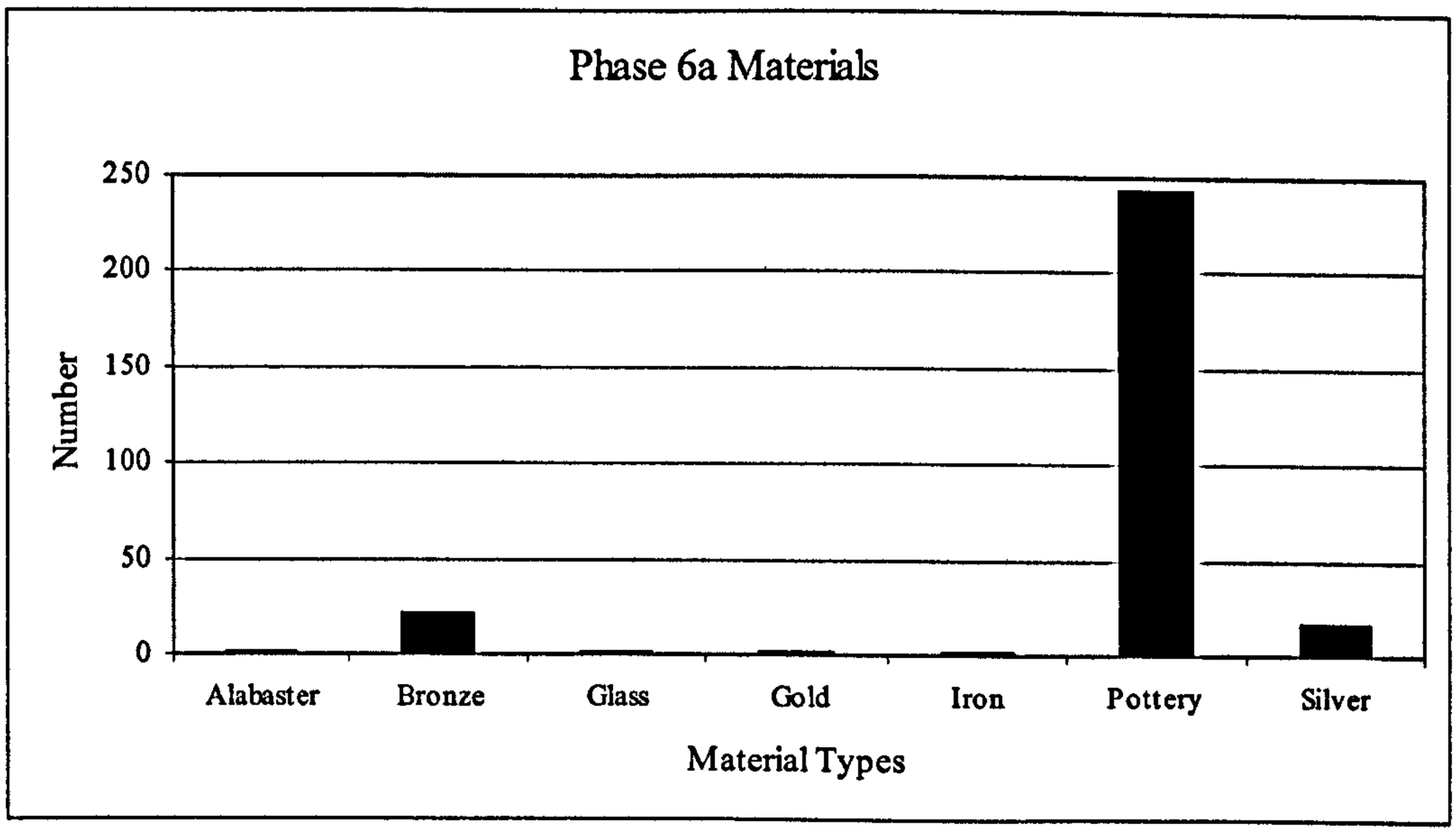


Figure 6.11

Seven different materials were found in phase 6a, with pottery occurring most frequently followed by bronze and silver.

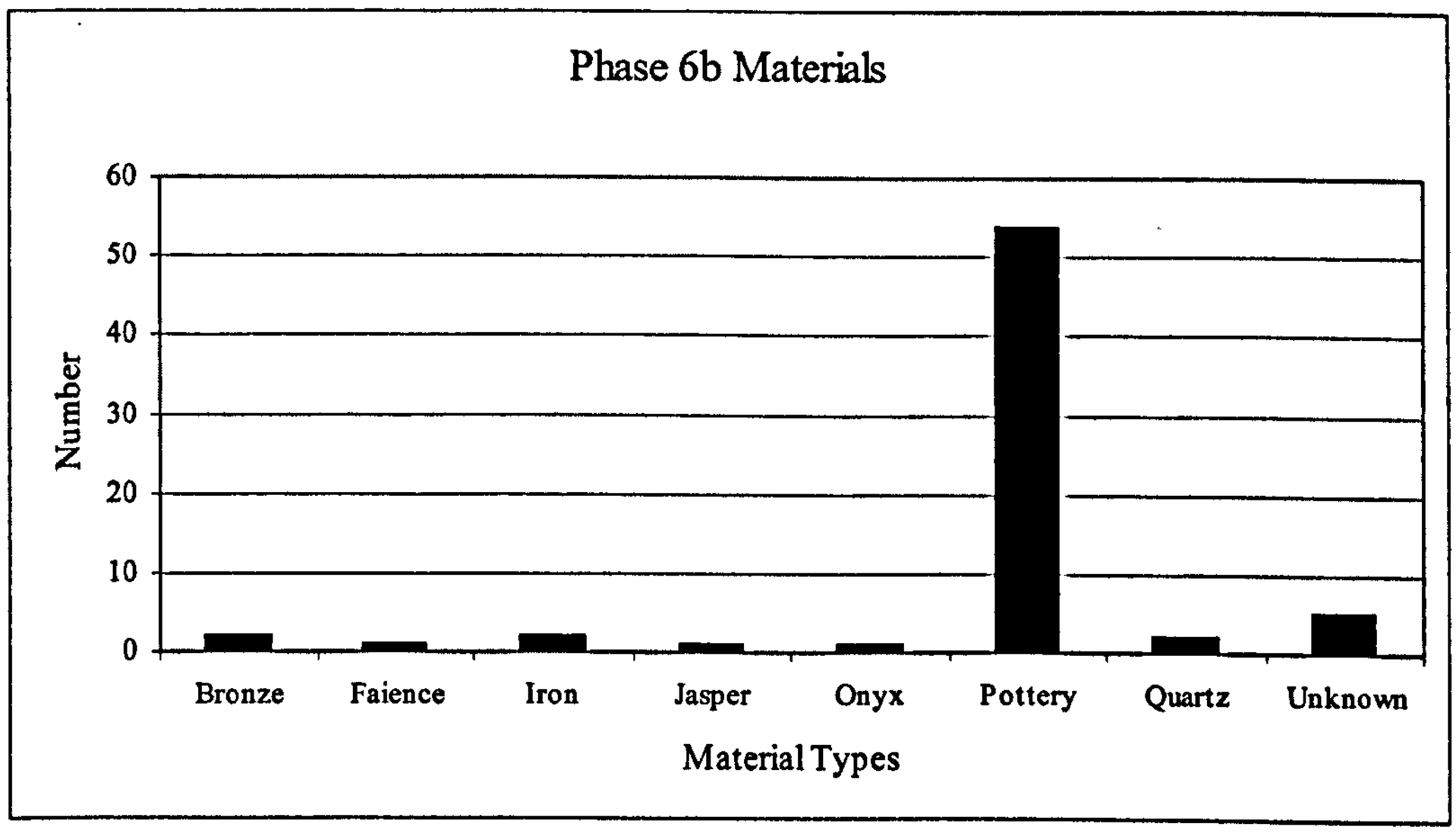


Figure 6.12

Pottery accounts for almost 80% of the materials found in phase 6b. The second most frequently occurring material was that of an unknown kind (7.9%).

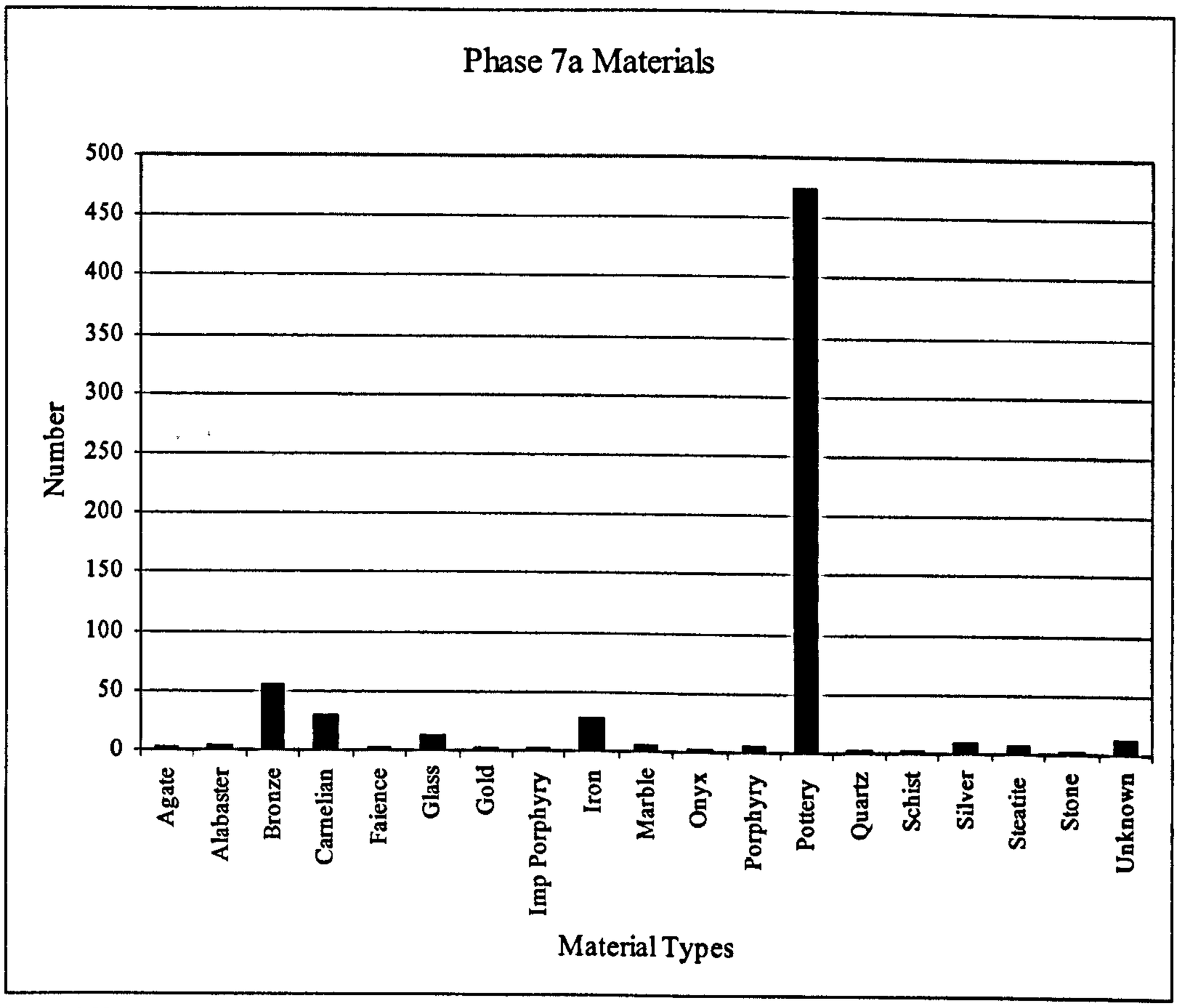


Figure 6.13

19 different materials were found in phase 7a, with pottery being the most frequent material found, followed by bronze. Certain unusual materials were found during this phase in very small quantities such as agate, imperial porphyry, onyx, schist at 0.2%.

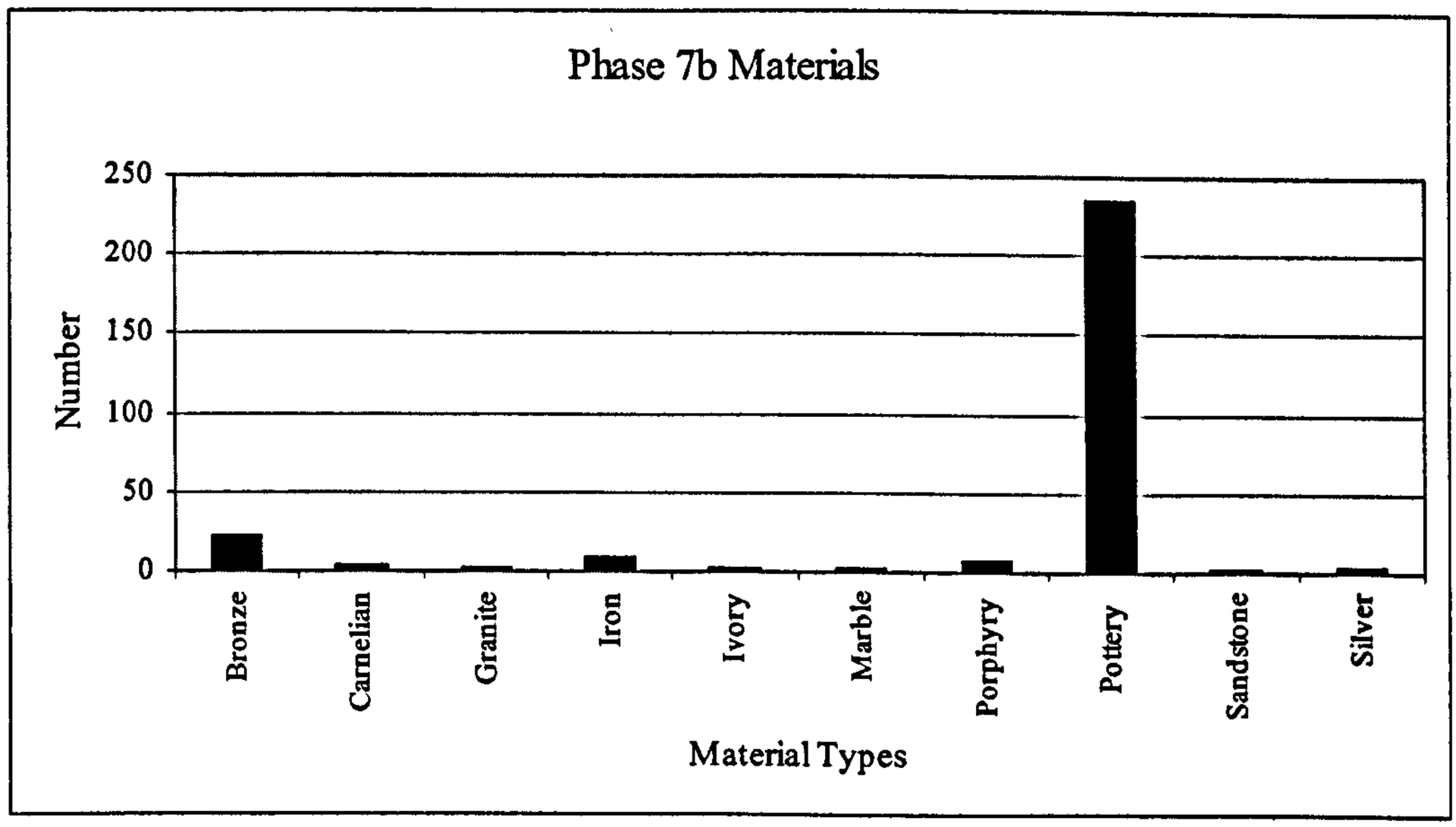


Figure 6.14

Pottery makes up over 80% of the materials found in phase 7b. Granite, ivory, marble and sandstone, all unusual finds at the cemeteries, account for between 0.3% and 0.7% of the total materials.

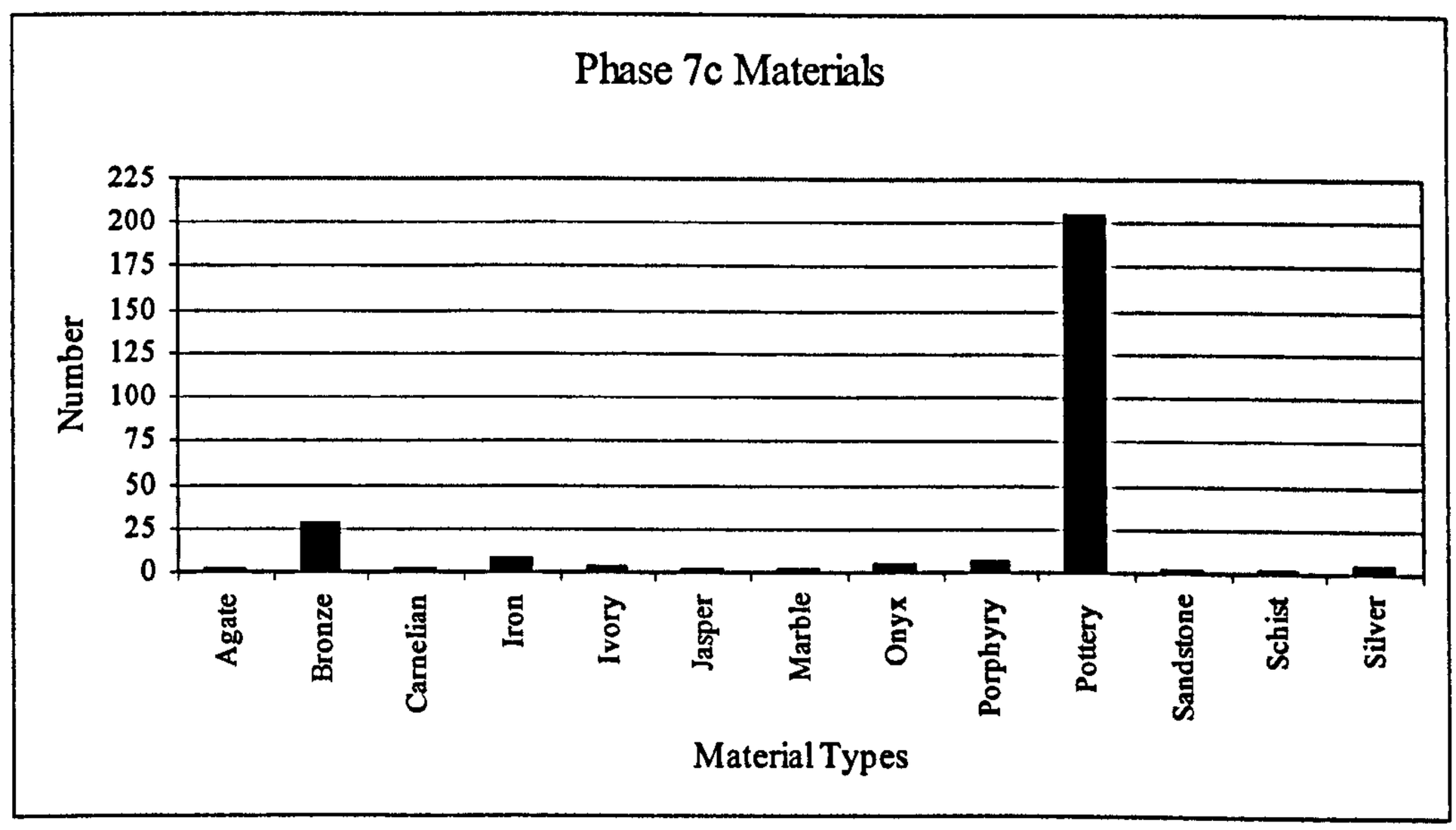


Figure 6.15

Pottery makes up over 75% of the 13 materials found in phase 7c. Small amounts of agate, carnelian, jasper, marble, sandstone and schist occurred as only 0.3% each of the overall total.

6. 7. Comparison of Material Sources.

The map below shows the possible original geographical locations of some of the materials found in the objects at Qustul and Ballana in Egypt and Nubia.

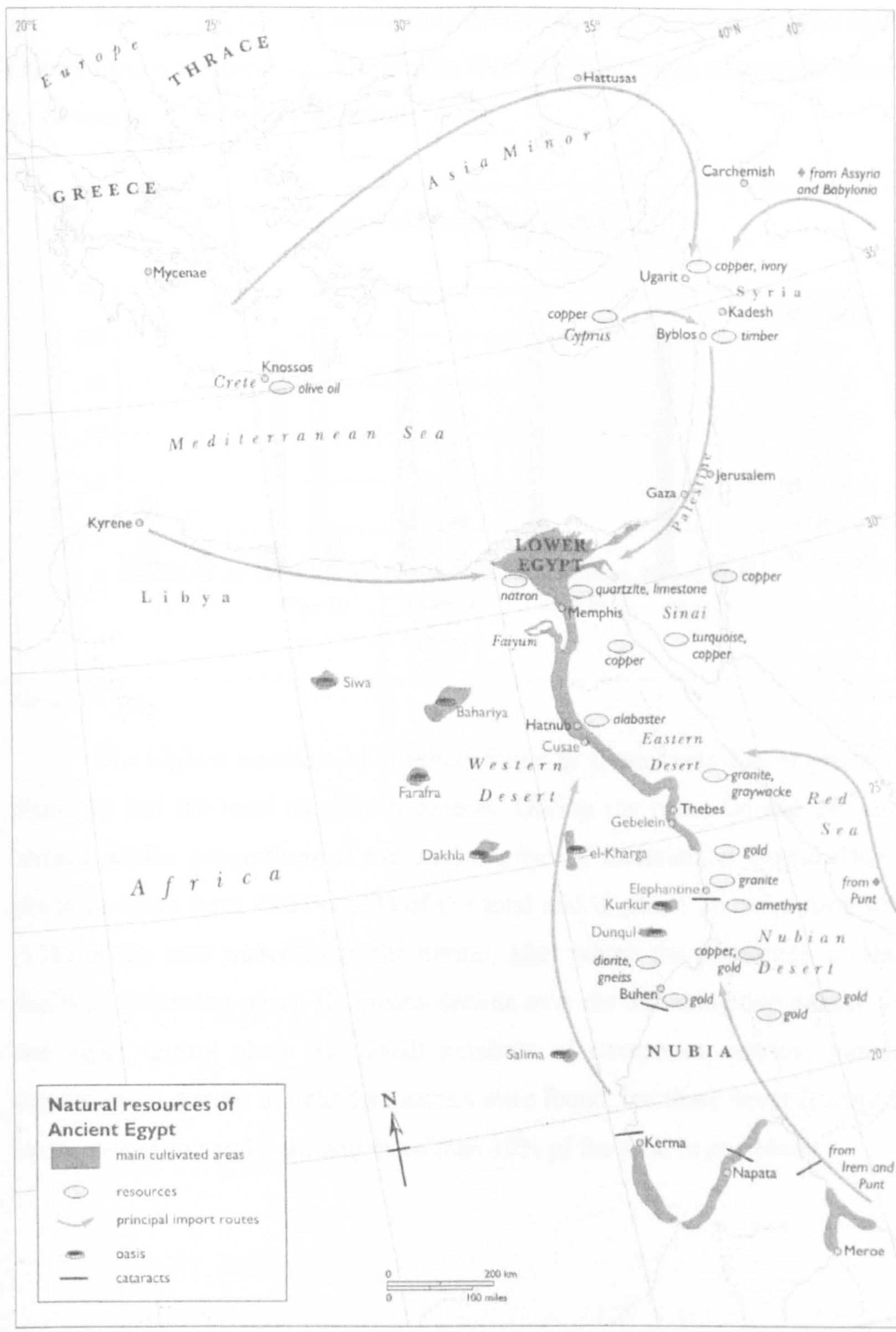


Figure 6.16 illustrating a selection of natural resources, after Manley, 1996, 19.

The graphs below illustrate the different sources of material types in the objects from the cemeteries. The graphs show the percentage of material from a given source in each specific period.

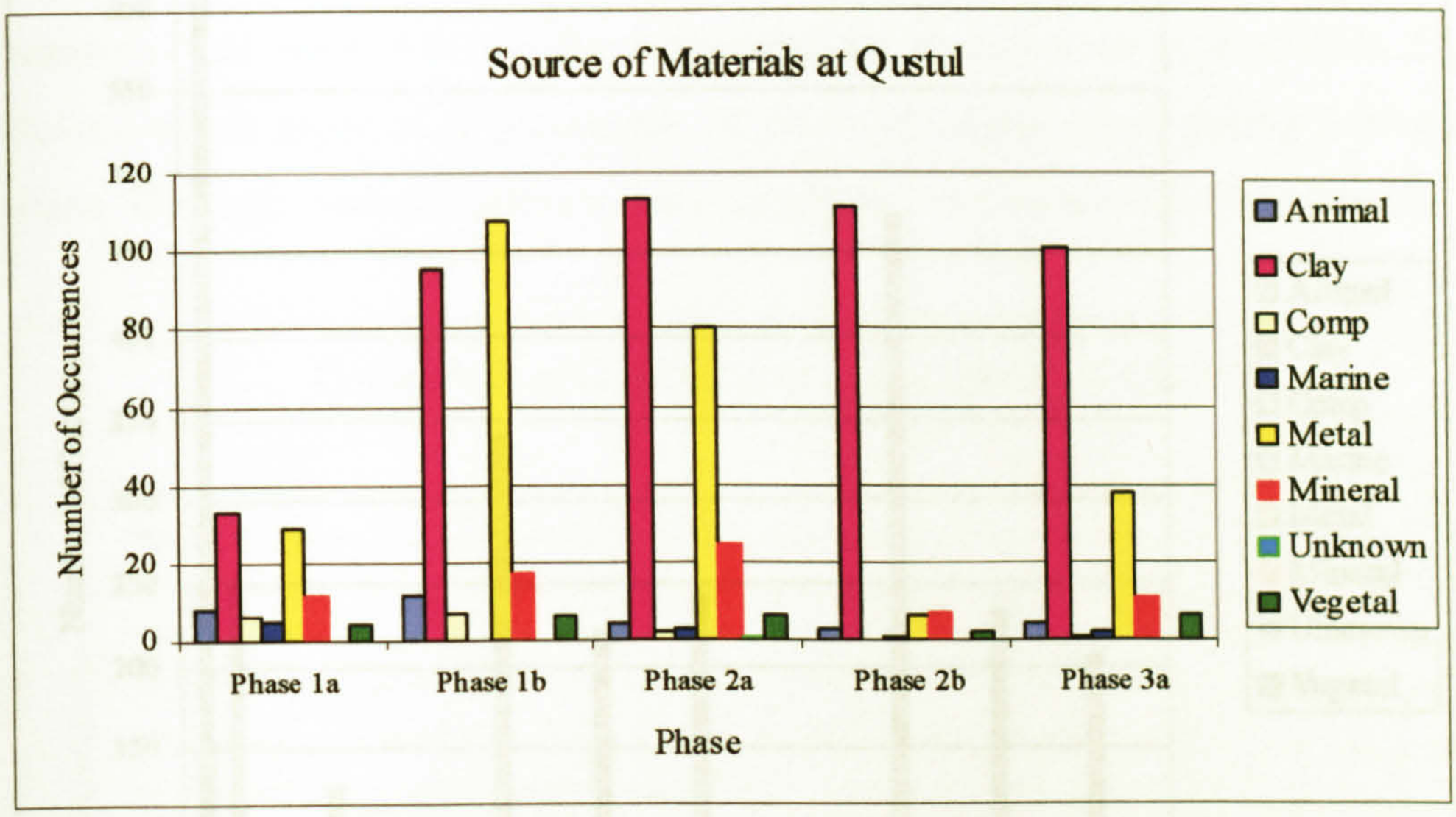


Figure 6.17

The highest numbers of artefacts found at Qustul was during phase 1b. Phase 1a had the least number of objects. During the phase 2a and 2b, clays formed similar proportions of the total number of materials at Qustul. During phase 2a clays form 48.2% (113) of the total and in phase 2b clays form 85% (111) of the total materials in the period, after which the proportion of clays declines. Following phase 1b, metals decline over the following two phases, and rise again during phase 3a. Small numbers of composite, marine, mineral, vegetal and materials of unknown source were found, but these never (except for in the case of minerals) formed more than 10% of the total in any phase.

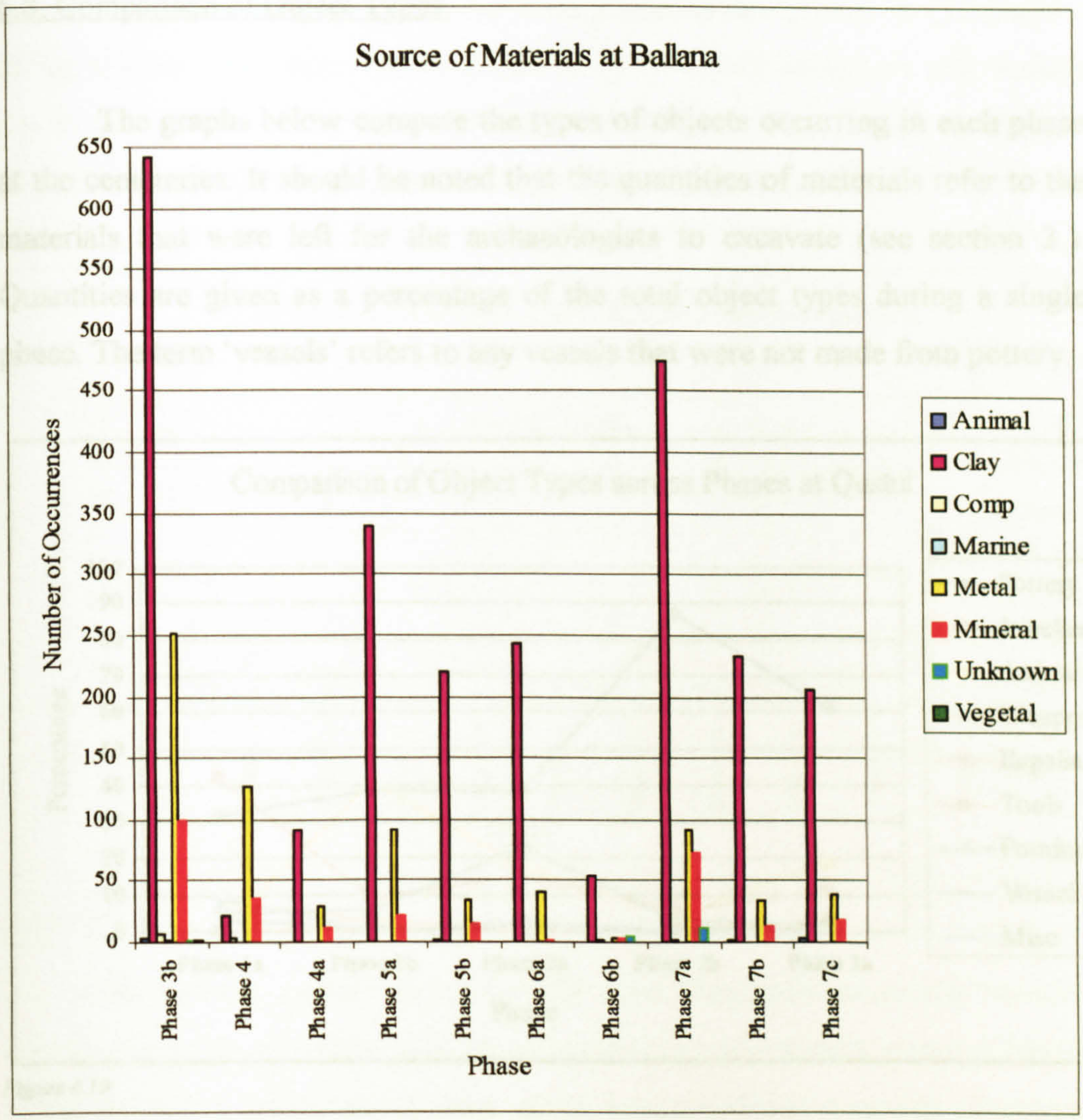


Figure 6.18

As was the case at Qustul, only small proportions of artefacts of animal, composite, marine, mineral, vegetal and materials of unknown sources were found at Ballana. The only exception to this is items of mineral sources during phase 4, when they peak at around 20%. Consistently high proportions of clay items were found at Ballana, except during phase 4 when the proportion of metal goods far exceeds that of any other source. Although metals steadily decline from a peak in phase 4, to their lowest proportion during phase 6b, in the final phases at the cemetery, the proportion of metals begins to rise. By phase 7c, metals, minerals and composite items have all risen, whist the proportion of pottery was in decline.

6.8. Comparison of Object Types.

The graphs below compare the types of objects occurring in each phase at the cemeteries. It should be noted that the quantities of materials refer to the materials that were left for the archaeologists to excavate (see section 3.). Quantities are given as a percentage of the total object types during a single phase. The term 'vessels' refers to any vessels that were not made from pottery.

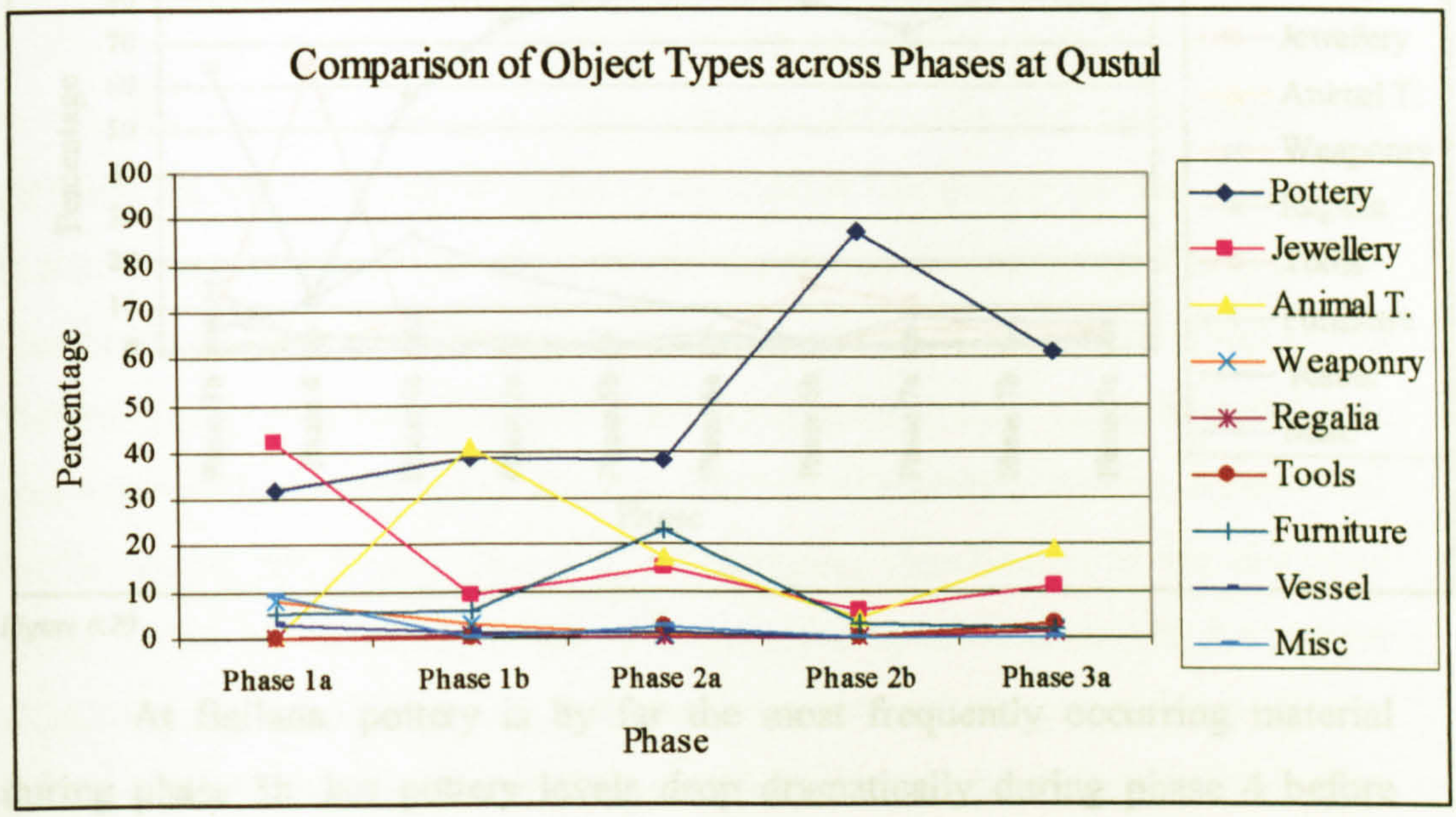


Figure 6.19

During phase 1a, jewellery finds are the most numerous at Qustul (42.2%), but after this first phase amounts of jewellery decline dramatically at Qustul, and never recover to more than 15% (during phase 2a). Pottery levels rise gently between phase 1a and 1b, and then decline slightly during phase 2a from 38.8% to 38.1%. In phase 2b pottery levels rise dramatically to 87.4%, before declining during the final phase to 61.2%. The number of animal trappings rises to their highest point in phase 1b. During this phase the amount of pottery and animal trappings are at almost identical levels. After this high point, the amount of animal trappings declines across phases 2a and 2b, before rising again in phase 3a. Within each phase, the figures concerning animal trappings broadly relate to the number of animals included in the graves (although some animals had no trappings). Phase 1b had the highest number of

animals (72), with numbers declining through phases 2a (43) and 2b (12), before rising slightly once more during phase 3a (15). Tools, weaponry and vessels never amount to more than 10% of the finds at any period at Qustul. Miscellaneous objects remain at consistently low levels across time.

