

## The scenes of Ramesses III on the eighth pylon at Karnak: following in the footsteps of Ramesses II

*Salvador Costa – Jordi García – Teresa Magadán*

[The article describes the scenes from Rameses III that decorate the two lower registers of the north face of the west tower of the eighth pylon at Karnak, and analyzes their most relevant iconographic elements. Among them, those present in the scenes of the central register stand out, as they depict, in a schematic way, the ceremonial of renewal of the power of Rameses III as king of the Two Lands. It is stated that these scenes follow the same pattern previously established by his illustrious predecessor, Rameses II.]

**Keywords:** Ramesses II, Ramesses III, Thebes, Karnak temple, Medinet Habu, Ramesseum, *Sed-Festival*, coronation.

### 1. *Introduction*

The north face of the west tower of the eighth pylon at Karnak is made up of three registers. The upper register presents three scenes of Thutmose II and Hatshepsut, with renewal-texts of Sety I (scenes *KG 107*, *KG 108*, and *KG 109*),<sup>1</sup> while the central and lower registers include other scenes that bear the name of Ramesses III (**Scene 1** to **Scene 12**). The scenes of the central register, four in number, are oriented east to west and depict the entrance of the King to the temple of Karnak. Instead, the eight scenes of the lower register, smaller than the previous ones and oriented west to east, show Ramesses III leaving the temple as he makes offers to various divinities (fig. 1).

The precise date when both registers of the north face from the west tower of the eighth pylon at Karnak were decorated is unknown. Nevertheless, there are many differences in the execution of the central relief, of excellent workmanship, and the images and inscriptions of the lower register, more roughly worked. So, it is reasonable to think that they were executed in two different moments, and by different Theban workshops.

---

1. Barguet 1962: 262; Porter and Moss 1972: 174 (519, I, 1-3).



Figure 1: North face of the west tower of the eighth pylon at Karnak

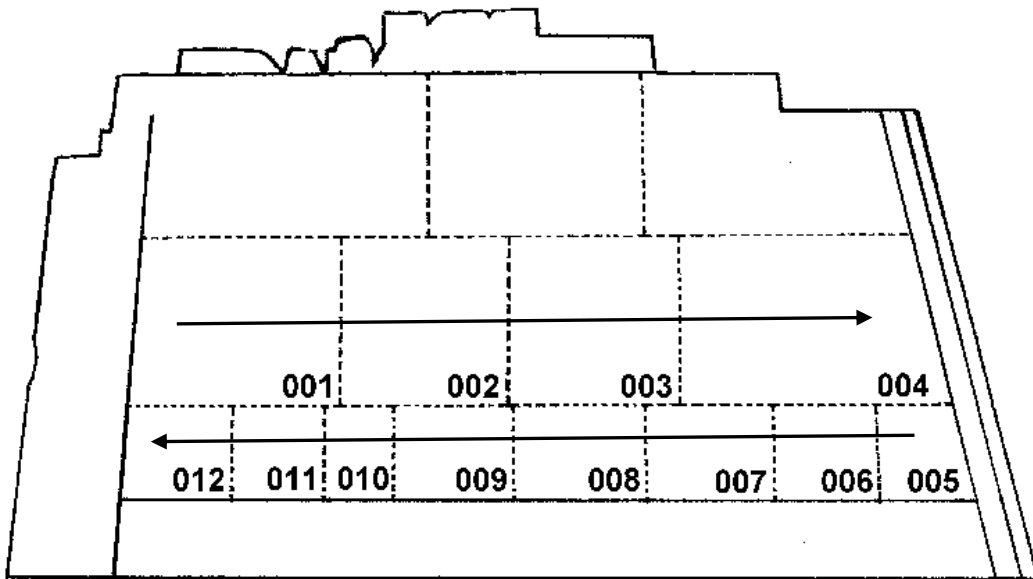


Figure 2: Location and orientation of the scenes of Ramesses III

2. The scenes

Scene 1

**Location:** Middle register, scene 1 (KG 110; see *fig. 2*).<sup>2</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III stands between the Behdetite and Thoth, who pour over him streams of water represented as signs of life (*figs. 3-4*).<sup>3</sup>

