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H. A. MacMichael

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL HISTORY OF KORDOFÁN

THE area at present known as Kordofán¹ may very roughly be divided into three parallel latitudinal belts, viz.:—the southern mountains inhabited by sedentary autochthonous Nūba and in part by nomad Baḡḡára; the central and comparatively fertile district peopled by a mixed Arab and black race; and the rough open wastes of the north, the home of the nomad Arab.

In the earliest days and for thousands of subsequent years the ancestors of the Nūba probably held the greater part of this country, excepting the northernmost deserts. Beaten back by other races that ruled the Nile banks in successive generations, or by tribes from the interior, and finally by the nomad Arabs, the Nūba have now retired to the mountains of Southern Kordofán.

Of the circumstances prevailing in Kordofán in the time of the Pharaohs we know nothing and can guess but little. The data available for determining the state of the Sudan as a whole in those dim days is very scanty, but such as we have is often applicable to Kordofán as much as to any other part of the country². In the fourth millennium B.C. the Pharaohs of the fourth, fifth, and sixth dynasties at intervals raided or traded with the Sudan. The power of Egypt in the Sudan then waned until about 2500 B.C. when the twelfth dynasty to some extent reasserted its power.

¹ For the origin of the word Kordofán see Appendix 1.

² The following remarks on the Pharaonic period are mainly abridged from Budge's *History of the Sudan*.

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Of what happened in the Sudan in the days of the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth dynasties next to nothing is known. Amasis I, first king of the eighteenth dynasty, invaded Nubia and probably penetrated Kordofán.

His son Amenhetep I, his grandson Thothmes I, and the latter's two successors all had to cope with raids and rebellions by the wild nomad tribes of the Sudan. The nineteenth dynasty were chiefly concerned with Syria and their south-eastern border, and in the time of the twentieth dynasty the power of Egypt over her vassals was fast waning.

When Shashanq I (the Shishak of the Bible) founder of the twenty-second dynasty drove the priests of Amen from Egypt they fled to Napata, and the native Nubian princes ruling there were encouraged to form an independent kingdom. So great did the power of these princes become that Piankhi king of Napata about 750 B.C. invaded and conquered Egypt, and his successor Shabaka some 40 years later completed the work of conquest.

About 693 B.C. Tirhákáh, who was acting as vassal king of Nubia, seized the throne of Egypt, but the power of the Nubians in Egypt lasted only about 88 years (c. 750-662 B.C.) and then declined.

Psammetichus I of the twenty-sixth dynasty established garrisons at Assuwán and concerned himself with the strengthening of his power to the north.

It was in his reign that the "Automoloi" or "Sembritae" of the classical authors deserted their posts on the frontier and settled in the Sudan to the south of the junction of the White and Blue rivers, and there mixed with the native population.

About 580 B.C. Heru-sa-atef, king of Napata, in nine expeditions conquered the Nile valley from near Halfa to about the latitude of Sennár.

Nastasenén (died 517 B.C.) ruled a great part of the Sudan from Napata and it was in his time that Cambyses made his mad attempt to invade the country. From 517 B.C. there is a gap of over 200 years in our knowledge of affairs; and then in the reign of Ptolemy II (283-247 B.C.) we hear of a king of Nubia "bred up in Grecian discipline and philosophy," who

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abolished the barbarous customs of his predecessors and put to death the priests by whom the country was ridden¹. About 30 B.C. the Nubians first came into contact with the Romans, who in that year had established a prefecture in Egypt, and we hear that the nomad Blemmyes of the East in alliance with these heathen "Nobatae" were a continual source of trouble. So strong did they become that eventually Diocletian (284–305 A.D.) was reduced to the expedient of subsidizing them and entrusting the guardianship of his frontier at Assuwán to the Nobatae, who at that time extended as far north as the oasis of Kharga. About 540 A.D. these Nobatae (Nūba) were converted to Christianity and little more is heard of them until the Arab conquest of Egypt.

From the conquest of Egypt onwards the Nubians were continuously engaged in wars, raids, counter raids, and rebellions against the Arabs with a decreasing measure of success, and Kordofán and the rest of the Sudan became gradually permeated by a constant influx of Semitic blood.

