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Covadonga en la Caldera del Teide. José Miguel Barrios Mufrege.

Ramesses III as Guarantor of Maat: the Iconographic Evidence at Medinet Habu

Salvador COSTA, Teresa MAGADÁN

Among the scenes depicted on the walls of the Temple of Millions of Years of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu there are two set of representations which portray the king performing two rituals whose purpose was to assure the cosmic order established from the beginning of times. Both rituals complement each other, as we can notice analyzing the depictions both on the stelae erected by Ramesses III in his 12th regnal year at the entrance of the main pylon, and on the walls of Room 32 inside the temple. Specifically, the rituals performed by Ramesses III inside Room 32 intended to ensure the annual advent of the Nile flood, which granted the renewal and prosperity of the earth thanks to the life-giving force of its waters filled of sediments.

Rameses III como garante de maat: la evidencia iconográfica en Medinet Habu
Entre las escenas que decoran el templo de Millones de Años de Rameses III en Medinet Habu, hay dos grupos de representaciones donde el rey aparece realizando dos rituales que garantizan el orden cósmico establecido desde el principio de los tiempos. Ambos rituales se complementan, como podemos observar en las dos estelas fechadas en el año 12 y en la decoración de la sala 32 del mismo templo. En esta última estancia, con los dos rituales, Rameses III pretendía asegurar la llegada de la inundación, que procuraba la renovación y la prosperidad de la tierra gracias a la fuerza vivificadora de las aguas portadoras de sedimentos.

Keywords: Thebes, cosmic order, Maat, jubilees, flood.
Palabras clave: Tebas, orden cósmico, Maat, jubileos, inundación.

Among the iconographic scenes depicted on the walls of the Ramesside temples in Ancient Egypt, two sets of representations could be considered to complement each other. In the following pages, we analyse the iconographical elements of these scenes as we find them represented at the Ramesses III’s temple of Medinet Habu and argue that their complementarity arises from their common ideological background, which concerns the role of the king as guarantor of the cosmic order, personified in the figure of the goddess Maat.¹ The first set of scenes portrays, in fact, the king as guarantor of the cosmic order established since the

beginning of times. The Pharaoh presents the figure of the goddess Maat to a divinity, who acts as recipient of the offering. In the second group, instead, the king is the recipient of the action. Here a divinity gives the king the regnal years and the signs of the *Sed* Festival. The double role of the king, as donor and recipient, enables us to see in these scenes the depiction of the balance of the universe as the Egyptians conceived it, although in a very schematic way. By presenting the figure of Maat to the gods, the Pharaoh reassures them that he has fulfilled his role as guarantor of the order, and so, he deserves to be granted an infinity of regnal years.

¹ For the role of Ramesses III as guarantor of the cosmic order, see Costa and Magadán 2017.

Upon his ascent to the throne of the Two Lands, one of the king's main duties was to restore and to maintain the cosmic order established by the creator god at the beginning of time. This cosmic order was personified in the figure of the goddess Maat —daughter of Re, the creator god—, represented as a woman with an ostrich plume upon her head. In the scenes that represent the offering of Maat to the gods, the king holds the figure of Maat on one hand, while performs the customary adoration gesture with the other. Therefore, by offering the figure of Maat to the gods, the king conveys to them his will to maintain the cosmic order and emphasizes his legitimacy to the throne of Horus. In exchange, the gods bestow the king some gifts, thus sealing a reciprocal relationship.

The first scenes we encounter of the king performing the ritual of presenting Maat to the gods date to the reign of Thutmose III.² We can presume that, after the death of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, in order to legitimate his position as king of Egypt, resorted to an element that was already present in the *Coffin Texts*³ and turned it into an iconographical motif: the offering of the goddess Maat, the personification of Law and Justice. However, not all the kings of the XVIIIth dynasty⁴ make use of this iconography. It is during the reign of

Amunhotep III that the importance of Maat increases and her figure is enhanced, not only through depictions that represent her, but through the dedication of a temple at Karnak-North.⁵

Afterwards, the most significant changes in the representation of this ritual took place during the Ramesside period.⁶ From the XIXth dynasty onwards it became a common iconographic element in the decorative repertoire both of temples and of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings.⁷ Also in this period, we observe that some pharaohs, whose *prenomen* contains the phonetic value Maat⁸, associate their name with the ritual of the presentation of the goddess.

The scenes of the king receiving the Jubilees appear, instead, during the reign of Ramesses I, the first pharaoh of the XXth dynasty. In these scenes, the king is represented either standing or kneeling; he stretches his left arm forward, his palm open upwards, so as to receive from the divinity the signs of the *Sed* Festival.⁹ Unlike the previous scenes, where the pharaoh presents Maat to the gods, here the roles are reversed, though they are complementary:

- When the king presents Maat to the gods, the king acts as donor and the main divinity is the recipient of the offering

² Teeter 1997: 7.

³ CT VII, 432-433.

⁴ For the use of the ritual of Maat during the XVIIIth dynasty, see Teeter 1997: 7-10.

⁵ Varille 1943: 21-27.

⁶ Teeter 1997: 10-13.

⁷ XIXth Dynasty: Merneptah (KV 8), Sety II (KV 15), and Tausret/Setnakht (KV 14). XXth Dynasty: Ramesses III (KV 11), Ramesses IV (KV 2), Ramesses VI (KV 9), Ramesses VII (KV 1), and Rameses IX (KV 6).

⁸ Kings from the ramesside period whose *prenomen* include the phonetic value *maat* are:
- XIXth Dynasty: Sety I: Menmaatre; Ramesses II: Usermaatre-Setepenre.
- XXth Dynasty: Ramesses III: Usermaatre-Meryamun; Ramesses IV: Heqamaatre; Ramesses V: Usermaatre-Setepenamun (later Heqamaatre-Setepenamun); Ramesses VI: Nebmaatre-Meryamun; Ramesses VII: Usermaatre-Meryamun-Setepenre; Ramesses VIII: Usermaatre-Akhenamun.

⁹ For the scenes of the king receiving the Jubilees, see Costa 2004; 2006.

- When the king receives the signs of the *Sed* Festival, the main divinity acts as donor and the king is the recipient of the gift

As we said before, the scenes of the king receiving the jubilees appear during the reign of Ramesses I. The scenes should be understood as an iconographic set of depictions that represents a wish, namely the monarch's aspiration to legitimize his ascent to the throne after a period of crisis. Ramesses I, who was designated by Horemheb as his beneficiary, brought stability to his country and secured succession to the throne of Horus. He had a son, Sety (the future king Sety I) and a grandson (the future Ramesses II), which meant that the continuity of power was guaranteed.

Upon his ascent to the throne, Ramesses I became the heir to a long tradition of over two millennia. As sovereign of the Two Lands, he acquired a condition which was both human and divine. Human, because he was mortal, and divine because, as his birth name shows -“Re has engendered him” (i.e. Ramesses). As a human being, both he and the people around him were aware that, because of his age, his vital energy would expire. For this reason, it was deemed necessary for king Ramesses I to engage in a dialogue with the gods in order to legitimize his sovereignty over the throne of Egypt as the true successor of Horemheb and the preceding millenary tradition. Once this dialogue with the most significant gods related to the monarchy is started, they grant him hundreds of thousands of years with *Sed* Festivals, and they inscribe his

name and the years of his reign on the leaves of the divine tree *Ished*.¹⁰ Thus, he assumed the status of a king, which made him the true guarantor of Maat, that is, he became responsible before the gods for the maintenance of the cosmic order established from the beginning of time.

One of the best examples that exemplifies the reciprocity between these two sets of scenes -the presentation of Maat and the reception of the Jubilees- occur in the two stelae erected by Ramesses III, pharaoh of the XXth dynasty, in his 12th regnal year, by the first pylon of his temple at Medinet Habu, since they portray each set of representations. The stelae stood at both sides of the entrance of the main pylon of Ramesses III's temple, on the eastern side of the building, and are thus known as the North and the South Stelae. In the South Stele (*MHA* 36), Ramesses III acts as donor and presents Maat to Amun-Re, who receives the offering. In the North Stele (*MHA* 34), though, the king is the recipient. Amun-Re (donor) gives him the regnal years and the signs of the *Sed* Festival.