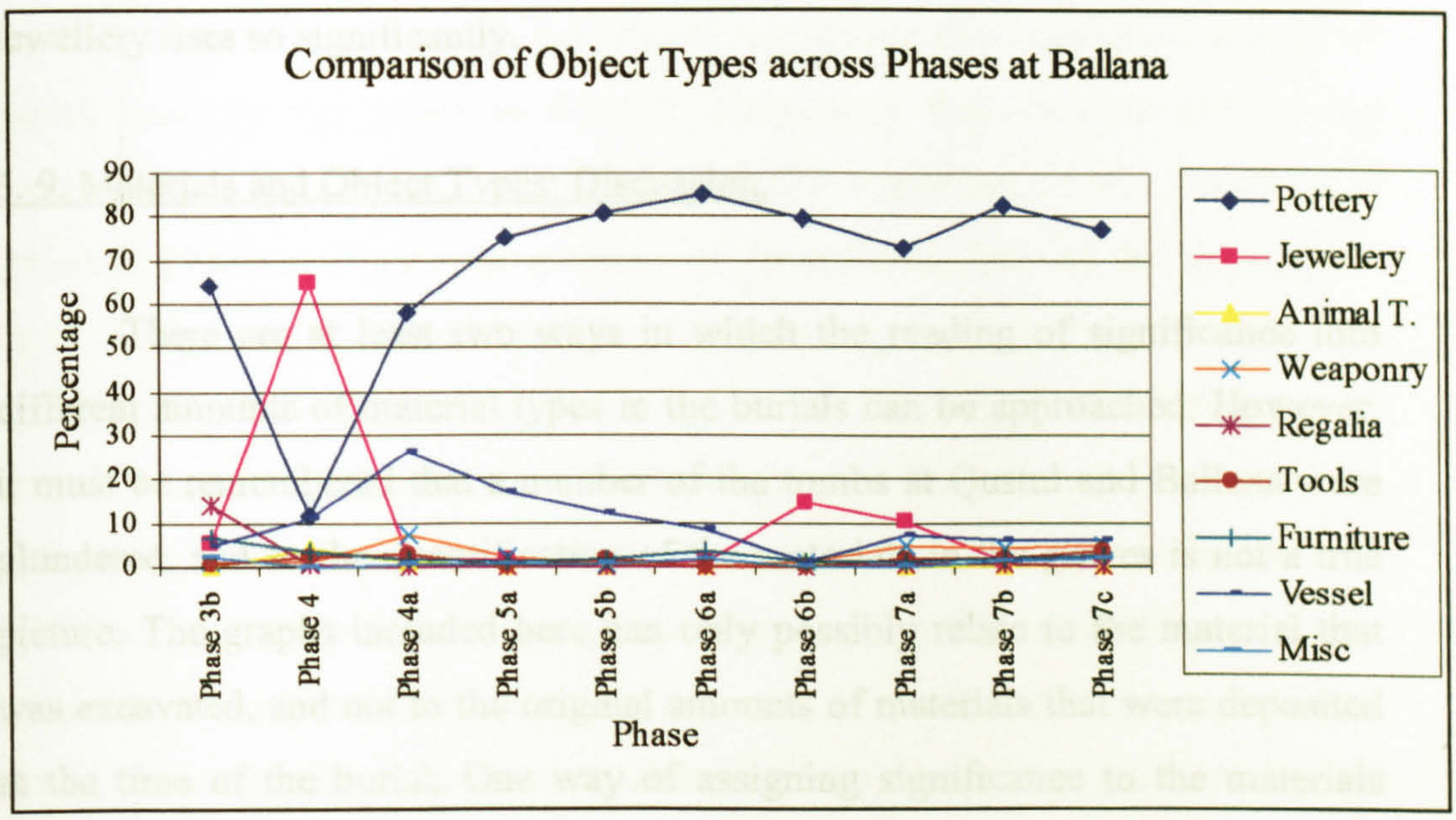


Figure 6.20

At Ballana, pottery is by far the most frequently occurring material during phase 3b, but pottery levels drop dramatically during phase 4 before rising through a steady curve from phase 4 to phase 6a. Amounts of pottery remain very high for the remaining four periods, despite a decline during phases 6a, 7a and 7c. Jewellery appears as only 5.8% of the total objects found during phase 3b. This amount jumps to a very high level during phase 4. In phase 4, jewellery makes up 64.8% of the total finds. Following this rise, levels of jewellery plummet once more, and between phase 4a and phase 6a, jewellery only accounts for between 1% and 1.7% of the total finds in those phases. There is a rise once more during phase 6b (14.7%), before a decline in the next two phases (to 1.4% in phase 7b). A final small increase, to 2.6% happens in phase 7c. Vessels appear in the greatest number during phase 4a, having risen through the previous two phases. From phase 4a to phase 6a levels of vessels decrease but throughout these phases, vessels remain as the second most frequently occurring object type after pottery. Furniture, tools, weaponry, regalia and

miscellaneous items remain at low levels in every phase, although during phase 3b, regalia appear as the second most frequently occurring object type after pottery. Vessels appear in more significant numbers at Ballana than they do at Qustul. The most surprising result concerning the source of materials and object types is during phase 4 at Ballana when pottery declines very sharply, and jewellery rises so significantly.

6. 9. Materials and Object Types: Discussion.

There are at least two ways in which the reading of significance into different amounts of material types in the burials can be approached. However, it must be remembered that a number of the tombs at Qustul and Ballana were plundered, and so the quantification of the materials in the graves is not a true picture. The graphs included here can only possibly relate to the material that was excavated, and not to the original amounts of materials that were deposited at the time of the burial. One way of assigning significance to the materials found within the different phases, is by considering those materials that appear most often. Alternatively, materials that were particularly unusual, and appear only in small quantities, may also be considered to have been significant.

Phase 3b exhibits the widest variety of materials of any phase, with 24 different materials occurring. Only seven types of material occur in phase 6a, the phase with the most limited range of materials. The overwhelming trend across all of the phases at the cemeteries is that the vast majority of the material found in the phases is pottery (often over 70%), followed by bronze. In most phases, other types of material only amount to less than 5% of the total materials in that phase. In phase 1a and phase 3b, the trend of large quantities of pottery followed by bronze alters, as in 1a pottery is followed by silver and in 3b, pottery is followed by iron as the second most frequently occurring materials instead. The most significant difference occurs in phase 4, where silver becomes the most frequently occurring material, and accounts for almost 50% of the materials found. In phase 4, bronze was found next most frequently, followed by pottery. This means that phases 1a, 3b and 4 are phases exhibiting obvious

divergences from the general pattern, with phase 4 being the most anomalous. Phase 1a is the first phase of the cemeteries and is dated at c.380AD, and involves the tumuli QT06, QT09, QT10, QT11, QT12, QT14, QT15. Phase 3b dates to 420-430AD and involves tumuli BT02, BT06, BT49 and BT90. Phase 4 is the subsequent phase to 3b and therefore dates to 440-450AD and involves tombs BT47, BT51 and BT53. It is clearly significant that anomalous groups of tombs occur at the points in Török's chronology that they do (*i.e.* at the beginning of the cemetery at Qustul, and the beginning of the cemetery at Ballana). Phase 1a stands out in terms of the material finds as the majority of finds were pottery followed by silver. These two groups of material amount to 48.4% of the total materials found in phase 1a. Phase 1a is the first phase at Qustul. Phase 3b is the first chronological phase at Ballana, and is followed by phase 4. It would therefore seem to be the case that these particular divisions of Török's chronology are confirmed by alterations in the materiality of finds. Materially, it might be expected that the crucial periods when the cemetery at Qustul was established, and when ritual activity was re-focussed on Ballana were periods at which more unusual types of behaviour, expressed via the inclusion of different levels of particular materials might occur.

There is a continued strong presence of items of clay source at both Qustul and Ballana, and at both sites there are peaks of over 80%. Overall, the trend seems more consistent at Ballana. However, phase 4 is the exception to this trend, when materials of clay sources decline sharply to around 10% of the total materials - the lowest proportion in any phase at either cemetery. During the same phase, metals rise to an extent unparalleled in any other period, to form almost 70% of the total material sources.

At both sites, tools and weaponry never amount to more than 10% of the total object types in any given phases. This is also the case for vessels of non-pottery type at Qustul, but at Ballana non-pottery vessels appear in significant proportions between phases 4 and 6a. The sharp decline in levels of pottery and the sharp rise in levels of jewellery during phase four, presents an interesting picture. In phase 3b, pottery accounts for 64.5% and in phase 4 jewellery accounts for 64.8%. This similarity in percentages, a difference of only 0.3%

between the amounts of the two object types in the two periods, and the reversal of quantities between phase 3b and phase 4, seems quite remarkable. In the graphs concerning the sources of materials the rise in jewellery corresponds with a sharp rise in metals, and so the jewellery in phase 4 was largely constructed from metals and not from natural materials of marine, animal or mineral source.

6.10. Metallic objects and Metalworking Technology.

As we have witnessed in the preceding graphs, certain materials appear far more frequently at the cemeteries than other types. The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with these different material types from different sources. A wide range of metal objects were recovered from both Ballana and Qustul in silver, gold, bronze, iron and lead. Silver and gold objects appeared in relative infrequency, yet bronze and iron objects were more numerous. Little has been written about these metal objects in terms of their technological construction, although there has been some discussion of their provenance and decorative designs (see Török, 1979; 1987a and 1987b).

If we were to take a less pessimistic view of X-Group capabilities, we might suggest that the artefacts appeared as the result of transactions that were either monetary, or based on trade and exchange. The coin evidence from the sites is limited to the single coin of Valens found at Qustul. There is no evidence form the sites of the caching of coinage, or of its use in ritual practice (particularly libations) which is in evidence during this period at Qasr Ibrim (Rose, 1992, 145). We do not even come across casual disposal of coins. If coinage was indeed a novelty item, we might expect to find it incorporated in other aspects of material culture. For example, the Marie Therese dollar and the French Franc were imported into Africa to be used as currency, but the coins are often used by Fulani women as hair decorations. (Fisher, 1984, 173). However, the possibility of some indigenous production should not be overlooked. Due to certain points expressed in chapter four, and the remarks made above concerning technology and the creation of culture, it may be interesting to

consider the practical points concerning whether or not certain artefacts appearing at the sites could have been locally produced.

The discovery, mining, processing and working of different metals have certain technological similarities, but also peculiarities relating to the metal in question. Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin, which has the main advantage of being a metal which is harder than copper, but that is easier to work. Many examples of African bronzes exist from numerous places on the continent. However, it has been demonstrated that a number of the so-called bronzes are in fact made from brass, a copper-zinc alloy. A famous example of this is the Benin 'bronzes' (Blier, 1998, 66). It is probably the case that some quantities of copper and tin were recovered by simple visual recognition, lumps of metal being found on the surface of the ground. This seems to have been the case in most places in Africa (Herbert, 1984, 68). The recognition of copper ores and oxides was no doubt aided by the distinctive colours in shades of blue, red and green which naturally occur in the oxides due to their chemical composition (Henderson, 2000, 210). In certain areas, surface ores may have been quite deep. In Mauritania, oxidised ores were found to run to a depth of seventy feet (Herbert, 1984, 17).

Silver and iron may occur either as native ores. However, gold may be found as part of the natural alloy electrum, or as silver sulphide in the lead ore galena (a mineral commonly found in Egypt and Nubia). Similarly, gold is usually found in combination with other metals such as silver or copper (Henderson, 2000, 213 and 237). The technique of cementation which may be used to separate silver and gold is the same as that used in the production of faience (ibid, 237). Many iron ores are easily obtainable, because many types of rocks with an iron content can be smelted. Iron was rarely deep mined in the past, as surface finds and opencast mining was largely sufficient. This was likely to be the case in Nubia, as large areas of the Nubian limestone landscape are covered with a surface layer of black iron ore, giving the area a volcanic appearance (Wainwright, 1945, 20-21). Nubian limestone also contains copper mineralization (Henderson, 2000, 216).

If worked from a raw form, lead is likely to have been derived from the lead oxide galena, which would be crushed and roasted (Schmidt, 1997, 71 and 143). Galena is known from Predynastic Egyptian contexts as a source from which pigment was ground, although no such pieces were found at Qustul or Ballana. The method used to refine silver is dependent upon the source of the metal, and may be a technology associated with lead working. Lead ores (i.e. galena) need to be refined in a process of cupellation (in a crucible or furnace lined with ash) to drive off the lead oxide, and leaving behind the refined silver (Hodges, 1989, 92; Henderson, 2000, 213). Silver is a soft metal, and might be alloyed with copper to produce a stronger, harder metal. During smelting, the lead could be tapped off from other impurities due to its low melting point. As gold is usually found with other metals, large amounts of these alloying metals can produce white or red metals.

Metal working usually requires the two related processes of smelting and forging. In some cases the size of a furnace could be very small. For example, the furnace required to smelt copper need be nothing more than a small bowl. The crucial factor in any smelting is the adequate provision of a draught to raise the temperature to the required 1,100 degrees centigrade (for bronze) within the furnace. The draught could be provided by bellows, and in a shaft furnace (where the furnace and ore were surrounded by a conical structure), by angling the opening at the mouth of the chimney in the direction of prevailing winds. Tin could be smelted from the mineral casserite, in the same way that copper oxide ores were smelted. The copper and tin ores might then be combined in a further smelting in an approximate 90% to 10% proportion. If the ratio changed to 90-70% copper and 10-30% tin, then brass would result (Hodges, 1989, 69).

Iron ores would be processed in a similar manner to ores of copper or tin. If the atmosphere within the kiln becomes too oxidised due to the over use of bellows, the iron might re-oxidise causing the smelt to fail (Hodges, 1989, 82).

Copper and bronze can both be cold-worked. This is a technique during which the metal is alternately heated and hammered (or *annealed*). This means that the metal can be hammered into a desired shape, but the metal also becomes much harder. In antiquity, the hammer may have been a smooth pebble or rock.

According to Hodges, the great advantage of this technique in copper or bronze working is the production of thin bronze sheeting, and the production of bronze vessels (Hodges, 1989, 74). Rounded vessels could be produced by hammering from the outside (*raising*), over a dome shaped surface, or by hammering on the inside (*sinking*) into a concave depression. Certain bronze artefacts from Ballana and Qustul may have been constructed in this manner, in particular the bells from Qustul, and the bronze bowls from Ballana (Bénazeth, 1996). Alternatively, bronze vessels could be spun on a lathe. The metal disc was trapped between a rounded piece of wood (to make the concave shape) and another piece of wood. As the lathe is spun, the metal curves around the concave piece (perhaps encouraged by a burnisher in contact with the convex side). This was also a neat method of applying incised parallel lines (a common decorative feature in the bells from Qustul). Lathes could also be used to turn items that had already been cast, in order to smooth out irregularities. Vessels formed by spinning tend to show evidence of pleating, and this is not something observed in the Qustul and Ballana artefacts.

In contrast, the spongy mass of iron that results from smelting is largely unworkable in a cold state, and needs to be processed further by forging. Iron is brought to red heat, in something as simple as a sufficiently hot fire. The hot metal is repeatedly hammered, bent back and re-hammered (*forged*), with repeated heating in the fire to ensure workability. Other techniques could then be applied to the metal, depending upon the final design and function of the iron object. Crucial to the forging of iron (and the working of other metals), is the use of tongs to handle the red hot metal in the fire (Hodges, 1989, 84). Also, iron headed hammers and an anvil (which might be a block of wood or a slab of stone) were necessary to work the iron effectively. The finds in tomb BT80 that are part of a tool set containing iron ingots, tongs, a hammer, and other artefacts that might have been used in the smelting and working of metals.

Silver, gold and lead are all soft metals. Silver, although not as malleable as gold, is a soft enough metal to be useful in jewellery making. Given the large number of silver finds from the cemeteries that were types of jewellery, it would seem that the metal was selected and exploited for this purpose, given its natural

qualities. The crowns from Ballana were constructed from sheet silver (Török, 1987b, 56-57). The creation of silver leaf, rather than gold leaf is quite an unusual use for silver, as unlike gold, after prolonged hammering, it would need to be annealed. To avoid cracking the metal, it is reheated to produce a new crystalline structure, which renders the metal malleable and workable again. The process of hammering and annealing may be repeated a number of times until the required amount of leaf is produced (Hodges, 1989, 73). Silver leaf was found on four of the saddles and a pommel from Qustul (the saddles do not appear in the table above, as silver was not the main material in the saddles). Without proper study, the method used to attach the leaf remains unknown. Gold is a highly malleable metal and is too soft to be used for many practical purposes. Gold used for jewellery is often alloyed with silver or copper to make it harder. The malleability of gold enables the metal to be hammered into thin gold leaf. The scroll containing the Isis hymn from BT02 was etched into gold leaf, and was probably made in this manner. The softness of lead would make it amenable to hammering into the thin scrolls that were the only lead objects recovered from the cemeteries.

Even if it was the case that metals were rarely or never mined and processed by the X-Group, we should not discount the further possibility that metal items were melted down and re-cast or re-smelted. Fulani smiths melt down the Austrian and French coinage mentioned above to provide silver that is then used to created bracelets, hair rings and decorated silver leaf to be folded around strands of hair (Fisher, 1984, 173). This is an example of the transformation of objects from one culture into a new form with new significance in another culture.

6. 11. Evidence for Metalworking.

Evidence for metalworking in Africa takes many forms, and although there is no written evidence for metalworking in the Sudan in the X-Group period, there are later textual sources that can be examined. Artefactual remains from Ballana and Qustul that were made from metals contain in their forms,

information regarding manufacturing and decorative techniques, as well as information regarding artistic and cultural influences. Evidence for the processes involved in producing metals may also prove informative. It is a source of regret that no scientific analysis has been conducted on the Ballana and Qustul remains, and this could be a very fruitful direction for future research. In the absence of other research on X-Group metal work, it is necessary to draw on findings from other areas of Africa where research is more advanced, and on anthropological parallels.

As previously mentioned, some amounts of iron and copper from gossan levels were simply gathered by people in antiquity, but even when mining occurred, shafts and holes were backfilled and sealed, perhaps because the ores became too deep to exploit, because a seam was exhausted, or due to changes in social or political control (Herbert, 1984, 51). Copper is a naturally occurring mineral in the Sudan, and is found to the east of Wadi Allaqi (Manley, 1996, 19). One later source of information for indigenous copper mining in the Sudan, is the site of Hufrat en-Nahas in the south-west of the country near the Umbelasha River, at which both surface deposits of malachite and mineralized ore deposits occurred. An account of a re-enactment of smelting at the site, published in 1927 documents the use of a clay furnace, a clay tuyere (nozzle) and bits of antheap (Herbert, 1984, 18; 66).

A further ethnographic account of iron smelting focuses on blacksmiths in the village of Toumra in the Tungur area of northern Darfur in the Sudan. A shaft furnace is used for the smelt, with slag falling to the bottom of the furnace rather than being tapped during the smelting process (in contrast with evidence form Meroe discussed below). The iron and slag are separated in separate workshops following the smelting. The furnace itself is broken down after smelting and cannot be reused. The depression for the furnace is c. 50cm wide and 60cm deep. The shaft furnace is made from mud and is c. 1m high, with 4-5 centimetre thick walls. Seven holes for tuyeres were dug around the furnace, with each hole holding two tuyeres. Bellows connected with the tuyeres and made from goat or sheep skins were operated by a number of men (*c.f.* Musa Muhammed, 1993, 462). Sandstone containing 50% iron is gathered from Jebel

Tayu (35 km away), or Jebel Moro (13 km), but this is less ferrous (Haaland, 1985, 52-3). 200lb of sandstone is used in the smelt of the small furnace, the rocks being crushed before the smelting process begins and double the amount of charcoal is needed to smelt the iron. After one hour of heating the furnace, ore and charcoal are added over four hours with the entire smelting process taking sixteen hours (Haaland, 1985, 54-56).

Whilst archaeological evidence of metalworking at Qustul and Ballana in the form of moulds, furnaces or slag are lacking, some evidence was recovered from Meroe. Initially evidence took the form of large heaps of slag, ash, tuyeres and fragments of furnace lining (Garstang et al, 1911, 21; Wainwright, 1945, 21-22). The type of smelting that was practiced is unclear, as the furnace bottoms that were recovered may be the remains of bowl furnaces, or of the smithing process. The C14 dates from these finds date to 514BC +/- 73, and correspond neatly with the first occurrence of miniature iron weapons (instead of copper ones) from the tomb of King Harsiotef (c. 404-369BC). However, there are earlier finds of iron from Sanam cemetery (Wainwright, 1945, 5-6; Shinnie, 1985, 30).

Definite remains of furnaces at Meroe were found in two levels in a single building erected over an earlier building. The C14 dates (AD 520 +/- 100; 310 +/-100; 280 +/- 70; 210 +/- 80) indicate a period of activity during the first few centuries AD. Furnace is made of fired brick with ganister lining. Furnaces F2 and F3 overlay furnaces F4 and F5, all inside a single mud-brick building which had been rebuilt after F2 and F3 fell into disuse, so that F4 and F5 could be built. Technical principles seem to be the same in both levels. All are 'domed, forced draught, slag tapping furnaces about 1 m in height enclosed in a building and apparently built and used in pairs facing each other within the building' (Shinnie, 1985, 32). The function of a brick lined channel in the enclosure has been suggested by Tylecote to be a water drain used to cool the tools used in tapping and handling the bloom (Tylecote, 1982, 46). Steps were found in the building suggesting that the room was below ground level, perhaps to protect the metalworkers (and their product) from sand. Evidence from furnace F5 gave information concerning the use of bellows. Special pots with a

hole in them were placed around the furnace into which the tuyeres fitted. A leather bag may then have been fitted around the rim of each pot, with some sort of valve to pull in the air. This evidence offers an early parallel with later medieval smelting at Ghazali monastery (Shinnie, 1985, 33-34). However, in trial trenches excavated at Meroe, ostrich feathers were discovered, that may have been used to fan the furnace (Arkell, in Wainwright, 1945, 23). Wainwright suggests that Kerma, Kawa, Napata and Argo island were other early sites of ironworking in the Sudan, due to the presence of large mounds of slag (1945, 35). However, a more recent survey by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society found no evidence of slag heaps at Kawa. It is possible that overfired bread moulds or bricks made from very iron rich clay can appear to be like slag (Welsby *pers comm.*). The charcoal necessary for the smelting process probably came from acacia trees, which seem to have been present in the area at the time, although they were more plentiful in the Darfur region (Haaland, 1985, 69; Musa Muhammed, 1993, 460).

Other dates for a developed iron working industry (*i.e.* evidence from iron slag or furnaces, rather than iron objects) in the Darfur region indicate dates preceeding the fifth century AD. Carbon 14 dates of iron slag from Koro Toro ranged from AD 450 +/- 100, AD 935 +/- 80 and AD 1220 +/- 90. Stratified evidence from the site of Daima to the east of Lake Chad gives a first century AD date to an iron object in a layer succeeding a stratum of stone artifacts. At this site it appears that there was a transition from the use of stone artifacts to iron artifacts without the interim usage of copper or bronze (Musa Muhammed, 1993, 263).

The copper trade between east and west Africa across the Sahara, is well-documented during the high-medieval period. An early source dating to 950AD by al-Husayn mentions that at Djarmi, gold was exchanged for copper and then traded south to the Sudan (Herbert, 1984, 113). A number of important copper sources and centres of copper trade and exchange existed in the Sahel (Hufrat, Azelick/Takkeda, Dkra, Dar'a, Igli, Awdaghost and Kougha) although the mechanisms of trans-Saharan and trans-Sahelian trade and distribution

remain unclear (Herbert, 1984, 113-5). Earlier contact is not explicitly known, but could be a fruitful avenue for research (Sutton, 2001).

6.12. Anthropological Evidence and Social Factors.

As has been discussed above, ethnographic studies of metalworking can offer the archaeologist crucial information in understanding the different steps involved in the technological process of smelting and metalworking. It is also the case that ethnographic research can offer an insight into the social and ideological aspects of craft production. These are elements that can be difficult to appreciate from the archaeological evidence alone.

The evidence derived from the village of Toumra in Darfur (mentioned above), shows the special position that both the blacksmith and the potter hold within that society. At the beginning of the smelting process the ferrous rocks are smashed into small pieces. This part of the metalworking is undertaken by a woman - one of the wives of the smelters. The wife of the blacksmith is always a potter, and both belong to denigrated social groups (Haaland, 1985, 54). The occupations of both parties are determined by their birth into this endogamous 'caste', which ensures the continuity of both specialized craft traditions concentrated within a relatively small group of people. The blacksmiths are believed to be a dangerous group of people who have special powers over thunder and lightening, whilst the potters are believed to play a role in protecting the rest of society from the unpredictable forces of nature. The intervention of a blacksmith may be sought by an individual who has suffered a social wrong, as the blacksmith has the ability to punish the wrongdoer with a bolt of lightening. In this manner, the blacksmith plays a social role in maintaining and restoring justice and social order (Haaland, 1985, 57). In effect the blacksmith is an ambivalent figure, in one sense feared and segregated, in another sense respected, and crucial to effective social functioning. The smiths' role is multi-faceted in that it combines ideological control, an economic function, and esoteric knowledge. It is also an excellent example of how an identity can cross-cut what have been traditionally thought of as 'identity

boundaries' (see chapter four *c.f.* Hodder, 1982). Although the blacksmith holds a role that is low in status for example, it was necessary for them to remove their shoes when entering the marketplace, (Haaland, 1985, 59), their role in solving disputes demonstrates a higher social status. The blacksmith could apparently move between these roles without problem.

Musa Muhammed has suggested (1993, 466) that the restricted distribution of archaeological evidence for iron production in the first millennium AD may already suggest a restricted status for early blacksmiths. The marginalised status of the blacksmith may be further exemplified by the possibility of an itinerant lifestyle - a further factor in restricted archaeological evidence for metalworking. The metalworking at Shaigiya and Monassir was undertaken by itinerant metalworkers, according to recent ethnographic fieldwork (Wolf, 2004, 25).

The combination of evidence – that smelting may only require small furnaces constructed from perishable materials, that some ores may have been grubbed from the surface or acquired by exchange, that metals may have been melted down from other artefacts, that iron working technology is well documented in the Sudan from the Meroitic period, that ingots and tools were found at Ballana, and that the technologies of smelting and working metals can be inter-related with each other (for example in the smelting of lead and silver) – suggests that it is not unreasonable to propose that some of the metal artefacts from the cemeteries may have been the result of indigenous metalworking.

Furthermore, given our lack of knowledge about pre-Islamic mining, trade, and exchange in Africa, the lack of evidence that we can expect from the metal smelting and working processes, and additional anthropological evidence, we can conclude that a large amount of comparable evidence suggests the possibility of indigenous metalworking in Nubia. This is a possibility that cannot be dismissed out of hand. Nor can the effect of gradual deforestation around Meroë as a result of iron smelting. This probably had a significant impact on the Meroitic economy and the political standing of local élites (Haaland, 1985, 71). The control of iron production may have been a crucial factor in the maintenance of centralized authority. The process of smelting and

smithing iron requires few extra resources and can be undertaken on a very small scale. The production of iron weapons beyond the control of the authorities was a potential threat to internal stability, and the position of the élites. The highly concentrated remains of slag, and of the furnaces at Meroe, suggests strong central control and supervision of this potentially disruptive craft (Haaland, 1985, 71). Ideological manipulation of the status and role of the blacksmith, and the creation of an identity that is deemed to be dangerous would have aided political control over their craft production. In this model 'the stigmatization which is manifested in the caste-like division of labour emerged in connection with political centralization and a redistribution system of circulation of specialized goods and services. In situations of weakness in central power the strategic position of the blacksmiths must have changed drastically, and their autonomy is likely to increase' (Haaland, 1985, 71). This hypothesis offers a further possibility in the decline of power at Meroe.

6.13. Comparison of Metals at Qustul and Ballana.

Having discussed the technological processes involved in metalworking and related anthropological evidence, we can now turn to look in more detail at the metals from Qustul and Ballana. The bar chart below compares the percentage of artefacts from each cemetery, the main material of which was a metal.

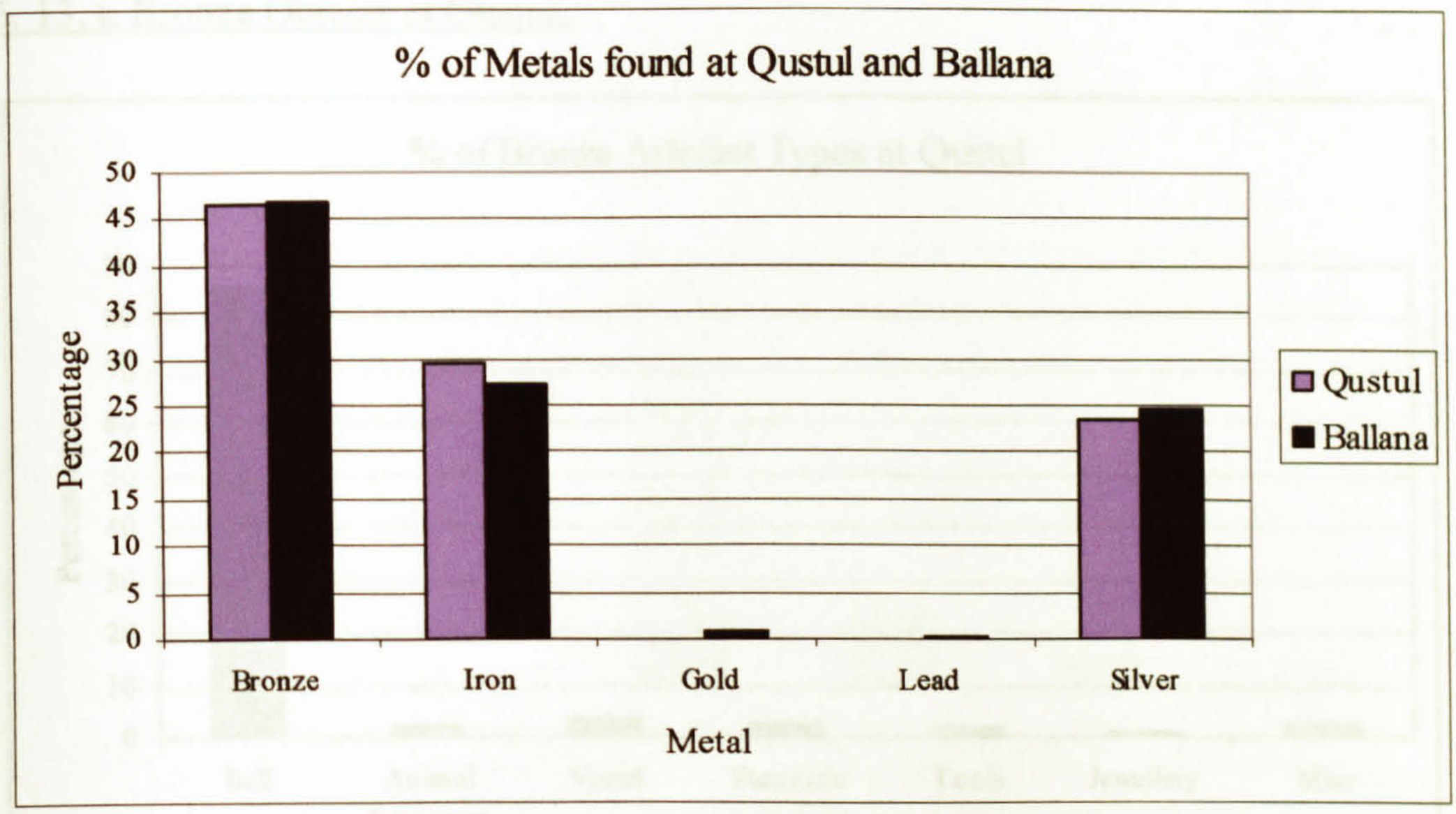


Figure 6.21

There are a total of 257 objects at Qustul, and 782 objects at Ballana that have a metal as their main material. At both Qustul and Ballana, bronze is the most frequently occurring metal. 151 objects at Qustul are made from bronze, and at Ballana, 392 objects are made from bronze. Bronze objects make up 57% and 50% of the metalwork corpus at each site respectively. Silver appears as the second most frequently occurring metal at Qustul (29%), and iron appears as the third metal (14%). At Ballana, iron (28%) appears as the second most frequently occurring metal, followed by silver (21%). Gold and lead only appear at Ballana, although they are only a very small percentage of the overall metalwork corpus (0.9% and 0.1% respectively).

6. 13. i. Bronze Objects at Qustul.

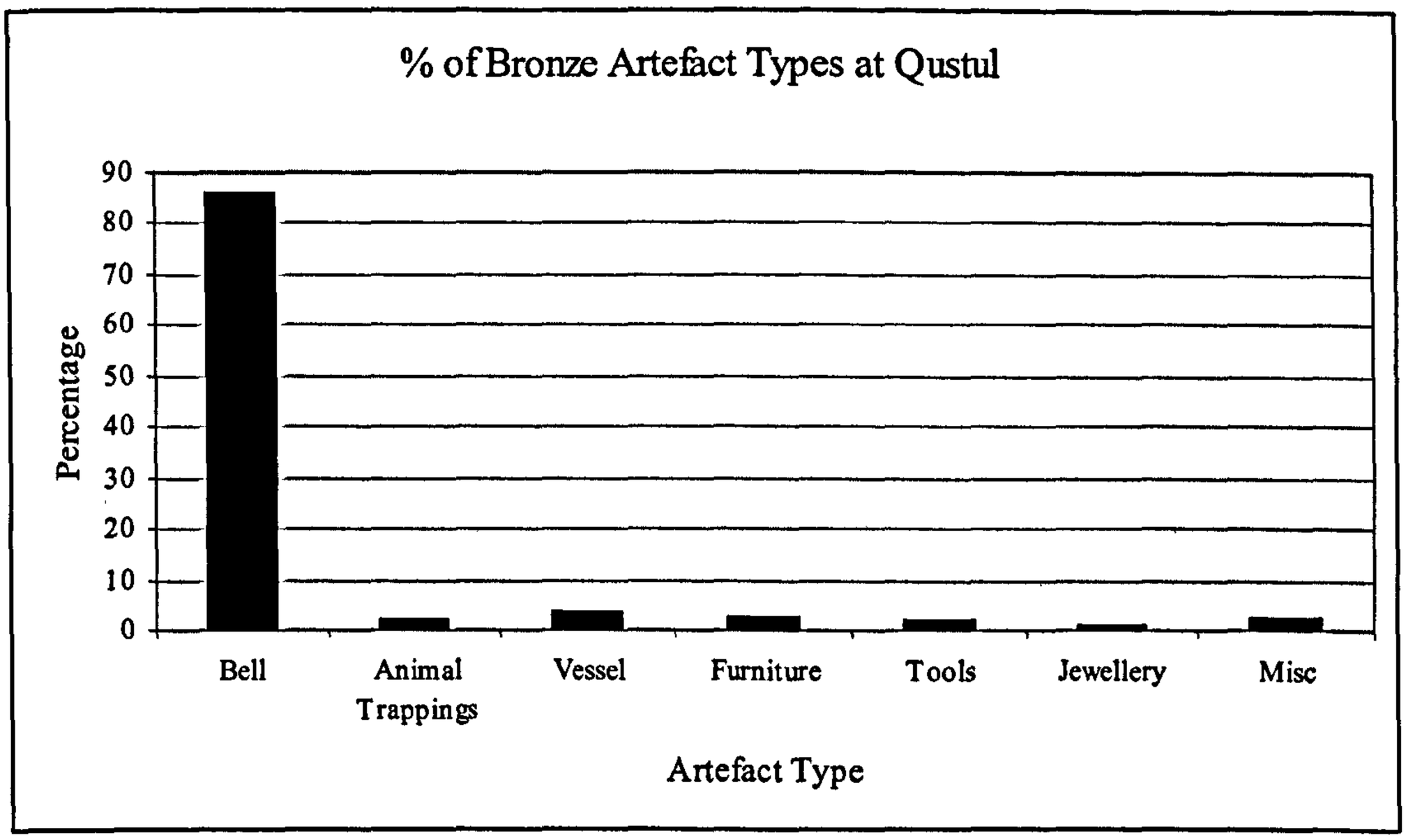


Figure 6.22

Of 151 bronze objects from Qustul, there were 134 bronze bells, which account for 88.7% of the bronze corpus. The bells of various types are a major feature of the fittings and harnesses for different animals from the tombs, but in particular, the camels and horses. The remaining 11% of objects comprise a single bridle fitting and harness medallion, furniture fittings, a small number (5) of vessels and the single coin find from the cemeteries.

