

A CHIEF OF THE BOWMEN, OVERSEER OF THE FOREIGN LANDS AT SERABIT EL-KHADIM (SINAI 300+297) AND THE “DWELLING OF SESU” (TELL EL-BORG)*

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STELA SINAI 300+297

Recent archaeological research of the area north-east of el-Qantara Sharq, in particular excavations at Tell el-Hebua I, Tell el-Borg and Tell el-Herr because of the threat posed to the sites by the As-Salaam irrigation and land-reclamation project, greatly increased our knowledge of the cities and fortresses along the estuary of the Pelusaic branch of the Nile and the ‘The Ways of Horus’.¹ This article is a contribution to this research based on my reconstruction of the stela Sinai 300+297² from Serabit el-Khadim. Though nowadays kept in different collections, the fragments form part of the same stela. Sinai No 297 shows clearly the missing foot of the godhead on Sinai 300 and the lower

part of his *w3s*-sceptre and the ‘join’ completely restores the figure of the worshipper (Fig.1). The fragments of Nubian sandstone represent the right half of a stela of the common *w4*-type with rounded top. The official stands on the left before the god Amun-Re, his hands raised in prayer. Between them is the full name of the god and below them the remains of a horizontal inscription of two lines. The left half is unfortunately missing, but it is reasonable to assume that the scene was mirrored by another similar scene of worship:

in front of the deity:

1) *Imn nb nsw.t t3wy* 2) *t3! t Ssw*³

Amun, Lord of the thrones of the two lands (in) the ‘Dwelling of Sesu’

* This article is part of my investigations of the Temple and monuments of Serabit el-Khadim in preparation for a *Corpus of Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions*, which unfortunately has been interrupted and subsequently delayed for a number of years; see also M. DIJKSTRA, *Semitic Worship at Serabit el-Khadim (Sinai)*, *ZAH* 10 (1997), 89–97; idem. An early Alphabetic Ostrakon from the Stables in Qantir (Egypt), *Biblische Notizen* 135 (2007) 1–5.

¹ Still fundamental is A. GARDINER, The ancient military road between Egypt and Palestine, *JEA* 6 (1920) 99–116; see further E.D. OREN, The “Way of Horus” in North Sinai, in A.F. RAINEY (Ed.), *Egypt, Israel and Sinai. Archaeological and Historical Relationships in the Biblical Period* (Tel Aviv 1987) 69–119; M. ABD EL-MAKSOUH, *Tell Heboua (1981–1991). Enquête archéologique sur la Deuxième Période Intermédiaire et le Nouvel Empire à l’extrémité orientale du Delta* (Paris 1998); J.K. HOFFMEIER & M. ABD EL-MAKSOUH, A New Military Site on ‘the Ways of Horus’- Tell el-Borg 1999–2001: A preliminary Report*, *JEA* 89 (2003) 169–197; M. ABD EL-MAKSOUH & D. VALBELLE, Tell Héboua-Tjarou. L’apport des l’épigraphie, *RdE* 56 (2005) 1–44; J.K. HOFFMEIER and R.D. BULL, New Inscriptions mentioning Tjaru from Tell el-Borg North Sinai, *RdE* 56 (2005) 79–94; J.K. HOFFMEIER, “The Walls of the Ruler” in Egyptian Literature and the Archaeological Record: Investigating Egypt’s Eastern Frontier in the Bronze Age, *BASOR* 343 (2006), 1–20; J.K. HOFFMEIER, The North Sinai Archaeological Project’s Excavations at Tell el-Borg (Sinai): An example of the “New” Biblical Archaeology? In: J.K. HOFFMEIER & A.R. MILLARD, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology. Reassessing*

Methodologies and Assumptions (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, UK) 2004, 53–66; J.K. HOFFMEIER, Recent excavations on the Ways of Horus. The 2005 and 2006 Seasons at Tell el-Borg, *ASAE* 80 (2006) 257–279; J.K. HOFFMEIER & K.A. KITCHEN, Reshep and Astarte in North Sinai. A Recently discovered stela from Tell el-Borg, *Ä&L* 17 (2007) 127–136. I thank James Hoffmeier for a copy of the last two articles and the insights in Egyptian-Levantine history and archaeology we shared during the SBL conference July Vienna 2007.

