Taharqo Edifice and Nilometer

Originally built by Taharqo - 690 BCE to 664 BCE

Other works initiated by Taharqo: Taharqo Kiosk, Ramesses II Eastern Temple, Khonsu Temple, Western Processional Way

Other lake and river rituals: Sacred Lake, Quays Ramps and Revetments

Introduction

The Taharqo edifice and “Nilometer” are located on the north side of the sacred lake. The sandstone edifice consisted of a series of subterranean rooms and a superstructure with a central open court, now destroyed. A mud brick courtyard fronted the east side of the building. The courtyard was cut though by the “Nilometer,” a deep stone well.

Measurements: The edifice measured 25m wide by 29m deep. Today the walls stand only 1m to 2.5m high. The “Nilometer” is about 30m long and slightly askew from the axis of the edifice.

Phase: Taharqo

Taharqo constructed a rectangular cult building near the sacred lake. Blocks inscribed for the 25th Dynasty king Shabaqo were used in the building’s construction; there may therefore have been an earlier version of the structure on the same site.

The exterior north and south walls of the edifice were decorated with sunk relief scenes of the king and various gods. The king moved east to west, while the gods faced eastward (towards the building’s entrance). The first scene depicted the king leaving his palace, while the following scenes portrayed him greeting the gods and making sacrifices to them in order to enter the temple. Interior rooms contained “litanies of the sun” and scenes associated with the “decade festival.”
The Taharqo edifice was used for rituals concerning the return of Amun-Ra from the west bank and the god’s union with the creative powers of the primeval waters (Nun). It was also a place where the celebration of the union of the gods Osiris and Amun took place.

Nilometers typically functioned as places where the level of the Nile could be measured; here, however, it seems to have instead served a ritual purpose. The deep well connected the temple to the primeval waters. All these rituals helped the king reaffirm his power.

Construction materials: sandstone

**About the reconstruction model of this phase**

The model was based on the plan and axial reconstruction published by Parker, Leclant and Goyon (1979: pl. 1).

A simple sandstone pattern was used on the model. The size of the bricks in the model correspond to the size of the few courses of stonework that remain visible at the site today.

**Bibliography and Sources Used for Model Construction**

