

Sacred bark of Bastet

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Just as ancient Egyptian gods, or their cult images which represented them on earth, had houses (temples), tables, beds, clothes and jewellery, etc. so they had also full-sized barks – which were similar in shape to Nile boats, except that their prows¹ and sterns² were adorned with the aegis³ of the god in question, and the cabin was replaced by a naos containing the cult image of the deity – in which to travel by river or canal. One must distinguish clearly between two kinds of these sacred barks⁴: real ships which carried images or shrines on Nile, canals or sacred lakes during the celebration of religious festivals, and portable barks or boat-shrines either dragged or borne in procession⁵ on the shoulders of the temple

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¹M. G. JÉQUIER, "Matériaux pour servir à l'établissement d'un dictionnaire d'archéologie égyptienne", *BIFAO* 19, 1922, p.165-167.

²*ibid.*, p. 50-54.

³Aegis is a Greek term for 'shield', used by Egyptologists to describe a representation of a broad necklace surmounted with the head of a deity. Depictions of sacred barks show that they had an aegis attached to the prow.

See H. BONNET, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin, 1952, p. 8-9, s. v. "Ägis"; M. LURKER, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1980, p. 24, s. v. "aegis"; I. SHAW, P. NICHOLSON, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo press, 1995, p. 16.

⁴A. ERMAN, *Aegypten und Aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, Bd 2, Stuttgart, 1885, p. 373; H. BONNET, *RÄRG*, 1952, p. 78-80, s. v. "Barke"; K. A. KITCHEN, *LÄ I*, 1975, col. 619-20, s.v. "Barke"; I. SHAW, P. NICHOLSON, *op. cit.*, p. 48-9; D. JONES, *Boats*, London, 1995, p. 20 ff; M. R. BUNSON, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed., USA, 2001, p. 65, s. v. "barks of the gods"; P. BRAND, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo press 2001, p.171-173, s. v. "sacred barks".

⁵Many Ancient Egyptian customs persist in a sadly degraded condition in the Egypt of to-day. Among these is the boat processions at many towns such as Qena and Luxor held annually on the birthday festivals (*mulids*) of the Muslims saints of these towns.

See A. ABUBAKR, "Divine Boats of Ancient Egypt", *Archaeology* 8, 1955, p. 96-101, (ill.); J. HORNELL, "171. Boat Processions in Egypt", *Man* 38, 1938, p. 145-146; L. V. GRINSELL, *The Folklore of Ancient Egyptian Monuments*, *Folklore*, 58, No. 4, Dec., 1947, p. 351-3.

priests amid great jubilation⁶ when the festival of the local god was celebrated during special times of the year, or when the god or goddess left the precincts of his or her own temple to visit another deity at some other location. Portable barks containing the cult statues of gods or kings were made in the form of papyri form miniature boats and richly decorated with gold and precious stones. Their hulls were gilded and their finials at stem and stern were carved in the likeness of the gods or the kings they carried. The stems and sterns were decorated with ornate collars and the shrine containing the image of the god amidships was always partially concealed from profane eyes by a white linen cloth and sometimes was set on carrying poles for easy transit from one location to another. The great temples in ancient Egypt especially from the New Kingdom onward had not only an inner sanctum for the 'permanent' image of the deity, but also a 'bark sanctuary' for the portable boat shrine and its small image.⁷

Notably, numerous gods possessed sacred barks. Portable barks with image and shrine were termed  *sšm ḥw* (var. *sšm n ḥw*⁸) 'protected image', and often described as 'uplifting the beauty' (*wts nfrw*⁹) of a deity, or "the one who raises on high the beauty (of the god)" that is the one who instils the god with new life. A number of sacred barks bear ceremonial names and are known from descriptions or reproductions. A famous one is the

⁶K. A. KITCHEN, *LÄ I*, 1975, col. 619-20, s. v. "Barke"; I. SHAW, P. NICHOLSON, *op. cit.*, p. 48-9; D. JONES, *op. cit.*, p. 20 ff.

⁷The placing of boats and ships or of representations of them in temples and tombs is an ancient and widespread practice. Moreover, it is a practice of which there are modern survivals. A boat or a ship also figures prominently in mythology and folklore.

M. A. CANNEY, "Boats and Ships in Processions", *Folklore* 49, No. 2, Jun., 1938, p. 132-147; J. BLACK, A. GREEN, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia, An illustrated Dictionary*, London, 1992, p. 44f.

⁸*Wb* IV, p. 291; R. HANNIG, *Sprache der Pharaonen Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch* (2800-950 v. Chr.), Mainz, 1995, p. 765.

⁹*ibid.*, p. 225.

*nšm.t*¹⁰—bark of Osiris, which played a prominent part in the celebration of the Osiris mysteries. Amon-Re had a divine bark called *wsr-ḥ3t-Imn*,¹¹ "powerful of prow is Amun", which is recognisable from the ram's head-sacred animal of Amon-on the prow and stern, less familiar are the smaller barks of his consort Mut and his son Khonsu, named respectively 'Great of Love' (*3-mrwt*) and 'Brilliant of brow (prow?)' (*thn-ḥ3t*). There is also the bark of Nekhbet, patroness of Upper Egypt, of which no further details are known, is somewhat similar in appearance to that of Sokaris. Much later there is another bark worthy of special attention is the one in which Hathor of Dendera journeyed annually to Edfu temple to visit Horus and celebrate there the *hieros gamos*¹².

