

# RESHEP AND ASTARTE IN NORTH SINAI: A RECENTLY DISCOVERED STELA FROM TELL EL-BORG

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In the course of excavations at Tell el-Borg, North Sinai, in 2006 we discovered a small limestone votive stela that contains the figures of Reshep and Astarte (TBO 760;<sup>1</sup> Fig. 1a–b). Given the scholarly interest in the presence and role of foreign deities in Egypt, and because of the intriguing iconographic features on this stela, it seems appropriate to publish this new discovery in a timely manner.

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE STELA

Tell el-Borg is located around ten kilometers (six miles) east of Qantara Sharq, Sinai and about five kilometers (3 miles) southeast of Tell Hebua II, now confirmed to be Egypt's frontier town of Tjaru/Sile.<sup>2</sup> Two forts from the New Kingdom have been discovered, the earlier one dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and the second one from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasties.<sup>3</sup> We have presented evidence elsewhere to show that the first fort was likely constructed during the reigns of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.) and/or Amenhotep II (1427–1400 B.C.), and was abandoned after the reign of Akhenaten. This terminal date rests on the discovery of a stamped jar handle of *ʿnh hprw rʿ* (Ankhheperu-Re) – the ephemeral successor or coregent of Akhenaten (1338–1336 B.C.) – among the sherds sealed in the very top of the moat.<sup>4</sup> The second fort was constructed immediately east of the

front of the earlier fort. In fact, in Field IV, Wall C of the second fort was constructed over the SE corner of the moat of the earlier fort. This stratigraphic evidence demonstrates that the second fort was likely built late in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or at the very beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>5</sup>

In 2005, a section of the moat of the Ramesside period fort was discovered and partially cleared (Field V, Area 2, squares A–B). It was a poorly made structure that measured 6.4 meters across at the top, and was at least 2.5 meters deep (Fig. 2). The superstructure was made of mud-brick that laid on a 45° angle in a trench that had been excavated into the sand. The foundation was made of an assortment of limestone blocks and fragments and was around 40 centimeters in depth. During the 2005 season, the ground water was touching the very bottom of the foundation. By the 2006 season, the water level had risen nearly another 15 cm, thus posing a danger to the blocks.

At the end of the 2005 season, most of the limestone blocks were recovered from the rising water table. Among them were 17 pieces that contained some sort of inscription. The most important were seven partial or complete doorjambs from an earlier structure bearing the cartouches of *ʿ3 hprw rʿ imn htp hꜥ3 ntry iwnw* (Aa-kheperu-ra Amenhotep, Divine Ruler of Heliopolis).<sup>6</sup> The building from which they came was obviously still

<sup>1</sup> TBO = Tell el-Borg Object, the system for cataloguing small finds at Tell el-Borg.

<sup>2</sup> In recent years, two inscriptions have been discovered in 1999 and 2005 at Hebua I that mention Tjaru. See M. ABD EL-MAKSOUÐ & D. VALBELLE, *Tell Héboua-Tjarou, L'Apport del l'Épigraphie*, *RdE* 56 (2005) 8, 19–21. Abd el-Maksoud's excavations during the spring and summer of 2007 at Hebua II have shown that it too is a part of the Tjaru military complex.

<sup>3</sup> For publications on Tell el-Borg J.K. HOFFMEIER, *Tell el-Borg in North Sinai*, *Egyptian Archaeology* 20, Spring (2002) 18–20. J.K. HOFFMEIER & M. ABD EL-MAKSOUÐ, *A New Military Site on 'The Ways of Horus' – Tell el-Borg 1999–2001: A Preliminary Report*, *JEA* 89 (2003) 169–197. J.K. HOFFMEIER, *Tell el-Borg on Egypt's Eastern Frontier: A Preliminary Report on the 2002 and 2004 Seasons*, *JARCE* 40 (2004) 85–112. J.K. HOFFMEIER,

Recent Excavations on the 'Ways of Horus': The 2005 and 2006 Seasons at Tell el-Borg, *ASAE* 80 (2006) 257–279. Some brief reports and pictures of the work at Tell el-Borg are also available at the project's web-site, [www.tellelborg.org](http://www.tellelborg.org).

