Sherds, charcoal, ash, pebbles, grinding stones and numerous red brick fragments. It was a place where the temple priests dumped their rubbish.

Mound K, the low mound behind the temple, to the east.

Nearly 1,200,000 cone-shaped, ceramic sherds from offering moulds were excavated from a small excavation square. The first 80,000 were counted by hand, then the remainder estimated by bucket-load. This comes to approximately 77,000 temple offerings when the cone-bases alone are taken into account.
Dangeil’s early Kushite statues may have come from a cache that was disturbed during the destruction of the later Amun temple, or they may have been housed in the temple and destroyed along with it. Because the Dangeil statues appear to be ritually broken, and are similar to those discovered buried in caches at Jebel Barkal and Dukki Gel, Kerma, the first explanation seems more likely. Many questions remain. What incidents led to the breakage of these statues and who was responsible? Much of the temple and surrounding enclosure remains to be explored. Hopefully, future work will answer these questions.

Dust cloud over the excavation site.

The Archaeological Site of Dangeil

Since 2000, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan, has been conducting archaeological excavations at Dangeil. The site consists of several mounds covered with fragments of red bricks, sandstone, potsherds, and plaster. The name Dangeil lived in the mountain of Jebel Barkal. They maintained close contacts with Egypt and their culture displays a rich mixture of Pharaonic, Roman, Hellenistic and indigenous African characteristics, as seen, for example, in the Kushite lion from Basa, the temple kiosk at Naqa and in the royal burial field of Kushite pyramids at Meroe.
DISCUSSION

Dangeil is the furthest upstream that such a statue group of early Kushite kings has been discovered so far. There have been two similar groups discovered in Sudan; one at Jebel Barkal found by George Reisner in 1916 and the other at Dokki Gel, Kerma, discovered by Charles Bonnet in 2003. The statues at these sites had been ritually buried in caches and the Kushite kings included were identical: Taharqo, Tamwetamani, Senkamanisken, Anlamani and Aspelta. All ruled between the 7th and the 6th centuries BC and all of these statues had been deliberately broken at the neck, thigh and ankle. Aspelta was the latest ruler to be included, but there is no direct evidence to suggest when the statues were broken and the caches made.

Dangeil’s early Kushite statues belong to this same family of rulers and were broken in the same places. It is likely that the caches mentioned above are connected and the contributory incident was the same in all three cases.

As found, the Dangeil discovery was not a statue cache. Statue fragments were randomly distributed over two rooms at various depths, and were mixed with the destruction layer of the later temple.

Dangeil’s temple was built on top of several substantial mud brick walls and shares their orientation. It seems likely that this mud brick building was an earlier Amun temple. Associated ceramics and faience suggest a date early in the Kushite period for these mud walls and it is probable that the royal statues originated in this building.

‘Dangeil’ actually means ‘broken red brick’. Some mounds stand more than 4m high and each one represents a well-preserved ancient building. Because Dangeil is well-preserved, it provides a unique opportunity to examine the characteristics of an ancient Kushite settlement and temple, and to gain greater insight into Kushite society and daily life. The site is quite large, measuring 300x400m, or is roughly equal to 17 football (soccer) fields in size.
Taharqo, ruled an empire that extended from the border of Palestine, possibly as far south as modern Khartoum. He united the Nile Valley from the junction of the Blue and White Niles northward to the Mediterranean Sea.

The statue shows the king in a standing position with his left leg striding forward. He is bare-chested with broad, round shoulders, lightly defined pectorals and chest, and well-defined arm and thigh muscles. His waist is narrow and he wears a closely-fitted kilt. His arms hang at his sides and he holds a document case in both hands. His belt is inscribed with an Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription that reads: 'The perfect god Taharqo, beloved of Amun-Re'.

Preparing to carefully move Taharqo out of the excavation.

The last fragment of a Kushite royal statue of early date discovered was the head of a king thought to be Aspelta (593-568 BC). Although the top of an inscription is present on the back of the statue, the name is missing, so the statue was identified through comparisons made with other known figures. The torso and upper legs are missing. The head is about 18.5 cm high and was carved from coarse grey and pink granite. It is roughly half life-size. The king wears a Kushite cap with double cobras (uraei) on his brow. The tails of the snakes extend backwards across the centre of the head. The face is round, has almond-shaped eyes, and the king appears to be smiling. Much of the surface remains rough so that painted plaster could adhere. Traces of yellow and red paint and plaster remained.