The purpose of these stelae was to glorify the figure of the Pharaoh and, for this reason, they are highly charged with historical significance. Nonetheless, it is astonishing that, in the rhetorical text of the stelae, conceived as a speech of the “state of the nation”, Ramesses III justifies himself before the gods and the court, although he had overcome a troubled time that threatened the cosmic order established by his forefathers. It's not usual to

¹⁰ At the entrance to the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak (eastern half of the passage of the second pylon) there are four scenes of Ramesses II receiving the signs of the *Sed* Festival, which were usurped by Ramesses II to a previous monarch, probably Ramesses I. The first scene, located on the north wall, third register, second scene (*KB* 15), presents Ramesses I kneeling on an *ished*-tree, receiving the Jubilees from Atum in the presence of Seshat. Seshat inscribes the king's name on a leaf. The second one, located on the south wall, third register, second scene (*KB* 6), Ramesses I is represented kneeling on an *ished*-tree, receiving the Jubilees from Re-Horakhty in the presence of Thoth, who inscribes the king's name on a leaf. Cf. Costa 2004 (I/2): 18-20 (scene 7) and 24-26 (scene 9); Costa 2003: 193-204.

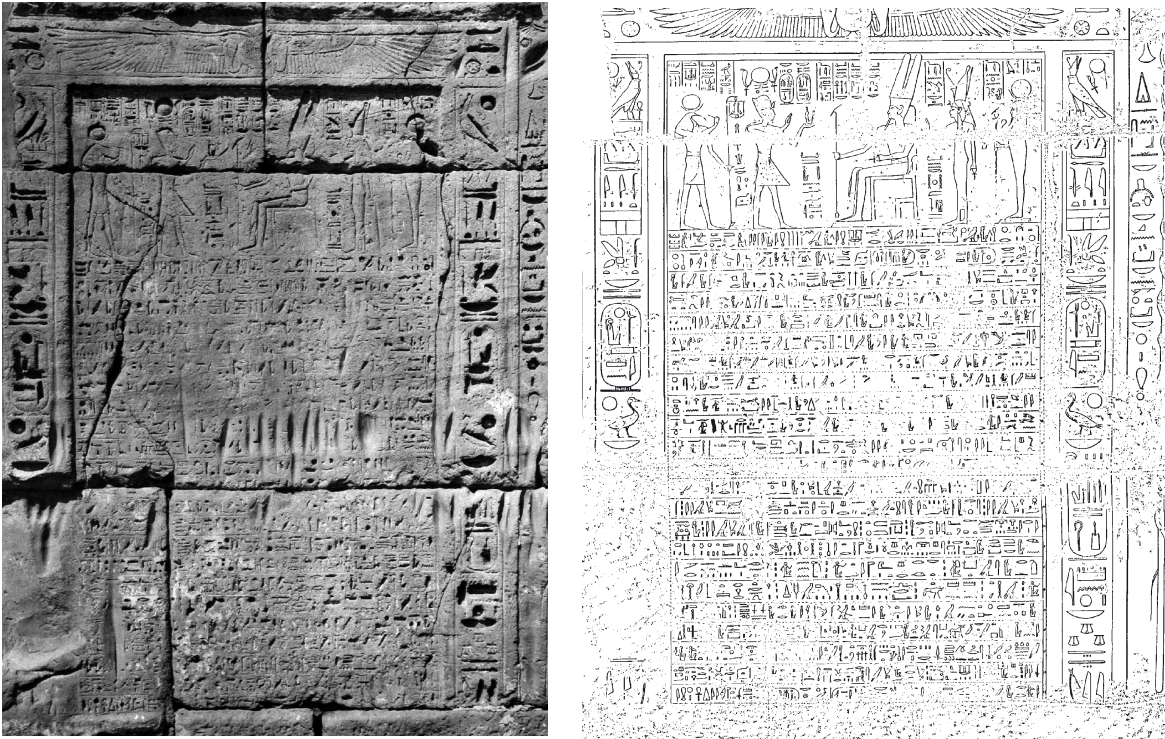


Figure 1. The South Stele (MHA 36; Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107, 128A).

find in the long history of the Egyptian king-ship a King justifying his claim to the throne of the Two Lands, even less so considering he had successfully overcome, as it is stated in the documents of his reign, the threat of three foreign invasions, in which the enemies were fully defeated. In that sense, the text of the stela seems to subtly replicate some notions and fears deeply rooted in Egyptian thought. For, from an Egyptian perspective, peoples living in the margins of Egypt and terrorizing the Nile lands were in fact enemies swarming in the limits of the world, lost in the chaos (*isft*). In order to overcome chaos and to protect Egypt, it was deemed necessary to maintain

the order of the universe -maat (*m3ʿt*)-, and this task was entrusted to a mediator, the king. The South Stele (MHA 36) is located on the eastern side of the South wall of the first pylon of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu.¹¹ It was carved in sunk relief, but it is now badly damaged; the damage affecting both the text and the iconographical scene. The stele is fashioned in the form of a rectangular false-door. The cornice, very damaged, was decorated originally with the king's cartouches. On the lintel, below the torus moulding, the winged solar-disk is depicted. The centre is occupied by a scene and a long inscription distributed in twenty-three lines (fig. 1).

¹¹ Porter and Moss 1972²: 490:50; Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107, 128A; Kitchen 1983: 72-74; Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 129-132; Costa and Magadán 2017: 13-27.

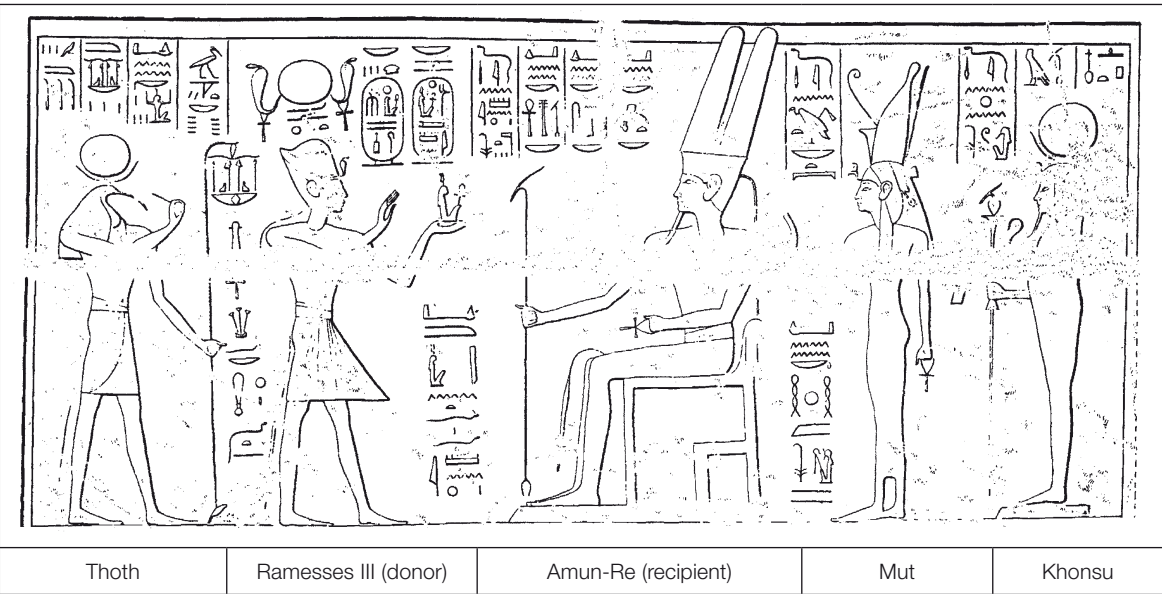


Figure 2. Scene depicted on the South Stele (MHA36): Ramesses presenting Maat (Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107).

The scene placed above the inscription depicts Ramesses III presenting the figure of the goddess Maat to his father Amun-Re in the presence of Mut, Khonsu and Thoth (fig. 2).

Ramesses III

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: blue crown.
- Dress: short kilt, with triangular apron and frontal ornament; ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: the king holds the figure of Maat on his left hand, while performs the adoration gesture with his right hand.

Above Rameses III figures a sun disc flanked by uraei devoid of crowns. In the area where the body of each uraeus is bent there is an *ankh*-sign.

Thoth

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing

- Physical appearance: represented as a man with ibis head.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; on his head is the crescent of the new moon in which the circle of the full moon rests.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: the god Thoth writes down the length of his reign and his jubilees. This year-staff ends in a *hfn* sign (*hfn*, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). A *heb-sed* sign (*hbs*) hanging from the year-staff, reads: “a hundred thousand of years with *Sed* Festival(s)”.