<sup>4</sup> Several studies have presented the evidence for the dating of the moat, including J.K. HOFFMEIER & M. ABD EL-MAKSOUÐ, *JEA* 89 (2003) 193–194 and J.K. HOFFMEIER, 'The Walls of the Ruler' in *Egyptian Literature and the Archaeological Record: Investigating Egypt's Eastern Frontier in the Bronze Age*, *BASOR* 343 (2006) 13–14.

<sup>5</sup> We currently favor the reign of Horemheb for this construction. See forthcoming J.K. HOFFMEIER, *ASAE* 80 (2006) 261–262.

<sup>6</sup> Two blocks mentioning Tjaru/Sile have been published. See J.K. HOFFMEIER & R.D. BULL, *New Inscript-*



Fig. 1a TBO 760 stela of Astarte and Reshep; Photograph: J.T. Lim

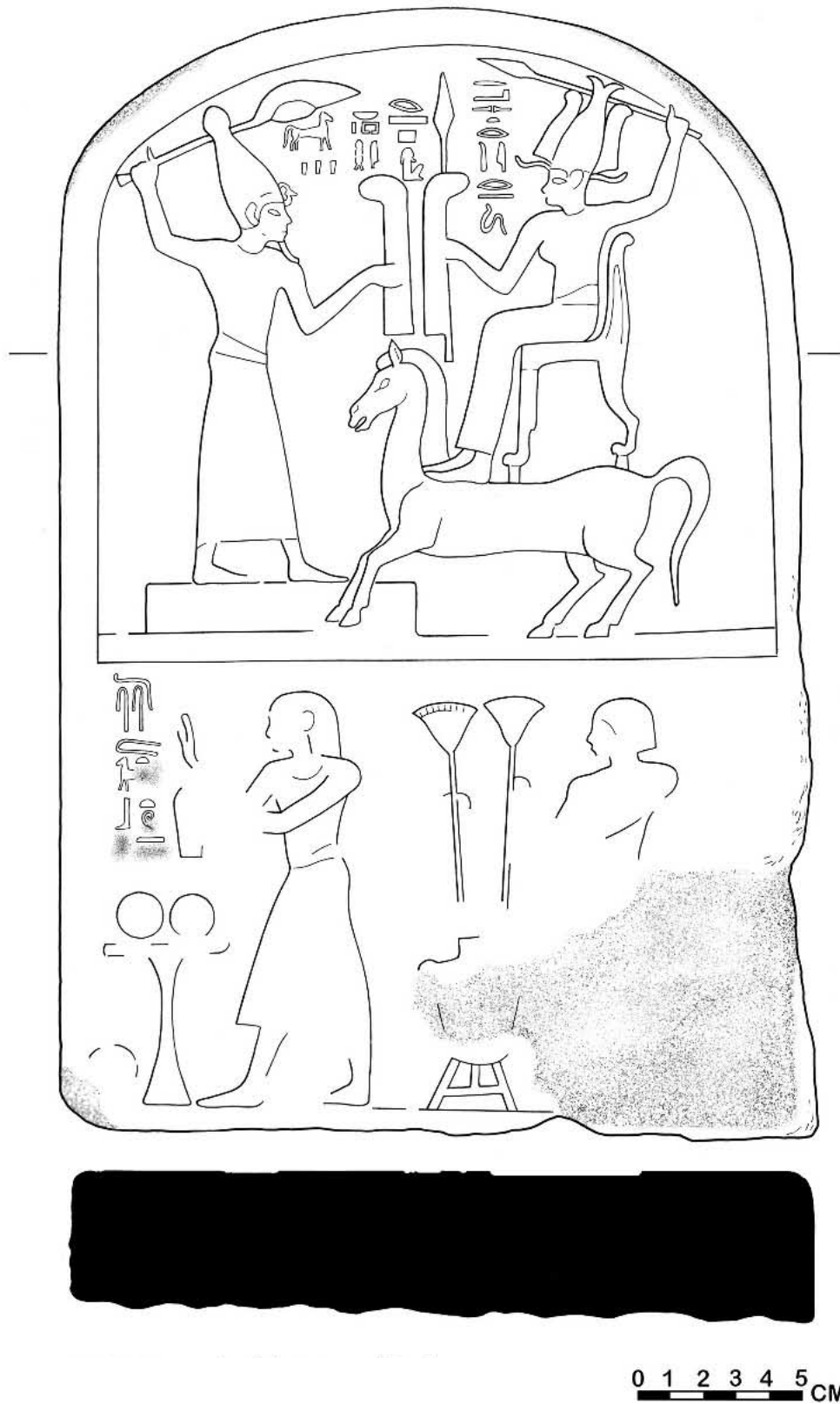


Fig. 1b TBO 760 stela of Astarte and Reshep; Computerised reconstruction: L. Pinch-Brock





Fig. 2 Tell el-Borg; Photograph: H. Alexander

standing during the reign of Akhenaten (1352–1336 B.C.) as the name of Amen was hacked out during the Amarna period iconoclasm. We have proposed that these blocks originally came from an important building associated with the first fort, which probably continued in use till the end of the Amarna period (ca. 1330 B.C.).<sup>7</sup>

This suggests that the reused blocks in the foundation of the moat most likely date to the period between 1425 B.C. (the reign of Amenhotep II) and ca. 1300 B.C. when the moat was constructed.

While excavating in Field II, Area 2, Square C during the most recent season, the stela under study was discovered. Unlike the other inscribed

tions Mentioning Tjaru from Tell el-Borg, North Sinai, *RdE* 56 (2005) 79–86, pls. XII–XIII) and the remainder are discussed in J.K. HOFFMEIER, Recent Excavations on

the ‘Ways of Horus’: The 2005 and 2006 Seasons at Tell el-Borg, *ASAE* (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> HOFFMEIER & R.D. BULL, *RdE* 56 (2005) 79–86.



Fig. 3 Tell el-Borg; Photograph: J.K. Hoffmeier

blocks from the moat, the stela's inscribed side faced upwards (Fig. 3). Based on the archaeological context (in the foundation of the moat), the stela must pre-date the Amarna period.

#### DESCRIPTION OF STELA

Rounded at the top, the stela is 35 cm tall and 24 cm wide, and it is about 4.5 cm thick (Fig. 1a–b). It is divided into two parts. The top section contains the two deities, and the bottom panel shows two men who are bringing offerings to Reshep and Astarte. The quality of the limestone is rather poor – somewhat porous. The bottom register has been damaged. A large section of the lower right hand portion has flaked off, obliterating the entire lower half of the second devotee. The general quality of the execution of the sunk reliefs is quite good, considering it is a private stela from a remote location, although the inscriptions are not as deeply incised and are difficult to read, especially the signs on the lower section.