6. 13. ii. Bronze Objects at Ballana.

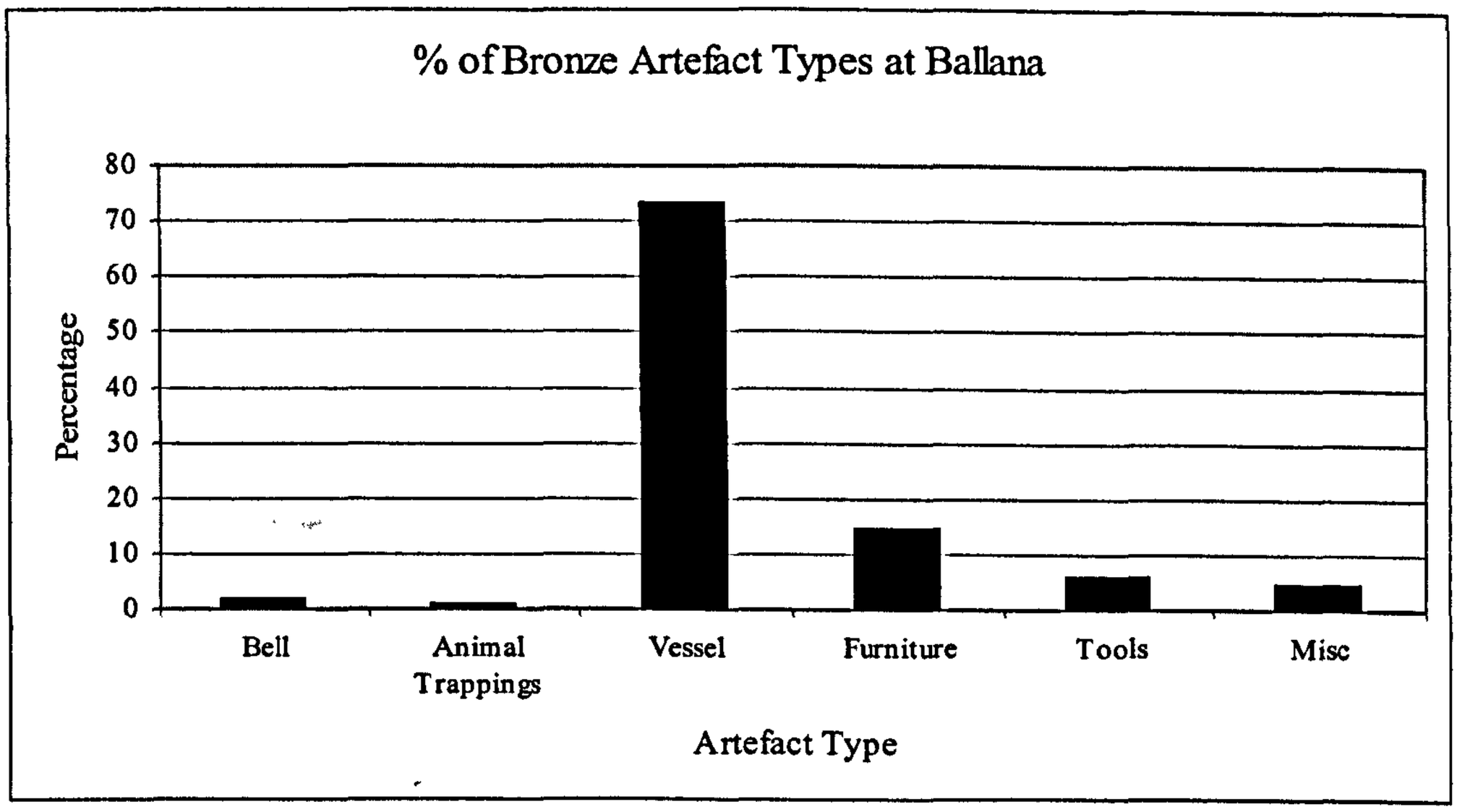


Figure 6.23

Although bronze was the most frequently occurring metal at both Qustul and Ballana, it was used for very different types of objects. 392 bronze objects were recovered from Ballana, but only seven bells were found (in contrast to 134 at Qustul), all of type one, which was also the most frequently occurring bell type at Qustul (27 examples, that is 18%). The low numbers of bells and animal trappings undoubtedly relate to the low numbers of animals buried at Ballana. In contrast, the majority of Ballana bronzes are vessels (291 vessels, that is 74%). A number of other bronzes were items that may have been involved in preparing, cooking or serving food and drink such as the sieve, colander, tables, candlestick and so on. These figures are strongly indicative of a change in the use of bronze between the two sites. The use of bronze for animal trappings has almost totally disappeared at Ballana.

6.14.iii. Iron Objects at Qustul.

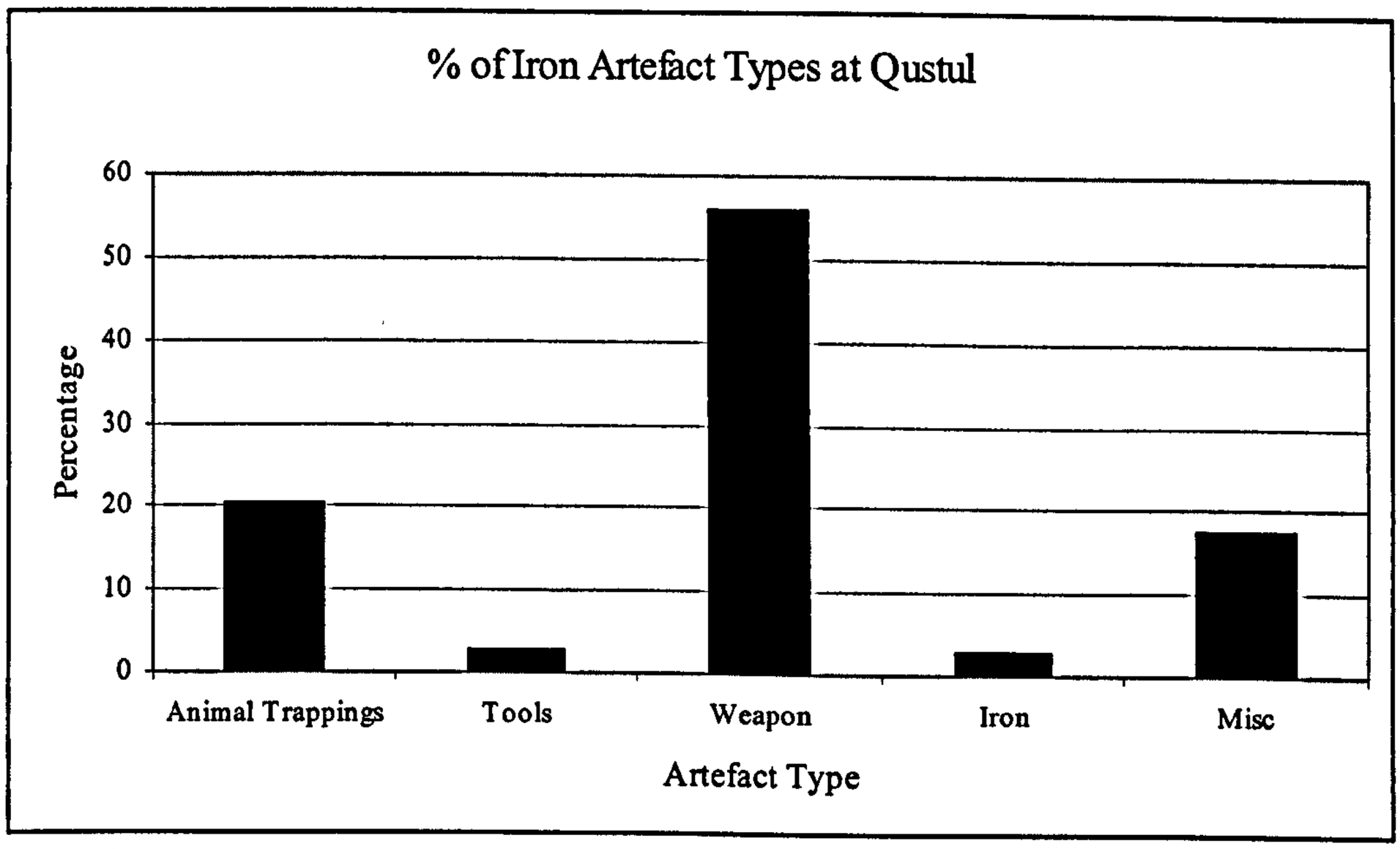


Figure 6.24

There were 34 objects made from iron that were recovered from Qustul. 19 objects are types of weapons (55.8%), whilst the largest single category of objects discovered was horse-bits.

6. 14.iv. Iron Objects at Ballana.

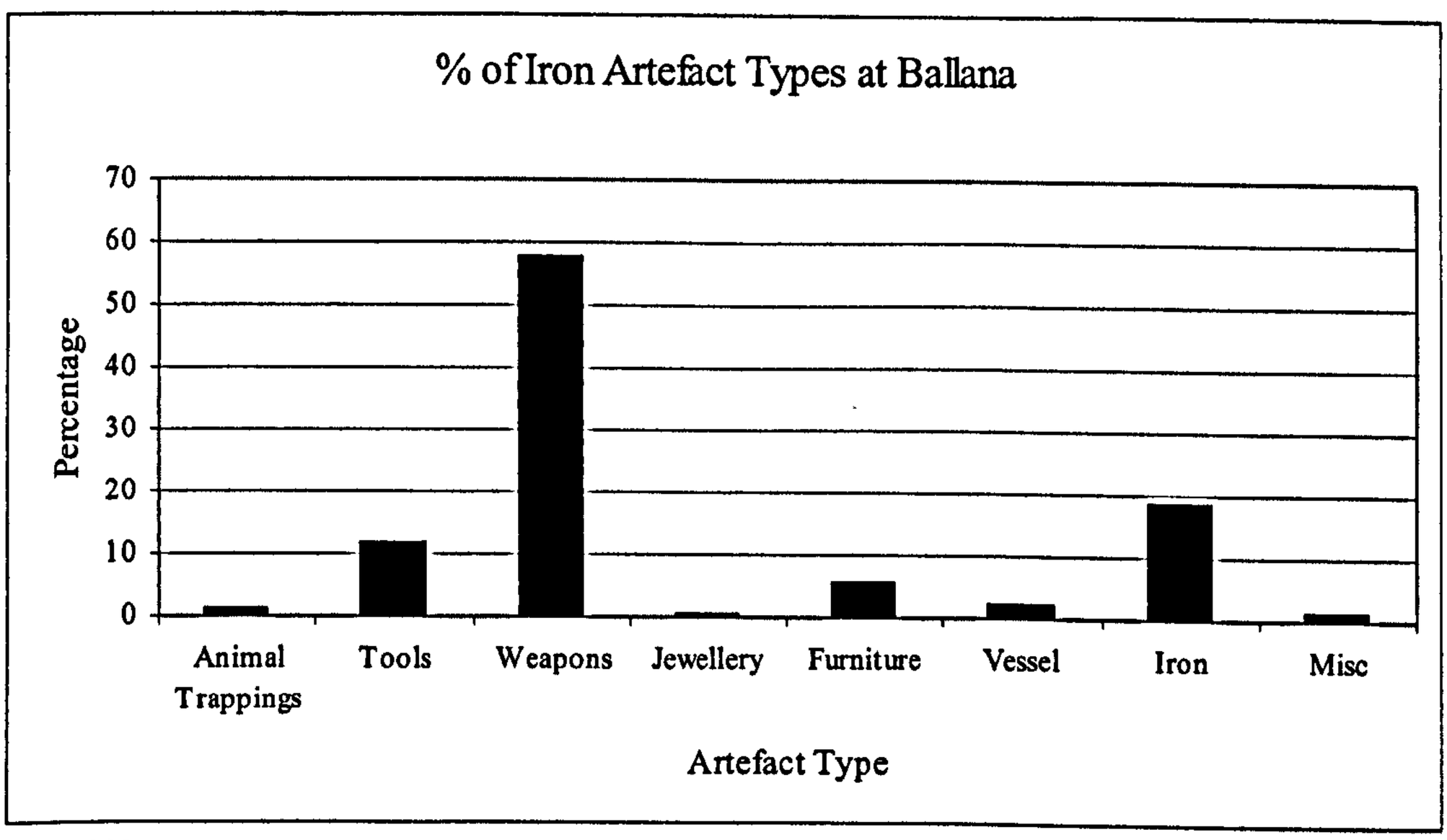


Figure 6.25

217 iron objects were recovered from Ballana. 26 of the objects were different types of tools (11.9%), whilst 126 objects were weapons (58%). Axes and knives were found at the site, and whilst axes were classified as tools, and knives as weapons, they may have been used interchangeably. As was the case at Qustul, three iron bits were found at Ballana. There were also 40 iron ingots and a number of iron fragments that accounted for 18.8% of the total. Iron is the second most frequently occurring metal at Ballana, and the third most frequently occurring metal at Qustul.

6.14.v. Silver Objects at Qustul.

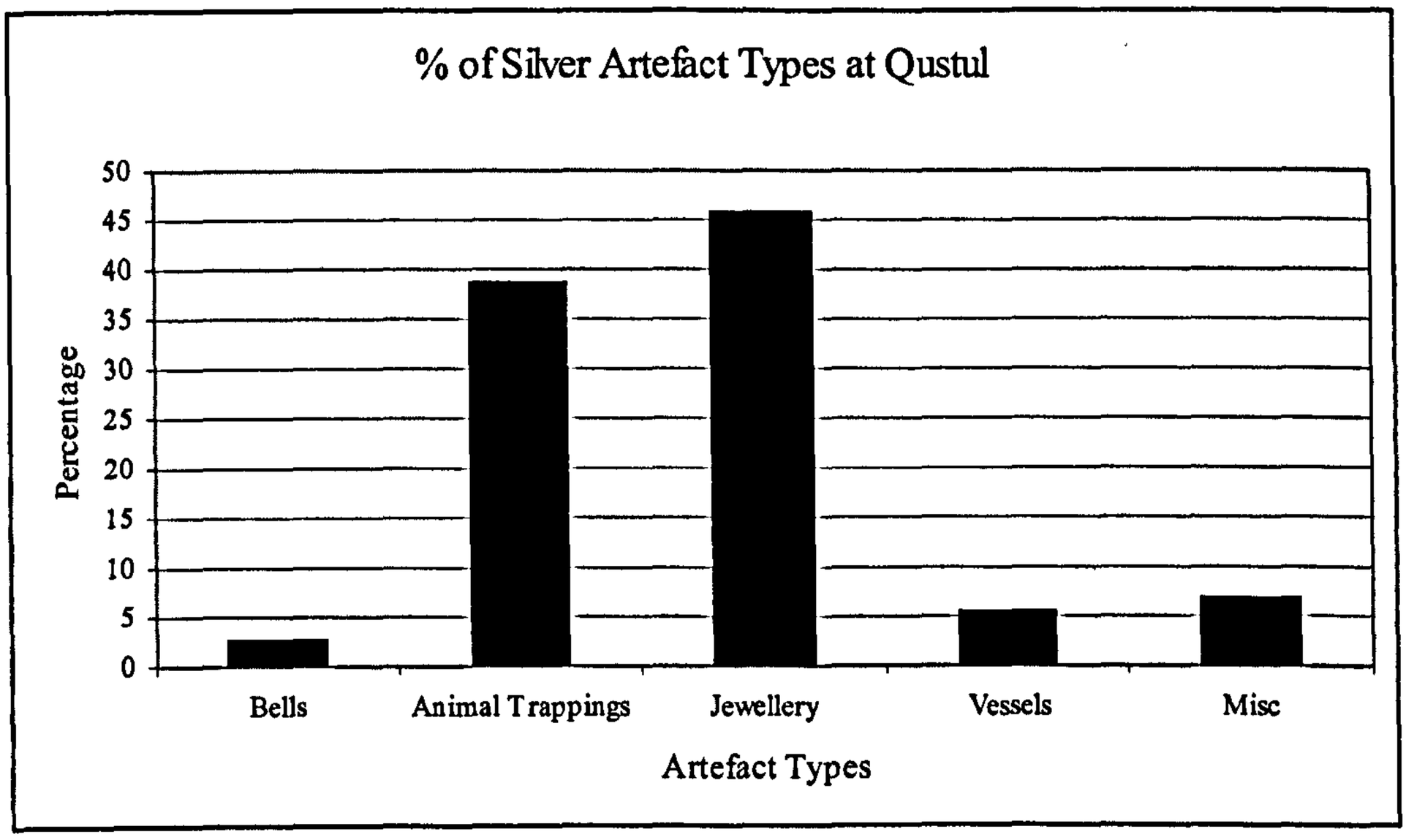


Figure 6.26

72 objects made from silver were recovered from Qustul. The majority of silver finds (33 examples) were jewellery items which account for 45.8% of the silver finds. 28 finds were types of artefacts related to animal trappings. These make up 38.8% of the silver objects.

6.14. vi. Silver Objects from Ballana.

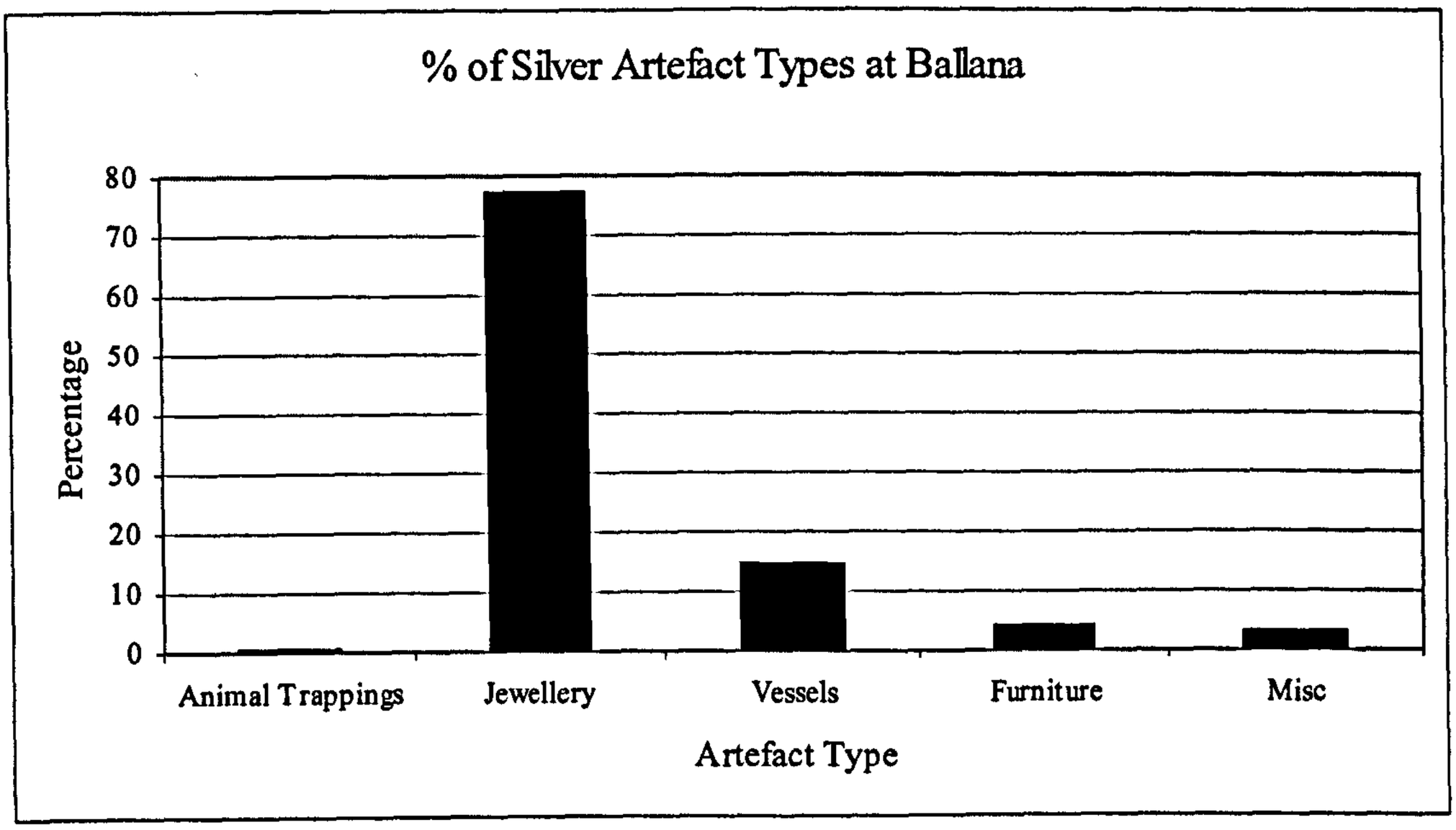


Figure 6.27

163 silver objects were excavated at Ballana. 118 artefacts were jewellery objects (77.3%), 14.7% of objects (24 items) were different types of vessels.

6.14. vii. Gold Objects at Ballana.

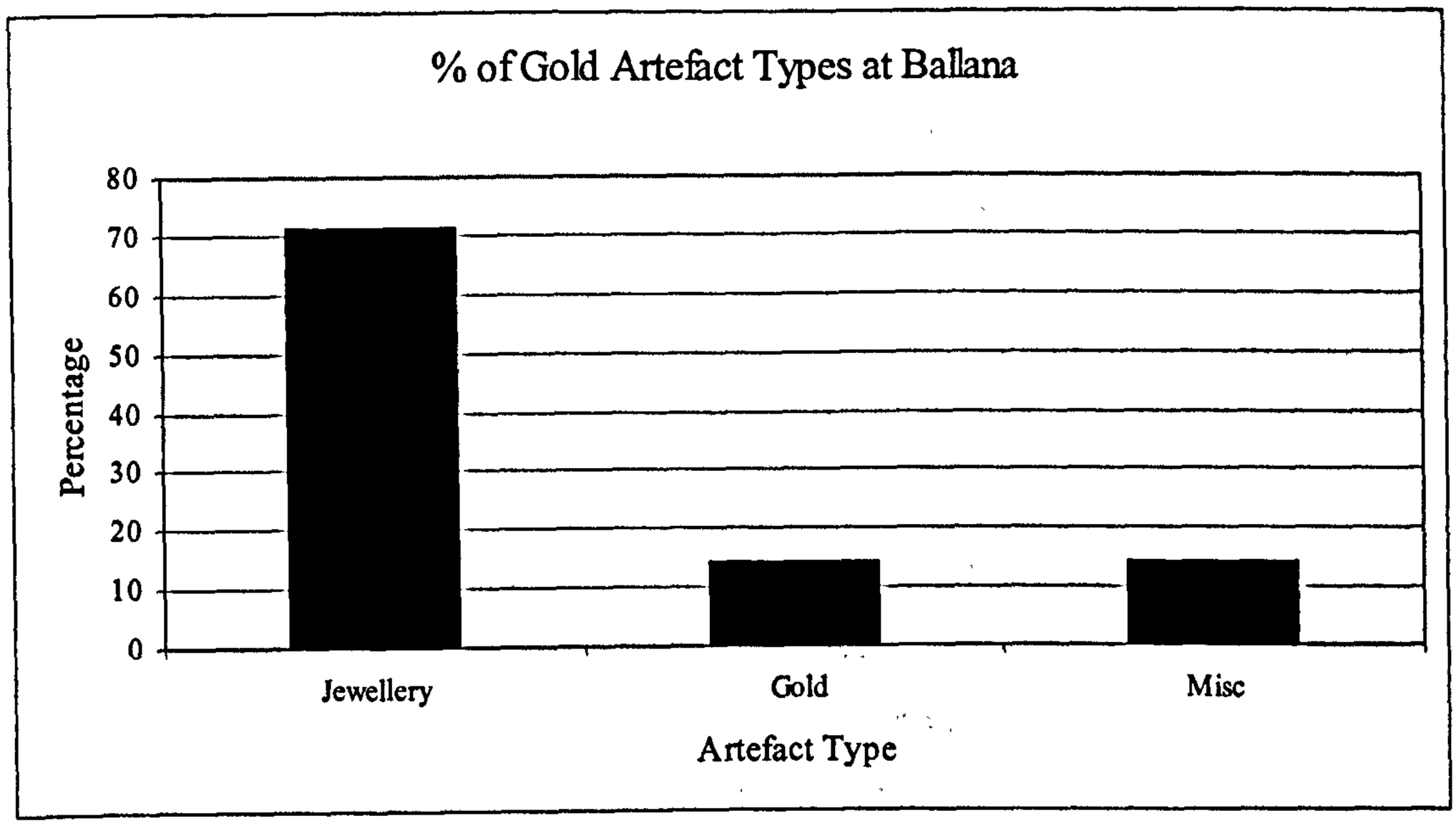


Figure 6.28

Five gold objects were discovered at Ballana, but no gold artefacts were found at Qustul. The miscellaneous object is a gold scroll inscribed with a verse written in Greek which is a hymn or prayer mentioning the goddess Isis.

6.14.viii. Lead Objects at Ballana.

Three lead scrolls were found at Ballana. No lead objects were found at Qustul.

6.15. Metallic Objects from Qustul and Ballana: Discussion.

The lack of gold finds in the Qustul and Ballana tombs may seem anomalous due to the high prevalence of gold that occurs naturally in Nubia, and the major interest in this material that other cultures had shown. It seems unlikely that the knowledge of the whereabouts of the gold seams would have entirely disappeared. A lack of access to naturally occurring lead (in the form of the mineral galena) also seems to be unlikely. The ability to refine and work gold and lead would surely have been developed, if the other types of metallurgy were successfully used, especially as silver and lead can co-exist in the same ores. Indeed, both gold and lead, due to their softness, are significantly easier to refine and work than bronze or iron (see information on individual metalworking technologies above). What may have been a disdain for gold and lead could have been due to a disinterest in these materials and their properties, and perhaps even a social taboo surrounding the materials. The softness of gold may also have made it an impractical material for functional objects. However, the use of these metals for only a small number of artefacts at Ballana may indicate that the materials were actually considered to be highly important, and that their use was restricted. Alternatively, they may have been too valuable to deposit in the graves. Gold may also have been the prime target for grave robbers, although their penchant only for gold objects and their distaste for silver, bronze and precious stones seems unlikely. Only three lead artefacts were found, and these were all from Ballana. This may suggest a restricted access to

this material, or a restricted use of these particular objects (scrolls). It may even be argued that this is the reflection of the development of new technology or access to different resources at Ballana.

Although bronze was the most frequently occurring metal at both Qustul and Ballana, it was used for very different types of objects. 392 bronze objects were recovered from Ballana, but only seven bells were found (in contrast to 134 at Qustul), all of type one, which was also the most frequently occurring bell type at Qustul (27 examples, that is 18%). In contrast, the majority of Ballana bronzes are vessels (291 vessels, that is 74%). A number of other bronzes were items that may have been involved in preparing, cooking or serving food and drink such as the sieve, colander, tables, candlesticks and so on. These figures are strongly indicative of a change in the use of bronze between the two sites. The use of bronze for animal trappings has almost totally disappeared at Ballana.

The iron assemblages at both sites show similarities, and it would seem that the overall usage of iron objects was as tools or as weapons. The use of iron as tools would be particularly fitting given that it is a very strong, hard metal, and therefore suited to the functions of hammering or sawing. It is interesting to note that many of the iron objects from Ballana were recovered from the same tomb (BT80). It is possible that this assemblage relates to the occupation of a particular individual in that tomb as a blacksmith. There is less variety in spear forms at Ballana than at Qustul. The weaponry corpus from the sites (which includes spears, swords and knives) contained only a small number of arrowheads. Given the traditional designation of the Nubians as archers, a larger number of arrowheads might have been expected. The number of tools and weapons that occur as partial remains – for example, just as blades – is due to taphonomic processes, and the consequent decay of wooden handles or shafts. At both Qustul and Ballana, animal bits were only manufactured from iron, and this may be for practical reasons. Iron is a harder metal than bronze, and was perhaps a more suitable metal to withstand the biting action of the animals.

Silver appears as the second most frequently occurring metal at Ballana, and the third most frequently occurring at Qustul. At both sites a small number

of animal trappings are made of silver. Most other silver objects are items of personal adornment, and this trend is elaborated in both numbers and forms of such items at Ballana – not least in the appearance of the crowns. Some silver finger looses also occur at Ballana. When animal trappings in silver appear in the tombs, they are found as a single set. The silver animal trappings may identify the ruler's steed. The restricted use of silver for small numbers of objects of particularly distinctive types may represent a royal prerogative.

6. 16. Metals, Metal working and Identity.

The metals form a substantial proportion of the artefactual remains from both cemeteries. In particular, it seems quite clear that bronze was used for very different types of artefacts at Qustul and Ballana.

At Qustul, the majority of bronze artefacts were the various parts of the animal trappings, whereas at Ballana, the majority of bronze items were vessels of different size and type. This difference represents a considerable change in the design concept, manufacturing process, and final usage of bronze at each site. The animal trappings at Qustul played a practical purpose in enabling a person to harness, lead or ride a horse or camel, whilst keeping it under tight control. The trappings also served as a means of displaying metallurgical wealth on the animal that was ridden. This may have proved particularly useful in maintaining the prestige status of those individuals able, or permitted to ride an animal. Displaying material wealth on the body of the horse would have been an excellent way to exhibit personal status, as the very act of riding the animal around a particular area would ensure that the maximum number of people witnessed this display. This was a very public method of maintaining personal position, and it may well have been linked with a person's social occupation, perhaps as a soldier or guard, or as a member of the inner retinue of the ruler. In this sense, there may have been a cultural recognition that a person riding a camel or horse with bronze trappings was both high status, and 'employed' in a particular role. We might even speculate that this occupational specialisation may have been different depending upon the mount which was ridden, either

camel or horse. This type of display might be interpreted as a kind of martial display, designed to both impress and intimidate the onlooker, and therefore reinforce the rider's social position (and perhaps judicial role), whilst helping to maintain a hierarchical social structure.

Like the bronzes from Qustul, the vessels at Ballana (bowls, colanders/sieves, dishes and so on), a number of which exhibit blackening on the outer surface, also served a practical purpose in the preparation, cooking and serving of food. This use of bronze may also represent a kind of status display, but in a rather different manner to that at Qustul. The bronze vessels may have been an integral part of a more gently coercive type of display. The bronze vessels may have been used in the preparation and serving of special feasts. Given the inclusion of so many vessels (including the pottery), it is tempting to interpret these grave goods as the containers used in a large ritual feast for the mourners at the funeral, and the actors involved in the preparation of the burial and the construction of the tombs. This may well have been the final act for which the bronze vessels were used before their own interment. However, they may have had a much longer life span, during which they were used in the entertaining of individuals or groups. Foods arranged and served on or in the bronze vessels may have combined in a double form of display. The foods arranged and served may have been impressive in their rarity, their manner of preparation, or in their artistic arrangement. Large amounts may have been served as a gesture of hospitality, or to reinforce the wealth of the host expressed in their ability to provide for guests. In fact this facet of serving large meals may have involved a magico-religious element with the host cast as a benevolent provider in wider social terms. The serving of food to guests using the bronze vessels is a much more private show of prestige than the bronze bells on animals at Qustul. This was probably the case in the first instance, as there may only have been a select few present at such entertainments. However, this selectivity was also likely to enhance the 'specialness' of the occasion and the feeling of inclusion by those picked, or invited to be involved. In turn, those who were not invited to attend may have been convinced of the special nature of the feasting on the basis of their non-inclusion. Furthermore, the knowledge that a special

feast was taking place might lead to positive speculation on the event by those people who were uninvited, once again reinforcing the social separation between these groups and perhaps encouraging a desire, in the non-invited people and groups, to belong. Overall it is reasonable to conclude, on the basis of the archaeological evidence, a change in the etiquette of feasting from Qustul to Ballana, and a change in the use of animals from Qustul to Ballana.

The interpretation of the evidence for the development and change of metallurgical technologies is somewhat tentative. There is little evidence of the mining of deep seams of metal ores in the area immediately surrounding Ballana and Qustul. However this lack is not necessarily problematic. If mining did take place, it may have occurred at some distance from the cemeteries. The gathering of metal rich ores was common practice in the past, and is one which leaves no evidence. The archaeological evidence regarding iron smelting and refining at Meroe, is evidence that such technologies were well developed at a period prior to the appearance of the X-Group in the Sudan. The smelting and working of copper is less well represented archaeologically, yet having explored certain examples of modern bronzeworking techniques in indigenous populations in the Sudan, it is clear that the evidence associated with such metalworking that could be expected to survive is minimal. The furnaces, tuyeres and moulds may have been constructed from natural materials that were wholly perishable, and therefore would not survive archaeologically. It is also no doubt the case that the artefacts were not manufactured at Qustul or Ballana, but that instead such activities took place in or near settlements. Natural ores may have been relatively pure, or may have been broken down and washed to remove unwanted residues. Therefore the production of slag as a by-product of the smelting process may have been minimal. A further source of metals was from pre-existing artefacts that the X-Group might have melted down and re-worked into objects of their own designs (or indeed, to imitate certain shapes or styles from neighbouring areas that they appreciated). There is also the possibility that certain objects were acquired via trade, perhaps in the gold which seems to have interested the X-Group less than other metals, or in the perishable exotic items such as skins or ostrich eggshells as the Nubians had done for centuries before.

The silver crown found in BT80 with Body K (phase 4) was embossed with a design (using a matrix) that had also appeared in the decoration of parts of the saddles found in QT31 (phase 2a) and QT36 (phase 2b). The reuse of the same matrix may suggest that the silver-working was undertaken by the Qustul and Ballana (perhaps even by the same skilled craftsperson) people as access to previously used designs via previously used metal-working tools, was possible.

