when we began excavating a low mound (Mound K) located behind the temple (to the east), we began to get a clearer idea of the type of offerings being made during the temple rituals and what the ancient Kushites were eating. The mound was covered with pottery fragments, sherds, charcoal, ash, pebbles, grinding stones and numerous red brick fragments. It was a place where the temple priests dumped their rubbish.

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.

**Ceramic mould sherds.**
Excavations in the Temple Precinct of Dangeil, Sudan

Julie Anderson and Salah eldin Mohamed Ahmed

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, pot sherds, and plaster. The name Dangeil’s early Kushite statues may have come from a cache that was disturbed during the excavation, which suggests the presence of an Amun temple. The temple and surrounding enclosure remain to be explored. Hopefully, future work will reveal more about the site.

Dust cloud over the excavation site.

Excavations in the Temple Precinct of Dangeil, Sudan

Julie Anderson and Salah eldin Mohamed Ahmed

Produced by the Berber-Abidiya Archaeological Project of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan in cooperation with the British Museum © 2010

2010-07-23

Kushite lion statue from Basa, now in the Sudan National Museum, Khartoum.

Kushite pyramids at Meroe.

Kiosk at Naqa.

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Dust cloud over the excavation site.
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.

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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 (593-568BC). 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 18.5cm 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 head matches a pair of striding feet indicating that like Taharqo and Senkamanisken, this king was shown in a striding pose.

A ram statue from el-Hassa, Sudan, similar to those which were at Dangeil.

THE KIOSK
A kiosk straddled the processional way roughly halfway between the enclosure entrance and the temple. It measured about 10 x 12m. 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...
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.

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

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 in either the kiosk or temple that suggests that scenes were painted on the outside of the structure. 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.

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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.

Back of Senkamanisken's torso with the king’s names inscribed in cartouches.

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.
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.
Within the temple’s sanctuary, several pink sandstone columns, 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.

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 fragment consisting of a life-size human fist holding a document case (moken). It 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.

With the sanctuary exposed, four decorated sandstone columns, and two altars were visible. The inscriptions on these columns are written inside cartouches including 8-10 alphabetic and consists of 23 letters written either in a hieroglyphic form or in a cursive form. While the sounds of these the Kushites chose to offer to their god Amun.

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 able 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 life-size human fist holding a document case (moken), 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.

The western part of this room, facing west.

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

Kushite beer jars from Dangeil's Kushite cemetery.

Each column is decorated with Nile fertility gods striding forward towards the main sanctuary. The entrances to the chapels were faced with sandstone blocks and the floor paved with well-fitted sandstone flagstones.

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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 or porridge were being consumed? The bread made from sorghum, called aceda, was the most common foodstuff found in the Dangeil moulds. Sorghum flour is mixed with water, usually left overnight, then the mixture is strained and boiled 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 murris or assaliya. Classical writers mention that the Kushites consumed beer made from sorghum, but direct evidence is lacking. Of note, what sort of bread can be made from sorghum, by the Kushites?

Similar daises have been discovered in the Amun temples at Kawa, Jebel Barkal, Meroe, and Naqa. The function of the daises within temples is unknown, but they may have had a throne placed upon them, that was used by the king during ceremonies dedicated to various gods, such as Re’ or Amun-Re’.

As with the kiosk, the careful architectural planning of the temple is particularly notable when examining the construction of the dais and its surroundings. Architects’ guidelines were incised into the soft sandstone floor, marking the exact position of the dais’ corners in relation to the room’s walls. Overall, few objects have been found in the temple and it is likely, that because it was a sacred space, a high level of cleanliness was maintained.