

An unpublished Early Dynastic stone vessel fragment with incised inscription naming the goddess Bastet

Francesco Raffaele

In this article I wish to present a fragment of Early Dynastic stone vessel¹ inscribed with the name of the goddess Bastet. The object is in a rather poor state of preservation, it has a worn surface and it is made of two sherds joined. The inscription is incised and no trace of pigment has been detected in the engraved lines; the fairly readable goddess’ name is complete but it cannot be said if the inscription is too. The height of the line of hieroglyphs is about 1 cm.

The maximum size of the complete fragment is 6,35 x 4,44 cm. It seems that the shape of the original vase was that of a small, roughly conical, grey stone vessel with carefully rounded lip.

¹ This is actually in a private collection (USA). I am mostly grateful to the owner of this fragment, Mr. Smith, who has provided a digital photo and details about the object size, colour, shape and purchase circumstance. He also sent me a line drawing of the profile of the fragment (fig. 3). Please, note that I have not personally examined it. About its purchase I quote the owner’s informations: "Regarding provenance, the fragment was acquired from a dealer who purchased it at public auction. I was told it was formerly in an old Greek Collection (there is an old collection number on the reverse, in ink, that reads: '774'). I do hold a bill of sale for the fragment". (Mr. Smith, personal communication via e-mail).

The present discussion is complemented by a more general introduction on Early Dynastic stone vessels (henceforth abbreviated ‘Stone vessels’) which follows in this same CCdE issue. I want to express my gratitude to Alain Anselin for inviting me onto the pages of the Cahiers.

The inscription

The name of the lion goddess² Bastet (*Wbastit*) became relatively common early in the Second Dynasty (see fig. 4), during Hotepsekhemwy's and Ninetjer's reigns³.

The goddess is apparently unknown on earlier inscriptions (Dynasty 0-1).

The *w* in *Wbastit* name is always graphically elided: "...quant au [Gardiner G43] *w* initial il n'est jamais écrit à cette époque; en syllabe atone, il devient voyelle non écrite. Mais la présence d'un *w* initial apparaît clairement dans les noms propres transcrits en grec qui contiennent ce nom de déesse; citons seulement Πετοβαστις, le *o* représent un *w* en syllabe atone⁴...".

The *s* precedes the *BA* bird owing to a common graphical metathesis recurring in most of the variants of this name writing. The horizontal ointment vessel *bas* [Gardiner W2] is very stylised, unusually long and without inner lines but the indication of the lid. The two *t* of the radical and feminine ending are often elided in the archaic writing, but they are significantly retained in the present one. The determinative of the sitting goddess is attested in Early Dynastic inscriptions, as the name is too. The

² Only since the Late Period was the goddess associated with (domesticated) cat.

For Bastet cf. Z. El-Kordy, *La déesse Bastet*, 1968; E. Otto, *LÄ I*, 628-630; B. Begelsbacher-Fischer, *Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des ÄR*, 1981, 36-41; T. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 1999, 282.

On the etymology of the name also see P. Kaplony, *RAR I*, 1977, 261, n. 465: *BAs*t would mean "Die (Herzens) Herausreisserin" (see n. 11 for a connection of the goddess with the king's hearth in PT) whereas in his opinion *BAs*tt as "She of the town of Bast" would be a secondary derivation.

³ Cf. Table 1.

⁴ P. Lacau, in: Lacau-Lauer, *PD V*, 35. See also n. 7 below.

goddess has a feline head, she holds the *was* sceptre⁵ and is represented sitting on a throne⁶.

Except for the present case and the Giza bowl inscription, the determinative is usually that of the standing goddess⁷. It seems that the goddess holds the *ankh* symbol (as she also does in the other known cases where the determinative is present) but in our inscription it is held by the right hand and it already has the classic shape (whereas earlier inscriptions retain the more archaic *ankh* hieroglyph/symbol, the one with a 'forked' base: cf. n. 19).

Purpose and provenance

The original inscription may have either cited the sole goddess' name or the title and name of a priest of her cult (*Hm-nTr BAsst*). Perhaps the small vessel once contained an offering to this goddess. The most probable provenance should be the Memphite necropolis (Saqqara), but an Upper Egyptian origin - although less plausible - cannot be excluded. Priests of this goddess (see n. 8) are attested more in the Memphite capital cemeteries than at Abydos (from this latter site only one attestation, late Dynasty 2, cat. B11). On the other hand the present object could also have been from E. Amelineau's excavations (at the end of '800: many of the objects found by this French Coptologist were sold at

⁵ A common attribute of gods in this period inscriptions, as with Seth/Ash, Neith, Wadjet (and the unidentified goddess in: Gardiner, Peet, Cerny, Sinai I, 1952, pl. 1.2 = J. Kahl et. al., *Die Inschriften*, 1995, Ne/Ma/1). *Was* sceptre: K. Martin, in: LÄ VI, 1152-1154; P. Kaplony, RAR I, 169-173; id., LÄ VI, 1373-1389.

⁶ The throne shape is well known also in relief and sculpture of the Second-Third Dynasty (it has the form of the *Hwt* hieroglyph and a low back) even though it isn't as common as the 'true' throne with pedestal (e.g. that of the Cairo Museum statue of Netjerykhet/Djoser and the one incised on Cat. B3 vase from Menkaura's complex), or as the *Khendw* throne, which is provided with lateral bent arcs.

⁷ For parallels of the goddess and its hieroglyphic name during the Thinite period (early Second Dynasty) see fig. 4 and the catalogue in Table 1 below.

Goddess Name: WB I, 423, 4-8; J. Kahl, *Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch I*, 2001, 136f.; Seat: Kaplony, IAF I, 237-238. *BAs* vase: *ibid.*, 274; id., IAF II, n. 105, 992 (*Grgt BAsst*), 1527, 1603; Helck, *Thinitenzeit*, 1987, 71-72; Kahl, *Das System*, 1994, 75, 790ff.

auctions to a number of Museums and private collections) thus the provenance would be in this case Abydos, Umm el-Qaab P or V (i.e. Peribsen's or Khasekhemwy's tombs respectively).

During the Second Dynasty, establishments and provisions known as "*Djefaw-Bastet*" (+*fAW-BAstt*) are associated with service of the *phyles*; this is an indirect witness to the cult of the goddess in that period (cf. n. 14 and 'Stone Vessels', n. 23).

