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Asiatic War Deities in Late Dynastic and Graeco-Roman Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of mankind, war has been part of human life. Its detrimental consequences could not have been evaded including physical, psychological, mental, economic, and environmental effects. People in ancient cultures worshipped war deities as they sought protection and victory. The ancient Egyptians had their pantheon that involved war gods and goddesses (e.g., Monthu, Onuris, Sekhmet). To those deities, temples were constructed, and offerings and prayers were made. The names of Asiatic war deities were sporadically attested in different periods of the Egyptian history and were common with the expansion of the Egyptian domains during the New Empire (e.g., Anat, Astarte, Reshep, Mithra/Mithras, and Sopedu). Such foreign deities received almost no resistance in Egypt; contrariwise, some of these deities were elevated to the same level of the Egyptian deities and their cults outlasted the Dynastic Period. This article aims to explore the persistence of these deities during the Late Dynastic and the Graeco-Roman periods in Egypt through iconographic and textual evidence.

KEYWORDS

Asiatic war deities – Anat – Astarte – Mithra/Mithras – Reshep – Sopedu – Late Period – Ptolemaic – Roman Egypt

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INTRODUCTION

Ancient Egypt was a prime example of the religious notion of political leadership, that was religion and politics, which were inextricably linked. In fact, it was the king's assertion of divine monarchy that fostered political stability in ancient Egypt,¹ which was sometimes endangered by external threats. Therefore, the Egyptian mythology included a considerable number of deities associated with war, to guarantee living in peace, and to have their protection and support whenever their state was engaged in battles such as Montu, Onuris, Seth, Horus-Behedety, Mahes, Menhit, Neith, Pakhet, and Sekhmet. Throughout the millennia of the ancient Egyptian history, the religious beliefs and practices remained relatively unchanged and has been integral part of the national identity of the ancient Egyptians. There were male and female war deities shown either in animal or human forms, with or without war attributes. They were depicted in different media (e.g., walls of the temples, stelae, and statues), often accompanied with their epithets and titles, and were also mentioned in numerous papyri with various contents. Despite the overall conservatism of the ancient Egyptian culture, they were open to foreign cults and beliefs, especially with extending the kingdom's domain in Asia Minor. Asiatic war deities were attested in Egypt; they were put together with those of the Egyptians on the same media, were identified with the Egyptian deities, and became an integral part of the Egyptian pantheon. The Macedonian conquest of Egypt did not put an end to the Egyptian religion; conversely, they realized the necessity of the continuation of the Egyptian beliefs and practices. The Ptolemaic kings were keen to construct temples for Egyptian deities and to be depicted in the same manner as their native predecessors, and so did the Roman Emperors despite residing far away in

¹ OKON 2012, 93, 95.

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Rome. The Greeks and Romans brought their deities, which were also identified with the other deities of the Egyptian pantheon, yet they were mostly depicted in various media that are different from those used for the Egyptian and Asiatic deities. This study deals with the Asiatic deities of war in Egypt tracing their introduction in the Egyptian land and briefly overviewing their presence in Egypt and focusing on their attestations in the Late Dynastic and Graeco-Roman Periods.

ANAT

Anat was claimed to be one of the most important deities in the history of religion in the North-West Semitic area.² The origin of this goddess was a matter of controversy whether Babylonian, Hittite, Canaanite, or Amorite, and it had been stated that her worship goes back to a very early age in Syria and Palestine.³ However, the earliest record of her cult was among the literary material of the Amorites discovered during the excavation campaigns carried out at ancient Mari from 1933 to 1938 found; i.e. her name was inscribed on a cuneiform tablet dating to the 18th century BC listing the gods of the city to whom sacrifices were offered.⁴

The name of Anat was attested in Egypt by the end of the Middle Kingdom. It was mentioned within two female names in a list of slaves having a considerable percentage of Semitic names that was written on a Papyrus (35.1446) kept at Brooklyn Museum. The Asiatic presence was attested in the Delta region in the 11th dynasty or earlier and were certainly worshipping their

² EATON 1964, 52.

³ EL-HAWWARY 1993, 25.

⁴ DOSSIN 1950, 41-45; EATON 1964, 10.

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homeland deities.⁵ However, this document is not necessarily indicative of the existence of Anat's cult at this early period in Egypt.⁶

The evidence of the cult was rather attested during the Hyksos occupation as early as the 17th century BC as the name of the goddess was included within a name of a man on a scarab-shaped seal,⁷ who was probably a ruler during the 15th dynasty,⁸ as well as Semitic personal name.⁹ Anat is always depicted as a woman seated on a throne, wearing long tight dress and the *Atef* crown with the two plumes, and holding weapons in her both hands, of which one is always raised.¹⁰ In the New Kingdom, it appeared under the reign of Tuthmosis III; however, the peak of her popularity was under the Ramessides;¹¹ there is no better evidence of her prominent rank than her name's inclusion in the name of Ramesses II's eldest daughter '*Bint Anat*' meaning "Daughter of Anat", who was the only princess bearing that Semitic name.¹² Anat was basically linked with royal figures; her main role was to protect the king during the military campaigns.¹³ She is referred to – together with Astarte – as "*the shield of the king*" in the inscriptions accompanying the military scenes, e.g., upon the back of the southern tower of the first pylon in the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III at Madinet Habu.¹⁴ Her cult was prominent in Lower Egypt/Delta, i.e. a temple was established for her at Tanis.¹⁵ Following the Ramesside Period,

⁵ HOLLADAY 1997, 198; GRIFFIN 2009, 418.

⁶ ALBRIGHT 1954, 223, 230-231. For the dating of the Papyrus to the end of the Middle Kingdom, cf. DE MEULENAERE 1982, 694; LLOYD 1994, 68 and n. 4.

⁷ MÜLLER 1912, 47.

⁸ RYHOLT 2018, 252.

⁹ SCHNEIDER 1998, 133.

¹⁰ WILKINSON 2003, 137.

¹¹ BLOK 1930, 184.

¹² STEINER 1998, 402-403.

¹³ HOFFMANN 2008, 50.

¹⁴ BREASTED 1906, 62 (§ 105); AHMED 2013, 242.

¹⁵ JORDAN 2004, 19.

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she was only occasionally attested until the reign of the Roman Emperor, Augustus.¹⁶

From the Saïte Period, there is a good example of a vase decorated with a scene having a background of stars and showing Anat seated on a throne wearing a long tight dress and a crown flanked by two plumes, holding a shield and spear in her right hand, and raising a battle-axe with the other hand, while carved in front of her in a gesture of adoration is the royal prince 'Psamtik' (Pl. I a).¹⁷ Dating to the 30th dynasty, there is a brief mention of the goddess on an altar of Nectanebo II that is kept at the Museum of Turin no. 1751.¹⁸ The upper surface on top of the cylinder has a square hole in the center, from which radiate several irregular lines.¹⁹ The upper cylinder of the altar has round it 68 perpendicular lines of hieroglyphs including the names and titles of many gods that is interrupted 4 times by a relief for the king's adoration and offering. A priest is shown in the front pouring a libation of water out of a vessel on a small altar, behind is the king who is holding an incense vase in one hand as an offering and raising the other hand in a gesture of adoration. It is a very important document providing a list or calendar of the principal deities of Egypt, to whom the king is making his offerings. The order with which the deities were listed followed the four cardinal points by the following order: South, West, North, and East. It was evidently placed so that the sides respectively faced the four quarters of the compass. The name of the goddess Anat appears among the deities of the South 'column no. 11' (Pl. I b).²⁰

¹⁶ HOFFMANN 2008, 50.

¹⁷ EATON 1964, 105.

¹⁸ LLOYD 1994, 102 and n. 48.

¹⁹ BONOMI 1874, 423.

²⁰ BIRCH 1874, 425-427.

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During the Late Period at Elephantine, there lived – besides the Egyptians – several elements of Jews, Persians, Babylonians, Palestinians, and Syrians.²¹ The Jews came to this area as mercenaries or refugees in the 7th and 6th centuries BC, and constituted a significant part of the military garrison there since the 26th dynasty; among the deities that they worshipped was Anat²² as indicated through the Aramic Papyri of Elephantine dating to the 5th century BC.²³

The cult of Anat was attested in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods.²⁴ A good example dating to the Ptolemaic Period was previously kept at Lunsingh Scheurleer Museum (S. 633), the Hague, and currently displayed at Allard Pierson Museum of Amsterdam (APM 7776). It shows Anat carved on a stela seated on a throne, wearing a long tight dress and her characteristic *Atef* crown with the two plumes and surmounted by a very small disk. She has her right hand empty and held forward, while the other hand is grasping a scepter. In this stela, Anat is represented together with the goddess Mut who is shown seated as well, and the god Khonsu is depicted in a standing posture. The owner of the stela is the scribe of the temple of the goddess Anat, who appears to be no more foreign deity, being in the company of principal Egyptian deities (Pl. II a).²⁵

²¹ El-HAWWARY 1993, 2.

²² IBRAHIM 2019, 21. For the religion of the Jews at Elephantine, see VINCENT 1937.

²³ HORN 1969, 38. For a detailed study on the Jewish colony at Elephantine through these papyri, see KRAELING 1953.

²⁴ LEITZ 2002a, 123-124.

²⁵ EATON 1964, 113-114; Von BISSING 1914, Nr. 120 A. Worthy of note is the identification between the goddesses Anat and Athena indicated through the discovery of bilingual inscription (Greek-Phoenician) in Cyprus under the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, in which Athena is addressed in the Greek text and Anat in the Phoenician one, see GUZZO & MONTICELLI 2015, 29-40.

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On a limestone plaquette previously kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 85625, SR 6161) measuring 7.3 cm, the name of Anat is engraved.²⁶ It was a gift of king Fouad in 1936. It was recently moved to the Grand Egyptian Museum. The name of the goddess is mentioned in a separate column after the cartouches of the royal couple, Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II followed by the title: *“The lady of the House of Anat”* (Pl. II b).

In the temple of Hathor at Dendera,²⁷ precisely in Crypt no. 1, there is a relief depicting the goddess Anat standing and wearing the horned *Atef* crown surmounted by a small disk. She is dressed in a leopard skin and holds the *ankh*-sign with one hand, and a papyrus scepter in the other. She is shown with other gods, among whom is Sopedu (Pl. II c).²⁸ The same crypt no. 1 bears a similar depiction for Anat (Pl. III a) with the same outfit and attributes (passage D-E) together with Hathor, Horus, and Khonsu, accompanied with text that reads: *“Words spoken by Anat in Iat-di (Dendera), who punishes the enemies for their misdeeds”*.²⁹

At Philae temple, Anat is depicted in the form of Isis receiving two mirrors from the emperor Augustus;³⁰ behind Anat sits the goddess Bastet (Pl. III b), and the accompanying text reads: *“Bastet, the princess, the mistress of Bubastis, the venerable and powerful one at the head of the birthplace, who protects Anat and her son Horus”*.³¹

²⁶ LECLANT 1975, 255; LLOYD 1994, 103.

²⁷ LECLANT 1975, 255.

²⁸ MARIETTE 1871, pl. 12d; MARIETTE 1875, 235.

²⁹ CHASSINAT 1952, 25 (no. 3) and pl. CCCXL (Passage D-E, Paroi Ouest).

³⁰ LLOYD 1994, 103-104; BOWMAN 1978, 248.

³¹ JUNKER & WINTER 1965, 391 (d) and phot. 1015.

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ASTARTE

Astarte is a Syro-Palestinian/West Sematic deity, who is equated with Ishtar of Mesopotamia.³² She was popular in other civilizations under different names; e.g., the Sumerians as *Inanna*,³³ people of Southern Arabia as *Athtar*, the Greeks identified her with Aphrodite, and the Romans equated her with Venus.³⁴ Her cult was mainly introduced into the Egyptian pantheon during the New Kingdom,³⁵ probably during Tuthmosis III's Syrian conquest.³⁶ The earliest evidence of her cult is attested on a stela found at Giza in 1936 dating to the reign of Amenhotep II, who was fond of horses and was entrusted by his father, Tuthmosis III, with the care and training of the best horse in the royal stables at Memphis under the protection of Reshep and Astarte.³⁷ Tuthmosis IV, to whom is attributed the earliest depiction of riding Astarte, was described as “strong in the chariot as Astarte”. However, she rose to prominence only during the 19th dynasty. She was also included within the Egyptian mythology; the Chester Beatty Papyrus I dating to the 20th dynasty states the settlement of the battle between Horus and Seth, in which Astarte and Anat are referred to as daughters of the god Re. Astarte is linked with the horse and chariot. The main aspect of her depictions in Egyptian art was as a female warrior, and she is closely related to the King's chariot performance.³⁸

The cult of Astarte spread in many Egyptian regions such as Eastern Delta, Memphis, Fayum, Oxyrhynchus, Herakleopolis, Thebes, and Tanis.³⁹ A temple

³² SCHMITT 2013, 215; IDD Project “Astarte” 2008, 1.

