

MACIEJ M. MÜNNICH

The God Resheph  
in the Ancient Near East

*Orientalische Religionen  
in der Antike*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Ägypten, Israel, Alter Orient

## Oriental Religions in Antiquity

Egypt, Israel, Ancient Near East

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Herausgegeben von / Edited by

Angelika Berlejung (Leipzig)

Joachim Friedrich Quack (Heidelberg)

Annette Zgoll (Göttingen)

11





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# The God Resheph in the Ancient Near East

Mohr Siebeck

MACIEJ M. MÜNNICH, born 1973; 2003 PhD from the Catholic University of Lublin, Faculty of Arts; 2012 Post-doctoral degree (habilitation) from the Catholic University of Lublin, Faculty of Arts; currently Head of the Department of Ancient History at the Catholic University of Lublin.

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## Foreword

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Maciej M. Münnich  
Lublin, May 2011

## Foreword to the English edition

The English edition of the presented work is a revised and updated version of the Polish publication. I would particularly like to thank Professors Angelika Berlejung, Annette Zgoll and Joachim Friedrich Quack. They read my manuscript and gave me many valuable remarks and advice. Only I know how much I am in debt to them. Any errors are mine and mine alone.

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Lublin, December 2012

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# Abbreviations

## A. Reference works and archaeological sites

<i>AB</i>	- The Anchor Bible
<i>ADAJ</i>	- Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
<i>AfO</i>	- Archiv für Orientforschung
<i>AION</i>	- Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli
<i>ALASP</i>	- Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens
<i>AnOr</i>	- Analecta Orientalia
<i>AOAT</i>	- Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<i>AoF</i>	- Altorientalische Forschungen
<i>ARM</i>	- Archives Royales de Mari
<i>ArOr</i>	- Archiv orientální
<i>ASum</i>	- Acta Sumerologica
<i>ASAE</i>	- Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte
<i>AuOr</i>	- Aula Orientalis
<i>BASOR</i>	- Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BASOR.SS</i>	- Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Supplementary Studies
<i>BES</i>	- Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar
<i>BETHL</i>	- Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>BibOr</i>	- Bibliotheca Orientalis
<i>BIFAO</i>	- Bulletin del'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
<i>BKAT</i>	- Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament
<i>BMMA</i>	- Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
<i>BZAW</i>	- Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	- Catholic Biblical Quarterly
<i>CdÉ</i>	- Chronique d'Égypte
<i>CRAI</i>	- Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres
<i>EA</i>	- Tell el-Amarna
<i>EbDA</i>	- Ebla Digital Archives
<i>EOL</i>	- Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux
<i>ETHL</i>	- Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
<i>EVO</i>	- Egitto e Vicino Oriente
<i>FAOS</i>	- Freiburger altorientalische Studien
<i>FAT</i>	- Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>HCCT-E</i>	- Hirayama Collection of Cuneiform Tablets from Emar, Kamakura, Japan
<i>HdO</i>	- Handbuch der Orientalistik
<i>HSM</i>	- Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HSS</i>	- Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HUCA</i>	- Hebrew Union College Annual
<i>IEJ</i>	- Israel Exploration Journal
<i>JAOS</i>	- Journal of the American Oriental Society
<i>JARCE</i>	- Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt
<i>JBL</i>	- Journal of Biblical Literature

## XII

<i>JCS</i>	- Journal of Cuneiform Studies
<i>JEA</i>	- Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
<i>JNES</i>	- Journal of Near Eastern Studies
<i>JNSL</i>	- Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
<i>JPOS</i>	- Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
<i>JSOTSupp</i>	- Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series
<i>MARI</i>	- Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires
<i>MEDA</i>	- Middle Euphrat Digital Archive
<i>MIFAO</i>	- Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire
<i>MRS</i>	- Mission de Ras Shamra
<i>NABU</i>	- Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires
<i>OrAnt</i>	- Oriens Antiquus
<i>OBO</i>	- Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
<i>OIP</i>	- Oriental Institute Publications
<i>OLA</i>	- Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>OLP</i>	- Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica
<i>OLZ</i>	- Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
<i>OTL</i>	- The Old Testament Library
<i>PRU</i>	- Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit
<i>PSBA</i>	- Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology
<i>RA</i>	- Revue d'Assyriologie
<i>RB</i>	- Revue Biblique
<i>RdÉ</i>	- Revue d'Égyptologie
<i>RIH</i>	- Ras Ibn Hani
<i>RS</i>	- Ras Shamra
<i>RSF</i>	- Rivista di Studi Fenici
<i>RSO</i>	- Rivista degli studi orientali
<i>SBL.WAW</i>	- Society of Biblical Literature. Writings from the Ancient World
<i>SEL</i>	- Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente Antico
<i>TCL</i>	- Textes cunéiformes du Louvre
<i>UF</i>	- Ugarit-Forschungen
<i>VT</i>	- Vetus Testamentum
<i>VTSupp</i>	- Vetus Testamentum Supplements
<i>WBC</i>	- Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WO</i>	- Die Welt des Orients
<i>ZA</i>	- Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
<i>ZAW</i>	- Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>ZÄS</i>	- Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde
<i>ZDPV</i>	- Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins