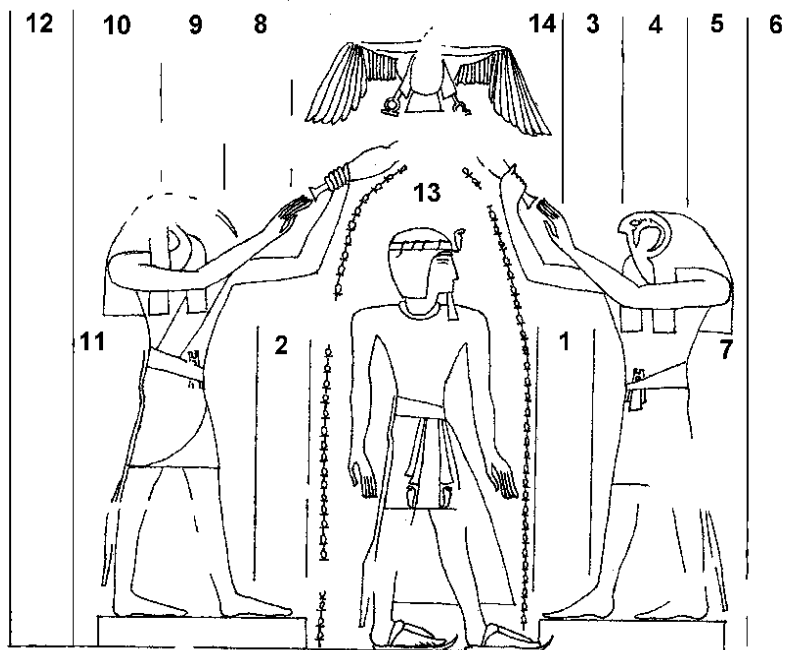


Figure 3: Scene 1 (KG 110)

Ramesses III

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: ritual beard; wearing sandals; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Headdress: short wig (*ibes*) with headband and uraeus (*seshed*).
- Dress: long kilt with frontal ornament.
- Attitude: both arms falling along the body

A vulture with outstretched wings flies over the king; holding a Q-sign with in each claw.

The Behdetite

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing on a plinth.

2. Porter and Moss 1972: 174 (519, II, 1).

3. Barguet 1962: 263.



*By Thoth:* Words spoken by the lord of Hermopolis: “Your purification is the purification of Dewen-‘anwy. The purification of Dewen-‘anwy is your purification. Purifying the lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun.

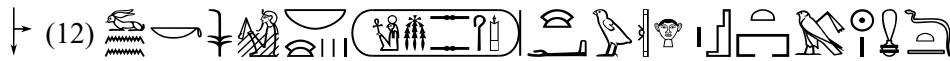


*Behind Thoth:*

All health like Re every day.



The king, the lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, shall continually appear upon the throne of Horus, like Re forever.



*By Rameses III:* [User]maat[re] Meryamun.



*By Nekhbet:* Nekhbet, lady of heaven.

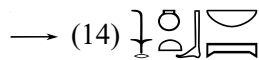


Figure 4. Scene.1 (KG 110)

Scene (KG 111)

**Scene 2**

**Location:** Middle register, scene 2 (KG 111; see fig. 2).<sup>4</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III crowned by Atum and Re-Horakhty (figs. 4-5).<sup>5</sup>

Ramesses III

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: ritual beard; wears sandals.
- Headdress: *atef* surmounting *nemes*, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: short skirt covering the calves and frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: his right hand is placed on the chest and with it holds the *heqat*-sceptre and *nekhakha*-flagellum; with his left, holds the *ankh*-sign.

A vulture flies over the king, holding a  $\Omega$ -sign with in claws.