³³ MATSUSHIMA 2014, 1.

³⁴ ABDEL-HAMEED & AMIN 2017, 240.

³⁵ TAZAWA 2014, 103.

³⁶ HOFFMANN 2008, 50.

³⁷ ZIVIE 1980, 269, 275.

³⁸ PERLMAN 1978, 191, 193-194, 198.

³⁹ ABDEL-HAMEED & AMIN 2017, 244.

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was constructed for her in the Ramesside capital of Pi-Ramesses in the Delta,⁴⁰ and another temple at Memphis.⁴¹ She was depicted in Egypt on the walls of temples and on various types of artifacts including stelae, seals, scarabs, amulets, Ostraca, plaques... *etc.*⁴² Astarte was generally depicted wearing a long, tight-fitting dress,⁴³ and frequently riding a horse, with or without war attributes.⁴⁴ She was shown with different Egyptian crowns such as the Red Crown, White Crown, and *Atef* Crown; however, the latter was characteristic of her.⁴⁵ There were similarities between Astarte and Anat; however, there were some iconographic differences summarized by Griffin as follows: Anat never carries the weapons held by Astarte (i.e. bow and/or arrow quiver); Anat as a warrior was only depicted seated or else standing peacefully, whereas Astarte as a warrior was depicted both seated and standing; Astarte was shown sitting on a throne upon a horseback, which was never attested for Anat; Astarte was represented as a sphinx on ostracon from Deir El-Medina, an image that never appeared for Anat.⁴⁶

Astarte's depictions decreased during the Late Period. However, there is an important relief (Pl. IV a) for her in the sanctuary of the temple of Hibis at the Kharga Oasis dating to the 5th century BC,⁴⁷ the construction of which began under King Darius I of the 27th dynasty; she is depicted in the sanctuary's north wall taking three different forms holding war attributes (two

⁴⁰ WILKINSON 2003, 139.

⁴¹ LECLANT 1960, 4.

⁴² ABDEL-HAMEED & AMIN 2017, 245; TAZAWA 2014, 105.

⁴³ GRIFFIN 2009, 52, Table 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97-116.

⁴⁵ PERLMAN 1978, 197.

⁴⁶ GRIFFIN 2009, 78-79.

⁴⁷ HOFFMANN 2008, 51.

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standing figures wearing the red crown and one riding figure wearing the white crown).⁴⁸ Her depiction in this temple was possibly because of being a wife of Seth, who was the god of the Western Desert.⁴⁹ There is also a papyrus fragment discovered within many other fragments in Saqqara in 1926 including a list of officials or workers at Memphis dating to the Persian occupation, among them is a theophorous name including Astarte that is ‘*Aštartyaṭon*.⁵⁰ Her cult as a warrior goddess continued until the Roman Period.⁵¹

An early Ptolemaic ex-voto to Astrate is marble slab stela (JE 43081, SR. 5/10154) found in Memphis with bas-relief that could reflect a scene from a Ptolemaic temple (Pl. IV b). It shows the goddess wearing the headdress of Isis-Hathor and sitting on a chair that takes the form of winged sphinx. There are two bearded priests shown in Syrian style, one is behind the goddess holding a censer attached to a ram-headed scepter, while the other is in front of her standing before an altar. There are several Egyptian elements in the relief that is framed with two Hathoric-like columns supporting an entablature having a cavetto cornice adorned with the winged solar disk and surmounted by Cobras with solar disks.⁵²

A sandstone votive (ex-voto) stela from Memphis dating to the late 3rd century BC – most probably under the reign of Ptolemy Philopator – was dedicated by an individual of Semitic origin from Sidon to the goddess Astarte referred to in the Greek text as “*the great goddess of his homeland*”; this person was temporarily or permanently resident in Memphis. At the time of its

⁴⁸ PERLMAN 1978, 197; LECLANT 1960, 51, fig. 27.

⁴⁹ MANAWIL 2014, 287.

⁵⁰ AIMÉ-GIRON 1931, 12, 39.

⁵¹ HOFFMANN 2008, 51; SCHMITT 2013, 225.

⁵² THOMPSON 2012, 83 and pl. IV; AIMÉ-GIRON 1925, 191-211, pl. I-II.

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publication, it formed a part of the private collection of Despoina Michaelides in Cairo.⁵³

A papyrus document dates back to the 3rd century BC found at Philadelphia in the Arsinoite nome in the Fayum, in which the priests of the temple of Astarte in Memphis ask Zenon to grant them oil in the same way it is granted to the other temples in Memphis.⁵⁴

A document dating to the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, which is a letter sent by the king himself to Apollonius, the Minister of Finance stating: “*Astarte should be treated like Isis, Mother of Apis in the official celebration of the Serapeum*” and giving his orders to use the cow as a symbol for the two goddesses, Isis and Astarte. Thus, there is a clear statement from the king to those in charge of the celebrations in Memphis to merge the two goddesses Isis and Astarte. This merge is also evident through the dedication of a bronze plaque in the Serapeum of Memphis near a shrine of Astarte dating to the year 32 of the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, on which the man addresses Isis Soteira Astarte Aphrodite.⁵⁵

A limestone block, which serves as a stand to the schist stela (CG 9402, SR. 3/8994) found in Memphis in 1900 and exhibited in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo, is inscribed with a four-line Phoenician text that is an appeal from the dedicant, who was a soldier of Phoenician origin coming from Thebes to visit Memphis during the 2nd century BC, to the goddesses Isis and Astarte to protect

⁵³ BOYAVAL 1966, 75-80, pls. VI-VIII; THOMPSON 2012, 82-83. For the dating, see BINGEN 1967, 236.

⁵⁴ Papyri.info (PSI.5.531); REEKMANS 1994, 131, n. 48.

⁵⁵ ABDEL-HAMEED & AMIN 2017, 242.

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himself, his wife, and his four sons; there are three names within the text including the name of the goddess Astarte (the dedicant ‘Paalashtart’, a son ‘Paalashtart’, and the mother ‘Hanashtart’);⁵⁶ the schist stela, on the other hand, is carved with a figure of Horus standing on top of crocodiles and covered with hieroglyphic inscriptions, which are spells against scorpions and snakes that are rendered functional by pouring water over the stela, the water was then flowed into a basin in front of the block, which could be drunk or applied to the body for purposes of healing. Thus, the Egyptians and non-Egyptians were enjoying the protection of these magical spells.⁵⁷

Dating towards the end of the Ptolemaic Period is a relief in the Temple of Horus of Edfu for Astarte standing in a chariot pulled by four horses, which tramples the body of the enemy on the ground; she is dressed in a long robe and the head surmounted by the solar disk, holding the reins with the left hand while the right holds the whip (Pl. V a). The accompanying text gives her titles: *“regent of horses, mistress of the chariot, who presides over Edfu”*.⁵⁸

Dating to the Roman Period is a relief on the North Wall of the chapel of the goddess Tjenenyet in the Tod Temple, in which the goddess Astarte is shown seated in human form with the head surmounted by the two horns and solar disk in between and holding the papyrus scepter in one hand and the *Ankh*-sign in the other; she receives an offering from the king (Pl. V b).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ DEMETRIOU 2023, 120-121, fig. 5.1; THOMPSON 2011, 104.

⁵⁷ THOMPSON 2011, 104-105.

⁵⁸ LECLANT 1960, 55-57.

⁵⁹ Porter & Moss 1962, 168 (Chapel of Thenent ‘no. 3-4’); LEGRAIN 1916, 119; LECLANT 1960, 55, n. 3; THIERS II 2003, 189, 190, N° 281; THIERS III 2003, 187, N° 281.

MITHRA- MITHRAS⁶⁰

The earliest mention of this god's name dates back to the 14th century BC; it was inscribed on clay tablets as the guardian of the treaty between the Hittites and Mitanni. These tablets were discovered in the early 20th century in the palace archives of the Hittites' capital, Boghazköy in north-central Turkey. The latest record, on the other hand, dates to the 5th century AD. Thus, this cult, which spread widely in the ancient world and was linked with religions of other cultures, continued for two millennia.⁶¹ The provenance of the earliest evidence of the cult, i.e., the clay tablets, indicates that the Indo-Europeans had already included Mithra into their religious pantheon; this interprets the early attestation of his cult in India and Persia. However, he was principally a Persian deity; his creation was to help their chief god, Ahura-Mazda, against the Ahriman, the demon/evil spirit in the realm of darkness, who was the main enemy in Zoroastrianism; he was known for his non-stop battling against his opponents since he never grows old or weakens. He is the god of armies and protector of heroes.⁶² The Persians believed that Mithra was the deity who led the kings to victories. The kings set the example for the nobles; the large number of theophorous names is a clear indication that they all held this deity in high regard. Mithra's fame reached the boundaries of the Aegean Sea.⁶³ The Persian kings, in their correspondences, identified themselves as sharing the throne with Mithra.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Mithras is a latinized name for the Persian god Mithra, *cf.* LAHE 2018, 486.

⁶¹ VERMASEREN 1963, 13-14.

⁶² WAGENER 1960, 79.

⁶³ CUMONT 1903, 8.

⁶⁴ A good example is a letter from Darius III and Alexander III in *The Romance of Alexander the Great*, see MAZHJOO 2019, 68.

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The conquests of Alexander the Great in the east followed by the Romans – upon the fall of the Hellenistic kingdoms – brought the Mediterranean cultures together.⁶⁵ Alexander III and his successors did not wipe out the Persians' culture and beliefs; conversely, the cult of Mithra was transferred to the west spreading throughout Europe and continuing for about five centuries.⁶⁶ The earliest attestation of the Roman cult of Mithra,⁶⁷ referred to as 'Mithraism', was in the late 1st century AD through archaeological material, and started to fade by the 4th century AD; eventually, it died out sometime after 400 AD. The Romans had their characteristic structures for this cult, particularly the *Tauroctony* (Mithras killing a bull), and the *Mithraeum* (place for the Mithras' followers).⁶⁸ They made slight modifications in the Persian traditions to match their own identity, e.g., the earlier Persian tradition of Mithra impregnating a living rock – in place of women – to have a son, in *De Fluviis*, had been altered in the way that Mithras became the miraculous god born from the living rock instead of impregnating it.⁶⁹

The cult of Mithra may have been brought to Egypt while being under the Achaemenian/Persian domination.⁷⁰ A papyrus from Elephantine, i.e. a bequest of apartment to wife, dating to 434 BC records the names of two Magian⁷¹ witnesses (Mithrasarah and Tata),⁷² which is an evidence of the

⁶⁵ ULANSEY 1989, 130.

⁶⁶ TOGHRALJERDI 2008, XII.

⁶⁷ A number of scholars claimed that the Mithraism is a new cult originated in the Graeco-Roman world and that it only borrowed the name of the Persian god. ULANSEY 1989, 131.

⁶⁸ CHALUPA et al 2021, 107-108. For the common features between the Persian Mithra and Roman Mithras, see LAHE 2018, 481-491.

⁶⁹ HILL 2017, 4-5.

⁷⁰ MIKOLAJCZAK 2008, 132.

⁷¹ Magians/Magi are Persian priests concerned with ritual sacrifices, see CORWIN 2016, 28-29.

⁷² PORTEN 1996, 216, 219 (B38).

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presence of Persian priests in Egypt.⁷³ A theophorous name including Mithra is documented in a Papyrus kept in Turin dating to the 5th century BC.⁷⁴

There is evidence of Mithra's cult dating to the 3rd century BC from Fayum;⁷⁵ a Greek Papyrus from Gurob mentions *Mithraion* among the temples in Fayum possessing sheep and goats.⁷⁶ This temple was most likely established for the Persian garrisons at that site and was then kept up by their descendants during the Ptolemaic period.⁷⁷

There was a Mithraeum (shrine for the god Mithra) discovered to the east of Mit-Rahinah at Memphis as orally reported by Daressy; there is no photo left for the structure, yet there is collection of artifacts found there and transferred to the Egyptian Museum; the collection are dated to the Roman Period around 3rd century AD.⁷⁸ Among the collection are two limestone bas relief sculptures found at the village of Mit-Rahinah in Memphis⁷⁹ in 1885 and are currently preserved at the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria and the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo. They represent *Tauroctony* (Mithra fighting a bull), which is characteristic of the Roman cult of Mithra. The first relief (Graeco-Roman Museum Inv. No. 34505) shows Mithras (Pl. VI a) wearing a belted *chiton* with two flaps, *chlamys* fastened on his left shoulder flying behind him, trousers wrapped diagonally around the leg, and low pointed shoes. He is shown kneeling with his right knee on the taurus and grabbing it

⁷³ MIKOLAJCZAK 2008, 132.

