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Structures and Realities of Egyptian-Nubian Interactions from the Late Old Kingdom to the Early New Kingdom

By CLAUDIA NÄSER

One of the main characteristics of the First Cataract is its functioning as a contact zone between Egypt and the societies further south. The topic of the present contribution is the trajectory of these contacts from the Old to the early New Kingdom. While the sources relating to them – Egyptian texts and a wide spectrum of archaeological evidence – have been repeatedly compiled, and the Egyptian conquest of Nubia in the Middle and New Kingdoms has been researched extensively, little has been said systematically either about the structural properties or the lived realities of these interactions. Further, astonishingly little is known about the area of the First Cataract as a major contact zone. In the latter respect, a main problem has of course been the state of publication of primary data. On the basis of the available material, the present contribution intends to open up a wider perspective in two steps. First, it will examine the general structure of Egyptian-Nubian interactions, summarizing and commenting on previous research. Secondly, it will investigate the evidence from the First Cataract in order to correlate it with the general picture and to highlight the details and specifics of this region.

The Structures of Egyptian-Nubian Interactions

Reviewing the contacts between the Egyptian and Nubian societies from the Old to the New Kingdom is a complex enterprise; the scope of this paper only allows for a summary and for comments on some of their most significant aspects. First, it should be emphasized that the historical, i. e. textual, sources are biased in that they are exclusively and unilaterally Egyptian, concentrating on Egyptian interests, namely economic interactions and provisions, and on the political security at the southern border of the Egyptian territorial state. *Communis opinio* is that in the earlier Old Kingdom, raids and the direct exploitation of natural resources dominated the Egyptian conduct towards Nubia. On the basis of the limited textual evidence, we can assume a substantial extraction of human resources, livestock and raw materials from Lower Nubia and the neighbouring desert areas¹. Egyptian enterprises of this period were centrally organized, their yields went directly to the state institutions and the pharaoh. In the texts relating to

¹ See e. g. the Palermo Stone entry of Snofru, the inscriptions at Khor Aqiba and – of later date – the Dahshur decree of Pepi I; for these sources, cf. G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 99f., with further references. For the mining activities of the Old Kingdom, see E. EICHLER, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, GOF IV.26, Wiesbaden 1993, *passim*, esp. pp. 143–156. For the question of an uncoerced, individual migration of Nubians into Egypt in this period, see a summary of the discussion in

K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die ägyptische Expansion nach Nubien. Eine Darlegung der Grundfaktoren*, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B 78, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 115 with note 473; cf. also S. J. SEIDLMAYER, *Nubier im ägyptischen Kontext im Alten und Mittleren Reich*, in: S. LEDER/B. STRECK (eds.), *Akkulturation und Selbstbehauptung*, in: *Mitteilungen des SFB „Differenz und Integration“ 2. Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 4*, Halle 2002, pp. 100–109.

these enterprises, Nubia is referred to as *t3 stj* or *t3 nḥsj*². Nubian populations are indiscriminately labelled *nḥsj.w*. They were regarded as one of the products: the raids of the Fourth Dynasty were reported as yielding thousands of prisoners, including women and children – who would mainly have been sent as labour force into state foundations, e. g. the pyramid-towns, and into military service³. Some Nubians are attested as servants in elite contexts, belonging to a wider spectrum of 'extranormal' individuals whose possession added to the prestige of a high-class household⁴. In the execration texts of the late Old Kingdom, Nubians had crossed the border from alien to dangerous⁵. The fact that they were the only foreign people mentioned in this text group at the time suggests that they had a prominent position in the Egyptian perception in this respect and served as a stereotype of the alien. In all three named contexts, the differential identity of the Nubians was maintained and reaffirmed constantly⁶ – in none of these contexts were they pictured as human individuals; at best they were placed on the fringe of humankind.

From the Fifth Dynasty onwards, the situation starts to change. Nubians now appear as contingents

in the Egyptian army and as *j*³.*w*-personnel, accompanying Egyptian expeditions⁷. As always in the evaluation of historical sources, the question is whether this picture is derived from accidents of preservation, changes in the occurrence and the use of the pertinent text genres, or from actual changes in terms of the related contents. Indeed, the genre of funerary biography of provincial officials starts to flourish at this time, and this might go some way to explain the sudden wealth of information. The inscriptions of the expedition leaders on the Qubbet el-Hawa in Aswan are particularly rich in this respect. Activities in Nubia were now at least partly organized by local agents – proud of their deeds and culturally sanctioned to make them part of their self-representation, they mimetically reported them in their tombs⁸. From these sources, it becomes clear that with the withdrawal of the residential organization, the forces available for the Nubian enterprises were more restricted. At a time when the C-Group population increased and organized its territories⁹, the Aswan expedition leaders negotiated their way through Lower Nubia; they even had to rely on Nubian escorts¹⁰. The need to find a peaceful route through Nubia and to accept the Nubians as trading partners resulted in a new interest in

² Remarkably, the latter designation occurs only once before the New Kingdom, namely in the famous entry about the reign of Snofru on the Palermo Stone; see K. ZIBELIUS, *Afrikanische Orts- und Völkernamen in hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Texten, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 1, Wiesbaden 1972, pp. 3f., 141f.

³ Due to the dearth of information, it is debated whether these prisoners were also employed in agricultural production. While this is assumed by W. HELCK, *Die Bedeutung der Felsinschriften J. Lopez, Inscriptions Rupestres 27 und 28*, in: *SAK* 1, 1974, pp. 218f., 223f., and K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die ägyptische Expansion nach Nubien. Eine Darlegung der Grundfaktoren, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 78, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 116 with notes 484f., also considers it possible, S. J. SEIDL-MAYER, *op. cit.*, p. 98, note 21, is sceptical about such a possibility.

⁴ Cf. S. J. SEIDL-MAYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 98f. See also G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 92–99, for the presence of individuals of Nubian ethnicity or descent in Egyptian society from the early Old Kingdom onwards.

⁵ For this source material in relation to the issues discussed here, see S. J. SEIDL-MAYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 97f. and G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 100.

⁶ Cf. in this respect again S. J. SEIDL-MAYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–100, 107–109.

⁷ The earliest evidence for this is prosopographical and can be found in military and *j*³.*w*-titles; see E. EICHLER, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–197, 205–207, 219. For the *j*³.*w*-personnel, cf. also L. BELL, *Interpreters and Egyptianized Nubians in Ancient Egyptian Foreign Policy: Aspects of the History of Egypt and Nubia*, Ann Arbor 1976, and G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 109f. The oldest more detailed evidence for Nubians in the Egyptian army comes from the biography of Weni of the time of Pepi I, i. e. the mid Sixth Dynasty; see *Urk.* I, p. 101, nos. 13–16, p. 102, no. 8.

⁸ For the category of the mimetic and its emergence in Egyptian literature, see A. LOPRIENO, *Topos und Mimesis. Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur*, ÄA 48, Wiesbaden 1988, pp. 14–21, also

with reference to the funerary biographies of the late Old Kingdom.

⁹ For the conventional dating of the appearance of the C-Group in the Lower Nubian Nile Valley at or shortly after the end of the Sixth Dynasty, see M. BIETAK, *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, pp. 133, 142–147, 165; H. HAFSAAS, *Cattle Pastoralists in a Multicultural Setting. The C-Group People in Lower Nubia 2500–1500 BC*, *The Lower Jordan River basin Programme Publications* 10, Bergen 2006, pp. 137f., regards the abandonment of the settlement at Buhen and the Gebel el-Asr quarries in the Fifth Dynasty, inferred from the distribution of datable material at these sites, as an indicator for a growing indigenous population in Lower Nubia already at this time.

¹⁰ As related in the biography of Harkhuf; *Urk.* I, p. 127, nos. 4–8. A short side remark is in order here about the much discussed apparent contradiction between the reports of Harkhuf and his colleagues, which imply a progressive centralisation of the Lower Nubian social entities, and the archaeological evidence, which suggests that the early C-Group was a non-centralized, largely non-hierarchical society. In this respect, it should be noted that the communities which Harkhuf met in Lower Nubia could be kept at bay by their local escort: "When the ruler of Irtjet, Setju 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, this ruler escorted me, gave me cattle and goats"; translation by M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1975, p. 26. Thus, the power which this ruler held should not be overrated. It may well have been of a rather ceremonial nature in a segmentary social context, and the recognition as *ḥq3*, i. e. "ruler" by the Egyptians may simply have been the result of their need to identify an individual to approach. Along similar lines, with direct reference to the subrecent parallel of the Leopard Skin Chief of

sociogeographical knowledge, which is also reflected in the mentioned texts¹¹. Thus, in the Sixth Dynasty inscriptions Nubian territories are specified in greater detail. For the first time, we learn of a series of distinct areas, reflected in the toponyms *w3w3.t*, *jr.t*, *s3w*, *j3m* and *md3*¹². However, the people themselves are still called *nh.sj.w* without any further distinctions¹³.

Throughout the Old Kingdom, there is an astonishing dearth of archaeological evidence for Nubians in Egypt. It is limited to isolated ceramic material, mainly from elite contexts of the later Old Kingdom and the settlement site of Elephantine¹⁴. We have to assume that in this period the Nubian presence largely went without

a trace, i. e. that their settlements lack distinctive find material and that they did not receive identifiable burials. In this respect, the situation only changes in the First Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom, with the evidence concentrating on Upper Egypt, namely Kubanija¹⁵, Hierakonpolis¹⁶ and Gebelein¹⁷. It is then that, apparently for the first time, Nubian mercenaries managed on the one hand to sustain their own culture in Egypt and on the other to get access to the genuinely Egyptian cultural repertoire, as the funerary stelae from Gebelein show.

However, the still unpublished Gebelein papyri¹⁸ provide hitherto unique evidence for a substantially earlier, i. e. later Fourth Dynasty presence of Nubians

the Nuer, U. STEFFENSEN, *A Re-Examination of the Mortuary Material from Cemetery North and the C-Group Settlement at Aniba: A Chronological Investigation of the Endogenous Social Changes of a Lower Nubian C-Group Society*, Copenhagen 2005, pp. 120–122. Contra, e.g. the unconvincing suggestion by S. GIULIANI, *Medja sources in the Old Kingdom*, in: *Discussions in Egyptology* 42, 1998, pp. 44–54, who wants to see the title *hq3* connected to “a territory with defined boundaries, subject to a power-territory limitation, different from a true nomadism-seminomadism, [...] a full-fledged territorial state”.