The top section containing the two deities is outlined by a circular line that follows the curvature of the top of the stela. The lines of the lunette extend down along the outside edges of the stela to

the surface on which the figures stand. The line representing the ground serves to demarcate the two panels; however, there are no outside lines in the lower portion, only a line representing the surface on which the two humans stand.

On the left Reshep stands on a plinth – indicating a cult statue was in view. His right arm is upraised, holding a pear-shaped mace combined with a blade. He wears a long kilt that extends down to the ankle area and he is decked with the white crown, and has the narrow curved beard of Egyptian divinities. In his left hand he clutches a shield, which curves inward at the top and faces the deity.

Above the shield his name and epithet are written: *ršp nb pr iḥw*, “Reshep Lord of the estate (or house) of the stable of horses.” This is a previously unattested epithet for Reshep. *iḥw* is a stable and normally is written with the house determinative (𓏏), indicating that it was a structure of some sort. However, there are examples in which a horse and plural strokes are written,<sup>8</sup> just as we have here (𓏏𓏏). What exactly a *pr iḥw* is remains uncertain, but it may refer to the entire stable establishment.

<sup>8</sup> *Wb* 1, 121= A. ERMAN & H. GRAPOW, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* 1–5 (Leipzig 1926–1931).



Directly opposite Reshep, is the figure of Astarte, the goddess associated with warfare, horses and chariots.<sup>9</sup> She sits enthroned on a leonine-legged chair, which in turn rests on the back of a horse. A spear clutched in her left hand is elevated over her head, as her right hand grasps a shield, which nearly touches that of Reshep. Also in the right hand one can see the top part and tip of a second spear extending beyond the top of the shield, which like Reshep's shield curves inward, facing the goddess. She wears a tightly fitted dress that reaches her ankles, with the outline of her breast clearly delineated. On her head is the horned *3tf*-crown (𓆎).