⁷⁴ CUMONT 1896, 77, no. 32.

⁷⁵ MARTIN 2016, 119.

⁷⁶ SMYLY 1921, 36-38 (doc. XXII).

⁷⁷ BOYCE 1982, 186.

⁷⁸ STRZYGOWSKI 1904, 9.

⁷⁹ VIREY 1892, 95, no. 296 and 296 *bis*.

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with his left hand by the mouth. The figure lacks his head and right arm. The raven, dog, and snake are visible on the edge of the rock; however, it is unclear whether the scorpion had been included or not. At the top corners are the busts of 'Luna' in the crescent to the right and 'Sol' to the left with *nimbus* and radiating crown.⁸⁰ The second relief (GEM. No. 7544) is a crude and poorly preserved relief that depicts Mithras as a bull slayer (Pl. VI b); he wears a Phrygian cap and the chlamys are flying behind. The bull's front part is lifted up high leaving the front paws hanging on the air, while its hindquarters are down squeezed beneath Mithras' weight, who kneels on the bull's rump with his right leg. Mithras' right hand is drawing a short dagger at the bull's head. The raven is no longer seen, only the dog and the snake. The scorpion, Sol, and Luna are not visible. The head of the animal, the right hand and right kneeling leg of Mithras are missing.⁸¹ There were also other limestone statuettes and fragmentary examples of Mithra found at the same location in Memphis in 1885 (Pl. VI e).⁸²

There are two relief sculptures from El-Menya dating to the Roman Period. A marble example (Pl. VI c) is preserved nowadays at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 85747, SR. 5/10317) that was discovered at Hermopolis (Al-Ashmonein) and sent to Cairo in 1941.⁸³ There had been a confusion concerning its provenance being documented in early references mistakenly as Memphis.⁸⁴ Mithras is wearing a chiton and chlamys shown while killing the bull. A snake is on the ground, and the dog and the scorpion are visible. The

⁸⁰ CUMONT 1896, 520, no. 285b and fig. 479; STRZYGOWSKI 1904, 9, Abb. 4; VERMASEREN 1956, 81, no. 92.

⁸¹ CUMONT 1896, 520, no. 285c, 521, fig. 480; STRZYGOWSKI 1904, 10-11, Abb. 5; VERMASEREN 1956, 81-82, no. 93.

⁸² CUMONT 1896, 521-522.

⁸³ HARRIS 1996, 169.

⁸⁴ Roger-Pearse. The Tertullian Project. CIMRM 91, 92 and 93 - Tauroctonies from Hermopolis and Memphis, Egypt (CIMRM 91).

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rocky background has a raven at the left side. On either side of the relief are columns having figures of *Cautes and Cautopates*, the torch bearers, carved in the front. Outside the niche at the top corners, Sol in nimbus and Luna in crescent are shown. Mithras' head and right arm, lower part of one of the side figures, are back quarter of the dog are missing.⁸⁵ Another relief sculpture made of limestone was found at Hermopolis and was acquired by Berlin Museum in 1895 (Inv. No. 12639). This small relief showing Mithras killing the bull was crudely sculpted and is likely to have been hastily made⁸⁶ (Pl. VI d).

From Oxyrhynchus came a limestone relief broken in three parts representing a figure of bizarre form linked with the Mithraeums referred to as Aion. The figure (Pl. VI f) is shown partly human and partly animal. The lion's head is encircled by a *nimbus* and radiate crown. The upper part of the body is exposed, while the lower is covered with hair.⁸⁷ Each hand is holding a key.⁸⁸ Oxyrhynchus also revealed a papyrus (P. Oxy. 10 1278) dating to AD 214, in which a person named Marcus Aurelius Andronicus was also called 'Mithres'.⁸⁹

The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris (=PGM IV) kept in Bibliothèque Nationale, which was acquired from Egypt, most probably Thebes, dating to the 4th century AD inscribed with Mithras Liturgy (lines 475-820); within the

⁸⁵ VERMASEREN 1956, 81, no. 91.

⁸⁶ Roger-Pearse. The Tertullian Project. CIMRM 91, 92 and 93 - Tauroctonies from Hermopolis and Memphis, Egypt (additional tauroctony); HARRIS 1996, 170, 172, fig. 3; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 1899, 331.

⁸⁷ HARRIS 1996, 169.

⁸⁸ VERMASEREN 1956, 83-84, no. 103. For a plate of the relief, see LEVI 1944, 275, fig. 5.

⁸⁹ VERMASEREN 1956, 84, commentary on no. 103; Papyri.info (p.oxy.10.1278).

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main body of the ritual, two ranks are mentioned (*Leo* ‘lion’ and *Pater* ‘father’) showing that traditional hierarchies were still in use there.⁹⁰ Also, it was claimed that there had been a temple for Mithras near the temple of Serapis on the highest natural ground at Alexandria referred to as the Acropolis of Alexandria and was abandoned in AD 361,⁹¹ and there is an account of the patriarch of Alexandria on the construction of a church on its ruins.⁹²

RESHEP

He is a West-Semitic god⁹³ of war. His main cult center was in the Delta. He was always depicted as warrior holding a shield and spear in one hand and grasping a club with the other. The diadem over the head has a gazelle’s head.⁹⁴ Among his epithets, which is indicative of his military nature, is the ‘lord of the arrow’.⁹⁵ Another epithet of special interest is ‘Reshep of the wings’; some instances show the god with wings that was hypothetically claimed to have been given to the god in Egypt because of his fighting and protecting nature as was the case with many warrior deities shown with feathers or wings (e.g., Horus and Montu).⁹⁶

His earliest evidence in Egypt dates back to the late 12th dynasty-13th dynasty, in which the name Reshep appears in a theophorous name of an Asiatic brewer “Aper-Reshepw” among other list of names on the verso side of Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446.⁹⁷ Another attestation of the name is the owner of a coffin, whose name was Reshep who was buried with a man named Baal; the coffin

⁹⁰ WALSH 2018, 30; GORDON 2019, 470. For the two ranks within the text, *cf.* BETZ 2003, 137.

⁹¹ SHARAFELDEAN 2021, 87-88.

⁹² MARTIN 2016, 123.

⁹³ SIMPSON 1983, 244.

⁹⁴ SIMPSON 1953, 88; Cornelius 1994, 247.

⁹⁵ LURKER 2004, 161.

⁹⁶ GRANDE 2003, 394.

⁹⁷ SIMPSON 1983, 244. For the list of names, see ILIN-TOMICH 2024, No. 9.

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dates to the 13th dynasty and was found at Assiut.⁹⁸ The instances of such theophorous names does not mean that the cult was introduced by then, but rather during the reign of Amenhotep II in the New Kingdom. In the temple of Amun at Karnak between the ninth and tenth pylon is the Festival Building of Amenhotep II, upon a wall of which is a damaged relief only showing a small part of a text reading "... Montu-Reshep..." and heads of two horses and a wheel indicating that it is a chariot scene.⁹⁹ Also, the association of Reshep with the horses is attested on the stela found at Giza in 1936 dating to the reign of Amenhotep II, on which the latter was entrusted with training of horses at Memphis royal stables under the protection of Reshep and Astarte.¹⁰⁰ Also, in the text accompanying the relief depicting the first Libyan campaign on the lower register of the south wall of the second court of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinat Habu, Reshep is again linked with the chariot: "*The chariot-warriors are as mighty as Reshep*".¹⁰¹ For unknown reason, there are fewer instances of Reshep's name after the reign of Amenhotep II, possibly as a result of disinterest in the deity or a void in the records. Interestingly, the Ramesside period witnessed a revival of interest revealed through the large number of stelae dedicated to that god, yet Reshep's name became rather linked with private individuals than royal figures.¹⁰²

Dating to the 25th dynasty under the reign of Taharqa, a relief in the temple of Mut at Karnak in the room of Montuemhat depicts unidentified cult object, possibly a pectoral, adorned with deities' figures, one of them is wearing the

⁹⁸ GIVEON 1980, 148; ME'WAD 2023, 2143.

⁹⁹ SIMPSON 1960, 64-65.

¹⁰⁰ ZIVIE 1980, 269, 275.

¹⁰¹ EDGERTON & WILSON 1936, 24.

¹⁰² SIMPSON 1960, 71.

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white crown with fillet and holding a shield with one hand and a spear with curved end with the other; such iconographic details raised a possibility that the deity is Reshep, and one of the other deities was identified as the goddess Qadeshu.¹⁰³

In the 27th dynasty under Darius I, there is a relief depicted on the north wall of sanctuary A of the Temple of Hibis in the Kharga Oasis showing the god Reshep, in the third register from the top, preceded by two standing and one riding figures of Astarte. The god Reshep is wearing the white crown adorned with the gazelle's head and holding a knife in each hand (Pl. IV a). The accompanying text indicates a clear association with Hieracleopolis.¹⁰⁴

The altar kept in Turin Museum of unknown provenance known as 'Turin Altar' dating to the 30th dynasty under the reign of Nectanebo II is engraved with the name of Reshep included within a list together with Anat and other deities of the eastern quarter of the sky. The accompanying text reads: "*Reshep in the house/chapel of Reshep*". This undoubtedly shows that there was a temple/shrine dedicated to that god¹⁰⁵ (Pl. I b).

The New York papyrus MMA 35.9.21 (Papyrus of Imouthes) dating to the early Ptolemaic Period constitutes a part of a larger group of Osiris rituals and liturgy.¹⁰⁶ It has the name of Reshep listed among the deities of the West (Neith, Wadjet, Sekhmet, Bastet, Anubis, and Ha); Reshep is entitled 'the great god': "*If you come to the west, the gods of the west will strike you down! Neith,*

¹⁰³ WIJNGAARDEN 1929, 34; MARIETTE 1875, 64, pl. 43; SIMPSON 1960, 68-69; FULCO 1971, 59-60.

¹⁰⁴ DAVIES 1953, 6 (Register III, no. 11) and pl. 3.

¹⁰⁵ SIMPSON 1960, 69.

¹⁰⁶ LEITZ 2002b, 727 [27]; ASSMANN 2008, 20, 23; MINAS-NERPEL 2012-2013, 81.

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Wadjet, Sekhmet, Bastet, Anubis, Reshep, the great god, Ha, lord of the West, will fulfill their office".¹⁰⁷ Thus, the god Reshep may have been charged with a new role during that period, that is a protector of the western borders.¹⁰⁸

Dating to the 3rd century BC is a significant relief of Reshep on the northern wall of the enclosure of the temple of Amun at Karnak at the entrance of the temple of Montu. The king represented is Ptolemy III holding the enemy by the hair, while the god represented in front of the king is Reshep known by his depiction that recalls those of the god at the beginning of the New Kingdom, especially the mace in his right hand, the characteristic tight kilt, and the Upper Egyptian crown with neither ribbons nor emblem in the front (Pl. VII a). The accompanying text reads: "*Words spoken by Min who slaughters his enemies... Reshep who dwells in the abode of Montu, son of Isis etc*".¹⁰⁹ The text associates Reshep with Min and Montu, and most importantly it may indicate that Reshep could have supplanted Montu during the Ptolemaic Period.¹¹⁰

There are numerous examples of bronze figurines, dating mostly to the 2nd century BC, having the same iconographic characteristics of Reshep (e.g., left foot stepped forward, wearing the white crown, lifting his right arm [most probably with weapon], and the left hand held out front); however, in view of the lack of carved texts upon these artifacts, there can never be definite

¹⁰⁷ GOYON 1975, 388-389; GOYON 1999, 68, 71.

¹⁰⁸ MANAWIL 2014, 291.

¹⁰⁹ LEIBOVITCH 1939, 157-158, pl. XX; FULCO 1971, 63, 64.

¹¹⁰ FULCO 1971, 64.