¹⁰The *Neshmet* bark of Osiris, sometimes termed "great" (*wrt*), is known from the biography of certain officials from twelfth dynasty at Abydos, and from Coffin Texts. Papyrus-umbels at stem and stern, and a large quadrangular cabin to contain the shrine proper, characterize this ship. In the temple of Sety I, a model vessel with carrying poles is depicted; its prow is decorated with a figurehead of the god emerging from a lotus stem, while the reliquary of Osiris protrudes from the top of the cabin shrine. This bark was personified as a goddess, and enjoyed cultic honours. However, Osiris possessed other ships, such as 'Kha-em-hat' (*ḥj-m-ḥ3t*), for his festivals.

Wb II, p. 339; K. A. KITCHEN, *LÄ* I, col. 620, s.v. "barke"; P. BRAND, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹¹The *wsr-ḥ3t* (perhaps, 'Powerful-of-Prow'), or the 'Great Bark of the Head-of-the-River', was the sacred river barge, used at Thebes during religious festivals as a virtual floating temple to convey the portable bark of Amun-Ra, from his cult centre at Karnak to other sacred location during the Festivals, its characteristic features was generally as follow: The prow and stern finials were carved in the shape of rams' heads with broad collars. On the fore-deck stood a falcon on a pole crowned with the solar disk and double feathers. Immediately behind it on the larboard and starboard sides stood images of the goddesses Maat and Hathor and a royal sphinx on a standard. Four tall slender columns with lotus-bud capitals surmounted by the reigning king's cartouches and falcons with solar disks and double-feathered crowns stood a midships before the bark-shrine. Immediately to their rear stood two tall obelisks, sheathed in gold and, behind these, two flagpoles decked with streamers. Sometimes a group of kneeling spirits representing the 'Souls' of Pe and Nekhen. The huge vessel was steered by two large steering-oars suspended over each quarter.

G. FOUCART, "Un Temple flottant, Le Vaisseau d'Or D'Amon-R ā", *Mon Piot* 25, 1921-1922, p. 141-169; Br. ALTENMÜLLER, *LÄ* I, 1975, col. 248-251, s.v. "Amunsbarke"; W. J. MURNANE, "The Bark of Amun on the Third Pylon at Karnak", *JARCE* 16, 1979, p. 11-27; D. JONES, *op. cit.*, p. 22-4.

¹²This event has traditionally been interpreted as constituting a *hieros gamos* feast, that is, the feast of a sacred marriage (divine wedding), celebrating the marriage of Horus and Hathor. This interpretation is now open to doubt. The reliefs and inscription may rather be seen as the=

Actually a flotilla of seven barks escorted the boat of the goddess, and the journey therefore acquired a particularly festive character. The number of divine barks increased greatly in later times. For example, in the temple at Dendera there are, in addition to the bark of Hathor, barks dedicated to Osiris, Sokar, Isis, Nephthys and Horus. In the description of the celebration of the Osiris mysteries in the month of Khoiak at the temple of Dendera, it is stated that 34 barks take part in the ceremonies, five of which are dedicated to the well-known gods Anubis, Isis, Nephthys, Horus and Thoth, and the remaining 29 to unknown gods.¹³

Just as most deities in ancient Egypt, Bastet¹⁴ also had her own sacred bark. This paper tries to shed light upon this bark across the textual and iconographical archaeological sources, especially at Bubastis (Tell Basta), the main cult centre of the goddess.¹⁵

=depiction of a feast during which the principal deities of Edfu left the temple, together with the newly arrived Hathor, to visit the nearby necropolis of Behdet, where primordial gods were believed to be buried. The aim of the rites and acts performed was the regeneration of the ancestor gods, together with a general regeneration of the whole of Egypt.

M. ALLIOT, *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées II*, Le Caire, 1954, p. 441-560; **H. W. FAIRMAN**, "Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester*, 37, No. 1, 1954, p. 196ff; **M. STADLER**, "Procession", in **J. Dieleman and W. Wendrich** (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2008, p. 5; **F. COPPENS**, "Temple Festivals of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods", *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2009, p. 5.

¹³**C. J. BLEEKER**, *Egyptian Festivals enactments of religious renewal*, Leiden, 1967, p. 76ff.

¹⁴Bastet, Mistress of Bubastis, was an important goddess, closely associated with the king since the earliest periods of Egyptian history, she was herself a lioness in the beginning, but in the later periods her worshippers preferred to see her in the form of a cat particularly in Lower Egypt. In her temple at Bubastis they dedicated to her hundreds of bronze figures in deferent shapes to gain her favour; some of these statuettes represent her entirely as a cat.

BONNET, *RÄRG*, p. 80-82 s. v. "Bastet"; **J. YOYOTTE**, in: **G. Posener**, (ed.) *A Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization*, Translated by **A. Macfarlane**, Paris, 1962, p.36-37, s. v. "Cat"; **E. OTTO**, *LÄ I*, col. 628-30, s.v. "Bastet"; **M. LURKER**, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1982, p. 32, s. v. "Bastet"; **M. SALEH, H. SOUROUZIAN**, *Official Catalogue, The Egyptian Museum, Cairo*, Mainz, 1987, Nr.255; **J. MALEK**, *The Cat in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1997; **G. HART**, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 2nd. ed., London, New York, 2005, p. 45-7, s. v. "Bastet".