Astarte's name (𓆎*strt*) is written between the shield and spear that is held in her right hand and her face. The signs 𓆎 are written after 𓆎*strt* and before the cobra determinative (𓆎) often used with female deities. Thus the name reads: 𓆎*strt rn*, meaning "Astarte name."<sup>10</sup> This is a most peculiar writing for which we can offer no parallel to this formula: deity-name + *rn* + determinative. It may be an Egyptian writing for the Canaanite epithet of Astarte, namely 𓆎*strt rn bʿl*, "Astarte the name of Baal."<sup>11</sup> In this case, either the name of Baal is missing due to lack of space or it was an intentional abbreviation. The appearance of a Semitic term in her epithet should not be surprising given her Levantine origin.<sup>12</sup>

In the lower register two worshipers are shown presenting offerings. The state of preservation of this part of the stela is poor, making the reading of the reliefs and inscription challenging. The man on the left wears a wig, the bottom of which touches the top of his left shoulder, and his kilt is knee-length. His one hand appears to be extend-

ed in a gesture of adoration, while the other may hold a libation vessel. A pedestal-type offering table stands before him with circular loaves (?) on it. Above the offering is the vertical inscription that includes the name and title of the devotee. The text reads *imy-r ssmt btw, mʿ3 hrw* – "the overseer of horses, Betu, the justified." If our reading for the man's name is correct, then we are dealing with a name known previously, but not common in Egypt. Ranke documents one occurrence in the Middle Kingdom and one in the New Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> The name is quite possibly a foreign one, perhaps Hurrian. It might derive from the name Pentu/Bentu, a personal name attested at Nuzi, if we assume the assimilation of the *n* to *t*.<sup>14</sup>

The second figure stands on the right side of the bottom register and holds lotus flowers in each hand. The opened flowers are in direct alignment with the worshiper's face, while the stems extend downwards. Below them is a wooden stand that supports what appears to be an amphora. The entire lower portion of this figure is missing and the top is so poorly preserved as to make it impossible to discern if this is a man or a woman. No trace of the second individual's name is visible.

## DISCUSSION OF ICONOGRAPHY

### The Figure of Reshep

Izak Cornelius recently studied the iconography of Reshep in Egyptian sources,<sup>15</sup> proposing three different forms in which he appears, as 1. The menacing god, in which the deity is shown brandishing a weapon, 2. The standing god, and 3. the riding/driving god. Cornelius assembled 27 examples of Reshep portrayed in the menacing

<sup>9</sup> J. LECLANT, "Astarté à cheval d'après les représentations égyptiennes," *Syria* 37 (1960) 1–67. C. ROMMELAERE, *Les Chevaux du Nouvel Empire Égyptien: Origines Races, Harachement* (Brussels 1991) chapter 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Rn* means 'name', cf. *Wb* 2, 425.

<sup>11</sup> J. HOFTIJZER & K. JONGELING, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Languages II* (Leiden/New York, 1995) 1158. The earliest occurrence of this name is in the Kirta Epic from Ugarit, where it is found but once, but occurs again in a Phoenician text centuries later (D. PARDEE, The Kirta Legend, in: *Context of Scripture I*, 343 n. 101, in: W.W. HALLO & K.L. YOUNGER (eds.), *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden, 1997). Another interpretation of *rn bʿl* is "sky of Baal", see N. WYATT, col. 205, in: K. VAN DER TOORN, B. BECKING, & P.W. VAN DER HORST

(eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Grand Rapids/Leiden 1999). We are grateful to K.L. Younger for these references.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Schulman has made this point with respect to the use of Semitic terms in epithets of Reshep. See: Reshep Times Two, 165, in: W.K. SIMPSON & W.M. DAVIS (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan: Essays in honor of Dows Dunham on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, June 1, 1980*, Boston.

<sup>13</sup> H. RANKE, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen I* (Glückstadt 1935) 99, no. 9.