## B. General

<i>Akk.</i>	- Akkadian
<i>Arab.</i>	- Arabic
<i>Aram.</i>	- Aramaic
<i>DN</i>	- divine name
<i>Eg.</i>	- Egyptian
<i>Fs.</i>	- Festschrift
<i>Gr.</i>	- Greek
<i>Heb.</i>	- Hebrew
<i>Hitt.</i>	- Hittite

Lat.	- Latin
LXX	- The Septuagint
MT	- Masoretic Text
n (n).	- note(s)
no.	- number
OSA	- Old South Arabian (earlier often described as Sabaic)
p (p).	- page(s)
Phoen.	- Phoenician
pl.	- plate
r.	- <i>recto</i>
Sem.	- Semitic
Sum.	- Sumerian
s.v.	- <i>sub verbo</i>
Syr.	- Syriac
tab.	- table
Ugar.	- Ugaritic
v.	- <i>verso</i>
v (v).	- verse(s)
Vg.	- The Vulgate

## Transcription

abc	- preserved text
abc <sup>?</sup>	- uncertain/problematic text
ʿabcʿ	- corrupted text, partly reconstructed
[abc]	- corrupted text, reconstructed
[...]	- corrupted text, illegible
[x]	- corrupted sign, illegible
<abc>	- text added in the original
(abc)	- text added in the translation
<<abc>>	- error in the original text
...	- omitted text

## Introduction

In this work the author's aim is to depict an incredible portrait of a widely worshipped deity in the ancient Near East by the name of Resheph. In depicting this portrait one should define the time and place of the worship of this god as well as his character, attributes, attitude towards other deities and the popularity of his cult. All the available Near Eastern texts mentioning Resheph will serve as a source foundation. These will include not only the sources from Elam, Mesopotamia, Syro-Canaan and Anatolia but also from Egypt and the colonies in Cyprus, Africa and Europe, inhabited by the Phoenicians, even if they are located geographically outside the territories of the Orient. Therefore, this work is a monograph concerning the cult of a given deity, typical for the research on the history of religion. As we are, however, dealing with sources that are spread both chronologically (from the third to the first millennium BC) and territorially (from Carthage to Elam) we cannot collect these sources mechanically and depict *one* single portrait of the deity on this basis. As P. Xella emphasised it correctly, "Acting this way, we begin a historical *flattening* leading to the creation of artificial divine figures that have never existed as such."<sup>1</sup> Having various sources we must first analyse the data of particular lands, ordering them from the oldest to the latest. Thus we will receive detailed pictures concerning the cult of Resheph at Ugarit, in Egypt, Phoenicia, Israel, etc., and these pictures will not be static but will change together with the period analysed. They will be supplemented by other elements from the earlier analysed authors of the iconographic sources. When these "mobile pictures" are superimposed on one another in a proper sequence, we will receive the final picture of the deity. Unfortunately, this portrait will not be acutely and precisely depicted following the model of the Renaissance masters but rather it will be characterised by the wide and slightly blurred drawings of the Impressionists' paintbrush. It is the effect of overlapping of many different pictures, which can actually enable noticing some details with the advantage that the most important features will be multiplied and thus emphasised and will not be lost in the sea of details.