The goddess was later (?) associated with the site of Bast (Bubastis, Per Bast, capital of the XVIIIth nome) in the mid-Eastern Delta but we don't know the original relationship between goddess and town and even the exact etymology of her name is uncertain (i.e. did it originally mean "*She of [the town of] Bast*" or rather "*She of the BAS-ointment jar*" ? Cf. also n. 2).

Bastet's role is often linked to the king(ship), although this is explicit only since the IVth Dynasty⁸.

⁸ Cf. the references to Khefren (CG 11 statue and Giza Valley temple inscription *Mrj BAsst anx Dt*' in: U. Hölscher, Das Grabdenkmal des König Kephren, 1912, 16-17, fig. 8, on granite gate jamb) and to Shepeskaf (royal epithet 'Beloved by Hathor-Bastet' on a seal, for which see P. Kaplony, IAF II, n. 105).

On an OK stone vessel inscription *Mrj BAsst*, the goddess is portrayed sitting on a throne, with the *WAD* scepter and no *anx* symbol (G. Brunton, Matmar, 1935, pl. 38.11; Kaplony, RAR I, 1977, 249, n. 439). For other mentions in the royal funerary complexes see L. Borchardt, Sahura, vol. I, 1910, 104, 121, 126; id., Sahura, vol. II, 1913, 36, 49f., 113f., pl. 35-36; id., Das Grabdenkmal des König Ne-user-re', 1907, pl. 14, fig. 72 (cf. H.G. Fischer, JNES 18, 1959, 129ff.); G. Jequier, Le Monument funéraire de Pepi II, vol. 3, 1940, pl. 28. For more attestations and interpretations see the admirable Ph.D. thesis by A. Cwiek, Relief Decoration in the Royal Funerary complexes of the Old Kingdom, Warsaw 2003, passim, fig. 41, 42, 43(?).

In late Old Kingdom Bastet became the protectress of the king (and of queens) in Lower Egyptian temples, especially worshipped in the valley temples of the Pyramid complex. She was also a sky goddess, in conjunction with Hathor; in this role as lioness and cow respectively, they were related to the sun god who was represented as a lion or a bull (A. Cwiek, op. cit., 310).

Bastet was also regarded as the Lower Egyptian royal partner, the Upper Egyptian counterpart being Hathor (or Nekhbet); she was linked

The Cairo Annals record an “*ir.n.f m mnw.f n [mwt.f] BAsTf*” formula in Djedefra’s reign⁹.

The South Saqqara Annals, report the name of the goddess in an undeterminable context (owing to the awful state of preservation of the inscriptions in this part of the reused stone slab)¹⁰.

In late Old Kingdom (Pepi I and II) Pyramid Texts, Bastet is also cited as the “king’s mother” and identified with the king’s heart¹¹.

with Shesmetet as well (Cairo statue CG 1403) and with the *shesmet*-girdle (ibid., 310, 169, n. 686; cf. P. Kaplony, RAR I, 1977, 249, 313). For associations of the goddess with the king in the Pyramid Texts see below, n. 11.

- The attestations of priests of Bastet’s (funerary) cult in OK private mastabas: Meidum: Nefermaat, t. 16 (Petrie, Medum, 1892, pl. 20; R. Weill, *La IIe et la IIIe Dynastie*, 1908, 289). Dahshur: Kanefer (M. Baud, *Famille Royale...*, 1999, 84f., 301, tab. 17; A. Cwiek, *Relief Decorations...*, 2003, 166, n. 668). Saqqara: Htp-jakhtj or Akhet-hotep, MM A1 (A. Mariette, *Les Mastabas*, 1889, 68-70; R. Weill, op. cit., 1908, 314; W. Helck, *Thinitenzeit*, 1987, 266f.; also cf. n. 23 below). Giza: He miunu, G4000 (H. Junker, *Giza I*, 149, pl. 23); Seshathotep, G5150 (H. Junker, *Giza II*, 172ff.), G7310 (M. Baud, op. cit., cat. nr. 259).

- For the first three dynasties no teophorous name is known to have been based on Bastet’s one. There are a few ones in the IVth and Vth Dynasties (cf. H. Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen*, I, 1935, 171, nr. 8, *Nj-ankh-Bastet*), and more in Middle Kingdom and especially during Late and Graeco-Roman period (ibid., 85 nr. 11, 90 nr. 3-7, 166 nr. 23, 210 nr. 7-8, 212 nr. 16, 222 nr. 19, 258 nr. 4-5, 260 nr. 4).

⁹ T. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals*, 2000, 228, 230-231 (Cairo fragment nr. 3, recto, line 1), restoring the epithet *mwt.f*, ‘his (of the king) mother’, after the name of Bastet.

Original publication of C3 Annals fragment by H. Gauthier, *Quatre nouveaux fragments de la Pierre de Palerme*, in: G. Maspero (ed.), *Musée Egyptien*, III, 1915, 50, pl. 30, fig. 2; cf. G. Daressy, *BIFAO* 12, 1916, 170.

¹⁰ Likely in the latter part of the short reign of Userkara, Teti’s follower early in the VIth Dynasty: M. Baud, *V. Dobrev, De nouvelles annales...*, *BIFAO* 95, 1995, 31f., n. 30, p. 67, fig. 4b (zone A2). Also see p. 36 for a further possible, if far less clear, mention of Bastet in Pepi I reign (zone C1).

Pepi I is known to have built a *Hwt-KA* in (or nearby?) the temple of Bastet at Bubastis¹².

The archaic writing determinative represents the goddess with lion or lioness head and with an anthropomorphic body; in later periods (particularly when the Goddess became tutelary *numen* of the 22th Dynasty and of the whole Egypt under the Bubastite dynasts) the cat headed goddess is sometimes represented holding a lion mask in her hand.

Independently from the find-spot of the inscribed material, be it the Memphite or the Abydene necropolis, it seems very probable that the origin of the Goddess Bastet may be ultimately ascribed to the Delta, either in the region of Memphis or at Bubastis itself. This latter site origin can now be traced back, yet more on epigraphic basis than archaeologically, to early Naqada III at least¹³.