¹⁵Bubastis (or *Pr-B3stt*, namely 'the house of (the goddess) Bastet', Arabic بلسطة), located on the Tanitic Branch of the Nile; its extensive ruins, now called Tell Basta, lie to the Southeast of Zagazig, capital of Sharqiya Governorate. Bubastis was also called Baset (*B3st*), from which=

A) Textual documents:

1-Montu-em-hat¹⁶ inscriptions:

Among his long biographical inscriptions, which narrated his achievements of his career in rebuilding and restoring the monuments of Thebes after the sacking of the city by Ashurbanipal the Assyrian in 663 B.C., Montemhet left two important indications to a sacred bark of Bastet in Thebes.

a) The first indication came through a text runs on the right-edge front of the seat of his statue in Berlin Museum (Inventory number 17271)¹⁷ and continuing on its right side and on the back in twelve columns.

=derived the goddess name as Bastet "The One of Baset" or "she of the city of Bast". It was first a part of the Heliopolitan or the 13th. nome of Lower Egypt. After the division of the Heliopolitan nome, Bubastis became the capital of the northern part known as the 18th. nome of Lower Egypt (Imet-Khenti) and capital of the whole Egypt during the 22nd. and 23rd. Dynasties.

É. NAVILLE, *Bubastis*, 1887-1889, London, 1891; *id*, *The Festival Hall of Osorkon II in the Great Temple of Bubastis*, 1887-1889, London, 1892; H. GAUTHIER, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques* II, p. 75; *Wb* I, p. 423; L. HABACHI, *Tell Basta*, Cairo, 1957; *id*, *LÄ* I, 1975, col. 873 f. s. v. "Bubastis"; A. el-SAWI, *Excavations at Tell Basta. Report of Seasons 1967-1971 and Catalogue of Finds*, Prague, 1979; M. I. BAKR, *Tell Basta I: Tombs and Burial Customs at Bubastis*, Cairo, 1992, p. 13-16; F. Leclère, *Les villes de Basse Égypte au I^{er} millénaire av. J-C., Analyse archéologique et historique de la topographie urbaine* I, *IFAO, BiEtud* 144/1, 2008, p. 363-85.

¹⁶Mentuemhat was one of the most powerful officials of 7th-century B.C. Egypt. He played a leading role - during many troubled years. He was "Count of Thebes" and "Governor of Upper Egypt," as well as "Fourth Prophet of Amun" under the Nubian kings **Taharqa** and **Tanutamani**, and he was still in office in the reign of **Psamtik I**. He witnessed the recurring Assyrian invasions, including the capture of Thebes in 663 B.C., he narrated on his many monuments (statues) the general prosperity of the Thebaid brought about by his wise administration. His tomb is in western Thebes (TT34).

See W. M. FL. PETRIE, *A History of Egypt* I, London, 1896, p. 304-306; J. LECLANT, *Montouemhat, quatrieme prophete d'Amon, 'prince de la ville', Bibliothèque d'Étude* 35, *IFAO*, Cairo, 1961; K. A. KITCHEN, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, Warminster, 1973; M. L. BIERBRIER, *The Late New Kingdom in Egypt*, Warminster, 1975; E. R. RUSSMANN, "Mentuemhat's Kushite Wife (Further Remarks on the Decoration of the Tomb of Mentuemhat, 2)", *JARCE* 34, 1997, p. 21-22; M. Rice, *Who's Who in Ancient Egypt*, London, New York, 1999, p. 117-118; I. SHAW, P. NICHOLSON, *op. cit.*, p. 182-3; *PM* II, p. 258.

¹⁷A finely worked statue of gray granite, 0.50 m high. Montu-em-hat seated on a chair with arms folded and enveloped in a long mantle. The face is youthful. The stone block representing the chair is inscribed on all four sides. In addition, a column of text runs down the center=



*sm3wy.n.(i) sšm n Hnsw p(3) hrd sšm n B3stt hry-ib(y) W3st shtp
hmt.s m ht ib.s*

I renewed the bark of Khons-the-Child (and) the bark of Bastet-residing-in-Thebes, So as to satisfy her majesty with what she wishes.¹⁸

b) The second indication is inscribed on a wall of a niche-like chamber of the temple of Mut at Karnak.¹⁹ The text is as follow:



iw ms.n.i sšm-hw²⁰ n B3stt hry-ib(y) W3st hr nbi m qm 3t nb m3t

I fashioned a portable bark of Bastet residing in Thebes, with carrying staves of electrum and every genuine costly stone.²¹

2- General Hor text:²²

This indication is a text, deserves to keep the attention in spite of its very bad preserved condition, inscribed on the back pillar of a

= of the mantle, and the back plinth is inscribed in two columns. The style of the statue is derived from Middle Kingdom prototypes.

W. WRESZINSKI, "Eine Statue des Monthemhēt", *OLZ* 19, 1916, col. 10-18, 91-92.

¹⁸M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. III: *The Late Period*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London, University of California Press, 1980, p. 32.