² Fragment Sinai 300 (18 cm × 15 cm) in the McClean Museum, Greenock, no 43, was sold in the sixties with other Aegyptica, its present whereabouts are unknown (information G.A. Woods assistant curator, March 2009); fragment Sinai 297 (13 cm × 15 cm) is published in A.H. GARDINER, T.E. PEET and J. CERNY, *The inscriptions of Sinai Part II Translations and Commentary* (London 1955) 193 with the comment ‘present whereabouts unknown’ – is now in the Edwards Collection 14304 in the Petrie-Museum of University College London (my own observation 1994); see also: H.M. STEWART, *Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs and Paintings from the Petrie Collection I*, London 1976, 45, pl. 35.5. The join that I propose here (Fig. 1), could therefore not be tested and still needs physical confirmation, but size, form, colour and layout of the scene leave little doubt.

³ Though the writing of the topographic name is somewhat irregular, comparison with *t3 t n Ssw* on the ‘map’ of Seti I and in pAn I 27:2ff confirms identification. The inscription pAn V 23:7ff also omits the preposition, see GARDINER, *JEA* 6 (1920) 106.



Figure 1 Sinai 297+300

Inscription below:

- 1) *ibw nk p3-R^cw n** []
 Praise to thee, O Re of (?) [Ramesses Meriamun?]⁴
 2) *h3y(?) hry pd.t* imy-r h3s.wt n nb t3wy* [
 Appearing to(?) the chief of the bowmen*, over-
 seer of the foreign lands for the Lord of the two
 lands, [N.N., true of voice?]

In view of the topographic name *t3 t(n) Ssw* 'Dwelling of Sesu' and also in view of the dress of the official on the stela, it is datable to the 19th Dynasty. 'Sese/u' is known to be a shortened form for Ramesses II.

After Tjaru / Sile at the border of Sinai, it is most probably the second station / fortress on the

military road between Egypt and Canaan, also known as 'the Way(s) of Horus'.⁵

Recent discoveries demonstrate almost beyond doubt that Tel el-Hebua/Hebwe I and II covered the ancient frontier city Tjaru of the New Kingdom (Late Bronze Age), so that the next military site that revealed the remains of two successive fortresses, Tell el-Borg is a plausible candidate for 'The Dwelling of the Lion (Seti I)', subsequently renamed 'the Dwelling of Sesu (Ramesses II)'. Most probably, the fortress possessed also a chapel for Amun-Re and his consort Mut. Excavations of this site produced not only architectural remains from the 18th Dynasty (door jambs from the time of Amenhotep II), but also the 19th Dynasty (a door jamb of Ramesses II) and perhaps even the 20th Dynasty. This 'Amun-Re of the Thrones of the Two Lands', worshipped at this place, is also mentioned on stela Sinai 300+297 from Serabit el-Khadim (Fig. 1).

Eileen Hirsch identified the worshipper and sponsor of Sinai 297 with the 'overseer of the foreign lands of the Lord of the Two Lands', Usikhau, who also appears on the fragment Sinai 294,⁶ dated in the 5th year of a pharaoh not named. Identification of the official on this stela with Usikhau is however far from certain. Sinai 294 most probably belongs to the assemblage of monuments and architectural restorations of the temple in Year 5, second month of the summer, ordered by Ramesses IV (1142–1135 BCE).⁷ If so, stela Sinai 300+297 must belong to another 'overseer of the foreign lands of the Lord of the Two Lands' despite the similarity in titles, since the restored stela would place this official somewhere in the reign of 'Sesu', i.e. Ramesses II. Perhaps, we may link him now to 'the royal scribe and army commander' Pa-mer-ihu from the early years of Ramesses II, who was also a 'overseer of foreign lands', according to a monument made by his son Merenptah.⁸

⁴ A similar formula of praise: *ibw nk* appears also on a Ramesside door jamb at Beth-Sean.

⁵ Preserved also as Shihor in the Old Testament Josh. 13:3; 1 Chron. 13:5; Isa. 23:3. For a summary view of this military road and its fortresses, see Appendix.