6.17. Pottery and Pottery Production.

Pottery is the most frequently occurring artefact type from both of the cemeteries. Pottery is a particularly resilient material, and is not subject to the same problems of preservation that many other artefact classes might be. In the tombs that were plundered, the pottery seems to have escaped the attention of the robbers. The pottery has been classified using a combination of the information contained in the original site reports (Emery and Kirwan, 1938a: 1938b; Farid, 1963) and later ceramic studies (Adams, 1986a: 1986b; Török, 1987b; Rose, 1992). The pottery is both hand made and wheel thrown, and four general ware types (based on fabric, decorative style and technology) are in evidence: 'R', 'H', 'U' and 'W'. The wares exist within wider families. H1 belongs to family D which are all handmade wares. Wares R25, R1, R2, W11 and W29 belong to Family N (group NII) and are all vessels that were indigenously made from silt. Ware W30 belongs to Family M, and is a fineware. Wares R30, R31, W24 (group AI), R4, U2 (group AII) are all imports, and are generally termed Aswan wares, although their exact place of manufacture remains unknown. Wares W28, U4, R25 and W11 belong to Family T (note the overlap with family N), and U3 and U16 to Family L. Ware U1 is included in group NU, as it is a utility ware that has a long period of distribution. However, Rose has suggested (1992, 183) that as it is difficult to differentiate between the ribbed, unslipped vessels of R25 and U1, that the distinction between the two can be questioned. The mica dusted ware U18 was not classified within a family group.

6. 18. Evidence for Pottery Production.

As has been mentioned above, a number of the wares found at Ballana and Qustul were imported wares. Some of the pottery came from Egypt (in particular the area around Aswan), whilst other examples came from further away. A small number of sites in Nubia have been identified as places of pottery manufacture. Argin Village (24-V-13), the kilns at Debeira (24-R-23), and Gezira Dabarosa (6-G-6) are three sites beginning in the late X-Group and ending in the early Christian period (Adams, 1986b, 602-603). All three sites cover three phases of development, but Argin and Gezira Dabarosa are stratified sites. Meinarti (6-K-3) is a large, well stratified kom site. Twelve metres of the deposit were excavated in the early 1960's which revealed eighteen stratified layers covering a period of 1200 years of occupation. The three earliest levels (18-16) dated to the late Meroitic and early X-Group periods, before a period of abandonment. Levels 15 to 2 dated from the end of the X-Group period to the end of the Christian period. Qasr Ibrim is a site with complex stratification, with deep stratified layers of refuse from Meroitic, X-Group and early Christian times which continue to be useful for refining the chronological and typological sequence of X-Group and early Christian wares (ibid).

Gezira Dabarosa had a series of rooms with evidence for three X-Group phases of occupation. The vast majority of the pottery wares at the sites were wheel-thrown red wares (R1). The small 'cylinders' and goblets were produced from clay of a very fine paste and had very fine walls indicating that they were produced by skilled craftspeople. After being allowed to dry to the leather hard stage the vessels were rubbed with the hand or a piece of leather to create a soft sheen. Some goblets were then trimmed at the base in order to create a ring base – i.e. the central part of the base was cut out (Lister, 1967, 7-9). Many of the vessels of the X-Group period are of a relatively simple shape and they were often constructed without handles. However, as Lister puts it '[i]t is an achievement which can be obtained only after long, arduous practice. It involves having the clay in just the right condition, keeping the wheel revolving at a constant speed, neither too fast nor too slowly, applying the same amount of

pressure from the same direction at the same stage of creation, and going through each every (sic) slight movement in exactly the same way each time' (ibid, 15).

At Debeira, production of pottery ceased as early Christian wares came into production and before X-Group wares finally went out of production, although the length of time that the types coexisted is unclear (Adams, 1986b, 616; Edwards, 2003, 6).

6.19. Anthropological Evidence and Social Factors.

A recent study of pottery manufacture in Kareima and Tangasi in the Sudan on the east and west banks of the Nile demonstrates, two different methods of producing vessels. A single potter working at Kareima used a paste of 2/3 donkey dung and 1/3 silt clay, to make large open water jars. The lower portions of the vessel were pressed over an upturned convex mould (Garcea, 2004, 97). The middle and upper portions are pinched-up. After drying in the sand for at least two days the pots are open fired in a bonfire kiln. The pots lie on a bed of straw and manure, and are covered with pieces of scrap metal. A mixture of straw, soil, grass and dung is placed on top, before a final layer of straw is added to provide kindling for the fire. As the dung burns slowly, the firing can last up to 48 hours (ibid, 2004, 99). Information gained in interviews with inhabitants at Monassir and Shaigiya near the fourth cataract showed that some of their pottery was made by itinerant potters from Kareima (Wolf, 2004, 25). At Tangasi men and women work together in the process of manufacturing pottery. 3/5 parts silt clay and 2/5 parts of donkey dung are used to make a paste, with added water to make various types of vessel. The water jars are constructed from the rim to the middle part, before being turned, and the lower part and base being finished. The pots are constructed from ring shaped pieces of clay that are smoothed together to form a coherent structure (essentially a variant of coil building) (Garcea, 2004, 100). The water pots were fired in a subterranean kiln under large pot sherds and pieces of sheet metal in direct contact with the vessels, before a final treatment with ground brick powder to

correct inconsistencies in colour (Garcea, 2004, 101). It is clear from the examples above, that even within close geographical proximity, manufacturing methods can vary significantly.

In the process of potting, the kiln sometimes exhibits anatomical features (in particular sexual features), and this is often also the case for furnaces and bellows (Herbert, 1993, figure 5, 6 and 21). As Herbert puts it '[l]ike smelting iron, pottery involves the transformation of inchoate masses of earth into objects indispensable to civilization; like smelting, too, firing pots offers a serious risk of failure and even some danger to life and limb' (1993, 206). The two processes of production, although utilising different raw materials, different methods and with the aim of producing qualitatively different results, need not necessarily be intellectually or conceptually divorced from one another.

6.20. Comparison of Wares at Qustul and Ballana.

The graphs below compare the percentage of different ware types found in each phase at Qustul and Ballana.

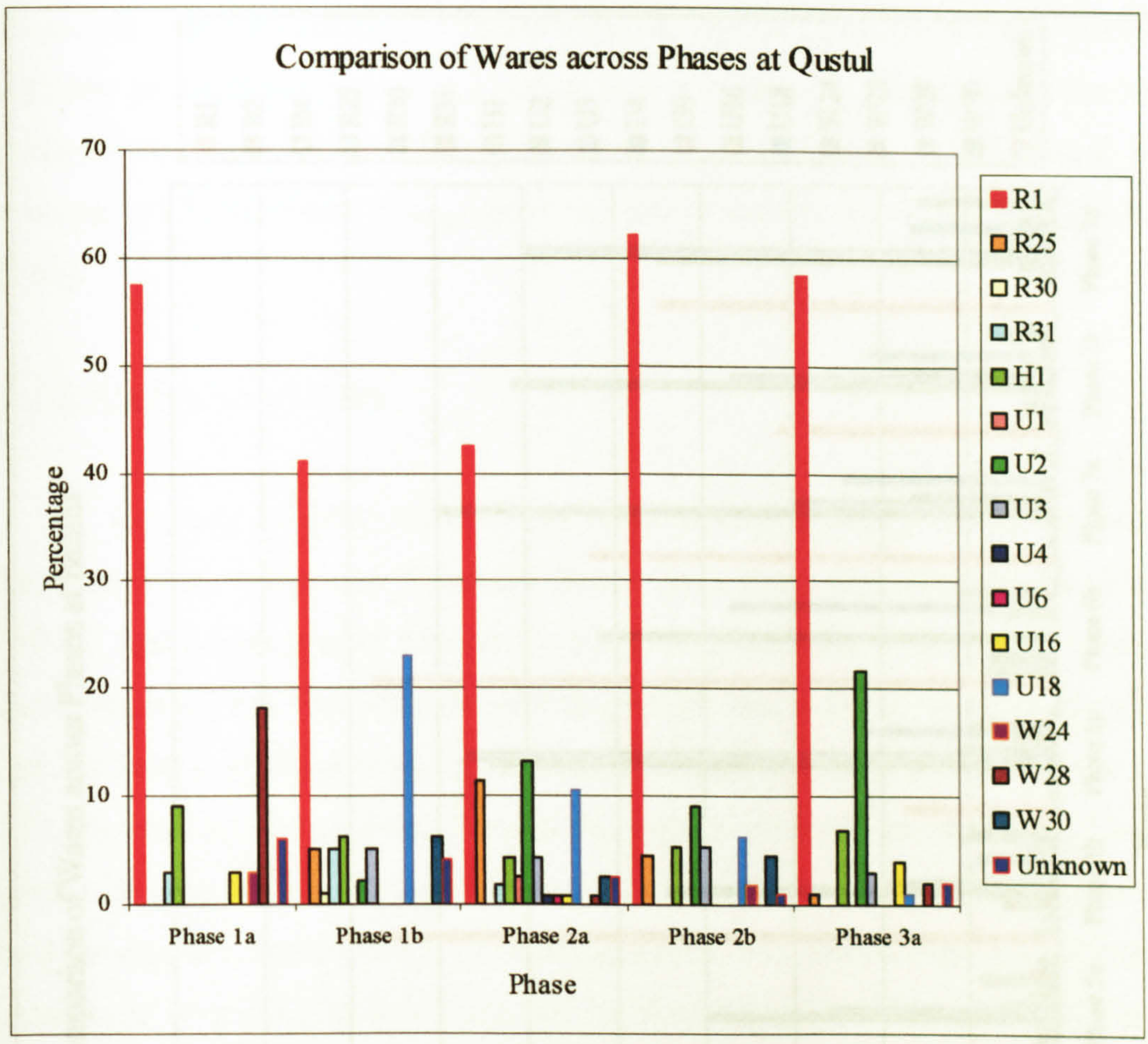


Figure 6.29

455 pottery vessels were recovered from Qustul. The vast majority of these were of ware R1, and this ware forms the greatest pottery type at Qustul in every phase. Phase 2a contained the greatest number of vessels (113), whereas phase 1a had the lowest number (33).

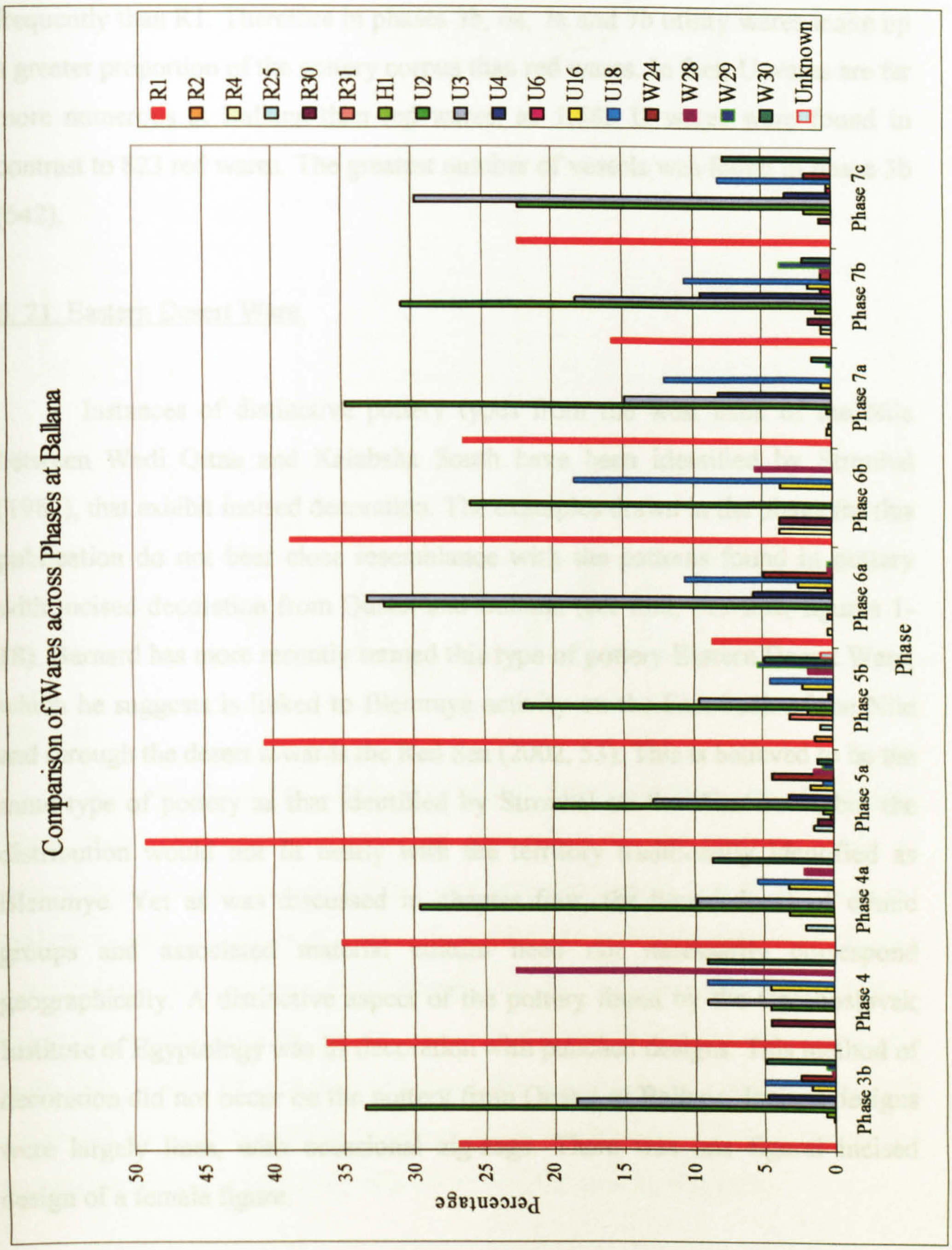


Figure 6.30

2635 pottery vessels were found at Ballana. Overall, the proportion of pottery types at Ballana is less uniform than at Qustul. R1 pottery is generally in the greatest proportion at Ballana, but in certain phases other ware types appear more frequently. In phase 3b ware U2 appears in a greater proportion, as it also does in phases 6a, 7a and 7b. In phase 6a, 7b and 7c, ware U3 also appears more

frequently than R1. Therefore in phases 3b, 6a, 7a and 7b utility wares make up a greater proportion of the pottery corpus than red wares. In fact, U wares are far more numerous at Ballana than red wares, as 1,583 U wares were found in contrast to 823 red wares. The greatest number of vessels was found in phase 3b (642).

6. 21. Eastern Desert Ware.

Instances of distinctive pottery types from the west bank of the Nile between Wadi Qitna and Kalabsha South have been identified by Strouhal (1982), that exhibit incised decoration. The examples drawn in the plates for this publication do not bear close resemblance with the patterns found in pottery with incised decoration from Qustul and Ballana (see ibid, 219-222, figures 1-18). Barnard has more recently termed this type of pottery Eastern Desert Ware, which he suggests is linked to Blemmye activity on the East bank of the Nile and through the desert towards the Red Sea (2002, 53). This is believed to be the same type of pottery as that identified by Strouhal on the West bank, but the distribution would not fit neatly with the territory traditionally identified as Blemmye. Yet as was discussed in chapter four, the boundedness of ethnic groups and associated material culture need not necessarily correspond geographically. A distinctive aspect of the pottery found by the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology was its decoration with punched designs. This method of decoration did not occur on the pottery from Qustul or Ballana. Incised designs were largely lines, with occasional zig-zags. There was one figural incised design of a female figure.

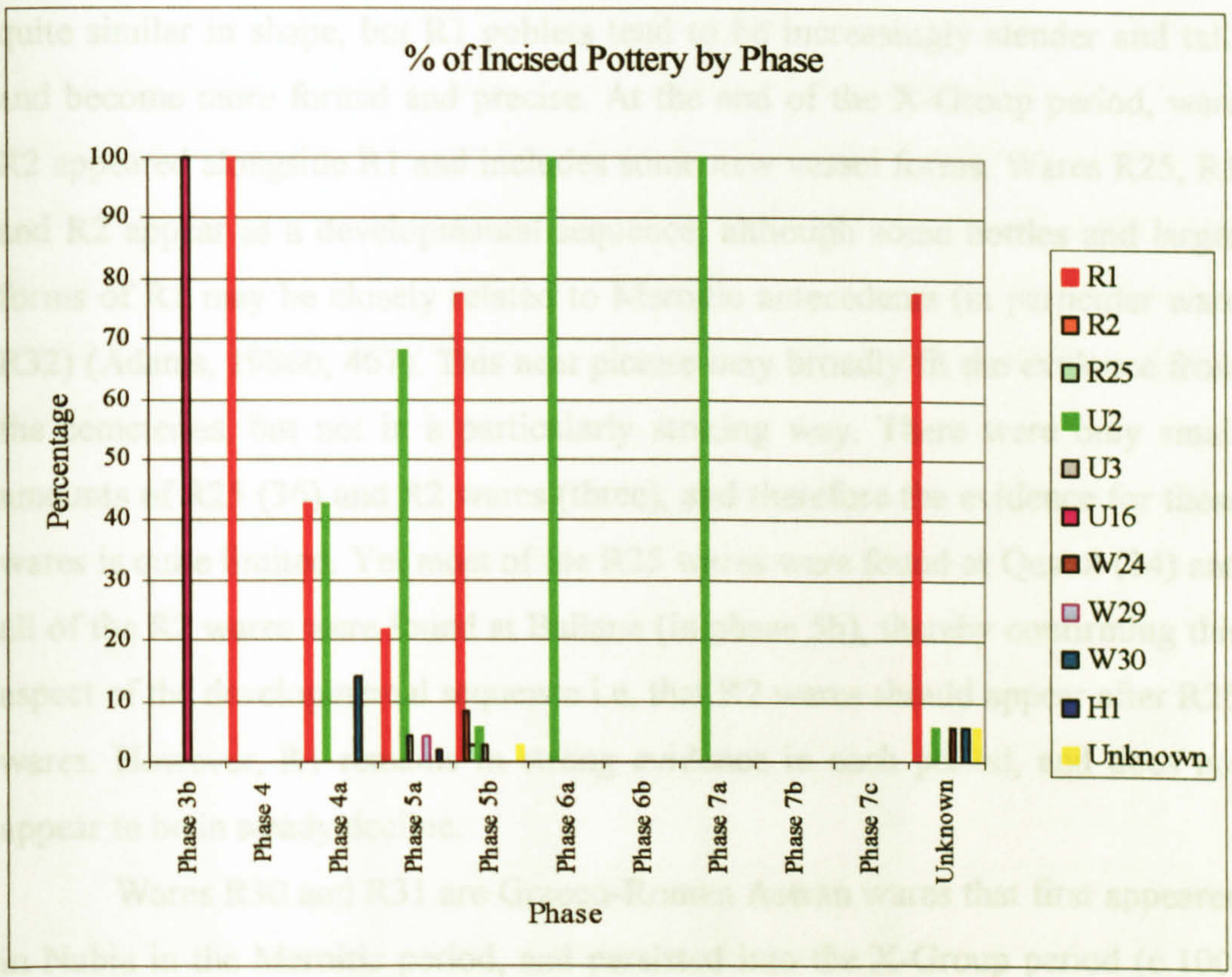


Figure 6.31

None of the pottery from Qustul was decorated with incised designs. There were 71 vessels with incised decoration as the primary mode of decoration, 112 with incised designs as a secondary mode, and 62 with incised designs as a tertiary mode of design. Therefore 245 pottery vessels from Ballana were incised. None of the pottery from phases 6b, 7b or 7c was incised. Most of the vessels with incised decoration were of U2 ware (169 vessels). 59 R1 vessels were also incised. The quantity of vessels that were incised in other wares, each numbered no more than three instances in each ware type. Most of the incised pottery was found in phase 6a, with 76 incised U2 vessels occurring.

6.22. R Wares at Qustul and Ballana.

The classic red ware R1 appears in the latter half of the X-Group period in graves throughout Nubia, gradually replacing ware R25. R1 differs from the earlier R25 wares in the application of red slip, polish and geometric decoration (in particular the characteristic blob and festoon patterns). R1 and R25 forms are

quite similar in shape, but R1 goblets tend to be increasingly slender and tall, and become more formal and precise. At the end of the X-Group period, ware R2 appeared alongside R1 and includes some new vessel forms. Wares R25, R1 and R2 appear as a developmental sequence, although some bottles and larger forms of R1 may be closely related to Meroitic antecedents (in particular ware R32) (Adams, 1986b, 467). This neat picture may broadly fit the evidence from the cemeteries, but not in a particularly striking way. There were only small amounts of R25 (36) and R2 wares (three), and therefore the evidence for these wares is quite limited. Yet most of the R25 wares were found at Qustul (24) and all of the R2 wares were found at Ballana (in phase 5b), thereby confirming this aspect of the developmental sequence i.e. that R2 wares should appear after R25 wares. However, R1 remains in strong evidence in each period, and does not appear to be in steady decline.

Wares R30 and R31 are Graeco-Roman Aswan wares that first appeared in Nubia in the Meroitic period, and persisted into the X-Group period (c.100-500AD). R30 appears most frequently in Nubia, but R31 as variant of R30, is found more often in the X-Group rather than the Meroitic period (Adams, 1986b, 526).

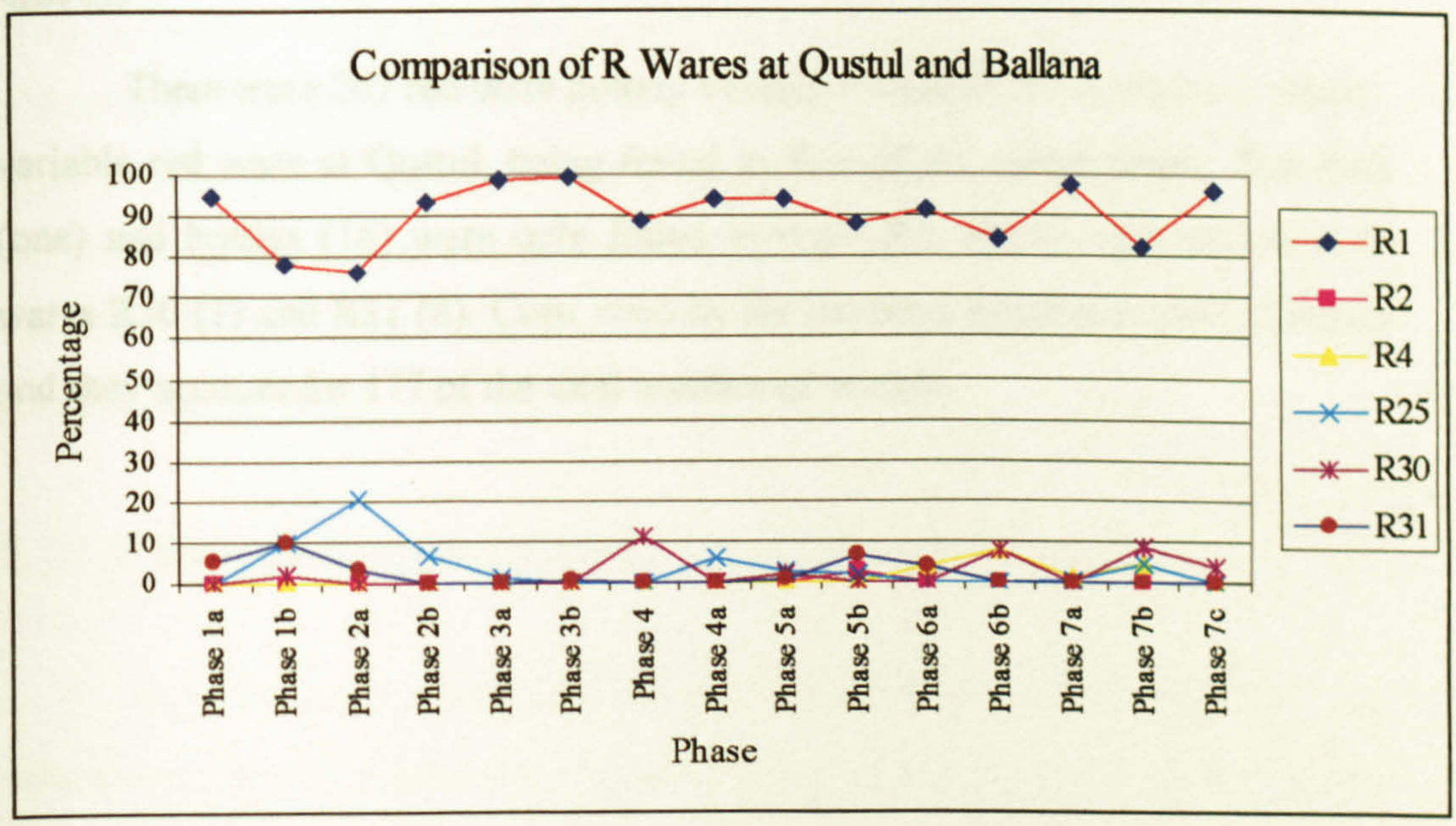


Figure 6.32

R1 forms the highest proportion of pottery vessels in every phase at Qustul and Ballana, and in nine out of 15 phases R1 forms over 90% of the pottery corpus. Other R wares were only found in small numbers. R25 has a peak in phase 2a, before reappearing again in phases 4a and 7b. R30 peaks during phase 4, and appears again in phases 7b and 7c at the end of the run of graves at Ballana. R2 and R4 are evident only in very small numbers, and only appear at Ballana.

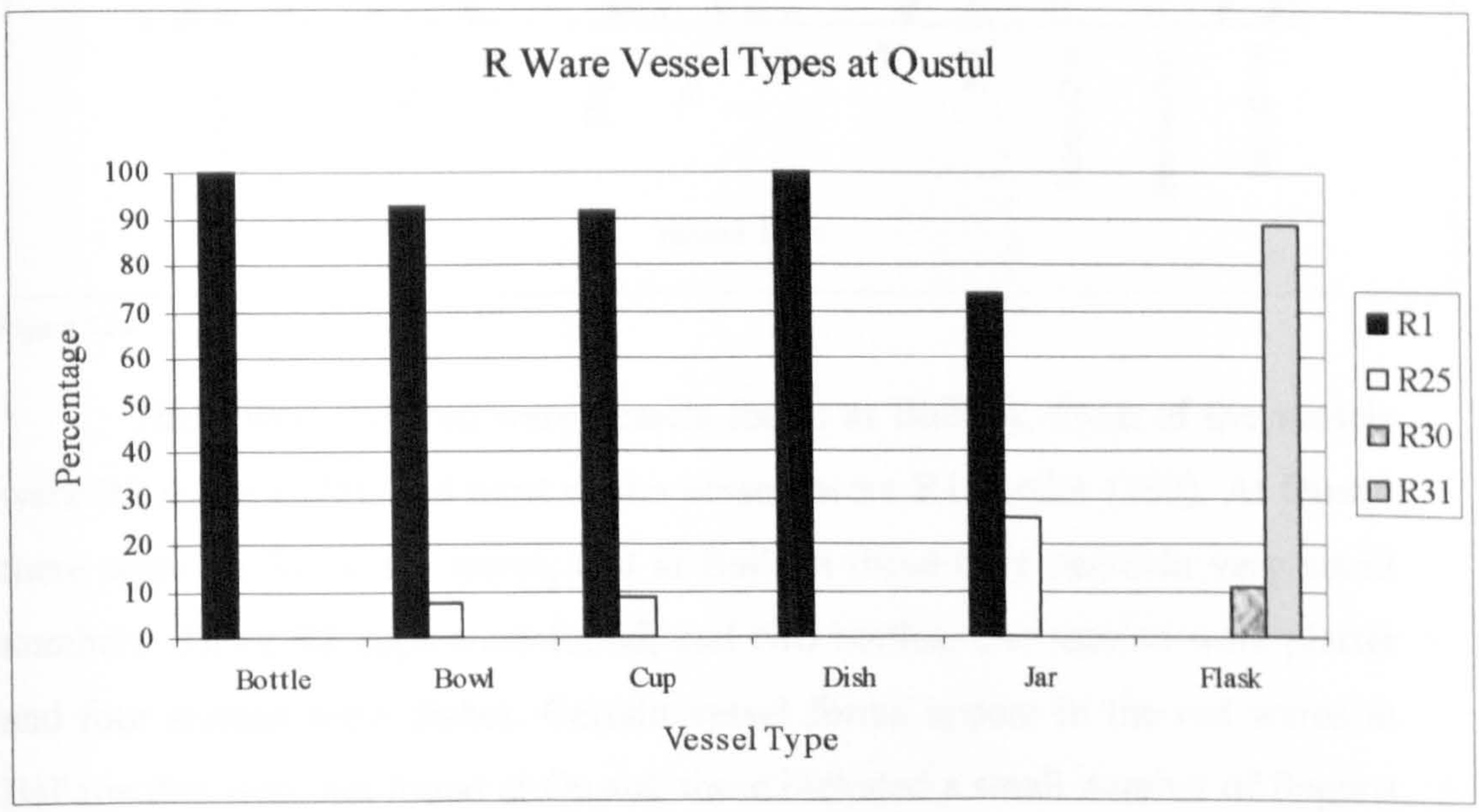


Figure 6.33

There were 267 red ware pottery vessels at Qustul. R1 is the most widely variable red ware at Qustul, being found in five of six vessel forms. The dish (one) and bottles (16) were only found in ware R1. Flasks only occurred in wares R30 (1) and R31 (8). Cups were by far the most numerous type of vessel and they account for 177 of the total number of vessels.

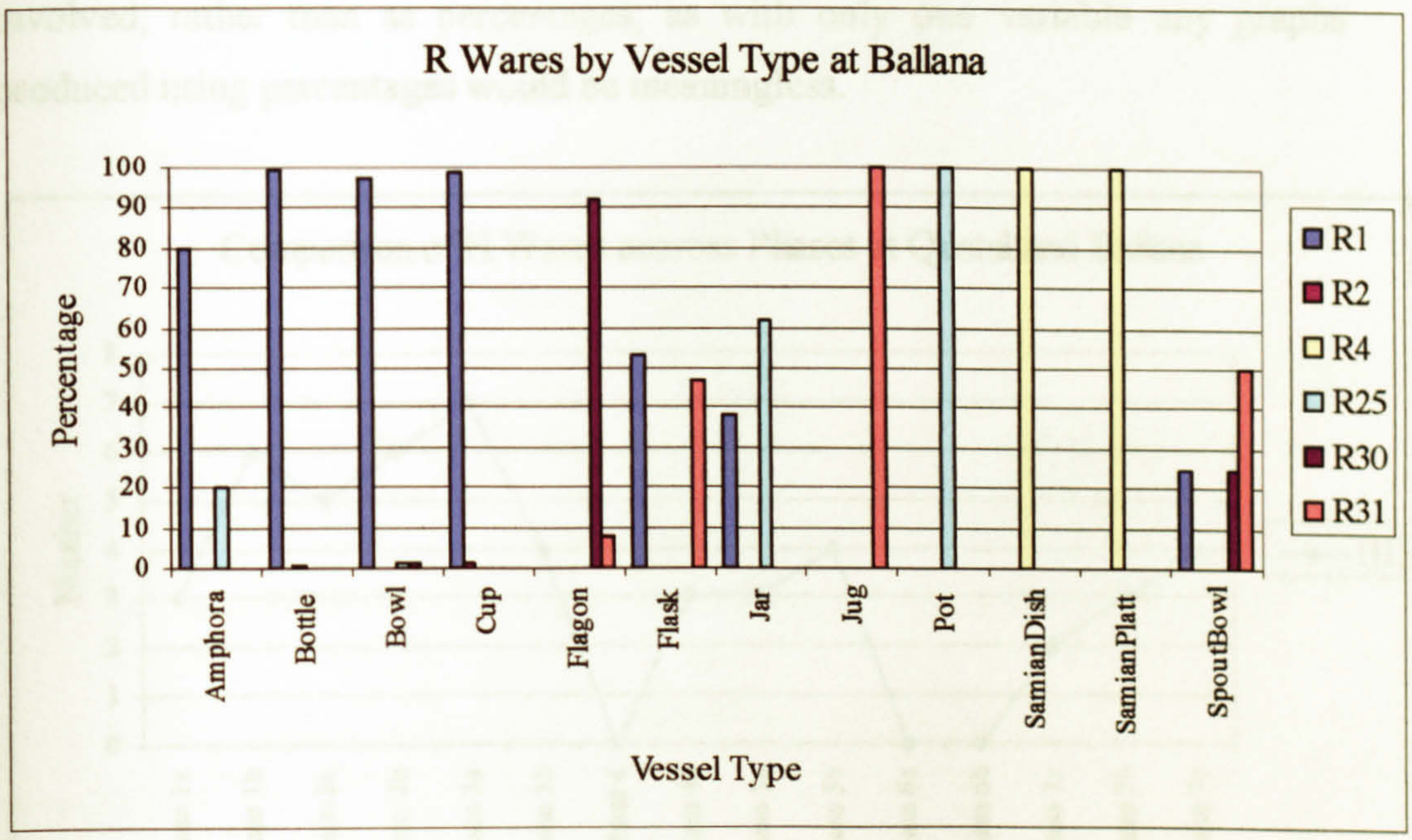


Figure 6.34

There were 823 red ware vessels found at Ballana. Most of the vessels were R1 wares (775), and most of the vessels were R1 bottles (389). At Qustul there were no R2 or R4 wares, and at Ballana these only occur in very small numbers. Three R2 cups were found, and two bottles, one samian ware platter and four samian ware dishes. Certain vessel forms appear in the red wares at Ballana that were not found at Qustul, these included a small number of flagons (13), amphorae (five), jugs (two), pots (two), samian dishes, (four), samian platter (one) and spouted bowls (four). In relation to the samian ware vessels, these different vessel forms are related to the different ware form, R2. However, the pots, jugs, amphorae and flagons were all of wares that occurred at Qustul. Therefore these objects represent the introduction of new vessel forms at Ballana using existing ware types.

6. 23. H Wares at Qustul and Ballana.

Ware H1 is a plain utility ware used for cooking pots and jars. There was only one type of H ware – H1, found at either of the cemeteries, therefore the following graphs that relate to this ware are given as a count of the numbers

involved, rather than as percentages, as with only one variable any graphs produced using percentages would be meaningless.

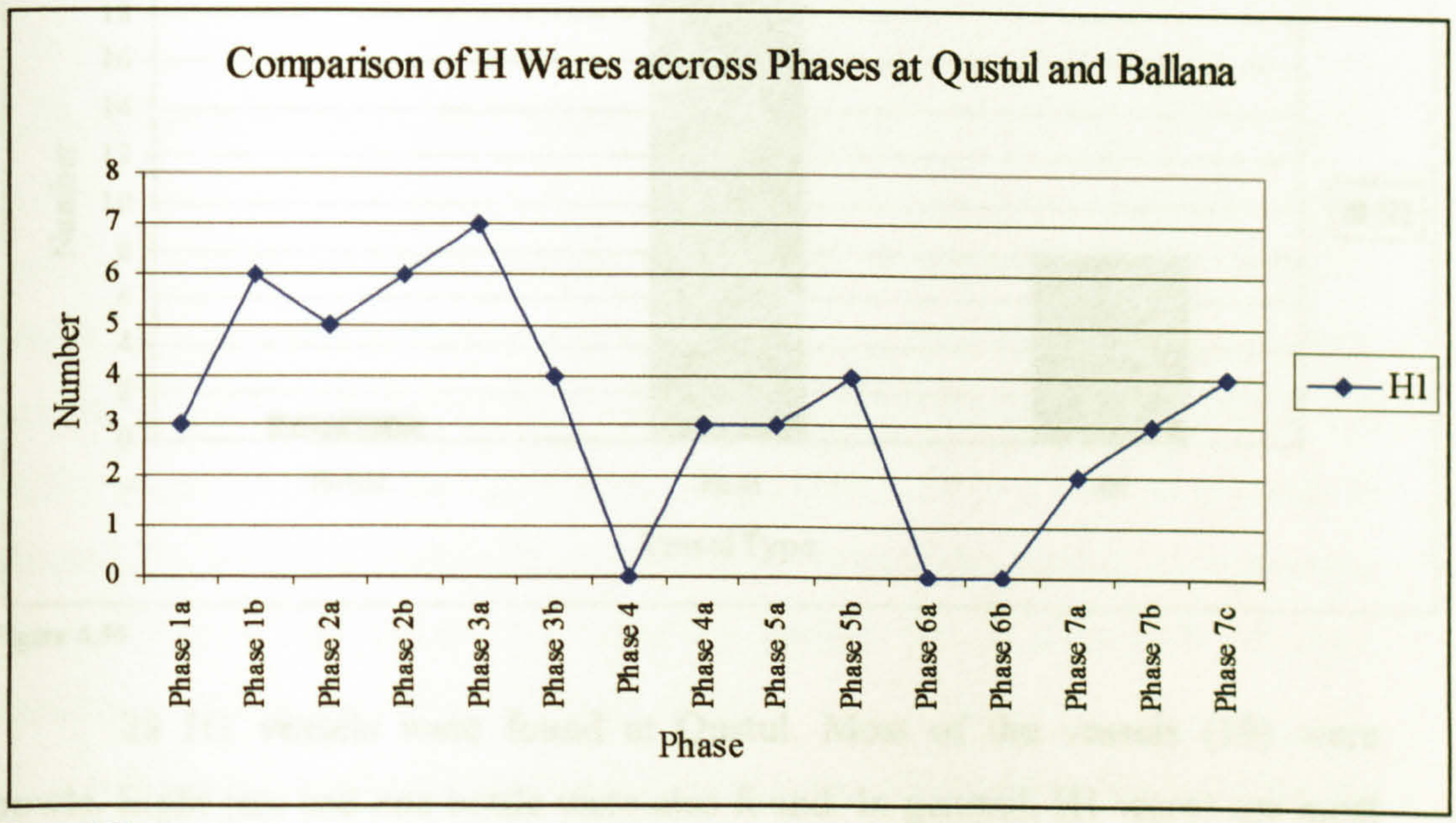


Figure 6.35

'H' wares form the smallest proportion of the pottery corpus at both sites. At Qustul, 28 vessels are of 'H1' type, and at Ballana, 24 are of the 'H1' variety. The 'H' wares are hand-made utility wares. The relative infrequency with which the 'H' wares occur may be explained by the fact that this ware, being commonly used for cooking and storage vessels, is more commonly found at domestic sites. Its inclusion in X-Group graves is less common (Adams, 1986b, 418).