Amun-Re

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: sitting on a throne placed on a *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: top crown with two high vertical feathers.
- Dress: short kilt; bull's tail that falls in front of the legs.
- Attitude: on the right hand, which is more

advanced, holds the *uas*-sceptre; on the left, the *ankh*-sign.

Mut


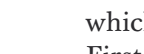
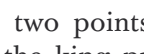

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig surmounted with the body of a vulture; on the headdress rests the Double Crown.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the right hand makes the gesture of protection; in her left hand holds an *ankh*-sign.

Khonsu



- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing, static, on *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: on his head is the crescent of the new moon in which the circle of the full moon rests.
- Dress: body wrapped in bandages, except head and hands.
- Attitude: both hands holding the *djed-ankh-uas* composite sceptre, the *heqat*-sceptre and the *nekhakha*-flagellum.

The iconographical depiction of the South stele is accompanied by the following hieroglyphic texts:

Amun-Re: Words spoken by Amun-Re, King of the Gods: “(I) have given to you all life, stability and dominion. (I) have given to you all health. (I) have given to you all joy”.

⤵ (2)  (3)  (4) 
(5) 

Mut: Words spoken by Mut, Lady of heaven: “(I) have given to you Perpetuity as king of the Two Lands”.

⤵ (6)  (7) 

Khonsu: Words spoken by Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep.

⤵ (8)  (9)  (10) 

Act of king: Giving Maat to his father, Amun-Re.

⤵ (1) 

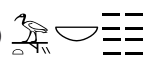

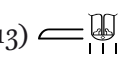
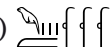
Ramesses III: The Lord of Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, Lord of Diadems, Ramesses III.

⤵ (a) 
(b) 


Behind the king: (May) all protection and life attend him like Re forever!

⤵ (c) 

Thoth: Thoth, Lord of Hermopolis: “(I) have granted to you millions of jubilees and myriads of years”.

⤵ (11)  (12)  (13) 
(14) 

Sun disc: The Behdetite.

→ (d) 

Below runs the text of the inscription, in which two points deserve special attention. First, the king praises his triumph over the foreign peoples who intended to invade the land of Egypt¹² and, second, he describes the greatness of his temple at Medinet Habu.¹³ Namely, Ramesses III reports that, upon his ascent to the throne of Atum, he has overcome

the enemies that have trespassed the frontiers of Egypt; that no land has risen against him; and that the Asiatics that dared to set foot on Egypt have fled mainly through dread of him. Just by hearing the name of Usermaatre Meryamun, the enemies shivered in their lands. Then, Ramesses underlines his triumph over the Lybians and the Sea Peoples, foreign invaders that put in danger his role as guarantor of *maat*. He mentions in the first place his victory over the Peoples of the Northern Lands, which in this stele are reported to be the Tjekker, the Peleset, the Danuna, the Weshesh and, the Shekelesh. Afterwards he states that he has wiped out the breath of the Lybians, that is, he has slain them. Last, Ramesses declares: “I lifted up Egypt’s countenance, with had been downcast...”.¹⁴ In this way, he reaffirms to the members of the court that he has fulfilled his duty to defeat the chaos and to maintain the cosmic order inherited from his forefathers.

In the second part, Ramesses emphasises the magnificence of his temple of Millions of Years.¹⁵ The text relates that Ramesses III built the temple of Medinet Habu on a plot (of land?) for Amun-Re, who dwells cheerful and happy inside it. At dawn the temple shines and the sun’s rays illuminate its statues. He points out that “its doorways are of gold,

inlaid with precious stones, and the twin door-leaves and (their) images are of fine gold, like the door-leaves of heaven”.¹⁶ Ramesses goes on to say that he has filled up the temple through his victories, that is, the booty seized from the captive enemies. The Treasuries of the Temple are full of gold and silver, with all (kinds of) linen, incense, vegetable oil and honey like the sands of the shore.¹⁷ In addition to the goods stored in the storeroom, the triumph of the Pharaoh provides also the temple with prisoners, which will be at the service of the pharaoh, arable lands, grain, and products of the harvest “by heaps, reaching up to the sky”.¹⁸

The words stated by the king in the South Stele make us realise that, in the stele, Ramesses III summarises the events that took place during his first 12 years on the throne. However, he primarily stresses two facts: his role as guarantor of Maat as he has defeated the foreign enemies, and his great satisfaction at the fact that he has built a temple of Millions of Years, where in the future he himself will be venerated in the shape of a god which blends his person with Amun and is, therefore, known as “Amun-Re of United with Eternity”.

The North Stele (*MHA* 34) is located on the eastern side of the North wall of the first pylon of the Ramesses III temple at Medinet Habu.¹⁹

¹² Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107: 4-12; Kitchen 1983: 73:5-74:1.

¹³ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107: 12-22; Kitchen 1983: 74:1-13.

¹⁴ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107: 9-10; Kitchen 1983: 73:11-14.

¹⁵ A more complete description of the temple of Millions of Years at Medinet Habu could be found in Papyrus Harris I, 3:11-5:3; cf. Erichsen 1933: 4:6-5:16; Grandet 1994 (I): 227-228.

¹⁶ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107: 15; Kitchen 1983: 74:4-5.

¹⁷ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107: 16. To the south of the first hypostyle hall of the temple at Medinet Habu there are five chambers (9-13), usually known as “treasures rooms”, because this was the part of the sanctuary where valuable goods (aromatic oils, gold, silver, copper, and so on) were stored to be used in the cult or in the maintenance of the sacred precincts. Cf. Aufrère 1995: 271-284. For the “treasure rooms” of the temple at Medinet Habu, see Baqué and Costa 2006.

¹⁸ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 107: 19; Kitchen 1983: 74:8-9.



Figure 3. The North Stele (MHA 34; Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108, 128B).

It was carved in sunk relief, but it is now badly damaged; the damage affecting both the text and the iconographical scene. The stele is fashioned in the form of a rectangular false-door. The cornice, very damaged, was decorated in origin with the king’s cartouches. On the lintel, below the torus moulding, the winged solar-disk is depicted. The centre is occupied by a scene and a long inscription distributed in twenty-two lines (fig. 3).

The scene placed above the inscription depicts Amun-Re delivering jubilees to Rameses III in the presence of Mut, Khonsu and Atum (fig. 4).

Rameses III

- Orientation: ←

- Posture: standing
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: remains of the *henu* crown.
- Dress: short skirt covering the calves and frontal ornament (missing); he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: his left hand is placed on the chest and with it holds the *heqat*-sceptre (hints) and *nekhakha*-flagellum; with his right hand, now missing, he received jubilees from Amun-Re.

Atum

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing
- Headdress: traces of the Double Crown.
- Dress: short kilt.
- Attitude: both hands are missing, although

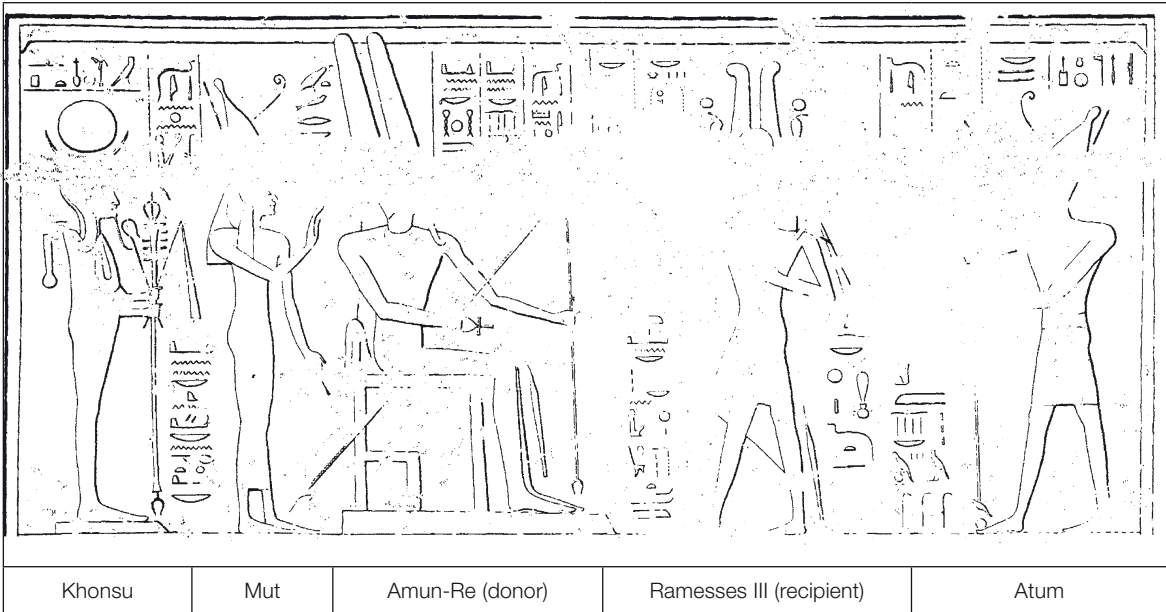


Figure 4. Scene depicted on the South Stele (MHA 34): Rameses III receiving jubilees (Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108).

we know that on the left hand held a year-staff; only the bottom end is preserved.