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identification since the god shares the posture and iconographic features with other deities.¹¹¹

SOPEDU

He is one of the oldest foreign deities joined the Egyptian pantheon. His origin is largely debated; however, there is a consensus that he is an Asian god, whose cult was present in Egypt eastern border area inhabited by mixed population. As he was highly reputed, the Egyptians welcomed his cult considering him as the protector deity of the eastern frontiers, lord of the foreign countries and eastern desert, whose dominion probably extended along the whole east since there is evidence of his cult on the coast of the Red Sea in Wadi Gassus near Qusseir.¹¹² His main cult center was Saft El-Henneh in eastern Delta where a temple dedicated to that god was established.¹¹³ He was venerated by the Egyptians in the area of Serabit el-Khadim as the protector god of the turquoise mines of the Sinai Peninsula.¹¹⁴ His cult was also attested in other places (e.g., the Memphite region,¹¹⁵ Lahun in the Fayoum, Dendera, Edfu, and Mendes).¹¹⁶ The name of the god is derived from the verb '*spd*', which means "pointed or sharp"; in the pyramid texts Sopedu was referred to as "pointed/sharp of teeth" since this meaning corresponds to his warlike nature.¹¹⁷ The oldest form attested for Sopedu is the crouching falcon with two or three plumes.¹¹⁸ His earliest human depiction in Egypt, which is at Sahure Temple at Abu Sir dating

¹¹¹ SIMPSON 1960, 72; FULCO 1971, 64. Worthy of note is that Reshep was repeatedly identified with Apollo in Cyprus, FULCO 1971, 137.

¹¹² BONNET 2000, 741-742. The evidence is a stela dating to the 12th dynasty, cf. GARDINER 1918, 222.

¹¹³ GOMAA 1984, 351.

¹¹⁴ GEORGE 2005, 151.

¹¹⁵ SAUNERON 1950, 117-123.

¹¹⁶ DESOUKY 2012, 126-127, 183.

¹¹⁷ AHMED 2013, 214.

¹¹⁸ SCHUMACHER 1988, 14.

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to the 5th dynasty, shows him as an Asian man (the hair, face, beard and skin colour are characteristic to the Asians), with the head surmounted by two tall feathers;¹¹⁹ he was also depicted in human form with falcon's head.¹²⁰

His cult was attested in Egypt as early as the Archaic Period on a crystal bowl found in Helwan grave 185H4 dating to the 1st dynasty, on which is a theophoric personal name (*Smr-Spdw*), who was most probably the tomb's owner.¹²¹ In the Middle Kingdom, Sopedu was the warrior god associated with the king.¹²² In the Middle Kingdom, Sopedu was mentioned in various texts (e.g., Sinuhe tale, Lahun Papyri, stelae, tombs, statues, sarcophagi, and Wadi Magharah in South Sinai); he was also depicted mainly in human form in Wadi Gassus along the Red Sea coast and Serabit El-Khadem in South Sinai.¹²³ Also, in the New Kingdom, Sopedu continued to be mentioned in the texts (e.g., papyri, temples, royal statuary, private statuary and artifacts, architectural elements, and graffiti); he was also depicted – mostly in human form – on the walls of the temples (e.g., Karnak and Ramesses III's Temple at Madinet Habu), tombs (e.g. Ramesses III's Tomb at Valley of the Kings), as well as funerary and boundary stelae.¹²⁴

During the Late Period, there is a bronze statuette of Sopedu dating to the reign of Psamtik I of the 26th dynasty that has been included within Matossian Collection since 1954; its provenance was most probably Eastern Delta as

¹¹⁹ BONNET 2000, 741.

¹²⁰ DESOUKY 2012, 107.

¹²¹ SCHUMACHER 1988, 33.

¹²² AHMED 2013, 217.

¹²³ DESOUKY 2012, 62-86.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89-108.

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claimed by the antiquities dealer by then. It depicts the god with a falcon head surmounted by two plumes with hieroglyphic inscriptions round its base (Pl. VII b): “Words spoken by the god Sopedu- Horus Sopedu that he gives life, health, and strength to the great god Psamtik...”¹²⁵

There are reliefs depicting Sopedu in the temple of Amun *Hbt* at Hibis in Kharga Oasis, which was constructed by Darius I of the 27th dynasty, who was shown on the north wall of the Hypostyle Hall M presenting wine and food offerings to the enthroned falcon-headed god Sopedu surmounted by two plumes (Pl. VIII a), and referred to in the texts as “Horus of the two eastern deserts”;¹²⁶ the king offers wine to Sopedu on the east wall of Room G;¹²⁷ in the exterior of the temple upon the south wall, the upper register shows the king wearing the *hemhem*-crown holding the symbols of authority and making offerings of food and drink to number of gods among them is Sopedu with falcon head surmounted by two plumes (Pl. VIII b);¹²⁸ he is also probably depicted in the sanctuary upon the south wall among the gods of the 8th register where a man with a pointed beard is represented with two plumes surmounting the head, holding a knife in one hand and grasping prisoners by the other, behind him is a falcon wearing the two plumes on a pedestal;¹²⁹ these two forms probably represent the god Sopedu as was the case regarding the repetition of other gods in different forms or with different attributes among the reliefs of the sanctuary.

A bronze base of a statue dating to the Late Period and kept in Staatlichen Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München (ÄS 6786); it shows two tied

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 114-115; YOYOTTE 1989, 45-47, figs. 10-11.

¹²⁶ DAVIES 1953, 24, pl. 30 (upper register).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29, pl. 50 (upper register).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12, pl. 4; DESOUKY 2012, 114.

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prisoners, the body of each is pierced by an oval hole to insert a walking figure of a god, whose name 'Sopedu' is the only one mentioned within the inscriptions.¹³⁰ A late period faience amulet kept in *Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim* Nr. 2745 showing Sopedu in human form holding a hare with the left hand and an oryx is carved to his right,¹³¹ probably in a role as a hunter in the desert. Three bronze *hypocephali* from the Abydene tomb G 50 B dating to the 30th dynasty covered with magical figures and inscriptions, the largest of which is described by Petrie showing Horus-Sopedu represented as a falcon on a pedestal within a boat above the four-headed ram god.¹³²

The threat of the Persians was faced by Nectanebo I, who successfully repelled their aggressive attack in 373 BC.¹³³ As the god Sopedu was the principal deity to whom is assigned defending the eastern frontiers, Nectanebo certainly desired to ensure the god's everlasting favour¹³⁴ by dedicating a number of shrines to that god in the temple of the god in the Eastern Delta (i.e., Saft El-Henneh). An important monument is the shrine found at Saft El-Henna dating to the 30th dynasty (Nectanebo I); it had been cut into fragments, which were put together by Edouard Naville preserving nearly half of the monument that was kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 70021).¹³⁵ The shrine walls show the god Sopedu in different forms (Pl. IX a,b): (1) falcon with or without two plumes crouching either on a pedestal or couch accompanied with the titles "*Sopedu, the Ba of the East, the falcon or Horus of the East*"; (2) hybrid form

¹³⁰ SCHUMACHER 1988, 151.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 152-153. For a statue's photo, see *The Global Egyptian Museum* [Pelizaeus 2745] 2003.

¹³² PETRIE 1902, 49-50, pl. LXXVI.

¹³³ LADYNIN 2013, 4.

¹³⁴ BOMHARD 2008, xi.

¹³⁵ SCHUMACHER 1988, 160.

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showing falcon's upper part and lower part of sitting human crouching on a pedestal (Pl. IX a) whether without human arms identified as Sopedu Horus or with human arms, of which one is holding bows and arrows identified as Sopedu Shu or else the counterpart of this form, which shows a standing human with falcon's tail (Pl. IX b) accompanied with the title "Sopedu, the master of faces, most terrible"; (3) a bearded dwarf (i.e. the god Bes) having large head surmounted with two plumes and having outstretched arms holding knife in each hand (Pl. IX a) accompanied with the title "*Sopedu who smites the Asiatics*";¹³⁶ (4) standing human with long wig wearing the two plumes; (5) standing human with short hair wearing the two plumes; (6) standing falcon-headed human.¹³⁷

Another monument is a granite shrine from Saft El-Henneh, but had been found at Al-Areesh dated by Griffith to the Ptolemaic Period¹³⁸ and is now housed at Ismailia Museum (Ismailia 2248 or generally referred to as 'Ismailia Shrine'), which is believed to be one of four shrines erected by Nectanebo I in the Temple of Sopedu at Saft El-Henneh;¹³⁹ it is dedicated to the god Shu who was identified with the local god of Saft El-Henneh, Sopedu.¹⁴⁰ A third monument known as the Naos of the Decades dedicated to Shu-Sopedu dating to the reign of Nectanebo I; it was commissioned for a temple in the Eastern Delta (i.e. Saft El-Henneh), then at a later unspecified time, it was transferred to the Canopic region. Parts of the naos are kept in two museums: the Louvre (Louvre D37 [the upper pyramid-like roof]) and in the Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria (JE 25774 [two huge fragments forming the base and the back wall discovered at Abu-Qir in Alexandria in 1933], SCA 161-164

¹³⁶ NAVILLE 1887, 10.

¹³⁷ SCHUMACHER 1988, 176-177.

¹³⁸ GRIFFITH 1890, 70-71.

¹³⁹ MILLS 2015, 5, n. 1

¹⁴⁰ SCHUMACHER 1988, 181.

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[four additional fragments discovered underwater in Abu-Qir Bay in Alexandria in 1999); ¹⁴¹ the god is represented upon the rear wall as a lion.

The cult of Sopedu persisted throughout the Graeco-Roman Period. At the temple of Dendera, the middle of the three southern rooms of Osiris on Hathor's temple roof has a relief (Pl. X a) showing Sopedu as falcon-headed god in a procession of protective deities of Upper and Lower Egypt before Osiris. The accompanied texts referred to him as the lord of the East and identifying him with Horus.¹⁴² In chapel C upon the north wall (Pl. X b), Sopedu is depicted in the form of a falcon with the two plumes and sun disk as manifestation of the god Re¹⁴³ in a row of deities opposite a kneeling figure of the king holding a figurine of Maat. Another relief from the west wall of the passage to the first east crypt (Pl. XI a) shows Sopedu in anthropomorphic form followed by the goddess Khensit; the inscriptions refer to Sopedu as "the Elder who strikes Asia, who crushes the rebels by his fear".¹⁴⁴ In the south-east back room, the northern side of the west wall shows Sopedu as a human seated behind Hathor before the King, whose cartouches are left blank, offering two mirrors, preceded by a small figure of Harsomtus (*Hr-sm3-t3wy*) as a naked child wearing the double crown and holding a sistrum before Hathor (Pl. XI b); the texts refer to him as "*the great god who is at Iwnt (Dendera), the power of the East, Horus, who is at the head of Per-Sopedu (Saft El-Henneh)...*".¹⁴⁵ Also, in the hypostyle hall within the naos (*Salle B*), there is a hymn to Amun-Min, in which he got the title of "*the good one from Punt*"; as the routes of the

¹⁴¹ BOMHARD 2008, 2.

¹⁴² DÜMICHEN 1885, 11 and tafel LI; SCHUMACHER 1988, 141.

¹⁴³ CHASSINAT 1934 a, 59 (inscriptions) and pl. LXXXVII; SCHUMACHER 1988, 142.

¹⁴⁴ CHASSINAT 1952, 31 (inscriptions), pl. CCCXLIII; SCHUMACHER 1988, 142.

¹⁴⁵ CHASSINAT 1935, 17, pl. CLXIX, CLXXI; SCHUMACHER 1988, 142-143.

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expeditions to Punt since the Middle Kingdom started from the Eastern Desert, whose patron deity was Sopedu, to the Red Sea.¹⁴⁶

There is another relief on the west exterior wall of the naos of Dendera Temple near its south-west corner, the 4th register shows the Roman Emperor Augustus, wearing the *Nemes*-headdress, holding a mace in his right hand to smite two bound prisoners facing ground and held by two ropes in his left hand, in front of a seated falcon-headed Sopdu waiving the four feathers crown (Pl. XII a); the accompanied text reads: “Words spoken by Sopedu, the great god of *Hwt-nbs* (Saft El-Henneh)... Horus of the east, who shines in the early morning, his rays enlightening both lands... May you come in peace, king of kings... I rejoice when you stab your enemies, so I grant you the strength of my majesty to both your arms when your mace beats down the foreign enemies”.¹⁴⁷ Thus, there is a clear change in the role of the deity from merely watching the king while smiting his enemies to be the one who is granting him the strength to do so.¹⁴⁸ In the temples of Dendera and Edfu, the gods, who were mostly represented before the king in the ritual slaying act, were either Sopedu or Horus-Behdety.¹⁴⁹

In Edfu, the god Sopedu is represented in human form or as a human with a falcon head surmounted with two or four feathers and two ram horns. In the outer walls of the sanctuary, the god is represented as a mummy with falcon head.¹⁵⁰ In Edfu III, in the west section of the pronaos, Sopedu is represented as falcon-headed surmounted with the four feathers over the two horns and holding the *Was*-scepter and *Ankh*-sign before king Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II

¹⁴⁶ MARIETTE 1870, pl. 23; SCHUMACHER 1988, 143.

