

K E R M A

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SOUDAN

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The excavations focused on the ancient fortified town of Dukki Gel, specifically on the Eighteenth Dynasty fortifications and the Nubian religious centre located in front of the eastern gate. It also included the architectural analysis of the urban centre's central temple (fig. 16). The results of this archaeological campaign highlight the clash between Nubian traditions and Egyptian culture, but also their reciprocal influences.

The early Eighteenth Dynasty town

The rounded wall of the fortifications discovered last year was followed this season in both a northern and southern direction. South, a door and 1.80 m wide stairs lead to the temenos of Hatshepsut's temple. On either side of this door is a large semi-circular bastion, organised with other smaller bastions perpendicular to the door (fig. 17). These structures were later modified and augmented with a second wall with bastions of 1.60 meters in diameter.

Figure 16 | Schematic plan of Dukki Gel with the remains of the Eighteenth Dynasty in blue.

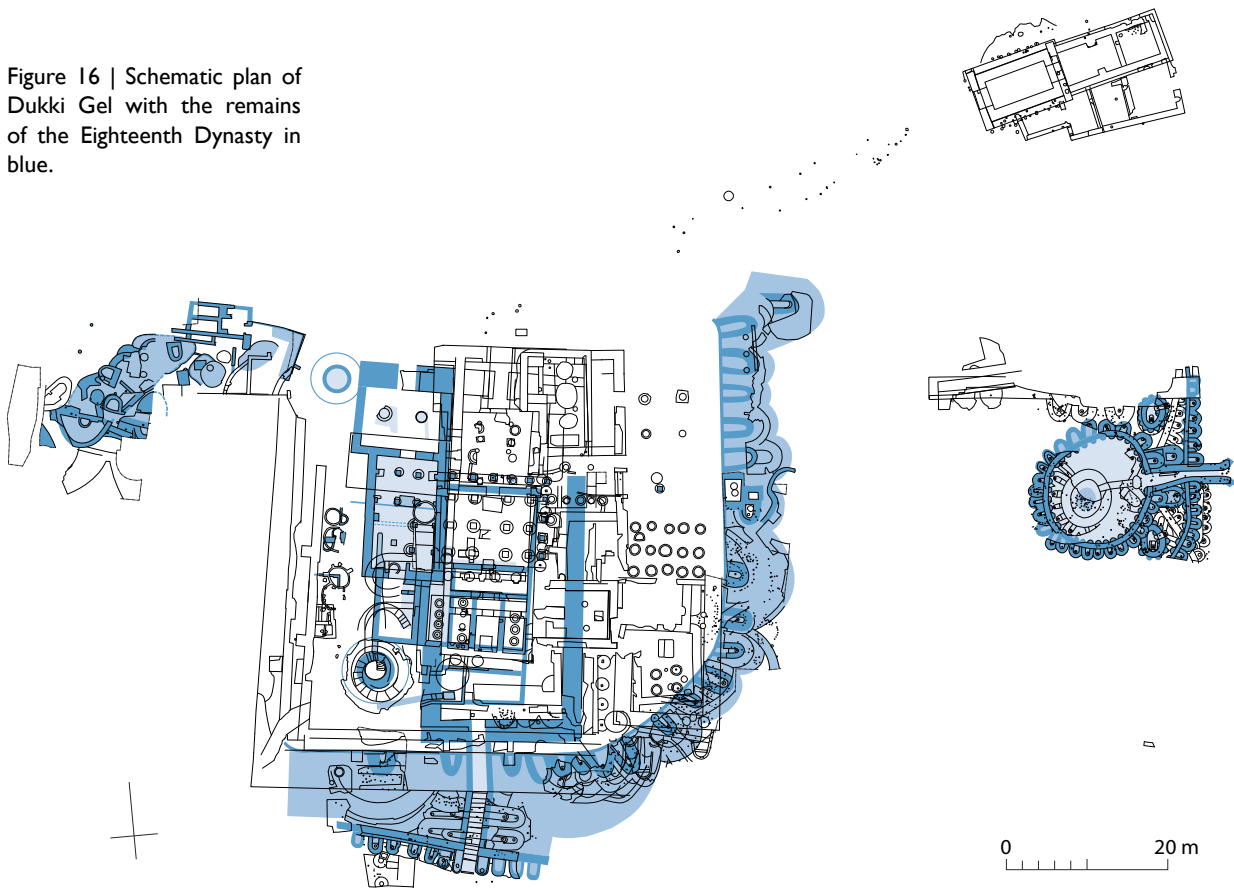


Figure 17 | View of the entrance to the main temple.



These huge fortifications, which follow Nubian architectural tradition, were first constructed by Thutmosis I and II, and probably by the last king of Kerma as well. West from the entrance, two circular bases linked by mud brick wall ties might indicate important architectural features that remain to be uncovered in the southern sector. The remains of a Napatan circular silo and a wall dated to the same period were also identified in that area. These large food reserves belonged to a workshop where offering breads were made in terracotta moulds. The accumulation of these bread moulds eventually created the hill of Dukki Gel.

A Nubian religious centre

The Napatan circular temple discovered two years ago is related to an architectural complex founded at the beginning of the New Kingdom (Bonnet 2007). The remains of two other circular temples were discovered this year, under *galus* columns dated before the campaign of Psamtik II. The older of the two is of oval shape and includes postholes at its centre, which indicate that the naos was a hut. The temple measures 4,5 by 3,75 meters from the inside and its walls are 1,25 meters thick; it is reinforced by 12 rounded buttresses. This unusual building is comparable to the second oval temple, which measures 15x3,75 meters on the interior and has walls 0,65 meter thick. It encircles the ancient temple and also comprises rounded buttresses, which resemble a crown around the unit. Rectangular postholes located in these buttresses appear to form a system of reference markers used during the construction phase.