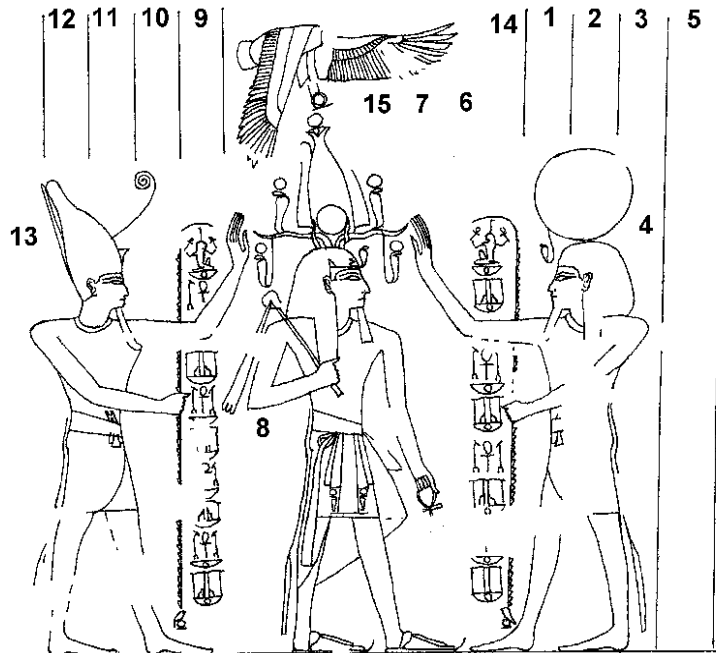


Figure 5: Scene 2 (KG 111)

Atum

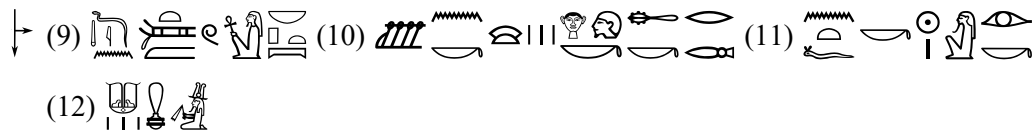
- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: double crown

4. Porter and Moss 1972: 174 (519, II, 2).

5. Barguet 1962: 263.



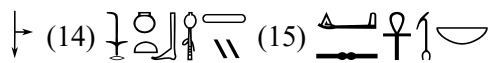
*By Atum:* Words spoken by Atum, lord of heaven: “receive for yourself the diadems upon your head, the ornament of your father Re, that you may celebrate jubilees like Tatenen”.



*Behind Atum:* Every protection — all life, stability, and dominion — surrounds him like Re.



*By Nekhbet:* Nekhbet, the bright one of Hierakonpolis, as she gives all life and dominion.



### Scene 3

**Location:** Middle register, scene 3 (*KG* 112; see *fig. 2*).<sup>6</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III is led by Mut and Khonsu into the temple (*figs. 6-7*).<sup>7</sup>

Mut

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig surmounted with the body of a vulture; on the headdress the double crown, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: plays a sistrum with her left hand; with the right, leading the king.

Ramesses III

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: wears sandals.
- Headdress: blue crown, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: long kilt with frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: arms dropped along the body; led by Mut and Khonsu.

A falcon soars above the king, holding the - signs in its claws.

6. Porter and Moss 1972: 174 (519, II, 3).

7. Barguet 1962: 263.



Khonsu

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- 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 an uraeus and attached to two tall feathers.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: with his right hand the god reaches out the sign of life towards the king; with his left leads the king.