¹¹ PT §1111: *Sdj.n sw mwt.f BASTt*: 'His/my (of the King) mother, Bastet, has nursed him/me'. In PT §1310, *HAtj n Mrj-ra pn m BASTt*, 'The heart of Meryra (Pepi I) is Bastet'. The last occurrence of this Goddess in the Pyramid Texts (§ 892) is more obscure: *n sm.n Nfr-ka-ra BASTt* (R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 1969, 156, is probably erroneous, as is Sethe's interpretation he quotes, *ibid.* n. 7; they would both imply a negative acceptance of the goddess whom the king would state not to have succoured or venerated, respectively). E. Otto, *LÄ I*, 629 translates the verb *sm* according to WB IV, 120,8, i.e. 'I have not approached Bastet', a more acceptable allusion to a taboo or a sin.

¹² Cf. T. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, 2000, 231; S. Seidlmayer, *Town and State in the Early Old Kingdom. A view from Elephantine*, in: A.J. Spencer (ed.), *Aspects of Early Egypt*, 1996, 117, 125; L. Habachi, *Tell Basta*, 1957, 40ff.

¹³ The earliest epigraphic evidence for the site of (*Per-*)*Bast* has been discovered by G. Dreyer's DAI archaeological mission at Abydos in 1990s excavations of the predynastic cemetery U, tomb U-j: G. Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab I*, 1998, 124-6, 139, 140-141, fig. 78 and pl. 31 (nr. 103-104); on small tags from tomb U-j, he has read (phonetically) the B-bird + st-seat as the toponym of the site in object, which interpretation has been accepted by other Egyptologists: F.A.K. Breyer, in: *JEA* 88, 2002, 53ff.; J. Kahl, *CdE* 78, 2003, 112-135; L.D. Morenz, *Bild-Buchstaben und symbolische Zeichen*, 2004, 73f.

For later archaeological evidence of Bubastis: E. Naville, *Bubastis* (1887-89), 1891; L. Habachi, *Tell Basta*, *SASAE* 22, 1957; *id.*, *LÄ I*,

Although it has been advanced that the goddess may have been a kind of “national deity”, it seems that her Lower Egyptian character is far more credible as more widely attested.

P. Kaplony, maintained that the *Djefaw Bastet* should have been interpreted as the incomes of (i.e. for the cult of) this divinity¹⁴.

However it is more verisimilar that the tax designation hinted at the *origin* of the product which was contained in the stone vessel, as it can be deduced comparing parallel examples on earlier labels and on slightly later seal impressions (cf. n. 14).

In its present state it can be thought that Mr. Smith’s fragment is from an *ex-voto* or offering for the goddess’ cult.

873-4; H.G. Fischer, AJA 62, 330ff.; C. Van Siclen, Tell Basta, in: K.A. Bard (ed.), Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt, 1999, 776-778.

For the period which spans later OK up to the MK, it becomes relatively easier to detect the core area of Bastet worship: yet, owing to the fact that the definitive nomes subdivision was only to be achieved much later, the influence of this goddess can be traced in an area which, still in the MK, covers both the Bubastite (later L.E. XVIIIth) nome and the Heliopolitan one (L.E. XIII): cf. H.G. Fischer, JNES 18, 1959, 133.

¹⁴ IAF II, 1002f., n. 1603 (*iz-DfA*, „die zentrale Landesstelle für Steuerwesen“, first attested in Njnetjer’s reign): also the gods would have their own incomes (*DfA*), named after some of them: *+fAw-BASTt*, *+fAw-nIrw*, *+fAw-nIrw*... (Also cf. id., in: MDAIK 20, 4 ‘Die Speisen von *Bastt*’; Helck, ZAS 106, 123f., translates ‘Versorgung der *Bastet*’). For a discussion of ‘*DfAw*’ see ‘Stone Vessels’, n. 23.

Contra T. Wilkinson, Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt, 2000, 231: the early IInd Dynasty stone vessels mentioning “the ‘provisioning of (the cult of) *Bastet*’ ... probably *came from* the furniture of her cult temple.” (The author erroneously attributes to Hotepsekhemwy four inscriptions, PD IV, nr. 63-66, which bear instead Njnetjer’s serekh).

- Tax designations as *+fA(w)-^ma(j)* (early First Dynasty ink notations on jars; Narmer (?) label in: Kaplony, IAF III, fig. 844; cf. Helck, Thinitenzeit, 1987, 172; Hor-Aha ‘Naqada label’) or *iz-DfA pr-dSr / Grg-Nxbt vineyard / female goddess* (on Khasekhemwy seal impression, Kaplony, IAF III, 309), clearly suggest that the origin of the labelled/sealed product was hinted at: Upper Egypt and Grgt-Nebtj vineyard respectively (also cf. W. Helck, Thinitenzeit, 1987, 200).

Authenticity, palaeography and datation

The question of the authenticity of inscriptions on stone vessels (or fragments thereof) cannot be prescindend from. It would be relatively easy for a good forger to reproduce any published inscription, engraving it on an authentic stone vessel fragment. This would highly enhance the importance of the piece, hence its value.

It is noticeable that there are several specimen of ancient Egyptian inscribed stone vessels in Museums and private collections of the World, but the cases of sure forgeries are actually almost non existent for this category of objects¹⁵.

There are various logic and scientific criteria to test the authenticity of inscriptions on object of unknown provenance. This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of this topic, therefore I'll limit to few considerations related to the fragment which is the object of our study.

For its own character, an inscription like this one cannot be a trial sketch on an *ostrakon*¹⁶: it must be either an original one engraved in the same period as the vase was finished, or a modern fake.

To my eyes, the only strange aspect which looks suspect is the fact that the whole goddess' name is perfectly preserved in its integrity: however this may be due to a happy coincidence, and – as I have already stated- this name might have been originally part of a longer inscription.

¹⁵ On the topic cf. Kaplony's Excursus II, in: Steingefässe, 1968, 73-77. The bowl in Lucerne, Kofler-Truniger collection (P. Kaplony, ZAS 88, 1962, 13f., fig. 16; id., IAF III, fig. 872; R. Stadelmann, BIFAO 81, 1981, 162f.; J. Kahl, 1994, Quelle 3706) has been stated to bear a suspect inscription (by W. Kaiser, in: MDAIK 25, 1969, 20, n. 4) but on weak if inconsistent grounds (the lack of Royal name and the writing of the name of the Memphite *nome* are by no means unusual features for that period).