As the texts are the basis for research, the first step is to present them and thus a catalogue of translated sources has been included in this work. However, this work does not strictly aim at providing a philological analysis of large fragments of the ancient sources. Doing so would lengthen this indeed extensive work and at the same time, it would not give a better understanding of the role that Resheph played in the ancient religions. For example, the consideration whether in the Ugaritic *Epic of King Keret* Resheph kills one fifth of the heirs or the fifth wife or perhaps the offspring of the fifth

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<sup>1</sup> "En opérant de la sorte on procède à un *aplatissement* historique qui aboutit à la création artificielle de figures divines qui n'ont jamais existé comme telles," Xella 1988, 46.



wife, etc. is interesting from the philological point of view and could have taken many pages but it would have had no deeper meaning for the picture of Resheph as a deity bringing death. One should also loyally warn readers that the catalogue includes some sources that in the literature of this topic were – and sometimes still are – presented as proof of Resheph's presence. However, later analyses proved it was a mistaken view. For instance, it is the case of the sources from Alalakh, Ammon or Carthage. Therefore, the contents of this work cannot be treated as a list of places where the sources concerning Resheph were found. For the readers' comfort such a list can be table 2, placed at the end of the summary, containing the places and the time as well as the amount and type of the sources mentioning Resheph. The catalogue does not embrace the iconographic sources but this is not because the author does not recognise the importance of the iconography in studying the ancient religions. A decided majority of the iconographic material concerning Resheph has been described in detail only recently and there is no sense in repeating the accomplished work.<sup>2</sup> The sources describing Resheph, however, without the inscription mentioning this god, will be enumerated in the footnotes, together with necessary bibliographical hints. Naturally, this does not mean that iconographic sources will not be considered in the conclusions. On the contrary, they will be essential elements in defining both the features of the deity himself and the character of his cult.

Grouping the sources, the author faced the choice: either to order them chronologically<sup>3</sup> or to order them in accordance with their territorial adherence.<sup>4</sup> The first option gives more possibilities to follow the changes in time whereas the other allows noticing better the local differences in the cult of Resheph. Therefore, the author tried to combine both possibilities, grouping the sources according to the territorial provenience and at the same time, trying to preserve the chronological order. But a purely chronological order introduces many artificial divisions. For instance, the data from Egypt should have been divided into those coming from the second millennium and those from the first millennium despite the obvious connection between the picture of Resheph in the Egyptian New Kingdom and in the later periods. One can face a similar problem studying the sources from Cyprus: some of them come from the Bronze Age and some only from the Hellenistic period. On the other hand, one should also notice the troubles resulting from the dominance of the territorial criterion, for example visible in the above-mentioned sources from Cyprus. The oldest Cypriot source is the letter found in Egypt in the archive at Tell el-Amarna. The place where it was found would have suggested including it into the Egyptian sources,<sup>5</sup> but the place of finding does not mean the place of the origin of the source, and consequently, it should be presented with other Cypriot sources. There are more such examples but the most important aspect is always the culture within the framework of which a given text originated and not the place where it was found. Additionally, the territorial criterion is blurred by the changes of the borders in history, the best example being Apollonia – Arsuf, the town located now in Israel

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<sup>2</sup> Cornelius 1994; Lipiński 1996; Cornelius 1998; see also Lipiński 2009.

<sup>3</sup> This system was adopted in Lipiński's work 2009.

<sup>4</sup> This is the order of Fulco's work 1976.

<sup>5</sup> The interesting thing is that Fulco 1976 omitted this text whereas Lipiński 2009 placed it among the sources from Ugarit, in the subsection dedicated to the legend of King Keret!