¹⁹J. Dümichen, *Historische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler*, Leipzig, 1867-1869, pl. 48a; A. MARIETTE, *Karnak*, Leipzig, 1875, p. 64-66, pl. 42; M. BENSON, J. GOURLAY, *The temple of Mut in Asher*, London, 1899, p. 28, 264-5, 357; J. H. BREASTED, *Ancient records of Egypt* IV, Chicago, 1906, § 901-916; W. WRESZINSKI, "Die Inschriften des Monthemhet im Tempel der Mut", *OLZ* 13, 1910, p. 385-399, pl. II-V; J. LECLANT, *op. cit.*, p.212ff.

²⁰R. HANNIG, *op. cit.*, p.765.

²¹J. H. BREASTED, *op. cit.*, §912; J. LECLANT, *op. cit.*, p. 214, 218; N. E. SCOTT, "The Cat of Bastet", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, vol. 17, No. 1, 1958, p. 6.

²²P. PIERRET, *Recueil d'inscriptions Inédites du Musée Égyptien du Louvre*, pt 1, in *Études égyptologiques*, livraisons 2, Paris, 1874, p. 14-21; E. De ROUGE, *Notice Sommaire des Monuments Égyptiens expose dans les galeries du musée du Louvre*, Paris, 1876, p. 42; H. BRUGSCH, *Thesaurus inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum altägyptische Inschriften/gesammelt, verglichen, übertragen, erklärt und autographiert*, vol. VI, Leipzig, 1891, p. 1251-1252; J. H. BREASTED, *op. cit.*, IV, §§ 967-71.

mentioned the Bubastite Nome bark which was called *nbt nrw(t)* C3 *nr(w)t* namely the mistress of terror, great of terror.²⁸ This name is very probably derived from one of the goddess Bastet epithets, where she was also called *nbt nrw*.²⁹



*in.f n.k Imt-hnty, Pr-B3st, hr(y) i3t 3t3 n B3stt, b3 n 1st m B3st(.t),
htpt dsrt m Ntr,*



*hm n B3st wr C3 ir ht n k3.s, ins s3š m-b3h.s, nb(t) nr(w)t C3 nr(w)t
mni n p3 i3r(w),*



*išd m C3 bs, Nb n bst, ir.f hbw.s m 3bd 2 3ht sw 13 3bd 1 Šmw sw 13,
3bd 2 Šmw sw 18.*

" (the king ...) he brings to you (namely Horus the Behdetite) the Bubastite Nome, Per-Bastet town, carrying the mysterious chapel of the soul of Isis there (i.e. in Bubastis) under the form of

²⁸ *Edfou* I, p. 355, 4-6; H. BRUGSCH, *Dictionnaire géographique de l'ancienne Égypte, supplement*, Leipzig, 1880, p. 1369; P. MONTET, *Geographie de l'Égypte ancienne*, vol. I, Paris, 1957, p. 178; D. JONES, *A Glossary of Ancient Egyptian Nautical Titles and Terms*, London & New York, 1988, p. 248; P. WILSON, *A Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Ph. D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1991, p. 940.

²⁹ Chr. LEITZ (ed.), *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* IV, Louvain, 2002, p. 77, s. v. "nbt nrw"

Bastet, (who is) satisfied and venerated in *Neter*³⁰, the priest of Bast, the very great priest takes care of her ka (soul), the priestess (of Bastet) plays sistrum in front of her, the (bark called) mistress of terror, great of terror, moors in the canal, the *Ished* tree of the great of fire, Lord of the Flame³¹, he (who) makes her festivals on the 13th of the 2nd Month of *3ht*, the 13th of the 1st Month of *Šmw* and the 18th of the 2nd Month of *Šmw*."

B) Iconographical sources:

1-The first example dated to the New Kingdom, where a figurative document was found in the second court of the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, wherever the feast of Sokar, which occurs on the 26th of Khoiak, is represented on the south and south-east walls. (Fig. 1) The procession of the *Hnw*-bark³² is the main episode of the Sokarian feast, as in all other iconographic documents. However, the divine bark of Sokar is also accompanied by five other barks which belong to the goddesses Hathor, Wadjet, Sekhmet, Bastet and

³⁰É. CHASSINAT, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak* (fascicule I), Le Caire, 1966, p. 79-80. As for *Neter* it is a name of a town in Delta (It is very probably Behbeit el-Hagar).

Wb II, p. 365; P. MONTET, *op. cit.*, p. 108f, 177.

³¹"Lord of the Flame" is the name of a sacred garden.

ibid., p. 179.

³²One of the earliest-known and most remarkable of portable barks was the *Hnw*-bark of Sokar, Memphite funerary god. This was placed upon a special sledge (*mft*) and drawn-later carried-round the walls of Memphis on the feasts of this god. Already in the Old Kingdom, the *Hnw*-bark appeared in its characteristic form: it rests on a frame which is strengthened by four legs and placed on a sledge; the upturned prow has an antelope head facing backwards and a mass of horizontal stays (?); two steering oars adorn the up-sloping stern; a falcon stands in the bark. The original design was retained in the New Kingdom but with much added ornamentation. Often discernible behind the antelope's head is the head of a bull facing forward, from whose mouth dangles a leash or cord. Also typical are a bolti-fish and six falcons on a small scale behind the prow. The number of steering oars is increased to three, then four. In the New Kingdom, there is a chapel amidships, on top of which stands or squats a falcon, and in which the sacred image can be glimpsed.

