



AXSE

AXSE, the name of a Parthian hostage in Rome, inscribed in the dedication of an epitaph engraved on a marble plaque and discovered at the Forum Boarium in Rome (Priuli, 1977, pp. 331-34; 1979, p. 25, no. 78). The text is as follows:

1.[—————]

2.[—————] and

3.Iulia Axse, Parthian hostage,

4.have made [this monument] for themselves and

5.for their daughter Ulpia Vobrane and

6.their grandchildren, [their] slaves, and [their] freedmen

7.and the posterity of all these.

(There is nothing remarkable about the formula in lines 6-7, which is frequently found in epitaphs of the imperial period.)

The epitaph having been broken off at the top, the name of the male dedicator—probably the husband of Iulia Axse—has disappeared. She is called *opses parthorum*, “Parthian hostage” (*opses* being an archaic form of *obses*, “hostage”). Axse is no doubt an approximate Latin transcription of an Iranian,



more particularly, Parthian name, as is Vobrane. S. Priuli, who published the inscription (1977, p. 334, n. 67), has connected it with $\bar{A}x\bar{s}$ or $\bar{A}x\bar{s}i$, the name of a *mōbed* (ap. Justi, p. 12), but this interpretation is not entirely satisfactory, and the original form of the name Axse remains to be established.

When and under what circumstances was Axse delivered to the Romans as a hostage? The Roman clan name Ulpia, which her daughter Vobrane bears, suggests the reign of Trajan (M. Ulpius Traianus) or the period immediately following it. Furthermore, Priuli (1977, p. 333, n. 66) has speculated that Axse might have been handed over as a hostage during Trajan's campaign in the Parthian empire, by agreement with Parthaspates, the transitory Arsacid king crowned at Ctesiphon by the hands of the Emperor himself in 116 or early in 117. This hypothesis is certainly not unlikely, but the surrender of Axse could have occurred at another time and in other circumstances.

However that may be, Axse must have belonged to the Parthian nobility and probably even to the Arsacid royal family. It would be difficult to identify her with the Arsacid princess whose father, the future king of Armenia, Tiridates, brother of Walagaš I, gave her as a hostage to Corbulo under the terms of the treaty of Rhandaia of A.D. 63 (Tacitus, XV, 30). Once established in Rome, Axse was granted the clan name Iulia and was married, either to a Parthian noble hostage or exile, or to a Roman aristocrat.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

E. Liss-Carona and E. Priuli, "Appendice Epigraphia" in *Notizie dei scavi di antichità*, 1979, p. 326 sq. (text of the inscription, p. 332).

Cf. also *Année Epigraphique*, 1979, p. 25, no. 78.

For the name of Axse, cf. F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 1963, p. 12-13 (Axs).

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