¹⁶ For "ostrakon" it is meant that the inscription has been done in antiquity but on a sherd of an already broken vase: cf. as an example of Naqada IID-IIIa date, the pot-herd from Hierakonpolis loc. 29A, with incised representation of the cow-goddess (Hathor-Bat?) and other signs, published by S. Hendrickx and R. Friedman, in: Nekhen News 15, 2003, 8-9; also see eod., GM 196, 95ff., fig. 2.

Further similar considerations ought to be done with respect to the other similar inscriptions (for which cf. table 1) and they are mostly inherent to the palaeographic and epigraphic study.

It should also be remarked that both the restricted corpus of attestations and the particular character of signs and determinative used, make it very unlikely that we have to do with a forgery.

The rendering of the *bAs* jar and the presence of the two final *t* seem to show that the inscription is later than the early/middle 2nd Dynasty ones cat. B1-B8 (mainly found on incised Stone vessels from the Step Pyramid complex of Netjerykhet/Djoser at Saqqara). The most striking parallel for this inscription has been published by Battiscombe Gunn (cat. B12)¹⁷.

In Khasekhemwy's tomb V at Umm el-Qaab, Abydos, a priest of *Bast* is mentioned (Cat. B11).

The Smith fragment (Cat. B13) can be fairly dated to late Second- or early Third Dynasty (after the reign of Netjerykhet only very few royal and private inscribed stone vessels are known, due to the unaccomplished state of his successors' funerary complex; cf. 'Stone Vessels').

Perhaps the fragment dates to the reign of Djoser himself, when the cult of the goddess must have been favoured at least as much as in the Second Dynasty (although priests of the goddess are

¹⁷ The *bAs* jar and the two *t* conform rather well with our inscription, but the goddess-name determinative doesn't appear on B12; the name of the priest is not preserved too. It is dated to the reign of Djoser, following Helck, ZAS 106 (cf. Kahl, Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch I, 2001, 137).

The most common shape of the *bAs* jar (Gardiner list, sign W2; WB I, 423, 4) is the one with concave walls. The simple rectangular shape of cat. B13 (which in my opinion may have a small inner vertical line on the right, indicating a lid, although less deeply incised than the lines of all the other hieroglyphs) is only found in the writings of the goddess name minutely drawn nearby her head in cat. B1, B2, and in the cursive inscription of *Grgt-BAsst* (B9, cf. below).

Among the ink inscribed attestations (cat. B4a, B5a, B9, B10, of which only two are published, in line drawing), the jar sign of B9 exhibits a striking similarity to the one incised on cat. B13: as the latter one, it is rectangular, thus representing a jar with parallel walls (i.e. cylindrical).

only sporadically known in the Third Dynasty –cat. B12 and Akhetjhotep) and later in the Old Kingdom (cf. n. 8).

Epigraphy does not firmly prevent from an attribution of our inscription to late Old Kingdom: for this period, in fact, we can expect to find both the archaising writing (as in PT §872, 1111) and those with the phonetic sign *b* (leg) or with only the *bAs* jar.

Palaeographically the jar sign and the throne/seat sign are of Dynasty 36 style. About the seat, I couldn't find parallels in Early Dynastic but only in Old Kingdom seal impressions¹⁸. This is an important clue. The presence of the determinative may suggest that the inscription only named the goddess, not a priest of her cult.

The *ankh* symbol in the hand of the goddess is directed rightwards, terminating with only one, pointed end¹⁹.

Concerning the original vessel shape, it must have been a small (h. circa 15-20 cm) cup as those belonging to El-Khouli²⁰ class XXX. The material, as far as I can see in the photo, should be a sedimentary (?) rock, but it's hard to guess which one precisely

¹⁸ P. Kaplony, R.A.R. II, 1981, pl. 52.11 (Userkaf), pl. 99.2, 111.40 (Pepi I); also cf. id., MDAIK 20, 1965, 44f., fig. 106 (cylinder vase). For the use of determinatives in Dyn. 0-3 cf. J. Kahl, *Das System*, 1994, 105ff.; L.D. Morenz, *Bild-Buchstaben...*, 2004 (p. 325, index).

¹⁹ For the *Ankh* (*anx*, 'life') sign cf. P. Derchain, LÄ I, 268-269; J. Baines, SAK 3, 1975, 1ff.; hieroglyph (S 34): J. Kahl, *Das System*, 1994, 703f.; id., *Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch*, I, 2002, 84ff. P. Kaplony, IAF III, fig. 40, 85, 155(?), 179, 180, 220A-B, 221A-B, 234, 235, 276A-B, 283, 286, 291, 300B, 302-304, 307, 309, 319, 324, 327, 332, 343, 347B, 348, 358, 360, 366 (= W. Helck, *Thinitenzeit*, 236), 377, 379, 388, 396, 422, 426, 427, 442, 450, 571, 688(?), 689, 748, 749, 753, 792, 861; IAFS, fig. 1043, 1071, 1072; id., *KBIAF*, fig. 1095 (= W. Helck, *op. cit.*, 237f.), 1132; id., *Beischriftete Kleinfunde*, 1973, 4, pl. 6.21; PD V, pl. 36.4 (nr. 258).

It seems that the traditional form of the *Ankh* sign started to appear in the reign of Horus Qa'a (cf. *jz-anx* on Merka stela from Saqqara mastaba S3505: W. Helck, *op. cit.*, 230ff., 236; J. Ogdon, GM 52, 1981, 55f.) whence the archaic shaped *ankh* sign is still found. Later in the Second Dynasty almost exclusively the classic shaped one persisted.

²⁰ A. El-Khouli, *Egyptian Stone Vessels*, 1978.

without observing the section, and without the assistance of a serious petrologic analysis; its colour is clear grey (despite the apparent soft green cast visible in the photo which the owner of the fragment kindly provided me).

The probable date of this vessel is, in my opinion, the reign of Khasekhemwy (horizontally oriented stone vessels inscriptions begin with Sekhemib and Khasekhemwy's reigns, late in the Second Dynasty), that of Netjerykhet or, less probably, the reign of a later Third Dynasty (or early Fourth Dynasty) king, thus about 2720-2590 BC in terms of absolute chronology²¹.

Conclusion

In my opinion we can be fairly certain about the authenticity of this fragment of stone vessel dated to the last part of the Early Dynastic period (Second Dynasty) or to the very early Old Kingdom (Third Dynasty).

The incised inscription is the main reason for the herewith proposed datation: in the absence of hieroglyphs it would have been impossible to date the vessel, with such a degree of precision, into the aforementioned period.