¹¹ This is the pragmatic explanation for the impression of a new, “neugierigen Einstellung zum Ausland”, which A. LOPRIENO, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 f. with note 25 detects in these sources.

¹² The earliest occurrences of these designations date to the time of Pepi I, i. e. the mid Sixth Dynasty; see K. ZIBELIUS, *Afrikanische Orts- und Völkernamen in hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Texten, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 1, Wiesbaden 1972, pp. 1–6 and G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 99–101, 110. For further locations named in this period for the first time, though more rarely, see K. ZIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–5 and A. M. ABU BAKR/J. OSING, *Ächtungstexte aus dem Alten Reich*, in: *MDAIK* 29, 1973, pp. 112 f., 116, 118, 121 f.

¹³ G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 93, 99 f., 109, 117–120. The only possible exception is the unique addition *stj* to the altogether rare title *jmj-r3 šnw.t*, held by a certain Sehetepu on his stela in his tomb at Saqqara; see *loc. cit.*, p. 109 with further references. While *loc. cit.*, translates the genitive *stj* as “von Nubien”, E. EICHLER, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, *GOF* IV. 26, Wiesbaden 1993, p. 218, reads *stj(.w)*, i. e. “Vorsteher der *šnw.t* der Nubier”.

¹⁴ For the former, see G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 90 and S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Nubier im ägyptischen Kontext im Alten und Mittleren Reich*, in: S. LEDER/B. STRECK (eds.), *Akkulturation und Selbstbehauptung. Mitteilungen des SFB „Differenz und Integration“ 2, Oriëntwissenschaftliche Hefte 4*, Halle 2002, p. 97 with note 16; for the latter, see S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Beispiele nubischer Keramik aus Kontexten des Hohen Alten Reiches aus Elephantine*, in: D. MENDEL/U. CLAUDI (eds.), *Ägypten im Afro-Orientalischen Kontext. Aufsätze zur Archäologie, Geschichte und Sprache eines unbegrenzten Raumes. Gedenkschrift Peter Behrens, Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere Sondernummer 1991*, Köln 1991, pp. 337–350, and D. RAUE, *Nubians on Elephantine Island*, in: *Sudan & Nubia* 6, 2002, pp. 20–22. Additionally, a number of ephemeral campsites of Old Kingdom date with Nubian pottery have been recorded outside the Nile Valley proper. They comprise – as the northernmost evidence – the stray finds from around the pyramid of Sinki, 6 km south of Abydos, and the so-called ‘Saharan sites’ at Armant and locality Hk64, a small sandstone hill with

rock art and a camp site in the hinterland of Hierakonpolis, about 1.5 km away from the river valley; G. DREYER/N. SWELIM, *Die kleine Stufenpyramide von Abydos-Süd (Sinki), Grabungsbericht*, in: *MDAIK* 38, 1982, p. 92; R. MOND/O. H. MYERS, *The Cemeteries of Armant I*, 2 vols., *EES* 42, London 1937, pp. 267–278, Pl. 74.2–4; O. H. MYERS, *Some Applications of Statistics to Archaeology*, Cairo 1950, pp. 17–37; R. FRIEDMAN, *Pebbles, pots and petroglyphs. Excavations at Hk64*, in: R. FRIEDMAN/B. ADAMS (eds.), *The Followers of Horus. Studies dedicated to Michael Allen Hoffman (1944–1990)*, *Egyptian Studies Association Publication 2*, Oxford 1992, pp. 99–106. Cf. also the short mention of a similar finding at Sedment, which cannot, however, be dated on the basis of the record available from F. PETRIE/G. BRUNTON, *Sedment I*, *BSAE* 34, London 1924, p. 21.

¹⁵ For the excavation report of the C-Group cemetery at Kubanija North, see H. JUNKER, *Bericht über die Grabungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien auf den Friedhöfen von El-Kubanieh Nord Winter 1910–1911*, *DÖAW* 64, Wien 1920, with a partly erroneous interpretation of the findings. For a reinterpretation and the assignation of its oldest part to C-Group phase IB, i. e. the later First Intermediate Period, see M. BIETAK, *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, *DÖAW* 97, Wien 1968, pp. 37, 148 f. Cf. also S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Nubier im ägyptischen Kontext im Alten und Mittleren Reich*, in: S. LEDER/B. STRECK (eds.), *Akkulturation und Selbstbehauptung. Mitteilungen des SFB „Differenz und Integration“ 2, Oriëntwissenschaftliche Hefte 4*, Halle 2002, pp. 104 f.

¹⁶ For the C-Group cemetery HK27 at Hierakonpolis and its tentative dating into phase IIA, i. e. the Middle Kingdom up to the late Thirteenth Dynasty, see R. FRIEDMAN ET AL., *Nubians at Hierakonpolis*, in: *Sudan & Nubia* 5, 2001, pp. 29–45; EAD., *The Nubian Cemetery at Hierakonpolis, Egypt. Results of the 2003 Season*, in: *Sudan & Nubia* 8, 2004, pp. 47–59, and S. GIULIANI, *Nubian evidence at Hierakonpolis*, in: I. CANEVEVA/A. ROCCATI (eds.), *Acta Nubica. Proceedings of the X International Conference of Nubian Studies. Rome 9–14 September 2002*, Rome 2006, p. 223.

¹⁷ For the Gebelein stelae, see H. G. FISCHER, *The Nubian mercenaries of Gebelein during the First Intermediate Period*, in: *Kush* 9, 1961, pp. 44–80, and with a revision of their dating into the later First Intermediate Period S. KUBISCH, *Die Stelen der 1. Zwischenzeit aus Gebelein*, in: *MDAIK* 56, 2000, pp. 239–265. Cf. also S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 100 f.; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 84, 90, 94–96; and L. BELL, *Interpreters and Egyptianized Nubians in Ancient Egyptian Foreign Policy: Aspects of the History of Egypt and Nubia*, Ann Arbor 1976, pp. 77–80.

¹⁸ See so far only P. POSENER-KRIEGER, *Les papyrus de Gébélein, Remarques préliminaires*, in: *RdÉ* 27, 1975, pp. 211–221, though without reference to this topic, and S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 100, note 26.

in that area. SEIDLMEYER assumes that this population segment was "wahrscheinlich sogar ursprünglich" at Gebelein and that "der Süden Oberägyptens sich noch in einem Bereich befand, den mobile nubische Gruppen regelmäßig entlang der Brunnen und Karawanenwege der Wüste durchschweiften"; thus, Nubian population elements had not to be systematically imported but had only to be motivated and stabilized to be recruited as mercenaries¹⁹. It should, however, be noted that the contemporary, i. e. First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom, archaeological evidence is currently limited to C-Group related material and that so far nothing points to a mobile C-Group segment traversing the regions outside the Nile Valley during this period, whereas the truly nomadic Pan-Grave people are archaeologically attested in the Nile Valley only from the later Middle Kingdom onwards. The situation is further complicated by a Blemmyan- and Bedawie-etymology, which has recently very plausibly been suggested for a personal name, *ihtk*, from one of the Gebelein stelae²⁰ – a finding which indeed suggests a *md3j*-affiliation of the local Nubian community. Unfortunately, the excavations at Gebelein still remain unpublished so that no details are known about the Nubian cemeteries found there²¹. With this level of available information, the cultural attribution of the Gebelein Nubians remains impossible. However, several other findings indicate that southern Upper Egypt indeed had a longstanding 'Nubian connection'. Thus, at least in the later New Kingdom the First Upper Egyptian nome up to Hierakonpolis was under the administration of the Viceroy of Kush²², and still in late antique times the region featured a population element of Nubian descent²³.

Returning to the textual evidence: also in the First Intermediate Period, in his funerary biography in his

tomb at Mo'alla on the east bank of the Nile across from Gebelein, the Egyptian nomarch Ankhtifi reports consignments of barley to *w3w3.t*, i. e. into C-Group territory²⁴. As it can be ruled out that these shipments had the character of development or emergency aid – even though Ankhtifi wants to make the reader believe exactly this – there must have been a reciprocity, i. e. the food must have been given in exchange for other products, most probably civil or mercenary labour. Ankhtifi's report also illustrates two other things: firstly – not surprisingly – an agrarian surplus production on the Egyptian side, and secondly the existence of a network for such distributions. In this respect, it is interesting to note that exactly in this period the amount of imported Egyptian pottery, primarily storage jars, in the C-Group graves in Lower Nubia rises substantially²⁵ – suggesting that such contacts were indeed not rare.

The situation once again changes with the Egyptian conquest of Lower Nubia in the early Middle Kingdom, which doubtlessly had radical effects on Egyptian-Nubian interactions. On the one hand, resources came into Egyptian hands, making their trade superfluous, and contacts between the different population groups were regulated more strongly. On the other hand, the continuous presence of the Egyptians in Lower Nubia opened up new local 'markets'. Interestingly, there is much less evidence concerning the Egyptian interests in Lower Nubia and the interactions between Egyptians and Nubians than in the previous periods. We do not know whether Nubians were still brought to Egypt in substantial numbers as labour force or mercenaries. A unique source, which may illustrate the possible dimensions of such transfers, is the stela from Abydos of a chief city administrator Khusobek,

¹⁹ S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 100f.

²⁰ R. EL-SAYED, *r3 n Md3. iw – lingua blemmyica – tu-bedawie. Ein Sprachenkontinuum im Areal der nubischen Ostwüste und seine (sprach-)historischen Implikationen*, in: SAK 32, 2004, pp. 358f.

