Perla Fuscaldo

Buenos Aires

AKSHA (SERRA WEST): TWO OFFICIALS RELATED TO ISIS' CULT

The Museum of Natural Sciences of La Plata, Argentina, houses two jamb and a fragment of a third one found in Aksha in 1963 by the Franco-Argentine Archaeological Expedition, headed by J. Vercoutter and A. Rosenvasser. The jambs A 527 and A 526 were found laying down in situ, in a mud-brick house of two rooms built on the south-east section of the officials' quarter. Both sandstone left jambs belong to each of one of the two rooms of the house.


2 Rosenvasser's note-book.
The jamb A 527 (Pl. I) was found broken in two pieces, being the first, 0.50 m high and 0.23 m wide (the upper part), and the second one, 0.65 m high and 0.23 m wide (the lower part). The sunk relief inscription, in a very bad condition, gives us the title and name of the owner:

a) Usual writing since the XIX Dynasty (Wb., V, 91).

b) for (Lesko, Late-Egyptian Dictionary, II, 59).

c) since the XIX Dynasty (Wb., III, 298).

d) Usual writing for since the end of the XVIII Dynasty (Wb., 1, 17).

"An offer \( \text{n}_3 \) which the king gives to Isis, the great, that she may give food, endurance (and) success in her temple for the \( \text{ka} \) of the \( \text{wr(t)} \) \( \text{hnr} \) Mahiy, blessed”.

The other jamb A 526 (Pl. II) is the lower part of a left one, 0.97 m high and 0.265 m wide, with a sunk relief inscription very well preserved, lacking the beginning of it:

a) for \( \text{hnr} \) of Isis, Mahiy, blessed”.

The inscriptions on both jambs of Mahiy’s house mention a \( \text{wr(t)} \) \( \text{hnr} \) of Isis and the existence of a temple for her cult. K. A. Kitchen in his Ramesside Inscriptions, I, 1974, p. 227, 10 and 9, copied the inscription on both jambs on the photographs published by A. Rosenvasser in his Preliminary Report of the excavation. According to Kitchen the name of Isis in the jamb A 527 is written \( \text{hnr} \) instead for \( \text{hnr} \), but there is no space for \( \text{hnr} \).

---

* Photograph of the Museum.
* In the reconstruction made in the Museum of La Plata to put the jamb in an upright position, it was written \( \text{hnr} \) instead of \( \text{hnr} \), as it is seen in the photograph of Pl. I.
* Photograph of the Mission.
* Kush XII, Pls. XXXIa and XXIXd
Aksha (Serra West). Door jamb Inv. No. A 527. Sandstone, height of fragments 0.50 and 0.65 m.

Museum of Natural Sciences of La Plata, Argentina
Aksha (Serra West). Fragment of a door jamb Inv. No. A 202. Sandstone, height 0.48 m. Museum of Natural Sciences of La Plata, Argentina
Wrt hnr was usually translated as “chief of the harem women”, but according to the studies made by D. Nord 7 and B. M. Bryan 8 must be rendered as “chief of the musical performers”, the women who dance, sing and clap the hands during the religious festivals 9. The office of wrt hnr of a god was performed by the wife of a high official. For example, during the time of Ramesses II are known the wife of the high priest of Osiris at Abydos as wrt hnr of Osiris 10; that of Ninmose, high priest of Onuris, as wrt hnr of this god 11 or the wife of the viceroy of Nubia Setau as wrt hnr of Amun 12. There is also a wrt hnr of the deified Tutankhamun 13 held by Tamewadjesym, the wife of the viceroy Hwy under this king 14.

The name Mahiy 16 is documented by H. Ranke 16, like  or  . In three stelae of Ramesses II’s date. In both of them, BM 305 17 and Copenhagen A Ad. 8/B6 18, she is “the lady of the house” and in the first one the wife of a sdm 15 of Deir el-Medina. For this reason the “chief of the musical performers Mahiy” of Aksha can not be identified with any of the women mentioned by H. Ranke; she should be the wife of an important official of Aksha.

