



Catching the King's eye - New joins for two statues from the Dokki Gel cache

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On the 24th December 2016, during surface clearing carried out by the Swiss-French-Sudanese mission at Kerma-Dokki Gel (Northern State, Sudan), on a large mound located some 100m west of the statue cache discovered in 2003, our Christmas find took the shape of a small granodiorite fragment (Plate 1). The piece, numbered DG 430, displayed a carefully polished side comprising a protruding quadrangular part with rounded corners, the end of which was approximately 56mm high and 50mm wide: we were dealing with a statue fragment comprising the end of a *mekes*, a very ancient symbol of authority considered in the later periods as a case containing the pharaoh's title of ownership over Egypt (Barta 1982).



Plate 1. Statue fragment DG 430 (photo: J.-F. Gout).

According to its dimensions, and to photographs of the royal statues from the cache, this new fragment clearly belonged to the largest, i.e. the statue of Taharqo (see Bonnet and Valbelle 2005, 86-93 and 118-127). A few days later, it was brought to the Kerma museum, where the royal statues found in the cache are exhibited, a visit which enabled us to confirm that it comprises the rear part of the right-hand *mekes* of Taharqo: the piece joins perfectly with the king's right hand, parts of which are still missing (Plate 2).

In later periods, the *mekes* was part of the pharaoh's regalia. This might explain why the emissaries of Psamtek II attacked this symbol of power,¹ and this small piece escaped the attention of the Napatan priests gathering fragments of the royal statues in the aftermath of the Egyptian campaign. The lower right corner of the *mekes* is also damaged, and we believe that it was used as a percussive tool at some point.

During the following field season, two significant diorite

¹ One hypothesis regarding these statues attributes their destruction to the invading Egyptian 26th dynasty army of Psamtek II. Other hypotheses have been suggested. See further, Anderson *et al.* in press; Anderson and Mohamed Ahmed 2014, 619; Bonnet and Valbelle 2005, 164-171 (Ed.).



Plate 2. Join.

fragments were found in the same area, which help us reconstruct the face of the larger statue of Senkamanisken wearing the *pschent* (see Bonnet and Valbelle 2005, 102-105 and 128-139). They consist of the almost complete mouth (DG 434, in December 2017) and the left eye with part of the crown edge (DG 436, in January 2018). These two new pieces could be joined to the left cheek fragment found in the cache (see Valbelle 2005, 253), which was retrospectively numbered DG 435. Glued together, the three pieces form a 170mm high fragment which is a welcome supplement to the Napatan king's face, though his nose and chin are still missing (Plate 3).



Plate 3. The three fragments joined (photo: J.-F. Gout).

For several reasons, it was not possible to go straight to the Kerma site museum initially, but this became possible in January 2019, and on this occasion a few photographs of the statue were taken with a camera with a self-timer fixed on a tripod. Although the king's face is still incomplete, this fortunate addition gives a better idea of the original appearance of this statue of Senkamanisken, which was of very high quality, quite comparable to the royal statues of his predecessors of the 25th dynasty (Plate 4).



Plate 4. *Senkamanisken gazing again.*

As is the case for the right eye, the surface of the left eye is roughly carved, and the cornea is shown with a circle of black pigment (Plate 5). The start of the left side of the nose is preserved. Almost complete but for the right corner of the lips, the mouth is harmoniously fleshy and shows a subtle smile (Plate 6).

These new fragments confirm that the execution of this statue of Senkamanisken, where the Egyptian influence is still perceivable, is of a much better quality than his second statue from the same cache (Bonnet and Valbelle 2005, 128; see also Wenig 2007, 35). To our knowledge, there are only two other statues of this king similar to this one: the first one comes from Jebel Barkal,² and the second one was discovered more recently at Dangeil (see notably Anderson and Mohamed Ahmed 2009, 82-83; 2014, 614-615). Note, however, that these two statues are headless; it is therefore impossible to

² From the statue deposit in room B 904 (Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 53.30.2), see Dunham 1970, 21 (no. 8), 22, fig. 11 and pl. XV-XVI; online photos of the restored statue: <www.vmfamuseum/piction/6027262-12951617/>.



Plate 5. *Detail of the left eye (photo: J.-F. Gout).*



Plate 6. *Detail of the mouth (photo: J.-F. Gout).*

know which crown he wore, or to appreciate the execution of the face. Another headless statue of Senkamanisken was also found at Jebel Barkal: this time, the king is dressed in the leopard-skin of the *sem*-priest.³ Finally, on his three other statues, more roughly executed but where the head is preserved, the king wears either a wide headband,⁴ or a *nemes* topped with the *pschent*.⁵ Moreover, on all of his statues where the head is preserved, he is equipped with the double *uraei* on his forehead (Plate 7).⁶

³ Statue deposit B 500 A (Khartoum, SNM 1842), see Dunham 1970, 21 (no. 7), 22, fig. 10 and pl. XIII-XIV.

⁴ Jebel Barkal statue, also from B 500 A (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 23.731), see Dunham 1970, 21 (no. 6), 22, fig. 9 and pl. XII and online notice: <www.mfa.org/collections/object/statue-of-king-senkamanisken-145119>; second statue of this king from the Dokki Gel cache (as a *sem*-priest), see Bonnet and Valbelle 2005, 106-109.

⁵ Jebel Barkal androsphinx, from B 501 (Khartoum, SNM 1852), see Dunham 1970, 33 (no. 18 and fig. 28), pl. III.A, IV (*in situ*) and XXXII; see also Ali Mohamed and Anderson 2012, 59 (no. 49).

⁶ Senkamanisken seems to be the only Nubian king whose *shabtis* were equipped with the double *uraei*, as underlined by Bovot 1996, 26; an exception to this is represented by the faience figures of type III 2 e, which display a tripartite wig and no *uraeus*, see Dunham 1955, 44 and pl. CXL (no. 14); Bovot 1996, 28, n. 61 and 63. The *shabtis* of the other Nubian kings usually wear a single *uraeus*.



Among the seven statues of Senkamanisken known so far, the one considered here seems to display the most finely executed face: it is to be hoped that new fragments and joins will enable us to further complete the remaining gaps in the future.



Plate 7. Three-quarter view.

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