near Tel Aviv but founded by the Phoenicians who must have come from Sidon. That is why the discussion of this toponym was included in the part dedicated to the Phoenician sources and not the Hebrew ones. Finally, the work was divided into three chronological parts (third, second and first millennia) and the sources were ordered territorially within the framework of this scheme. However, the priority was given to the place of origin and thus if the sources embrace more than one millennium (Egypt, Cyprus) they were not divided but assigned to the part in which more sources were found. Therefore, the division concerning all the Egyptian sources is in the part dedicated to the second millennium whereas the Cypriot sources were grouped in the part discussing the monuments from the first millennium. The division of the book into three big parts in the chronological order ensures a minimum balance between them, naturally within the limits allowed by the number of sources in particular millennia. However, one cannot preserve any balance in the particular chapters ordered in accordance with the territorial provenience since the source material has been preserved in a completely unequal way. The clearest examples are Elam or Babylon with one source and Ebla with 275 sources. Unfortunately, one cannot introduce any unification since it would be against the preserved source material. The large chapters have been divided into subsections dedicated to the sources (catalogues) and the conclusions flowing from these sources. In turn the catalogues of the sources – depending on the source material – can be divided into parts concerning the occurrence of the name of the god Resheph himself and dedicated to the personal names or places containing the name of Resheph while the division of the conclusions in particular chapters depends on the nature of the source texts and can contain paragraphs concerning the chronology of Resheph's cult and the forms of his name, the characteristics of the deity, the local hypostases, the use of the god's name in the onomastic material, etc. Naturally, the above-mentioned divisions make sense only in the chapters containing a bigger number of sources. It would be pointless to divide the chapters into any smaller sections discussing a few or only a single source even if it leads to some imbalance in the construction of the work. Here another remark concerning the counting of sources is needed. Namely, the author has assumed the principle that every mention of Resheph or of the theophoric name containing the name of Resheph will be counted even if the mentions occur several times in one text. If in one royal inscription Resheph is mentioned several times, it testifies to the greater connection of the ruler with the cult of the discussed god than when Resheph occurs only once. Similarly, it concerns the lists of sacrifices offered to gods. If Resheph occurs in such a context many times it undoubtedly means that he had a bigger significance in the cult than other deities mentioned only once. Therefore, it should be reflected in the statistical data. Naturally, one should remember that these data present the number of mentions of Resheph and not the number of texts, inscriptions, etc. The introductory chapter, breaking the chronological order, concerns a short discussion about a possible etymology of the name of Resheph. The indices and bibliography have been placed at the end of the book. The list of abbreviations and the principles of transcription have been placed at the beginning of the work to facilitate the reading of the work.

Although Resheph belongs to the foreground figures in the Near Eastern myths he enjoys considerable popularity among contemporary scholars. One can enumerate numerous articles dedicated to various aspects of the cult of Resheph in particular ancient

countries. However, avoiding repetitions the most important works have been mentioned at the beginning of the chapters. The most important editions of the sources, with the data we are interested in, have also been included there. Naturally, introductions to the chapters containing one or at the most several sources have not been included but all topics have been discussed within the framework of the given source. Only the texts that tried to embrace all issues connected with Resheph and originated not earlier than the middle of the 20th century have been mentioned. The earlier works are very incomplete since the sources that were discovered later have not been taken into account. Considering the chronological order the most important works can be presented as follows:

P. Matthiae devoted to Resheph, especially focusing on his iconography, an article in the then new periodical *Oriens Antiquus*.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, because of the date of its publication, the texts from Ebla, Emar and many other texts from Egypt were not included.

In turn in his article F. Vattioni focused on the written sources.<sup>7</sup> Undoubtedly, it was then the best discussion of the cult of Resheph although it is obvious that many sources were not included, either.

The controversial work is the article of D. Conrad who tried to prove that Resheph was one of the most important deities in the pantheon and first of all in the pantheon he played the role of the god of the weather, thunderstorms and lightings, and consequently the god of fertility.<sup>8</sup>

In the same year in two articles A. van den Branden presented a solid discussion of the sources connected with Resheph.<sup>9</sup> This author includes the most important and then known texts regarding Resheph, stressing the ominous nature of the god in question. Soon afterwards the monograph dedicated to three gods: Apollo, Nergal and Resheph, written by M. Schretter, was published.<sup>10</sup> However, it is written from the perspective of a researcher of the Greek religion, someone who sought to explain the phenomena observed in this religion among the Near Eastern religions, which were slightly alien to him.

The first monograph fully dedicated to Resheph was the work of W. J. Fulco, originating during his studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. The text is characterised by an explicit composition; it presents a catalogue of sources and their discussions, and thus one can say that the present work is to some extent modelled on the construction of the above-mentioned book. At the same time, one must notice that the work of W. J. Fulco lacked many sources, including not only those the author could not have known because they were published later. That lack evoked a series of reviews, sometimes fairly critical, although they always emphasised the importance of the author's work.<sup>11</sup> Until the publication of E. Lipiński's monograph the work by W. J. Fulco was the starting point of any research concerning Resheph. One should notice with all honesty that W. J. Fulco was simply unlucky because when his work was printed the texts from Ebla

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<sup>6</sup> Matthiae 1963, 27–43.