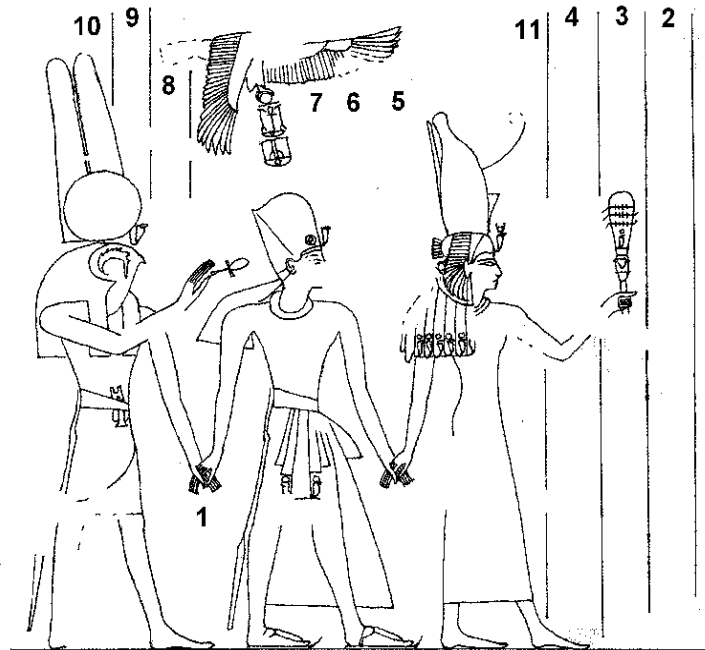


Figure 6: Scene 3 (KG 112)

**Hieroglyphic texts:**

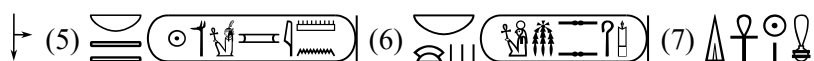
*Label:* Coming in and going out: inducting the king into the temple.



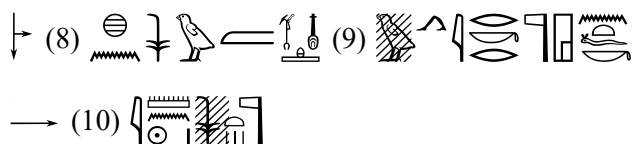
*By Mut:* Words spoken by Mut the great. Lady of Isheru, mistress of all the gods: “I play the sistra to your face, [your?] beauty and your ka every day. That you protect your son whom he love, the lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, lord of Diadems, Ramesses III, with all life, stability, and dominion, and you might give to him your strong arm, your strength, your powerful, and every hill country”.



By *Ramesses III*: The lord of Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, lord of Diadems, Ramesses III, given life like Re.



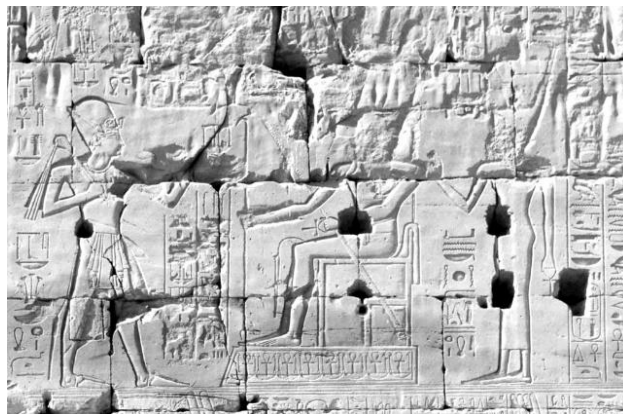
By *Khonsu*: Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep: “Proceed you the temple of your father Amun-Re, king of the gods”.



By *the falcon*: The Behdetite, great god, lord of heaven.



Figure 7. Scene 3 (KG 112)



Scene 4 (KG 113)


**Scene 4**

**Location:** Middle register, scene 4 (KG 113; see fig. 2).<sup>8</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III receives jubilees from Amun-Re in the presence of Amonet (figs. 7-8).<sup>9</sup>

Ramesses III

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: wearing sandals.
- Headdress: blue crown, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: short skirt covering the calves and frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: the right hand, which is placed on the chest, holds the *heqat*-sceptre and *nekhakha*-flagellum; in the left hand he receives jubilees from Amun-Re.

A vulture flies over the king, holding the - signs in its claws.