K. A. KITCHEN, *LÄ* I, 1975, 622-23, s.v. "Barke"; E. BROVARSKI, *LÄ* V, 1985, col. 1074-1075, s.v. "Sokar".

Sekhmet³³ (Fig. 1). Of these five smaller barks accompanying the *Hnw*-bark of Sokar, three among them possess a high throne (Hathor and Wadjet in the upper register, Bastet in the lower register), the fourth has a chapel, while the fifth bark of Sekhmet is provided with four bars (evoking those of a *pr-nw*). Above the barks is a sign in duplicate which can be interpreted as *g3wt* = bundle (goods), tribute) with four or six circles which probably indicate the plural. The boats would seem to be laden with good offerings.³⁴

As for the participation of these barks and these goddesses in the festival of Sokar which cannot be coincidental, since Sokar is never accompanied by a female partner, so the appearance of these five goddesses is remarkable. By virtue of their nature they belong there: Hathor the typical mother-goddess, the patroness of birth, love and also of the dead. Moreover, it is interesting to note that Hathor of Dendera characterized as the goddess of the ideas of rejuvenation, of blossoming, of renewal. Bastet possesses a demonic nature; she can be friendly and gay but also savage and wrathful. Neith and Sekhmet are warlike figures. Neith is in origin a goddess of war, but she also possesses magic knowledge; she conducts the ceremonies during the laying of foundations of buildings; she protects medicine and cares for the dead. Sekhmet, the powerful, combats the enemies of Re and of the king; she too protects medical practitioners, though in her rage she spreads epidemics. All four fit in perfectly with the atmosphere of Sokaris, because they are, as it were, figurations of elements in the being of Sokaris, the god of the potential life in death.³⁵

³³The Epigraphic Survey, *Medinet Habu*, IV, *Festival Scenes of Ramses III*, OIP 51; Chicago, 1940, pl. 196 C-D; G. A. GABALLA and K. A. KITCHEN, "The Festival of Sokar", *Or* 38, 1969, p. 52-67; C. GRAINDORGE, *Le dieu Sokar a Thèbes au Nouvel Empire*, GOF 4/28, Wiesbaden, 1994, p. 239-58.; *Ead.*, 'La Quête de la lumière au mois de Khoiak: Une histoire d'oies', *JEA* 82, 1996, p. 83-105.

³⁴C. J. BLEEKER, *op. cit.*, p. 88-9.

³⁵C. J. BLEEKER, *loc. cit.*

2- One of the most imposing examples of Bastet bark came from Tell Basta; maybe confirm again a link between Bastet, especially her sacred bark, with the god Sokar and his bark. In the debris of the cats' cemetery at Tell Basta, a rectangular limestone stela, 28 cm. long and 18.5 cm. wide, reg. no. 1800 (now in The Sharqeya National Museum at Herreyat Raznah, Inventory number 651), was found by **Ahmed el Sawi**³⁶ during his excavation there (seasons 1967-1971) (Fig. 2, a-b). On this stela there is a unique scene is depicted in sunken relief, represents a sacred bark of Bastet carries a boat shrine mounted on a base (sledge?), containing the divine image of Bastet,³⁷ who was inscribed as a woman with a lioness head seated on a throne, holding the papyrus-scepter *w3d*³⁸. The boat shrine is in the form of the traditional Upper Egyptian sacred *pr-wr* shrine, has a shape identical to that of the golden shrine of Tutankhamen, consisting of a square box topped by a cavetto cornice and a roof or lid sloping down from the front decorated with a serpent (uraeus) occupies the entire length of the vertical side of the roof.

The central shrine, which was often more than half-hidden by a white veil³⁹, fronted by four⁴⁰ flagstaves without streamers, may be their tops were decorated with streamers only during the festivals.⁴¹

³⁶A. el-SAWI, *Preliminary Report on Tell Basta excavations*, ZÄS 104, 1977, p. 129, fig.4; *id.*, *Excavations at Tell Basta, Report of seasons 1967-1971 and catalogue of finds*, Prague, 1979, P. 76, figs. 171-172.

³⁷In Egyptology, it has generally been thought that the divine image in the bark and the cult statue in the sanctuary were one and the same image. However, evidence from Karnak suggests that there were two distinct statues—one that remained in the sanctuary, *sšmw jmnw/dsrw* (“hidden/secret/sacred image”), and another that was used as a processional statue, *sšmw hw* (“the protected image”) or *ntr pn špsj/nrt tn špst* (“this venerable god/goddess”).

M. STADLER, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁸This emblem assigned to Bastet since the Old Kingdom.

P. KAPLONY, *LÄ VI*, col. 1374, s.v. "zepter"; M. Lurker, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

³⁹K. KITCHEN, *LÄ I*, 1975, col. 623, fig. s.v. "Barke"

⁴⁰Cf. G. FOUCART, "Un Temple flottant, Le Vaisseau d'Or D'Amon-R á", *MonPiot* 25, 1921-1922, p. 155.

⁴¹A. BADAWAY., *Le dessin architectural chez le Ancienne Egyptiens*, Le Caire, 1948, p. 188; R. ENGELBACH, "The supports of the pylon Flagstaves", *AE* 8, London and New York, 1923, p. 74.

The form of this shrine with flagstuffs reminds us of Amun's bark shrine. The shrine roof was supported by papyrus columns with Hathor capitals.