About the relationship of the goddess with the later period cult centre of (Per-) Bast / Bubastis, in the central-east Delta, we must be very cautious. This site, provided the correct identification of its name on the two labels from tomb U-j (which I have no reason to doubt), should have been founded in Naqada II,

²¹ There are still divergent hypotheses about the duration of the Third Dynasty. The reign of Snofru, the first king of the Fourth Dynasty, is generally considered starting at about 2620BC (± 20 years), but the number of his predecessors who would reign in the Third Dynasty is still unknown (as is for the Second Dynasty too). Considering the monumental evidence, it ought to be estimated a range of 50 to 70 years for the whole Third Dynasty (5-7 rulers), and perhaps 2700 BC (or a few decades later) as the accession date of the 'founder' Netjerykhet/Djoser (J. von Beckerath, *Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten*, 1997, 173-179, 187; M. Baud, *Djéser et la IIIe dynastie*, 2002, 9f., 56ff.).

perhaps already before the decline of the Lower Egyptian (Maadi-Buto) culture.

The etymology of the toponym may suggest a non-Egyptian origin: without recurring to Helck's criticized argumentations for a "Butische Schrift", it could be thought that *Bast* emerged with other settlements (as Buto, Mendes) in a Lower Egyptian cultural context, under the influence of Near Eastern centres, around the middle of the 4th Millennium BC²².

Sharp archaeological indications are still missing but Early Dynastic inscriptions mention a *Gerget-Bastet*, which should be interpreted as a generic foundation (?), bearing the goddess' name, situated in the area between Memphis and Bubastis or not far from one of these centres.

In particular, this name should either define a new settled agricultural estate or a cult centre, built during the early Second Dynasty reigns. In my opinion this latter hypothesis seems the most probable, as it would equally imply an associated productive establishment (as it was the case for royal domains and their vineyards, oil presses and further centres devoted to commodities processing). This must also be true for the 'Gerget Nekhbet' (*Gerget Nebtj*) discussed by P. Kaplony²³.

²² L.D. Morenz, op. cit., 2004, 48f., also stresses the apparently foreign etymology of other sites' names as Koptos (*Gbtw*) and Abydos (*AbDw*).

²³ IAF II, 858ff., n. 992; see I.A.F. III, fig. 748 (Njnetjer), 309, 765 (Khasekhemwy); for the reading *Grgt Nbtj* cf. Helck, Thinitenzeit, 72, 195, 200; Kahl, Das System, 894; for *grg* = sign N38, cf. *ibid.*, 616.

On 2nd Dynasty seal impressions the vineyards of the *Grgt-Nbtj* are under the patronage of a female goddesses (Wadjit). Bastet would similarly be the protectress of the provisions mentioned on stone vessels inscriptions of Ninetjer's reign, in combination with the *Wr*-phyle, with the slaughterhouse and the cellars (thus probably fat, oils or unguents of organic origin). Cf. Stone Vessels', *passim*; P. Kaplony, *Steingefasse*, 36.

About the settlement, it may also be argued that a sort of re-foundation might have taken place, in the same way as it has been supposed for Buto, which name (was) changed from the pre-protodynastic one, *Djeba(w)t(y)* = Heron (-town), to *Pe* and *Dep* and later *Per Wadjet*; thus in our case *grg* would indicate a new-founded place (in the Thinite kings' colonized Delta) and this does not necessarily imply that the old one (Buto) had been destroyed. (About this topic, in relation with a new

The early Second Dynasty reigns correspond to the period in which a *definitive* migration of the state-system apparatuses took place: from the Upper Egyptian Thinis/Abydos nome, the royal necropolis was moved to the Memphite region, surely along with the whole palatial-bureaucratic *centre of gravity* of the state²⁴.

interpretation of the Towns-/Tehenw-/Buto-Palette, cf. L.D. Morenz, 2004, 144ff.).

For *grgt* (and the title *ad-mr grgt*) later in the Old Kingdom cf. J.C. Moreno Garcia, ZAS 123, 1996, 116-138: his conclusions can be extended to the Thinite period, interpreting the *grgt* as the first step in the level of appropriation of the territory for “des fins agricoles et de son intégration effective dans l’administration égyptienne” (ibid., 124).

For other gods’ (later Old Kingdom) foundations as *Grgt-@rw*, cf. H. Jacquet-Gordon, Les noms des domaines funéraires..., BdE 34, 1962, 116, 261 (nr. 9, Athribis?); M. Baud, V. Dobrev, Le verso des Annales de la VIe dynastie, BIFAO 97, 1997, 36f., n. 9 (*Grgt-@rw* late in the reign of Merenra). For a *Grgt Erj-S* on a sealing of Peribsen cf. Helck, Thinitenzeit, 199, n. 173 = Kaplony, IAF III, fig. 284 (Kaplony, IAF II, 1130, reads the town name [^]*rj-S*).

Apart from being the *numen* of oil magazines (cf. below, n. 39) it has been also proposed that Bastet may have had some relevancy as a protectress of the throne: see B. Begelsbacher-Fischer, Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des ÄR, 1981, 36ff.; M. Baud, Famille Royale et puouvoir, 1999, 302-303; P. Kaplony, IAF II, 1066, n. 1863: Htp-*iakhtj/Akhet-Hotep* (MM A1: cf. n. 8 above) is priest of the *Hrjt-xndt* (throne) and of Bastet.

²⁴ Hotepsekhemwy’s tomb A, south of the SPC at Saqqara, was the first royal tomb of the Saqqara cemetery, despite some Egyptologists still attribute North Saqqara mastabas (as S3357, S3471, S3504, S3035, S3038, S3505) to the First Dynasty kings. For full data on the Second Dynasty kings, cf. my internet web-site (n. 40) related pages and my forthcoming degree thesis; also T.A.H. Wilkinson, op. cit., 1999, 82ff.

It is certain that the Memphite region was already an important centre of administration during (and before) the First Dynasty. The evolution of the Upper Egyptian region during Naqada IC-IIIB reflects both the emergence of a distinctive culture in that area, and the interaction (which is perhaps still premature to try to describe in detail) among various polities in the region of the (later) southernmost eight U.E. nomes (plus, eventually, the relationships of these latter centres with Lower Nubia, Lower Egypt and other more peripheral territories).

