“Those Who Mourn for Re”: Mourning and Regeneration in the Book of the Twelve Caverns
Daniel Miguel MÉNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ

The Courtyard of TT 209 (Areas C1 and C2). Seasons 2012 to 2014
Miguel Ángel MOLINERO POLO, Cristo Manuel HERNÁNDEZ GÓMEZ...

Algunas reflexiones sobre Uluburun y el intercambio comercial y cultural en el Mediterráneo Oriental
Antonio PÉREZ LARGACHA

The Framework of the Meeting
Narrative Uses of Stelae in Egyptian Literary Texts
José Ramón PÉREZ-ACCINO

Introducción a la investigación arqueológica para estudiantes a través de reconstrucciones virtuales
Sofía PÉREZ-RUIZ, Ainara ACEBO, Pilar RODRÍGUEZ MARÍN...

Lucernas decoradas con la imagen de una rana del yacimiento de Oxirrinco, El-Bahnasa, Egipto
Esther PONS MELLADO

Trabajos de Egiptología
Papers on Ancient Egypt

Estudio preliminar de la cerámica procedente de las excavaciones en la TT 209, Luxor, Egipto
Zulma BARAHONA MENDIETA

La ocupación macedónica y la Dinastía Lágida. Impacto político, económico y social
Francisco BOSCH PUCHE

Reflexiones sobre Meretseguer en la estela EA272 del British Museum
Elisa CASTEL RONDA

Ramesses III as Guarantor of Maat: the Iconographic Evidence at Medinet Habu
Salvador COSTA, Teresa MAGADÁN

Iconographic Rendering of the Notion of Purification in Two Elements Included in the Vignettes of Chapters 17 and 125 of the Book of the Dead
Lucía DÍAZ-IGLESIAS LLANOS

Taboo – bwt?
Paul John FRANDSEN

Flat-Section Hairpins during the Egyptian Predynastic Period? A Proposal of Identification and Typology
Candelaria MARTÍN DEL RÍO ÁLVAREZ

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Covadonga en la Caldera del Teide. José Miguel Barros Mufiaga.
Among the iconographic scenes depicted on the walls of the Temple of Millions of Years of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu there are two sets 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 assure 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.

Keywords: Thebes, cosmic order, Maat, jubilees, flood.

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: Tebas, orden cósmico, Maat, jubileos, inundación.

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 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 iconographic element in the decorative repertoire both of temples and of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings.² Also in this period, we observe that some pharaohs, whose prenomen contains the phonetic value Maat³, 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 XIXth 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.⁴ 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.

Ramesses III as Guarantor of Maat: the Iconographic...at Medinet Habu
Salvador Costa, Teresa Magadán

³ CT VII, 432-433.
⁴ For the use of the ritual of Maat during the XVIIIth dynasty, see Teter 1997: 7-10.
⁷ XXIII Dynasty: Meryamun (KV 8), Sety II (KV 15), and Tausert/Setnakht (KV 14). XIXth Dynasty: Ramesses III (KV 11), Ramesses IV (KV 2), Ramesses VI (KV 9), Ramesses VII (KV 6), and Ramesses IX (KV 8).
⁸ Kings from the rameside period whose prenomen include the phonetic value maat are:
- XIXth Dynasty: Sety I: Menmaatre; Ramesses II: Usermaatre-Setepepere.
- XXIII Dynasty: Ramesses III: Usermaatre-Meryamun; Ramesses IV: Heqmaatre; Ramesses V: Usermaatre-Setepepennu (later Heqmaatre-Setepepannum); Ramesses VI: Nebmaatre-Meryamun; Ramesses VII: Usermaatre-Meryamun-Setepepere; 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—occurs 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 Stela (MHI 90), Ramesses III acts as donor and presents Maat to Amun-Re, who receives the offering. In the North Stela (MHI 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 stela, 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 Ramennes II receiving the signs of the Sed Festival, which were usurped by Ramesses III to a previous monarch, probably Ramesses I. The first scene, located on the north wall, third register, second scene (LB I 9), 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 (LB B 9), 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/3): 18-20 (scene 7) and 24-26 (scene 9). Costa 2006: 155-164.
find in the long history of the Egyptian kingship 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 stele 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 (isf). In order to overcome chaos and to protect Egypt, it was deemed necessary to maintain the order of the universe -maat (mAat)-, 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-disc is depicted. The centre is occupied by a scene and a long inscription distributed in twenty-three lines (fig. 1).

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).

- Physical appearance: represented as a man with ibis head.
- Headaddress: 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 sign (xfn, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). A heb-sed sign (🗣) hanging from the year-staff, reads: “a hundred thousand of years with Sed Festival(s)”.

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

**Khonsu:** Words spoken by Khonsu-in-Thebes Netherhotep.

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

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

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

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

Sun disc: The Behdetite.

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 Egypt and, second, he describes the greatness of his temple at Medinet Habu. Namely, Rameses 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, Rameses 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 Danuana, the Wesheesh and, the Shekelesh. Afterwards he states that he has wiped out the breath of the Lybians, that is, he has slain them. Last, Rameses declares: "I lifted up Egypt’s cownenance, with had been downcast...". 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, Rameses emphasizes the magnificence of his temple of Millions of Years. The text relates that Rameses 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". Rameses 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. 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".