²¹ See only A. M. DONADONI ROVERI, *Gebelein*, in: G. ROBINS (ed.), *Beyond the Pyramids. Egyptian Regional Art from the Museo Egizio, Turin*, Atlanta 1990, pp. 23f., Fig. 3.1, mentioning a Pan-Grave cemetery. In 2004 the author had the chance to shortly examine several objects reportedly from Gebelein in the storerooms of the Turin Museum; they comprised typical Pan-Grave jewellery and pottery. S. CURTO, *Nubien, Geschichte einer rätselhaften Kultur*, München 1966, Fig. 21, without comment illustrates two incised C-Group bowls from Gebelein, apparently dating to the early and classic phases, i. e. Ia and IIa. Furthermore, an unlabeled incense burner of C-Group type is exhibited in the Gebelein section of the museum.

²² Cf. on this T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *Ägypten und Nubien*, Lund 1941, pp. 177–180.

²³ As is witnessed, e. g. by the so-called Blemmyan documents from Gebelein; see T. EIDE ET AL., *Textual Sources for the History*

of the Middle Nile Region Between the Eighth Century BC and the Sixth Century AD III: From the First to the Sixth Century AD, *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*, Bergen 1998, pp. 1196–1216.

²⁴ See W. SCHENKEL, *Memphis. Herakleopolis. Theben. Die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7.–11. Dynastie Ägyptens*, AA 12, Wiesbaden 1965, pp. 45 and 54. For the question of topos and mimesis in this text, see L. MORENZ, *Versorgung mit Getreide: Historische Entwicklungen und intertextuelle Bezüge zwischen ausgehendem Alten Reich und Erster Zwischenzeit aus Achmim*, in: SAK 26, 1998, pp. 101f. For possible archaeological evidence for much earlier food exports from Egypt to Lower Nubia, datable to the Fourth Millennium BC, see H. A. NORDSTRÖM, *Neolithic and A-Group Sites. The Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia 3.1: Text*, Uppsala 1972, p. 26. Especially notable in this respect is the occurrence of grain at the Lower Nubian site of Khor Daud and NORDSTRÖM's conclusion that it "may also have been a riverain bartering place for cattle pastoralists living in the tract between the Red Sea hills and Lower Nubia".

²⁵ M. BIETAK, *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, pp. 134f., 149.

who had served under Sesostri III²⁶. It mentions military actions in Nubia and that Khusobek received "100 heads" as a reward. Whether they represent prisoners given to him or whether he was awarded a command over 100 men remains debated – although the former reading is generally preferred²⁷. Moreover, there exist isolated references to mainly *md3j* servants, temple personnel, tribute bearers and diplomatic representatives, as well as occasional depictions of Nubian mercenaries in Egyptian service, a few rarely attested military titles related to them and some information about *md3j.w* employed as scouts in the Egyptian fortresses in Lower Nubia²⁸.

Although Nubian resources were doubtlessly much more widely and systematically exploited in the Middle Kingdom than before, very little is known of the actual produce, how it was gained, transported and distributed²⁹. An exceptional source in this respect is the biographical inscription of Amenemhat, called Imeni, nomarch of the Sixteenth Upper Egyptian nome in the time of Sesostri I, in his tomb at Beni Hassan. There, Imeni reports on three expeditions to the south on which he accompanied the king or the crown prince respectively, mentioning that he fetched tribute (*jn.w*) and gold and transported ores to Koptos³⁰. A certain Sahathor, an assistant sealer, i. e. a lower treasury official, at the time of Amenemhet II, claims on his funerary stela that he forced the Nubian chiefs (*wr.w*) to wash gold³¹. Another official of the Thirteenth Dynasty, whose name is lost, states on his stela from Gebelein that he "roamed [the lands] of the *md3j.w* to scour (them) for cattle for his god"³².

Apart from isolated testimonies like these, we must assume either that the exploitation of Nubia in the Middle Kingdom went largely without recording or, more likely, that the respective bureaucratic documents are lost due to bad preservation and recovery chances. That the royal texts of this period do not relate any of this – let alone trade or barter – is not astonishing in view of the triumphal pharaonic ideology that permeates those sources. When mentioned at all, products from Nubia are sweepingly declared as tributes or booty of military actions. One of the few more instructive documents, the so-called 'Small Semna Stela', expressly exempted those Nubians who wanted to trade from the ban to cross the southern Egyptian state border at the Second Cataract³³. Thus, it testifies to regular barter or trade supplementing the assumed large-scale exploitation of Nubian resources by force.

One so far unresolved question concerns the influx of the Pan-Grave people or *md3j.w* into Egypt. Their original homeland is considered to be the Eastern Desert. In this vast and almost totally unexplored region they are, however, not yet archaeologically attested. Instead, the known Pan-Grave sites are concentrated in the Nile Valley from Lower Nubia to Middle Egypt. While campsites are rare, the main evidence derives from over 50 cemeteries, which are distributed over more than 30 sites. Additionally, Pan-Grave pottery was found in Egyptian contexts, e. g. on Elephantine, and in contexts of the contemporary Lower Nubian C-Group³⁴. The first appearance of Pan-

²⁶ The object is today in the Manchester Museum, no. 3306. See notes from P. E. NEWBERRY on the hieroglyphic inscriptions in: J. GARSTANG, *El Arâbah: A Cemetery of the Middle Kingdom; Survey of the Old Kingdom Temenos; Graffiti from the Temple of Sety*, ERA 6, London 1900, pp. 6, 32 f., Pls. 4 f. and G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 98, with further references.

²⁷ See line 17 of the stela and its differing interpretations by P. E. NEWBERRY, *op. cit.*, p. 33; K. SETHE, *Erläuterungen zu den ägyptischen Lesestücken. Texte des Mittleren Reiches*, Leipzig 1927, p. 134: "Er ist zum centurio avanciert", and G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 98. Cf. also the discussion by J. BAINES, *The stela of Khusobek: private and royal military narrative and values*, in: J. OSING/G. DREYER (eds.), *Form und Maß. Beiträge zur Literatur, Sprache und Kunst des alten Ägypten*, ÄUAT 12, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 49 f., note 5. A second, even more controversial source in this respect is the funerary stela of a certain Haankhef from Edfu, on which he relates in a rather obscure phrasing that he brought gold and one (?) female servant from Kush; see B. GUNN, *A Middle Kingdom stela from Edfu*, in: *ASAE* 29, 1929, p. 11, Fig. on p. 7, line 8, and T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *A Buhen stela (Khartūm no. 18)*, in: *JEA* 35, 1949, pp. 57 f. with note 2.

²⁸ For a compilation of the relevant sources see G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 96–98, 101 f., 106–108, 110, 118–120. Missing from his list is the title *jmj-rj*³², which continues to be used in the Middle Kingdom; L. BELL, *Interpreters and Egyptianized Nubians in An-*

cient Egyptian Foreign Policy: Aspects of the History of Egypt and Nubia, Ann Arbor 1976, p. 85; W. A. WARD, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*, Beirut 1982, p. 13; K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die ägyptische Expansion nach Nubien. Eine Darlegung der Grundfaktoren*, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B 78, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 119.

²⁹ For a discussion of the products from Nubia compiled from all available sources, see K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–114.

³⁰ *Beni Hasan I*, pp. 25 f., Pl. 8; E. FEUCHT, *Amenemhet*, in: *LÄ I*, cols. 193 f.

³¹ The stela is now in the British Museum, no. 569; see *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum II*, London 1912, p. 8, Pls. 19 f. with further references. For the passage in question, namely columns 1 f. on the right hand side of the statue recess, see also H. G. FISCHER, *A god and a general of the oasis on a stela of the late Middle Kingdom*, in: *JNES* 16, 1957, p. 228. For further evidence concerning the extraction and importation of gold from Nubia, see K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 f.

³² The fragmentary object is now in the Cairo Museum, CG 20764. See CG 20001–20780, p. 397, and for the passage in question, namely lines x + 3 f., P. VERNUS, *Études de philologie et de linguistique*, in: *RdE* 37, 1986, pp. 141–144, Pl. 16.

³³ See G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 10 f.

³⁴ For extensive, though not complete, compilations of Pan-Grave sites, see M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Sayala-Nubien 1961–1965*.

Grave material in the Nile Valley can be dated to the later Middle Kingdom; it continues through the Second Intermediate Period and seems to end, probably with a more or less complete assimilation of the concerned groups, in the early New Kingdom.

So far, the sudden appearance of the Pan-Grave people in the Nile Valley was explained by two factors: a climatic deterioration in the Eastern Desert³⁵ and the breakdown of the Middle Kingdom and its border security³⁶. As I have argued elsewhere³⁷, the weakening of Egyptian control over Lower Nubia certainly facilitated their influx, but it did not cause it. The same goes for the assumed ecological crisis, which, incidentally, has never been substantiated by ecological data. In this respect it should be noted that the Eastern Desert did not become depopulated. Texts of the New Kingdom still mention *mḏḏj.w* in the region; further, it remained continuously inhabited by nomadic populations also throughout the following periods, via late antiquity up to the present³⁸.

The entry of the Pan-Grave people into the Nile Valley – and on a larger scale the entire spectrum of

Egyptian-Nubian interactions – can certainly not be accounted for by ecologically deterministic and opportunistic explanations. The trajectory outlined in the present contribution clearly speaks of socio-economic interests and needs, which were historically concrete and specific. In this respect, I would suggest that the political changes at the close of the Middle Kingdom led to a collapse of the established networks of barter and trade, which in turn resulted in economic stress for the Pan-Grave people, to which some of them reacted by seeking new habitats and subsistence sources³⁹.