¹⁴⁷ CAUVILLE 2007, 285, pl. 108, pl. 175; COPPENS 2021, 474-475 (Doc. 18).

¹⁴⁸ COPPENS 2021, 426-427.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 422.

¹⁵⁰ SCHUMACHER 1988, 143-144.

who is holding a harpoon with his right hand to spear a kneeling enemy held by a rope in the king's left hand (Pl. XII b); the accompanying text reads: *"Words spoken by Sopedu, the eldest one, who strikes the Mnt(y)w (beduins of Asia)... who slays the foreign lands in the 'Throne of Horus' (Edfu), the eldest one of Asia, who is at the head of the East, I make your arms strong to annihilate your enemies..."*.¹⁵¹ Thus, the contradiction in the nature of the god Sopedu is clearly shown, that is he is fighting the Asians in his function as 'lord of the East' regarding them as enemies, while the title 'Eldest one of Asia' describing him as as one of them.¹⁵²

In Edfu V, upon the west interior wall of the open court, the first register depicts king Ptolemy IX Soter II holding a harpoon to spear two bound crouching prisoners before Horus Behdety, Hathor, and in between the ruler and the deities are smaller figures of Hapy of the north brandishing an unidentified weapon and Sopedu in human form with no crown holding a big knife, while in between the latter figures is a brazier, in which four enemies are burnt (fig. XIII a).¹⁵³

In Edfu VII, the connection with Horus is very evident as he merges with him and appears as 'Horus-Sopedu, the Great' or 'Horus of the East in *Wtzt-Hrw*'.¹⁵⁴ In the east exterior enclosure wall of Edfu temple, the second register shows king Ptolemy X Alexander I holding a mace with his right hand to smite two enemies, whose faces lying down an altar and held by a rope in the king's left

¹⁵¹ CHASSINAT 1928a, 247 (inscriptions), pl. LXXVI; COPPENS 2021, 448 (Doc. 6).

¹⁵² SCHUMACHER 1988, 144.

¹⁵³ COPPENS 2021, 449 (Doc. 7), 417 (fig. 4), 421 (fig. 6); KURTH 2019, 78-81; CHASSINAT 1928b, pl. CXIV (Edfou X); CHASSINAT 1934b, pl. CCCCLXXX (Edfou XIII).

¹⁵⁴ SCHUMACHER 1988, 145; CHASSINAT 1987, 277 (Edfou II [inscriptions]); CHASSINAT 1930, 93 (Edfou V [inscriptions]); CHASSINAT 1932, 162, 272 (Edfou VII [inscriptions]).

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hand before seated falcon-headed Sopedu wearing two feathers crown (Pl. XIII b); the accompanying text reads: “*I grant you strength to overthrow your enemies... the great god, the Eastern Horus, Ba of the East... The lord of Asia has appeared in the ‘Island of Fury’ (Temple of Edfu) as the lord of strength... slaying the enemies... creating massacre in the foreign lands of the rebels...*”.¹⁵⁵ Also, in Edfu VII, upon the west exterior enclosure wall of Edfu temple, the third register shows Ptolemy IX Soter II holding a mace to smite two bound kneeling enemies held by a rope with his other hand before seated with the four feathers crown upon the horns (Pl. XIV a); the text also describes him as Horus of the East, who protects the birth of the early morning, and who provides the king the strength to beat down the enemies.¹⁵⁶

In Edfu VIII, upon the southern face of the east tower of Pylon (k), the 1st register shows the king, followed by Horus and Hathor, and a small figure of Sopedu in front of the defeated enemies.¹⁵⁷ In Edou II, upon the eastern wall of treasure B, as the god responsible for the East, Sopedu leads processions of genii as personifications of Eastern countries, while Ha, as lord of the West is shown on the opposite west wall at the head of the procession of western countries.¹⁵⁸

In Philae, the east tower of the first pylon of Isis temple shows Sopedu depicted on a small scale in human form with the head surmounted by the two feathers and the sun disk holding a *Ankh*-sign with one hand and presenting a knife to the king with the other hand (Pl. XIV b), accompanied with the following

¹⁵⁵ CHASSINAT 1932, 272; COPPENS 2021, 464-465 (Doc. 13).

¹⁵⁶ CHASSINAT 1932, 162; COPPENS 2021, 460-461 (Doc. 11); CHASSINAT 2008, pl. CLXVII (Tome X- fascicule 3).

¹⁵⁷ CHASSINAT 1933, 118.

¹⁵⁸ SCHUMACHER 1988, 146-147; DÜMICHEN & BRUGSCH 1866, pl. LXIX-LXX; for the inscriptions, see CHASSINAT 1918, 277.

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inscriptions: “... *the great god, who beats the foreign countries and the Mnt(y)w (Beduins of Asia)...*”.¹⁵⁹ Another relief on the eastern outer wall of the hypostyle hall, Sopedu is also presenting the Roman Emperor Tiberius a knife assuring him victory over his enemies.¹⁶⁰

In the Hieratic Papyrus (BM EA 10252) ‘Book of the Victory over Seth’ dating to the Ptolemaic Period (306/7 BC), the part concerned with the magical spell for the purpose of protecting the Egypt’s borders in the four directions mentions the god Sopedu: “... *If you come from the East, then [the gods of the East] ward you off, Sopdu, lord of the East, the great god, who vanquishes the foreign lands and crushes the Asians, soul of the East, Horus of the East...*”¹⁶¹

In the Papyrus (BM EA 10188) ‘Book of overthrowing Apophis’ dating to the Ptolemaic Period (305 BC), which includes series of magical spells to be recited to overcome and capture the demon ‘Apophis’, Sopedu is mentioned twice: “... *I have overthrown ... all the foes of Sopd, Lord of the East...*” and “... *Fire is in thee in the east, and it has power over thee; it is Sopd, Lord of the East, who has commanded what is done against thee...*”¹⁶²

CONCLUSIONS

Foreign deities of war in Egypt found a favorable climate that helped to spread their worship among all categories of people. The early Dynastic Period rarely documented foreign deities except for the god Sopedu, whose cult was brought

¹⁵⁹ JUNKER 1959, 27 (Abb.13a), 30, 31 (Abb.14a); SCHUMACHER 1988, 149.

¹⁶⁰ SCHUMACHER 1988, 150.

¹⁶¹ Attalus. Egyptian Texts. The Book of the Victory over Seth 2000; SCHOTT 1929, 32; SCHUMACHER 1988, 155.

¹⁶² Attalus. Egyptian Texts. The Book of Overthrowing Apep 2024; FAULKNER 1933, 55; SCHUMACHER 1988, 155.

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in the Delta from the eastern border and his Asiatic human depiction was attested in the 5th dynasty. His common forms were falcon, human, or falcon-headed deity. However, the end of the dynastic period showed other hybrid forms for Sopedu (e.g., falcon's upper part and lower part of sitting human crouching on a pedestal with or without human arms; standing human with falcon's tail; a bearded dwarf with large head and two plumes outstretching his arms with knife in each hand). He was identified with Egyptian deities particularly Horus being referred to as Sopedu-Horus. The contradiction in his epithets and titles being referred to as one of the Asians 'Eldest one of Asia' or stating his main function as protector of the eastern borders considering the Asians as enemies 'Lord of the East', 'Horus of the East', '*Ba* of the East' persisted throughout the successive periods. His cult continued in the Graeco-Roman period since he was represented in his usual forms in the main Upper Egyptian temples (e.g., Dendera, Edfu, and Philae), yet there is a relief in Edfu shows him as a mummy with a falcon's head. He was especially depicted in the traditional smiting scenes where the accompanying texts show a change in the god's role from merely watching and praising the king for his victories to be the one who grants the king the power to do so.

The presence of Asians in the Delta region from the eleventh dynasty or earlier justifies the theophoric personal names dating to the Middle Kingdom including the names of Asiatic war deities (i.e., Anat and Reshep). Yet the evidence for their cult was clearly attested during the New Kingdom together with that of Astarte, when the Egyptian kings were expanding the borders of their kingdom including foreign lands, thus expectedly they would seek the protection and support of the homeland deities, especially during the wars; therefore, these deities were mostly linked with the royal figures. As for the Asians who settled in Egypt for generations and were Egyptianized, they

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would normally desire to perceive their deities in the form of Egyptian deities. All these foreign deities were commonly represented upon the same media as their Egyptian counterparts. They were portrayed in Egyptian style accompanying Egyptian deities, were venerated under their foreign names, and were worshipped by both royal figures and private individuals. They were often associated with war, protection, fertility and played a significant role in the religious scene, reflecting both the region's cultural diversity and the blending of local Egyptian traditions with foreign influences.

The identifications between Asiatic and Egyptian war deities can be seen in their shared roles as protectors, warriors, and symbols of military strength. Anat was linked to other deities, especially those with similar warrior or protective roles (i.e. Bastet, the lioness-headed goddess of war and protection; the goddess Mut; and at Philae temple, she was linked to the goddess Isis, as the mother of Horus, since they both shared qualities of motherhood, protection, and fierce independence); curiously, Syrian depictions show Anat as cow-headed similar to Hathor's representations. Astarte was associated with Isis, Hathor, Sekhmet, and was referred to, together with Anat, as daughters of Ra. Reshep was associated with Horus and Montu. Sopedu was identified with the Egyptian god Horus and became known as *Hor-Soped*; he was also linked with the gods Horakhty and Shu.

Anat and Astarte shared attributes and functions; however, there were differences in their iconography. The peak of Anat's cult was under the Ramessides, then she was only sporadically attested until the reign of Augustus; yet such several attestations confirm the continuity of her cult as one of the principal deities of Egypt, who was worshipped by other foreign

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communities living in Egypt during the Late Period. Astarte was closely linked with the king's chariot and the horses, and her cult was particularly prominent during the New Kingdom; her depictions decreased during the Late Period, but her cult was occasionally attested until the Roman Period. The evidence of her cult during the Ptolemaic Period reflects the royal concern for treating Astarte the same as the principal Egyptian goddess Isis. Reshep was also associated with horses and chariot like Astarte, especially during the reign of Amenhotep II. In the Ramesside Period, he was rather linked with private individuals than with royal figures. In the Late Period, his name and depictions were attested together with Astarte or Anat. In the Ptolemaic Period, Reshep was listed among the deities of the West, and more importantly Reshep's depiction before the Ptolemaic king in the traditional smiting scene of at the entrance of Montu's temple at Karnak and his association with Montu in the accompanying text, which may indicate that Reshep may have replaced Montu during that period.

Mithra's cult may have been introduced during the Persian occupation of Egypt. There was evidence for a temple established for this god in the Fayum as listed in a Greek papyrus from the Ptolemaic Period, which may have been constructed for the religious practices of the descendants of the Persians who settled in Egypt. The majority of the cult evidence, however, dates back to the Roman Period until the 4th century AD, especially from Memphis, El-Menya, and Oxyrhynchus. Mithras was closely linked with military personnel and warlike activities. His relief sculptures mostly represent *Tauroctony*.

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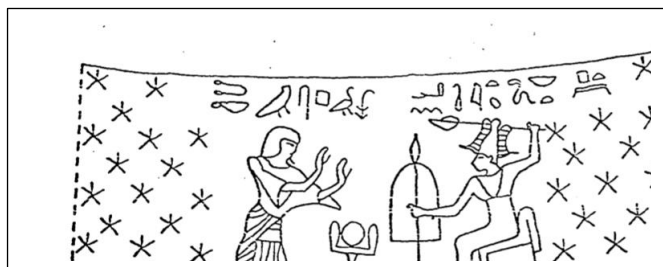
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Pl. I



- a. A scene from a vase found in Egypt: Anat, armed with weapons, receives the worship of Psamtik.

GRDSELOFF 1942, 28-31, pls. V-VI.



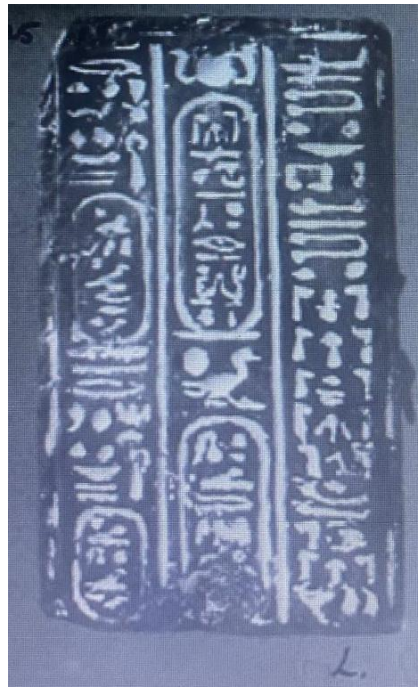
- b. The 68 vertical lines round the cylinder of 'Turin Altar' no. 1751
BONOMI 1874, 424.