It is true that in 1275 A.D. the Arabs annexed the Sudan, but until about the middle of the fourteenth century the Christian kingdom of Dongola formed a partial dam to the tide of Arab immigration along the river. It is not however to be supposed that it could impose any serious check on the southern movement of the nomads in the interior, nor on the unknown migrations of the non-Arab tribes to the south and west of its territories.

In 1365 A.D. and again 20 years later the rebellious Awlád Kanz conquered Assuwán, and though defeated in 1412 by the Howára Berbers who had been forced southwards from Northern Africa by the Arabs, held the chief power in the Northern Sudan till 1517. During these years the power of the Nubians disappeared and the blacks to the south were practically left face to face with the Arabs: the result of the facts summarized was a general commingling of stocks and the conversion, often from political motives, of all but the Southern Sudan to Islam.

From 1517, when Selím conquered Egypt, little is known of

¹ This king was called Ergamenes. He is alluded to as μετασχηκώς Ἑλληνικῆς ἀγωγῆς καὶ φιλοσοφίας. See Diodorus Siculus, Bk III, pp. 174 et seq.

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the affairs of the Sudan for 300 years. There were mercenary garrisons of "Ghuzz" scattered all over the country and the mixed tribes of Arabs Hamites and blacks were to some extent held in check.

What part in the events described was played by Kordofán can only be determined by guesswork. That part of the country north of Gebel el Ḥaráza we may be sure was from first to last no more than refuge for the untameable nomads, whatever their race, whose hand was against that of each successive ruler of the Nile banks.

Central Kordofán, being fertile, was probably inhabited by various Nubian races and by the black races of the western kingdoms, until both were displaced or absorbed by the Arab immigrants.

The mountains of Southern Kordofán may have been inhabited by Nūba or by negro races that gave place to the Nūba as the latter lost their power to the north and were forced southwards.

Kordofán has never, like Sennár, Dárfūr, Wadái, Bagirmi, Bornu, etc. itself been an independent kingdom, and consequently its records have not been kept continuously, as happened to some extent in the case of the above-mentioned states, whose rulers, for their own glorification and according to the common usage of all independent states, have preserved a more or less true, though highly coloured, account of their past history.

Nor has Kordofán, which has formed the only break in a chain of dynastic kingdoms stretching across Central Africa from east to west, obtained an equal share of attention from those who have been interested in unravelling the tangled skein of the early history of Africa.

Consequently the history of Kordofán, from the time when it ceases to be guesswork until the Egyptian invasion in 1821, has to be collected from (1) the records of Sennár which formed a kingdom separated from Kordofán by the Nile, (2) the records of Dárfūr which bounds Kordofán on the west, and (3) from oral native traditions in Kordofán and elsewhere. Of antiquarian remains that would assist the enquirer practically nothing has been discovered. The history of Kordofán, in brief, is the

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history of a buffer territory, now the prey of its eastern, now of its western neighbours.

It is not impossible that Northern Kordofán may have been the early home of those mysterious Anag to whom any signs of human occupation previous to the coming of the Arabs is always attributed, and whose name is therefore used as practically synonymous with aborigines¹.

Another ancient people, of whom there are traces in Kordofán, are the Dágu².

Very little is known about the latter but tradition speaks of them as being heathen and black and with a strain of Arab blood. Barth records a tradition that they came from Fazuglo and were known as "Nas Fara'ón" ("Pharaoh's folk"). Assuming that they came from the east, possibly about the eleventh or twelfth century A.D., it appears that they did not settle in Kordofán to the extent to which they did in Dárfūr, where they seem to have lived side by side with the aboriginal Fūr for some centuries and to have in time become the ruling power.

To understand in the least what subsequently happened in Kordofán we must now follow the general trend of events in Dárfūr.

Probably about the fourteenth century a race of pagan Arabs called the Tungur³ began immigrating into Dárfūr. They were of a more advanced civilization than the Dágu or the Fūr but they intermarried with the Dágu ruling family, gradually gained in power and influence at their expense, and finally displaced them entirely and seized the reins of government. In time however the Tungur themselves began to lose their racial individuality and to coalesce with the old Fūr inhabitants of the country; until, about the fifteenth century, there succeeded to the throne one Dáli, whose mother was a Kera-Fūr and whose father was only partly Tungur.