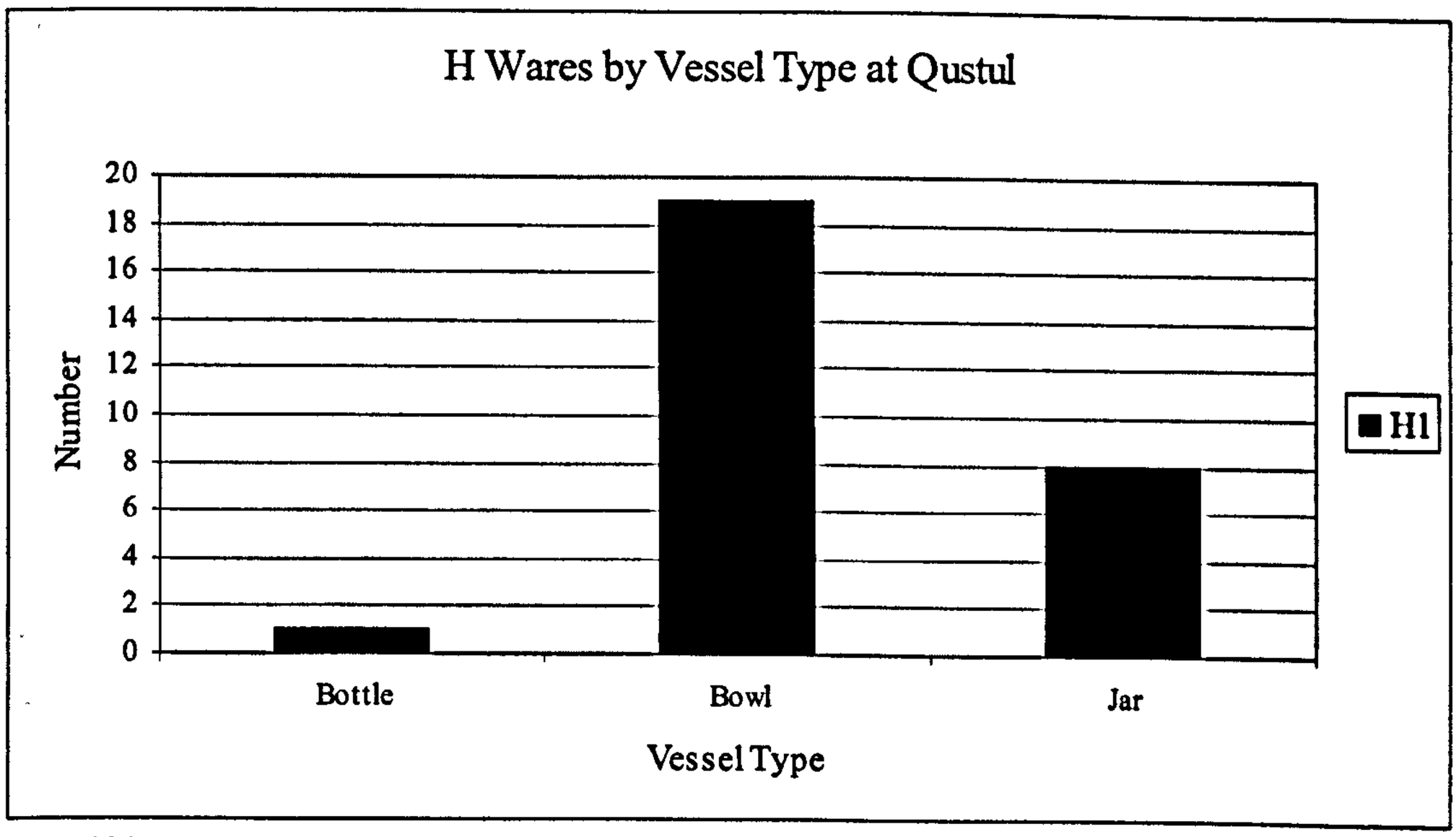


Figure 6.36

28 H1 vessels were found at Qustul. Most of the vessels (19) were bowls. Eight jars and one bottle were also found. In general, H1 wares are most commonly found as jars, but at Qustul its appearance in bowl form is quite unusual.

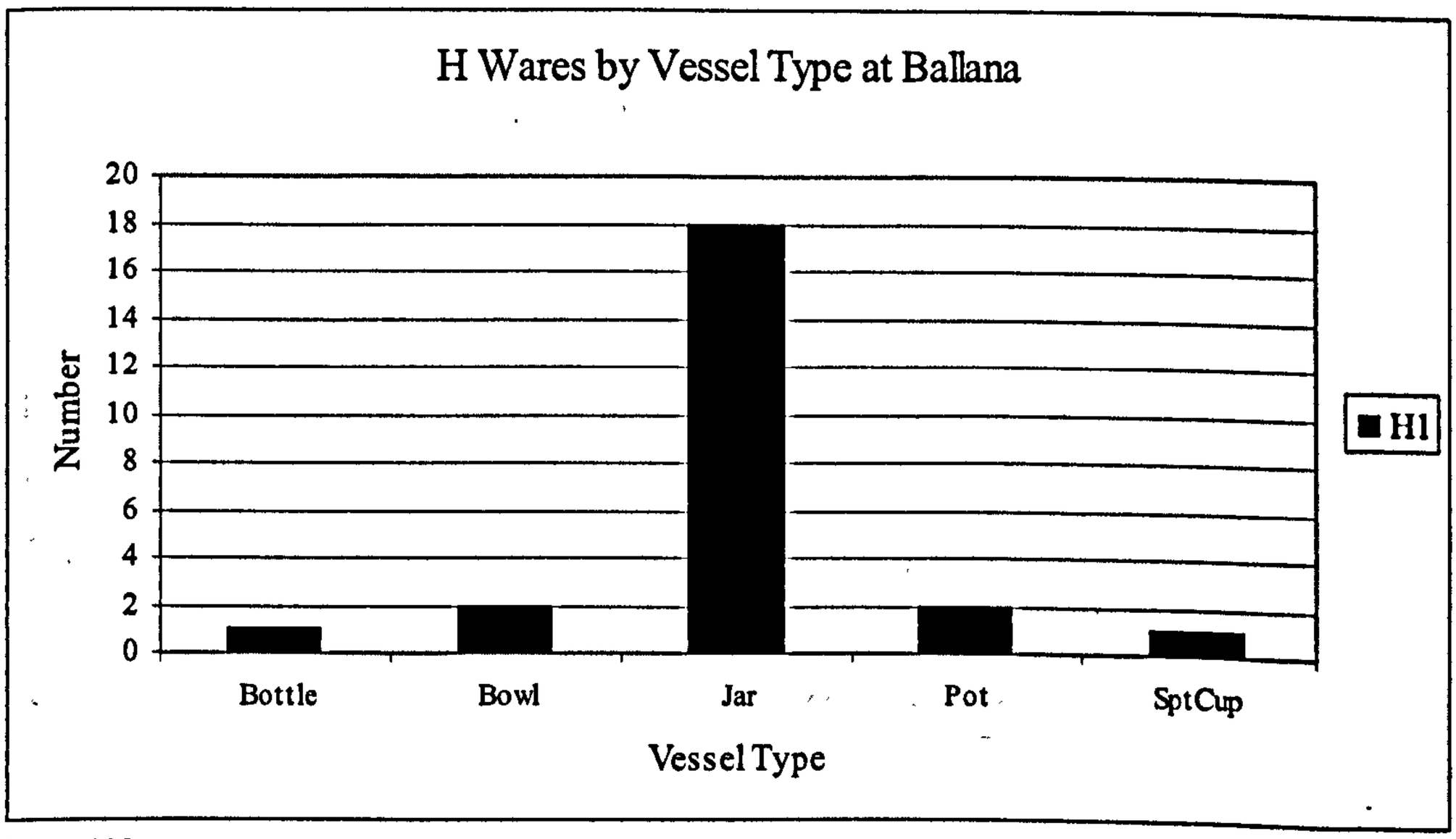


Figure 6.37

24 H1 vessels were found at Ballana. Most of the vessels were jars (18). There were small numbers of bowls and pots (two in each case), and a single

bottle and a single spouted cup. In contrast to Qustul, the number of bowls has seriously declined. The pots and spouted cup were forms new to Ballana in this ware.

6.24. U Wares at Qustul and Ballana.

U wares are utility vessels with coarse unslipped surfaces, some of which have painted decoration. The vessels often include a finely chopped straw temper. Finds from Debeira, Serra and Faras show evidence of both painted and utility wares made at the same sites. The vessels show a lack of change of painted décor which makes it impossible to assign the vessels to sequential groups. Forms and decoration seem to persist for long periods of time, remaining unchanged (Adams, 1986b, 514).

Ware U1 is a heavy unslipped utility ware belonging to the Meroitic and X-Group periods that were mostly used for qadus pots. It is difficult to distinguish from the imported ware U4 (also see the point rasied above with regard to the difficulty suggested by Rose in distinguishing between U1 and R25). U4 is usually an unslipped utility ware for large vessels that were shipped as wine containers. The vessels are sometimes covered in a pinkish or cream wash, apparently in imitation of R30. The interiors of the amphorae may be resinated, but if this was the case at Qustul or Ballana, it is not mentioned in the description of the finds. None of the U2 vessels were resinated on the interior, although a jar from QT02 did contain unguent. A number of U2 vessels at Qustul and Ballana were inscribed with potmarks and seals. A large proportion of the U3 vessels from Qustul and Ballana were marked with Greek graffito. A small number of U4 vessels from Ballana also had Greek graffito, and four amphorae from tomb BT122 were painted with a *chi rho* and *alpha* and *omega* signs.

Ballas ware vessels were made at Ballas in Egypt, and are therefore imports. Ballas ware stands out from other drab wares due to its hard reddish-brown paste, tempered with yellow material. U16 is the earliest of this type and belongs to the X-Group period. Unlike U4, the interiors are unresinated, and

were therefore unlikely to have been used for wine. The majority of U16 finds in Lower Nubia were found at Ballana and Qustul (Adams, 1986b, 575). There are other Ballas wares, including U9 and U12, but these types were not found at either cemetery.

U18 is a micaceous brown utility ware known from Meroitic, X-Group and Christian contexts in Nubia. A number of U18 vessels from Ballana had a resinated interior (*contra* Adams, 1986b, 582).

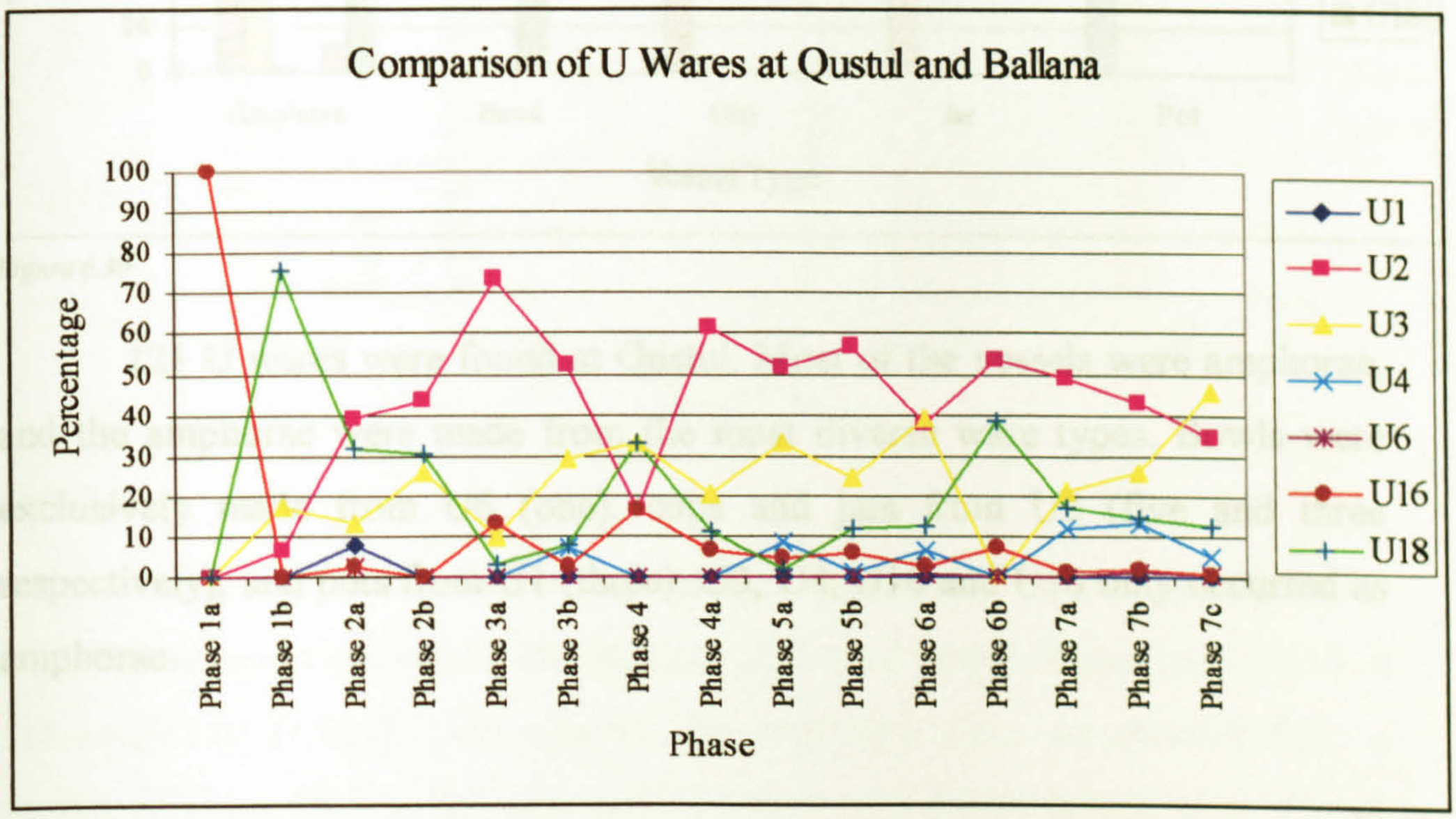


Figure 6.38

Most of the U ware pottery vessels were of U2 type, and these form the greatest proportion of vessels in most phases. In phase 1a only a single U ware vessel occurred of U16 type. In phase 1b, 29 vessels were found, 22 of which were of U18 type. In general the amounts of U ware pottery are very erratic across the two cemeteries, and the amounts of U ware vary wildly between phases. For example, in phase 3a thirty vessels occurred, in phase 3b 410 vessels occurred, then in phase 4 the number falls to six vessels. Types U1 and U6 were the rarest types with only three and five vessels of each type respectively.

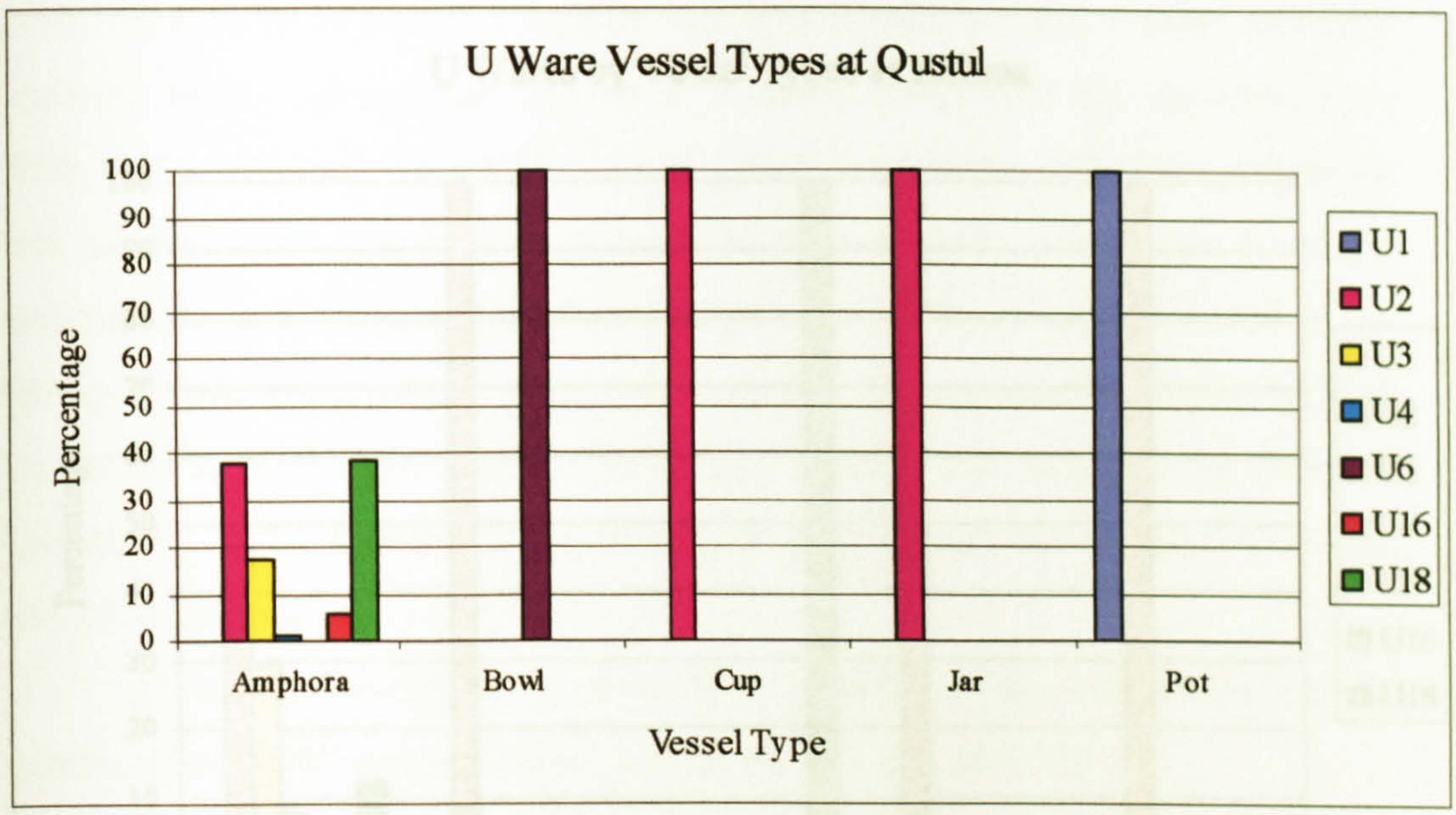


Figure 6.39

121 U wares were found at Qustul. Most of the vessels were amphorae, and the amphorae were made from the most diverse ware types. Bowls were exclusively made from U6 (one), cups and jars from U2 (five and three respectively), and pots from U1 (three). U3, U4, U16 and U18 only occurred as amphorae.

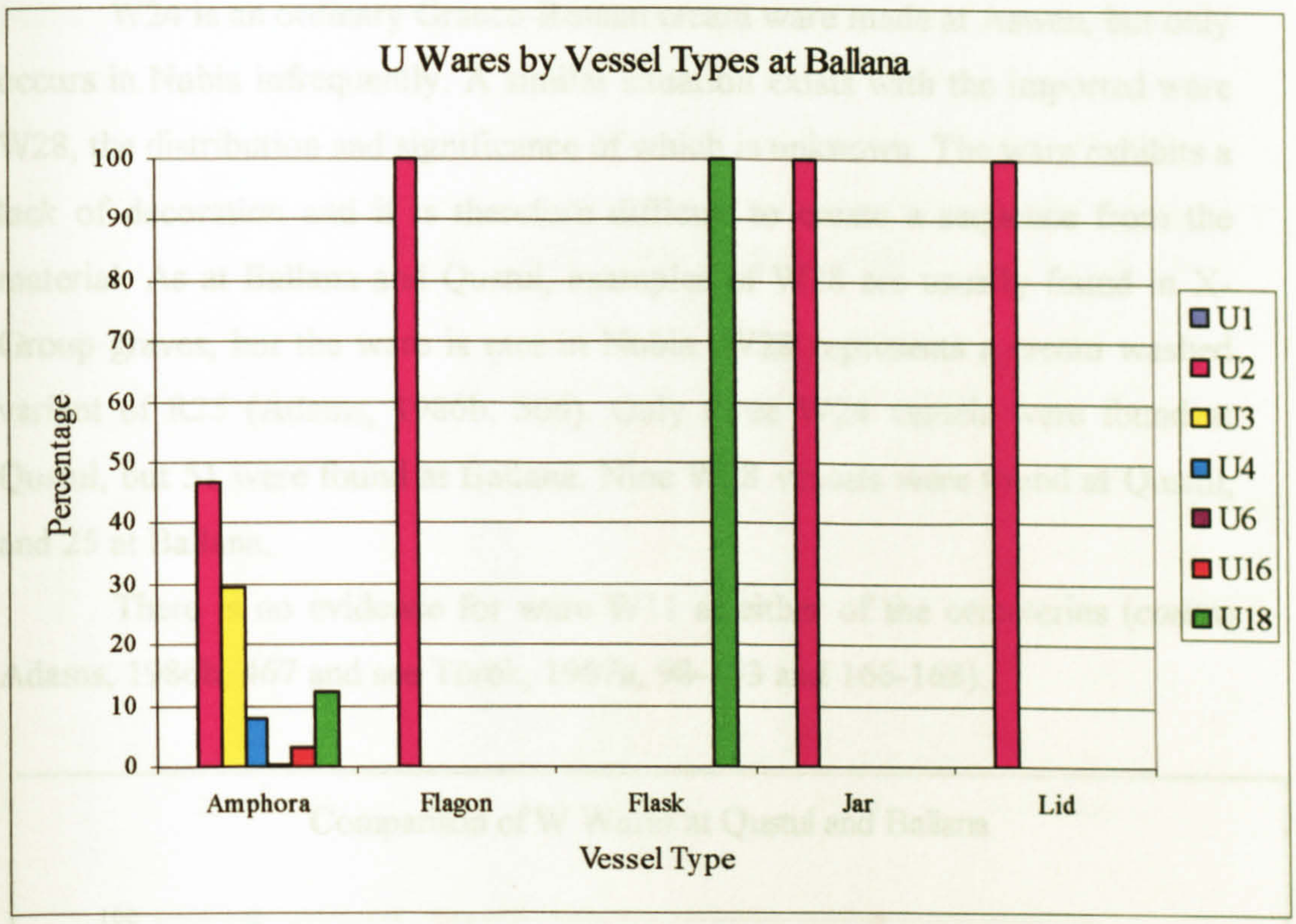


Figure 6.40

1,583 U ware vessels were found at Ballana, and this is a significant rise from the numbers at Qustul. The largest number of vessels forms was found in the amphorae (1,551). Like Qustul, the amphorae were constructed from a variety of U wares. U3, U4, U6, and U16 were only found in amphorae. Flasks (2) were only made from ware U18. Flagons (13), jars (15), and lids (2) were only made from U2.

6.25. W Wares at Qustul and Ballana.

The W wares tend to bear similar characteristics to certain R wares. Ware W30 (a fine white ware of the X-Group period) was manufactured from fine residual clays and has a fine paste. This ware type is related to earlier Meroitic eggshell wares, but W30 is more scarce than Meroitic fine wares. W30 is related to W29 (an ordinary X-Group fine ware), R1 and R25. W24 is an uncommon Graeco-Roman ordinary cream ware, which is a variant of R30 with a cream coloured slip (Adams, 1986b, 435).

W24 is an ordinary Graeco-Roman cream ware made at Aswan, but only occurs in Nubia infrequently. A similar situation exists with the imported ware W28, the distribution and significance of which is unknown. The ware exhibits a lack of decoration and it is therefore difficult to create a sequence from the material. As at Ballana and Qustul, examples of W28 are usually found in X-Group graves, but the ware is rare in Nubia. W28 represents a cream washed variant of R25 (Adams, 1986b, 566). Only three W24 vessels were found at Qustul, but 51 were found at Ballana. Nine W28 vessels were found at Qustul, and 25 at Ballana.

There is no evidence for ware W11 at either of the cemeteries (*contra* Adams, 1986b, 467 and see Török, 1987a, 98-153 and 166-168).

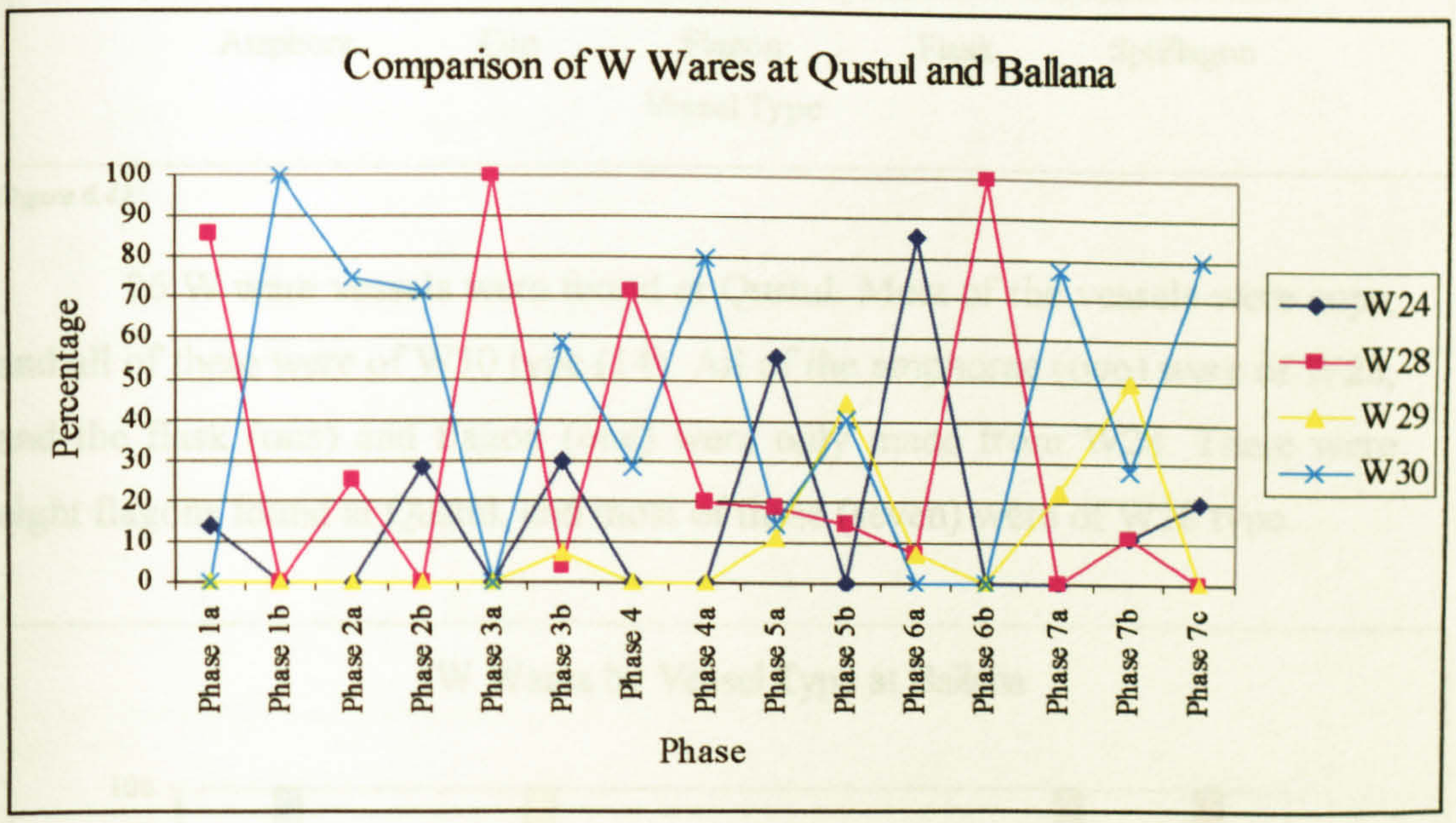


Figure 6.41

Most of the W ware vessels are of W30 type. The proportion of the ware types is very variable in different phases and none of the wares exhibits the kind of dominance that, for example, R1 does in the R wares, or that U2 does in the U wares. At Qustul, W30 forms the greatest proportion of W wares in most phases. At Ballana, W30 appears in the greatest proportions in four phases, but in combination, wares W24, W28 and W29 form the greatest proportion in six phases. The appearance of each of the ware types is highly variable, and for example there are no W30 wares in phase 3a, but 32 in phase 3b. This pattern of

peaks and troughs in the proportions of ware types occurs for each ware, and at both cemeteries.

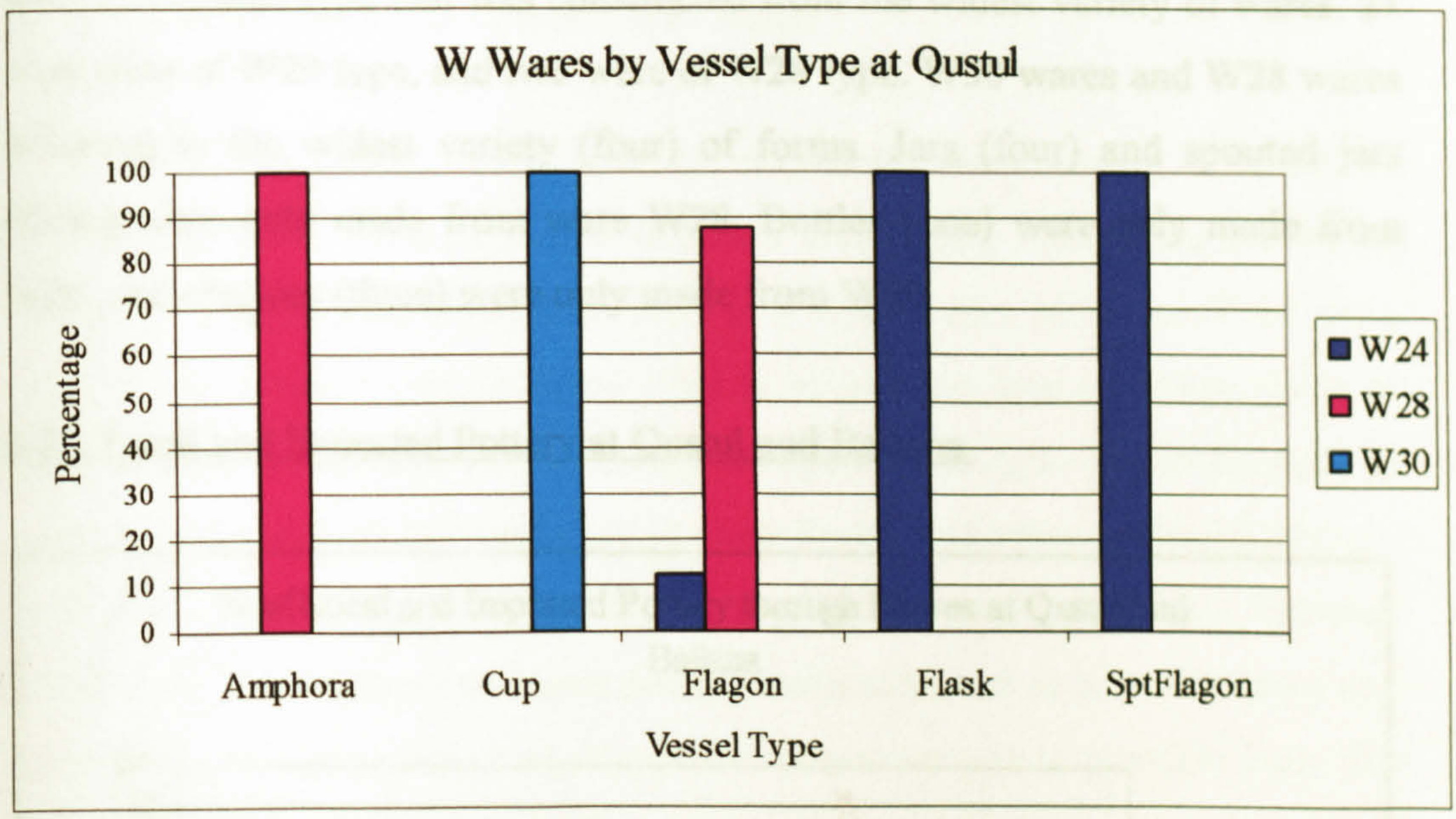


Figure 6.42

26 W ware vessels were found at Qustul. Most of the vessels were cups, and all of these were of W30 type (14). All of the amphorae (two) were of W28, and the flask (one) and flagon (one) were only made from W24. There were eight flagons found at Qustul, and most of these (seven) were of W28 type.