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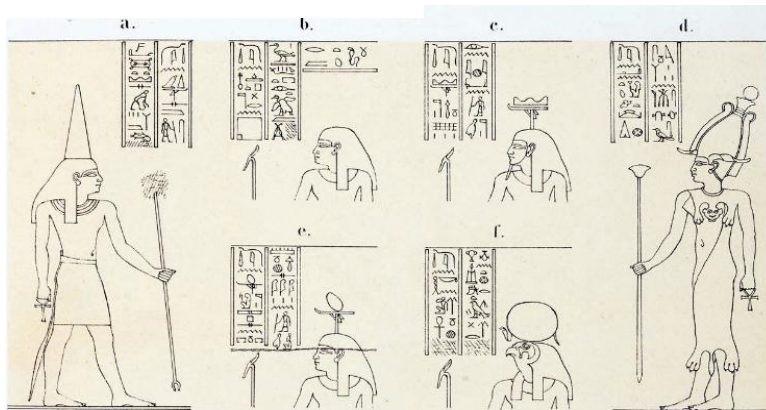
Pl. II



a. A Ptolemaic stela shows Anat seated together with the goddess Mut, and the god Khonsu in a standing posture.
Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam (APM 7776)
Von BISSING 1914, Nr. 120 A;
The Global Egyptian Museum [APM 7776] 1997.

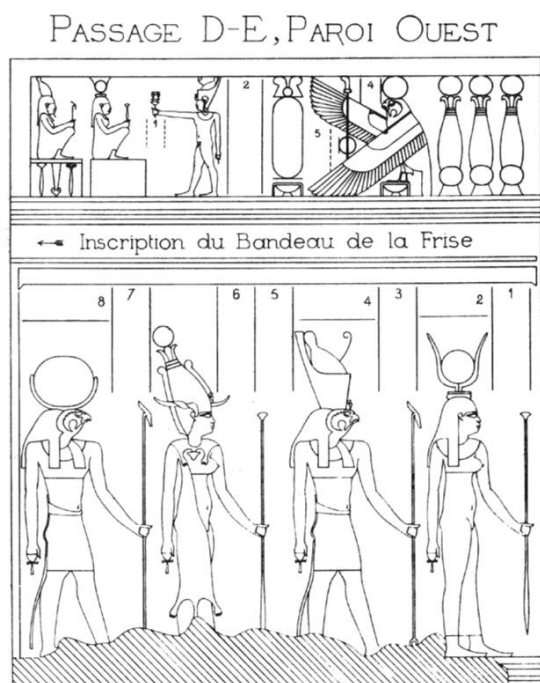


b. Small Ptolemaic Plaque with the name of Anat mentioned in a separate column after the royal cartouches.
© Egyptian Museum, Cairo
(JE 85625, SR 6161)

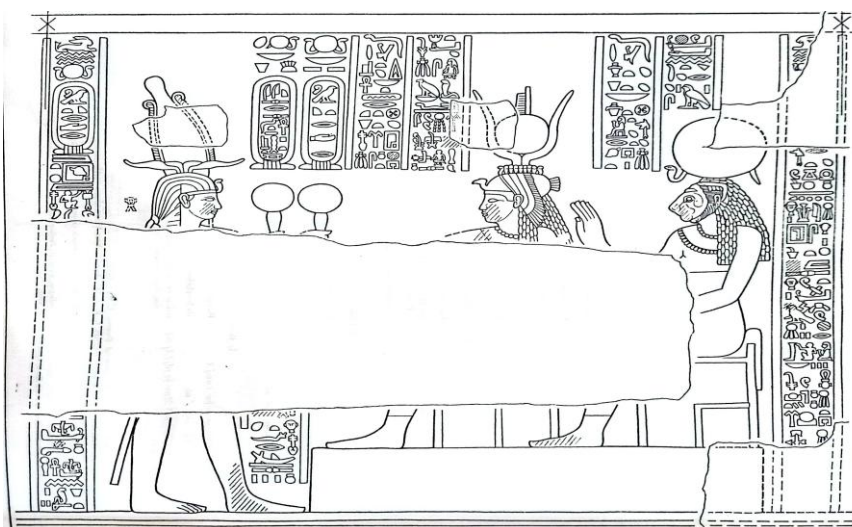


c. A relief depicts the goddess Anat standing and wearing the horned Atef crown with a small disk. She is shown with other gods, among whom is Sopedu.
Temple of Hathor at Dendera, Crypt no. 1.
MARIETTE 1871, pl. 12

Pl. III



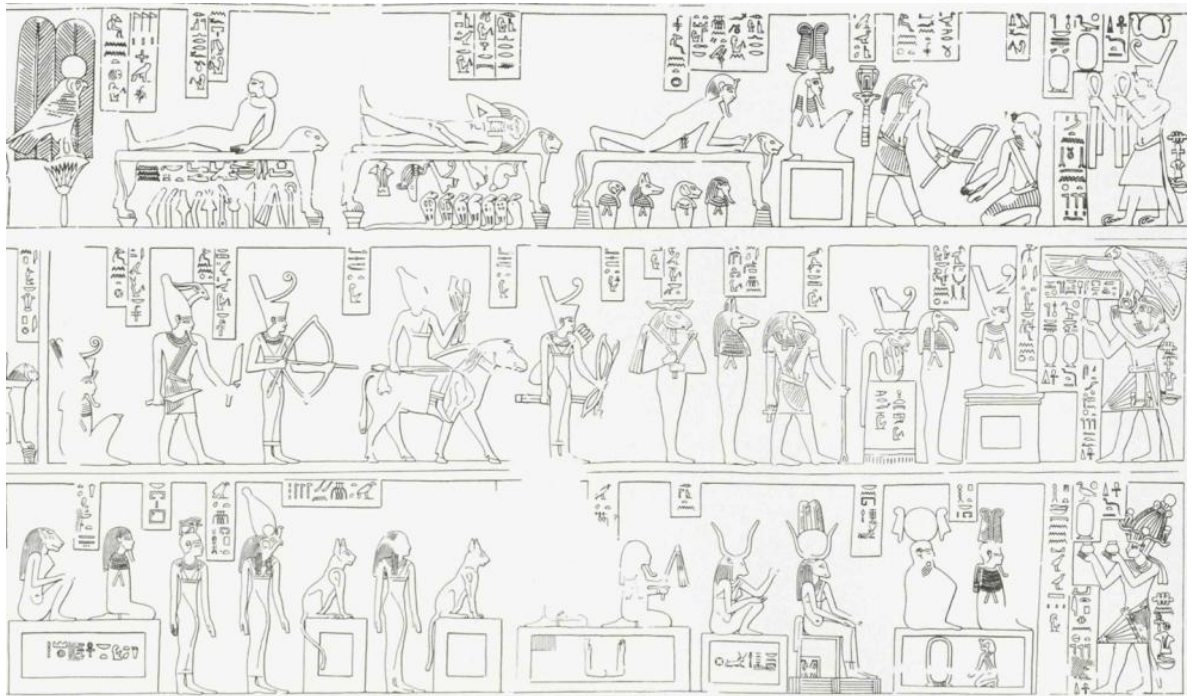
- a. Anat (third figure) is shown together with Hathor, Horus, and Khonsu.
Temple of Hathor at Dendera, Crypt no. 1.
CHASSINAT 1952, pl. CCCXL (extract [Passage D-E, Paroi Ouest]).



- b. A relief of Roman Emperor Augustus presenting two mirrors to Goddess Anat
at Philae Temple.
JUNKER & WINTER 1965, 391, phot. 1015.

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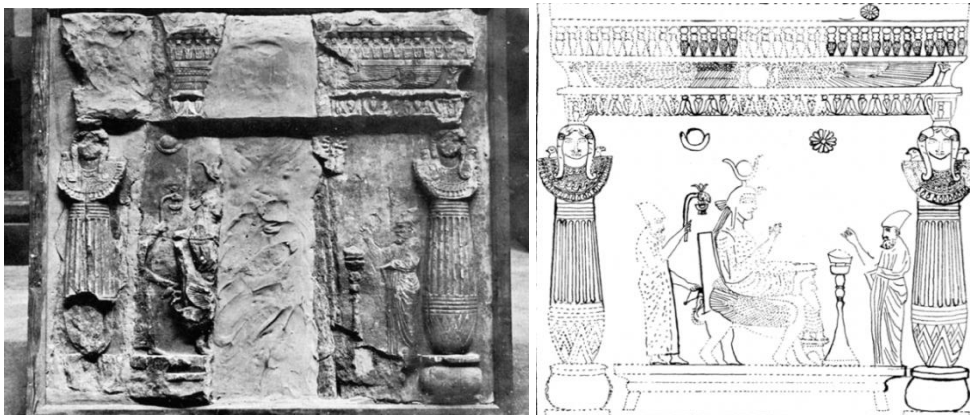
Pl. IV



a. Reliefs from the North Wall of the Sanctuary of the Temple of Hibis at Kharga Oasis:

Astarte is shown in the middle register in three forms wearing different crowns.
Reshep is shown in the middle register at the back before the squatting deity.

DAVIES 1953, pl. 3 (extract).

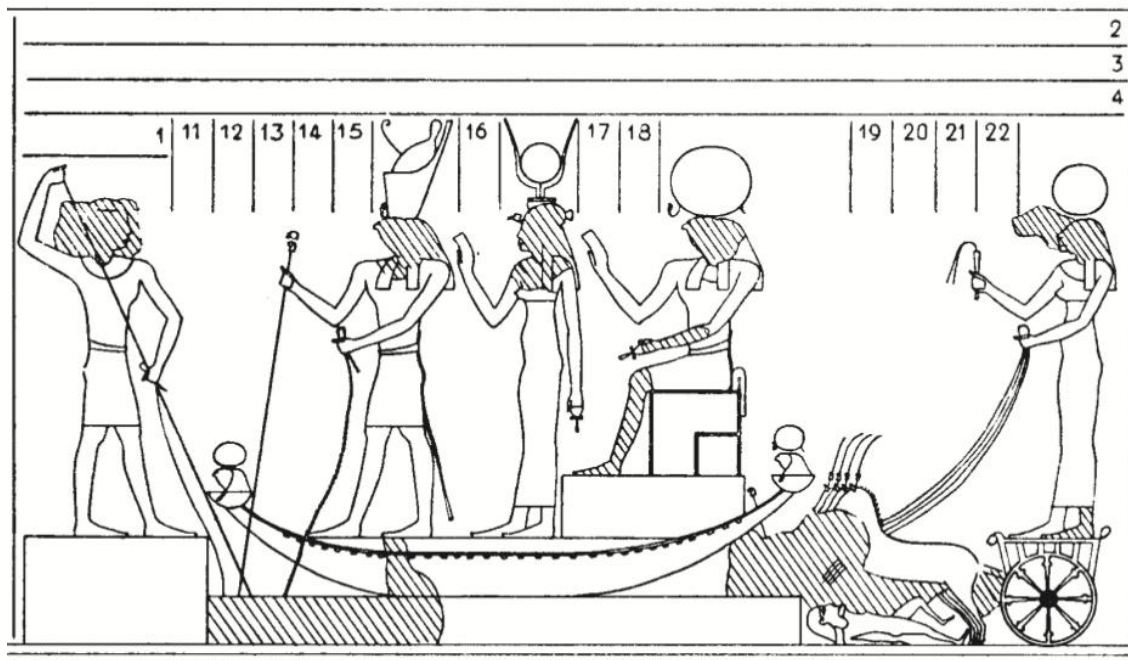


b. An early Ptolemaic ex-voto to Astrate shows the goddess wearing the headdress of Isis-Hathor and sitting on a chair that takes the form of winged sphinx.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 43081, SR 5/10154)

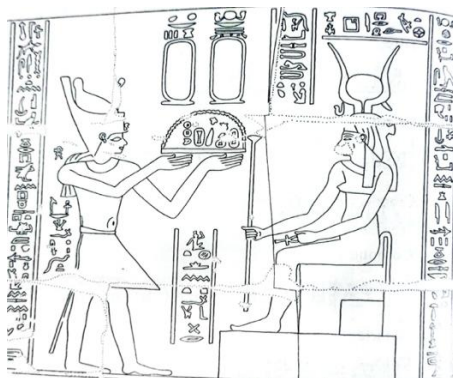
AIMÉ-GIRON 1925, pl. I-II.