Near the prow, in front of the shrine, there are another two (?) columns surmounted by the falcon Horus, and a plumed standing sphinx preceded by a cobra on a standard-perhaps embodying the king as a forward look-out. The prow of the bark has the form of a cobra (?) (Goddess Wadjet), Actually Bastet was connected with the serpent goddess Wadjet because they both were believed to represent the eye of Re, and hence the beneficent power of the sun, therefore Bastet was often depicted as a woman with the head of lioness and with a uraeus (serpent).⁴² The most important thing also is concerning the upturned stern which has antelope's (gazelle) head facing backwards while smelling a lotus flower bud, it is clearly similar to the form of the god Sokar's bark prow, and to some extent to that of Nekhbet bark⁴³. As for the significance, the antelope⁴⁴ (Oryx gazella) was the sacred animal of the desert, and was sacrificed in the New Kingdom and its head offered to Sokar or his bark.⁴⁵

⁴²A. GEISSEN, M. WEBER, "Untersuchungen zu den ägyptischen Nomenprägungen IX: 15.-19. unterägyptischer Gau", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 160, 2007, p. 287-90; Chr. LEITZ, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen II*, p. 739 f. s. v. "B3stt/Bastet"; J. MALEK, *The Cat in Ancient Egypt*, p. 95-97, fig. 62.

⁴³A scene in the tomb of Setau, high priest of Nekhbet at el Kab, represents traces of two barks moving towards the right. The first or right-hand bark is under full sail and tows the sacred bark of Nekhbet, that distinguished by two antelope-heads at the upturned prow.

A. H. GARDINER, "The Goddess Nekhbet at the Jubilee.Festival ofRamas III", *ZÄS* 48, 1910, pp. 47 ff.

⁴⁴Antelope is a desert-dwelling horned bovid, which served as the symbol of the 16th Upper Egyptian Nome (province). Three species of antelope are known from ancient Egypt (*Alcephalus buselaphnus*, *Oryx gazella* and *Addax nasomaculato*). One of the earliest forms of amulet took the form of a gazelle head, possibly in order to ward off the evil that such desert animals represented.

L. STAEHELIN, *LÄ I*, 1975, col. 319-23, s.v. "Antilope"; E. BRUNNER-TRAUT, *LÄ II*, 1977, col. 426-7, s.v. "Gazelle"; I. SHAW, P. NICHOLSON, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁵C. J. BLEEKER, *op. cit.*, p. 80; E. BROVARSKI, *LÄ V*, 1984, col. 1066-7, "Sokar"; G. A. GABALLA, "New Light on the Cult of Sokar", *Orientalia* 41, 1972, 178-179.

This huge bark was steered by two large steering-oars suspended over each quarter. The butt-ends of the steering-oars, and the posts supporting them, were surmounted by unclear heads, but the most exciting is the waves of water that resulted from the movement of the immersed steering-oars in water. There are no inscriptions on the stela. The stela can be preliminarily dated to the Late Period (Dyn. XXII - XXVI?).

3- Unfortunately there is no certain occurrence of the sacred bark of Bastet in the inscriptions of the Great Temple of Bubastis, except two fragments from the festival hall of king Osorkon II, (Fig. 3) contained a scene show two barks, one tows (?) the other (fig. 2)⁴⁶, maybe point to the role of Bastet sacred bark in the rites of *sd* festival of the king, the latter possess amidships shrine in the form of the *pr-wr* chapel, below it there is a text saying: " ... may she give you millions of feasts ...", that suggests this bark belongs to Bastet. The bark in the front distinguished by four curiously small steering-oars adorn the upsloping stern⁴⁷ resemble those of Sokar bark. This also reminds us of that scene in Setau tomb which represented the royal bark towing the Nekhbet bark, which is somewhat similar in appearance to that of Sokar and, according to the accompanying texts, fulfilled the holy rites in the *sd* festival of Ramses III.⁴⁸

Finally Bastet also appeared twice with the king Osorkon I, Heka (*hK3*), Wepwawet (*Wp-w3.wt*) and a leonine oarsman on board of the sacred bark of the sun god Atum among the few and badly preserved remains of the representations which adorned the walls of the Small Temple of Atum in Tell Basta,⁴⁹(Fig. 4) where the king is represented making offerings to them. Bastet is the only one of the

⁴⁶E. NAVILLE, *The festival Hall of Osorkon II in the Great Temple of Bubastis*, London, 1892, Pl. XIII: 2-3.

⁴⁷K. KITCHEN, *LÄ I*, 1975, col. 622, fig. s.v. "Barke"

⁴⁸A. GARDINER, *op. cit.*, p.47-51, fig.; C. BLEEKER, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁴⁹For identification see E. NAVILLE, *Bubastis*, London, 1891, p. 60-2, pl. L. A, C; L. HABACHI, *Tell Basta*, Le Caire, 1957, p. 119-20; PM IV, p. 32; K.A. KITCHEN, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt(1100-650 B.C.)*, 2nd. rev. ed., Warminster, 1995, p. 303-4.

former figures being seen standing before the king and looking toward him. On one of the fragments the accompanied label says: "[*B3st.t ...ḥnwt*] *nṯr.w* [...] *s* [...]" Bastet ... Mistress of gods.⁵⁰

Bastet bark procession

The festival of the goddess Bastet at Bubastis became one of the largest and most popular in Egypt. These occasions usually included a ceremonial procession during which the image of the local deity was brought out and at least its portable shrine could be seen by ordinary people. In the fifth century B.C., Herodotus claimed to have visited Bubastis (or Bubastos) in Eastern Delta and witnessed the celebrations of her great festival,⁵¹ but in spite of his amazing description of the celebrations of Artemis-Bastet, He mentioned nothing about the nature and procedures of the goddess appearance in her sacred bark in the river procession⁵², but

⁵⁰ J. H. BREASTED, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 362-66:§§729-37; R. K. RITNER, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period*, USA, 2009, p. 249-50.