<sup>14</sup> I.J. GELB, *Nuzi Personal Names* (Chicago 1943) 114.

<sup>15</sup> I. CORNELIUS, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshep and Baʿal*. *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 140 (Fribourg 1994).

god stance on stelae or reliefs on a permanent surface.<sup>16</sup> There are many examples of the menacing god in glyptic art, but identifying the deity is challenging as Ba<sup>c</sup>al and Reshep are at times indistinguishable.<sup>17</sup> Clearly the Tell el-Borg stela falls into the menacing god category. Here Reshep is portrayed with his right hand upraised, clutching a pear-shaped blade-mace. In ten of the examples from Cornelius's corpus, this type of mace is used. In the other hand, our deity holds a shield that curves inward at the top, pointing inwards towards Reshep's head. This particular perspective has several parallels, apparently representing a side view of the shield.<sup>18</sup> The most common shield form shows a frontal perspective, and typically, along with the shield, the god holds a spear. Thirteen of Cornelius's examples have the shield-spear combination. The new stela omits the spear. The omission may be due to the fact that the deity's name was written over the top of the shield, and below it is the head of Astarte's horse. So there was simply no room for the spear. Space considerations – especially interference with an offering table – may account for the absent spear in some cases. Normally, if the shield is shown over the offering table and an inscription is above it, the spear is omitted. One notable exception is found on a Ramesside era stela from Deir el-Medineh, the artist includes the spear by placing it behind the offering table with the bottom of the shaft protruding below the table.<sup>19</sup>

Reshep is portrayed in keeping with normal Egyptian canons, including the narrow beard that curves out at the end, which is the traditional form for an Egyptian god. The standard headgear of this deity, the white crown, is worn, but no flowing streamers or band around the crown are visible, which are attested elsewhere. There are cases when he is portrayed in a more Semitic manner with

long hair, a large beard, and a fillet that secures a gazelle's head to his brow.<sup>20</sup> The Tell el-Borg stela includes the gazelle's head, an iconographic detail associated uniquely with representations of Reshep. It has been observed that the gazelle head or horns "are Reshep's distinguishing mark," according to Raphael Giveon.<sup>21</sup> Another regular iconographic element of the Reshep repertoire is the lute,<sup>22</sup> but it is not present in the new stela.

### The seated Astarte

Cornelius has also classified the iconography of Semitic goddesses in Egyptian sources. They are 1. the armed goddess, 2. the seated goddess, 3 the standing goddess, 4 the equestrian goddess, and 5 the naked woman holding objects.<sup>23</sup> Astarte usually is depicted in the first and fourth type, and within these, there are variations. The armed goddess type has sub-categories of the menacing seated goddess and the menacing standing goddess, while the equestrian goddess typically shows Astarte riding bare back on a horse in New Kingdom Egypt in a menacing pose. There are a few cases, however, where she is not in an attacking posture.<sup>24</sup> Anat is also portrayed in nearly identical ways, and sometimes is iconographically indistinguishable from Astarte.<sup>25</sup> Portrayals of Astarte on a chariot are found in the Levant in a bronze figurine, but only in Ptolemaic times is she shown driving a chariot in Egypt.<sup>26</sup>

In the Tell el-Borg stela, Astarte adopts the menacing posture, with a spear raised in her left hand, which is held near the very end of the shaft. The spear is the weapon of choice for this goddess, but the mace, blade mace and even a bow and arrow are all attested in Egyptian New Kingdom sources.<sup>27</sup> The *3tf*-crown is the standard diadem for Astarte. Some portrayals include horns and a ribbon flowing downwards from the back of

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pls. 1–19.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 167–169.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* pls. 2, 6, 8, & 21. One of the four examples of this side view presentation of the shield on a Ramesside period stela has the curved part turned outwards towards the worshiper. See CORNELIUS, pl. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* pl. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pls. 22–23.

<sup>21</sup> R. GIVEON, Reshep in Egypt, *JEA* 66 (1980) 144.

<sup>22</sup> On the lute in Egypt and as an element of Reshep's iconography, see K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, Two Lute-Players of the Amarna Era, *JEA* 66 (1980) 72–73.