The style of the sunk relief hieroglyphics of the jambs of Mahiy is the same that of that of the inscriptions written on the lintels and jambs belonging to the southern store-rooms of the temple 19, bearing the name of Seti I, the king who began to built the temple because his name appears on an inscription found in it 20. The style of the fine sunk relief hieroglyphics is still in use during the time of Ramesses II, the king who built the temple of Aksha for his cult as a god. Beside Amun and Re-Harakhte 21, at least in some reliefs found in and around the temple: the scene on the right jamb of the forecourt,

3 C. J. Bleeker, Egyptian Festivals, 1967.
4 KRI, III, 458, 2.
5 KRI, III, 473, 4; 472, 8.
6 KRI, III, 103, 16.
7 L. Bell, Aspects of the cult of the deified Tutankhamun, [in:] Mélange Mokhtar, 1985, I, pp. 31—59
8 In Faras Urk., IV, 2075, 5.
9 And not Mahiy as Rosenvasser read (Kush XII, 1964, p. 99).
11 KRI, III, 770, 8.
12 KRI, III, 776.
13 P. Fuscaldo, Aksha (Serra West). Las inscripciones de las puertas de piedra de los depósitos del templo, RIHAO 9 (in print).
14 On the north wall of the treasure. P. Fuscaldo, Aksha (Serra West). Fragmentos con escenas e inscripciones en el Museo de Ciencias Naturales de La Plata, RIHAO 9 (in print).
15 P. Fuscaldo, Aksha (Serra West.) La inscripción de la puerta del pilón del templo, 1989 (unpublished).
where the king offers Maat to Amun; a double lintel of Amun and the
god Ramesses and a cornice where Ramesses II smites a Nubian, both
of them in the Museum of Khartum, and a lintel of the viceroy of Nubia
Heqanakht. Other reliefs and inscriptions are incised, specially those belong-
ing to private buildings. According to the style of the hieroglyphics on
the jambs of Mahiy’s house, Mahiy would have lived during the end of the
time of Seti I, when the site of Aksha was founded.

The fragmentary jamb A 202 (Pl. III), 0.48 m high and 0.34 m wide,
was found reused in a disused saqiya 50 m east of the pylon, being the
middle part of a left door jamb. An incised inscription says:

\[
a) \quad \text{[...]} \quad \text{[...]} \\
\]

b) Like in an inscription of Hawnefer, governor of Thebes (KRI, III
163,11).

b) Some traces are still seen.

“[...] for the ka of an uniquely excellent without equal, the haty-a of I[sis]
[...]”.

It is documented the existence of the office of the haty-a in relation with
a god in the Ramesside time: Bekwer, inv-r n hm ntr and wnb, Hwnefer,
hm ntr tpy and ss ntr and Pentawrt, “haty-a of Horus, lord of Buhien”. A haty-a of Isis of the time of Ramesses II
to whom the jamb A 202 belonged is the only known, to my knowledge,
in relation with this goddes in Nubia. The duties of a haty-a of a god would
be those of the administration connected with religious activities.

Till now there was only one reference about the cult of Isis in Nubia:
a hm ntr tpy of Isis, called Sa-Amun. Besides this there are the inscriptions

---

22 P. Fuscaldo, Aksha (Serra West): La lista topográfica del atrio del templo de Ramsés II, RIAHO 7/8, Pls. II, IV, Vfa and Fig. IIa.
23 It was found lying down with one of its jambs by the door of the mud-brick wall which separates the temple area from that of the officials’ quarter. P. Fuscaldo, A lintel and two fragments of lintels in relation with the deification of Ramesses II, Pl. I and Fig. I.
24 A. Rosenvasser, La muerte ritual..., Humanidades 38, 1962, p. 107 ff, and Pl. III.
25 See note 19.
27 Photograph of the Museum.
28 Rosenvasser’s note-book.
29 D. Randall-Maciver, Buhien, 1911, p. 45 and Pl. 16.
32 D. Randall-MacIver, Buhien, Pl. 16 and p. 45.
in the Nubian temples where she was worshipped together with Horus like "Isis, the great", "the god's mother", "mistress of all the gods", "lady of heaven" and "lady of Nubia". Nothing was found in Aksha of a temple or a chapel for her cult as it is mentioned on the jambs of Mahiy, but the existence of a wrt hnr of Isis and a ḫ3ty-∅ of Isis are definitive proof of her cult in Aksha during the end of the Seti I's reign and that of Ramesses II.

Abbreviations

BES — Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar, New York
BM — British Museum
JSSEA — The Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, Toronto
KRI — K. A. Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical, Oxford 1968
LD — C. R. Lepsius, Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien, I—VI, Berlin 1849—1859
RIHAO — Revista del Instituto de Historia Antigua Oriental, Universidad de Buenos Aires


34 The problem of the datation of Aksha will be presented in a future article.