At this time the Fūr seem to have been more predominant in the east and the Tungur to have been gradually extending their power westward over Bagirmi, under pressure from the east.

¹ For the Anag see Chapter VI.

² See Chapter II.

³ See Chapter II.

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The Dáli mentioned above is the ancestor of the two dynasties whom tradition invariably describes as having subsequently ruled Kordofán, and of whom mention will be made later, viz. the Kungára and the Musaba'át.

In the meantime, about the date of the end of the Tungur dynasty in Dárfúr, events fraught with great importance to Kordofán in the future were taking place on the eastern side of Kordofán. About the close of the fifteenth century¹ 'Amára Dunkas had united under his leadership the assortment of tribes known as Fung², and, in alliance with the chief of the Keri district³ east of the Blue Nile, swept over the country between Fazuglo and Khartoum. The force led by 'Amára Dunkas was largely Arab, nominally at least of Muḥammadan religion, and almost certainly included the forefathers of many sections of the so-called Arab tribes now in Kordofán.

After conquering the Gezíra it appears that the Fung also extended their immigrations to Kordofán and that some of them settled there.

It is known without doubt that of the tribes which at present inhabit Kordofán the earliest comers were the Ghodiát, the Bedayría, the Gawáma'a, the Gima'a, the Gilaydát, and the Shuwayhát, and traditions say that they, more especially the Ghodiát, are connected with the Fung.

It is therefore probable that their settlement in Kordofán dates approximately from the beginning of the sixteenth century.

These tribes took up their abode for the most part in the neighbourhood of El Rahad, El Birka, and Gebel Kordofán, and, to judge from probability, tradition, and external evidence, largely intermarried with the Nūba tribes. They appear to have been to some extent united under a sort of supreme arbitrator chosen from among themselves, who decided all important disputes.

¹ Bruce gives the date as 1504; Col. Stewart as 1493; Cailliaud as 1484; and the "Sennár History" as 915 A.H. (1509 A.D.). Tremaux shews how Bruce's and Cailliaud's dates came to differ; he prefers 1504. Stewart calls the leader of the movement "Amara Dunkas"; Cailliaud "Amárah Dounaqs"; Bruce "Amru wad Adlan."

² See Appendix 2.

³ "Abdulla Gemáa-el-Kerinani" (Stewart); "'Abdulla Gemá'a" ("Sennár History").

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The story that these tribes were the ancestors of the Baḳḳára of Western Kordofán is not supported by the traditions: it is more likely that the Baḳḳára (i.e. Ḥumr, Messirfa, Rizayḳát, etc.) arrived in Dárfūr and Kordofán about the same time or rather later from the north and north-west *via* the interior. The confusion may have arisen from the fact that the Ghodiát, Bedayrfa, etc. were at first “Baḳḳára,” i.e. “cattle-owners.”

It is quite possible that from 1500 A.D. (or thereabouts) onwards the Fung kings of Sennár regarded Kordofán as a province of their kingdom, but whether they actually had any power there is extremely problematical.

We must now return to Dárfūr¹.

King Dáli was according to one tradition the great-grandfather of Tumsáh and Kūru the ancestors of the Musaba'át and the Kungára respectively: the two brothers quarrelled and Tumsáh migrated eastwards (“ṣobaḥa” [صبح] hence “Musaba'át”) to Kordofán.

Another account says that Sulaymán Solong, a descendant of Dáli, had a brother called Musabbá to whom he gave Kordofán after conquering that country, each engaging to respect the other's sphere of influence.

A third version of the story is that Solong and Selmán were two brothers and that the former was ancestor of the Fūr and the latter of the Musaba'át.

In any case this Sulaymán Solong is practically the first historical personage who appears in Kordofán.

He ruled Dárfūr from 1596 A.D. till 1637, and during that period conquered Kordofán—(presumably from the admixture of Fung and Arab who had immigrated since the time of 'Amára Dunkas)—and temporarily extended his dominion over Sennár which was now in an enfeebled condition owing to a series of civil wars².

Sulaymán's mother is said to have been an Arab, and he himself took an Arab wife. He too was the first royal convert

¹ For an amplified account of the following see Chapter II.

² According to Bruce, Ounsa was deposed in 1606, 'Abd el Ḳádir in 1610, 'Adlán wad Ounsa in 1615, and Ba'adi wad 'Abd el Ḳádir died in 1621.