⁶ Eileen HIRSCH, Die Beziehungen der Ägyptischen Residenz im Neuen Reich zu den vorderasiatischen Vasallen. Die Vorsteher der nördliche Fremdländer und ihre Stellung bei Hofe, in: R. GUNDLACH & A. KLUG, *Der ägyptischen Hof des Neuen Reiches. Seine Gesellschaft und*

Kultur in Spannungsfeld zwischen Innen- und Aussenpolitik. Akten des Internationalen Kolloquiums vom 27.–29. Mai 2002 an der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Wiesbaden 2006) 150.

⁷ In particular, Sinai 275–288, 311, see HIRSCH, *Die Vorsteher*, 150; TH. HIKADE, *Das Expeditionswesen im ägyptischen Neuen Reich – ein Beitrag zu Rohstoffversorgung und Außenhandel* (Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte des Alten Ägypten 21, Heidelberg, 2001) 185.

Hirsch rightly stresses the importance of this official in charge for the northern provinces of the empire under the 18th and 19th Dynasty. Therefore, the connection between this frontier area and Serabit is no coincidence. The texts of Serabit el-Khadim mention several individuals who have a relation with the area around Tjaru and with the city itself. For instance a *h3ty-ꜥ n T3rw* ‘mayor of Tjaru, Neby’ is mentioned in an inscription adjoining Mine E from the 4th year of Tuthmoses IV.⁹ There is also a *hry pꜣt n T3rw* ‘a commander of the bowmen of Tjaru’ and officials from other fortresses along the ‘Ways of Horus’ left their memorials in Serabit. There is a *hry pꜣt n t3 hnm̄t Rꜥ-ms-sw-Mry-Imn*, Amenemope (Sinai 247W Seti I Year 8; Sinai 252b Ramesses II Year 2, Sinai 260 Ramesses II (mentions also his 17th son Meri-Atum), Sinai 261 Ramesses II). This fortress was most probably identical to Gardiner’s fortress M, *t3 hnm̄t Sety Merenptah* but was early in Ramesses’ II reign renamed after him like Tell el-Borg.¹⁰ This fortress probably housed some infantry and cavalry from a division of the Amun army.¹¹ As Gardiner/Peet already remarked about the changes during the New Empire, in particular the 19th Dynasty in Serabit: “Doubtless for military purposes Sinai was regarded as an appanage of the north-east frontier and the great military road into Asia.”¹² It is therefore not surprising to find several such high officials in charge of the northern lands including Sinai, such as Pamerikhu, Sethnakht and Usikhau in the records of Serabit.

IDENTIFYING THE SITE OF “THE DWELLING OF THE LION / SESU”

Gardiner *et al.* identified Biblical Migdol and classical Magdolo (Herodotus, Antonine Itinerary etc) with Tell el-Herr seven Roman miles south west of Pelusium.¹³ More recent archaeological discoveries and Biblical criticism made this identification doubtful.¹⁴ According to E. Oren, the fortress Tell el-Kedua = T 21 might be 7th Century BCE, Saitic and Biblical Migdol (Jeremiah, Ezechiel). Excavation of Tell el-Herr produced material remains only from the Persian Period onwards. Apparently, it was established after the Saitic fortress was abandoned or destroyed (perhaps in 525 after Cambyses’ battle at Pelusium). Gardiner noted another objection to this identification: the equal distance of 12 Roman mile (ca 17,6 km) that Migdol was said to be between Sile and Pelusium, according to the Antonine Itinerary. The problem is even more complicated, because of the discovery that the coastline from the Roman-Byzantine Period differed considerably from the estuary of the Pelusaic Branch of the Nile with its large Palaeolaogoon in the 2nd Millennium BCE. Large deposits of Nile silt moved this line several kilometers to the north and even further after the construction of the Suez Canal. It is feasible to assume that cities, villages and fortresses migrated but also other natural aspects of this wetlands were influenced by changes in the course of this branch of the Nile and the coastline. In recent

