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A. J. Arkell

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KŪR, THE TITLE OF THE KING OF CUSH

BY

A. J. ARKELL

In their important article « La campagne nubienne de Psammétique II et sa signification historique » in *B. I. F. A. O.* 50, pp. 183 ff., MM. Sauneron and Yoyotte draw attention to the title of the King of Cush as used on the stele giving an account of this campaign found at Tanis; and explain why they think that it was probably pronounced *kūr* (kour). They suggest that it may be connected with Kurru, the modern name for the village of the 25th dynasty royal cemetery, and also with *qēre,* the Meroitic word for « king ». In chapter 8 of my *History of the Sudan* (Athlone Press, London 1955) I have recorded some traces of the survival of the influence of the Kingdom of Cush in Kordofan, the country between the Nile valley and Darfur, after the fall of Meroe, and the reasons for thinking that the royal family which had ruled over Cush for more than 1000 years set up a kingdom in Darfur after their expulsion from Meroe. In Darfur may be found apparent survivals of *kūr,* the title of the King of Cush. The old name for the Fur was Kora or Kūr, see my « History of Darfur » in *Sudan Notes and Records,* 32, pp. 52 ff., which I there suggest is a Berber word meaning « blacks ». Can it really have meant « the people of the *Kūr* »? On pp. 59 ff. of the same paper I discuss the meaning and origin of the name Keira for the royal Fur and of Konjāra the name for the aristocratic Fur; and suggest their possible connection with the Meroitic *qēre,* with the title Kirāti (translated « of the people of Kira ») used by the royal Tungur predecessors of the historic Fur sultans in Darfur, and also with *kiri* the word for « sultan » in the language of the Zaghawa of northern Darfur.

In the Fur language the sultan is called *aba kūri,* see for example A. C. Beaton's paper « The Fur » in *Sudan Notes and Records,* 28, p. 8. This title is

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now explained as meaning « the father of a bow or obeisance », but *aba* or *abo* is a common Fur title of respect, presumably derived from the arabic *abu* = « father » and precedes all Fur titles, as in *abo tekenyawi, abo gabbayin,* etc., while *kūri,* I now feel sure, is the ancient title *kūr* once used at Napata and Meroe. Another example of its survival is Kurra or Kura, the village of the chief of Turra, at the north end of Jebel Marra, the home of the sultans of Darfur before they moved down to the plains. I was told when there that it was called Kurra because it was the residence of the chief of Turra. The ruined palace of Sultan Tunsam in Turra is known as Dulo Kuri, *dulo* meaning « ruin » in Fur. Indeed the legendary sultan Kuru, who is said to have founded the Keira dynasty may be much older than I have made him out to be in my *History of the Sudan,* p. 213. But in any case I think the Fur title *aba kuri* tends to confirm MM. Sauneron and Yoyotte's reading of the title of the ruler of Cush.

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