Pl. V



- a. Astarte is shown standing in a chariot pulled by four horses, which tramples an enemy's body on the ground.

Temple of Horus at Edfu
CHASSINAT 1960, pl. CXLVIII.



- b. The goddess Astarte is shown in human form with the head surmounted by the two horns and the solar disk in between.

Tod Temple, the north wall of the chapel of the goddess Tjenenyet.

THIERS III 2003, 187, Nr. 281; THIERS II 2003, 190, N° 281.

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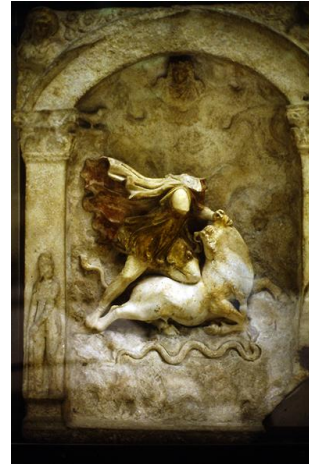
Pl. VI



a. Limestone relief of Mithras. Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria (Inv. No. 34505) STRZYGOWSKI 1904, 9-10, Abb. 4.



b. Limestone relief of Mithras. Grand Egyptian Museum, Cairo (GEM. No. 7544) STRZYGOWSKI 1904, 10-11, Abb. 5.



c. Marble relief of Mithras from Hermopolis, Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 85747, SR. 5/10317) Michael Fuller, Hermopolis in Egypt 2016.



d. Limestone relief of Mithras from Hermopolis, Berlin Museum (Inv. No. 12639). HARRIS 1996, 170, fig. 3. Roger-Pearse, The Tertullian Project, CIMRM 91, 92 and 93 (additional tauroctony)



e. Statue of Mithras from Memphis. CUMONT 1896, fig. 485.

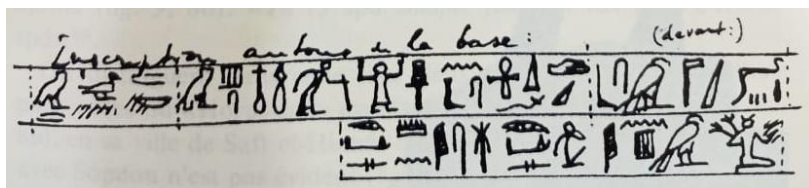
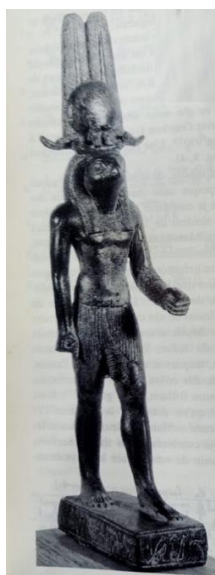


f. Bizarre form, partly human and partly animal, linked with the Mithraeums referred to as Aion from Oxyrhynchus. LEVI 1944, 275, fig. 5.

Pl. VII



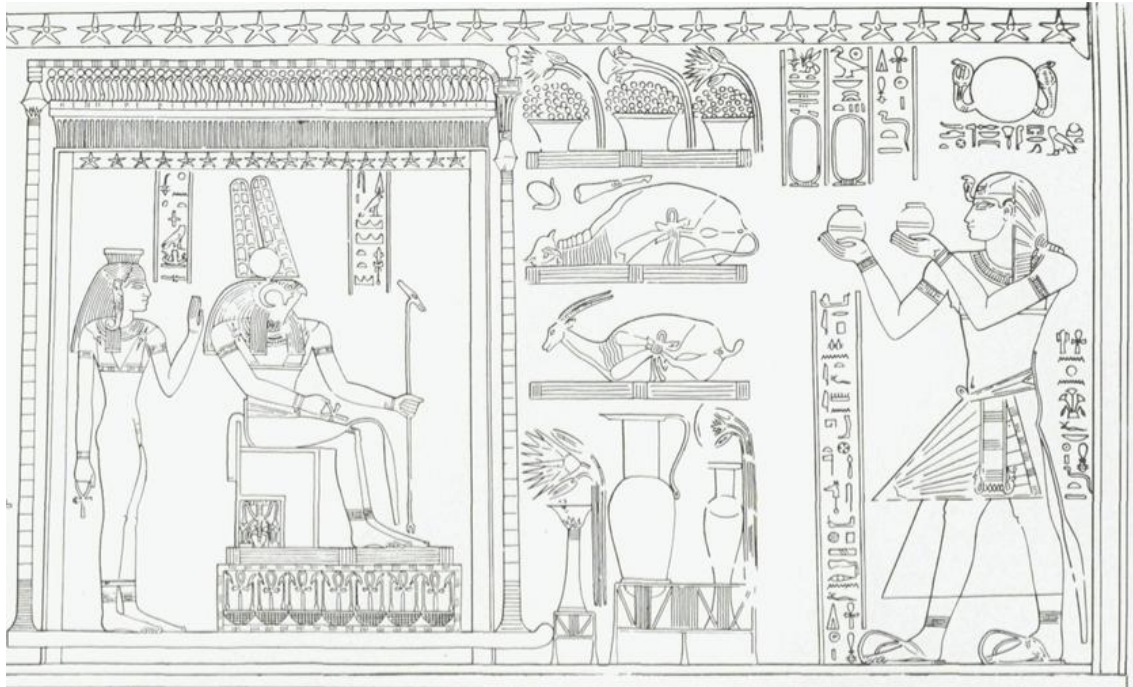
- a. King Ptolemy III is holding the enemy by the hair in front of the god Reshep.
 The northern wall of the enclosure of the temple of Amun at Karnak at the
 entrance of the temple of Montu.
 LEIBOVITCH 1939, 171, pl. XX.



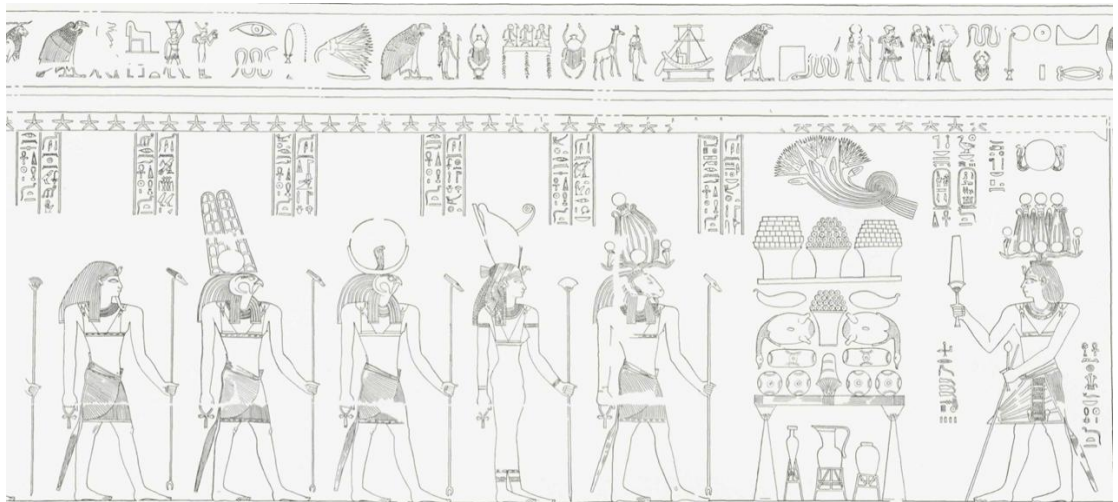
- b. The bronze statuette of Sopedu and the hieroglyphic inscriptions
 on its base dating to the reign of Psamtik I of the 26th dynasty.
 YOYOTTE 1989, 45, figs. 10-11.

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Pl. VIII

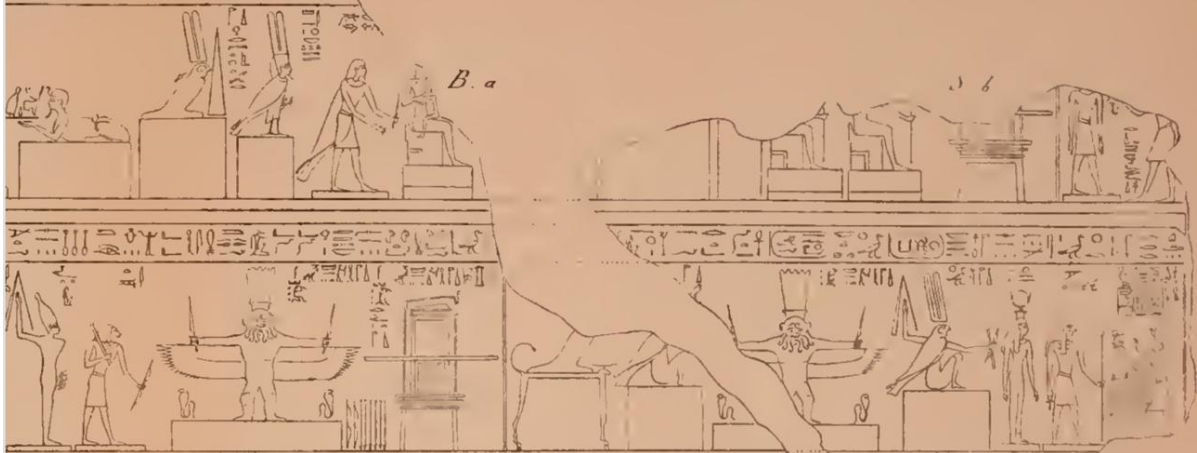


a. Darius I is presenting wine and food offerings to Sopedu and Khenset.
Hypostyle Hall M of the Temple of Hibis (Northern Wall - Upper Register).
DAVIES 1953, pl. 30 (extract [upper register]).

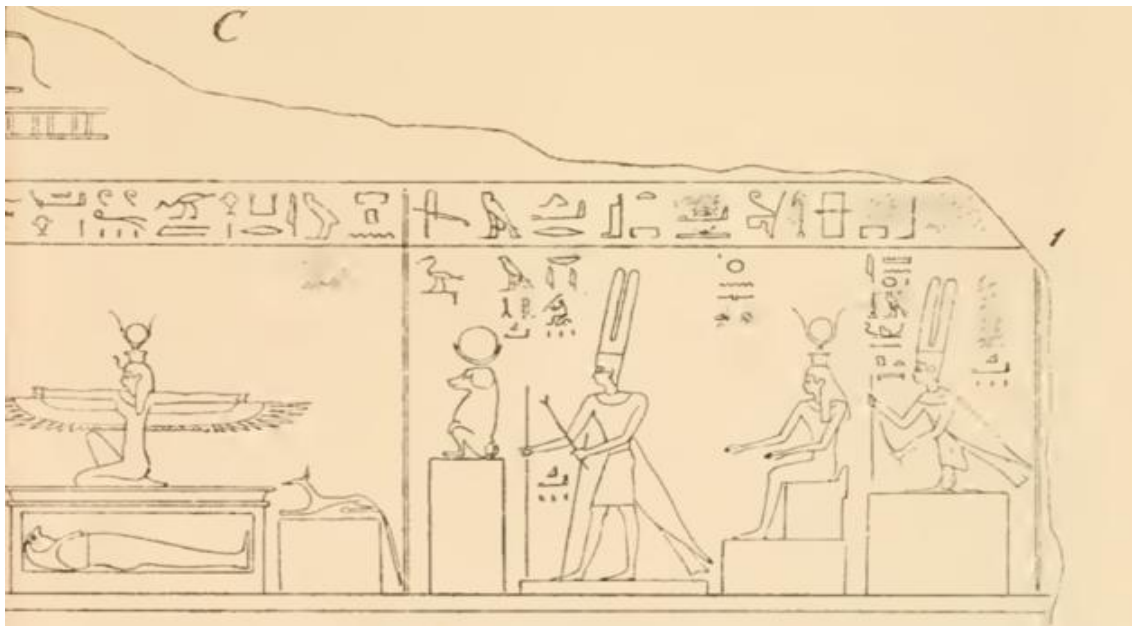


b. The king is wearing the *hemhem* crown holding the symbols of authority and making offerings of food and drink to a number of gods, among them is Sopedu with a falcon head surmounted with the plumes.
The Exterior of the Temple of Hibis, south wall, upper register.
DAVIES 1953, pl. 50 (extract [upper register]).