THE KIOSK

A kiosk straddled the processional way roughly halfway between the enclosure entrance and the temple. It measured about 10 x 12 m. The lower portions of the walls were constructed of three engaged columns connected on either side by a wall, and four rounded corners also consisting of engaged columns. The basic unit of measurement used was the

THE PROCESSIONAL WAY AND RAM STATUES

A processional way led from the entrance of the enclosure, through a kiosk, to the temple. It was paved with sandstone flagstones and red bricks. Part of it was excavated, along with the remnants of several smashed sandstone ram statues that had previously flanked it on either side.

A ram statue from el-Hassa, Sudan, similar to those which were at Dangeil.
Senkamanisken’s feet and statue base were found in the north-east corner of the room, beside the torso of a colossal granite statue which was lying on its left side. Its kilt and thighs were leaning against the upper part of the temple’s east wall and the shoulders were angled downwards towards the floor. The names and titles, again written in Egyptian hieroglyphs in the cartouches on the back pillar, were those of the Kushite ruler and pharaoh of the Egyptian 25th Dynasty, Taharqo. The first base discovered belongs to this statue.

The Taharqo statue was carved from granite gneiss and is comprised of seven fragments, of which the torso and feet are the largest. The head is still missing. Wearing a simple cap crown, the statue would have originally stood around 2.6-2.7m high and is about 1.5 times life size.

Taharqo, king of Kush and pharaoh of Egypt.

Egyptian cubit (c. 52.3cm). When the kiosk’s dimensions are calculated in cubits, it is evident that the structure was laid out precisely.

Dangeil kiosk, with the entrance into the enclosure in the background, facing west.

From traces of painted plaster remaining on the kiosk’s walls and architectural fragments, it is possible to determine the way in which this ancient building had been decorated on its exterior walls. The exterior walls and mouldings were yellow, while the columns were blue. The entire building was topped by a cornice, painted with alternating stripes of red and blue enclosed within yellow borders, and column capitals that were red and blue.

Apart from the broad application of colour, there is nothing to suggest that scenes were painted on the outside of the kiosk. So from the archaeological data collected on site, it is possible to reconstruct much of the original appearance of the Dangeil kiosk. From all indications it would have been an extremely brightly decorated building, as was the temple. Imagine the visual impact of this building against the brown desert landscape.
The torso of King Senkamanisken.

The Dangeil temple: facing east, from the top of its main entrance. The first court is in the foreground and the sanctuary is in the background.

THE TEMPLE’S FIRST COURT

The floor was reached in the north side of the first court and six columns were exposed. The floor consisted of hard, packed earth. The columns were made from several stacked layers of red brick quarter-circles and are a little over a metre in diameter.

Dangeil temple: north side of the first court with red brick columns.

Kiosks are small sanctuaries that served as places of rest and protection for the god’s sacred boat when the god, housed within a shrine on the boat, left the safety and sacred space of the temple to travel, visit other gods, and participate in festivals. The god’s sacred boat was normally carried on the shoulders of several priests.

The kiosk was the focus of the sacred cult on the processional way and it was fully incorporated into the overall plan of the temple precinct. As a more public space than the temple itself, the kiosk acted as a point of engagement between the local people and their god Amun, as well as the power of the state and king, as represented by Amun.

THE AMUN TEMPLE

Dangeil’s Amun temple is orientated east-west with the entrance facing the Nile (48.5m x 33.5m). The temple’s monumental entrance gate is over 5.5m wide and stands almost 4m high. Much of the foundation and external wall faces are made of red brick or sandstone, while the interiors of the walls are constructed of mud brick. Excavations within the temple initially bisected it along its east-west axis.

Back of Senkamanisken’s torso with the king’s names inscribed in cartouches.
As work expanded eastwards in the south hall, the torso of another granite statue was uncovered. It had been intentionally placed in an upright position and appears to have been reused for baraka or blessing rituals after the temple had stopped being a formal place of worship. Written in Egyptian hieroglyphs in well-preserved cartouches on the statue’s back pillar were the names and titles of the King Senkamanisken (643–623 BC) who ruled Kush during the 7th century BC. The fist found in 2007 belongs to this statue.

There is a dramatic difference in colour between the hand discovered in 2007 and the statue torso, with the torso being considerably lighter. This suggests that the torso was likely exposed to the elements for quite a period of time.