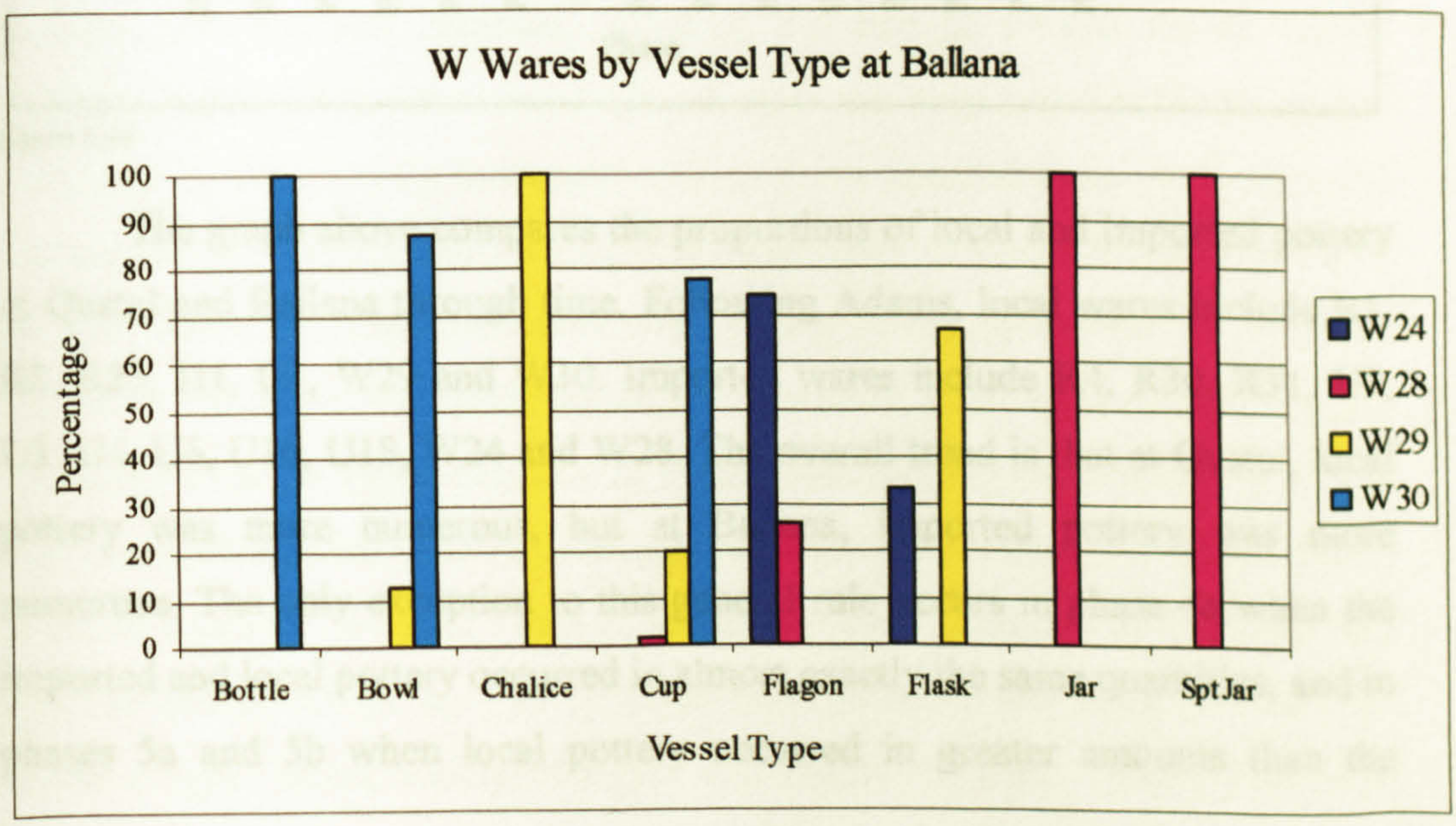


Figure 6.43

201 W ware vessels were found at Ballana in eight different forms. Most of the W vessels were cups (105), and most of these were of W30 type. Cups were the vessels type that was constructed from the widest variety of wares. 21 cups were of W29 type, and two were of W28 type. W30 wares and W28 wares occurred in the widest variety (four) of forms. Jars (four) and spouted jars (three) were only made from ware W28. Bottles (one) were only made from W30, and chalices (three) were only made from W29.

6.26. Local and Imported Pottery at Qustul and Ballana.

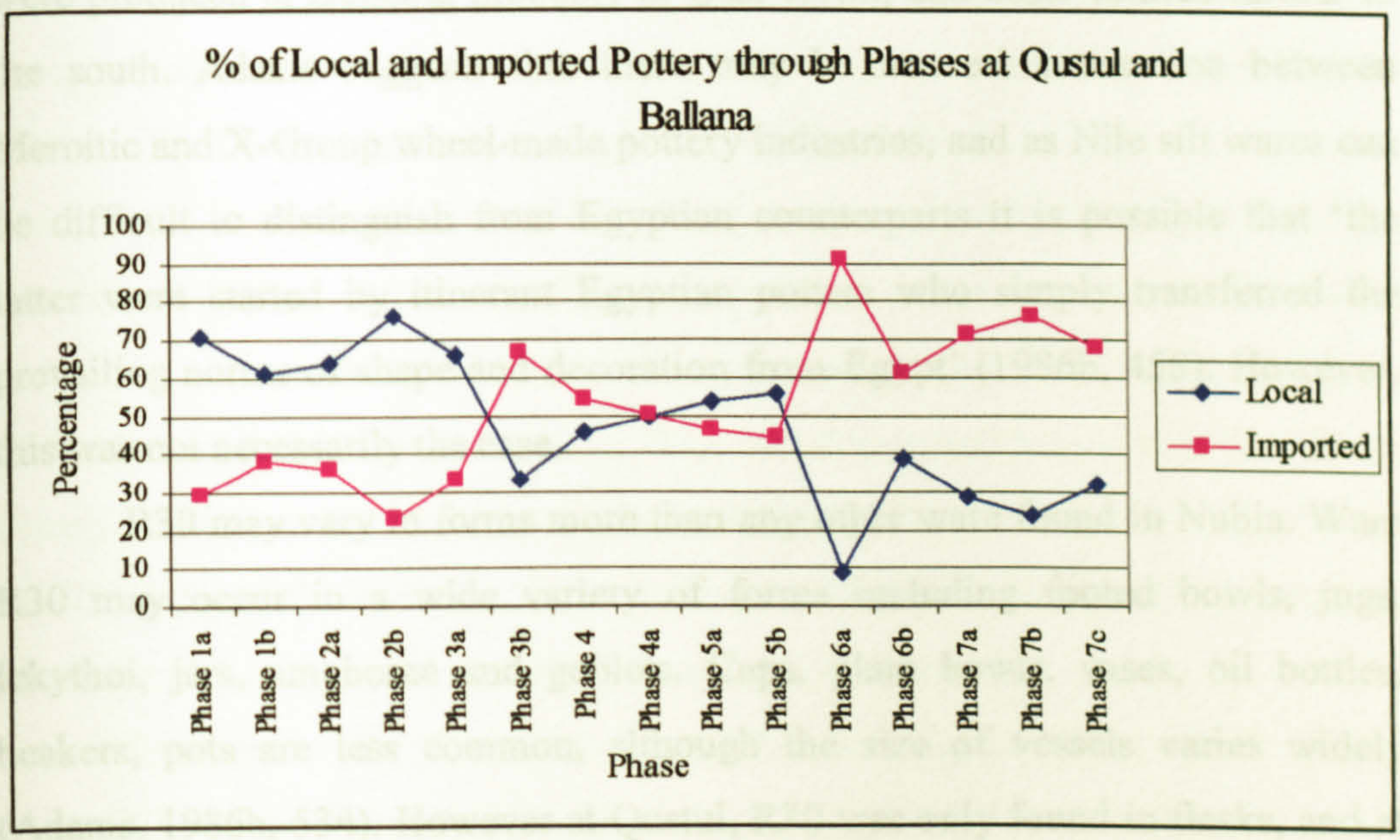


Figure 6.44

The graph above compares the proportions of local and imported pottery at Qustul and Ballana through time. Following Adams, local wares include R1, R2, R25, H1, U1, W29 and W30. Imported wares include R4, R30, R31, U2, U3. U4, U6, U16, U18, W24 and W28. The overall trend is that at Qustul, local pottery was more numerous, but at Ballana, imported pottery was more numerous. The only exception to this general rule occurs in phase 4a when the imported and local pottery occurred in almost exactly the same quantities, and in phases 5a and 5b when local pottery occurred in greater amounts than the

pottery that was imported. This is a major change in the origins of the most numerous type of material at the sites.

6.27. Pottery at Qustul and Ballana: Discussion.

Pottery finds from the early levels at Qasr Ibrim are mostly of type R25, a coarse, undecorated ware found in Nubia and Egypt, sometimes known as flowerpot types (Rose, 1992, 91). Only a few examples of R1 or W11 were found in the earlier levels at Ibrim. This is in contrast to the earliest phase at Qustul where 173 R1 vessels occurred, but none of R25 type. Wares R1 and R2 were produced at Debeira, probably at Qasr Ibrim, and other centres further to the south. Adams suggests that there may be no real connection between Meroitic and X-Group wheel-made pottery industries, and as Nile silt wares can be difficult to distinguish from Egyptian counterparts it is possible that 'the latter were started by itinerant Egyptian potters who simply transferred the prevailing norms of shape and decoration from Egypt' (1986b, 458). However, this was not necessarily the case.

R30 may vary in forms more than any other ware found in Nubia. Ware R30 may occur in a wide variety of forms including footed bowls, jugs, lekythoi, jars, amphorae and goblets. Cups, plain bowls, vases, oil bottles, beakers, pots are less common, although the size of vessels varies widely (Adams, 1986b, 534). However at Qustul, R30 was only found in flasks, and at Ballana it appears mostly in flagons, and in a few spouted cups. At Qustul and Ballana it is not a particularly variable ware in terms of vessel forms. Ware R31 (termed 'Graeco-Roman flaky pink ware') often occurs in lekythoi, bottles, and jugs and is an uncommon pink/red ware of the early X-Group. Correspondingly, it is only found in small numbers at both Qustul (eight) and Ballana (12), but disappears after phase 6a at Ballana. At Qustul, R31 only occurs in flasks, but is found in a variety of vessel forms at Ballana including flasks, flagons, jugs, and spouted bowls. R4 is an Aswan Byzantine polished red ware, which is a common type, found widely in Egypt and Nubia. (Adams, 1986b, 536-543).

However, this ware was not found at Qustul and only occurs seven times at Ballana.

Goblets, jars, jugs, lamps, lekythoi and bottles are the most common forms of R25, and are mostly small to medium sized vessels. These forms are often copies of bronze prototypes, perhaps because pottery was a cheaper medium. This is also true of some R1 vessels, and this is a point to which we will return in section 6.27 below.

H wares were the numerically smallest ware type found at either cemetery. Unlike the R wares and W wares it is a handmade ware, and believed to be of local production. It is generally thought to have been used for cooking and storage. At Qustul H1 mostly occurred in bowl forms, and at Ballana in jars. Its appearance in bowls at Qustul is a less common manifestation of the ware, as it is usually found in jars or pots (Adams, 1986b, 418).

The U wares are utility vessels. U2 is an imported pink utility ware of the late X-Group and early Christian periods. Most U2 wares are ribbed amphorae and are more abundant than any other distributed ware in Nubia, probably due to the trade in wine. The amphorae sometimes exhibit painted Greek graffito on the shoulder (Adams, 1986b, 545). It is the case that 736 of the 785 U2 vessels from the cemeteries were found at Ballana, and therefore U2 became more common at the later site as would be expected.

Like ware U2, U3 is an imported squat amphora with Greek graffiti painted in red on the shoulders. This ware type is found exclusively during the X-Group period in both houses and graves. On basis of the Greek inscriptions, Roberts suggests a date of 450-550AD (in Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, 401-402), whilst Kirwan suggested a mid fifth century to late sixth century date (Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, 401). Having found U3 wares in every X-Group level at Qasr Ibrim, Adams gives a probable date of 400-600AD (Adams, 1986b, 579). The disappearance of U3 wares corresponds with that of R1 and R2, and consequently 650AD is taken as the terminal point of X-Group pottery (Adams, 1986b, 604). Only 19 U3 vessels (out of 121 utility wares) were found at Qustul, whilst 460 were found at Ballana. Using Török's chronology (1987a, 154), the first finds of U3 were during phase 1b at Qustul, c. 380-390AD. The first phase

of burial at Ballana occurs c420-430AD, and in this phase 119 U3 vessels were found. The introduction of U3 in small numbers at Qustul, and the increase in U3 finds from c420-430AD at Ballana suggests a start date that is likely to be around that proposed by Adams. U3 is a widely distributed ware type which has been found throughout Egypt, at Meroe, along the shores of the Mediterranean and at Axum (Adams, 1986b, 579).

Ware U4 was mainly discovered in Lower Nubia in domestic and tavern refuse, and occasionally, in X-Group graves. Only one instance of U4 was found at Qustul, but 125 U4 vessels were found at Ballana. This pattern corresponds with the rare occurrence of the amphorae in Meroitic and early X-Group contexts, and their abundant appearance in late X-Group and early Christian contexts. All of the U4 vessels are amphorae. The vessels are found from the 1st to the 2nd Cataract and all over Upper and Middle Egypt. Whilst the centres of manufacture of U4 are unknown, these imported specimens are thought to have come from Palestine and Istanbul (Adams, 1986b, 568).

All of the Ballas wares are very rare in Nubia (but as mentioned above most U16 finds in Nubia are from Qustul and Ballana), but those finds that are known, are often associated with early X-Group wares such as R25, R1 and W11 (Adams, 1986b, 575). Although there are an abundance of R1 wares at Qustul and Ballana, R25 is relatively infrequent, and there were no W11 finds. Therefore this pattern of association does not occur at the cemeteries.

U18 is the only pottery from the cemeteries that was definitely not made in Egypt or Nubia. It has a very wide distribution throughout the Roman Empire, including Germany, Spain, the Athenian agora, Cyprus and England. Its place of manufacture is unknown but a centre in Sardis, Asia Minor has been suggested. The appearance of U18 ware has a very characteristic appearance, with its thin walls and large amounts of ground mica. The amphorae are very uncommon in Nubia, and it is dissimilar to any other Egyptian or Nubian ware (Adams, 1986b, 581-582).

W29 (and W11, not found at Qustul and Ballana) date to the late X-Group period and only account for 2% of the total ceramic corpus in Lower Nubia at this period (Adams, 1986b, 458). W29 (X-Group ordinary white ware)

vessels are usually small and are white-slipped counterparts of the smaller R1 vessels with the same decoration. W29 is therefore a very unusual ware type, being rare in the early X-Group period, but even rarer in the later X-Group period. Adams states that 'known examples in this style are chiefly from Ballana and Qustul royal tombs; they have not been found in other X-Group sites' (Adams, 1986b, 472), although even its occurrence there is in small numbers. There were no examples of W29 found at Qustul, and only 35 found at Ballana. Furthermore, the decorative schemes that are most frequently found in X-Group wares (the blob and festoon patterns), are not observed in this ware. Instead, stripes and friezes are more common. The place of manufacture of W29 vessels is unknown, but they were not manufactured at Debeira. The earliest specimens of W29 were found in Meroitic contexts, and therefore precede the X-Group red wares, although W29 is a counterpart to R25 and R1, occurring in some of the same forms. At Ballana W29 mostly occurred in cups (21), but flasks (10), chalices (three) and a single bowl also occurred. The chalices are the only vessels of this type at either cemetery. Although none of the graves at Qustul contained W29 vessels, vessels with a similar form (flasks and cups) as those of W29 type (see graph 6.42 above concerning other W ware types), but of a different ware type, may have served a similar function. Similarly, R1 and R25 cups and bowls at Qustul may have served a similar function as W29 cups and bowls at Ballana

6.28. Pottery and Identity.

Pottery was the most ubiquitous artefact type at both Qustul and Ballana. Yet whilst pottery is a very numerous class of artefact at the sites, this over-arching term covers a wide variety of vessel forms, wares, colours and decoration. The colours and decoration on artefacts will be the subject of study in the following chapter. It would seem that the ware types were consistently used to produce the same vessel forms. R wares from are mostly cups, U wares are mostly amphorae and W wares are also mostly cups. This pattern in the most numerous type of vessel forms occurs at both Qustul and Ballana for each of

these wares. H wares however, are the exception. At Qustul most H wares were bowls, and at Ballana most H wares were jars, but the sample size is very small. When H ware bowls from both sites, and H ware jars from both sites were added together, there are 21 bowls and 26 jars in total. In the case of the R, W and U wares there is a correspondence between ware type and vessel form suggesting that the ware types may have largely become commensurate with particular vessel forms to the people that used them. This correspondence may appear to be the result of the typological scheme that has been used. A correspondence should be expected between ware type and vessel type if part of the classificatory system used to develop a typology was shape. However, Adams' typology was devised on the basis of technology, fabric and decoration. Shape was not used as one of the explicit criteria (Rose, 1992, 181). This perhaps overstates the case, as although Adams did not use specific criteria of shape (such as everted rims or pedestal base) as typological markers, he did broadly identify vessel types. For example, when discussing ware R2 Adams identified the forms as cups, bowls and less commonly as footed bowls, with goblets, vases, pots, bottles and jars also appearing in that ware (Adams, 1986b, 470).

Although there are a number of ware types and forms found at the cemeteries, certain pottery types seem to be particularly prevalent at the sites. Ware W29 in particular (in the form of bowls, chalices, cups and flasks – see figure 43) is mostly known from Ballana (Adams, 1986b, 472). It can therefore be suggested that this pottery type was of restricted use in Lower Nubia in general. The fact that the pottery is almost wholly known from Ballana means that it was a particular sub-type in the pottery repertoire that was tied to the rites enacted at the sites. Therefore ware W29 is particularly tied to Ballana, not only in space and time, but due to its involvement in the rituals enacted there. W29 is an appropriate, perhaps even necessary, aspect of the Ballana funerals. If this was the case, the individuals buried during phases 4, 4a, 6b and 7c whose graves did not contain W29 may have been missing a significant aspect of the material culture of death at Ballana.

The pottery in the Qustul and Ballana graves was always in the form of vessels. This may seem like a rather self-evident point. Yet clay that is worked

is, by definition, a plastic substance that could be shaped and fired in an infinite number of ways (see for example the sculpted pottery altarpiece from an Igbo village in Willet, 1993, 93 and the sculptures from Mali and Nok Garlake, 2002, 97-112). At Qustul and Ballana clay was not used to produce figurines, amulets or beads. Clay was an appropriate material for vessels only. Some vessel forms, in particular in ware R25 mimic bronze vessel forms (Adams, 1986b, 467). This is especially interesting because of the number of ethnographic parallels in Africa which suggest a gendered division of labour in the manufacture of pottery and metalwork. In Sudanic Africa and the Highlands of Cameroon potters tend to be women, and smelters, men. This is not just a gendered division of labour – the potter and smelter are often married and are therefore tied together in a socially sanctioned and recognised relationship (Herbert, 1993, 203; see also Haaland, 1985, 54). Although taboos may surround the presence and involvement of the opposite sex in all or part of the manufacturing process, the potential influence that they may have on each other's work can be suggested. If some R25 vessels are mimicking bronze vessels is this because they are produced in (largely) the same location, by the same people, or by people who have a relationship with each other. A gendered division of labour along the lines of the ethnographic evidence cited above can be proposed, but other social arrangements may also be represented such as endogamous or exogenous lines of production. Indeed as Herbert states, although the potters equal females and smiths equal men seems to be standard picture in Africa, there are just as many examples of the work of pottery production being performed by men, or being shared by men and women (Herbert, 1993, 203). It is equally possible that the metal vessels were mimicked in pottery as pottery was a cheaper, more readily available material.

It is not unusual for archaeologists to associate peoples with pottery and with places (as we have seen in chapter four). Pottery is the most prolifically occurring artefact type at both Qustul and Ballana. It was undoubtedly a type of material culture that was encountered on a daily basis, and in both domestic and funerary contexts. As such, it was a material that surrounded people all of the time. As the pottery only occurred as vessels, it was pottery that stored and

served food and drink, and was thereby bound up with the social acts of cooking, eating and drinking, but also with the cultural norms surrounding food production, service and consumption.

As a commonly used and seen artefact pottery was crucial to the creation of group identity. This was based on the visual appearance of pottery in particular shapes, of particular wares, holding particular products and perhaps used for particular acts such as drinking milk or storing oil. The fact that pottery was used in activities surrounding foodstuffs that would be prepared and consumed on a daily basis reinforced the link between this ubiquitous artefact class and group identity.

6. 29. Conclusion.

This chapter has been concerned with the materials from which the artefacts were constructed from at the cemeteries. As there are so many different materials at the site, it has only been possible to investigate two types – metals and pottery – in any detail. Anthropological evidence has been used to suggest a range of ways in which manufacture may be practically conducted, and the social and ritual aspects that may be associated with manufacture and technology. The main point in this chapter was to argue that the technological aspects of the material culture from Qustul and Ballana has been under-researched as there is an underlying assumption that the material was acquired from outside the group. Whilst this may be the case for some of the material, and it is undoubtedly the case for some of the pottery, we need not assume that this was the case for all of the artefacts. I have also argued that even if we were to accept that all of the material culture was acquired from outside the group, the manner in which it was re-made as X-Group material culture has also been under-researched. I have attempted to suggest certain ways in which value and meaning could be created according to whether artefacts were indigenously produced or acquired from elsewhere, but a full investigation of such a complex subject is beyond the scope of this research.

Pottery and metalwork are the two material types that occurred most frequently at both sites, and are therefore materials that were frequently encountered in the preparations and enactment of the funerary rituals. They were the materials that, by virtue of their pervasive presence, created the backdrop of X-Group material culture. This was something to be visually apprehended, but as we have seen, the pottery artefact and many of the bronze artefacts were vessels for making, storing and serving food, the consumption of which introduces a relationship with the other senses. This is a point to which we will return in chapter eight. At this point it is enough to stress the visual importance of these materials, as in the next chapter other visual factors - the colour and pattern in artefacts – will be analysed in an exploration of aesthetics and identity at Qustul and Ballana.

Chapter Seven

Artefacts and Aesthetics.

'We have, somehow, to retain the capacity of the aesthetic approach to illuminate the specific objective characteristics of the art object as an object, rather than as a vehicle for social and symbolic messages, without succumbing to the fascination which all well made art objects exert on the mind attuned to their aesthetic properties' (Gell, 1992, 43).

7.1. Introduction.

The previous two chapters have been concerned with the spatial layout of the tombs, the placing of bodies within space and the use of various materials to construct the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana. Effectively, the spatial and material aspects of the burials have been analyzed and discussed. This chapter moves on to discuss the artefactual remains from the sites from an aesthetic perspective: a final level of analysis which addresses the nature of subjective experience. In examining the nature of aesthetics and aesthetic experience it is necessary to consider the social and psychological matrix within which artefacts and people exist. In the previous chapter I touched on the concept of primary and secondary qualities, and these terms will be elaborated upon as important classifications when debating the aesthetic, and explore the operation of aesthetic objects as psychologically powerful entities. This chapter explores what an archaeology of aesthetics might encompass, or aspire to achieve. More specifically, the colours, decoration methods and decoration designs of the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana will be examined. These facets will be discussed through three separate (but related) themes; the adornment of artefacts in space, the adornment of human bodies, and the adornment of animal bodies. This investigation is conducted on a tomb by tomb and body by body basis in an attempt to identify similarities and differences on a small scale.

7.2. Aesthetics or Art?

Within archaeological circles, a consideration of art and the artistic qualities of artefacts has been a largely neglected subject over the last few decades. There has been a strong art-historical element to the research of European culture historians, and this position has been bound up with the development of Classical history and Classical archaeology. Within Egyptology, art history has, to a lesser extent remained an aspect of studies on funerary and religious matters (see for example Davis, 1989). This decline can be linked to the general development of the discipline. Culture-history was concerned with identifying particular artefact types or designs with specific cultural groups (for example, the identification of certain brooch types with the Angles, Saxons or Jutes), and explained the dissemination of style by invasion, migration or acculturation. As the methodological and theoretical limitations of such an approach became clear, and new scientific techniques were developed, archaeologists increasingly turned towards investigating 'artistic' objects either from the perspectives of craft manufacture, function and the development of artisanal techniques, or as objects that reflected aspects of social structure. Artefacts of especially interesting, unusual or rare manufacture, design or provenance, were particularly viewed as artefacts reflecting social hierarchy under the overarching term 'social status'. Indeed Török propounds this position with regard to the types of artefacts found at Qustul and Ballana, which he suggests are directly readable status indicators (1987a, 79). From this structural-functionalist perspective artefacts functioned to uphold status divisions, and 'art' objects were the provision of those of higher status, with utilitarian artefacts widely available to the undifferentiated masses. Very often the investigation of the relationship between artefacts and social structure was based upon finds from cemeteries, where the combination of unusual artefacts with different types of mortuary structure, and different treatments of the body could also be mobilised to reinforce the explanation of status differentiation (see chapter three). One of the problems with the art historical approach was its explicit subjectivity: an aspect of research that was unpopular with the New

archaeologists and processualists. Art is not an easily quantifiable or measurable thing, although Robins has successfully integrated a quantifiable approach to Egyptian art (1994). With the development of post-processualism has come an increased diversification in approaches to artefacts and sites. Borrowing from disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology and critical theory, the concepts of space and time, being-in-the-world and the nature of subjective experience have become legitimate matters of concern for the archaeologist (see chapter four and also Chesson, 2001; Gosden, 1994; Meskell, 1999; Overing and Passes, 2000; Tarlow, 1992 and 1999; Thomas, 1996; Tilley, 1994). This development in the discipline has allowed different questions to be asked of the data, and has permitted a more holistic treatment of the past.

Gell has convincingly argued, drawing upon the analogy of the anthropological study of religion, that the only possible way forward for a study of art, is for the researcher to embrace a position of 'methodological atheism' (Gell, 1992, 41). In advancing this proposition, Gell suggests that the analyst must abandon (or disregard) their own concepts of aesthetic judgement (in a similar way that when studying the anthropology or archaeology of religion, one's own religious beliefs or lack of them is irrelevant for the study in hand), in order to exercise a kind of methodological philistinism. For Gell, '[i]n so far as modern souls possess a religion, that religion is the religion of art, the religion whose shrines consist of theatres, libraries, and art galleries, whose priests and bishops are painters and poets, whose theologians are critics, and whose dogma is the dogma of universal aestheticism' (ibid, 41-42). It is precisely this sense of reverence and awe with regard to art works which Gell argues is a damaging cultural attitude for the researcher to embrace. Instead, Gell proposes that the researcher must treat the objects in question with indifference to their aesthetic value. In fact, this indifference must be embraced both from the perspective of 'universal aestheticism', that is the canon with which the western researcher is most familiar, and indigenous value, that is the value placed on certain objects by the society in question (1992, 40-41). However, a rather different conception of the aesthetic has also been posited. It may be possible to use the term 'aesthetic' to encompass the ways in which the senses are socialized within a

particular culture. Such an approach is both historically and culturally contextual, but also advances an encompassing understanding of the aesthetic, which makes reference to the physical world (artefacts, bodies) or the natural world (geographical locations, animals) (Coote, 1992).

Gell's argument concerning the sacralization by academic researchers, of art objects from other cultures (whether living, for the anthropologist, or dead, for the archaeologist), finds resonance in the treatment of the Ballana and Qustul corpus. One of the inherent problems regarding the way in which Nubiologists have approached the material remains from Qustul and Ballana, is that they have only recognised a narrow class of artefacts as aesthetic objects. The objects that are given this honour tend to be those that are said to exhibit Classical or Kushitic form, such as, the candelabra and lamps in the form of a human head or dove, or the incense burners in the shape of a lion. Alternatively, the crowns are considered as objects of art due to the unusual nature of the objects, the materials from which they were made, and their incorporation of figurative motifs. The more simple objects, such as the bells, spears, pottery and so forth are generally considered as craft objects rather than art objects. These objects are quite ubiquitous, apparently simply constructed, and sparsely decorated with spots, splashes, lines or festoons. The distinction between art objects and craft objects has enshrined a false dichotomy, which privileges the three-dimensional and figural (the iconic) over the two-dimensional and the abstract (the aniconic). It is further argued that this is a preoccupation guided by an unrecognised deference to a kind of Western aesthetic art criticism, which has traditionally privileged naturalism, and imitative forms as art (see for example Murray and Murray, 1963; Rhodes, 1994 and Chapman, 2005). This has encouraged a division between 'high art', such as sculpture and painting and 'low art', such as weaving, pottery and basketry. From the point of view of an analysis of the aesthetic, this distinction is unhelpful. At Qustul and Ballana, this distinction has helped to continue to emphasise the importance and intricacy of the Classical and Kushitic artefacts over the indigenous products, whereas it should be recognised that these indigenous artefacts are crucial to the construction of an

aesthetic world. Therefore the analysis presented here considers every artefact as potentially culturally significant.

7.3. Artefacts as Agents.

An intrinsically important aspect of Gell's theory is that agency can inhere within objects. We are quite used to the discussion of individuals as agents (see for example the papers in Dobres and Robb 2000; Giddens, 1984; Gillespie 2001; Thomas, 2002), but the move towards considering objects as agents is a step further. There is however, a problem in this theory, in that it is quite obvious that objects do not share the same sort of intentionality as humans and therefore they cannot be considered to be active in the same way (see chapter four). Yet, any discussion about agency need not revolve solely around the intentionality of an agent. Although individual human agents may have a given intention in performing a particular act, or manufacturing a particular object, they have little control over whether or not the desired result of their intention is achieved. What might therefore be considered to be the most salient aspect of the action of any agent, is the effect that they 'cause', whether this was the intentional effect or not. This is because it is impossible to consider an agent as an agent prior to their acting as such, as the detection of agency rests upon the detection of alteration or change – the detection of effect(s). In this manner, the archaeological record is a record of effects rather than of intentions. Gell concedes that objects would perhaps be better defined as 'secondary agents', agents 'through which primary agents distribute their agency in the causal milieu, and thus render their agency effective (1998, 20). This observation, that the artefact may be considered as an agent, enables the analysis of the formal qualities of artefacts not simply in terms of artistic merit (a dubious element to define), but in terms of how formal qualities can affect social roles (Gosden, 2001a, 164). It is this understanding of the potential power of artefacts as secondary agents that enables the analysis presented here (for a more detailed quantitative analysis see appendices A, B and C). It is also a point to which we shall return in the following chapter.

7.4. Primary and Secondary Qualities.

Much of modern philosophy has moved away from the dualistic conception of the Primary and Secondary qualities of artefacts, as defined by John Locke (Clark, 1993, 6). However, a short discussion of these concepts and their continued relevance in archaeology is useful here, in order to clarify the meaning of the two terms. Primary qualities are defined as those things which are totally inseparable from an object, (or body) such as its number, shape, fabric or size. Without the integral primary quality, the artefact would cease to exist. For example, if it was possible to remove the 'globularity' from a globular pot, the pot would cease to be. The primary quality of material has been discussed in chapter six with regard to the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana. In contrast, secondary qualities are elements of the object which are 'nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us' (Locke 1975, II. viii. 10). The secondary qualities of an artefact or body might include its lustre, smell, sound, taste, colour or decorative scheme. The perception of the sensible qualities of an object is subjective, and hence this perception is, to some extent, constructed by social context, learning, language and so on, as will be explored in the examples that follow. Secondary qualities have tended to be the qualities of objects that have been overlooked by archaeologists, who have instead tended to favour a consideration of primary qualities. This is true when we consider the continued importance of typological schemes, which are usually based on the shape or fabric of artefacts, both of which are primary qualities. It is suggested that the secondary qualities of artefacts (as they are meaningful in the construction of subjective experience in the past), can be investigated as significant elements in themselves. It is argued that an analysis of secondary qualities, as subjectively perceived experiences, can be the basis of a contextual consideration of embodiment. It is further suggested that this analysis enables the exploration of an aesthetic identity at Ballana and Qustul, based upon the use of certain 'secondary' aesthetic qualities, and informs the investigation of how such an aesthetic identity is created, maintained, or changed. Such facets are

perhaps particularly salient in a non-literate society. Following Gell's admonition to 'illuminate the specific objective characteristics of the art object' (1992, 43), three specific characteristics of the artefacts from Qustul and Ballana will be investigated here: colour, decoration method and decoration design.

7.5. Colour (see appendix A).

The psychological perception of colour is subjective, and the perception of colours is not universal. Rays of light are themselves uncoloured, and the basis of colour perception is not a physical phenomenon in this sense. Reflectance is the basis of human colour vision, and a colour does not exist until the eye (and the brain) receives external input (Kaiser and Boynton, 1996, 33). Linguistic analysis has been used as a tool to examine differences in colour perception in different societies. Eskimos use seventeen words for white, as applied to different types of weather condition. It is also the case that certain societies do not 'see' certain colours, or only use a limited number of linguistic colour terms to describe them. In particular, some languages do not have separate terms for 'green' and 'blue' or 'yellow' and 'orange'. The Dani of Papua New Guinea perceive the entire colour spectrum, but only use two colour terms to describe them. One term denotes 'light - warm' and includes the colours yellow, red and white, and the other term means 'dark-cool' and includes the colours green, blue and black (Jones and Bradley, 1999, 112). However, comparisons of cross-cultural colour terminology seem to reveal certain consistencies. All languages have a designation for 'white' and 'black'. If another hue is recognised, it is 'red'. Next come the colours 'yellow' or 'green' and then both 'yellow' and 'green' together. 'Blue' would be the sixth colour named, and 'brown' the seventh. If distinguished, the colours grey, orange, pink, and purple follow in no particular order. This popular scheme concerning the development of colour classification and language is based upon the research of Berlin and Kay (1969), and which has been the source of some major criticisms (see for example Saunders, 1995; Wierzbicka, 1990, Chapman, 2002, 45-49). Moreover, the common western division of the spectrum into

seven distinctive colours based on Newton's experiments with a prism, is founded upon the traditionally perceived relationship between optical colour harmony and musical harmony (Lyons, 1995, 215), rather than a specific 'scientific' logic. It is clear that the number of colours perceived and named can vary significantly, and that this is indivisible from cultural context. For example, in ancient Egyptian language, there are four basic linguistic colour terms: black (*km*), white (*hd*), red (*dšr*), and green or green/blue (*w3d*) plus the textural term *s3b,* although a greater number of colours is visible in Egyptian tomb paintings which suggests that certain linguistic terms covered a wider range of colours than they seem to imply (Baines, 1985, 283). Wierzbicka has attempted to argue that the meaning of colour terms is framed by reference to locally specific referents, but that basic colour terms are rooted in universal experience, such as fire (red) and sun (yellow) (1990, 124-128). The perception of colour is also influenced in a number of other ways. Physiological factors can disturb colour vision, for example in colour blindness, leading to the 'misperception' of certain colours. As colour vision is based upon the frequency of light waves and reflection, colours may also be perceived differently when light conditions change at different times of day or periods of the year, or depending upon the surface texture of an object, as the texture alters the nature of reflection into the eye.

In attempting to define the nature of a given colour (and without recourse to the use of scientific methods of examining wavelength), a terminology has been developed in order to classify colours rather more clearly. Colours of the spectrum (which in common western terminology would include red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, indigo and blue-violet) are known as chromatic colours, whilst colours including brown, pink and magenta are non-chromatic. Black, grey and white are termed achromatic. Colours can be even more precisely defined. The 'hue' is the colour usually associated with the terms blue, yellow, red and so on. Saturation (which might also be termed chroma, or tone) refers to the relative purity of a given colour. If a pure, vivid green colour is mixed with different amounts of white, then paler, weaker greens are produced. Each green has the same hue, but a different level of saturation. Finally, light of

any combination of hue and saturation can have variable brightness (or value, or intensity) which is dependant upon the amount of light energy present. Brightness may vacillate between a barely perceptible appreciation of brightness, to a high degree of brightness that is dazzling, and verges on being physically painful (Kaiser and Boynton, 1996, 42). These classifications of hue, saturation and brightness are particularly interesting as in cross-cultural analysis, their perception appears to be unaltered by colour terminology (Gage, 1999, 1; Lyons, 1995, 213).

The physical properties of light waves and the physiological processes of colour perception are only a small part of the discussion about colour classification. Much recent research has focussed upon the linguistic progression of colour terminology, which was also an aspect of Berlin and Kay's original work (see for example, Berlin and Kay, 1969; MacLaury, 1991; Saunders, 1995). This line of enquiry is of little relevance in a discussion of the colours found at Qustul and Ballana, as it remains uncertain which language those people spoke (and if it was Meroitic, no colour terms have yet been identified from the language). More important then, is a discussion based upon contextual selection of colours in the tombs at Qustul and Ballana, and by implication, the control of the colour resource. However, it must be noted that only certain materials or objects allow a choice of colour – for example, gold is always gold coloured.