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in Dárfūr to Muhammadanism¹. His people, however, were not converted from heathenism at once, but only gradually adopted the religion of Islam, with which they were more and more closely being brought into contact by intercourse with Arab traders. This tendency was facilitated by the conquests of Sulaymán, whose sway was extended as far as the Atbara².

It is probable that Southern Kordofán and the mountains of Dáir and Teḳali from the time of 'Amára Dunkas, and perhaps earlier, had been more closely connected with Sennár than with Dárfūr and that Sennár was until about 1788 considered as the paramount power in those regions. In support of this is the fact that Sennár, at any rate previous to the date mentioned, seems to have been well supplied with slaves caught in Southern Kordofán, principally from Dáir and Teḳali³, and to have almost entirely recruited its army therefrom.

It so happens however that the only actually recorded incident, happening comparatively early, which illustrates this theory is the attack made about the middle of the seventeenth century⁴ upon Teḳali by Ba'adi abu Duḳn (Ibn Rebát). Sulaymán Solong had died in 1637 and the power of Dárfūr had waned: Ba'adi no doubt took advantage of this: he "destroyed Kordofán" and subjected Teḳali and made it tributary to Sennár, and,

¹ So Nachtigal, followed by Ensor and Schurtz (p. 544). Of Sulaymán Solong Escayrac de Lauture says "son père était Toumourki, sa mère seule appartenait à la tribu des Bederieh, et c'est en Égypte qu'il connut l'Islamisme, dont les Bederieh savaient probablement à peine le nom."

² See Schurtz, p. 545.

³ Bruce says of these Nūba whom he met in Sennár "Many of them that I have conversed with seem a much gentler sort of negro than those from Bahr el Aice, i.e., than those of whom the Funge or Government of Sennar are composed" (Vol. IV, p. 420). They were said also by Bruce to adore the moon but not the sun, and also a tree and a stone "though I could never find out what tree or stone it was, only that it did not exist in the country of Sennar but in that where they were born." See also Stewart's *Report...*, p. 3. He thus accounts for the number of villages in Sennár with the same names as places in Kordofán.

Bruce also heard it related in Sennár that the original home of the Fung race was near Dáir and Teḳali, whence they migrated "after having been preserved from a great deluge."

⁴ Stewart gives the date as 1635. The "Sennár History" gives the surname "Abu Duḳn" to Ba'adi Ibn Rebát and describes his attack on Teḳali and its results. Bruce gives the dates of Ba'adi Ibn Rebát as 1651-89; the "Sennár History" gives them as 1641-77; and Cailliaud as 1638-75. 1635 is therefore too early.

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whatever may have been the case previous to Ba'adi's time, Teḡali and the surrounding country remained subject to Sennár, with interludes, until about 1788¹.

Whatever power they may have had in the south the Fung were not at any time supreme in Central Kordofán before about 1748, and in Northern Kordofán never. It is true that after the decline in the power of Dárfür following upon the death of Sulaymán Solong, the Fung seem to have had more power in Kordofán than had Dárfür, but the fortunes of both parties varied so greatly in proportion as their affairs were more or less prosperous at home, and the Musaba'át were by now so firmly established in Kordofán, that neither can be said to have been supreme. Each power seems to have regarded Kordofán as a province of its kingdom, though without adequate justification, and no doubt extorted whatever it could: the Musaba'át appear meanwhile to have considered themselves subject to neither.

From the time of Ba'adi abu Duḡn until the real Fung conquest of Kordofán we have no knowledge of any definite events that may have occurred.

However in 1733², while 'Omar Lele was Sultan of Dárfür, and the Musaba'át predominant, if not independent, in Kordofán, Ba'adi abu Shilluk ibn el Nul came to the throne of Sennár. Soon after his succession he became involved in a prolonged war with Abyssinia, and we hear from Bruce that he was assisted in his councils by "Hamis, Prince of Dar Fowr [who] had been banished from his country in a late revolution occasioned by an unsuccessful war against Selé and Bagirma and had fled to Sennar." "Hamis" [Khamís?] also probably furnished a contingent of men³. After long years of fighting the Abyssinians were driven off. Some years later, having recouped his strength, Ba'adi engaged in a war with the Musaba'át⁴, possibly at the

¹ The "mekes" of several of the southern gebels, e.g. Debatna, are said to be Fung to this day.

