



TEMPLO
DE DEBOD

MUSEOS MUNICIPALES

Map

Tuesday to Sunday:
10.00 - 20.00

Closed all Mondays and
1, 6 January, 1 May, 24, 25
and 31 December

Free entry

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Meroitic Debod A Ptolemaic temple

The origin of the Temple of Debod dates from 195 to 185 BC, when Adikhalamani, King of Meroe, in present-day Sudan, ordered a chapel to be built in the Nubian village of Debod, 25 kilometres south of the First Cataract of the Nile.

The building had a rectangular floor plan and a single entrance from the east. Its interior walls were completely decorated with scenes representing the king making offerings to the gods, arranged in two strips or registers. Scenes, carved in relief, were later painted in bright colors. The ceiling was also painted with stars and vultures. The exterior decoration was limited to the entrance door and there are only a few blocks, that are exhibited today on the terrace of the temple.

The chapel was dedicated to two gods: Amun of Debod, a Nubian god, and the goddess Isis, the Osiris wife and mother of the god Horus, whose main sanctuary was located on the Philae Island, 20 km north of Debod.

Adikhalamani has a pyramid attributed to him in Meroe's Royal Cemetery; however, except for a fragment of stela found in Philae, Adikhalamani's chapel in the Temple of Debod is the main testimony of the reign of this Meroitic monarch to date.

In 172 BC, Ptolemy VI (180-145 BC) built the 2nd Gateway of the Temple of Debod, dedicated to the goddess Isis. This king was probably also responsible for expanding the temple around the primitive chapel built by Adikhalamani several years earlier.

The old chapel became a chamber inside the new building, between the vestibule or Hall and the sanctuary. Following the plan of the Temple of Isis in nearby Philae as a model, the new Temple of Debod was endowed with three sanctuaries, at the rear of the temple, two halls, in addition to the aforementioned Adikhalamani chapel, storerooms and crypts. A staircase led to a terrace that housed a chapel, probably used for rites related to the resurrection of the god Osiris.

Throughout this period, the temple maintained the unusual double dedication to Amun de Debod and Isis. Ptolemy VIII (145-116 BC) had a naos or shrine built in honor of the goddess, who disappeared in the 19th century. Ptolemy XII (80-51 BC) commissioned another naos, somewhat smaller, carved for Amun of Debod, which is currently on display in the main sanctuary of the temple. The two shrines were carved out of monolithic blocks of Aswan granite.

Augustus in Debod From Nubia to Madrid

After the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC, a stable border between Egypt and Meroe in Lower Nubia was set. The following decades were a period of prosperity in the region, resulting in numerous temples being built and others enlarged.

Roman-era workings in the Temple of Debod were mainly due to the Emperor Augustus and were located in the vestibule and the main façade that were decorated with representations of the emperor making offerings before the gods Amun of Debod and Isis, along with Osiris and Mahesa, among others. This latter god, Mahesa, must have had certain significance at this time in Debod as he is represented on several occasions (Hall, main and rear façade, always alongside Amun of Debod.

The Emperor Tiberius, Augustus' successor, continued to decorate the vestibule, although the reliefs in which he appeared was destroyed in the 19th century. The mammisi, chapel of god-child birth, attached to vestibule is also from Roman times, as well as the First Gateway and, perhaps, the Third, the closest to the temple, which disappeared at the beginning of the 20th century. A processional path and a terrace on the river, which were not rescued in the 1960 campaign, were also Roman work.

Construction of the Aswan High Dam began in 1960 and threatened to submerge Lower Nubia, its villages and monuments under a reservoir more than 500 kilometers long.

UNESCO, in close collaboration with the governments of Egypt and Sudan, called on the international community to collaborate in rescuing this historical heritage by moving the temples and monuments to places far from the threat of water. The Temple of Debod was one of the monuments that was to be donated to a foreign country that would provide outstanding aid to the rescue project. It was the first to be dismantled and its ashlar blocks were deposited on the island of Elephantine, in Aswan.

In 1968, the Egyptian state donated it to Spain for its help in saving the Abu Simbel temples. Two years later, the blocks were transferred to Alexandria to be then transported to their new destination.

The temple began to be reconstructed in Madrid in 1970. During the following months, the gardens were designed and planted, ponds were built, the Nubian ashlar blocks were erected, and the lost parts were faithfully rebuilt to better protect it. The temple opened its doors to the public in July 1972.

1



Gateway built by King Ptolemy VI in 172 BC. The cornice has hieroglyphic and Greek inscriptions. Ptolemaic period.

2



Temple façade. Rebuilt in Madrid. This was decorated in Roman times.

3



Representations of the gods Amun of Debod and Mahesa on the rear wall of the temple. Roman era.

4



Scenes of the Roman Emperor Augustus' offering to the gods Isis, Osiris, Amun of Debod and Mahesa and Thoth of Pnubs.

5



Scenes of King Adikhalamani's offering to the gods of Debod. Meroitic era.

6



Naos or sanctuary that housed the statue of Amun of Debod. It was commissioned by Ptolemy XII, whose titles appear on both sides of the niche.

7



Model of the Temple of Debod in the first century, with the wall that surrounded it and the three original doors.

8



Ashlar bearing the title of King Adikhalamani.

9



Ashlar with representation of Amun of Debod. Roman era.

10



Model of Lower Nubia and the salvaged temples during the 1960-1982 UNESCO Campaign.