To the east once stood the monumental entrances of these two temples. While the door of the first construction was relatively simple in conception, the entrance of the second was more elaborate. It included two parallel buttresses linked to a wall with many small bastions that encircled the entire complex (fig. 18).

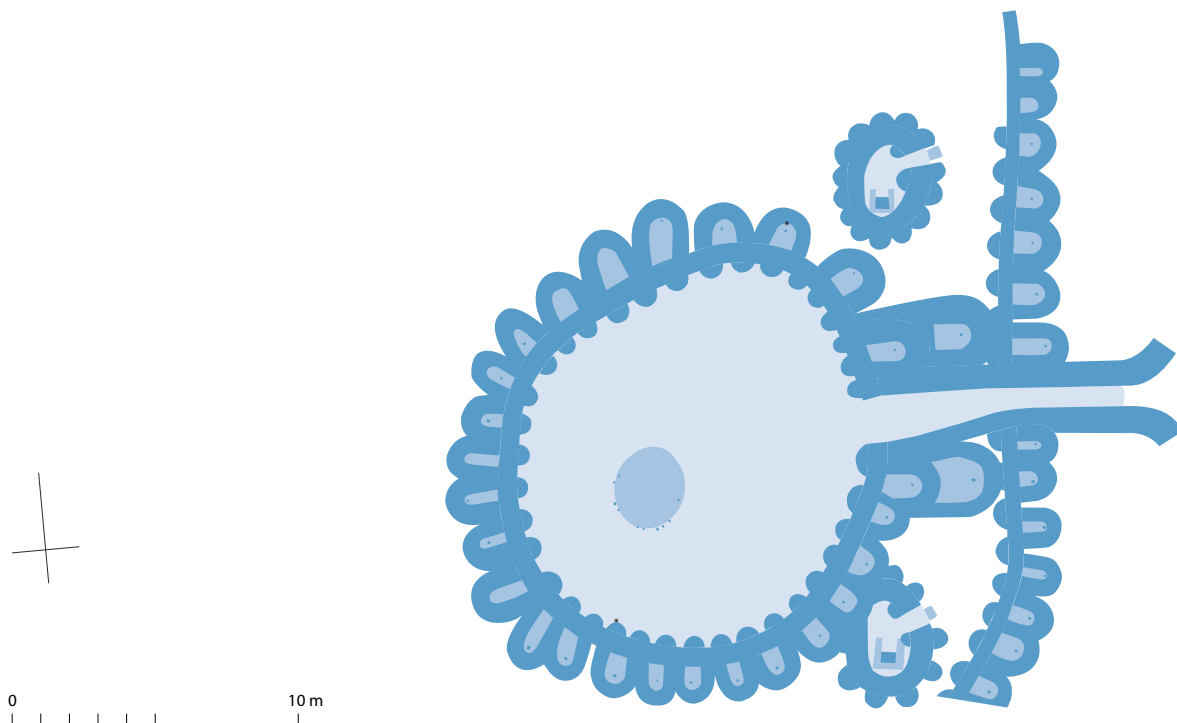


Figure 18 | View of the fortifications of the circular temple.

Although the dimensions of the latter were less important than those of the Egyptian temple complex located to the west, it nonetheless evokes a similar idea expressed in Nubian style (fig. 19). The dating of these two circular temples was possible due to the great quantity of sherds - even if of small dimensions. The majority was dated of the Eighteenth Dynasty, whereas less than a quarter of the assemblage dated to the end of the Classic Kerma period.

The central temple of the Egyptian complex

In order to narrow down the relative chronology of the succession of temples erected at the beginning of the New Kingdom, the excavations begun last year south of the central temple continued. The sanctuary wall of Thutmose I was cleared for a few meters. In its south-west angle it was built around and then cut by later buildings erected by Hatshepsut - a large wall measuring 2.4 meters wide, with an entrance in the same axis as the central temple. A staircase coming from the south goes through the fortifications of the religious complex. Under Thutmose III, the imposing constructions of Hatshepsut were systematically destroyed, resulting in a thick layer of decorated or inscribed blocks, pottery, red bricks, earth and fragments of sandstone.



The overseers in charge of Thutmosis III's construction site used a curious system of measurement. Pits more than two meters in diameter were dug at the base of the interior face of the temenos wall of Hatshepsut's temple. Square-shaped markers of mud brick or stone were discovered at the bottom. After ritually depositing ceramics over these markers and partially filling the pits, a small wall was built to serve as orientation marker for the new buildings under construction. Under the corners of large walls built by Thutmosis III unusual circular mud brick foundations were discovered.

The access to the northern New Kingdom well shall have to be studied in more detail in the future because several construction phases are now obvious. The discovery of two mud brick column bases and a transverse wall indicates the presence of a pronaos in front of Thutmosis I's sanctuary. The access to the well was moved outside the sanctuary, behind the temple. Under Hatshepsut, the direct connection between the sanctuary and the well was turned into an annex, while Thutmosis III later created an underground passage between the two. Finally, Thutmosis IV built a new corridor to reach the west room of the tripartite sanctuary. These architectural details give a better understanding of the ritual activities associated with water and the cult of Amun.

Figure 19 | Plan of the fortifications around the circular temple.