7.6. Discussion of Colour at Qustul, Phases 1a-3a.

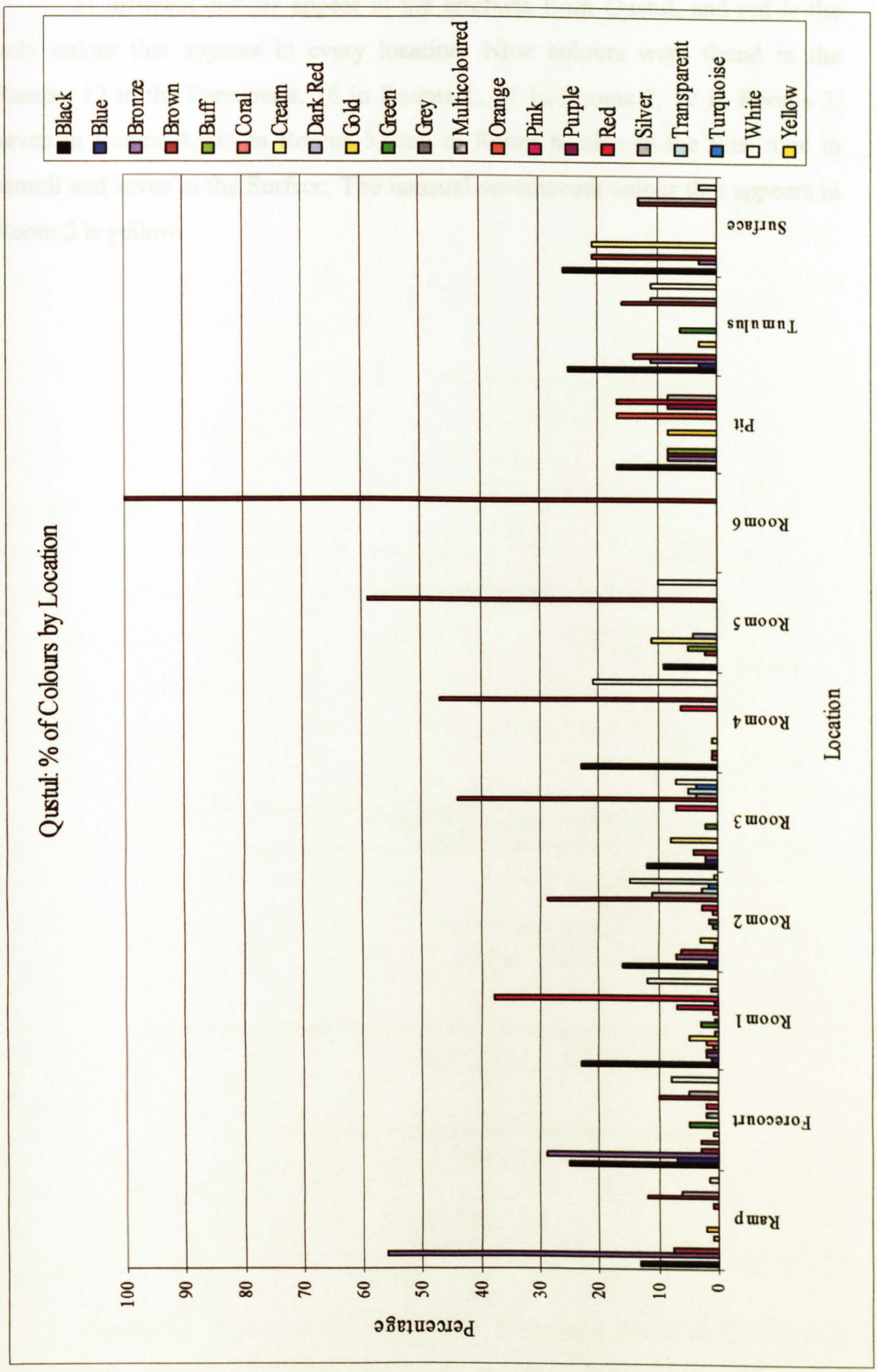

Qustul: % of Colours by Location
Black
Blue
Bronze
Brown
Buff
Coral
Cream
Dark Red
Gold
Green
Grey
Multicoloured
Orange
Pink
Purple
Red
Silver
Transparent
Turquoise
White
Yellow
Percentage
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Ramp
Forecourt
Room 1
Room 2
Room 3
Room 4
Room 5
Room 6
Pit
Tumulus
Surface
Location

Figure 7.1

21 different colours appear in the artefacts from Qustul, and red is the only colour that appears in every location. Nine colours were found in the Ramps, 12 in the Forecourts, 16 in Rooms 1, 17 in Rooms 2, 12 in Rooms 3, seven in Rooms 4, six in Rooms 5, one in Room 6, nine in the Pits, nine in tumuli and seven at the Surface. The unusual seventeenth colour that appears in Room 2 is yellow.

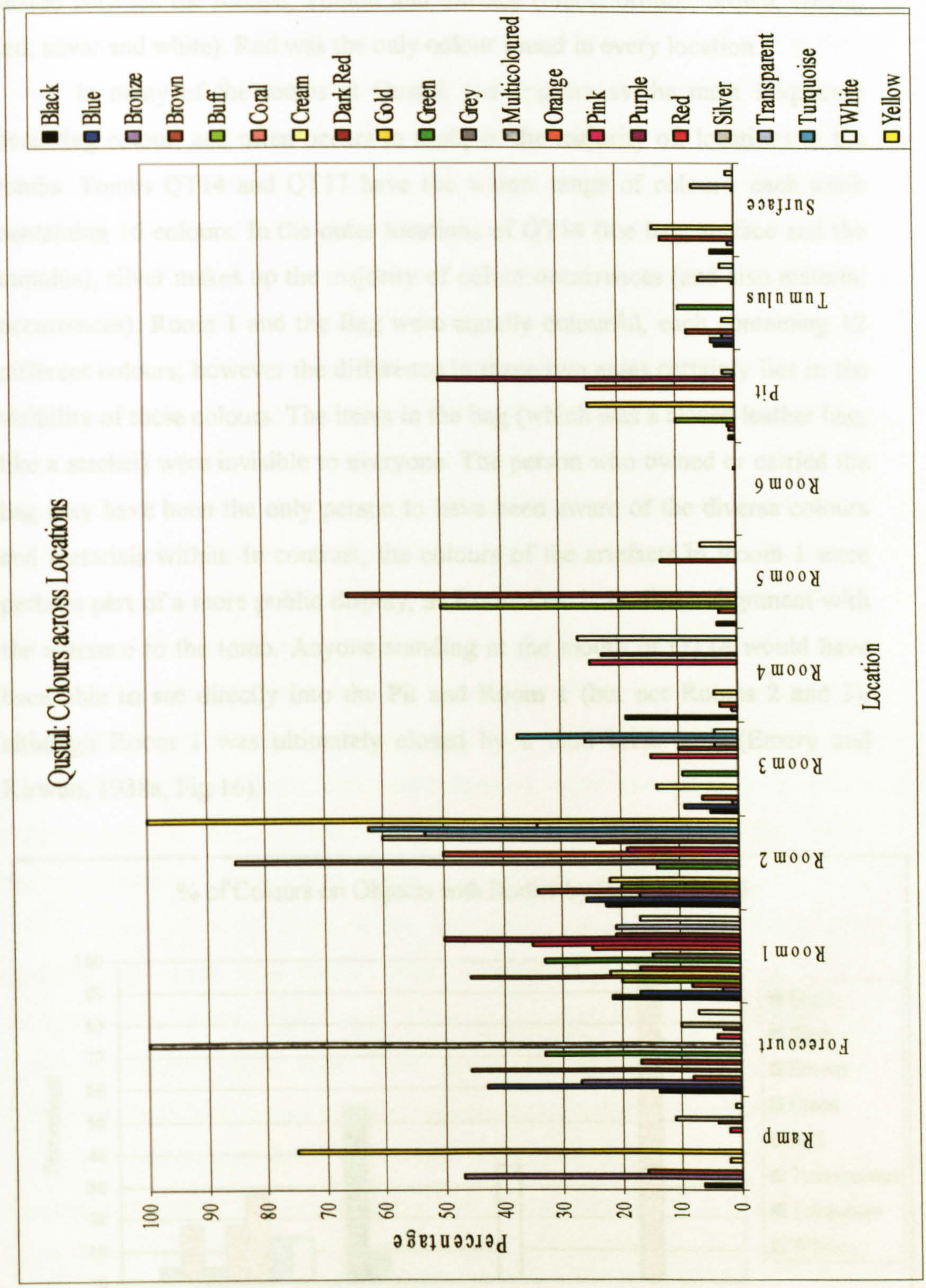


Figure 7.2

Figure 7.2 illustrates the percentage of colours found at Qustul as a percentage across the different locations in the tombs. Seven basic colours are

shared between the Ramps, Tumuli and Surface (black, bronze, brown, cream, red, silver and white). Red was the only colour found in every location.

In many of the tombs at Qustul, red appears as the most frequently occurring colour, and often occurs in each, or the majority of, locations in the tombs. Tombs QT14 and QT17 have the widest range of colours, each tomb containing 16 colours. In the outer locations of QT14 (the bag, surface and the tumulus), silver makes up the majority of colour occurrences (and also material occurrences). Room 1 and the Bag were equally colourful, each containing 12 different colours; however the difference in these two areas certainly lies in the visibility of these colours. The items in the bag (which was a closed leather bag, like a satchel) were invisible to everyone. The person who owned or carried the bag may have been the only person to have been aware of the diverse colours and materials within. In contrast, the colours of the artefacts in Room 1 were perhaps part of a more public display, as Room One is in direct alignment with the entrance to the tomb. Anyone standing at the mouth of QT14 would have been able to see directly into the Pit and Room 1 (but not Rooms 2 and 3), although Room 1 was ultimately closed by a mud brick wall (Emery and Kirwan, 1938a, Fig 16).

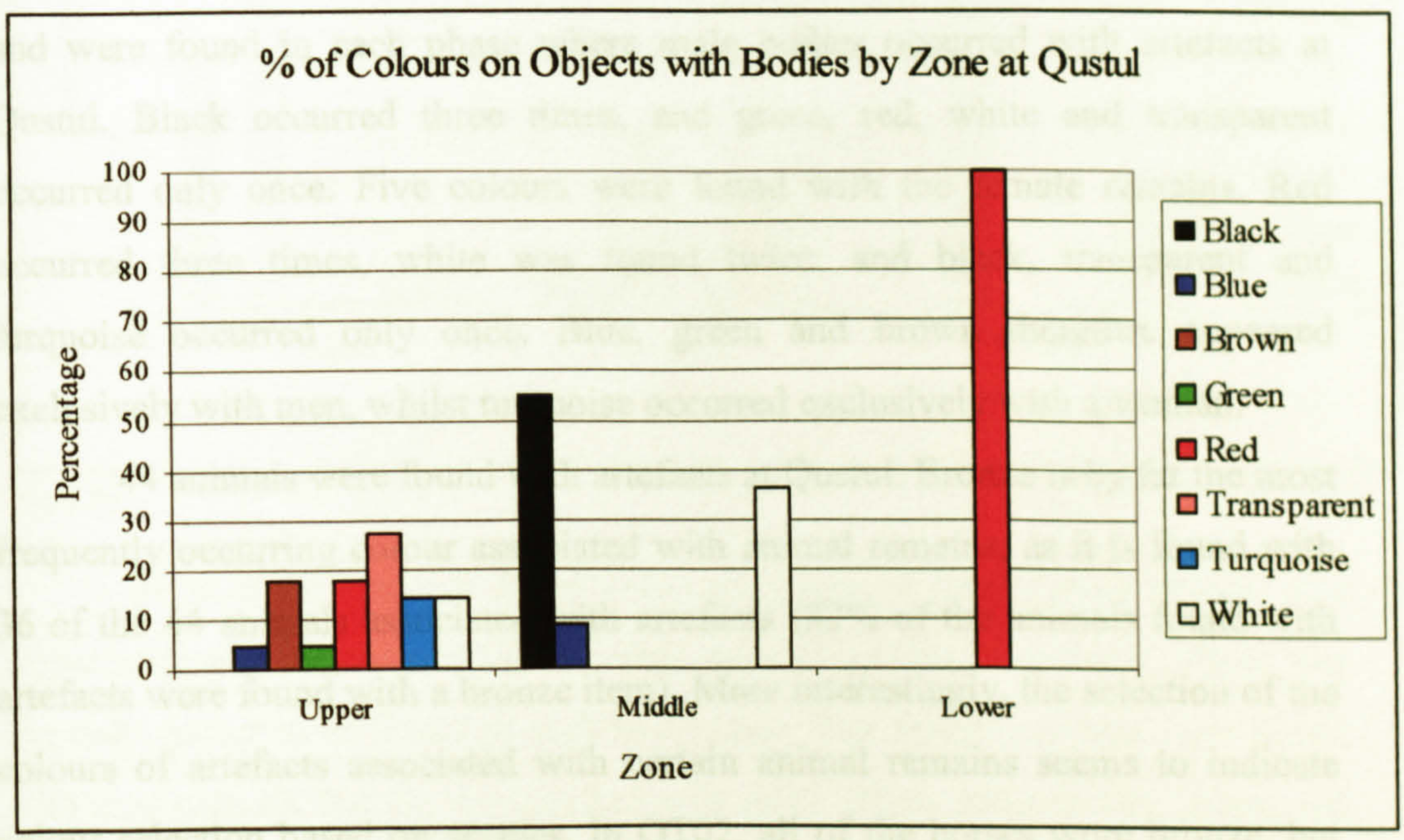


Figure 7.3

The human remains and animal remains have been interrogated separately in order to be able to analyse specifically the similarities and differences between the adornment of animals and humans. Eight colours were found in the objects associated with humans at Qustul. Although there were, in total, 36 artefacts associated with 13 bodies a number of the artefacts were discovered in a location with the body that is unknown. An artefact may also contain more than one colour. Therefore, this graph deals with the 34 colours that were found in artefacts in a known location in/on/near a body.

Theoretical perspectives concerning clothing and appearance were outlined in section 4.7 of chapter four. There is a significant preponderance for artefacts (and therefore colours) to occur in the upper zone. 22 out of 34 occurrences of colour were in the upper zone. Three colours were found in the middle zone, and there was only a single occurrence of a colour in the lower zone. None of the colours appears in each bodily location. Only a small number of humans (15) from Qustul were buried with artefacts. 11 of the bodies were classified as males and four as females. Female remains only occur in phases 1b, 2a and 2b. In both the first phase and final phase at Qustul only male remains were found with artefacts. The male remains were associated with seven different colours. Blue and brown occurred most frequently (four times each), and were found in each phase where male bodies occurred with artefacts at Qustul. Black occurred three times, and green, red, white and transparent occurred only once. Five colours were found with the female remains. Red occurred three times, white was found twice, and black, transparent and turquoise occurred only once. Blue, green and brown therefore appeared exclusively with men, whilst turquoise occurred exclusively with a woman.

44 animals were found with artefacts at Qustul. Bronze is by far the most frequently occurring colour associated with animal remains, as it is found with 36 of the 44 animals associated with artefacts (82% of the animals found with artefacts were found with a bronze item). More interestingly, the selection of the colours of artefacts associated with certain animal remains seems to indicate colour selection based on species. In QT02, all of the horses wore bronze, but Horse B also wore silver and gold, Horse E wore silver and Horse F wore gold.

In QT03 all of the animals in the ramp wore bronze except Horse H which just wore silver. Silver also occurred with Horse K in the ramp. In QT17 all of the animals in the ramp wore bronze, but Horse J also wore silver, and one of the Horses in the forecourt (Horse N) also wore silver. In the ramp of QT31 all of the animals wore bronze, but Camel C also wears silver. In the forecourt of the same tomb, Camel H and Horse G also wore silver. In QT36, in the ramp, the two camels wear bronze, and Horse C wears silver. Overwhelmingly, silver artefacts found in the ramps or forecourts of the tombs at Qustul are associated with horses. This pattern only changes in a single tomb, QT31, where both a horse and a camel in the forecourt wore silver, and a camel in the ramp also wore silver. This represents a diversification in the pattern of dressing horses in silver – the horse is still included in this tradition, but the trend is widened in order to include camels too.

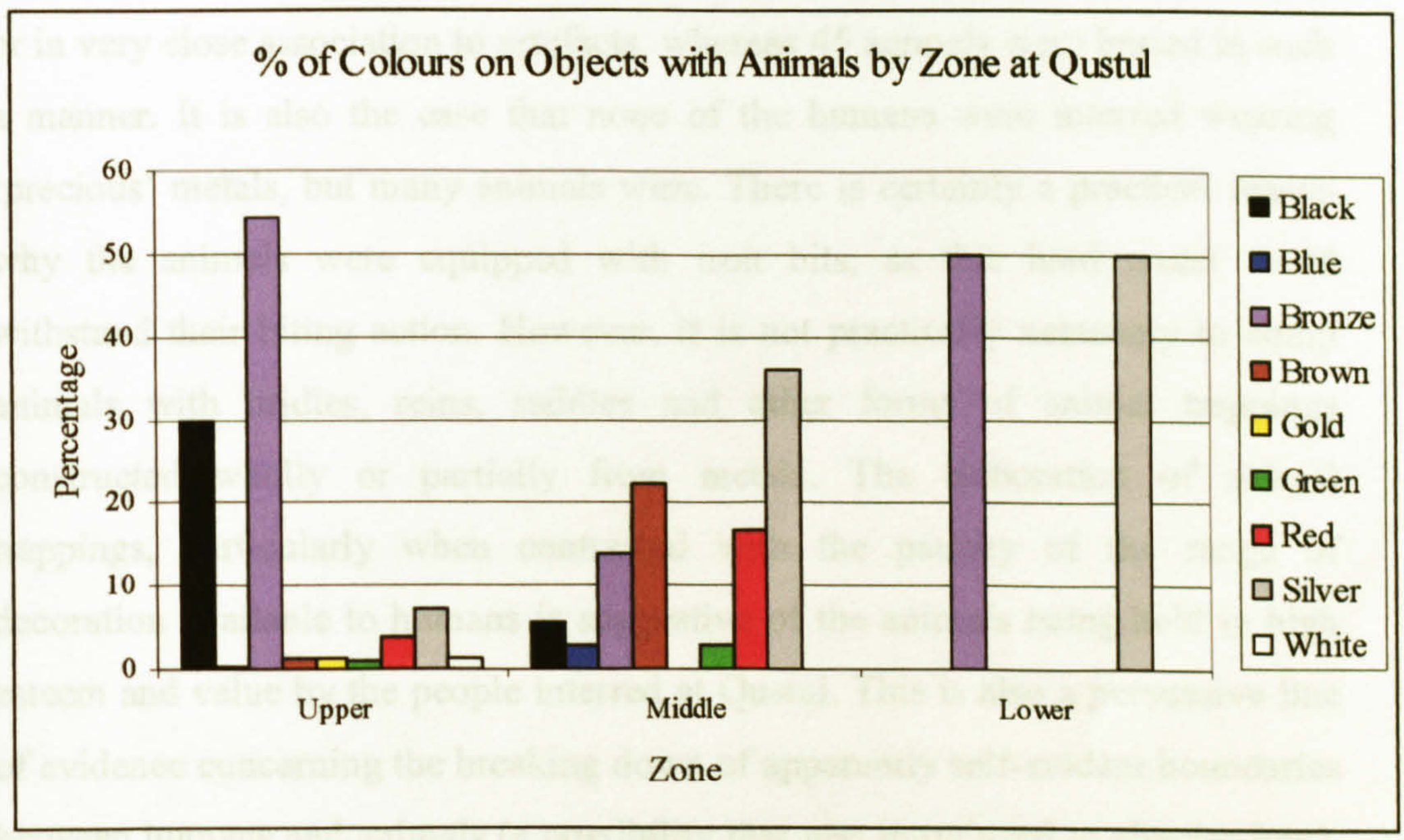


Figure 7.4

Most of the artefacts found with the animals at Qustul were bronze. The upper zone was the most colourful, containing nine different colours. Silver was the only colour to be found in each body zone. The animal remains were found with nine colours, but the humans had only eight. Black, blue, brown, green, red and white were colours that were shared by the humans and animals. Bronze,

gold and silver were only found with the animal remains, and as these are colours that also relate to materials, it is clear that the humans wore metal objects, but none of the humans did at Qustul.

Sometimes at Qustul, certain colours were only found in a tomb in exclusive association with animal remains. Due to the fact that animal remains were almost always located in the ramp or forecourt of the tombs, this also means that certain colours were not only found exclusively with animals, they sometimes occurred exclusively in those particular locations in the tombs. In QT02 gold was only found with an animal, and only occurred in the ramp. In QT24, brown and gold only occur in the ramp, with animals. In QT25, blue, bronze and green only occur in the forecourt, with an animal, and in QT31, silver only occurs in the ramp, with an animal.

It is certainly interesting to note general discrepancies between human and animal remains at Qustul. At Qustul, only 15 humans were buried wearing, or in very close association to artefacts, whereas 45 animals were buried in such a manner. It is also the case that none of the humans were interred wearing 'precious' metals, but many animals were. There is certainly a practical reason why the animals were equipped with iron bits, as this hard metal could withstand their biting action. However, it is not practically necessary to equip animals with bridles, reins, saddles and other forms of animal trappings constructed wholly or partially from metals. The elaboration of animal trappings, particularly when contrasted with the paucity of the range of decoration available to humans is suggestive of the animals being held in high esteem and value by the people interred at Qustul. This is also a persuasive line of evidence concerning the breaking down of apparently self-evident boundaries between humans and animals (a possibility that was introduced in chapter four). In one sense humans and animals are treated in the same manner as they are both included in the interments, and they may both be adorned. In another sense, the two are treated differently as animals are more likely to be adorned than humans, and they were often adorned with metals. There is also material and colour differentiation between species as discussed above. I would also argue that the animals can be considered as secondary agents in their own right.

Gosden discusses the social importance of pigs in certain areas of the Pacific, where their physical characteristics influence their value (Gosden, 2001a, 166). A similar observation has been made by Coote in his article concerning the esteem in which cattle exhibiting particular qualities are held by Nilotic peoples (Coote, 1992). Certain physical qualities of the animals at Qustul, in particular the horses, may have been lauded as especially beautiful or significant. This may in part relate to practical matters such as the size and physical fitness of the animal, but it may also (following Coote) concern the colour of the animal, the kink of the mane, or the pattern of markings on the hide. These qualities, now unfortunately lost to us, may have been instrumental in the selection of certain animals for certain jobs, and for their inclusion in the funerary rituals at Qustul.

7.7. Discussion of Colours at Ballana, Phase 3b-7c.

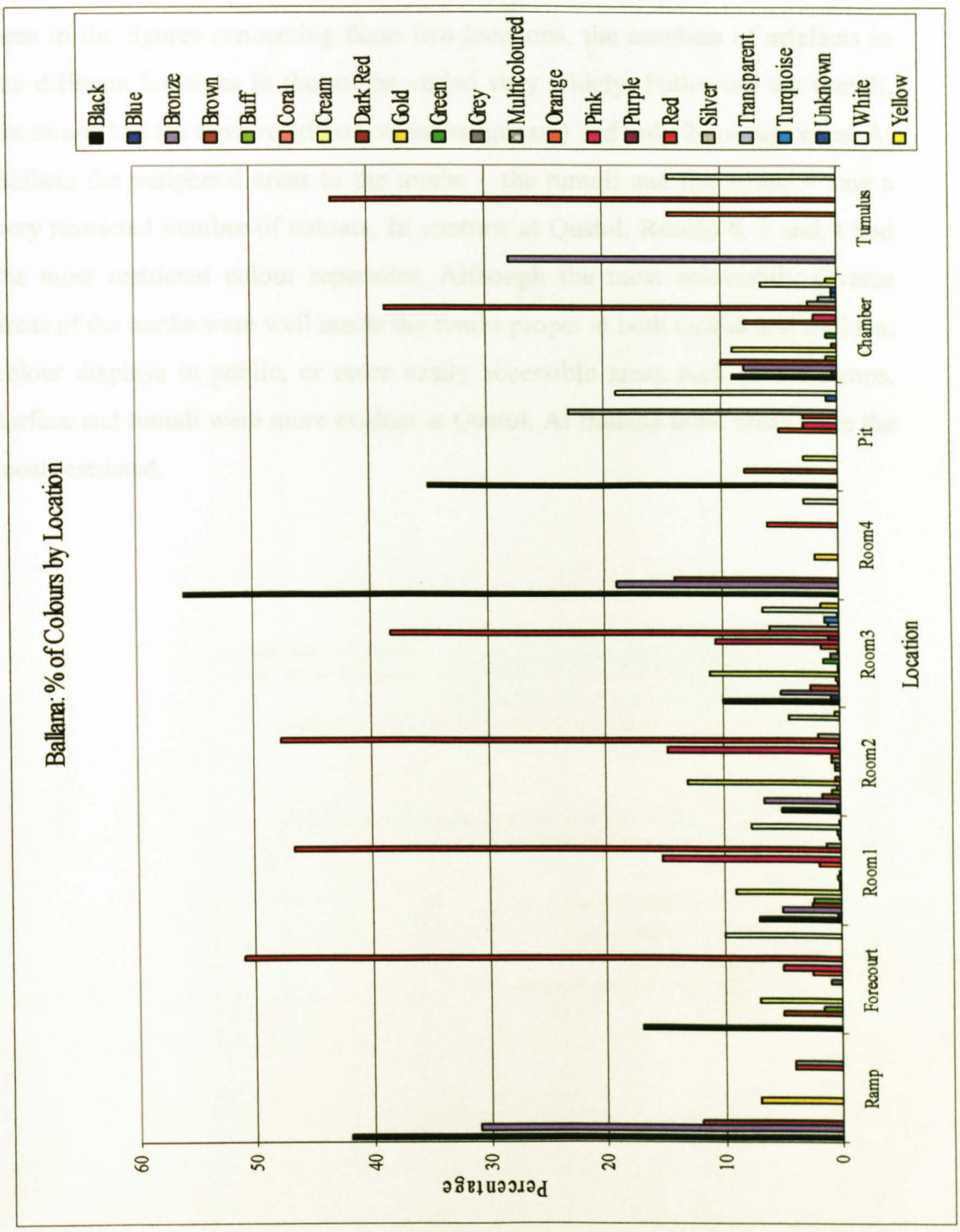


Figure 7.5

Red was the most frequently occurring colour in the Forecourts, Room 1, Room 2, Room 3, the Chambers and the Tumuli. Black occurred most frequently in the ramp, Room 4 and the Pits. The tumuli were the locations in which the fewest number of artefacts, and therefore the fewest number of

colours (four) occurred. The combined data for Room 3 demonstrated the highest number of colours: there were 1942 instances of 22 colours. As can be seen in the figures concerning these two locations, the numbers of artefacts in the different locations in the tombs varied very widely. Following the tumuli, the ramps had the most restricted colour range (six) and only 26 occurrences. At Ballana the peripheral areas to the tombs – the tumuli and the ramps – saw a very restricted number of colours. In contrast at Qustul, Rooms 6, 5 and 4 had the most restricted colour repertoire. Although the most colourfully diverse areas of the tombs were well inside the tombs proper at both Qustul and Ballana, colour displays in public, or more easily accessible areas such as the ramps, surface and tumuli were more evident at Qustul. At Ballana these areas were the most restricted.

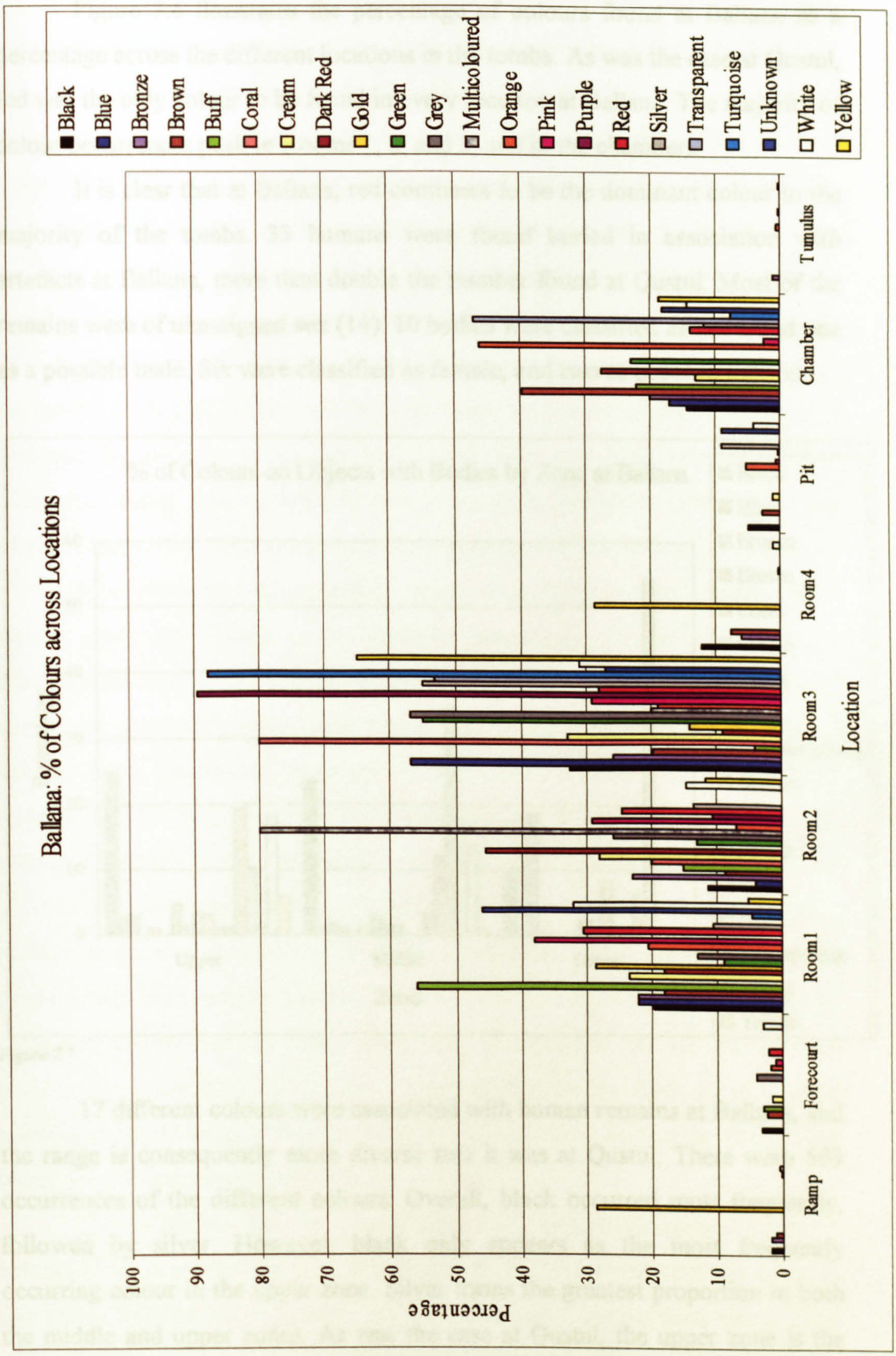

Ballana: % of Colours across Locations
Black
Blue
Bronze
Brown
Buff
Coral
Cream
Dark Red
Gold
Green
Grey
Multicoloured
Orange
Pink
Purple
Red
Silver
Transparent
Turquoise
Unknown
White
Yellow
Percentage
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Ramp
Forecourt
Room1
Room2
Room3
Room4
Pit
Chamber
Tumulus
Location

Figure 7.6

Figure 7.6 illustrates the percentage of colours found at Ballana as a percentage across the different locations in the tombs. As was the case at Qustul, red was the only colour to be found in every location at Ballana. The majority of colour occurrences peak in Rooms 1, 2, and 3, and in the chambers.

It is clear that at Ballana, red continues to be the dominant colour in the majority of the tombs. 33 humans were found buried in association with artefacts at Ballana, more than double the number found at Qustul. Most of the remains were of unassigned sex (14). 10 bodies were classified as male, and one as a possible male. Six were classified as female, and two as possible females.

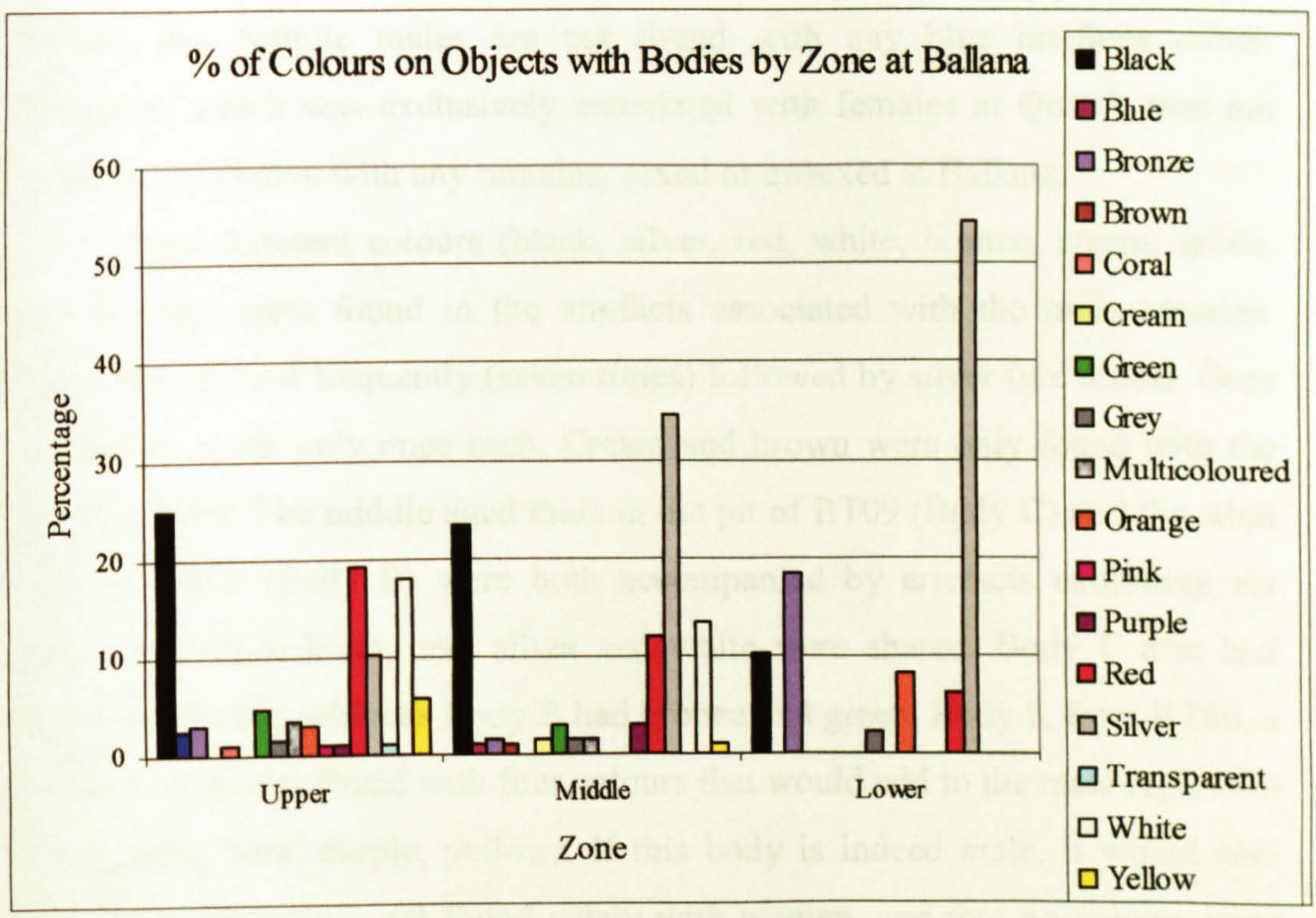


Figure 7.7

17 different colours were associated with human remains at Ballana, and the range is consequently more diverse that it was at Qustul. There were 563 occurrences of the different colours. Overall, black occurred most frequently, followed by silver. However, black only appears as the most frequently occurring colour in the upper zone. Silver forms the greatest proportion in both the middle and upper zones. As was the case at Qustul, the upper zone is the most colourfully diverse, having 15 different colours.

The female remains from Ballana appear to have been associated with a relatively restricted colour repertoire. Eight colours (bronze, silver, black, green, grey, red, white, yellow) were found with the females, and bronze appeared most frequently, occurring with three of the six female burials. Body H from Room 1 of BT114 has the most diverse colour set, consisting of green, red, silver and yellow. When the possible female remains are included in this analysis, no further colours are added to those already associated with definite females. Yellow was found exclusively with the females. As was the case at Qustul, the female remains are not associated with brown artefacts with which the males were associated with at both sites, or blue artefacts. However, at Ballana, the definite males are not found with any blue artefacts either. Turquoise, which was exclusively associated with females at Qustul, was not found in association with any remains, sexed or unsexed at Ballana.