Amun-Re

- Orientation: →
- Posture: sitting on a throne placed on a socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: top crown with two high vertical feathers.
- Dress: short kilt; bull's tail that falls in front of the legs.
- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, he holds the *uas*-sceptre; on the right hand holds an *ankh*-sign and a year-staff leaning towards the king, from which the jubilees that the sovereign received hung.

Mut

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig surmounted with

the body of a vulture; on the headdress rests the Double Crown.

- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the right hand she makes the gesture of protection; in her left hand holds an *ankh*-sign.

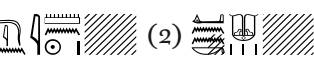



Khonsu

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing, static, on *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: on his head is the crescent of the new moon in which the circle of the full moon rests.
- Dress: body wrapped in bandages, except head and hands.
- Attitude: both hands holding the *djed-ankh-uas* composite sceptre, the *heqat*-sceptre and the *nekhakha*-flagellum.

The iconographical depiction of the North stele is accompanied by the following hieroglyphic texts:

19 Porter and Moss 1972²: 490: 51; Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108, 128B; Kitchen 1983: 75-77; Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 133-136; Costa 2004 (I/2): 117-119 (scene 41); Costa and Magadán 2017: 29-43.




Amun-Re: Words spoken by Amun-Re, [...]: “(I) have given to you [...] jubilees; (I) have given to you Perpetuity as [king of Two Lands]. Receive for yourself the jubilees of Re, and the years of Atum”.

↓ (1)  (2)  (3)  (4) 



Mut: Mut the mighty, Lady of [...].

↓ (5) 

Khonsu: Words spoken by Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep: “(I) have given to you all valour and all victory”.

↓ (6)  → (7)  ↓ (8) 




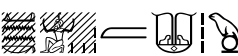

Ramesses III: The Lord of [Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun], Lord of Diadems, Ramesses III.

↓ (a)  (b) 

Behind the king: (May) all [protection and life attend] him like Re forever!

↓ (c) 

Atum: Words spoken by Atum, the Lord of Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, the great god: “[(I) have given to you millions] of jubilees and myriads of years”.

↓ (9)  (10)  (11)  ← (12)  ↓ (13) 

Below it runs the text of the inscription of the North Stele, which differs from the preceding text of the South Stele. Here Ramesses III addresses the members of the court. In his speech, the king emphasizes his legitimate right to the throne of Horus and urges the courtiers and members of the army to remain faithful to him. It is astounding that a mighty king of Egypt should justify his position. Yet, Ramesses III proceeds to explain how he acceded lawfully to the throne of Egypt, without recourse to violence, being designated willingly both by gods and men.²⁰ Ramesses relates that, as a young man, he was chosen by the god Amun-Re among hundreds of thousands to sit in peace on the throne of the Two Lands, whereas the deities of the Egyptian pantheon rejoiced. As the king of the Upper and the Lower Egypt, Ramesses received the insignia of Horus, Seth and the Two Ladies and holds in his hands the royal emblems: the *nekhakha*-flagellum, *heqat*-sceptre and *ames*-sceptre.²¹ Ramesses III reminds them also that his reign is under the protection of the god Amun-Re-Kamutef, “his shield”,²² as he calls him, and stresses once more his role

²⁰ “I have not oppressed (anyone), and I have not taken my (high) office by robbery. The crown was set upon my head freely (= voluntarily)”, cf. Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108:4-5, Kitchen 1983: 76:5-6

²¹ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108: 6-7; Kitchen 1983: 76:7.

²² Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108: 8; Kitchen 1983: 76:10.

as guarantor of *maat* while saying: “I have strengthened Egypt, I have protected [her] with [my] [sword/strong arm...]”.²³ Ramesses recalls that he had secured the frontiers of the land of the Nile before the attacks of the Lybians in his 5th and 11th regnal years and the so-called Peoples of the Sea in his 8th regnal year. So, he addresses his courtiers and says: “So, render praise before me, (just) as (for) Re [...], [kissing the earth]”,²⁴ while he keeps on asserting his position, since he is “settled and established as king of the Two Lands”.²⁵ Accordingly, Ramesses makes his glorious appearance as king of the Upper and the Lower Egypt wearing on the head the crowns that constitute the attributes of his power. That is, the Blue Crown, the White Crown, the Red Crown, the *Atef*-Crown and the Crown of plumes, possibly equipped with horns.²⁶

Comparing the text of the two stelae, we can notice that in the North Stele, unlike the South Stele, Ramesses III emphasizes his role as legitimate king of the Two Lands. And even more significantly, Ramesses states this claim before the power elites of Egypt, resorting to rhetoric to defend himself as Pharaoh and guarantor of Maat. We can conclude, then, that the North and South stelae could be perceived as a political statement which makes use of the aspects and attributes that only a king can possess. So, Ramesses invokes the reciprocal relationship that entitles him to legitimacy and that involves the presentation of Maat to the gods. Therefore, by presenting the goddess Maat, Ramesses obtains in return a long reign which enables him to retain power and to maintain it as much as he

desires, fulfilling his will to celebrate many *Sed* Festivals.

We should not forget that, since the beginning of his reign, Ramesses III took Ramesses II as a model and, so, he explicitly manifested his ambition to win many campaigns and to reign for many years in order to celebrate many *Sed* Festivals, just as Ramesses II did. Ramesses II was certainly the political figure on which Ramesses models himself. The emblematic figure of Ramesses II, who ruled for 67 years and celebrated 14 *Sed* Festivals, became the ideal model of kingship which every pharaoh wanted to emulate. Nevertheless, albeit Ramesses III presented himself as a new Ramesses II, in the end he couldn’t match his renowned predecessor.

Beyond the political implications of this emulation, Ramesses III’s will to celebrate *Sed* Festivals and to obtain millions of regnal years could also be set in the context of the rational and practical aspects of religiosity that Georges Posener²⁷ called “the sentiment of filial devotion”. The Egyptian king, in recognizing his filiation, accepted that his authority emanates from his fathers and mothers -the gods and goddesses-, to whom he ought to keep presenting offerings if he wants, in exchange, to continue receiving their needed support. Indeed, if we analyse carefully the iconography of the scenes depicted in the stelae of the 12th regnal year, we can observe this double connotation, religious as much as political.

In the scene depicted in the South Stele (*MHA* 36), Ramesses III, as donor of the cosmic order, presents the figure of Maat to Amun-Re, who acts as recipient of the

²³ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108: 8-9; Kitchen 1983: 76:10-11.

²⁴ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108: 16; Kitchen 1983: 77:5.

²⁵ Epigraphic Survey 1932: pl. 108: 16; Kitchen 1983: 77:5-6.

²⁶ Epigraphic Survey 1932: 108: 19-20; Kitchen 1983: 77:9-10.

²⁷ Posener 1960: 35.

offering. Before the king, we distinguish the dedication inscription that clarifies the act of Ramesses III: “Giving Maat to his father, Amun-Re”. Besides Amun-Re, three other divinities attend the offering: Mut, Khonsu and Thot (*cf.* figure 2). The god Amun-Re, “King of the Gods”, replies to the offering awarding Ramesses III the gift of a long and prosperous life: “(I) have given to you all life, stability and dominion. (I) have given to you all health. (I) have given to you all joy”, while the goddess Mut bestows Ramesses III a long reign upon the throne of Horus: “(I) have given to you Perpetuity as king of the Two Lands”. The god Thoth stands on Ramesses’ side. Thoth, “the Lord of Hermopolis”, addresses the king with the following words: “(I) have granted to you millions of jubilees and myriads of years”, while he inscribes king’s name on a year-staff from which hangs a *heb-sed* sign, cluster of signs translated as “a hundred thousand of years with *Sed* Festival(s)”. In fact, Amun-Re and two of the assistant divinities grant him a long, powerful, balanced, as well as satisfactory life, that would enable him to rule forever and ever upon the throne of the Two Lands and to celebrate endless *Sed* Festivals when, after the 30th regnal year, he had exhausted the time assigned to a “generation”.

