THE SECOND PYLON OF THE TEMPLE OF BA-NEB-DJED AT MENDES

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The discovery that the great temple of the ram god at Mendes had been fronted, from the thirteenth century BC onwards, by two pylons, focused attention on the structure itself as a typical processional temple. None of the limestone blocks of the First Pylon—between 40 and 50 survive—remains in situ, but the sand-filled foundation trench, c. 65 meters east-west by 10 meters wide, shows the monument to have been substantial and not far short of the Luxor Temple pylon in size. While no foundation deposits have as yet come to light, the presence of the names of Rameses II and Merenptah on a gate block, and that of the latter on one of the blocks in the eastern massif of the pylon, strongly suggests that the construction was part of a Ramesside building program.

The court, c. 35 meters in length, behind the First Pylon is poorly preserved today, and it was only through careful excavation in the 2003 season that its southern side was identified as a second pylon. The latter had been completely stripped of its limestone masonry, probably for the lime kilns in the Middle Ages, but the foundation trench was easily discernible. In its present ruinous condition, the trench was found filled with smashed limestone chips and a varying depth of foundation sand at the bottom. The trench of the eastern massif of the pylon was intact, and its dimensions from the axial line of the temple to its eastern end proved to be c. 30 meters. The western wing of the pylon had lost 6 meters at its western extremity due to the excavations in the 1960s to retrieve the subterranean installation of Pepy-yema. The presence of Rameses II’s name on a basalt block that must have been part of the jambs of the pylon gate, coupled with two “foundation deposits” of Merenptah, militate, as was the case of the First Pylon, in favor of a Ramesside date.

The present destruction fill of the pylon trench shows varying degrees of disturbance. The east wing yielded a fragment of a “fish” stela of the sort known only from the Hat-mehyet shrine, c. 180 meters due east of the temple. Within the gate area, about two dozen disarticulated diorite, granite, limestone, and quartzite blocks lie scattered at the original level of the entry, viz. 11.72 meters a.s.l. The diorite (four blocks) clearly belong to the jambs, inscribed with Rameses II’s name, referred to above, while the granite formed a dado inscribed with alternating nomen and prenomen of Merenptah, in upright cartouches, along the reveals of the entry. Drums of engaged(?!) limestone columns, approaching 2 meters in diameter, with the Horus-name 𓊫-][mry-t[wy] indicate perhaps the presence of a columned chamber inside the gate decorated by Achoris. The gate itself suffered demolition and reconstruction at least twice. The granite dado was wrenched from...
Fig. 1. Plan of the temple of Ba-neb-djed, oriented (local) north.

Fig. 2. Section through the western massif of the Second Pylon. The prominent sand stratum marks the bottom of the foundation trench. The scattered bricks (58) represent the demolition of a structure (MK?), while the surface below loci 63, 64, 84, 85 and 88 is the bottom of the Thutmoside pit. The limestone blocks at the bottom of the control trench belong to the partly preserved burial installation immediately east of the sloping corridor of Pepy-yema.