In the Middle Kingdom, topographical information on Nubia in Egyptian texts became still more diverse. With toponyms like *ḳwšk*, *wbḏ.t-sp.t* and *jbh.t*, this is especially true for *mḏḏj* territory, which was a focal point of Egyptian activity but not under direct Egyptian control⁴⁰. Individuals from Lower Nubia and the adjacent Eastern Desert were now differentiated as *wḳwḳtj.w* and *mḏḏj.w*, reflecting the fact that they were the people with whom the Egyptians had the

Denkmäler der C-Gruppe und der Pan-Gräber-Kultur, DÖAW 92, Wien 1966, pp. 64–70, and, confined to Egypt, G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 83–86. Further findings have been published, e.g. by B. B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier. Part 5: C-Group, Pan Grave, and Kerma Remains at Adindan Cemeteries T, K, U, and J*, *Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition 5*, Chicago 1983, pp. 12, 111–113; *Id.*, *Excavations at Serra East. A-Group, C-Group, Pan Grave, New Kingdom, and X-Group Remains from Cemeteries A-G and Rock Shelters*, *Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition 10*, Chicago 1993, pp. 121–148; T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *Middle Nubian Sites. The Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia 4.1: Text*, Partille 1989, pp. 15–19. Recently, two Pan-Grave cemeteries have been localized and partly excavated at Hierakonpolis; see R. FRIEDMAN ET AL., *Nubians at Hierakonpolis*, in: *Sudan and Nubia 5*, 2001, pp. 29–45, and S. GIULIANI, *Nubian evidence at Hierakonpolis*, in: I. CANEVEA/A. ROCCATI (eds.), *Acta Nubica. Proceedings of the X International Conference of Nubian Studies. Rome 9–14 September 2002*, Rome 2006, pp. 223–227. One further cemetery was investigated near Kubanija; see M. C. GATTO/S. GIULIANI, *Nubians in Upper Egypt: results of the survey in the Aswan-Kom Ombo region (2005–2006)*, in: B. GRATIEN (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Francis Geus*, *CRIPPEL 26*, Lille 2006–2007, pp. 123f., Figs. 5–8; M. C. PITRE/M. C. GATTO/S. GIULIANI, *Nag el-Qarmila, Aswan (Egypt), season 2007*, in: *Bioarchaeology of the Near East 1*, 2007, pp. 59–61, Fig. 1.

³⁵ See e.g. I. HOFMANN, *Beitrag zur Herkunft der Pfannengräber-Leute*, in: *ZDMG*, Suppl. I, 1969, p. 1121; M. BIETAK, *Pfannengräber*, in: *LÄ IV*, col. 1000; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 71, 123.

³⁶ See e.g. M. BIETAK, *op. cit.*, pp. 72f.; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 122.

³⁷ C. NÄSER, *Ethnoarchäologie, Analogiebildung und Nomadismusforschung. Eine Einführung mit einer Fallstudie aus Nordostafrika*, in: J. GERTEL (ed.), *Mitteilungen des SFB „Differenz und Integration“ 8: Methoden als Aspekte der Wissenskonsstruktion. Fallstudien zur Nomadismusforschung, Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 17*, 2005, pp. 17–42, and EAD., *Ethnoarchaeology, analogical reasoning, the question of universals – and the archaeology of nomadism*, in: S. HAUSER (ed.), *The Visibility of Nomads and Seasonal Occupation in the Archaeological Record: Multidisciplinary Approaches to*

a Methodological Problem. Nomaden und Sesshafte, Wiesbaden (in press).

³⁸ For the New Kingdom, see the sources discussed by K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die Kubanstele Ramses' II. und die nubischen Goldregionen*, in: C. BERGER/G. CLERC/N. GRIMAL (eds.), *Hommages à Jean Leclant, BdE 106:2*, Paris 1994, pp. 411–417. For the later periods, see e.g. I. HOFMANN, *op. cit.*; M. KRAUSE, *Blemmyer*, in: *LÄ I*, cols. 827f.; R. HERZOG, *Bedja*, in: *LÄ I*, cols. 676f.; K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die Medja in altägyptischen Quellen*, in: *SAK 36*, 2007, pp. 391f., 405; H. BARNARD, *Eastern Desert Ware: Traces of the Inhabitants of the Eastern Deserts in Egypt and Sudan During the 4th–6th Centuries CE*, *British Archaeological Reports International Series 1824*, Oxford 2008, pp. 9–17; *Id.* *The archaeology of pastoral nomads between the Nile and the Red Sea*, in: J. SZUCHMAN (ed.), *Nomads, Tribes, and the State in the Ancient Near East. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives, OI Seminars 5*, Chicago 2009, pp. 19–22, with further references. For a linguistic and thus also ethnic continuum from the *mḏḏj.w* through the Blemmyes up to the Bedja, see now also R. EL-SAYED, *rḳ n Mḏḏj. iw – lingua blemmyica – tu-bedawie. Ein Sprachenkontinuum im Areal der nubischen Ostwüste und seine (sprach-)historischen Implikationen*, in: *SAK 32*, 2004, pp. 351–362.

³⁹ C. NÄSER, *Ethnoarchäologie, Analogiebildung und Nomadismusforschung. Eine Einführung mit einer Fallstudie aus Nordostafrika*, in: J. GERTEL (ed.), *Mitteilungen des SFB „Differenz und Integration“ 8: Methoden als Aspekte der Wissenskonsstruktion. Fallstudien zur Nomadismusforschung, Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 17*, 2005, pp. 17–42, and EAD., *Ethnoarchaeology, analogical reasoning, the question of universals – and the archaeology of nomadism*, in: S. HAUSER (ed.), *The Visibility of Nomads and Seasonal Occupation in the Archaeological Record: Multidisciplinary Approaches to a Methodological Problem. Nomaden und Sesshafte*, Wiesbaden (in press), for a more detailed argumentation of this point.

⁴⁰ Of the three named designations, only *jbh.t* had already been mentioned in an Old Kingdom source, namely the biographical inscription of Weni; see K. ZIBELIUS, *Afrikanische Orts- und Völkernamen in hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Texten, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B 1*, Wiesbaden

closest interactions⁴¹. All other Nubians were still subsumed under the term *nḥsj.w*⁴².

Assuming that the topographical onomasticon of the texts mirrors the perception and the interests of the Egyptians, it is possible to detect a trajectory which reflects the structure and the developments of Egyptian-Nubian interactions through time. In the earlier Old Kingdom, the extraction of labour force and raw materials for the thriving Egyptian economy was the primary motivation on the Egyptian side. With the weakening of the central administration towards the end of the Old Kingdom, the assertion of Egyptian interests in Nubia could not any longer be based on force. Consequently, the Egyptian expedition leaders and recruiting officers developed an interest in the differentiation of the Nubian cultural groups and the territories which they inhabited, as this sociogeographical knowledge helped them to find their way through Nubia. It was then that for the first time Nubians had to be recognized, if not as cultural equals, at least as social beings and active agents in certain practical settings⁴³. In the Intermediate Periods, fragmented power relations and divided interests made provincial rulers turn to Nubia for partners ready to trade and to serve as mercenaries. Both in the First and the Second Intermediate Period, Nubians appear with their own cultural equipment in

Egypt, certainly having come of their own accord and as free agents. The resulting interactions were not limited to the socioeconomic sphere, they also entered into the self-representation of the protagonists on both sides, providing us with new categories of historical source material. Of course, these facets do not filter through as far as the royal documents of the earlier Old and the Middle Kingdom, where they remain unmentioned. But the strictly regulated and controlled contacts of these periods, especially the assumed large-scale economic exploitation of Nubia, also do not figure in these topic texts, making their scope and mechanisms remarkably hard to grasp.

The Area of the First Cataract

As noted in the introduction, the present state of research and publication does not permit a detailed or even approximately comprehensive description of Egyptian-Nubian relations in the region of the First Cataract. Still, the available evidence allows to rate the area as a specific contact zone, which deviates in its characteristics from the rest of Egypt. The landscape of the cataract was – and still is – highly marked by the different levels of Egyptian-Nubian contacts

1972, pp. 1f., 74f. For this toponym, see also K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die Kubanstele Ramses' II. und die nubischen Goldregionen*, in: C. BERGER/G. CLERC/N. GRIMAL (eds.), *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, BdE 106:2, Paris 1994, pp. 411–417; EAD., *Die Medja in altägyptischen Quellen*, in: SAK 36, 2007, pp. 404f.; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 106, with note 8. For *ḥ(w)šg*, see K. ZIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, p. 72. For *wb3.t-sp.t*, see K. ZIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, p. 104 and a further mention in the annals of Amenemhet II not yet known then; for the latter K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die ägyptische Expansion nach Nubien. Eine Darlegung der Grundfaktoren, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 78, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 98; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 102, with further references. Apropos of the extending range of localities occurring in Middle Kingdom sources, cf. also the ten toponyms on the stela of Sesostri I, erected by his general Mentuhotep in Buhen, today in the Egyptian Museum Florence, no. 2540; see C. OBSOMER, *Sésostri I^{er}. Étude chronologique et historique du règne, Connaissance de l'Égypte Ancienne* 5, Bruxelles 1995, pp. 676–681, with further references. The trajectory towards a greater diversification and detailedness of the place-names occurring in the Egyptian source material continued into the subsequent New Kingdom. For this, cf. K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die Kubanstele Ramses' II. und die nubischen Goldregionen*, in: C. BERGER/G. CLERC/N. GRIMAL (eds.), *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, BdE 106:2, Paris 1994; for the toponyms *jk.t* and *brhj*, see already K. ZIBELIUS, *Afrikanische Orts- und Völkernamen in hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Texten, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 1, Wiesbaden 1972, pp. 95f., 108.

⁴¹ Cf. G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 93–98, 101–108, 110, 117–120. This compilation can be extended by several documents, among them the newly discovered inscription in the tomb of Sobeknakht at el-

Kab; for this see V. DAVIES, *Kush in Egypt: a new historical inscription*, in: *Sudan & Nubia* 7, 2003, pp. 52–54. S. GIULIANI, *Medja sources in the Old Kingdom*, in: *Discussions in Egyptology* 42, 1998, pp. 41–54, is certainly not right in stating that “starting from the end of the Middle Kingdom/III Intermediate Period, the exclusive presence of the term *Md3wy* [sic] came into use in concomitance with the disappearance of [...] the place-name *Md3*” and “that the place-name *Md3* [...] disappeared at the end of the VI dynasty, and never appeared again in the following centuries”. Rather, the toponym continues to be used, though sparsely, throughout the Middle into the New Kingdom; see K. ZIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, pp. 133f. For the ethnonym *md3j.w*, see now also K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die Medja in altägyptischen Quellen*, in: SAK 36, 2007, pp. 391, 395. The oldest known instance of the two designations *md3j.w* and *w3w3tj.w* is on a fragment of an inscribed cornice from Naqada of probably First Intermediate Period date; see H. G. FISCHER, *Inscriptions from the Coptite Nome, Dynasties VI–XI*, *AnOr* 40, Rome 1964, pp. 50, 70–73, Pl. 20; K. ZIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, p. 7, II H 10; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 101.