In the other stele, the North Stele (*MHA* 34), the king, as recipient, receives the regnal years and the signs of the *Sed* Festival from Amun-Re, who acts as donor. The bestowing of the Jubilees is certified by the inscription placed before the god: “Receive for yourself the jubilees of Re, and the years of Atum”. Furthermore, while Ramesses III grabbed the signs of the *Sed* Festival (now disappeared), Amun-Re granted also to him by means of the word “jubilees and a Perpetuity as king of the Two Lands”. Besides Amun-Re, three assistant

divinities attend the scene: Mut, Khonsu and Atum. Khonsu explicitly reward Ramesses with victories over the customary enemies of Egypt: “(I) have given to you all valour and all victory”.

To comprehend still better the significance of the use of these representations by Ramesses as we find them in the stelae of the 12th year we should move into the temple, the true domain of the gods who dwell in the Temple of Millions of Years of this king of the XXth dynasty. Specifically, we enter a cluster of rooms located in the innermost section of the temple and approachable through the north-western end of the third hypostyle hall (*fig.* 5). These are rooms numbered 30 to 32.

After passing room 30, which serves as a passageway, we enter room 31, equipped with nine niches, probably intended for statues of the Ennead. In this room, on the main western wall, (*MHA* 545; *fig.* 6),²⁸ we can see a double scene, symmetrically arranged, where the

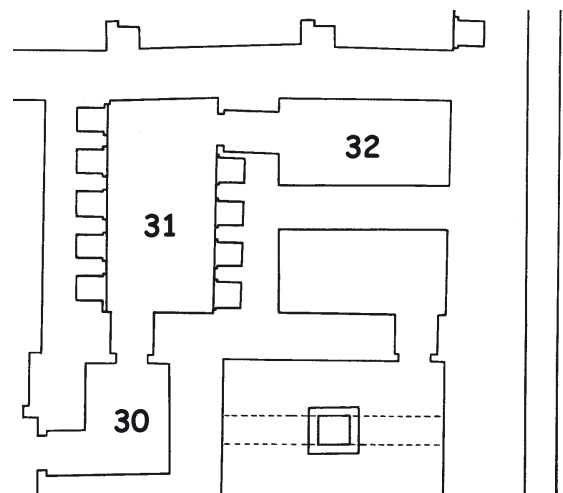


Figure 5. Rooms 30-32.

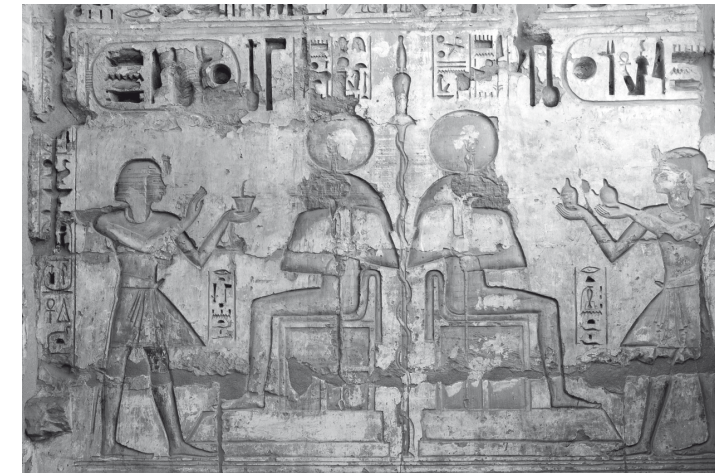


Figure 6. Scene *MHA* 545.

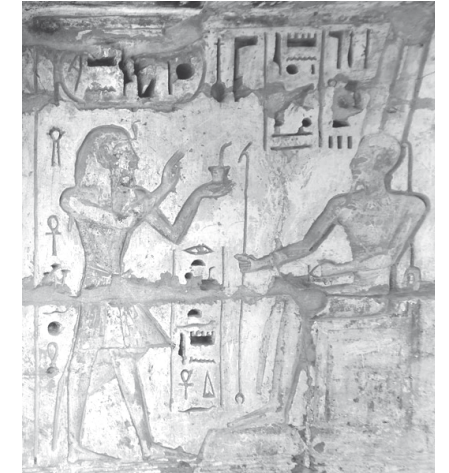


Figure 7. Scene *MHA* 548.

“Perfect God, Usermaatre Meryamun” stands before the god Amun-Re.²⁹ The south half of the scene depicts Ramesses III wearing a short wig that ends in long loops performing an incensation³⁰ (holding a bowl on his left hand), while in the north half Ramesses, wearing a headdress that outlines the skull, accomplishes a libation³¹ (holding a *nemset* bowl on each hand). In both scenes, Amun-Re is depicted with a ram-head and his body wrapped in bandages. The arms are crossed over the chest and the hands grasp a *uas*-sceptre. Upon his head is placed a solar-disk ended frontally in erect *uraeus*, which is also surmounted by a solar-disk flanked by liliform horns on both sides.

In both scenes, the god Amun-Re represents a subtle fusion between Amun-Re and Osiris, in which the “Lord of the Gods”³² embodies his role of primal god, as expressed by the epithets “Chief of the Great Ennead”³³ and “Primeval One of the Two Lands for each god”.³⁴

At the back end of the left side of room 31, a passage leads to room 32, the rearmost chamber of the cluster. In the passage, we find another scene (*MHA* 548; *fig.* 7),³⁵ where the “Perfect God, Usermaatre Meryamun” is performing an incensation before the figure of Amun-Re,³⁶ “Primeval One of the Two Lands, the great god, Ruler of the Ennead”.³⁷ Here Ramesses wears the *nemes* headdress and per-

²⁹ Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492.

³⁰ «Thurifying for his father», *cf.* Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492:2.

³¹ «Making a libation for his father », *cf.* Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492:5.

³² Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492:3 and 6.

³³ Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492:4.

³⁴ Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492:7.

³⁵ Porter and Moss 1972²: 513:163, a.

³⁶ Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 496A.

³⁷ Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 496A:2-3.

²⁸ Porter and Moss 1972²: 513:162, g.

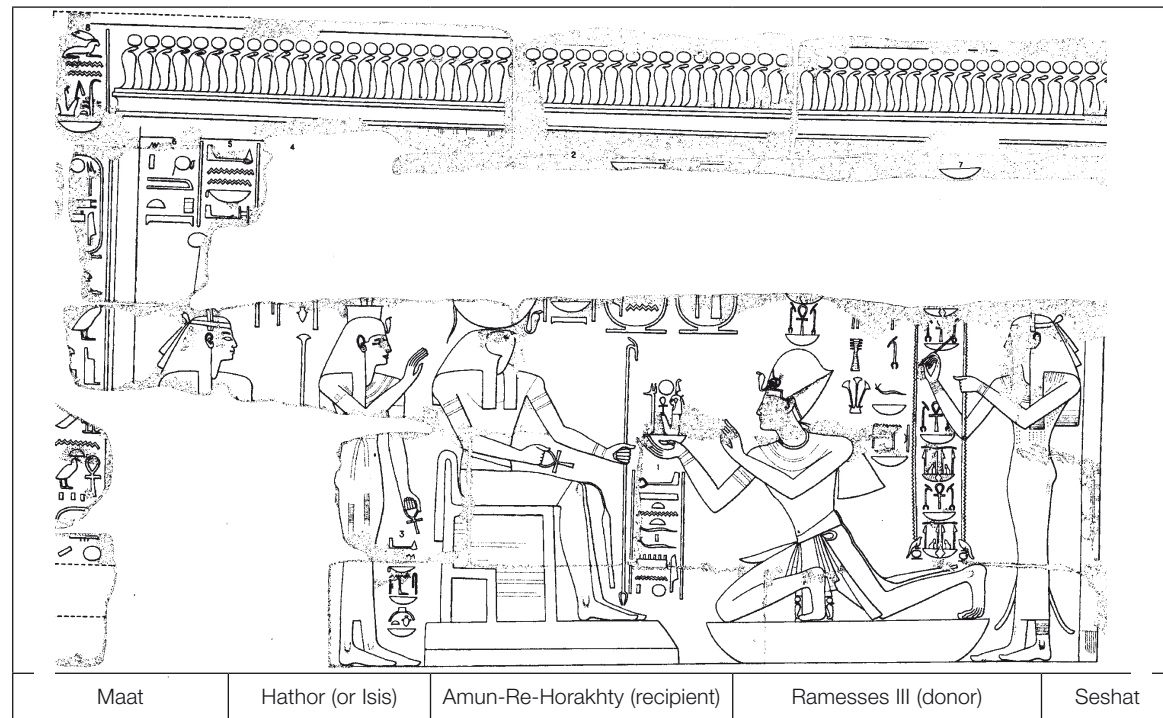


Figure 8. Room 32. Scene *MHA* 551. Ramesses presenting Maat (Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 499).

forms the incensation with the bowl ☩, which he holds on his left hand.