⁸ HIRSCH, Die Vorsteher, 141. It is tempting to relate him to the official Muarihu in letter RS 15.11 (PRU 3, 19) written to the governor of the city of Ugarit. If so, the Egyptian *Hé-hé-a* or *Hé-ya!* mentioned in this letter cannot be the Egyptian Vizier and governor of Canaan, Khaya, who was probably active in the 27th–50th years of Ramesses II, K.A. KITCHEN, *Pharaoh Triumphant. The Life and Times of Ramesses II* (Cairo 1982), Chart 2; idem, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated Volume III* (London 2001), 27–31; I SINGER, A Political History of Ugarit, in: W.G.E. WATSON & N. WYATT, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (HOS 39, Leiden 1999) 716; Y. GOREN, N. NAAMAN, H. MOMMSEN, I. FINKELSTEIN, Provenance Study and Re-evaluation of the Cuneiform documents from the Egyptian Residency at Tel Apheq, *Ä&L* 16 (2006) 169.

⁹ ABD EL-MAKSOUÐ & VALBELLE, *RdÉ* 56 (2005) 21.

¹⁰ Another ‘commander of the bowman Ta[]’ is mentioned in an intrusive inscription on a squatting statuette with stela from Tell el-Hebua No 22 originally

belonging to a: *snny n hm=f* ‘chariot archer of his majesty Nehem-sou-Hor’ and a dyade statuette from Tell el-Hebua No 21 of *hry pꜣt p3-sr* ‘commander of the bowmen, Paser’ and his wife Henout, see ABD EL-MAKSOUÐ & VALBELLE, *RdÉ* 56 (2005) 16–21.

¹¹ See from Tell el-Borg the small door-shield (TBO X27 13.5 × 11.0 × 5.0) *ir.n t3i-hꜥw Hꜥ* ‘made by the weapons-bearer, Kha’ from the regiment / division *Imn hꜥ nt n Wsr-m3ꜥt-rꜥ Stp-n-rꜥ di ꜥnh mi Rꜥ dt* ‘Amun appears gloriously and victorious for User-maat-Re Setpen-Re, given life like Re for ever’.

¹² GARDINER & PEET, *Inscriptions of Sinai II*, 20.

¹³ Gardiner followed by Eißfeldt, Cazelles and others; see the discussion with E.D. OREN, Migdol: A New Fortress on the Edge of the Eastern Nile Delta, *BASOR* 256 (1984) 7–44; esp. 30–35.

¹⁴ OREN, *BASOR* 256 (1984) 30–35, B.E. SCOLNIC, A New Working Hypothesis for the Identification of Migdol, in: HOFFMEIER & MILLARD, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*, 91–120, esp. 109–110.

years, it was established beyond doubt that original Egyptian Tjaru was hidden in Tell el-Hebua I and II, whereas Tell Abu Sefeh was the more recent site of Roman-Byzantine Sile. The distance between Tell Abu Sefeh and Tell el-Herr is indeed about 16.5 km, that is close to the 12 Roman Miles of the Antonine Itinerary. It suggests that ancient Pelusium should be sought somewhat further along the coast to the east and not only in modern Tell Beluza. Old and new surveys and excavations have shown that the Roman-Byzantine coastal town of Pelusium comprised a rather widely spread conglomerate of residential and industrial areas, among which are also Tell el-Makhzan, Tell el-Kanais and perhaps even Muhammediah at Lake Bardawil.

Initially, archaeological fieldwork seemed to confirm the identification of Tell el-Hebua with 'The dwelling of the Lion'. Gardiner had suggested to identify 'The dwelling of the Lion' from Seti's battle scenes in Karnak with this tell. The place was also known from pAnastasi I and V as 'The dwelling of Sesu / Ramesses Meri-Amun', that is renamed after Ramesses II.¹⁵ As I have shown, this fortress is also mentioned on stela Sinai 297+300, dedicated by an unfortunately unknown 'overseer of the (northern) foreign lands', among which Sinai was counted. He dedicated the stela to 'Amun(-Re), Lord of the thrones of both lands'.