⁴² An exception is the equally general term *stj.w*, which rarely occurs in military titles from the Old Kingdom onwards; for the Middle Kingdom evidence see G. MEURER, *Nubier*, pp. 108, 110, 120.

⁴³ I would like to propose this point as the recognisable start of a development which A. LOPRIENO, *Topos und Mimesis. Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur*, ÄA 48, Wiesbaden 1988, pp. 36f. – partly drawing on the same sources, but generally arguing within the framework of Egyptian literature – describes as “jenseits des Topos [...] bahnt sich die Beschäftigung mit dem individuell bewußteren Fremden an”, but the beginning of which he perceives only somewhat later, in the First Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom.

throughout all times from prehistory onwards. These interactions must also have figured prominently in the collective memory and the everyday experiences of its inhabitants. What evidence is there for the periods considered in the present contribution?

The excavations in the settlement of Elephantine continue to produce varying amounts of Nubian ceramic material from the late Fourth Millennium BC onwards, throughout all later periods⁴⁴. On the adjacent cemetery, the physical presence of Nubians can only be traced from the late Old Kingdom up to the Late Period⁴⁵. Anthropological analysis showed that up to 10 % of the investigated skeletal material displayed a Nubian influence, which was especially strong among members of the lower social stratum and women⁴⁶. The associated funerary practices indicate a high degree of assimilation and integration into the local Egyptian society⁴⁷. The original cultural affiliation of these individuals can only be inferred from the ceramic evidence directly or indirectly associated with them. By 'indirect association', a mere chronological correlation is meant: from the late Old up to the Middle Kingdom, the Nubian pottery on Elephantine is limited to C-Group related material. On the basis of this somewhat shaky evidence, a C-Group descent for the Nubians present on the island in these periods can be suggested. A second Nubian component can only be traced from the late Twelfth and early Thirteenth Dynasty, corresponding to stratum 13 of the island's archaeological sequence. It is then that,

to quote DIETRICH RAUE⁴⁸, "the complete spectrum of the pottery production of the Pan-Grave culture is present". So far, the recovered and published data do not suffice to describe the presence of Nubians on Elephantine more precisely and in greater detail. In the most general terms, their appearance is interpreted as the result of peaceful and slow migration processes⁴⁹. Beyond the above-quoted evidence from the cemetery, the question of their occupational, economic and social integration into local society remains open; it is merely by intuition and conjecture that they are identified as servants and wives⁵⁰.

An interesting point is that so far only very little ceramic material of the later C-Group phases has been recovered on Elephantine⁵¹. If we subscribe to the somewhat problematic methodological construct that the Nubian groups used their traditional pottery as a medium of cultural self-assertion and -identification at least for some time after their arrival, and that in turn the existence of culturally diagnostic ceramic material indicates the physical presence of members of this culture, it appears that at some point during the Middle Kingdom the dominating agents on the Nubian side changed, with the Pan-Grave largely replacing the C-Group people. On the regional level, the validity of this observation is confirmed by the evidence from Kubanija and its environs, outlined in the following paragraph. At the current state of recovery, the material from Hierakonpolis also conforms to it, with the C-Group cemetery HK27 dated well into the Middle Kingdom and the two Pan-Grave burial

⁴⁴ See S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Beispiele nubischer Keramik aus Kontexten des Hohen Alten Reiches aus Elephantine*, in: D. MENDEL/U. CLAUDI (eds.), *Ägypten im Afro-Orientalischen Kontext. Aufsätze zur Archäologie, Geschichte und Sprache eines unbegrenzten Raumes. Gedenkschrift Peter Behrens, Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere Sondernummer 1991*, Köln 1991, pp. 337–350; *Id.* *Town and state in the early Old Kingdom. A view from Elephantine*, in: J. SPENCER (ed.), *Aspects of Early Egypt*, London 1996, p. 111; D. RAUE, *Nubians on Elephantine Island*, in: *Sudan & Nubia 6*, 2002, pp. 20–24; the latter with the most detailed discussion of the quantitative and chronological distribution of the material.

⁴⁵ In general on this site so far only S. J. SEIDLMEYER in: W. KAISER ET AL., *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. Neunter/Zehnter Grabungsbericht*, in: *MDAIK 38*, 1982, pp. 284–296, without reference to the Nubian segment.

⁴⁶ See F. W. RÖSING, *The negroid population component in the border city of Aswan from the Predynastic to the Late Period*, in: S. SCHOSKE/H. ALTENMÜLLER/D. WILDUNG (eds.), *Akten des vierten Internationalen Ägyptologen-Kongresses München 1985, Band 1: Methoden und Geschichte der Ägyptologie: Informatik, Keramologie, Anthropologie*, in: *Beihefte SAK 1*, Hamburg 1988, pp. 310f.; *Id.*, *Qubbet el Hawa und Elephantine: Zur Bevölkerungsgeschichte von Ägypten*, Stuttgart/New York 1990, pp. 163–175, 220; S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Nubier im ägyptischen Kontext im Alten und Mittleren Reich*, in: S. LEDER/B. STRECK (eds.), *Akkulturation und Selbstbehauptung. Mitteilungen des SFB „Dif-*

ferenz und Integration" 2. Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 4, Halle 2002, pp. 106f., for the identification of an additional Nubian population element, previously recognized as "Altbevölkerung".

⁴⁷ See S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 106f.

⁴⁸ D. RAUE, *Nubians on Elephantine Island*, in: *Sudan & Nubia 6*, 2002, p. 22, with note 11. Beyond the evidence cited there, cf. also C. VON PILGRIM, *Elephantine XVIII*, pp. 336f., Fig. 149k.

⁴⁹ F. W. RÖSING, *The negroid population component in the border city of Aswan from the Predynastic to the Late Period*, in: S. SCHOSKE/H. ALTENMÜLLER/D. WILDUNG (eds.), *Akten des vierten Internationalen Ägyptologen-Kongresses München 1985, Band 1: Methoden und Geschichte der Ägyptologie: Informatik, Keramologie, Anthropologie*, in: *Beihefte SAK 1*, Hamburg 1988, p. 311; *Id.*, *Qubbet el Hawa und Elephantine: Zur Bevölkerungsgeschichte von Ägypten*, Stuttgart/New York 1990, pp. 173–175.

⁵⁰ E.g. by G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 91; S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Beispiele nubischer Keramik aus Kontexten des Hohen Alten Reiches aus Elephantine*, in: D. MENDEL/U. CLAUDI (eds.), *Ägypten im Afro-Orientalischen Kontext. Aufsätze zur Archäologie, Geschichte und Sprache eines unbegrenzten Raumes. Gedenkschrift Peter Behrens, Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere Sondernummer 1991*, Köln 1991, p. 347; D. RAUE, *Nubians on Elephantine Island*, in: *Sudan & Nubia 6*, 2002, pp. 23f., for more evidence-based discussions of this point.

⁵¹ See for this D. RAUE, *op. cit.*, pp. 22f.

grounds HK47 and HK21A being somewhat more recent⁵². DIETRICH RAUE⁵³ convincingly correlates this replacement with the construction of the Egyptian fortresses in Lower Nubia during that period. Eventually, both phenomena indicate the strong interest of the Pharaonic state of the high Middle Kingdom in a tight control over riverain Lower Nubia. It remains an open question why the by then long-established system of C-Group people migrating north and entering Egyptian service was halted and their desert neighbours were recruited instead. But the quoted evidence clearly suggests that at that time new networks were formed, which continued uninterrupted also into the following Second Intermediate Period. At least, the C-Group people remain largely absent from the scene of Egyptian-Nubian interactions on Egyptian territory from that point onwards.

Turning to the wider region of the First Cataract, the long-known C-Group cemetery at Kubanija North provides valuable testimony supplementing the evidence from Elephantine. The burial ground is situated on the western bank of the Nile, about 15 km downriver from Elephantine. In its oldest phase, the onset of which has been dated to the late First Intermediate Period, it represents a typical C-Group burial ground⁵⁴. It was frequented by a small community, which can be estimated to about 20 to 50 people⁵⁵. Unfortunately, there is no anthropological analysis of the skeletal material. But several children's burials indicate that this community did not exclusively consist of men who served, e. g. as mercenaries, but also included women and children. The reasons for their settling on Egyptian territory cannot be determined from the available evidence. However, they came with a typical C-Group cultural repertoire, which at first they also maintained under the new conditions – for exactly how long is hard to tell, since a detailed chronology of the (find) material has still to be established.

The successive cultural assimilation of the Kubanija people, at least in the funerary sphere, can be

closely followed through the later phases of the cemetery. One of the first elements to be abandoned was the typical C-Group grave architecture. The 'transitional' part of the cemetery already shows Egyptian grave types, i. e. rectangular burial pits lacking (durable) superstructures. It should be noted that the abandonment of the typical Nubian stone ring also put paid to the possibility of performing the most important and characteristic feature of traditional C-Group burial practice, namely the deposition of offerings in association with it. While also in this phase the body position changed from flexed to extended, the hide wrappings and the orientation of the burials were still maintained. A similar trend, i. e. the longest persistence of body-related attributes, can be witnessed in the Nubian burials on the above-discussed cemetery of Elephantine⁵⁶.

What do these observations mean? They belong to a hitherto scarcely researched sphere, namely the everyday realities of cultural interactions between Nubians and Egyptians in actual contact situations. The example above is given here primarily in order to demonstrate that the archaeological record offers avenues to access this sphere. It will only be possible to reach a conclusive interpretation of the outlined development after a detailed investigation integrating all elements of burial practices at Kubanija. To open up a perspective: it is possible that the grave architecture was of subordinate significance in the cultural repertoire of the Kubanija Nubians and thus easily adaptable, or else that its specific importance resulted in the search for new expressions and the eager adoption of Egyptian forms. Reasons for the latter could lie in the adoption of Egyptian religious concepts and the performances and architectural forms associated with them, or else in a socially motivated orientation towards Egyptian practices⁵⁷.