Room 32, probably the main room or sanctuary of this cluster of chambers, is oriented South-North, symbolically representing the course of the Nile (see fig. 11). The upper part of the scene on the eastern wall of room 32 (*MHA* 551; fig. 8) is badly damaged; the damage affecting the names, epithets and headdresses of the characters that compose it. In it, Ramesses III, as donor of Maat, presents his *prenomen* Usermaatre (*Wsr-M3^ct-R^c*) to Amun-Re-Horakhty, as recipient of the offering, in the presence of three auxiliary goddesses: Hathor (or Isis), Maat and Seshat.³⁸




Ramesses III

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: Kneeling on the *heb* sign.
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: blue crown.
- Dress: Short kilt with frontal ornament, and ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: the king holds his *prenomen Wsr-M3ʿt-Rʿ* on his right hand, while he makes the worshipping gesture with his left hand.

Seshat

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; her emblem, which emanates from a headband, is missing.

38 Porter and Moss 1972²: 513:163, f; Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 499; Teeter 1997: 109 (F13).

- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: the goddess Seshat writes down the length of his reign and his jubilees on a year-staff, while another year-staff is displayed before the goddess. Each year-staff ends in a  sign (*hfn*, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). Three *heb-sed* signs () and three groups for “all life and dominion” () that hang alternately from both year-staves read: “a hundred thousand of years of all life and dominion with *Sed* Festivals”.

Amun-Re-Horakhty

- Orientation: →
- Posture: sitting on a throne placed on a *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: man with the head of a hawk.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; on the head, a solar disk that is surrounded by the body of a *uraeus* (deteriorated zone).
- Dress: short kilt; bull's tail that falls in front of the legs.
- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, holds the *uas*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

Hathor (or Isis)

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; on the head rests a *modius* that supported the horns and the solar disc (today not preserved).
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the right hand she makes the gesture of protection; in her left hand she holds an *ankh*-sign.

Maat

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: only the upper part of the figure of the goddess has been preserved.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; an ostrich feather is tied to her head.

In the iconographical scene *MHA* 551 we can still discern some of the hieroglyphic signs that accompanied the depiction:

Act of king: Presenting Maat to his father Amun-Re.

Amun-Re-Horakhty: [...], Lord of heaven.

(2) 

Before Hathor (or Isis): “(I) have given to you
all health and all joy”.

(3)

Goddess Maat: [...]: “(I) have given to you the life-span of Re in the sky”.

Behind Maat: The king, the lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, shall maintain a glorious appearance in the throne of Horus of the living, forever and ever.

(8) 

Ramesses III: The Lord [of Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, Lord of Diadems, Ramesses III].

Figure 1 consists of two schematic diagrams, (a) and (b), illustrating the experimental setup. Diagram (a) shows a horizontal tube with a piston at the left end. The tube is divided into two sections: a shaded region on the left and an unshaded region on the right. A vertical arrow points down from the piston, indicating its position. Diagram (b) shows the same setup, but the piston has moved to the right, compressing the gas in the shaded region. The piston is now at the right end of the tube, and the shaded region is smaller than in (a).

Behind the king: (May) protection, life, stability and dominion attend him, and all health.

(c) 

Seshat: [...] Lady [...].

(7) 

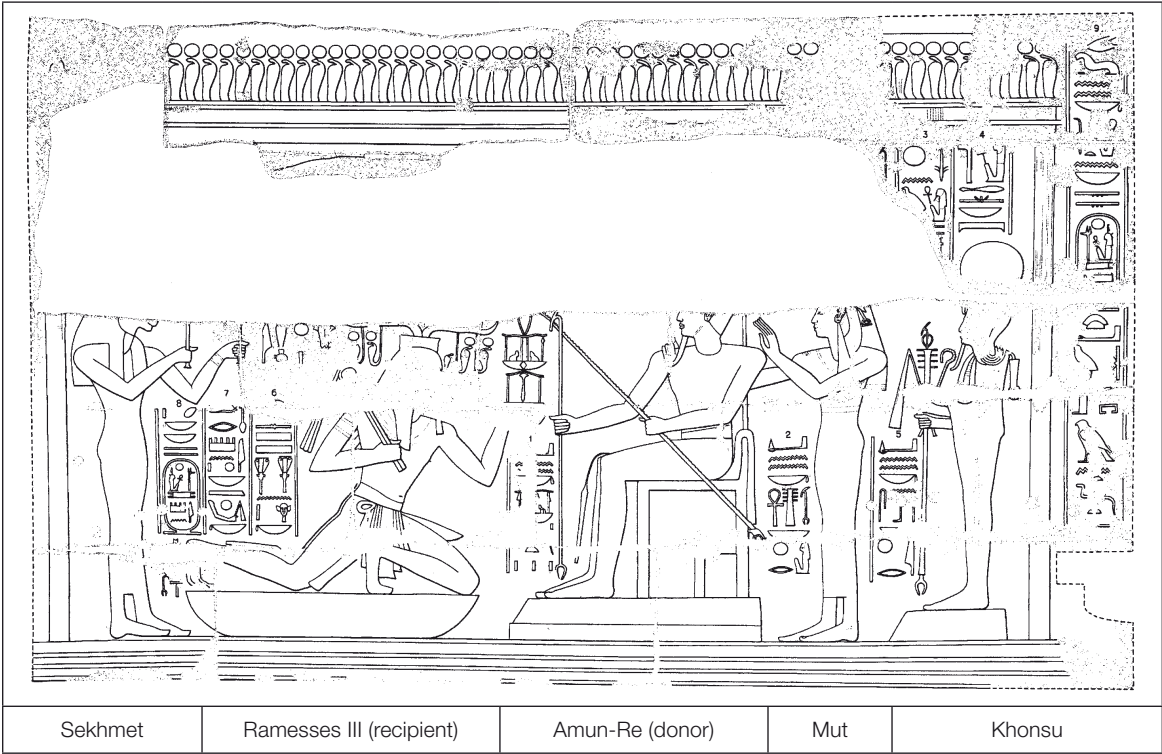


Figure 9. Room 32. Scene MHA 553. The King receiving jubilees (Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 498).

The upper part of the scene depicted on the western wall (MHA 553, fig. 9) is, like the eastern one, badly damaged; the damage affecting the names, epithets and headdresses of four of the five figures that integrate it. In the scene we can see the god Amun-Re who, as donor of the *Sed* Fest signs, hands over the Jubilees to Ramesses III, here the receiver of the offering. The action is attended by three assistant divinities, Mut, Khonsu and Sekhmet.³⁹

Ramesses III

- Orientation: →
- Posture: Kneeling on the *heb* sign.
- Physical appearance: ritual beard; barefoot.
- Headdress: remains of the *atef* crown

surmounting nemes-headdress.



- Dress: Short kilt with frontal ornament, and ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: his right hand, which is placed on the chest, holds the *heqat*-sceptre and nekhakha-flagellum; in his left hand, now missing, he received jubilees from Amun-Re.

Sekhmet

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: she is shown with the body of a lady and the head of a lioness.
- Headdress: tripartite wig.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: playing the sistra with both hands.

39 Porter and Moss 1972²: 513:163, e; Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 498; Costa 2004 (I/2): 143-145 (scene 50).

Amun-Re

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: sitting on a throne placed on a *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: remains of the crown.
- Dress: short kilt; bull's tail that falls in front of the legs.
- Attitude: on the right hand, which is more advanced, he holds the *uas*-sceptre. With his left hand, the god Amun-Re grasps a year-staff ending in a *hfn* sign (*hfn*, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). The signs  and  that hang from the year-staff read: “a hundred thousand of years with *Sed* Festivals”.