As early as the First Dynasty, leaders of the new born state started to adapt this complex organism (in religious, political and economical

terms) to the needs and circumstances of the changing historical scenario.

With particular regards to the Memphite region, the importance of the future capital of the Old Kingdom laid in its strategic location (which was also true for centres like Thinis, Naqada, Koptos, Hierakonpolis): from the (afterwards) so called “Balance of the Two Lands” it was possible to control Delta and the access to Southern Levant via the Northern Sinai routes. This key-role was exploited in some way already from Maadi(-Buto) settlements which, at the end of the first half of the 4th millennium BC, entertained trade relations with Southern Palestine Chalcolithic centres.

Upper Egyptian polities had a different social character and culture than Lower Egyptian predynastic ones; they are also thought to have experienced the influence of mid 4th millennium Elam (Suasa I-II) and Mesopotamia (early Uruk phases), possibly through the Wadi Hammamat and Red Sea, if not through the Delta and Sinai too.

This southern culture started a progressive northward spreading at least since early Naqada II but, politically speaking, it was only in the period of the “Unification” (Naqada IIIA-C) that Egyptian rulers invaded the Lower Egyptian lands which had already been “Naqadized” few centuries before.

Now trade was a real prime mover and Upper Egyptian leaders intended to replace the earlier indigenous societies in the exploitation of the exchange of resources and luxury goods with Southern Levant settlements.

The reign of Narmer was the apex of trade relations between Egypt and Southern Palestine: here a number of quasi-colonial settlements flourished, hosting permanent Egyptian nuclei.

The entire system started a rapid decline after the middle of the First Dynasty (but as late as the reign of Qa'a, inscribed labels still attest imports of Lebanese timber: cf. E. M. Engel, *Das Grab des Qa'a*, 1997, 463).

A roughly similar situation was occurring at the same time in the southernmost part of Egypt, where A-group (“*&A-sty*”) Lower Nubian centres, after centuries of mostly peaceful cultural and trade relations with Upper Egypt, had to face the effect of a more aggressive policy engaged by the early First Dynasty kings.

When the Egyptians managed to “resolve” the question of Lower Nubia, making the fortified site of Elephantine become the bastion from which the state sponsored expeditions leave for Nubia, and dismantling (?) the proto-reigns of Seyala and Qustul, the southern boundary ceased to be a source of possible troubles for Egypt; yet it continued to be a source for exotic goods. It was not necessary anymore to maintain a

First Dynasty kings were much present in Lower Egypt, but they were still attached to their homeland in the south; as it has been explained (cf. n. 24), the very head of the state was by then located in the north, and thus the impact of the state presence there was more and more massive.

This policy continued in the early Second Dynasty, when the royal presence was further rooted all over the Egyptian territory connecting the royal palace with local temples (and relative secular *dépendances*). One of the aspects of the relationship between these two institutions and of each one of them with other ones, was the mechanism of gifts –of oils, aromatic essences, perfumes and other precious substances properly presented and stored in beautiful, costly hard stone vessels²⁵.

particular presence and care on the southern boundary. The mentioned ‘centre of gravity’ of the state was shifting northwards.

To return to the Memphite question, it is still difficult to be sure about the details, but the researches in the cemetery of Helwan have clearly shown that the area was a main site during the period of the so called *Dynasty 0*.

Perhaps local sovereigns (*Gegenkönige*) of the area were descendants of the Lower Egyptian peaceful traders influenced by both the Levantines’ and Southerners’ cultures or, more probably, the ‘Naqadians’ had already expanded and taken possession of Lower Egypt territories since early Naqada III. The precise modalities of this process are not yet clear.

The wave of *political* superimposition of the Upper Egyptian rulers through the Delta, was not the same smooth and peaceful process as the *Naqadization* of Lower Egypt had been. Dynasty 0 - early 1st Dynasty symbolism of relief representations cannot be interpreted as an entirely ideological accomplishment: it must have sprang out of the historical situation of the time (F. Raffaele, in preparation, 2005).

²⁵ Year-labels and later Annals offer a clear picture of the program of state propaganda inaugurated by Horus Aha and Djer through the whole Nile Valley. They aimed to maintain the control and obtain the levies from all over the state territory undoubtedly with the intermediation of temples and structures which would emerge around them at the periphery of the state (cf. Helck, *Thinitenzeit*, 1987; id., *LÄ VI*, 486ff.). From these social configurations, administrative organs grew up during the Early Dynastic period, first in the main centres, then in the minor ones too. A number of royal estates were founded, particularly under the reign of Den, in the Western Delta (Letopolis region), and kings of

Table 1: “*Bastet*” in Dynasty 1-3 inscriptions²⁶ (see fig. 4)

<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Date / reign</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Kahl, 1994</i>	<i>Prov.</i>	<i>Inscr.</i>
B1	Hotepsekhemwy	PD IV.1, nr. 57, pl. 11(57); PD IV.2, 31	2062	Sa	E ²⁷

the Second Dynasty must have certainly continued this process, fuelling it by the foundation of new religious and economic structures.

Any of the particles of this wide constellation was the core of productive centres which gathered the agricultural surplus from local farmers. Each one of them was centred on a temple, probably the one of the ancestral local deity.

The temple and its religious, magical authority was certainly very soon sided by more secular apparatuses of the peripheral administration, and by a sort of executive organism able of a certain degree of coercive power, whenever needed.

During the “Followers of Horus” (*^msw-@r*) the king himself (or his deputies) periodically sailed on the Nile upstream to perform important rituals in the local gods’ sanctuaries, to make donations for gods, priests and officials; that was also the occasion to receive the tributes gathered in the local provisions’ magazines (*iz*) since the last fiscal drag. Initially, in lack of dedicated administrative hierarchies in the districts, the local magazines would likely be those of the main local temple itself, under which god’s sacred protection (and within the walls of which) the goods were expected to be safe. These levies were ultimately destined to the king (being forwarded to the central magazine of the capital, *jz-DfAw pr-nswt*), to his palace wide court and eventually redistributed to the other non productive classes (see ‘Stone Vessels’).

This also clarifies the association of provisions with certain deities: Bastet was originally tightly linked to offerings and stored facilities.

²⁶ Table 1, abbreviations (references, provenance, inscription type):

PD IV = P. Lacau, J.P. Lauer, *La Pyramide à Degrés*, tome IV, vol. 1, 1959 (plates), vol. 2, 1961 (text).