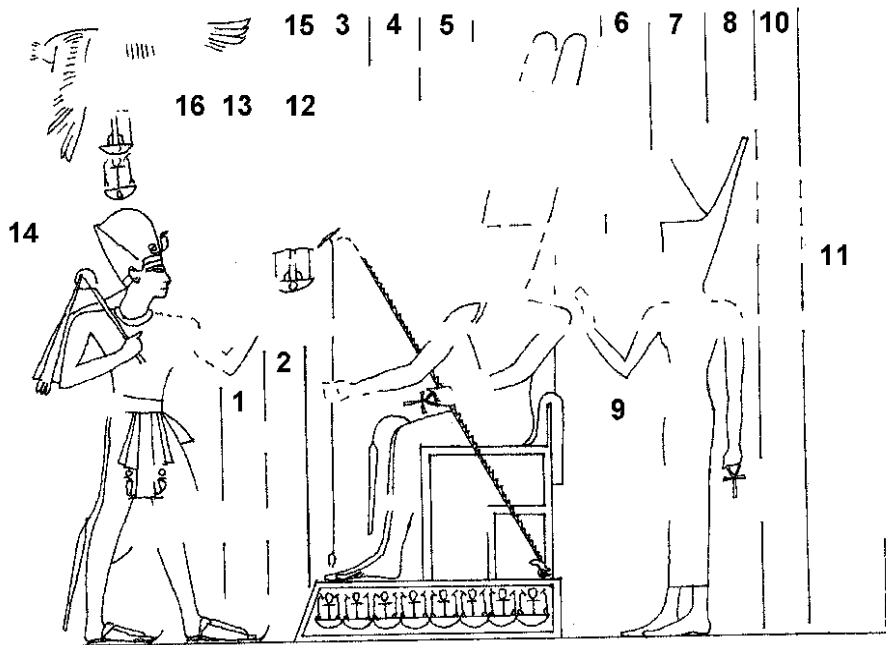


Figure 8: Scene 4 (KG 113)

Amun-Re

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: sitting on a throne placed on a socle.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: top crown with two high vertical feathers.

8. Porter and Moss 1972: 174 (519, II, 4).

9. Bargout 1962: 263; Costa 2004: I, 108-110 (scene 38).

- Dress: short cloth; bull's tail that falls in front of the legs.
- Attitude: on the right hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre. With the left, he grasps an *ankh*-sign and a year-staff ending in a *hfn* sign (*hfn*, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). A *heb-sed* sign that hangs from the year-staff reads: “a hundred thousand of years with *Sed*-Festival(s)”.

**Amonet**

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: red crown.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the right hand the goddess makes the gesture of protection; on her left, she holds an *ankh*-sign.

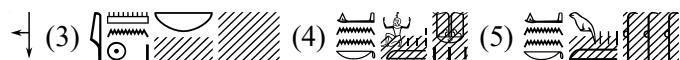
**Hieroglyphic texts:**

*By Amun-Re:*

Between the god and Ramesses III: “Receive for yourself the jubilees of Re and the years of Atum, (O) Horus, great in kingship”.



Above: Amun-Re, lord of [...]: “(I) have given to you millions [of jubilees] and (I) have given to you myriads [of years]”.



*By Amonet:* Amonet, residing in Karnak, mistress of the gods: “(I) have given to you the lifetime of Re and the years of Atum. (I) have given to you eternity as king of the Two Lands like Re”.



*Behind Amonet:*

The king, the lord of the Two Lands, the master of the ritual, Usermaatse Meryamun; the son of Re of his body, his beloved, lord of Diadems Ramesses III, given life like Re.



So long as Re exists, so shall your name exist (and) so shall your deeds exist (with) life and dominion united with your limbs.



- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

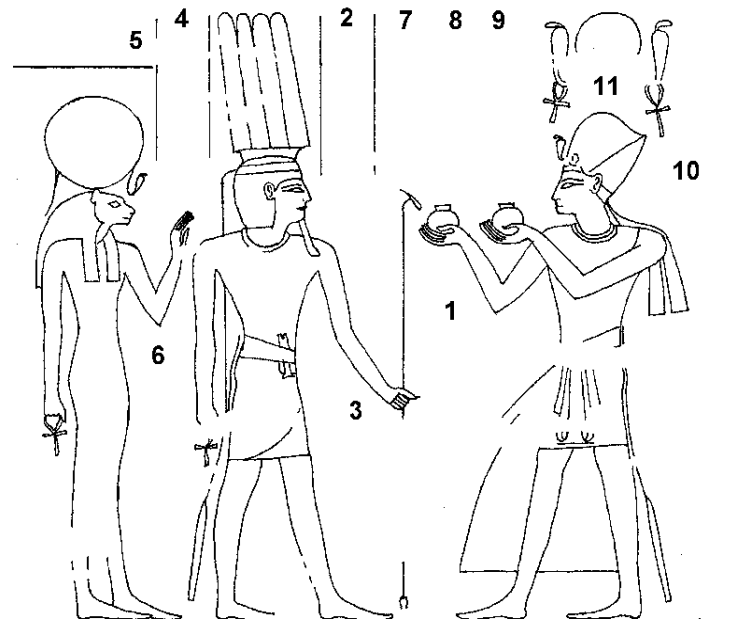


Figure 9: Scene 5 (KG 121)

Tefnut

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: she is shown with the body of a lady and the head of a lioness.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; on the head, a solar disk that is surrounded by the body of an uraeus.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the left hand, the goddess makes the gesture of protection; in her right hand she holds an *ankh*-sign.

**Hieroglyphic texts:**

*Label:* Presenting wine to his father.



*By Onuris-Shu:* Onuris-Shu, the son of Re, the great god, lord of heaven: “(I) have given to you many jubilees”.





**Scene 6**

**Location:** Bottom register, scene 2 (KG 120; see *fig. 2*).<sup>12</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III presents a *heb-sed* sign to Amun-Re in the presence of Mut and Weret-hekau (*figs. 10-11*).<sup>13</sup>

Ramesses III

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: short wig from behind with long loops, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: short skirt covering the calves and frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: the left hand is placed on the chest and with it the king holds the *heqat*-sceptre; with his right, he presents a *heb-sed* sign to Amun-Re.

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

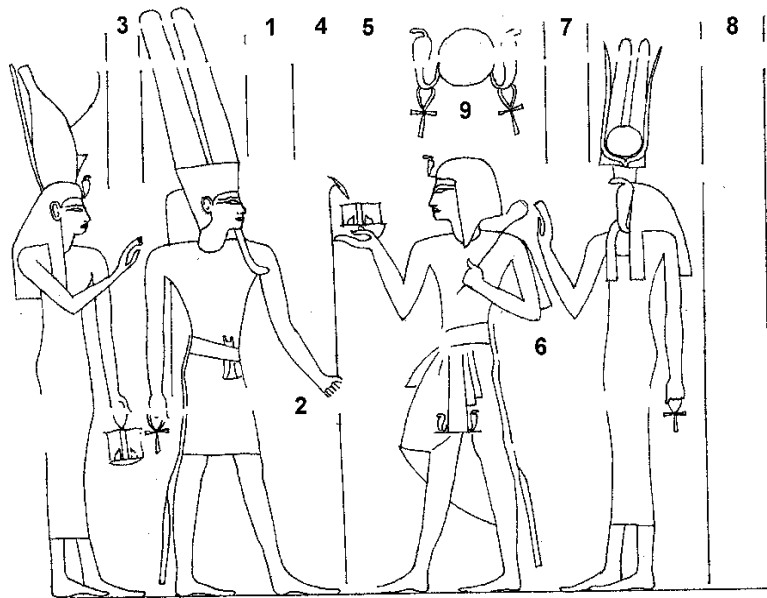


Figure 11. Scene 6 (KG 120)

Weret-hekau

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: she is shown with the body of a lady and the head replaced by the body of a cobra.

12. Porter and Moss 1972: 174-175 (519, III, 7).

13. Barguet 1962: 263.



- Headdress: tripartite wig; on the headdress rests a solar disk flanked by two horns and attached to two tall feathers.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the right hand the goddess makes the gesture of protection; on the left she holds an *ankh*-sign.

**Amun-Re**

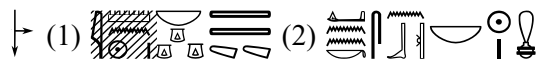
- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: top crown with two high vertical feathers.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

**Mut**

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig, with frontal uraeus; on the headdress rests the Double Crown.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the right hand the goddess makes the gesture of protection; on the left she holds a *heb-sed* sign.