Mut


- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig surmounted with the body of a vulture; the Double Crown is not preserved.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: her right hand rests on Amun's right shoulder; with the left makes the gesture of protection.

Khonsu

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing, static, on *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: on his head is the crescent of the new moon in which the circle of the full moon rests.
- Dress: body wrapped in bandages, except head and hands.
- Attitude: both hands holding the *djed*-ankh-*uas* composite sceptre, the *heqat*-sceptre and the *nekhakha*-flagellum.

In the iconographical scene MHA 553 we can still read some of the hieroglyphic signs that accompanied the depiction:






Before Amun-Re: “(I) have given to you many jubilees”.

↓ (1)  

Before Mut: “(I) have given to you all life, stability and dominion on my part”.

↓ (2)   

Khonsu: Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep, the great god, lord of heaven.

↓ (3)    (4)  









Before Khonsu: “(I) have given to you all health on my part”.

↓ (5)   

Behind Khonsu: You are the king, the lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, shall maintain a glorious appearance in the throne of Horus (of the living), forever.

↓ (9)        

Sekhmet: [Playing] the sistrum to your beautiful face, Oh! Amun-Re, Lord of Maat (that) might protect to your son, the Lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun.

↓ (6)    (7)   (8)   

Behind the king: [...] like Re.

↓ (a)  

At the bottom, between the goddess Sekhmet and the king: [...] life and dominion.

↓ (b)  

As can be inferred from the above description, the eastern and western scenes of room 32, *MHA* 551 y *MHA* 553, insist on the fact that Ramesses III has fully fulfilled his role as guarantor of the cosmic order established since the beginning of time, and so he has been rewarded by the gods with a long reign of hundreds of millions of years and *Sed* Festivals. However, the depictions do not represent true facts; they simply denote the Pharaoh's aspiration to have a "long life-span" that will enable him to celebrate "many *Sed* Festivals". This wish will be achieved in his 30th regnal year when Ramesses III will celebrate his unique *Sed* Festival.

The last scene (*MHA* 552),⁴⁰ located on the northern wall, is also much damaged and does not allow a detailed description. Nevertheless, we can still identify the figure of Ramesses III represented standing before the god Osiris (see fig. 10).⁴¹ In the text that has survived in the upper left corner the "Lord of Perpetuity" addresses the king saying: "(I) have given to you Perpetuity as king of the Two Lands".⁴² Under the depiction, at the bottom of the wall, there are still traces of a stone bench, where offerings or cult objects could be placed.⁴³

Although badly damaged, the scenes depicted on the walls of room 32 gives us a certain clue about the rituals that could be performed inside. We pointed out above that room 32 has a South-North orientation, like the Nile. One of the most essential duties of the Egyptian sovereign in order to maintain the cosmic order was to ensure the annual advent of the Nile flood, which granted the

renewal and prosperity of the earth thanks to the life-giving force of its waters filled of sediments. Ancient Egyptians called the Nile the "Effluvium of Osiris", generating a special relationship between the life-giving water that year after year flooded Egypt starting from the South and the god, who symbolised regeneration and fertility. This is explicitly stated in the *Pyramid Texts*, where it says «The canals are filled, the waterways are flooded by means of the purification which issued from Osiris» (*TP* 848).⁴⁴ Even the Greek author Plutarch in his work on the myth of Osiris explains that «the wiser of the priests call not only the Nile Osiris and the sea Typhon, but they simply gave the name of Osiris to the whole source and faculty creative of moisture, believing this to be the cause of generation and the substance of life-producing seed».⁴⁵

Therefore, to sum up the analysis, we tentatively advance that on room 32 of the temple at Medinet Habu the king could have performed the rituals intended to secure the cosmic order and, especially, the annual flood, whose benefits would ensure a prosperous beginning of the year (*cf.* figure 11). The king, Ramesses III, would have placed the plentiful products of the earth on the bench of the northern wall, the scene above it being an iconographical replication of the offering, since in the scene Osiris is identified with the flood that carries the renovating silt which brings new vitality to the arable lands waiting for their annual revivification. The arrival of the flood, the focal point of the ritual, is announced nonetheless in the preceding scenes on the eastern and

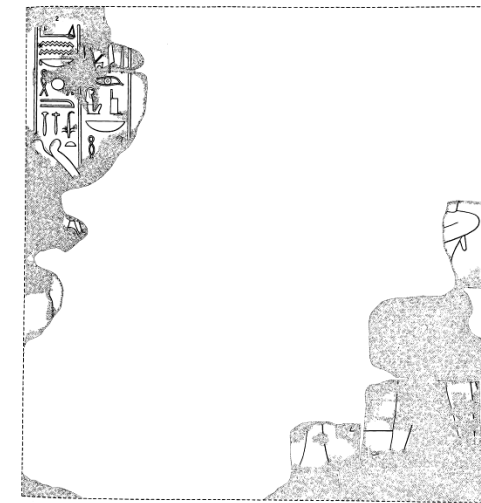


Figure 10. Scene *MHA* 552 (Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 500).

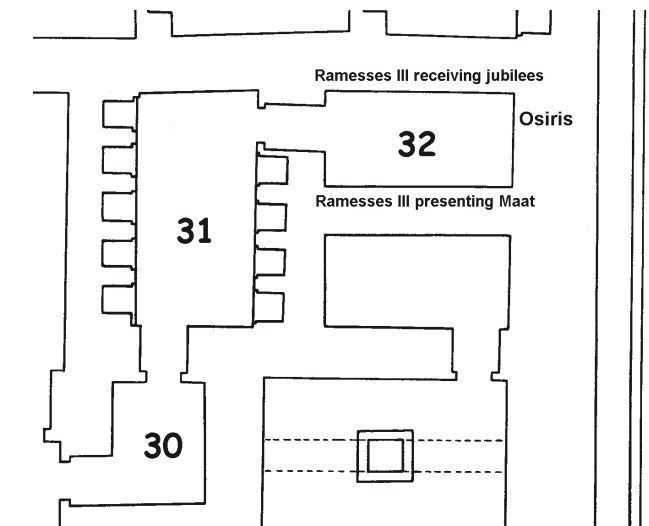


Figure 11.

western walls, which line the symbolic course of the coming waters. The iconographical depictions displayed on these walls, where the king presents Maat to the gods and is given the Jubilees, certify that, as long as the king performs these rituals during his "life-span", the annual arrival of the life-giving waters is assured.

The temple of Millions of Years of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, like the other temples of Millions of Years that the Egyptian kings built on the west bank of Thebes represents a microcosm of the original creation. The architectural elements, the statues, the reliefs, and the inscriptions help us to understand the meaning of the whole construction. They carry a stereotyped image of the first moments of the Universe. The iconographical themes depicted on its walls manifest a conscious program intended to convey the royal ideology. They are thematically selected in order to reassert the divine character of the Pharaoh and to ensure his cult as a deity, generated by his fusion

with the supreme god Amun-Re. This purpose is also manifest in the fighting scenes that depict the military campaigns the king held against the foreign enemies and, thus, considered to represent historical events. The wars illustrated on the walls of the temple imply likewise that the Egyptian kingship holds responsibility for the maintenance of the cosmic order established by the creator god since the beginning of time. Moreover, this responsibility is even more evident in the military campaigns fought by Ramesses III in his 5th, 8th and 11th regnal years depicted at Medinet Habu, because, unlike Sety I's and Ramesses II's wars, they were defensive and preventive rather than offensive. Ramesses III's opponents were not regular armies like those confronted by Ramesses II in the Levant; they were tribes, bands, and coalitions whose fighting methods—skirmishes, clashes, raids—, impersonate the chaos. So, they could be deemed more dangerous as they threatened both the cosmic order and the Land of Egypt.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Porter and Moss 1972²: 513:163, g.

⁴¹ Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 500.

⁴² Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 500:1-2.

⁴³ Murnane 1980: 62.

⁴⁴ *Cf.* Faulkner 1969: 151 (formula 455).

⁴⁵ *Cf.* Plutarch, Isis and Osiris, §33 (The Loeb Classical Library, Plutarch's Moralia V. Cambridge, Ma., 1967, 81).

⁴⁶ Cavillier 2013: 26.

The maintenance of the cosmic order as primary duty of the Pharaoh is thus embodied in both the scenes depicted both on room 32 and on the North and South Stelae. They not only present iconographical themes that relate to each other but they also convey the same meaning. They announce before men and gods that the king, through his achievements, secured, as their ancestors did following the path of a millenary inherited tradition, the annual revival of the Land of Egypt.