<sup>7</sup> Vattioni 1965, 39–74.

<sup>8</sup> Conrad 1971, 157–183.

<sup>9</sup> van den Branden 1971a, 389–416; van den Branden 1971b, 211–225.

<sup>10</sup> Schretter 1974. The chapter dedicated to Resheph is on pp. 111–173.

<sup>11</sup> Coogan 1978, 111; Couroyer 1978, 150–152; Spalinger 1978, 514–517; Horn 1979, 143–145; Lipiński 1979, 259–260; Givon 1980, 144–150; Xella 1981b, 121–124.

just appeared (and W. J. Fulco could have only mentioned them in the foreword), which caused the loss of the topicality of his work at the moment of its publication.

In the 1990s two biblical dictionaries, which have remained fundamental to this day and which contain valuable entries dedicated to Resheph, as expected discussing this deity also in the non-biblical contexts, were published. The author of the article concerning this topic in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* is L. K. Handy<sup>12</sup> whereas the entry to the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons* was written by P. Xella,<sup>13</sup> who also wrote other works dedicated to Resheph, especially his occurrences at Ugarit. One must add to the mentioned dictionaries the new entry in volume XI of *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, written by M. P. Streck.<sup>14</sup>

The next important work dedicated to Resheph was written by H. Niehr in the collective work about the biblical demonology.<sup>15</sup> Like in other such publications the non-biblical sources were extensively presented. Yet, the lack of the mention of the sources from Emar is striking.

While this work was in preparation other publications were released. Certainly the monograph *Resheph. A Syro-Canaanite Deity* by E. Lipiński should be mentioned first.<sup>16</sup> It is undoubtedly the best book dedicated to the deity in question. It mentions a decisive majority of the sources regarding Resheph although – adhering to the method chosen by its author – it presents and discusses only the sources that the author regarded as important. The bibliographical data of the remaining sources have been given in the footnotes but without citing the texts themselves. Thus readers must trust the evaluation of the author. The work by E. Lipiński includes almost all texts concerning Resheph himself but it omits texts, many a time numerous ones, in its onomastic material. One can also see that these types of sources were less interesting to the author, and his research was slightly random. For example, the onomastic material from Emar was discussed thoroughly and extensively<sup>17</sup> but the presentation of the onomastic material from Ebla occupies only five lines of the text.<sup>18</sup> The philological knowledge and amazing erudition of E. Lipiński surely cannot be overestimated, which makes his work in many places a model one in the linguistic topics although at the same time, one cannot avoid the impression that some of his proposals of new readings are fairly risky. However, it seems that the author, having concentrated on the linguistic questions, treated the problems connected with the history of religion in a rather superficial way, not drawing many conclusions from the available material. This can especially be seen in the conclusions, which barely occupy a full page.<sup>19</sup> Considering the huge amount of sources and sometimes its slightly chaotic order, the incomplete indices, embracing only the sources

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<sup>12</sup> Handy 1992, 678–679.

<sup>13</sup> Xella 1999<sup>2</sup>, 700–703.

<sup>14</sup> Streck 2008, 251–253.

<sup>15</sup> Niehr 2003, 84–107.

<sup>16</sup> Lipiński 2009. The work was published at the turn of November and December 2009. See also the reviews: Smith 2011, 86–89; Spronk 2011, 612–614.

<sup>17</sup> Lipiński 2009, 124–132.

<sup>18</sup> Lipiński 2009, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Lipiński 2009, 263.

quoted in the main text and omitting those that were only enumerated, not mentioning the sources in the footnotes, create big impediments.

The next book that was published while the present work was being prepared is the monograph by J. M. Blair, *De-Demonising the Old Testament*, in which large fragments discussing both the biblical examples and those from other texts were dedicated to Resheph.<sup>20</sup> However, one should stress that referring to the non-biblical data J. M. Blair follows faithfully the existing literature without giving any new proposals of her own. But presenting the biblical examples the author tries to do her best proving that Resheph (and all of the discussed beings) cannot be called a demon, which, however, results from the mistaken definition of the concept of “demon,” based only on the contemporary meaning of this word.

Such a rich literature of the topic, including a number of newly published works, testifies to the importance of the discussed problems and shows their topicality. At the same time, it points to the adequacy of the theme chosen.