⁵¹The city Bubastis had several festivals in honour of its patron goddess, Bastet. According to the Festival calendar of the temple of Horus in Edfu dated to the time of Ptolemy X, the main festivals at Bubastis fell on the 13th of the 2nd Month of *3ḥt*, the 13th of the 1st Month of *Šmw* and the 18th of the 2nd Month of *Šmw*. The festival that mentioned by Herodotus ought to be one of these, especially the list informs us that on the 1st of the 2nd month (=Pauni) of *Šmw* was a festival in honour of the goddess Hathor of Dendera 'who lives in Bubastis', and Hathor actually travelled to Bubastis. That would fit Herodotus' festival context perfectly. She was simply one of the participants, albeit divine, in the great Bubastite festival. According to the Canopus Decree the Greater and Lesser Boubastia took place on day 1 of the 2nd Month of *Šmw*, which seems to correlate this with the gathering of the crops, and the rise of the River Nile. The Saite Calendar mentions a festival on the 16th of the 2nd Month of *Šmw* as does the Esna Festival List. Elsewhere, there are also texts mention a procession of Bastet at Karnak on the 29th of the 1st Month of *Prt*, a procession at Herakleopolis on the 5th Day of the 4th Month of *Prt* and a festival at Thebes on the 4th day of the 4th Month of *Prt*.

E. OTTO, *LÄ I*, col. 628-30, s.v. "Bastet"; A. B. LLOYD, *Herodotus Book II. Commentary 1-98*, 2nd ed., Leiden, 1994, p. 272-3; J. MALEK, *op. cit.*, p. 98; I. RUTHERFORD, "Down-Stream to the Cat-Goddess: Herodotus on Egyptian Pilgrimage", in J. Elsner, I. Rutherford (ed.), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity Seeing the Gods*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p.141-2.

⁵²The essence of the annual festival ritual of ancient Egyptian gods consisted of "seeing the god" or "revealing his (i.e., the god's) face" (*m33 nṯr/wn-ḥr*), and the deity's statue appeared (*ḥꜥj*) by coming forth (*prj*) from the temple's sanctuary in a ceremonial bark—hence the two Egyptian terms for procession: *shꜥy* ("the causing of a god or ruler to appear") and *prt* or *prw* ("a coming forth"). In most cases the divine image was nevertheless hidden in a naos (shrine)=

according to many indications from other different places, one can imagine or expect that. According to temple reliefs show the outward appearance of these events (including their participants), religious feasts processions consisted of five basic elements: 1) the temple's principal gods (i.e. the triad) in their processional barks; 2) other deities, represented as standards, preceding the barks; 3) the king; 4) the people who formed the audience; and 5) those who acted in the procession.⁵³

In accordance with the former elements, it is clear that during the feast of Bastet the goddess was brought out of her sanctuary as is recorded on the statue of general Hor, who said: "I brought out Bast in procession to her bark, at her beautiful feast of the fourth month of the second season, the fifth day until [///]". Certainly the main place during this festival was the temple, which is on an island, surrounded by channels that come from the Nile, where many sources, as the Edfu text⁵⁴, mentioned an *išrw*⁵⁵, which seems to be a lake or a body of water or the 'channels' that Herodotus described as follow⁵⁶: "I will now show the form of her temple: save for the entrance, it stands on an island ; two separate channels approach it from the Nile, and after coming up to the entry of the temple, they

=that was carried within the bark and was therefore still invisible to the public. In a river procession, the Egyptian term for which was *hn(y)t* ("rowing"), the ceremonial bark was put into another bark to be ferried over.

M. STADLER, *op. cit.*, p. 3; F. COPPENS, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵³Those who were actively involved were, for example, priests who bore the processional bark, the standards, or other cultic instruments, the rowing crew (needed when the processional bark was actually transported on the Nile in a larger craft), and singers, musicians, and dancers who accompanied the cult statue. The presence of singers implies the existence of standard hymns that were sung and indeed texts of hymns for the god in procession are preserved.

M. STADLER, *op. cit.*, p. 3

⁵⁴*Edfou* I, p. 335, 5-6.

⁵⁵H. GAUTHIER, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*, I, Le Caire, 1925, p. 108; FI. PETRIE, *Koptos*, London, 1896, pl. X, 2; P. MONTET, *Géographie de l'Égypte ancienne*, I, Paris, 1957, p. 179; S. SAUNERON, "Villes et légendes d'Égypte", *BIFAO* 62, 1964, p. 50-54; P. WILSON, *A Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Ph. D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1991, p.210; I. RUTHERFORD, *op. cit.*, p.141; A. Tillier, "Notes sur l'icherou", *ENIM* 3, 2010, p. 167-176.