<sup>23</sup> I. CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddess Anat, Astarte, Qedshet, and Asherah ca. 1500–1000 BCE*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 204 (Fribourg 2004) 21.

<sup>24</sup> CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, pls. 4–6-7.

<sup>25</sup> See discussion and illustrations throughout CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*.

<sup>26</sup> CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 93–94; pl. 1.6, and 32.


<sup>27</sup> CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, for the spear, see 1.1.a, 1.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4a, 31; for other weapons, see pls. 1.1, 1.7, 4.4.



Fig. 4 Astarte seal

the crown. In the new example, the horns are present, but there is no trace of a ribbon.

### The horse


The most striking iconographic element of Astarte is that she is ensconced on a chair that rests on the back of a horse. The rear chair foot rests on the rear haunches, very close to the tail, while the front feet rest on the middle of the horse's back. This placement allows space for Astarte's feet to rest at the front of the back, just below the flowing mane. To our knowledge, this combination of seated goddess on the back of a horse is without parallel in Egyptian art. It appears to be a conflation of the seated menacing goddess and equestrian motifs. The closest possible parallels to this combination in Egyptian sources is found on some New Kingdom period scarabs in which a winged-deity appears to be sitting as if on a chair on the back of a horse, but there is no chair! (Fig. 4)<sup>28</sup> In fact the divinity seems to be hovering over the equine. Cornelius initially identified the winged-figure on these scarabs with Baal. Edward Lipiński challenged this identification, believing that the deity is female, and is likely Astarte or Anat.<sup>29</sup> The main argument he advances is the presence of the *wḏbt*-eye () on some of the scarabs which could point to Anat because her name was symbolized "at Ugarit by the cuneiform logogram of the eye."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, pls. 4.22, 23, 24, 25.

<sup>29</sup> E. LIPINŃSKI, *Egypto-Canaanite Iconography of Reshef, Ba'al, Ḥoron, and Anat*, *CdÉ* 71 (1996) 262.



Fig. 5 Nuzi seal in 'Mittanian style'

This suggestion apparently convinced Cornelius, because in his recent monograph on the iconography of Semitic goddesses in Egypt, he reclassified these images as "the goddess stands or kneels (not riding) on horseback."<sup>31</sup> The problem with Lipiński's suggestion is that the appearance of the -sign is, as Carol Andrews reminds us, "the most powerful of protective amulets."<sup>32</sup> So the appearance of this apotropaic symbol on a scarab is fitting and thus may have nothing to do with the Ugaritic writings. The second problem with Lipiński's identification is that in all four of the scarabs with the winged-deity under consideration, the figures wear the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (Fig. 4). Among all the clearly identifiable illustrations of Anat and Astarte, these deities never wear the double crown, rather the *3tf*-crown. Thus equating these winged-deities on horses with Anat or Astarte is at best questionable.

Despite the uncertainty of the identity of these winged-deities, this motif, absent the throne, comes closest in Egyptian representations to Astarte's presentation on TBO 760. Outside of Egypt there are examples in glyptic art of deities seated on the throne that are perched on the back of an animal. From Pre-Sargonic Mesopotamia, for example, comes a cylinder seal where a deity is enthroned on the back of a bull that faces right while the god faces left, and a second bull facing the other directions serves as the footstool for the

<sup>30</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 40–41.

<sup>32</sup> C. ANDREWS, Amulets, in: 79, D.B. REDFORD (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* I, New York 2001.



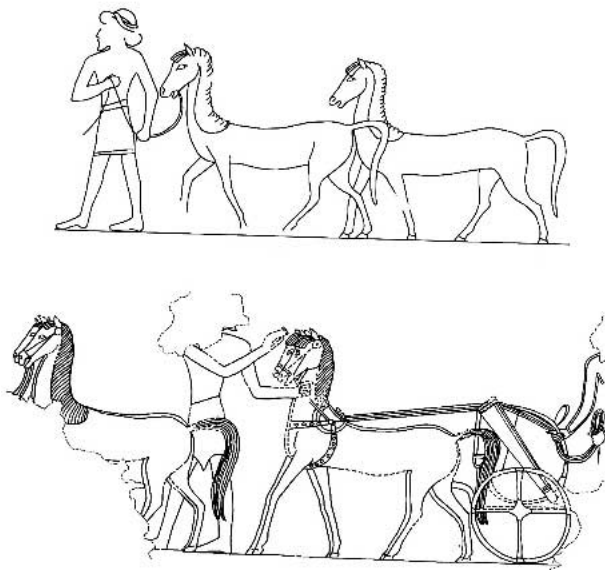


Fig. 6 Tomb of Amen-Nedj, no. 84 (top)  
Tomb of Menkheperre-Senb, no. 86 (bottom)