PD V = P. Lacau, J.P. Lauer, *La Pyramide à Degrés*, tome V, 1965.

SP I = C.M. Firth, J.E. Quibell, *The Step Pyramid*, 1935.

Kahl, 1994 = J. Kahl, *Das System der Ägyptischen Hieroglyphenschrift in der 0.-3. Dynastie*, 1994.

Kahl et al., 1995 = J. Kahl, N. Kloth, U. Zimmermann, *Die Inschriften der 3. Dynastie. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, 1995.

Kahl, FW, I = J. Kahl, *Frühägyptisches Wörterbuch*, 2002-.

Sa = Saqqara; Gz = Giza ; Ab = Abydos, Umm el-Qaab.

E = Engraved inscription ; I = Ink inscription (usually drawn with black ink).

B2	Hotepsekhemwy (+ Nebra)	PD IV.1, nr. 58, pl. 11(58); PD IV.2, 31f.	2063	Sa	E ²⁸
B3	Hotepsekhemwy (+Nebra)	Reisner, 1931, 102, 179, pl. 70c Weill, 1961, vol. 2, 55	2080 =2095	Gz	E ²⁹

²⁷ **B1**: On the external rim of an intact granite bowl (PD IV.1, ink pl. 1.14: diam. 28,7cm, h. 6,5cm). The standing goddess with *was* sceptre and *ankh* in her hands faces the royal *serekh*. *Bas* signs are incised in very small size between the goddess' lion head and the top of the *was* sceptre; *grg* + det. written below her feet. Actual location unknown (Saqqara Magazine?).

The inscription should refer to a visit of the king to the goddess' shrine or to a foundation named after and protected by the goddess (see P. Kaplony, Steingefasse, 1968; also cf. 'Stone Vessels').

²⁸ **B2**: Cairo JdE 65413. Inscription on the external surface of a diorite bowl (PD IV.1, ink pl. 2.8: diam. 24,2cm, h. 5,2cm).

The falcon atop the *serekh* has a double crown (cf. Kaplony, Steingefasse, nr. 14). The *serekh* of Hotepsekhemwy's follower, Nebra, was added afterwards to the inscription.

²⁹ **B3**: Cairo JdE 41981, flint bowl from the valley temple of Menkaura pyramid complex. Evidently an heirloom as those found in Djoser, Khaefra, Sahure and other kings' funerary temples. Reisner thought that the name of Hotepsekhemwy on this vessel appeared to have been inscribed between the goddess seat and the one of Nebra, which had been also effaced. He thus argued for a succession Nebra – Hotepsekhemwy at the beginning of the 2nd Dynasty (G.A. Reisner, Mycerinus, 1931, 179; cf. PD IV.2, 31, n. 3; P. Kaplony, Steingefässe, 1968, 36, 75), but this is certainly to be inverted.

However the patterns of stone vessels (inscriptions) reuse are often more complex and in the present fragment the slight erasure of Nebra's *serekh* might be due to Ninetjer's scribes (cf. J. Kahl, in print, for British Museum EA 35556).

As in the previous example, the falcons have the double crowns on their heads. The goddess is represented sitting on a throne and carrying the *was* sceptre and the *ankh* sign, which is here interestingly of the archaic type (cf. n. 19).

Almost disappeared inscribed signs are visible above the head of the goddess (her name, as rendered in the line drawing provided by Weill) and behind her seat (there is a small cobra, probably an indication of *Wadjit* rather than part of a *Nepty* name, which would be too close to the base of the bowl).

It should be mentioned that all the inscriptions are very dimly incised, including the name Hotepsekhemwy, (which Reisner believed to have

B4a	Njnetjer (?)	PD IV.1, ink pl. 7.3; PD IV.2, 33	2106	Sa	I ³⁰
B4b	Njnetjer	PD IV.1, nr. 63, pl. 13(63); PD IV.2, 33	2108	Sa	E ³¹
B5a	Njnetjer	PD IV.2, 33 (no illustration)	2110	Sa	I
B5b	Njnetjer	PD IV.1, nr. 64, pl. 13(64); PD IV.2, 33	2109	Sa	E ³²
B6	Njnetjer	SPI, 136; SP II, pl. 105.2 PD IV.1, nr. 65, pl. 13(65); PD IV.2, 33	2111	Sa	E ³³
B7	Njnetjer	PD IV.1, nr. 66, pl. 13(66); PD IV.2, 33	2112	Sa	E ³⁴

been overwritten to a previous one in the serekh frame) but the outline of this king's serekh, the crowned falcon atop of it, the goddess Bastet, its throne, *was*-sceptre and *ankh* sign are instead incised with straight, much deeper lines.

³⁰ **B4a**: Black ink inscription on the inner surface of the same dish as B4b (cf. the following note). The inscription mentions Bastet provisions (Djefaw-Bastet) from the *Wr*-phyle of the slaughterhouse [*(pr-)*Nmt, cf. WB II, 264, 1]. On *phyles* cf. 'Stone Vessels', n. 25.

³¹ **B4b**: On the outer surface of a pink limestone dish (same one as cat. B4a) from gallery VI (H). Diam. 30,8cm, h. 2,8cm. The engraved text, written in two columns the signs of which face each others, refers to the *Wr*-Phyle's "Bastet provisions" for (?) Nswt-Bity Njnetjer-Neby (or Nswt-Bity Neby, Njnetjer). For reasons of symmetry, the phyle name (*Wr*) is written at the end of the left column, below the royal name and in front of the *ZH* ('phyle') hieroglyph (exactly the same as in cat. B5b, B6 and B7).

This vessel (and the following ones with Njnetjer's name) must have been originally part of the funerary offerings of the nearby Saqqara royal tomb B: for an interpretation of stone vessels and their inscriptions as an offering *for* or *by* the king see 'Stone Vessels'; for *DfAw* see *ibid.*, n. 23.

³² **B5b**: Again on the outer surface of a pink limestone dish (diam. 30,8cm, h. 3,5cm) from gallery VII (B). Also the engraved inscription is the same as cat. B4b. In the dish a black ink inscription (B5a, quite equal to cat. B4a) was reported but not published neither in photo plate nor in line drawing.

³³ **B6**: Engraved inscription (total height 5cm, same text as B4b and B5b), equally on the external side of a pink limestone dish from gallery VI.