⁵⁶Herodotus, II, 138.

run round it on opposite sides; each of them is an hundred feet wide, and overshadowed by trees". Modern archaeology has confirmed this arrangement.⁵⁷

The river or canals would then not only have been over crowded with individual parties but also by grand ceremonial ships-procession *hn(w)t*, as deities, sailed down the Nile from all places of Egypt toward Bubastis in their divine barks to participate, like their worshippers, in this famous feast of Bastet. Hathor might be one of these deities, especially there is a proof in the Edfu temple List also informs that on the 1st of the 2nd month of *Šmw* Hathor of Dendera actually travelled to Bubastis. "The 1st. Day of 2nd. month (=Pauni) of the *Šmw*-season: feast of Hathor of Dendera "eye-of-Re, eye-of Horus and eye of Atum", who lives in Bubastis. Her sacrificers (priests) accomplish the ritual-actions in the temple of the northern Bubastis, [...] Temple of the northern [...] one."⁵⁸ That would fit Herodotus' context perfectly. She was simply one of the participants, albeit divine, in the great Bubastite feast. As it was in the Festival of the sacred marriage (=Beauteous Re-Union) of Hathor of Dendera and Horus of Edfu wherever the flotilla of Hathor was joined *en route* by the municipal barks of Elephantine, El Kab and Komir.⁵⁹

The presence of the king in this event is affirmed recently through an autobiographical account inscribed on the body's left side of a block statue of a priest of the lion-goddess Sekhmet in the reign of King Amenhotep III (ca. 1388–1350 B.C.), called *Nefer-ka*⁶⁰ relates how he witnessed King Amenhotep III's personal visit

⁵⁷I. RUTHERFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁵⁸*Edfou* V, p. 355; M. ALLIOT, *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou* I, p. 232; A. B. LLOYD, *op. cit.*, p. 272; A. GRIMM, *Die altägyptischen Festkalender in den Tempeln der griechisch-romischen Epoche*, Wiesbaden, 1994, p. 112-113; I. RUTHERFORD, *op. cit.*, p.142.

⁵⁹M.ALLIOT, *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, Le Caire, 1954, p.441-560; A.B. LLOYD, *op. cit.*, p. 273 ; C. J. BLEEKER, *op. cit.*, p. 78-9 ; D. JONES, *Boats*, London, 1995, p.22.

⁶⁰This upper part of the block statue of *Nefer-ka* was found in 1992, during the excavations of the Tell Basta Project, It is carved from brownish quartzite and was recovered from the bottom of a well, dated to the Roman Period, in the central part of the Great temple of Bastet at Bubastis. =

to the temple of Bubastis on the occasion of the great festival of the goddess Bastet:

"His Majesty wore the red crown [i.e. the crown of Lower Egypt]; he rewarded me [...]; he appeared on his throne in order to celebrate the feast of Bastet [...]; he had bulls sacrificed for her, 71 perfect bulls, and also perfect cakes and bread, 30 pieces [...]"

As for the individual parties Herodotus said that:⁶¹ "When the people are on their way to Bubastis they go by river, men and women together, a great number of each in every boat.⁶² Some of the women make a noise with rattles, others play flutes all the way, while the rest of the women, and the men, sing and clap their hands. As they journey by river to Bubastis, whenever they come near any other town they bring their boat near the bank; then some of the women do as I have said, while some shout mockery of the women of the town; others dance, and others stand up and expose their persons. This they do whenever they come beside any riverside town. But when they have reached Bubastis, they make a festival with great sacrifices, and more wine is drunk at this feast than in the whole year beside. Men and women (but not children) are wont to assemble there to the number of seven hundred thousand, as the people of the place say." It is not clear if these boats that Herodotus mentioned belong to only individuals or the deities too.

It is very probable that this splendid scene had not happened only in Bubastis, but there is an indication that suggests another similar water procession took place on the Nile in Thebes, as there is text

=E. BERNHAUER, "block statue of Nefer-ka", in M. I. Bakr, H. Brandl, F. Kalloniatis (ed.), *Egyptian antiquities from Kufur Nigm and Bubastis*, Berlin, 2010, p. 176-9, Nr. 53; http://www.project-min.de/restoration_en.html (last access 15/4/2011).

⁶¹HERODOTUS II, 60.

⁶²These may be the sacred barks that came to participate in the festival as the one of Hathor.

inscribed on a stela of Thutmosis III in the temple of Mut at Karnak concerning a feast of Bastet was celebrated in Thebes, saying:



tpy Prt 29 hb hn(y)t B3stt

"...the 29th day of the 1st month of *Prt*, feast of the Bastet water procession."⁶³

The use of the word "*hn(y)t*"⁶⁴ in this text, which means "water procession", support that the statue of Bastet maybe enjoyed her feast of the same rituals that were granted to Amon there.⁶⁵

⁶³J. F. CHAMPOLLION, *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie: notices descriptives conformes aux manuscrits autographes rédigés sur les lieux II*, Paris, 1889, p. 264.

⁶⁴*Wb* III, p. 375, 7-12; R. O. FAULKNER, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford, 1962, p. 201; R. HANNIG, *op. cit.*, p. 635.

⁶⁵Z. EI-KORDY, *La Déesse Bastet, Depuis les temps les plus reculés de l'histoire, jusqu'à la fin du Nouvel-Empire*, MA. diss., Cairo University, 1978, p. 62.