More recent discoveries include many more artefacts which put the identification of Tell el-Hebua I and II with the New Kingdom frontier city of Tjaru beyond doubt.¹⁶ Though Tell el-Hebua I and II were divided by a branch of the Nile, on the relief of Seti I indicated as *t3 dnit* 'The Dividing Water', they were part of the same city and centre of an urban area.¹⁷ In de 'Map' of Seti I, Tjaru is written on the part of the city left of 'The Dividing Water', that is on the southern bank of the mouth of the Nile. Scolnic still pleaded for Tell el-Borg = Migdol, but could not exclude the equally plausible option for the 'Dwelling of the Lion'. Palaeogeological investigations discovered beyond Tell el-Hebua the continuation of the ancient coast-line interrupted by a large lagoon, seemingly part of the estuary of this Nile branch. It indicated that the road to Tell el-Ghaba ended there and that, at the junction of Tell el-Heboua I–II, the main road to Sinai turned south-east along Tell el-Borg and the southern side of the lagoon.

This suggests, however, that the next station on the military road 'The Dwelling of the Lion / Sesu' should be identified with the fortress of Tell el-Borg, a site a few kilometres east of New Qantara and 3 km north of the Road to El-Arish, as it was also finally proposed by Hoffmeier himself.¹⁸ If so, the fortress *p3 mktr n Mn-m3^ct-r^c* which after Seti I was renamed by Seti II en Ramesses III, but also was

¹⁵ GARDINER, *JEA* 6 (1920) 106; see further M. ABD EL-MAKSOU, Une nouvelle forteresse sur la Route d'Horus: Tell Heboua 1986 (Nord-Sinaï), *CRIPPEL* 9 (1987), 13–16; idem, Excavations on "The Ways of Horus" Tell Heboua North Sinai (1986–87), *Discussion in Egyptology special number 1* (1989) 175; because of the discovery of a limestone architrave and an octagonal pillar and abacus with cartouches of Seti I, see D. VALBELLE *et al.*, Reconnaissance archéologique à la pointe orientale du Delta. Rapport préliminaire sur les saisons 1990 et 1991, *CRIPPEL* 14 (1992) 1–12, esp. 18 fig. 4; pl. 1B; K.A. KITCHEN, Egyptians and Hebrews, from Ra'amses to Jericho, in: S. AHITUV & E.D. OREN, *The Origin of Early Israel – current Debate*, (Beer-Sheva XII, Jerusalem 1998) 70–71.

¹⁶ HOFFMEIER & M ABD EL-MAKSOU, *JEA* 89 (2003) 169–197 esp. 171 n. 10, 195–197; ABD EL-MAKSOU & VALBELLE, *RdE* 56 (2005) 1–44; SCOLNIC, Migdol, 91–120.

¹⁷ HOFFMEIER & ABD EL-MAKSOU, *JEA* 89 (2003) 196; HOFFMEIER & KITCHEN, *Ä&L* 17 (2007) 12 n 2 notes that excavations during the spring and summer of 2007 have shown that Heboua II too is a part of the Tjaru military complex; Tell el-Ghaba lies ca 7 km further on the dunes north-east of the Palaeolagoon. Settlement from the 19th

Dynasty until the Byzantine Period is attested (*CRIPPEL* 14 (1992), 18), for the greater part lower-class living quarters and graveyards (ca 11 hectare). The ceramic repertoire with its Mediterranean imports strongly resembles that of Tell Heboua II. It was not an independent city but a kind of suburb of Tjaru, perhaps a kind of harbour quarter or a base of the Egyptian Navy (Ramses III Medinet Habu). The letter of pAn V 23:7–25:2 also suggests the presence of harbour facilities close to this 'Dwelling of Sesu / Rameses Meri-Amun'. See GARDINER, *JEA* 6 (1920) 106–107. J.K. HOFFMEIER & S.O. MOSHIER, New Palaeo-Environmental Evidence from North Sinai to Complement Manfred Bietak's Map of the Eastern Delta and some Historical Implications, in E. CZERNY *et al.* (eds), *Timelines: Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak*, OLA 149.2 (Leuven, 2006), 167–176, esp. 171–173.