The words stated by the king in the South Stele make us realise that, in the stele, Rameses 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 Rameses III temple at Medinet Habu.
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-disc 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 Ramesses III in the presence of Mut, Khonsu and Atum (fig. 4).

Ramesses 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
- Dress: short kilt.
- Attitude: both hands are missing, although 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.

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-uay composite sceptre, the heqat-sceptre and the nekhakha-flagellum.

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.

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

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

Khour: Words spoken by Khour in Thebes Neferhotep: "(I) have given to you all valour and all victory".

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

Behind the king: (May) all [protection and life]

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

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.23 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 nefkhakha-flagellum, heqa-t sceptre and ames sceptre.23 Ramesses III reminds them also that his reign is under the protection of the god Amun-Re-Kamutef, “his shield”,23 as he calls him, and stresses once more his role 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 Libyans 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) 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, all 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 (MIA 60), Ramesses III, as donor of the cosmic order, presents the figure of Maat to Amun-Re, who acts as recipient of the

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.
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. Furthermore, while Ramesses III grabbed the jubilees of Re, and the years of 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. 3). 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), we can see a double scene, symmetrically arranged, where the two of the 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”.

In both scenes, the god Amun-Re represents a subtle fusion between Amun-Re and Osiris, in which the “Lord of the Gods” embodies his role of primal god, as expressed by the epithets “Chief of the Great Ennead” and “Primeval One of the Two Lands for each god”. 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), where the “Perfect God, Usermaatre Meryamun” is performing an incensation before the figure of Amun-Re, “Primeval One of the Two Lands, the great god, Ruler of the Ennead”. Here Ramesses wears the nemes headdress and per-

29 Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 492.
36 Epigraphic Survey 1964: pl. 496A.
forms the incensation with the bowl δ, 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 headaddresses of the characters that compose it. In it, Ramesses III, as donor of Maat, presents his prenomen Usermaatre (Wsr-Mf-Ra) 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.
- Headress: blue crown.
- Dress: Short kilt with frontal ornament, and ceremonial bull’s tail.
- Attitude: the king holds his prenomen Wsr-Mf-Ra 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.

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

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

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 headaddresses of the characters that compose it. In it, Ramesses III, as donor of Maat, presents his prenomen Usermaatre (Wsr-Mf-Ra) to Amun-Re-Horakhty, as recipient of the offering, in the presence of three auxiliary goddesses: Hathor (or Isis), Maat and Seshat.38

Amun-Re
- Orientation: ←
- Posture: sitting on a throne placed on a maat socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headress: 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 sign (xfn, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). The signs 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 nekhabba-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”.

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

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

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

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.

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.

Behind the king: […] like Re.

At the bottom, between the goddess Sekhmet and the king: […] life and dominion.
As can be inferred from the above description, the eastern and western scenes of room 52, MIA 552 and 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 553), 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). 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”.

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.

Although badly damaged, the scenes depicted on the walls of room 32 give 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).

Even the Greek author Plutarch in his work on the myth of Osiris explains that “the wisest 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 seeds.”

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 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 architectonic 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. Moreover, this responsibility is even more evident in the military campaigns fought by Ramesses III in his 27th, 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.
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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Índice  |  Contents

José Miguel BARRIOS MUÑOZ Covadonga en la Caldera del Teide 5
Prefacio  9
Foreword  10
Carta a una hermana en la luz / Letter to an enlightened sister  11
Estudio preliminar de la cerámica procedente de las excavaciones en la TT 209, Luxor, Egipto  13
Zulema BARAHONA MENDELA

Amparo ERRANDONEA Liebestod 31
La ocupación macedónica y la Dinastía Lágida. Impacto político, económico y social  33
Francisco BOSCH PUQUE

Cristina GIL PANEQUE Et il pleut sur Bruxelles 75
Reflexiones sobre Meretseguer en la estela EA272 del British Museum  77
Elisa CASTEL RONDA

Fernando GUERRA-LIBRERO FERNÁNDEZ Taffich 93
Ramesses III as Guarantor of Maat: the Iconographic Evidence at Medinet Habu  95
Salvador COSTA, Teresa MAGADÁN

Fernando GUERRA-LIBRERO FERNÁNDEZ Muro de la casa de excavación 115
Iconographic Rendering of the Notion of Purification in Two Elements Included in the Vignettes of Chapters 17 and 125 of the Book of the Dead  117
Lucía DÁZ-IGLESIAS LLANOS

Isabel SÁNCHEZ MARQUÉS Adoratriz del Dios 163
Taboo – bwt?  165
Paul John FRANDSEN

Fernando GUERRA-LIBRERO FERNÁNDEZ Barco en el Nilo 193
Flat-Section Hairpins during the Egyptian Predynastic Period? A Proposal of Identification and Typology  195
Candelaria MARTÍN DEL RÍO ÁLVAREZ

Isabel SÁNCHEZ MARQUÉS Plañidera 211
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 ka 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.
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-Khentamentiu 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 en 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 Khentamentiu. 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, olvídate por el bien de tus hermanas y hermanos. Sé misericordiosa, y así todos los dioses del nomo de This serán misericordiosos contigo.

Mantén alejadas todas las aflicciones dirigidas a nosotros, tus hermanos 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.
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.