We only have an incomplete picture of the presence of Pan-Grave groups in the wider area of the First Cataract. A growing number of sites with diagnostic

⁵² See S. GIULIANI in R. FRIEDMAN ET AL., *Nubians at Hierakonpolis*, in: *Sudan & Nubia* 5, 2001, pp. 40, 42f., and in R. FRIEDMAN ET AL., *The Nubian Cemetery at Hierakonpolis, Egypt. Results of the 2003 Season*, in: *Sudan & Nubia* 8, 2004, p. 54, as well as S. GIULIANI, *Nubian evidence at Hierakonpolis*, in: I. CANEVA/A. ROCCATI (eds.), *Acta Nubica. Proceedings of the X International Conference of Nubian Studies. Rome 9–14 September 2002*, Rome 2006, p. 223.

⁵³ D. RAUE, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ See H. JUNGER, *Bericht über die Grabungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien auf den Friedhöfen von El-Kubanieh Nord Winter 1910–1911*, *DÖAW* 64, Wien 1920; for the dating, cf. M. BIETAK, *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, *DÖAW* 97, Wien 1968, p. 37; S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *Nubier im ägypt-*

tischen Kontext im Alten und Mittleren Reich, in: S. LEDER/B. STRECK (eds.), *Akkulturation und Selbstbehauptung. Mitteilungen des SFB "Differenz und Integration" 2. Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte* 4, Halle 2002, p. 105.

⁵⁵ These figures are based on the total occupation of the cemetery and calculated on the basis of the formula by G. ACSÁDI/J. NEMESKE'RI, *History of Human Life Span and Mortality*, Budapest 1970, pp. 65–67; for the latter, see also F. W. RÖSING, *Qubbet el Hawa und Elephantine. Zur Bevölkerungsgeschichte von Ägypten*, Stuttgart/New York 1990, p. 115.

⁵⁶ S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 106f.

⁵⁷ For an equally summarizing argument along somewhat different lines, see S. J. SEIDLMEYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 105f.

finds is being reported by the survey projects currently active in the region⁵⁸. But only one of them has so far been recorded in detail. Cemetery WK11 at Nag el-Qarmila, slightly north of Kubanija, comprises an estimated number of 30 graves. Some of them were excavated and found to be heavily plundered and disturbed⁵⁹. On the basis of the pottery collected from the site surface, the occupation was dated to the late Twelfth to early Thirteenth Dynasty. A second, long-known site is the small Pan-Grave burial ground within Cemetery 7 at Shellal, about 8 km south of Elephantine, on the east bank of the Nile in the cataract area proper. It consists of some 20 graves and several deposit pits. Its exact dating is still outstanding, but it can safely be assumed to belong to the late Middle Kingdom and/or the Second Intermediate Period, too.

The complex picture of Egyptian-Nubian interactions is further expanded by the fact that beside the *de facto* evidence of Nubians being present in Egypt throughout all periods of Pharaonic history, we also have some access to the other side of the figural coin, namely the Egyptian provisions for separation and differentiation. In the area of the First Cataract, they are materially present in form of several fortification works. From textual and archaeological evidence it is known that they consisted of at least three elements: the town fortress on Elephantine, the fortress at *snm.t* and a monumental brick wall securing the main traffic route from the southern to the northern end of the cataract⁶⁰.

Certainly, Elephantine took a key role in the administration of the Egyptian border with Nubia – but unfortunately, for the discussed periods the archaeological and textual evidence is still very fragmentary and, moreover, incompletely published⁶¹. A specific corpus of material is constituted by several highly fragmentary papyri of Sixth Dynasty date, which mention contingents from *mdj* and *w3w3.t* in an uncertain context⁶². One fragment probably relates to border controls, stating “[When] the Nubians go north to the place where the officials are [lacuna] you did [not] have me brought a copy of [lacuna; probably some list or other]”⁶³. Notwithstanding their unsatisfactory state of preservation, these papyri still allow the conclusion that in the late Old Kingdom, Elephantine housed an institution which was dealing with security and military issues such as those reported.

Apparently the island continued to fulfil similar functions in the Middle Kingdom. Semna despatch no. 5 is the copy of a document “brought from the fortress of Elephantine”, relating that seven (?) *mdj.w* came from the desert seeking employment in Egypt, but were sent back⁶⁴. Further, in his funerary biography the mayor and nomarch of the First Upper Egyptian Nome of the time of Sesostri I, Sarenput, states that the tributes (*jn.w*) of the Nubian chiefs were reported to him. Also in the Middle Kingdom, according to textual evidence, the fortifications on Elephantine were renewed – although little is known about their nature and lay-out in this period⁶⁵.

⁵⁸ See S. GIULIANI and P. STOREMYR in the present volume. For further localities of Pan-Grave finds north of Aswan, see G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 85.

⁵⁹ See M. C. GATTO/S. GIULIANI, *Nubians in Upper Egypt: results of the survey in the Aswan-Kom Ombo region (2005–2006)*, in: B. GRATIEN (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Francis Geus, CRIPEL 26*, Lille 2006–2007, pp. 123f., Figs. 5–8; M. C. PITRE/M. C. GATTO/S. GIULIANI, *Nag el-Qarmila, Aswan (Egypt), season 2007*, in: *Bioarchaeology of the Near East 1*, 2007, pp. 59–61, Fig. 1, and the contribution by S. GIULIANI in the present volume.

⁶⁰ Another fortress may have been situated in the Kubanija area: the Ramesseum Onomastion preserves a fragmentary place name, ...*dd*, after the mention of *snm.t* and Elephantine; see A. H. GARDINER, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, Oxford 1947, p. 11, Pl. II.A.; L. BORCHARDT, *Ägyptische Festungen an der Zweiten Nilschwelle*, Leipzig 1923, p. 25, note 4, suggested to identify it with remains of buildings downstream of the Qubbet el-Hawa.

⁶¹ For the earlier, i. e. Early Dynastic and early Old Kingdom periods, see in summary S. J. SEIDLMAYER, *Town and state in the early Old Kingdom. A view from Elephantine*, in: J. SPENCER (ed.), *Aspects of Early Egypt*, London 1996, pp. 108–127, and C. VOGEL, *Ägyptische Festungen und Garnisonen bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches*, HÄB 46, Hildesheim 2004, pp. 206–210.

⁶² Today in the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection Berlin and in the National and University Library Strasbourg; see G. MÖLLER, *Hieratische Papyrus aus den Königlichen Museen zu*

Berlin. Vol. 3: Schriftstücke der VI. Dynastie aus Elephantine. Zaubersprüche für Mutter und Kind. Ostraka, Leipzig 1911, Pls. 3: pBerlin 8869, 7: pStrasbourg Ba. For discussions of these texts, see e. g. T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *Ägypten und Nubien*, Lund 1941, pp. 12f.; P. C. SMITHER, *An Old Kingdom letter concerning the crimes of Count Sabni*, in: *JEA* 28, 1942, pp. 16–19; K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Die ägyptische Expansion nach Nubien. Eine Darlegung der Grundfaktoren, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 78, Wiesbaden 1988, pp. 115f., with note 473.

⁶³ G. MÖLLER, *op. cit.*, Pl. 7: pStrasbourg Ba, verso, 2–3.

⁶⁴ P. C. SMITHER, *The Semnah dispatches*, in: *JEA* 31, 1945, p. 9, Pls. 5, 5a.

⁶⁵ See C. VOGEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 63f., 211, F. GOMÄÄ, *Die Besiedlung Ägyptens während des Mittleren Reiches. I. Oberägypten und das Fayyum, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Reihe B 66/1, Wiesbaden 1986, p. 26; T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *op. cit.*, pp. 75f. Cf. also S. J. SEIDLMAYER, *Town and state in the early Old Kingdom. A view from Elephantine*, in: J. SPENCER (ed.), *Aspects of Early Egypt*, London 1996, pp. 108–127, on the development and the importance of Elephantine as a fortified administrative center at the onset of the Old Kingdom. Note his remark, S. J. SEIDLMAYER, *op. cit.*, p. 113, that “functionally (or perhaps only nominally), it seems, Elephantine maintained its status as a fortress [...] in the Middle Kingdom and later [...], although nothing in its architectural appearance, especially when compared to the Nubian forts, would have suggested such a role”.

The second fortification element in the First Cataract is a rather unusual construction: a monumental brick wall, extending from Aswan to Konosso over a length of c. 7 km⁶⁶. At its base, it is between 3.75 and 5.25 m wide. In its best preserved parts, it still has a height of c. 5 m, but originally it may have risen twice as high. Allegedly, the purpose of this wall was to protect the portage road connecting the harbours at both ends of the cataract. Its age has been widely debated. Most conclusively, HORST JARITZ⁶⁷ argued that it was built in the reign of Sesostris II, thus being roughly contemporary to the Middle Kingdom city wall on Elephantine⁶⁸.

The third element, the fortress of *snm.t*, is only known from written sources⁶⁹. Though often assumed to have been situated on Bigga island⁷⁰, it has also been located on the eastern bank of the Nile near Shellal⁷¹ and even identified with the above-described wall⁷². Against the latter suggestion argue several seal impressions from Uronarti and Semna South: one of them explicitly names a *mnnw*, i. e. fortress *snm.t*, several others mention a treasury and a granary of

snm.t, testifying to the existence of such institutions, which can only have been part of a fortress proper⁷³. Apart from these sealings, the oldest mention of the fortress *snm.t* derives from the late Middle Kingdom Ramesseum Onomasticon, there, however, without the specification *mnnw*⁷⁴. It was the erroneous reading of EDEL's circumstantial interpretation of the biographical inscriptions in the tomb of Sarenput I on the Qubbet el-Hawa which established the impression that *snm.t*, which is not actually mentioned there, was the main place of trading and collecting tribute at the southern gates to Egypt⁷⁵. In the early Eighteenth Dynasty, the fortress is again named in a tax list copied in the tombs of the viziers Useramun and Rekhmire at Thebes⁷⁶. According to the latest analyses, this text, which in both cases is associated with the famous "Duties of the Vizier", was composed at the very onset of the New Kingdom, in the reign of Ahmose⁷⁷. The better preserved copy in the tomb of Rekhmire enumerates the payments (*jp.w*) to the office of the southern vizier by over eighty Upper Egyptian officials. The command-

⁶⁶ Seminally on this structure H. JARITZ, *The investigation of the ancient wall extending from Aswan to Philae. First preliminary report*, in: *MDAIK* 43, 1986, pp. 67–74; *Id.*, *The investigation of the ancient wall extending from Aswan to Philae. Second preliminary report*, in: *MDAIK* 49, 1993, pp. 107–132; cf. also the summary in C. VOGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

⁶⁷ H. JARITZ, *The investigation of the ancient wall extending from Aswan to Philae. First preliminary report*, in: *MDAIK* 43, 1986, pp. 73f. and *Id.*, *The investigation of the ancient wall extending from Aswan to Philae. Second preliminary report*, in: *MDAIK* 49, 1993, pp. 107–109, 112–114.