¹⁸ For the identification of Tell el-Borg, Hoffmeier and Abd el-Maksoud initially suggested a choice between 'the Dwelling of the Lion' or 'Migdol etc.' (*JEA* 89 (2003) 196; also in 2002 and 2006), but in later studies Hoffmeier took for the first option; see references note 1, to which may be added: J.K. HOFFMEIER, The Search for Migdol of the New Kingdom and Exodus 14:2: An Update, *Buried History* 44 (2008) 3–12 esp. 9.

briefly known as Migdol,¹⁹ should be looked for a bit further along the road to Canaan. Hoffmeier suggested the disappeared Tell T 78.²⁰ The ‘map’ of Seti I seems to suggest that the fortress of Migdol is situated somewhere along the coast past the (Palaeo)lagoon. However, identification with either T-21 = Tell el-Kedua or Tell el-Herr less plausible. T 21 = Tel el-Kadua, for the last originated in de Saitic Period as part of the line of defence against the Babylonians and Persians, similar to

fortresses such as Tell el-Maskhuta in Wadi Tumilat. It could have been the Migdol of the 7th and 6th Century mentioned in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezechiel. In the Persian Period this Migdol was succeeded by Persian-Hellenistic-Roman Migdol / Magdolo = Tell el-Herr, slightly further inland from the coast, but its predecessor in the 2nd Millennium is as yet not identifiable with one of the known tells in the area, though Tell Abyad (2007) may turn out to be a plausible option.²¹

Appendix: Survey of the fortresses and wells along the military road ‘Way(s) of Horus’

Karnak	Papyrus Anastasi I	Other sources	Identification
	Ways of Horus		
The fortress of Tjaru B			Tell el-Hebua I and II
The dividing canal <i>β dnit A</i>	–		Mouth of the Nile?
The Dwelling of the Lion D	The Dwelling of Sesu	Sinai 279+300	Tell el-Borg
The Migdol of Men-maat-Re (= Seti I) = E; The well <i>Ha*-pa*-na*</i> = F	– <i>Ha-pa!=y-na</i> pAn I 27:4	At Medinet Habu = Migdol of Ramesses-Prince of Heliopolis; pAn V, 19, 6–20, 2 The Migdol of Seti II Merenptah ... beloved of Seth	Near Tel el-Kedua / Tell el-Herr, perhaps Tell Abyad
Buto of Seti I Merenptah G with the well: Ain-?	Ain of Buto of Sesu		Near Rumani?
The Fortress of Men-Maat-Re: The ... is his protection = I The strength of Seti-Merenptah = J	In his stronghold is User-maat-Re	The Fortress of Merneptah who takes pleasure in truth pAn III, 5:1	BEA-10 = Bir el-Abd
Town which His Majesty [newly built?]: K – the Well of Ib-sa-gá-ba L	<i>Sa-ba*-ir</i> pAn I 27:5 <i>Ib-sa-gá-bu</i> pAn I 27:6		?
The Well of Seti Merenptah = M		The Well of Ramesses-Meri-Amun Sinai 247 etc	Bir el-Mazar
The Well of Men-Maat-Re <i>Pa-nakhtu</i> = N: The sweet Well = O	<i>ʿi=y-ni-{ni}</i> ? pAn I 27:6	pHarris RIII <i>ʿi=y-ni</i> ?	El-Arish?
The Well of Men-maat-Re = [S]: <i>Na-ha-su</i> of the Prince = [T]	<i>Na-ha-sa</i> pAn I 27:6–7		El-Arish?
The City that His Majesty recently built at the Well <i>Hu=[r]-ba-ti</i> , = [P+R]; The stronghold of Men-maat-Re, heir of Re = [Q]	<i>Ha-bu-ra-ti</i>	<i>Hi=r-bu</i> pLeiden? see Ahitub, p.119f	A-345 ‘Huravit’

¹⁹ GARDINER, *JEA* 6 (1920) 107–110; also in Amarna letter EA 234, see SCOLNIC, Migdol, 104–105; HOFFMEIER, *Buried History* 44 (2008) 7–8.

²⁰ But see now HOFFMEIER, *Buried History* 44 (2008) 9–10 where he says that T-78 is too small to be the location of a fort and now suggests the site of T-211.

²¹ OREN, *BASOR* 256 (1984) 35; see now provisionally D. VALBELLE and F. LECLÈRE, Tell Abyad: a royal Ramesside residence, *Egyptian Archaeology* 32 (2008), but see also HOFFMEIER, *Buried History* 44 (2008) 9–10.