B8	Njnetjer	Gunn, ASAE 28, pl. 2.4; SPI I, 121; SP II, pl. 89.5 PD IV.1, nr. 67, ink pl. 5.1; PD IV.2, 33f.	2104	Sa	E ³⁵
B9	2 nd Dynasty	PD V, 35, nr. 45, fig. 55	2492	Sa	I ³⁶
B10	2 nd Dynasty	PD V, 35 (no illustration)	-	Sa	I ³⁷
B11	(Khasekhemwy) ?	Amelineau, NF II, 171, 293, pl. 22.1 Weill, 1908, 194f. Kaplony, IAF I, 573	3021	Ab V(?)	E ³⁸
B12	Late 2 nd – 3 rd Dynasty	Gunn, ASAE 28, 164, fig. 5, pl. 3.7 SPI I, 122; SP II, pl.	3191	Sa	E ³⁹

³⁴ **B7**: Engraved inscription, same vase, material and text as the previous ones (B4b, B5b, B6) but the *Wr* bird at the end of the left column is almost completely disappeared.

³⁵ **B8**: Cairo JdE 55265, inscription on the external part of a diorite bowl fragment. The text is slightly different from the three previous ones: the provision is written as a singular (instead in the previous examples we have three times *++f* to render the plural *Df(A)w*), then the *Wr-ZA* (*phyle*) follows entirely in the same right hand column, and finally *#nt* is added, indicating the ‘cellars’ in which the Bastet (protected) provisions were stored by the *phyle* members (*Wr-ZA* of the great cellar/magazine of the *Pr-nswt*, known since the reign of Qa’a in connection with annual offerings (?) and the royal estate *Hwt ZA-HA-Nb*: Petrie, Royal Tombs I, 1900, pl. 9); Also cf. inscriptions –mostly ‘usurped’ – of Sneferka (Neferkaes ?) (W.B. Emery, Great Tombs III, pl. 38.1) and of Horus “Bird” (PD IV, nr. 108). ‘Stone Vessels’, table 1.

³⁶ **B9**: Only a line drawing published. A column which Lacau and Lauer interpreted as a personal name (comparing it to *Khnmw-deben*’s one); but the last circular sign should be the town determinative and the sign above it N38 (*grg*), rather than F47 (*dbn*). For the place name ‘Gerget-Bastet’ cf. n. 17.

³⁷ **B10**: No photo or line drawing provided but the text must be the same as B9.

³⁸ **B11**: Louvre 11017. Large fragment(s) of polished green schist vase, with upper horizontal rope relief and incised inscription (cf. PD IV.1, pl. 22, nr. 117; PD IV.2, 58f., nr. 117, note 4 and p. 59, nr. 118, fig. 6): *Hm-nĪr BAstt, Hm-Sn(dt)j* (?). This latter is paralleled by the personal name *Hem-Sobek* and should also refer to the Crocodilopolis god.

		90.9 Kahl et al., 1995, 58- 59 (Ne/Sa/32)			
B13	Late 2 nd – 3 rd Dynasty	Raffaele, CCdE 7, 2005	-	?	E ⁴⁰

³⁹ **B12**: Cairo JdE 55274 (quartz vase fragment; also cf. above, n. 17); W. Helck, *Thinitenzeit*, 255 (also P. Kaplony, *IAF I*, 573). The inscription is fragmentary: [*Smsw-*] *jzt*, *Hm[-nTr]* *BAstt...* ('Elder of the Magazine, Priest of Bastet...'); the priest's personal name is not preserved. Helck pointed out the role of Bastet as *numen* of the oil-magazines (cf. n. 23). This is suggested by the frequent mentions of "Bastet-provisions" (*DfAw BAstt*) on Ninetjer's vessels (B4a -B8).

⁴⁰ **B13**: Mr. Smith's Collection.

Also cf. my web-page:

<http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/Bastet.htm>

- I wish to thank B. Lieffering (Rotterdam) for his support and for useful discussions on year labels and annals; L. Degli Esposti, G. Gasperetti, F. Merletti, M. Mariani and everyone at CISE for inviting me to the lectures they have been organizing these years in Imola.



Fig. 1. The stone vessel fragment (photo)



Fig. 2. The inscription

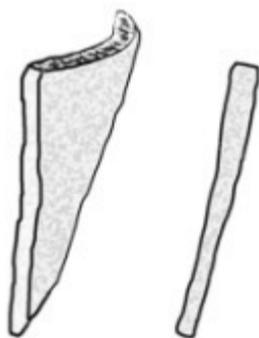


Fig. 3. Sketches of the fragment profile

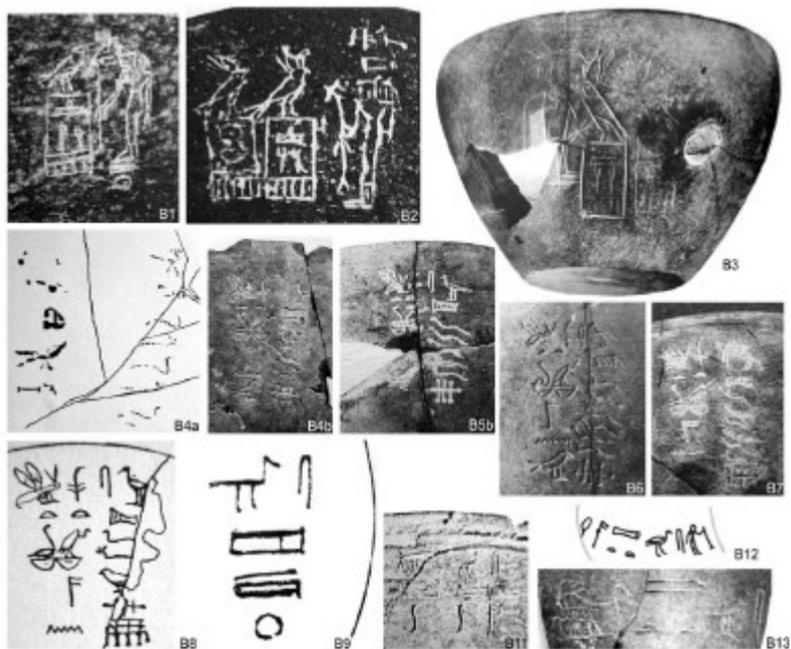


Fig. 4. Bastet on Early Dynastic vessels inscriptions (not to scale)