A separate issue, which is worth mentioning, is the identification of Apollo appearing in the Greek and Roman sources speaking about the Phoenician-Punic world.<sup>21</sup> Considering the fact that Apollo was identified with Resheph in the Cypriot sources one could assume that these gods were connected in other texts as well. However, we face the problem whether Apollo was *always* identified with Resheph. When can we identify these deities and when should Apollo be connected with another god, for example with Eshmun?<sup>22</sup> Are there any time or territorial limits or perhaps should we discuss each case separately? When do we deal with *interpretatio Graeca* made only by a classical author and when were Apollo and his Eastern equivalent really identified by the inhabitants themselves? Finally, what should be done with the cases where Resheph seems to be identified with other classical deities, for instance with Heracles?<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know the answers to these questions and consequently, we move among suppositions. We lack certain identification as it was, for example, in the bilingual Cypriot inscriptions. Facing such doubts we leave the classical sources mentioning Apollo in the Phoenician-Punic context without any clear reference to Resheph as those that do not concern the deity in question.

Regardless of the land of the origin of a source the form of the name “Resheph” will be used in the whole publication so that readers do not feel at a loss among a variety of possible forms. The exceptions will be the onomastic and toponomastic sources where the forms of the name occurring in a given land will also be used. At the same time, during the discussion of the sources we will give the most probable form of the name of Resheph, which was used in the land where the sources come from.

The writing of toponyms and personal names will be simplified not to unnecessarily complicate the system of recording. Some names have been accepted in the English language for a long time and their scientific transcriptions would evoke astonishment. This concerns, for example, the Egyptian Thebes, which should have the Greek transcription

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<sup>20</sup> Blair 2009, 41–53, 194–233.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Polybius, *Historiae*, VII 9:2–3, where Apollo appears in the text of the treaty between Philip V and Hannibal.

<sup>22</sup> In the Punic sources: Lipiński 1995, 155–168, 188; Niehr 2003, 93–94.

<sup>23</sup> At Palmyra: Kaizer 2002, 98.

Thēbai or the Egyptian Uaset. In order to avoid inconsistencies the less known names are written in the simplified form, too, e.g. instead of Abū Ṣalābīḥ the form Abu Ṣalabikh has been used. Naturally, it does not concern the places where the precise form of transcription should be presented in order to understand the text. This form has usually been placed in the brackets.

All the dates given in this work concern the time before Christ unless indicated otherwise. The only exception is the dates concerning the time of the discoveries of particular monuments. The so-called middle chronology is in use since most textbooks still accept this system. However, one should remember that the system of lower chronology wins more and more followers and all the given dates might be slightly decreased. A halfway solution is to give dates in both systems, which, for example, was accepted in the textbook concerning the Near East written by A. Kuhrt.<sup>24</sup>

Having presented all of the preliminary remarks we can now proceed to depict Resheph's portraits based on the sources from particular lands. When this task is completed we will superpose the results to notice the most important recurring features of Resheph's cult and to notice the local changes. At the same time, thanks to the chronological order we will be able to see the changeability of these characteristics in time.

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<sup>24</sup> Kuhrt 1995.

## Etymology

Speaking about the etymology of the name “Resheph” one should begin with the statement, both essential and banal: namely, its etymology is uncertain. There is no single proposal accepted by most scholars. The most frequent proposal is the conception that the name of the deity in question comes from the reconstructed Semitic root *\*ršp*, which would mean “to blaze, burn, light”<sup>1</sup> and thus this name would be connected with flame, heat, and consequently, with fever. Therefore, Resheph was to be the god of plague. The reconstruction of this hypothetical root is based on the meaning of the word *rešep* in some biblical passages in which it is related to flame and lighting (Ps 76:4; 78:48; Job 5:7; Song 8:6). Then *rišpā*, i.e. “flame”, appears in the Jewish Aramaic texts. *\*ršp* meaning “to blaze” as well as *ršpw/ršwp* appear in the Samaritan texts.<sup>2</sup> The meaning does not evoke doubts and it seems to match the features of the cult of Resheph but here the chronology remains the key problem. One must notice that the name “Resheph” already occurred in the sources from Ebla from the 25th century whereas the first biblical texts connecting the words based on the root *\*ršp* with flame, heat, glow come not earlier than the end of the 6th century or perhaps slightly later. Therefore, we have almost 2,000 years of the attested cult of Resheph and no texts pointing to the “fire” etymology of his name. What is worse, all the sources pointing to such an origin of the name “Resheph” come exclusively from the Jewish circles. Thus the above-mentioned hypothesis is based on the relatively late sources that originate from only one environment, which obviously evokes justified doubts. Hence there were other proposals, connecting the name “Resheph” with the roots *\*srp*, *\*šrb*, or even *\*ršp*.<sup>3</sup> However, they have no documented foundations and are only philological speculations. It is more probable to connect Resheph with the Akkadian verb *raš/sābu(m)* I meaning, “to crush, destroy, cut out” and with the adjective *rašbu(m)*, i.e. “terrifying, horrible.”<sup>4</sup> This etymology would be connected with an angry, threatening deity, which Resheph appears to be. However, this connection has one weak point: each deity of the ancient Near East could be de-