⁶⁸ Contra C. VOGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 65, 176, 268.

⁶⁹ Apart from being the name of the fortress, *snm.t* as a topographical term seems to denote the wider border area at the southern end of the First Cataract; see H. JARITZ, *The investigation of the ancient wall extending from Aswan to Philae. Second preliminary report*, in: *MDAIK* 49, 1993, pp. 115–117. The oldest occurrence in this meaning is in two epithets of the cataract god Khnum, namely First or Lord of *snm.t*, found on several inscribed architectural elements from the reigns of Antef Wahankh and Mentuhotep Sankhkare from Elephantine; see F. GOMAA, *op. cit.*, p. 14 and H. JARITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 116, note 43. For further references, see F. GOMAA, *op. cit.*, pp. 14f.

⁷⁰ For the implicit equation of Bigga, Σηνίς and *snm.t*, see the discussion by H. JARITZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–119. This identification is favoured e. g. by A. H. GARDINER, *An ancient list of the fortresses of Nubia*, in: *JEA* 3, 1916, pp. 184–192, pp. 186, 191.

⁷¹ A. H. GARDINER, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, Oxford 1947, p. 266*; C. VOGEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 176f., Fig. 37, with the most convincing argumentation.

⁷² L. BORCHARDT, *op. cit.*, p. 25, note 4; T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *op. cit.*, p. 81, note 3; H. JARITZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–119. See the latter and G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 50 with note 3 for summaries of the discussion.

⁷³ See G. T. MARTIN, *Egyptian Administrative and Private Name Signs*, Oxford 1971, p. 145, nos. 1873f., Pls. 44.17, 45.13; L. V. ŽABKARJ I. ŽABKAR, *Semna South. A preliminary report on the 1966–68 excavations of the University of Chicago Oriental Institute Ex-*

pedition to Sudanese Nubia, in: *JARCE* 19, 1982, pp. 18, 36: KE-46, KE-7.

⁷⁴ A. H. GARDINER, *op. cit.*, Pl. IIA. For the date of the sealings, cf. the observation by L. V. ŽABKAR/J. J. ŽABKAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 19f., that all associated royal specimens bear the names of Twelfth Dynasty rulers only, while the private sealings are also of Twelfth Dynasty character.

⁷⁵ See E. EDEL, *Zur Lesung und Bedeutung einiger Stellen in der biographischen Inschrift S3-rnpwt's I.* (*Urk. VII* 1,20; 2,1; 2,4), in: *ZÄS* 87, 1962, pp. 96–107; *Id.*, *Zur Familie des Sn-m-sjj nach seinen Grabinschriften auf der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan*, in: *ZÄS* 90, 1963, p. 11; cf. also the latest edition of the two texts by N. FAVRY, *La double version de la biographie de Sarenput I^{er} à Qoubbet al-Haoua*, in: *BIFAO* 103, 2003, pp. 223, 232, Fig. 1, line 5.2, cols. 3f. One of Sarenput's titles is "who[se name] is on the sealings as overseer of all *g3.wt*-tributes for the Door of the Foreign Lands which are (for) the Royal Adornment, to whom the *jn.w*-tributes of *md3* are reported as *b3k.wt*-tributes of the chiefs of the foreign lands." E. EDEL identifies *r3-3 h3s.wt*, the Door of the Foreign Lands, with the border fortress at the First Cataract, but in this context only speaks of Elephantine. As the tributes are destined for the *hkr nsw*, he thinks that they consisted in gold. Only in the later readings, e. g. by B. KEMP in B. G. TRIGGER ET AL., *Ancient Egypt. A Social History*, Cambridge 1983, p. 135; G. MEURER, *Nubier*, p. 50, note 3; Sarenput's occupation is related to *snm.t*, though – to repeat it – the fortress is mentioned neither by Sarenput nor by E. EDEL. Cf. E. F. MORRIS, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt's New Kingdom*, PÄ 22, Leiden/Boston 2005, pp. 196f., 203f., 283f. on the importance of *snm.t* as a border checkpoint.

⁷⁶ For Useramun, TT131, see E. DZIOBEK, *User-Amun*, pp. 88f., Pl. 75. For Rekhmire, TT100, see N. de G. DAVIES, *Rekh-mi-Re*, pp. 32–36, 106, Pl. 29.

⁷⁷ See G. P. F. VAN DEN BOORN, *The Duties of the Vizier: Civil Administration in the Early New Kingdom*, *Studies in Egyptology*, London/New York 1988, pp. 19f., note 42, 212f.; E. F. MORRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 87, note 221.

er of *snm.t* is surpassed in the height of his payments only by his colleague from Elephantine. Thus, at the beginning of the New Kingdom, or whenever the list was up to date, both officials must have made exceptionally good profit from the dealings of their fortresses. Interestingly, *snm.t* also figures in the sources of the later New Kingdom. In a bill of indictment from the time of Ramesses V, a priest of Khnum is accused of having sold a Mnevis calf to the *md3j.w*, in this case probably desert scouts, of the fortress⁷⁸. Thus, *snm.t* was still manned in this period – though its actual function is unclear due to the dearth of information.

And Beyond

If the region of the First Cataract constituted a cultural, though not at all times a political, border – what do we find beyond? The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that the area immediately south of the cataract was flooded by the first Aswan dam without prior archaeological salvage work. Only later did GEORGE A. REISNER survey the banks of the new lake, recording among other finds a vast multi-period cemetery on the east bank at Shellal⁷⁹. This famous, but hitherto little-studied, Cemetery 7 includes a small Pan-Grave burial ground with some 20 graves⁸⁰ and a New Kingdom cemetery with 15 chamber tombs⁸¹. Its major part, however, form burials at-

tributed to the A-Group. Thus, it was rather in the Fourth Millennium BC than in the periods discussed here that the location served as a prominent burial ground.

Beyond Shellal, matters become problematic, as the settlement history of northern Lower Nubia has not yet been studied systematically. Some 20 km upstream of the First Cataract, at Meris Markos, a small C-Group cemetery of apparently Middle Kingdom date has been identified⁸². Another 20 km south, at Ginari, two cemeteries of late C-Group and Pan-Grave affiliation were recorded⁸³. More densely populated territory only starts another 40 km upstream in the wide plain at the exit of the Wadi Allaqi. There, over 40 C-Group cemeteries were identified on a stretch of some 50 km length, among them the extensive burial grounds of Gerf Hussein 72:200 and Dakka 101 with over 500 graves each⁸⁴. Evidence for Pan-Grave presence is scarce also in this region⁸⁵.

Realities of Egyptian-Nubian Interactions in the Area of the First Cataract

What can we conclude from this rather patchy evidence? Certainly one thing: the realities of the interactions between Egyptians and Nubians in the region of the First Cataract, their knowledge of each other

⁷⁸ pTurin 1887, rt. 1, 1–3; see W. PLEYTE/F. ROSSI, *Papyrus de Turin*, Leiden 1869–1876, Pl. 57; A. H. GARDINER, *Ramesseide Administrative Documents*, Oxford 1948, pp. 74 f. For discussions of this source, see e.g. E. F. MORRIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 785, 791–793; I. HOFMANN, *Beitrag zur Herkunft der Pfannengräber-Leute*, in: ZDMG, Suppl. I, 1969, p. 1121, note 65. For other New Kingdom references, see E. F. MORRIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 660, 665–672, 793 f., 804: note 2, 810: note 26.

⁷⁹ G. A. REISNER, *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia, Report for 1907–1908: Archaeological Report*, Cairo 1910, pp. 17–72, Pls. 1–9, 60 f., 63–66, 68–72, plans 1, 2, 9, 10.

⁸⁰ G. A. REISNER, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–56, Pls. 70.b, 1–4, 6, plans 9 f. Cf. also M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Sayala-Nubien 1961–1965. Denkmäler der C-Gruppe und der Pan-Gräber-Kultur*, DÖAW 92, Wien 1966, p. 65; ID., *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, pp. 42, 44.

⁸¹ G. A. REISNER, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–72, Pls. 9.a, e, 64.j–k, 65.c.1–4, 11, 12, d.4, 70.c.1, 2, 4–6, 71.a.3, b.1–8, 71.c.1–2, 6, 8, 10, 12–13, 72.a, c, plan 9.

⁸² Cemetery 41:500 with 31 recorded graves; see M. BIETAK, *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, p. 44. Several further sites in between, namely cemeteries 14, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30 and 41:423 and a settlement at Dabod, display C-Group and/or Pan-Grave traits. Not least due to their summary documentation and publication they are difficult to assess. Therefore, though mentioned by B. G. TRIGGER, *History and Settlement in Lower Nubia*, Yale University Publications in

Anthropology 69, New Haven 1965, p. 175, they are not discussed by M. BIETAK, *op. cit.*

⁸³ Cemetery 58:100 with 28 graves and cemetery 58:1 with 18 graves; see M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Sayala-Nubien 1961–1965. Denkmäler der C-Gruppe und der Pan-Gräber-Kultur*, DÖAW 92, Wien 1966, p. 65; ID., *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, pp. 44–46. Again in the area in between, several further sites with C-Group and Pan-Grave characteristics, namely cemeteries 45, 48 and 50, were identified, but are difficult to assess; see B. G. TRIGGER, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁸⁴ See B. G. TRIGGER, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, map 2, 100, map 3, 176–178 and M. BIETAK, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–68, 85 f., Fig. 1.