**Hieroglyphic texts:**

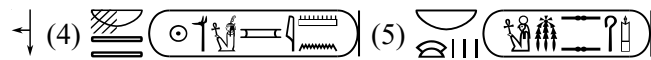
*By Amun-Re:* [Amun-Re], lord of the thrones of the Two Lands: “(I) have given to you all health like Re”.



*By Mut:* Mut the great, lady of heaven, mistress of the gods.



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



*Behind the king:* (May) protection and life attend him like Re.





- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: double crown.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

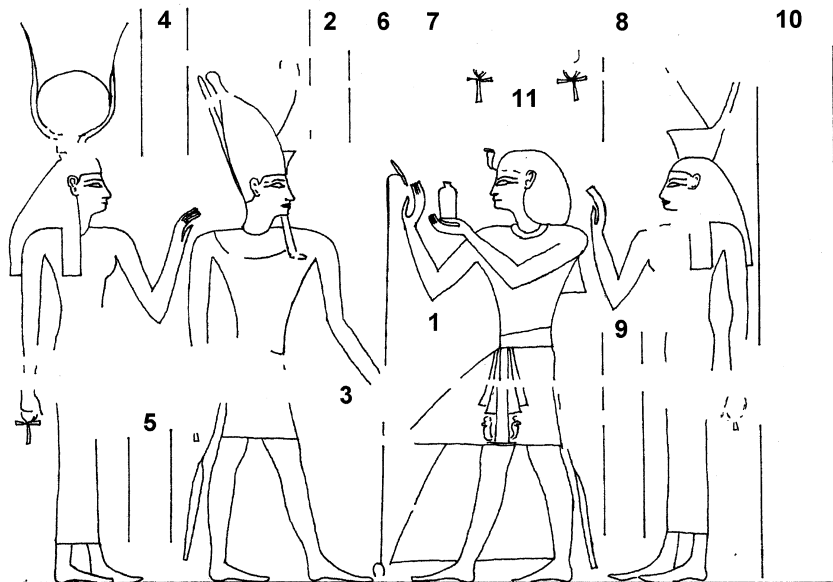


Figure 12: Scene 7 (KG 119)

Hathor

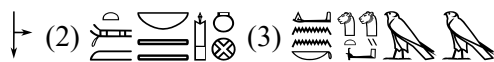
- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig; on the head rests a *modius* that supported the horns and the solar disc.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the left hand the goddess makes the gesture of protection; on the right she holds an *ankh*-sign.

### Hieroglyphic texts:

*Label:* Offering ointment to his father.



*By Atum:* Atum, lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan: “(I) have given to you the strength of the Two Lords”.





**Scene 8**

**Location:** Bottom register, scene 4 (KG 118; see *fig. 2*).<sup>17</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III presents Maat to Amun-Re-Horakhty in the presence of Iusaas and Thoth (*figs. 13-14*).<sup>18</sup>

Ramesses III

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: blue crown, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: combination of long kilt and short kilt with triangular protection and frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: the king holds the figure of Maat on his right hand, while performing the adoration gesture with his left hand.

Above Ramesses III figures a sun disc flanked by uraei devoid of crowns. In the area where the body of each uraeus bends there is an *ankh*-sign (deteriorated area).