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<sup>1</sup> Dahood 1958, 85; Albright 1968a, 79; Gese & Höfner & Rudolph 1970, 141–142; Roberts 1972, 48; Mulder 1993, 685; Streck 2008, 252; as the most frequently quoted etymology is also given by Xella 1999b, 701; Mettinger 2001, 85; Frey-Anthes 2007, 110.

<sup>2</sup> *BDB* 958; *HAL* s.v. *rešep*.

<sup>3</sup> See their survey in: Mulder 1993, 685; Frey-Anthes 2007, 110. Fulco does not exclude even *rph*, *rṣ*, *trp*, *trp*, *rpp*, *rhp*, which seems completely free speculations (Fulco 1976, 65).

<sup>4</sup> Albright 1926, 151; van den Branden 1971a, 394–395; van den Branden 1971b, 211; Müller 1980, 10; E. Lipiński is a firm advocate of this etymology, see Lipiński 1995, 179; Lipiński 2009, 23–24. See hesitation in Smith 2011, 86. Cf. *AHW* 960–961; *CAD R* 179–180, 191–192; *CDA* 299–300 suggests that the adjective *rašbu* derives from the Old Babylonian verb *rašābu* (“to be terrifying”), different from the verb *rasāb/pu*, written occasionally only in New Babylonian Period *rašābu* (“to smite”).

scribed as “terrifying, horrible” if he or she became angry with people for some reason. Could people have formulated the name of a concrete deity on the basis of one of the most common divine characteristics? Naturally, one cannot answer such a question. Both conceptions may not be mutually exclusive but rather complementary. In the Semitic languages the example of the root *ḥrr/hl'/y* related both to anger and flame points to the semantic closeness of horrible anger, vehemence with flame and fire.<sup>5</sup> Thus in Biblical Hebrew *ḥarôn* means both “burning” and “wrath” and the verb *ḥārāh* can mean “to be hot” and “to kindle anger.” The same applies to the later forms of Hebrew and Aramaic used in the Jewish environment.<sup>6</sup> It will be sensible to indicate that the name of the god Erra, identified with Nergal to the extent that both names were used interchangeably from the second millennium, comes exactly from this root. Remembering that Resheph was connected with Nergal, their terrifying, angry, quick-tempered moods become more evident. Therefore, we can suppose that as the Hebrew root *ḥrr* developed from the initial idea of heat into anger, so the word *rešep̄*, at first the name of a horrible, angry deity of war and plague, gradually assumed the meaning of *fever* and *heat* and then *glow*, *flame* and *lightning*. However, one should remember that such a widening of the semantic field was only testified in the Hebrew language.

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<sup>5</sup> See the Akk. (*h*)*arāru* “to rot”; the Ugar. *ḥrr* “to dry, burn, roast”; the Aram. *ḥar* “fire, anger”; *erēru* “to mould”; the Arab. *ḥarra* “glow”; *ḥarwat* “burning, anger”; the Ethiopian *ḥarra* “to be hot”; *CAD A 237; E 280, 307; AHW 65, 238; DUL 368–369*. It is not accidental that in contemporary languages anger, wrath, impetuosity are connected with high temperature, see fiery temperament, hot-blooded, hothead, etc.

<sup>6</sup> The words originating from this root can receive the meaning “to shine, to fan, to set on fire” and also “to quarrel,” “anger, argument”; see. *BDB 354, 359; HAL s.v. ḥrh; ḥrr; ḥārôn*.





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