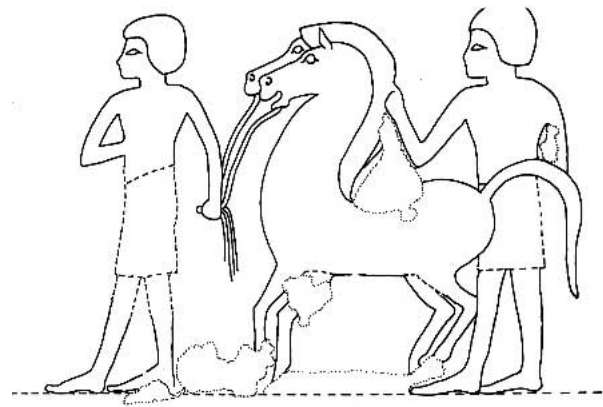


Fig. 7 Tomb of Userhet, no. 56

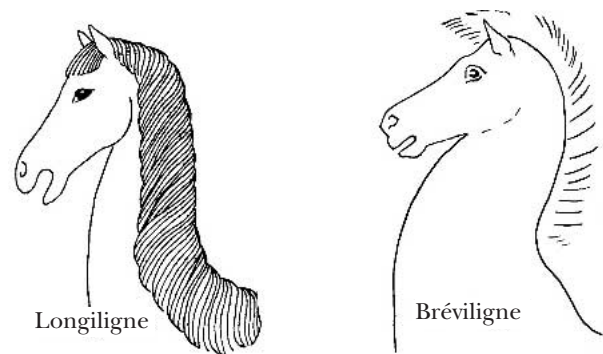


Fig. 8 Rommelaere's two types of 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty horses

deity.<sup>33</sup> A similar instance occurs on a seal from the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Ammiditana.<sup>34</sup> The closest parallel artistically and chronologically to the new enthroned Astarte on a horse is the depiction of a Mesopotamian god on a seat that is placed on the back of what appears to be a horse (Fig. 5). This seal is in the "Mitannian Style" and dates to ca. 1400 B.C. according to Edith Porada.<sup>35</sup>

In the absence of a royal cartouche on the stela, the presentation of the horse offers helpful details for dating the scene. Astarte's horse has an elongated and slender body, a thin upright neck with a broad flowing mane whose width is only a little less than the thickness of the neck itself. The tail is long and thin, and its curvature gives it a question mark shape (Fig. 6).<sup>36</sup> This type of horse compares well with the horses in the tomb of Renni, Paheri, Djehuti, Amun-nedjeh, Sennefer, Amenemhet, Nebamun, and Rekhmire, all spanning from the reigns of

Amenhotep I to Thutmose III.<sup>37</sup> At the end of this period and into the reign of Amenhotep II, a stockier horse begins to appear as the earlier type fades out (Fig. 7).

Catherine Rommelaere made a diachronic study of the horse based on 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty representations. She determined that there are two types depicted. The shape of the one type is an elongated slender horse that she calls 'Longiligne.' The second horse is stockier horse and shorter, hence 'Bréviligne.'<sup>38</sup> She convinc-

<sup>33</sup> This is Berlin VA 3878 in D. COLON, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London 1987) 165. For the dating see p. 27. I am grateful to Alan Millard for directing me to this and the other Mesopotamian examples cited here.

<sup>34</sup> B. BUCHANAN, *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection* (New Haven 1981) 352–53.

<sup>35</sup> E. PORADA, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections I: Plates* (Washington, D.C. 1948) # 1029E pl. 157, and pp. 143–144. Porada suggests that the animal supporting the enthroned deity is an ox. A

closer look suggests that it looks more like a horse than an ox, especially the manner in which the ears are shaped. The tail does seem to be that of a bovine. Perhaps a composite animal is intended?