The statue is approximately ¾ life-size and would have stood c. 1.5m high. Senkamanisken is depicted in a pharaonic striding pose with arms at his sides and hands holding document cases. His muscles are well-defined. The rough stone texture of his kilt, upper armlets, bracelets, sandals and Kushite ram necklace indicate that they would have been plastered and painted or gilded.

Fragments of ceramic drainpipes were recovered from the rubble debris in the first court and in front of the temple’s main entrance. They had been set in the upper part of the wall to divert rainwater away from the base of the building. The area around Dangeil only receives about 25mm of rain per year, but most falls between the months of July and September and it can be very destructive, undercutting the foundations of walls and buildings.

Surveying in the temple precinct.
At this point, it remains unknown as to whether a sorghum beer or porridge was consumed in Dangeil’s ancient moulds. It is hoped that further study will be enable us to determine which of these the Kushites chose to offer to their god Amun.

**RECENT EXCAVATIONS AND THE DISCOVERY OF KUSHITE ROYAL STATUES**

Most recently, work has focused on the long, southern room of the temple. The western part of this room contained four red brick columns and a well-fitted sandstone floor. A granite statue fragment, consisting of a ¾ life-size human fist holding a document case (owlexes), was discovered in the centre of this hall at the end of the 2007 season. It was found in a pit filled with destruction debris from the temple and it clearly had belonged to the statue of a god or royal person.

Excavations in following years have focused on the eastern part of this south room, and here many fragments of early Kushite statues have been discovered. The first fragment found was the right foot of a large, granite statue bearing the Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription ‘forever’ on its back. The left foot was missing, but it was clear that this had been the base of a standing figure with the left leg striding forward. This discovery generated great excitement because the fragment was definitely dated to the 7th century BC, yet surprisingly like the granite fist uncovered earlier, it was found in the destruction level of the Amun temple, which is dated at least 700 years later.

With the sanctuary exposed, four decorated sandstone columns, and two altars were visible. The entrances to the chapels were faced with sandstone blocks and the floor paved with well-fitted sandstone flagstones.

Sandstone sanctuary column with Nile fertility gods.

**Dangeil temple: sanctuary area.**

The sanctuary columns consist of a series of sandstone drums stacked one upon the other, with a thin paste of mud mortar sealing them together, and are one metre in diameter.

The west end of the temple’s southern room, facing west.

**Kushite sandstone sanctuary.** She was a major benefactor of the temple and probably constructed a large part of it during its destruction.

**Quarry at Jebel Nakharu.** The sandstone used in the temple comes from the ancient quarries located in Jebel Nakharu.
It appears that the Kushites, at least those in the middle Nile, adopted the practice of using moulds for offerings made to the god Amun, but modified their use to suit their own needs, local rituals, traditions, and perhaps available food grains.

What sort of bread can be made in a mould with sorghum? The only sorghum foodstuff currently produced in Sudan using a mould is a stiff porridge, called aceda. At its simplest, to make aceda, sorghum flour is mixed with water, usually left overnight, then the mixture is strained and heated over a fire in a pot. It becomes thicker during cooking, turning into a porridge. The aceda is then added to moulds, such as bowls. When the aceda is removed from the mould, it maintains its shape. The moulds themselves are not baked or cooked. Another possibility is that bread or porridge are not being consumed at all, but rather a beverage or beer similar to modern day mekeusa or assalye. Classical writers mention that the Kushites consumed beer made from sorghum, but direct evidence is lacking. Of note, the only sorghum foodstuff currently produced in Sudan using a mould is a stiff porridge, called aceda. At its simplest, to make aceda, sorghum flour is mixed with water, usually left overnight, then the mixture is strained and heated over a fire in a pot. It becomes thicker during cooking, turning into a porridge. The aceda is then added to moulds, such as bowls. When the aceda is removed from the mould, it maintains its shape. The moulds themselves are not baked or cooked. Another possibility is that bread or porridge are not being consumed at all, but rather a beverage or beer similar to modern day mekeusa or assalye. Classical writers mention that the Kushites consumed beer made from sorghum, but direct evidence is lacking. Of note, it appears that the Kushites, at least those in the middle Nile, adopted the practice of using moulds for offerings made to the god Amun, but modified their use to suit their own needs, local rituals, traditions, and perhaps available food grains.

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