² 1733 is the date given by Bruce. The "Sennár History" gives it as 1135 A.H. (1723 A.D.), and Cailliaud as 1721.

³ The "Sennár History" states that Sennár was aided by the Fūr; and gives the date of the defeat of the Abyssinians as 1743. Bruce (Vol. II, p. 635) dates the outbreak of the war about 1736 or 1737.

⁴ The "Sennár History" gives the date of the war with the Musaba'át as 1747 (1160 A.H.), i.e., four or five years after the close of the Abyssinian war.

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instigation of Hamis, for we are told that “it was by his [Hamis’s] assistance the Funge had subdued Kordofán¹.” Ba’adi was twice repulsed, but about 1748² the Fung general Muḥammad

¹ Bruce does not describe the war with the Musaba’át, and from his remark when first mentioning “Hamis” as flying to Sennár that “it was by his assistance the Funge had (sic) subdued Kordofan,” one might suppose, but for the “Sennár History,” that the Musaba’át war preceded the Abyssinian, instead of vice versa.

² The date of the defeat of the Musaba’át is not given by Bruce, but is an important one as marking the beginning of the Fung supremacy in Kordofán. The following are my reasons for placing it about 1748 :

Bruce gives Ba’adi abu Shilluk’s dates as 1733–66; the “Sennár History” as 1723–62; Cailliaud as 1721–61. The “Sennár History” describes the campaign as beginning in 1747; but it is not said how long after the outbreak of the war Abu Lekaylak gained his victory. We will now refer to the popular account regarding the number of years that the several dynasties prior to the coming of the Turks lasted:—The “Dongola nisba” says, “Kordofán was ruled by the Fung for seven years, then by the Ghodiát (who are Hameg by descent) thirteen years, then by the Musaba’át for seventeen years, then by the Kungára for thirty-six years, and it was from them that the Turks took it.” Now the Kungára conquered Kordofán about 1784—(Tiráb died in 1785 [vide Schurtz, p. 545] and El Tunísí mentions that his death was in the year following his victorious campaign. Budge however puts his death in 1787.)—the date of the Fung conquest will therefore be 1784 minus 37 Muḥammadan, or about 36 solar, years, i.e. about 1748. Allowing one year for the course of the war after its outbreak, this agrees so well with the date given by the “Sennár History” that it is probably fairly correct.

Even if Bruce’s dates for the reign of Ba’adi are correct, the theory that Kordofán was conquered in 1748 is not impaired.

Now Pallme (p. 12) says the cattle-breeding tribes round Gebel Kordofán “became towards the middle of the last century [eighteenth] better acquainted with Sennaar. The king of Sennaar, namely, sent in the year 1779, the Sheikh Nacib, with 2000 cavalry, to take possession of the country, and the tribes surrendered, with a pretty good grace, to their fate, without offering much resistance. Thus they remained for about five years, under the government of Sennaar.” Petherick (*Upper Egypt*, p. 263) says, “Towards the middle of the last century the kingdom of Sennaar had been increased by various conquests until it stretched...to the White River...Its King Adlán,...having gleaned a knowledge of the tribes inhabiting the (sic) Kordofan...conceived the idea of subjugating them....About the year 1770, under Sheikh Nasseeb, he invaded the country with 2000 horsemen....Nasseeb acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of Adlán, that he named him his Melek or viceroy; and under his lenient administration the country prospered.” Both Pallme and Petherick speak of the Fūr as reconquering the country later from “Melek el Hashma” (i.e. Hášhim the Musaba’áwi), but both are apparently under the impression that Hášhim was one of the Fung. As a matter of fact Petherick plagiarizes freely and without acknowledgement from Pallme and adds flowery details of his own:—both are vague and very inaccurate. In spite of this the story of Nacib (Nasseeb) has occasionally been accepted. No one in Kordofán at present has ever heard of him though Abu Lekaylak and Hášhim are well known names, nor is any such person mentioned by Bruce, Burckhardt, or Browne. It is almost certain that Pallme’s informants, vaguely as usual, spoke of the ruler of Sennár as sending