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Prefacio

A Covadonga le gustaba conducir, le apasionaba estar al volante de su coche. “Pareces una chica del futurismo italiano”, le decía un amigo, aunque su primer automóvil fuera pequeño, blanco con un techo amarillo y a veces le costase llegar a su destino. Estuvimos años riendo cuando nos acordábamos del nombre con que habíamos bautizado aquella máquina. En nuestro recuerdo, ella sigue siendo la joven radiante y activa que conocimos a sus veinte años. Y su personalidad permanece entre nosotros como un perfume indeleble, retomando los versos del poeta alejandrino que tanto le gustaba. Quienes asistieron a sus conferencias conocieron la calidez de su voz; sus clases en la universidad crearon vocaciones; son, sin embargo, los que compartieron con ella su amistad quienes disfrutaron de los rasgos más sobresalientes de su personalidad: la generosidad, la entrega desinteresada a los demás. Cova tenía una capacidad excepcional para la empatía hacia los que se le acercaban. Eso le hizo ganar afectos en todos los ámbitos de su vida y conservarlos, desde los compañeros del colegio de la infancia y la pandilla de la juventud a los colegas de la madurez. Este tributo pretende también transmitir a las generaciones futuras el legado de una persona excepcional y la huella que dejó en su generación.

Un grupo de amigos que vivimos con ella sus labores de docencia, investigación o proyectos arqueológicos, decidimos rendirle un homenaje particular, uno más entre los que se le han dedicado desde el momento en que su *ka* voló al cielo. Este volumen es el resultado de esa voluntad de crear nuestro monumento a su memoria, por tantas experiencias inolvidables compartidas. El homenaje ha querido ser un caleidoscopio de miradas desde las que reflejar la personalidad de Covadonga y hemos preferido romper el formato académico tradicional. Los artículos se entrelazan con fotografías, dibujos, semblanzas o poemas que pretenden dejar constancia de la huella que ella legó a sus autores. Es nuestra ofrenda para que su *ba* siga regresando desde donde esté hasta nosotros, cada vez que la nombremos y en cada ocasión en que su recuerdo tome forma en nuestro corazón.

Foreword

Covadonga enjoyed driving; she loved being behind the wheel of her car. A friend used to tell her “you look like a woman of the Italian Futurism,” although her first car was small and white with a yellow roof, and sometimes had difficulties reaching its destination. We laughed for years remembering the name with which we baptized that machine. In our memories, she is still the radiant and active young woman we met in her twenties, and her personality remains among us as an indelible scent, to draw upon the verse of an Alexandrian poet that she loved so much. Those who attended her lectures knew the warmth of her voice, her classes at the university created vocations, however, it is those who shared her friendship who enjoyed the most outstanding features of her personality: generosity, and selfless dedication to others. Cova had an exceptional capacity for empathy toward those who approached her. This allowed her to win affection in all aspects of her life and to retain it, from the classmates of her early schooldays, to the circles of her youth, to the colleagues of her adult years. This tribute will surely be transmitted to future generations as the legacy of an exceptional individual, and the mark she left on her generation.

As a group of friends who lived with her through teaching, research, or archaeological projects, we have decided to pay her a particular tribute; one more among the many that have been dedicated to her from the moment her ka flew to heaven. This volume is the result of our desire to create for her a monument to so many unforgettable shared experiences. We decided that this tribute should be a kaleidoscope, to reflect Covadonga’s personality, and we have thus preferred to break from the traditional academic format. The articles are intertwined with photographs, drawings, sketches, or poems that are intended to record the traces she left with their authors. It is our offering so that her ba keeps coming back to us from where she now is, every time that her memory takes shape in our hearts.

Carta a una hermana en la luz

Son los hermanos y las hermanas quienes le hablan a su hermana en la luz, como el hijo que le habla a su padre, como la hija que le habla a su madre.

¡O Senet, Senet Meret! Que Osiris-Khentamentiut te otorgue millones de años respirando aliento en tu nariz, dándote pan y cerveza junto a Hathor, Señora de la Tierra de Luz.

Tu condición es como la vida millones de veces, por orden de los dioses que están en el cielo y la tierra. Que Ha, Señor de Occidente, actúe en tu favor de acuerdo a sus deseos, que Anubis, Señor del Buen Entierro actúe para ti como él lo quiera. Que pueda levantar una barrera contra los enemigos, hombres y mujeres malvados que se oponen a tu casa, tus hermanos, tus padres, tu memoria y tus obras.

Fuiste excelente en la tierra, por lo que también serás capaz y eficiente en el Más Allá. Que se te hagan ofrendas, que se realice la fiesta Haker para ti, que hagan la fiesta del Wag, que te den pan y cerveza del altar de Khentamentiut. Que puedas viajar río abajo en la Barca del Ocaso y que navegues río arriba en la Barca de la Mañana. Que estés justificada junto a cada dios. Que te conviertas en alguien elogiado por nuestros espíritus masculinos y femeninos.

¿Has visto estos lamentos ahora que estás allí en el Más Allá?

¡Oh, gran dolor! Útil es una queja para hablar de lo que se hace contra nosotros de una manera tan injusta. Aunque no hay nada que hayamos hecho contra los dioses, y aunque no hemos comido de sus ofrendas, ¡sin embargo nos han privado de ti!

Te han traído aquí a la Ciudad de la Eternidad, sin que albergues ira contra nosotros. Pero si hubiera un reproche en tu corazón, olvídale por el bien de tus hermanas y hermanos. Sé misericordiosa, sé misericordiosa, y así todos los dioses del nomo de This serán misericordiosos contigo.

Mantén alejadas todas las aflicciones dirigidas a nosotros, tus hermanas y hermanos, porque tú sabes que tenemos una gran necesidad de esto. Que vivas para nosotros y así el Grande te elogie. Que la cara del gran dios sea gozosa para ti, y que él te dé pan puro con ambas manos.

Todos los sacrificios funerarios se han realizado para la que está en la luz, a fin de que pueda interceder por nosotros, los sobrevivientes en la tierra que han quedado atrás. Por lo tanto, busca que el que causó aquello de lo que estamos sufriendo ahora te dé una explicación, porque necesitamos entender y queremos también ser justificados delante de los dioses como lo eres ahora, entendiendo todo, justificada y transfigurada.

Son los hermanos y hermanas quienes le hablan a su hermana, para quien la luz ya nunca se oscurecerá.

Letter to an enlightened sister

It is the brothers and sisters who are speaking to their sister like the son who is speaking to his father, like the daughter who is speaking to her mother.

O Senet, Senet Meret! May Osiris-Khentamentiu make millions of years for you by breathing breath into your nose, by giving bread and beer beside Hathor, Lady of the Land-of-Light.

Your condition is like life millions of time, by command of the gods who are in heaven and earth. May Ha, Lord of the West, act on your behalf as he wishes, may Anubis, Lord of the Good Burial act for you as he wishes. May you erect a barrier against male and female enemies, male and female evil ones who oppose your house, your brother, your mother, your memory, your deeds.

You are one who was excellent on earth, therefore you will also be capable in the hereafter. May one make offerings to you, may one make the Haker-feast for you, may one make the Wag-feast for you, may one give you bread and beer from the altar of Khentamentiu. You will travel downstream in the Bark-of-the-Evening and sail upstream in the Bark-of-the-Morning. May you be given justification at the side of every god. Make yourself into someone praised by our male and female ghosts.

Have you seen this lamentation now that you are there in the hereafter?

O, great grief! Useful is a complaint to speaking concerning this which is done against us in such an unjust way, although there is nothing that we have done against the gods, and although we have not eaten of his offerings, nevertheless they have deprived us of you!

You have been brought here to the City of Eternity, without you harbouring anger against us. But if there is a reproach in your heart, forget it for the sake of your sisters and brothers. Be merciful, be merciful, then all the gods of the Thinite nome will be merciful towards you.

Keep away all afflictions directed at us, your sisters and brothers, for you know we have a need for this. May you live for us in order for the Great One to praise you. May the face of the great god be joyous because of you, so that he will give you pure bread with both his hands.

All mortuary sacrifices are made for the enlightened one in order to intercede on behalf of the inhabitants of earth. Therefore seek an explanation from him who caused that of which we are suffering now, for we want to be justified in front of the gods same as you are now.

It is the brothers and sisters who are speaking to their sister, she for whom the light will never darken.