Pl. IX



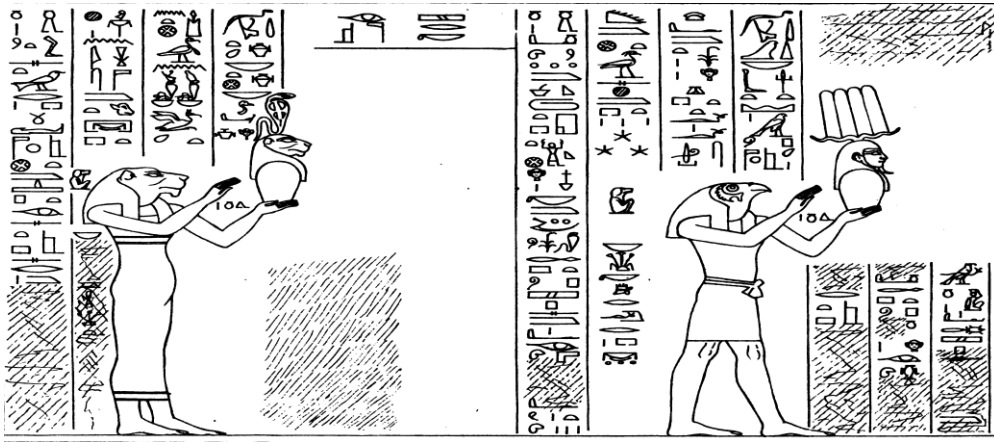
- a. Sopedu is shown in the above register shows a standing hybrid form (standing human with falcon's tail), while the below register he is shown as a sitting hybrid form (Upper 'bird' and lower 'sitting human'), and as a dwarf holding a knife in each hand. The shrine of Saft El-Henneh dating to the 30th dynasty. NAVILLE 1887, pl. II, 5, 6 (extract).



- b. Sopedu is shown as a standing human with falcon's tail. The shrine of Saft El-Henneh dating to the 30th dynasty. NAVILLE 1887, pl. V, 1 (extract).

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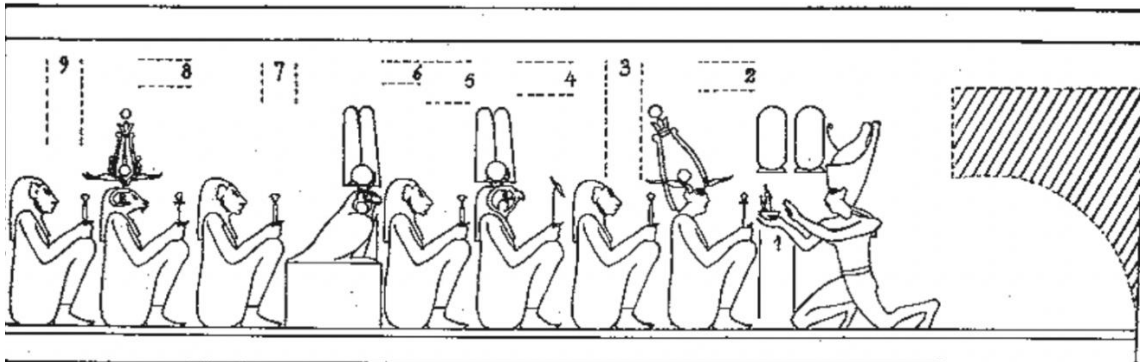
Pl. X



- a. The relief shows Sopedu as falcon-headed god followed by the lion-headed goddess Bastet. The accompanied texts referred to him as the lord of the East and identifying him with Horus.

Temple of Dendera, the middle of the three southern rooms of Osiris on Hathor's Temple roof.

DÜMICHEN 1885, tafel LI.

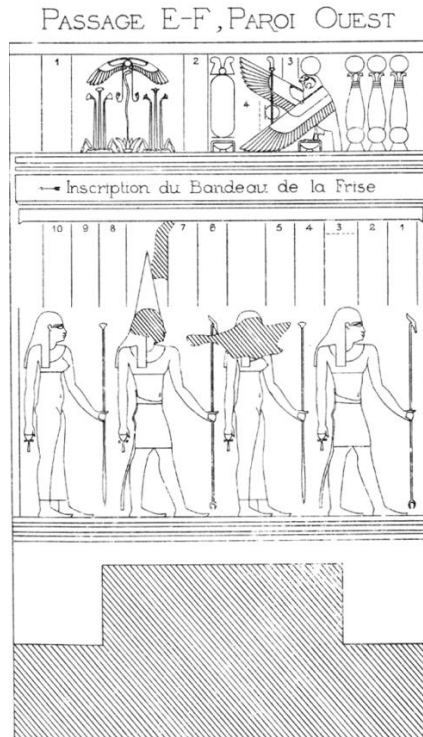


- b. Sopedu is depicted in the form of a falcon with the head surmounted with the two plumes and sun disk as manifestation of the god Re.

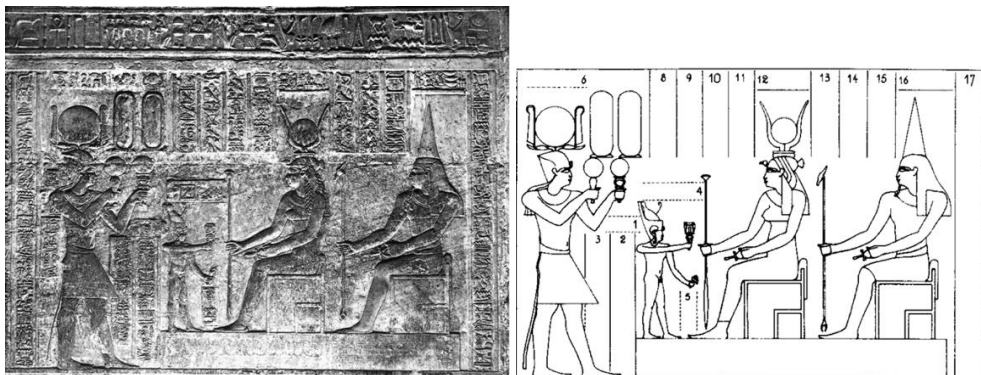
Temple of Dendera, Chapel C, North Wall.

CHASSINAT 1934a, pl. LXXXVII (extract).

Pl. XI



- a. The relief depicts Sopedu in anthropomorphic form accompanied by the goddess Khensit.
- Temple of Dendera, East Crypt no. 1, west wall of the passage (E-F) to that crypt.
- CHASSINAT 1952, pl. CCCXLIII.



- b. God Sopedu is accompanied by Hathor before the King and Harsomtut.
- Temple of Dendera, south-east back room, west wall (northern side).
- CHASSINAT 1935, pl. CLXIX (paroi oust) and CLXXI.

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Pl. XII



- a. The Roman Emperor Augustus is about to smite with a mace two bound enemy prisoners in front of a seated Sopdu, wearing the four falcon feathers crown.

Temple of Dendera, west exterior wall of the temple naos H', 4th register.
CAUVILLE 2007, pl. 175.

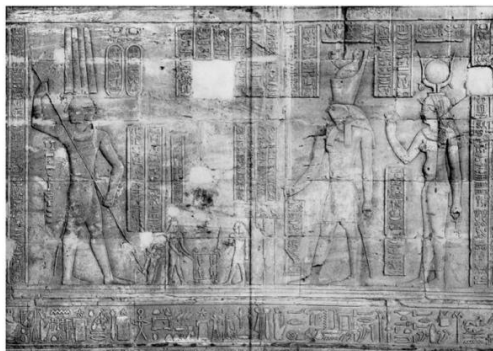


- b. King Ptolemy VIII (Euergetes II) is about to spear with a harpoon a kneeling prisoner held by a rope in his left hand before a standing falcon-headed Sopdu.

Edfu Temple, pronaos, 2nd column, west section.

CHASSINAT 1928a, 247, pl. LXXVI.

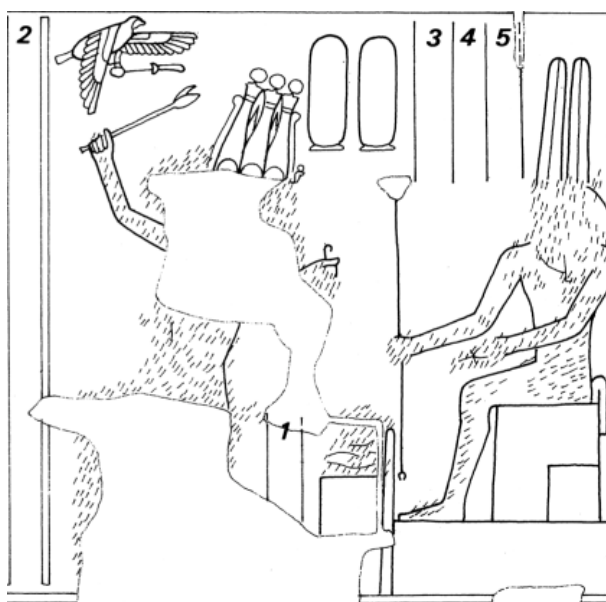
Pl. XIII



- a. King Ptolemy IX (Soter II) stabs with a harpoon in both hands two bound crouching prisoners in front of a standing Horus Behdety and Hathor, while the smaller figures are Hapy of the north and Sopedu in human form holding a big knife, and there is a brazier in the middle, in which four enemies are burnt.

Edfu temple, west interior wall of the open court, 1st register.

COPPENS 2021, figs. 4, 6.



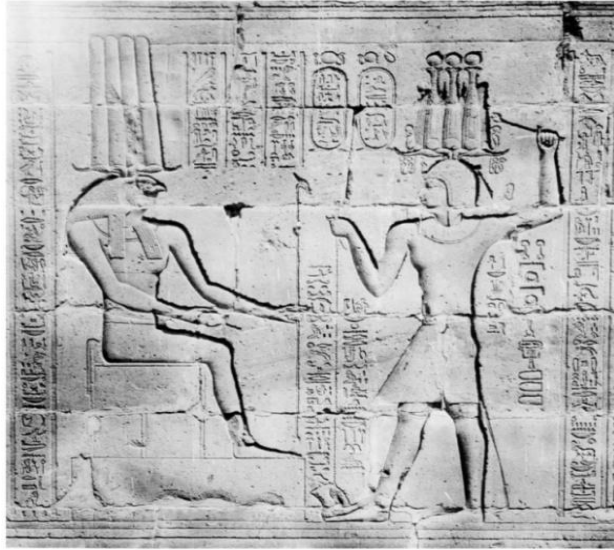
- b. Ptolemy X (Alexander I) is about to smite with a mace in his raised right hand two (?) prisoners, held by a rope in the ruler's left hand and lying face down unto a square block altar, in front of a seated Sopedu, wearing a double falcon feather crown.

Edfu Temple, East exterior of the temple enclosure wall, 2nd register.

CHASSINAT 2008, pl. CLXXIV.

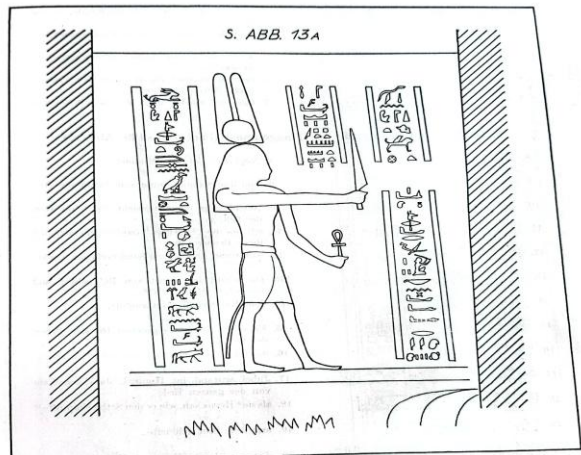
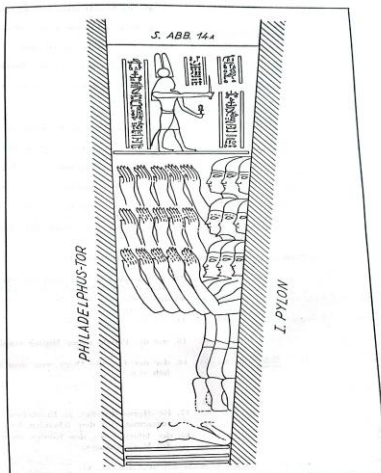
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Pl. XIV



- a. King Ptolemy IX (Soter II) is about to smite with a mace in his left hand two bound and kneeling prisoners, held by a rope in his right hand, in front of a seated Sopdedu, wearing the four-falcon feather crown mounted on horns.

Edfu Temple, West exterior of the temple enclosure wall, 3rd register.
CHASSINAT 2008, pl. CLXVII; CHASSINAT 1934c, pl. DCXXXV.



- b. Sopdedu is depicted presenting a knife to the king.
Temple of Isis at Philae, First Pylon Tower.
JUNKER 1959, 27 (Abb.13a), 31 (Abb.14a).