<sup>36</sup> C. ROMMELAERE, *Les Chevaux du Nouvel Empire Égyptien. Origines, races, harnachement* (Bruxelles, 1991), 68–70.

<sup>37</sup> Illustrations of these have all been conveniently assembled and illustrated in ROMMELAERE, *Les Chevaux du Nouvel Empire Égyptien*, 152–167.

<sup>38</sup> ROMMELAERE, *Les Chevaux du Nouvel Empire Égyptien*, 34–37.

ly demonstrated that this difference is not merely an artistic one, but reflects a shift in the breed of horse. The earlier horse, she suggests was the Akhal Teke horse of Central Asia, whereas the later heavier equid is the Arabian Pur-sang.<sup>39</sup> The change from one type of horse to the other during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. coincides with the period when Thutmose III and Amenhotep II campaigned extensively in the Levant. Thousands of horses were brought to Egypt as booty during the three decades of aggressive military activity. The Megiddo booty list of Thutmose III alone records that 2041 horses, 191 foals, 6 stallions and colts (the number is lost) were taken to Egypt.<sup>40</sup> This influx of horses to Egypt apparently brought the new breed which in time, by sheer numbers and cross-breeding, replaced the earlier, slighter variety. The shift in artistic representation, then, merely reflects the change in breed.

#### CONCLUSIONS

When the horse of Astarte is compared with the two types of horses found in 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty representations, it clearly matches the Longiligne variety. Consequently, the new stela most likely dates no later than the reign of Amenhotep II. The archaeological context of the stela suggests a date before ca. 1320–1300 B.C. The fact that the stela was found in association with other blocks bearing the names of Amenhotep II is not insignificant. When all these factors are weighed, a date in the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II is likely. Consequently this stela of Reshep and Astarte is one of the earliest representations of these martial deities who became increasingly

important in the course of the New Kingdom. Moreover, to our knowledge, this is the first example in which Reshep and Astarte appear together in Egyptian art.

The owner of the stela was the ‘overseer of horses,’ apparently during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty when the first Tell el-Borg fort flourished. Considering that he was likely a foreigner himself, his devotion to Reshep and Astarte, who are associated with horses and warfare, is quite fitting. The former’s title ‘Lord of the house of the stable of horses,’ shows the close relationship between the deity and Betu, the stable master. The personal name Reshep, a stable master, is found in the Wilbour Papyrus from the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>41</sup> The convergence of the two martial deities, Reshep’s epithet, the depiction of a horse and an officer responsible for the stable at a military site is altogether appropriate and expected. Ironically, this stela was discovered only about 3 meters west of a burial of four equines within the moat (Fig. 2). Two of these may be horses.<sup>42</sup>

While Reshep’s name is attested in Asiatic personal names in Egypt as early as the Middle Kingdom,<sup>43</sup> it is not until the New Kingdom that this West Asian storm-god begins to play a greater role in Egyptian religion and is associated with horses and warfare. Thirty years ago the late Alan Schulman lamented that while Reshep ‘is associated with horses’ in the New Kingdom, the evidence was ‘surprisingly scant.’<sup>44</sup> The recently discovered stela provides new evidence for this important but somewhat elusive foreign deity from the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, while at the same time expanding the repertoire of forms for the iconography of Astarte.

<sup>39</sup> ROMMELAERE, *Les Chevaux du Nouvel Empire Égyptien*, 34–46.

<sup>40</sup> K. SETHE, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie IV* (Berlin 1961) 663.

<sup>41</sup> A.H. GARDINER, *Wilbour Papyrus III* (London 1948) 43, Text A 41,5; 72 Text A 68, 36. He is son of Thut-em-Heb.

<sup>42</sup> During the most reason season, preliminary studies began on the four equids

<sup>43</sup> The name *ꜥpr ršpw* occurs in Brooklyn Papyrus 35.1446. See W.C. HAYES, *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom I the Brooklyn Museum* (New York 1955) 94.

<sup>44</sup> A. SCHULMAN, Reshep on Horseback?, *JSSEA Newsletter* 7 no. 4 (1977) 13.