Now when the ruler of Irtjet, Satju, and Wawat saw how strong and numerous the troop from Yam was which came down with me to the residence together with the army that had been sent with me, he gave me cattle and goats, and led me on the mountain paths of Irtjet.1

1. The Post-A-Group Hiatus and the Establishment of the Egyptian Domination

According to Reisner’s periodization of Nubian history, the A-Group period was followed by a B-Group period.2 Since the finds associated with this period reflected a much less complex socioeconomic structure and a less advanced culture than the Middle and Late A-Group evidence, the B-Group culture, as described by Reisner, induced a misleading reconstruction of the impact of the early Old Kingdom domination on a—hypothetical—settled native society. In 1966 H.S. Smith convincingly demonstrated that the archaeological evidence attributed to the B-Group belongs in reality to the Early A-Group.3 Consequently, no evidence was left to represent the period between the end of the Late A-Group (c. 2800 BC) and the beginning of the Early C-Group (c. 2300 BC, see below).

From the hiatus occurring thus in the archaeological record, the literature concluded that the Nile Valley between the First and Second Cataracts was completely or almost completely depopulated for about five centuries between c. 2800 BC and c. 2300 BC. A part of the A-

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2 Reisner 1910 213–348.
Group population was believed to have moved to Upper Egypt in the Early Dynastic period. Another part may have remained in the southern part of Lower Nubia between Aniba and the Second Cataract, as it is suggested by burials identified as post-Terminal A-Group and by a small amount of non-Egyptian pottery recovered at Buhen North (for the site, see below). The temporary campsites of this population disappeared, however, as a result of sediment deposition or erosion or remained unidentified by the archaeologists. As to the bulk of the A-Group population, it may be confidently supposed that it moved to regions of the Eastern Sahara that had already been inhabited for a period by their ancestors (see Chapter III.6). The climatic conditions allowed the use of these regions for nomadic cattle-herding until c. 2400–2300 BC, when, in the period coinciding with the dramatic political, economic and cultural changes in late Old Kingdom Egypt, the worsening environmental conditions forced the descendants of the A-Group to return to the Nubian Nile Valley.

Although the details of the process remain obscure, the disappearance of the bulk of the A-Group population from the Nile Valley was brought about by the aggressive Egyptian policy the documents of which were discussed above in Chapter III.7. The point of departure of the Egyptian penetration into Lower Nubia was Elephantine, where the earliest dwellings appeared in the Naqada IId period (c. 3300–3200 BC). The earliest traces of urban architecture on the island date from the period of Dynasty 0 (c. 3200–3000 BC). The first fortress was built in

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9 In 1977, Adams hypothesized thus: “the ‘mysterious C People’ are anyone but the descendants of the A People and their Stone-Age predecessors. Immigrants they certainly were in Lower Nubia, but immigrants in all probability only from some neighbouring region where the actual process of cultural transition from the A to the C Horizon took place”. Adams 1977 143.