CHAPTER THIRTEEN


(And from that time on) the southerners have been sailing northwards, the northerners southward, to the place where His Majesty is, with every good thing of South-land and every (kind of) provision of North-land[.]1

1. Introduction: The Emergence of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty

The el Kurru necropolis had originally been associated with an unexcavated and unpublished settlement site beneath the present-day village of el Kurru. Reisner discovered sections of several hundred metres lengths of its rubble-filled, stone-faced enclosure walls together with a rounded bastion-like structure and a gateway facing the river.2 It must remain a conjecture that this walled settlement was the ancestral (?) seat of the princes buried at el Kurru, which took over the functions of Napata 15 km upstream from Kurru after the withdrawal of the viceregal administration. The placename Kurru may actually derive from the Karoy (Kšṛy, Kšry, Kšr, Kšy) of New Kingdom Egyptian texts occurring as the name of the southernmost area under Egyptian control as well as a placename (cf. Chapter IX.1).3

The earliest el Kurru burials, viz., Ku. Tum. 1, 4, 5, and 2 (for the sequence, see Table G), display purely un-Egyptianized features as to tomb type and burial rite and attest thus to the survival of indigenous mortuary traditions during the centuries of Egyptian domination and their re-emergence some time after the final withdrawal of the viceregal government in the eleventh century BC. The circular stone superstructure, if correctly reconstructed, resembles the characteristic tomb type of the Nubian C-Group culture (Chapter IV.3), although its

1 Dream Stela of Tanwetamani, FHN I No. 29, lines 41 f., trans. R.H. Pierce.
2 G.A. Reisner, field notes 1919, mentioned by Kendall 1999a 48f.
3 Zibelius 1972 162f.; Kendall 1999a 49.
continuous survival could so far not be documented. The position of the contracted body similarly recalls a C-Group tradition. The burial on a bed, introduced with Ku. Tum. 6, had been practiced in the Kerma culture from the end of Ancient Kerma and, on Kerma influence, also in the final stage of the C-Group culture. The lateral niche or pit-and-side-chamber substructure type occurs with the earliest burials and may thus be regarded as characteristic for the el Kurru population.

The changes in tomb types and mortuary religion at el Kurru reflect a political process during the course of which a local princely family of apparently limited resources established its power over a territory which was significantly expanded within a rather short period of time. The borders of the original nuclear territory (the size of which may be estimated on the basis of the size of the tombs as not larger than perhaps the wider Napata region) were expanded to the First Cataract in the north and the Butana in the south in c. one century according to the short, and in c. two and a half centuries according to the long chronology. We are ignorant of the actual course of this integration process. Certain details of the Kushite myth of the state (first of all the multiple coronations) may be interpreted as a conceptualized memory of the federation of polities centred around Napata, Kawa, and Pnubs/Kerma, while the form in which the Butana region is included into the myth of the state as well as the absence of the mention of the region north of the Third Cataract in the discourse on the myth of the Kushite state indicate that these latter regions were acquired by conquest.

Artefacts made of ivory indicate contacts of the el Kurru chiefdom with more southern regions from Ku. Tum. 1, i.e., the first generation. A large, unworked chunk of obsidian from Ku. 11 signals trade with the Ethiopian highlands, while the lapis lazuli artefacts from Ku. 14 may have come from Afghanistan (via Egypt?) as well as from Ethiopia. In Ptolemaic texts lapis lazuli would also be mentioned as a product of the First Cataract region and of Meroe. The political annexation of the Butana region, which secured complete control of the trade routes, was, however, not accomplished before the middle of the eighth century BC. This region was not conquered by Egypt in the New Kingdom.

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6 Zibelius-Chen 1988 87f.