⁸⁵ Pan-Graves were recorded at Dakka 101 and possibly at Dakka 98:1000; see M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Sayala-Nubien 1961–1965. Denkmäler der C-Gruppe und der Pan-Gräber-Kultur*, DÖAW 92, Wien 1966, p. 67; ID., *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, p. 60. Traits of the Pan-Grave culture were noted in individual burials at Moalla 68, Dakka 97, Qurta 118 and Wadi Allaqi 114; see M. BIETAK, *Ausgrabungen in Sayala-Nubien 1961–1965. Denkmäler der C-Gruppe und der Pan-Gräber-Kultur*, DÖAW 92, Wien 1966, pp. 65, 67; ID., *Studien zur Chronologie der Nubischen C-Gruppe*, DÖAW 97, Wien 1968, pp. 46, 56, 62, 67. Only the southern limit of the area in question displays a somewhat stronger Pan-Grave presence with the Pan-Grave camp at Maharraqa East and cemeteries Sayala 135, B and G/6–8.

and contacts with each other, were multifaceted and complex.

First, the Egyptian inhabitants of the area had a long-standing, direct and thus individualized experience with Nubians. The ceramic evidence from Elephantine proves continuous contacts from the late Fourth Millennium onwards, even though their scope and content are hard to judge. At the latest during the late Old Kingdom, the presence of a Nubian population segment, probably of C-Group descent, can be physically proven on the island. It seems to have been largely integrated into the local Egyptian society and displays only isolated traits of its original cultural affiliation. A little later we find a C-Group community at Kubanija North, in this case segregated from its Egyptian neighbours at least in the funerary sphere. The reasons for their immigration are unclear. Whether the Kubanija Nubians – and the new finds at Hierakonpolis 27 – are part of the same phenomenon as the Gebelein mercenaries remains to be proven. As elsewhere in Egypt, Pan-Grave people are present in the region of the First Cataract only from the late Twelfth Dynasty onwards.

On the other hand, from the late Fourth Millennium BC onwards, Elephantine was an administrative and military stronghold of the Egyptian state and closely involved in its Nubian enterprises. The leaders of the Nubian expeditions of the late Old Kingdom lived on the island, and the responsibilities of its officials included security issues, border controls and certain dealings with the tributes from the south, although exactly at what scope and in which way cannot be determined from the evidence available. In the Middle Kingdom, the fortifications on Elephantine were apparently renovated, and with the large wall through the Cataract and the fortress of *snm.t*, the regional security system was extended onto the east bank and the area south of the island. What was the purpose of these new installations? To protect the portage road and the traffic, or rather to control it and raise levy on it – as the payments enumerated in the tax lists in the tombs of the early New Kingdom viziers suggest? It is hard to imagine that *md3* groups would carry out raids into the area of the First Cataract at the heyday of the Middle Kingdom. But one way or the other, the inhabitants of the First Cataract were familiar with, and acted as important agents of, the Nubian policy of the Pharaonic state.

Thus, in the first instance we can identify two levels on which the Egyptian population of the region interacted with and perceived their southern neighbours: first, the everyday, individualized experience of Nubians living in or on the fringe of the local communities, and, second, the experience of the relations and interactions channelled by the state and its administrators. Their material manifestations were a familiar sight – over the centuries the cultural landscape of the First Cataract became densely marked in this respect; apart from the discussed fortifications, e. g. by numerous rock inscriptions relating to the Nubian experience. Thus, this level also assumed a certain everyday quality. Would the local population still have run onto the street to watch a military contingent, a group of foreigners, another caravan carrying trade goods or tributes when such groups were passing – so to speak – their doorstep daily throughout history?

Beyond this, the First Cataract evoked a third level of perception, which must have been recognized by its inhabitants as well as by its visitors: that of a liminal area. A suggestive source in this respect is the Middle Kingdom tale of the "Shipwrecked Sailor". Its narrative frame introduces a high Egyptian official, who is returning from an expedition to the south, which apparently had failed in its objective. In order to give him courage, one of his attendants tells him a marvellous adventure. He starts with the words: "Take heart, my lord! [...] We have left *w3w3.t* behind, we have passed *snm.t*; we have returned in safety; we have reached our land"⁸⁶. Here, *snm.t* is understood as the border line, or in its topographically wider sense as the "in between", a grey area which needs to be traversed in order to pass from chaos and into the ordered world⁸⁷. The feeling of *finis terrae* conveyed in this passage must have been enhanced in the actual experience by the fact that beyond the Egyptian frontier, indeed there followed a kind of waste land. The ancient travellers again reached bustling villages only after a three day journey in the plain of Gerf Hussein.

Against this background, a fourth level of experience can be inferred: that of a mutual cultural strangeness. Most openly, it finds expression in the Egyptian sources of the earlier Old Kingdom. But although the following periods brought closer day-to-day interactions and a wider variety of cultural contacts, this

⁸⁶ Translation by M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1975, p. 211.

⁸⁷ In this context it is noteworthy that the list of place names in the Golénischeff Onomasticon, compiled in the late New Kingdom,

also starts with *snm.t* as the last – respectively first – settlement on Egyptian territory; see A. H. GARDINER, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, Oxford 1947, pp. 1f., Pl. XA.

strangeness, at least in parts, persisted throughout history. On the Egyptian side, it is perpetuated by the official ideology and its material manifestations, e. g. the topic lists of conquered territories and peoples of the New Kingdom, and the variations of them produced throughout later tradition⁸⁸.

Although with the limited evidence currently available we are still far from being able to present a coherent picture of Egyptian-Nubian interactions, the existing sources suffice to show that the structure and the realities of these contacts changed through time – in significant ways, the investigation of which may shed light on the motifs as well as the consequences of these interactions for the involved parties. Notwithstanding the unbalanced database, especially in view of the textual evidence which is exclusively Egyptian, it should be borne in mind that not only the Egyptians, but also the Nubians played an active role in these encounters, shaping them according to their abilities and their interests.

Finally returning to Elephantine: how far we still are from gaining a full grasp of the historical reality is demonstrated, e. g. by our inability to appropriately appreciate and process the fact that the chiefs of the Lower Nubian district *thht* of the early New Kingdom seem to have originated from the region of the First Cataract⁸⁹. This suggestion is based on two monuments. The first is a funerary stela which was bought on Elephantine by GOLENISCHEFF and probably origi-

nates from the area. It was dedicated by a certain Ruju, who bore the title of a Great of *thht*, to his father Teti, called Djavia⁹⁰. Secondly, in a tomb on the Qubbet el-Hawa, the tomb owner Senmes calls himself the brother of the Great of *thht* Paitsi, son of the Great Ruju⁹¹. As to the ethnic affiliation of the family of Teti, Senmes and Ruju, opinions differ⁹². ELMAR EDEL⁹³ was the first to suggest their Nubian descent. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Teti only holds the honorary title of a *sib*, while Senmes is entirely without title and office – and still their descendents rise to the office of a Great of *thht*. This curious development could indeed be best explained if they were Nubians, not previously incorporated into the Egyptian administration, but chosen for the position in question exactly because of their ethnicity. If this were so, we would have to assume that in the late Second Intermediate Period and at the onset of the New Kingdom in the region of the First Cataract – on Elephantine? – there existed a Nubian population element – *mdj.w?* – whose members in at least one instance sought and were granted access to the elite necropolis on the Qubbet el-Hawa and were appointed – by whom? – to the office of a Great of *thht*. In the end, this scenario leaves us with a host of questions and inferences about the social standing of at least certain Nubian segments in the region as well as the role of the First Cataract population – be they Nubian or Egyptian – in the imperial enterprise of the Pharaonic state in Nubia in the time of the early New Kingdom.

⁸⁸ For the mentions of Nubian localities in these lists, see K. ZIBELIUS, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–24, 28–30, 38, 41–49, 59. Cf. also the unique instance of a comparable composition from the Middle Kingdom, namely the depiction of ten captives, surmounting fortified ovals with the names of vanquished regions, being handed over by the god Montu to Sesostris I on the stela of the general Montuhotep from Buhen.

⁸⁹ For *thht*, see in summary T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *Teh-khet, the cultural and sociopolitical structure of a Nubian principedom in Thutmoside times*, in: W. V. DAVIES (ed.), *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam*, London 1991, pp. 186–194.

⁹⁰ The object is now in the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts at Moscow, no. GMII I.1.a.5629. See S. I. HODJACHE/O. D. BERLEV, *Le père du fondateur de la dynastie des princes de Tjthtj en Nubie*, in: E. ENDESFELDER ET AL. (eds.), *Ägypten und Kusch, Schriften zu Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients* 13, Berlin 1977, pp. 185–

188; I. MÜLLER, *Die Verwaltung der nubischen Provinz im Neuen Reich*, Berlin 1979, p. 408: 15.2.2. For the somewhat problematic provenance of the object, see especially S. I. HODJACHE/O. D. BERLEV, *op. cit.*, pp. 183f.

⁹¹ See E. EDEL, *Zur Familie des Sn-msj nach seinen Grabinschriften auf der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan*, in: ZÄS 90, 1963, pp. 28–31; I. MÜLLER, *op. cit.*, pp. 407f.: 15.1.24 with further references.

⁹² See most recently K. ZIBELIUS-CHEN, *Zur Problematik von Herrschaft und Herrschaftsform im mittleren Niltal vom 3. bis zum 1. Jt. v. Chr., Der antike Sudan, Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin e. V.* 12, 2001, p. 30 with further references. For Ruju, who can approximately be dated into the time of Hatshepsut, see I. MÜLLER, *op. cit.*, p. 299: 2.5.4.1. with further references. Cf. also the family trees in E. EDEL, *op. cit.*, p. 30 and I. MÜLLER, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

⁹³ E. EDEL, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

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