Nine different colours (black, silver, red, white, bronze, cream, green, brown, grey) were found in the artefacts associated with the male remains. Black occurs most frequently (seven times) followed by silver (six times). Grey and brown occur only once each. Cream and brown were only found with the definite males. The middle aged male in the pit of BT09 (Body C) and the adult male in BT95 (Body B) were both accompanied by artefacts exhibiting six colours of which black, red, silver and white were shared. Body C also had brown and cream, whereas Body B had bronze and green. Body K from BT80, a possible male, was found with four colours that would add to the male repertoire (transparent, blue, purple, yellow). If this body is indeed male, it would also mean that yellow was not found solely with women, and that no colours were exclusively found with the females. Alternatively, on the basis of the colour pattern, we could suggest that the body is more likely to be female. Brown and cream were found exclusively with the males.

The 14 bodies that were unassigned a sex exhibit the greatest array of colours in the artefacts that were found with them. 19 different colours occur in this group (one of which is classified as unknown). Orange, blue, transparent, pink, dark red, coral, purple, multicoloured and 'unknown' were all found in this group. Black was found with 12 of the 14 bodies, whilst coral and dark red only

occurred once each. Two bodies were particularly colourful, each being adorned with 12 different colours. Body C in Room 3 of BT47 wore silver, red, black, bronze, green, white, blue, coral, orange, purple, yellow and an unknown colour. Body G in Room 3 of BT80 wore white, black, red, yellow, orange, green, blue, grey, multicoloured, bronze, pink and purple.

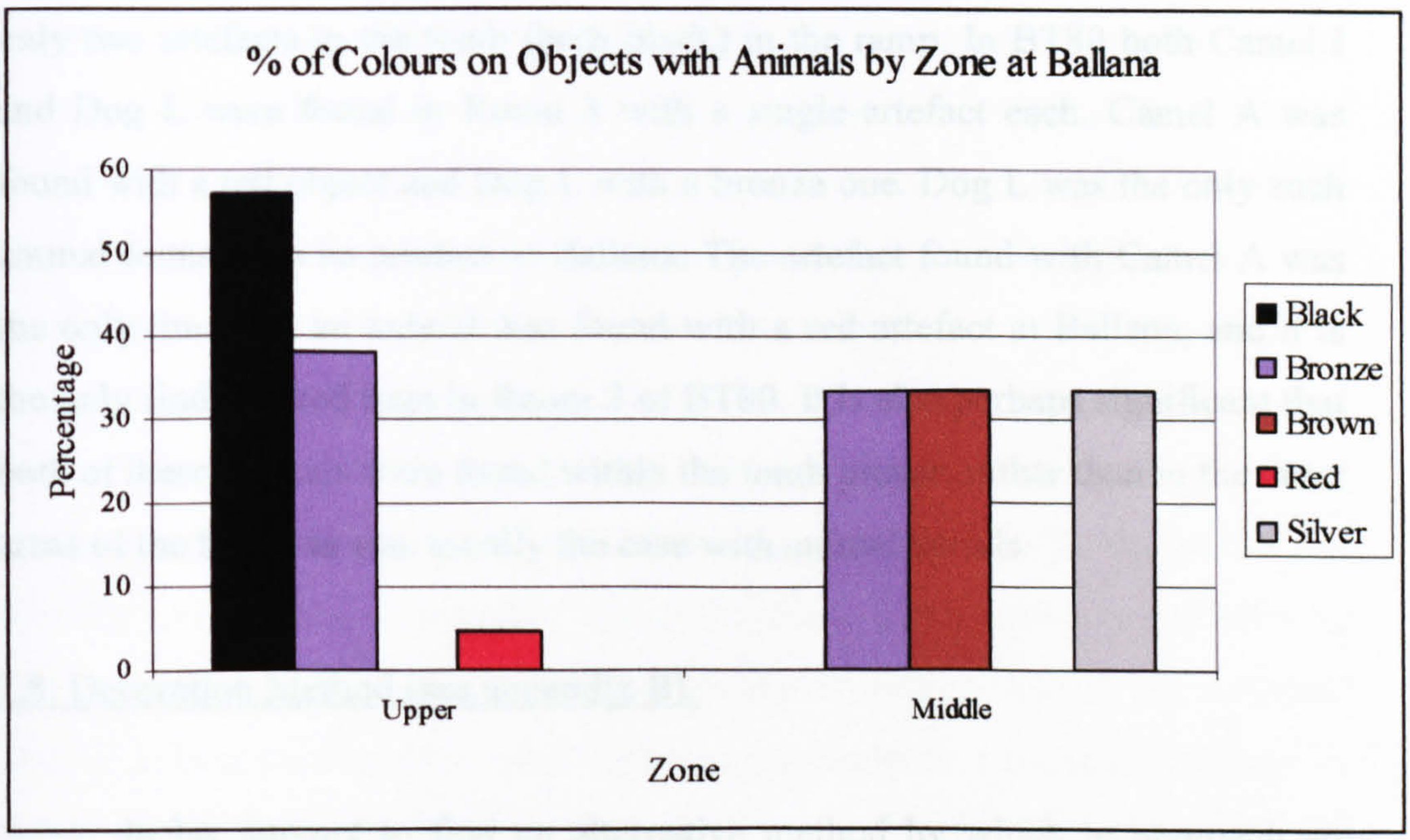


Figure 7.8

Unfortunately, due to the lack of recorded information with regard to the existence of animal remains at Ballana, the interesting trends with relating to the use of colour on animals at Qustul cannot be compared to trends at Ballana in any great depth. Only six tombs at Ballana contained animal remains in association with artefacts. There were no artefacts found in the lower zone with the animal remains. The restricted number of colours found with the animals at Ballana were also found with the animals at Qustul. These were colours that were also found with the humans. Most of the artefacts that were found with the animals at Ballana were found in the upper zone.

Most of the animals were found in the ramps, with the donkey in BT24 being in the forecourt, and the camel and dog in BT80 both being in Room 3. Black is the colour that occurred most frequently with the animals, appearing with five of the seven animals with objects. In BT02, Horse A was found with

brown pottery in the ramp. In BT09, Donkey C and Horse A were both found in the ramp of the tomb with black artefacts. Horse A also had a silver object. In BT24 Donkey A was found with one black object in the forecourt. In BT47 Camel A was found in the ramp with black, bronze, brown, and silver artefacts. These were the only artefacts found in the ramp, and Camel A was the animal found with the most colours at Ballana. In BT72, Horse A was found with the only two artefacts in the tomb (both black) in the ramp. In BT80 both Camel I and Dog L were found in Room 3 with a single artefact each. Camel A was found with a red object and Dog L with a bronze one. Dog L was the only such animal found with an artefact at Ballana. The artefact found with Camel A was the only time that an animal was found with a red artefact at Ballana, and it is the only find of a red item in Room 3 of BT80. It is also perhaps significant that both of these animals were found within the tomb proper, rather than in the outer areas of the tomb, as was usually the case with animal burials.

7.8. Decoration Method (see appendix B).

In his attempt to find an alternative method by which to approach art objects, Gell puts forward the proposition that works of art can be considered from the perspective of technology, as every object must be the result of a number of technical processes (Gell, 1992, 43). Gell uses the term 'the technology of enchantment' to suggest that art provides the technical means to convince individuals that the existing social order is crucial, and that it does this by reference to the technological processes that the artefact embodies. I have already discussed aspects of technological production in chapter six, and suggested, using anthropological parallels, the manner in which technological production can create meaning and forge identities. However, that discussion was mainly concerned with the materials acquired and transformed during technical manufacture. The discussion that follows picks up and develops the theme of technology, but from the perspective of the technical processes used to 'finish' the artefacts in terms of decoration. As will be further explored in sections 7.11 onwards, this is rather a false dichotomising of the functionality of

decoration method versus the apparent frivolity of decoration design. However, the split is tolerated here as it acts as a bridge between the major methods of manufacture such as smelting or firing discussed in chapter six, and the creation of decorative designs discussed below. According to Gell 'The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form' (Gell, 1992, 44). There are numerous different types of decorative method in evidence at Qustul and Ballana. Although these elements can certainly be included as types of technology used in the production of artefacts, they are not the primary methods by which the objects are made. In fact, the process of manufacturing an artefact is traceable back to the point when ores are grubbed, or clay is dug out. The primary means by which many of the objects are actually physically produced might be by hand-building or casting. The decorative method refers to those more superfluous touches, usually added to an artefact towards the end of the manufacturing process. However, it should be noted that certain manufacturing techniques are integral to the finished decorative design, and so are included here as a decorative method. Such techniques include the casting or beating of a metal object (particularly when the object has a figural design), such as the candelabra in the form of humans. Some of these techniques are specific to the category of material – a pottery vessel cannot be soldered, for example. It may be argued that these are special methods in themselves, as the design method and design decoration are inextricably combined.

7. 9. Discussion of Decoration Methods at Qustul, Phase Ia-3a.

The decoration methods in the artefacts from Qustul have been investigated from the perspective of decoration methods on objects in space, on objects associated with human remains, and on objects associated with animal remains. The most frequently occurring primary method of decoration (classified under 'Decoration Method A' in the database) on the objects in space was painting, and with the animals was casting. In only three different tombs were artefacts that were decorated associated with human remains. In each case

a different method was most used frequently in these artefacts. In QT15 the method was incising, in QT22 it was ribbing, and in QT36 it was plaiting. Plaiting was only found in association with a human, but it was a single example in a single artefact.

The following graph demonstrates the overall percentage of decorative methods used in the artefacts from Qustul.

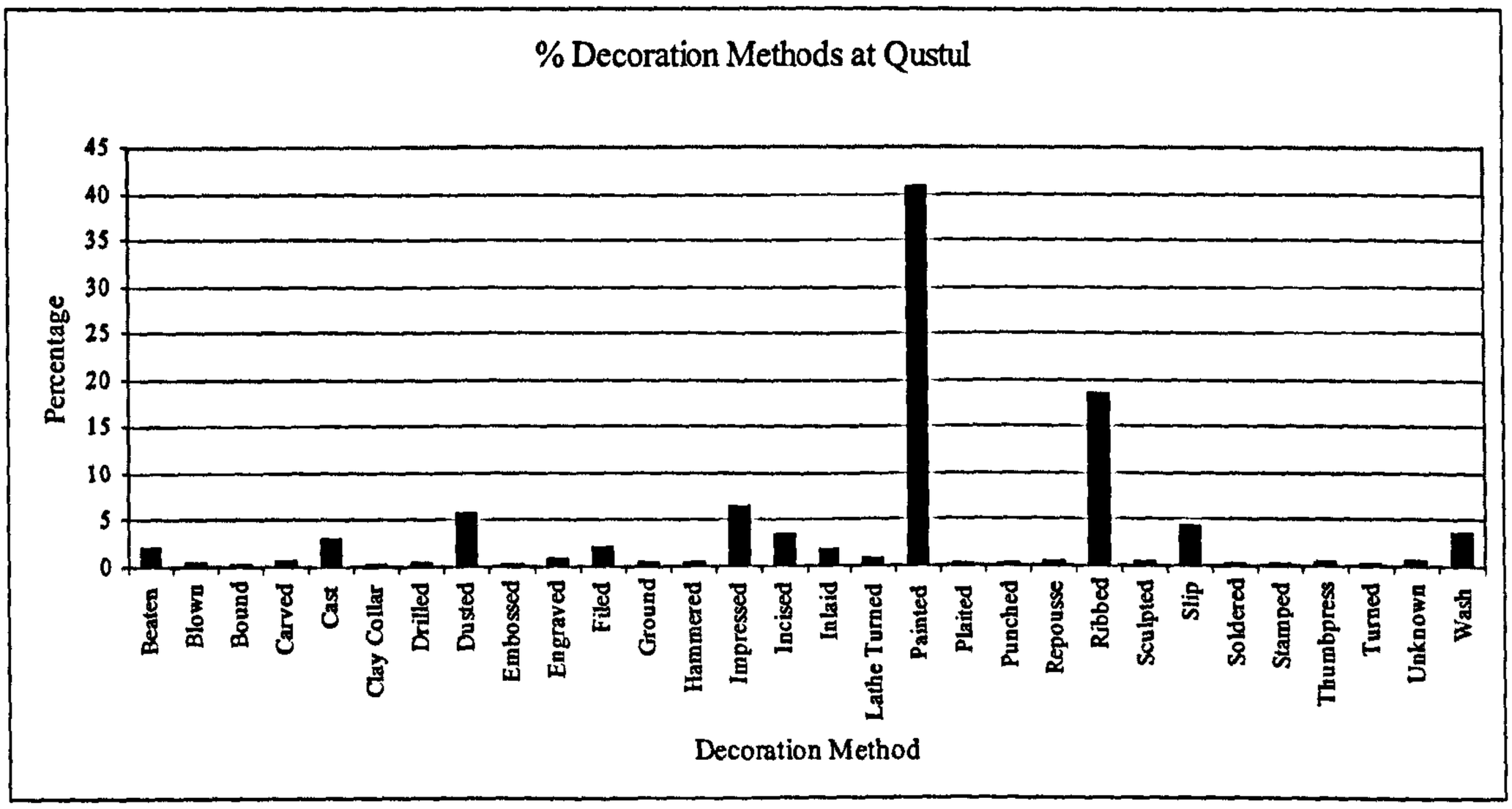


Figure 7.9

30 different methods of decoration were found in the artefacts that existed in space. Most of these artefacts were painted, or had been ribbed or impressed. Very small numbers of artefacts were blown, bound, carved, had a clay collar, were drilled, embossed, ground, hammered, plaited, punched had repoussé decoration, were sculpted, soldered, stamped, thumb pressed or turned. A small numbers of artefacts had also been decorated by an unknown method.

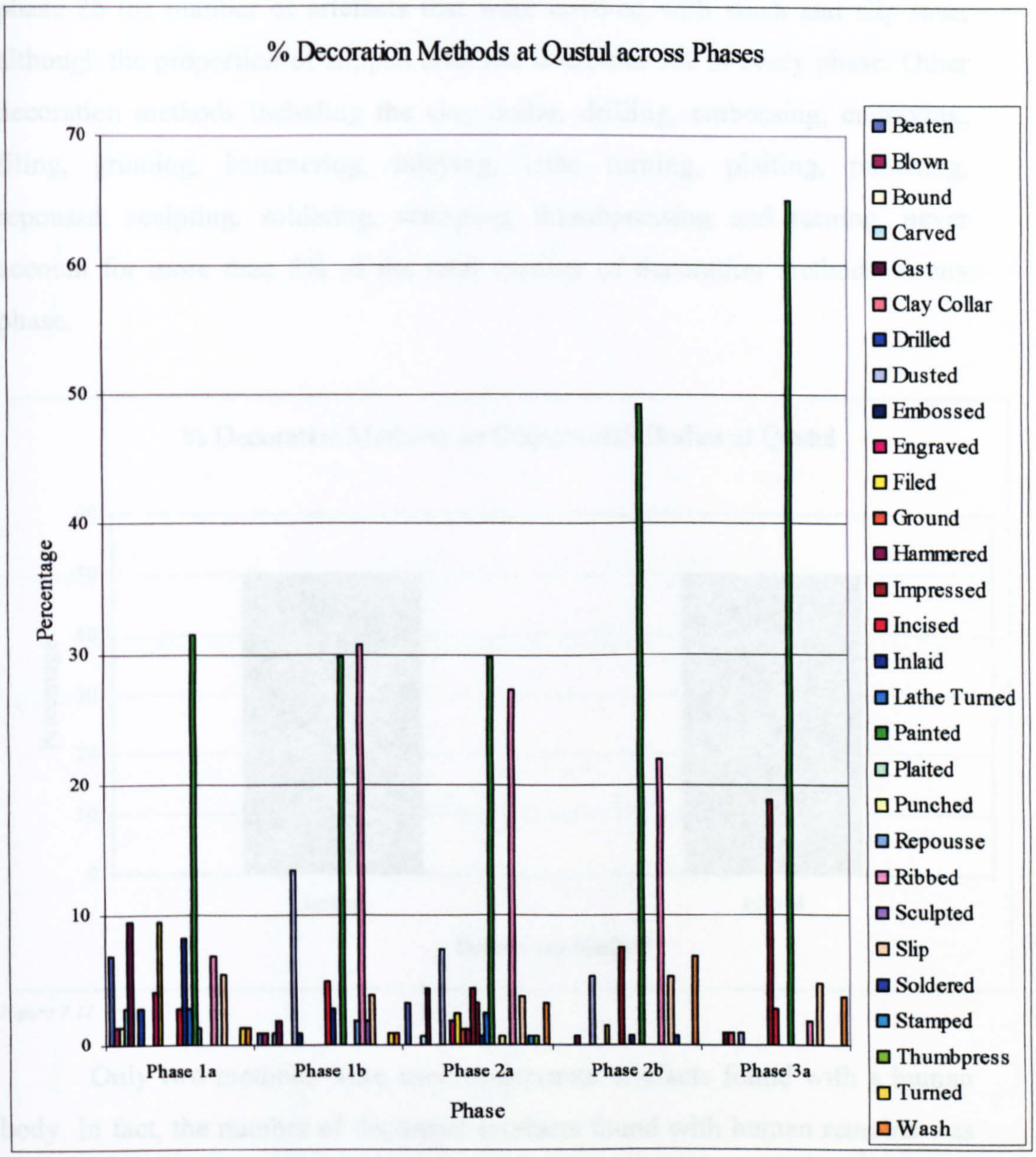


Figure 7.10

The graph above demonstrates the percentage of different decoration methods in the artefacts at Qustul, as they appeared through time. In every phase except 1b, painting was the most frequently occurring decoration method. During 1b ribbing appeared most frequently. Phase 1b was also the phase that witnessed a rise in the quantity of artefact that were dusted. After its appearance in 1b, dusting gradually declines across the remaining phases at Qustul. From phase 1b, impressed designs gradually increase, until they are the second most frequent design method in the final phase of the cemetery at Qustul. During

phase 2b the number of artefacts that were covered with wash and slip rose, although the proportion of slipped artefacts is around 5% in every phase. Other decoration methods including the clay collar, drilling, embossing, engraving, filing, grinding, hammering, inlaying, lathe turning, plaiting, punching, repoussé, sculpting, soldering, stamping, thumbpressing and turning, never account for more than 5% of the total number of decoration methods in any phase.

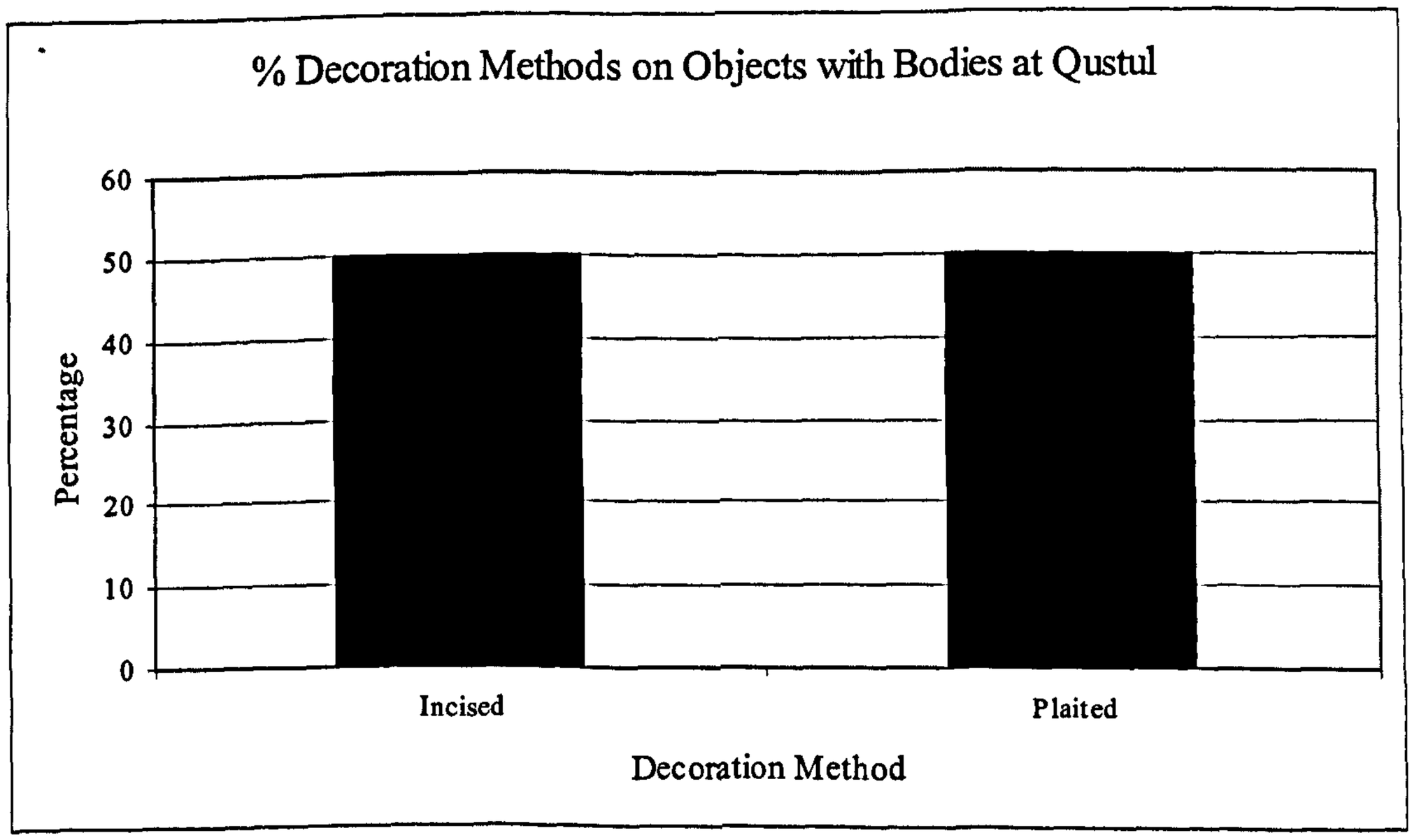


Figure 7.11

Only two methods were used to decorate artefacts found with a human body. In fact, the number of decorated artefacts found with human remains was very small indeed. Two artefacts were incised and two were plaited. A single artefact had a secondary scheme, which was again, incising. Plaiting and incising were found in the artefacts that existed in space (although plaiting occurred only once and appears to have been a limited technique), and incising was found in the artefacts that accompanied the animal remains. Consequently, none of the decorative methods used on the artefacts found with humans occurred exclusively with them.

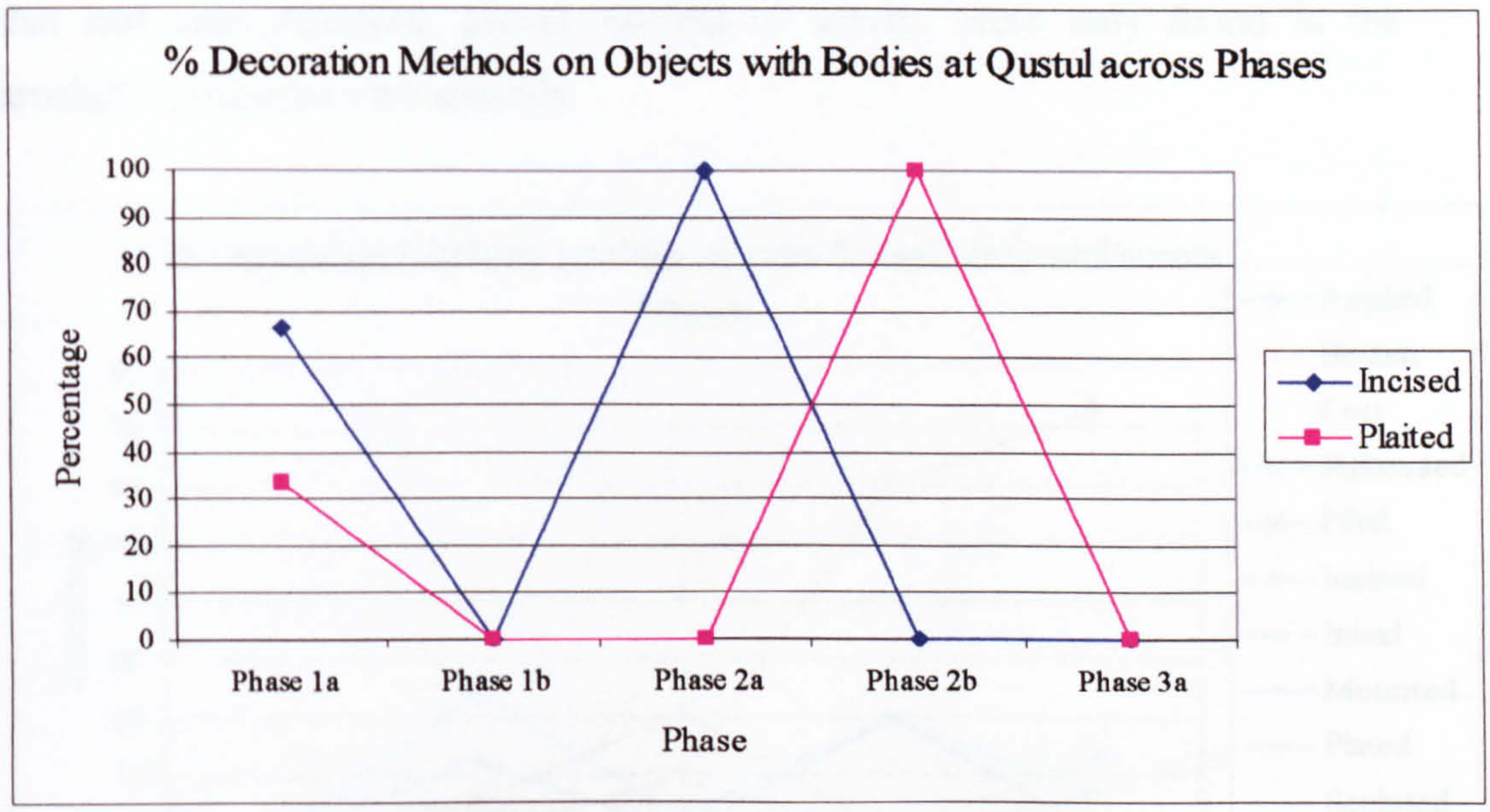


Figure 7.12

Humans were found with decorated artefacts in phase 1a, 2a and 2b at Qustul.

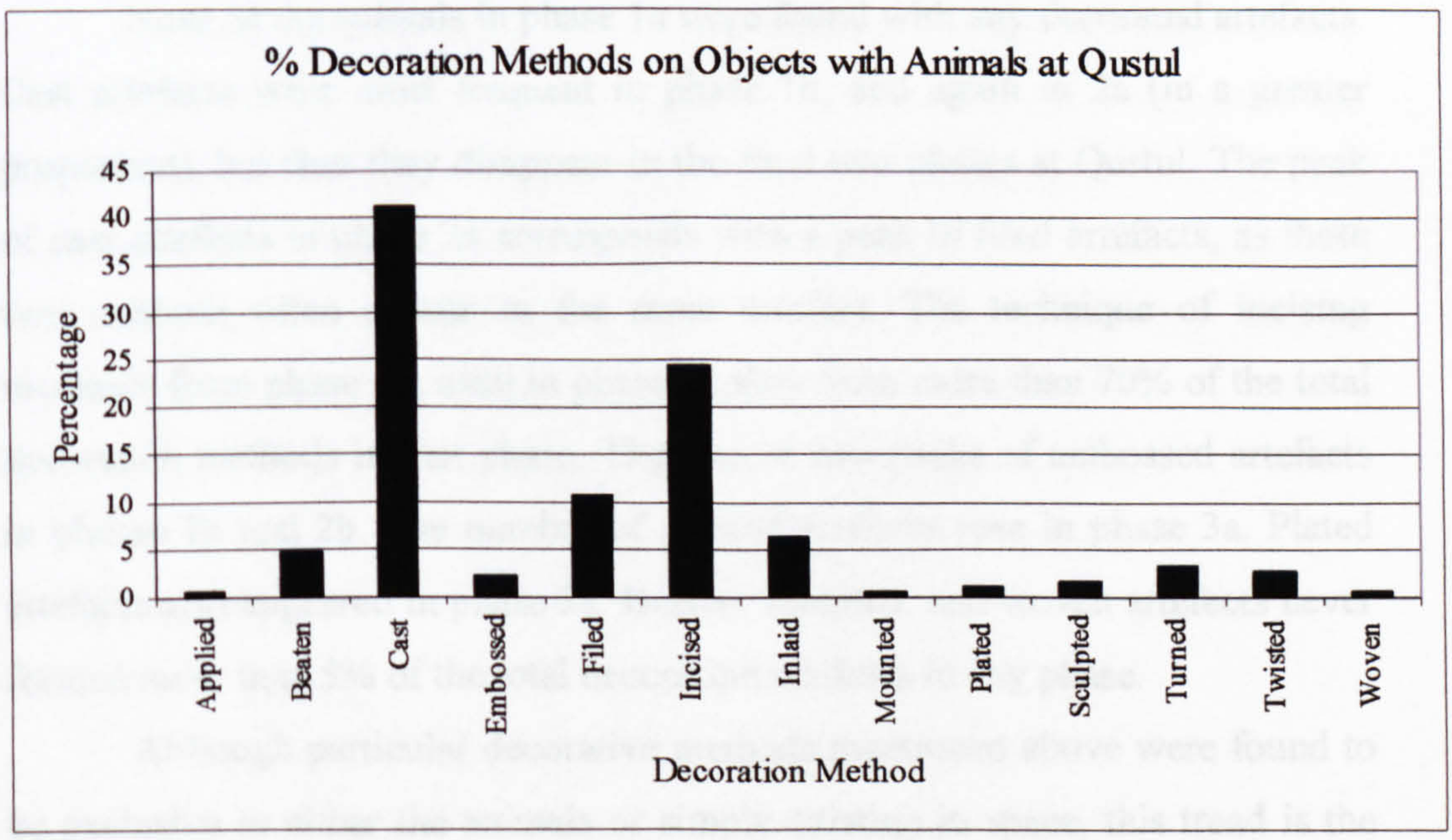


Figure 7.13

13 decorative methods were found in the artefacts associated with the animal remains at Qustul. Cast artefacts occurred most frequently, followed by incised and filed artefacts. Small numbers of artefacts had applied decoration, were mounted, plated, sculpted or woven. Artefacts with applied decoration, or

that had been mounted, plated, twisted or woven, were only found in the artefacts associated with animals.

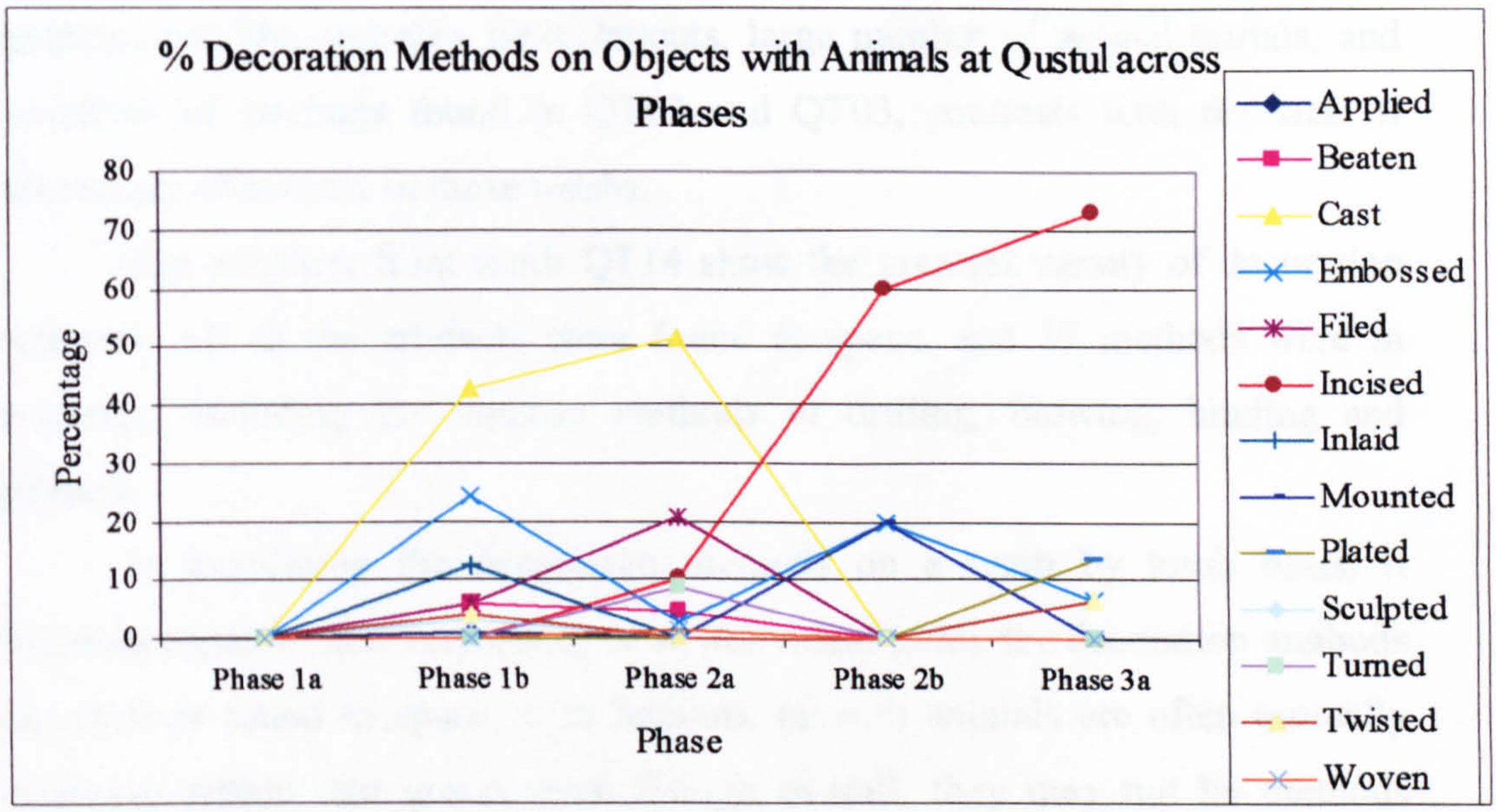


Figure 7.14

None of the animals in phase 1a were found with any decorated artefacts. Cast artefacts were most frequent in phase 1b, and again in 2a (in a greater proportion), but then they disappear in the final two phases at Qustul. The peak of cast artefacts in phase 2a corresponds with a peak in filed artefacts, as these two methods often appear in the same artefact. The technique of incising increases from phase 1b, until in phase 3a they form more than 70% of the total decoration methods in that phase. There were two peaks of embossed artefacts in phases 1b and 2b. The number of twisted artefacts rose in phase 3a. Plated artefacts also appeared in phase 3a. Beaten, sculpted, and woven artefacts never formed more than 5% of the total decoration methods in any phase.

Although particular decorative methods mentioned above were found to be exclusive to either the animals or simply existing in space, this trend is the overall pattern. Whilst these macro trends are true, from tomb to tomb certain methods were arranged in different combinations, and in many tombs certain decorative methods (those appearing in very small numbers in the graphs above), were not present at all.

A number of the artefacts found in the tombs at Qustul were found with no evidence of decoration. These were the objects in QT04, QT06 and QT10. The objects found with the human remains in QT02, QT03, and QT24 were also undecorated. The complex tomb layouts, large number of animal burials, and quantities of artefacts found in QT02 and QT03, contrasts with the lack of adornment of humans in those tombs.

The artefacts from tomb QT14 show the greatest variety of decoration methods. All of the artefacts were found in space, and 17 methods were in evidence, including the unusual methods of drilling, blowing, binding and plaiting.

In examining the decoration methods on a tomb by tomb basis, it becomes apparent that very often, in an individual tomb, the decoration methods on artefacts found in space, with humans, or with animals are often mutually exclusive within that grave, even though overall, they may not be methods exclusive to space, humans, or animals. However, it is the case that certain decoration methods occurred exclusively in certain locations with the animals. The method of casting was found with animals in both the ramp and forecourt. Incising, twisting, filing, embossing, mounting and plating only occurred with the animal burials found in the ramps. Artefacts that were beaten, woven and turned were only found with the animals in the forecourts. Applying, inlaying and sculpting were methods only found with the objects with animals in Room 2 of QT03. These are trends of exclusivity across the entire cemetery.