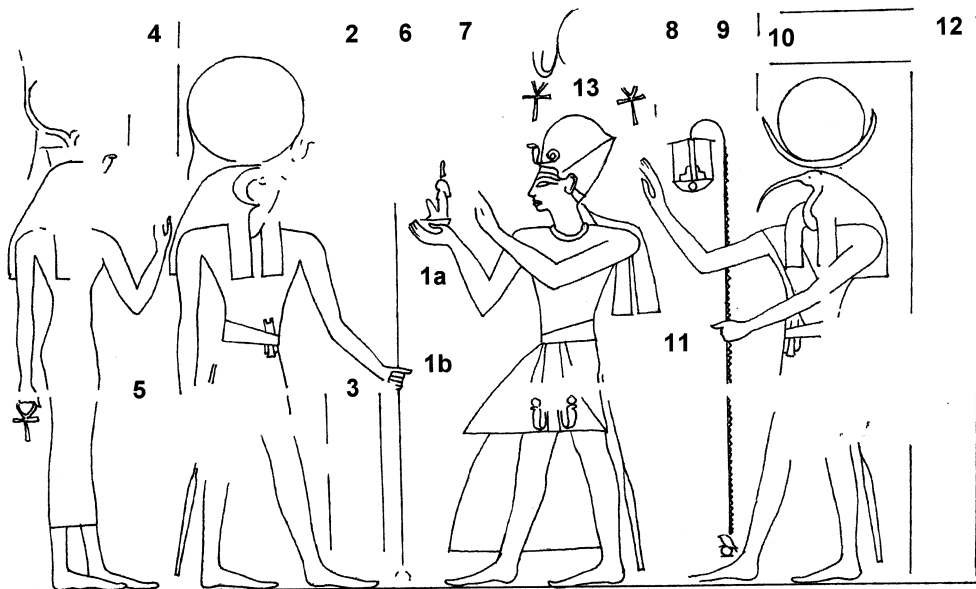


Figure 14: Scene 8 (KG 118)

Thoth

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: represented as a man with ibis head.

17. Porter and Moss 1972: 174-175 (519, III, 5).

18. Barguet 1962: 263.

- Headdress: tripartite wig; on his head is the crescent of the new moon in which the circle of the full moon rests.
- Dress: short cloth, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: with the right hand, the god makes the gesture of protection; with the left, he grasps a year-staff ending in a *hfn* sign (*hfn*, "a hundred thousand" or "myriad"). A *heb-sed* sign that hangs from the year-staff reads: "a hundred thousand of years with *Sed*-Festival(s)".

Amun-Re-Horakhty

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- 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 an *uraeus*.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

Iusaas

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig, with frontal uraeus; on the head rests a *modius* that supported the horns and the solar disc.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the left hand the goddess makes the gesture of protection; on the right she holds an *ankh*-sign.



**Hieroglyphic texts:**

*Label:* Offering Maat to his father Re-Horakhty that he might achieve 'given life'.



↓ (1a) 

↓ (1b) 

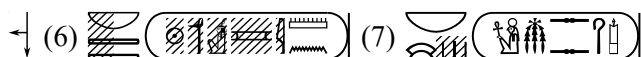
*By Amun-Re-Horakhty:* A[mun-Re-Horakhty...]: "(I) have given to you all life and dominion, and all health".

↓ (2)  (3) 

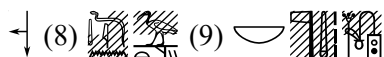
*By Iusaas:* Iusaas, mistress of Heliopolis: "(I) have given to you the lifetime of Re and the years of Atum".

↓ (4)  (5) 

By *Rameses III*: The lord of Two Lands, [Usermaatre Mery]amun, lord of Diadems, Rameses III.



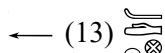
By *Thoth*: Words spoken by Thoth, lord of sacred writings, scribe of truth for the Ennead: “(I) have given to you millions of jubilees like Tatenen”.



Behind *Thoth*: The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun; the son of Re, lord of [Diadems], Rameses III, beloved of Amun.



By *the Disk*: The Behdetite.



### Scene 9

**Location:** Bottom register, scene 5 (*KG* 117; see *fig. 2*).<sup>19</sup>

**Scene:** Rameses III offers incense and libation to Amun-Re in the presence of Khonsu (*figs. 15-16*).<sup>20</sup>

Rameses III

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: crown made up of two horizontal ram horns supporting two ostrich feathers and a disc, and flanked by uraei with a solar disk; all surmounting short wig (*ibes*) with headband and uraeus (*seshed*).
- Dress: long kilt with frontal ornament; ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: holding the *heset*-vase on his right hand, on the left, the arm of Horus censer.

Amun-Re

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.

19. Porter and Moss 1972: 174-175 (519, III, 4).

20. Barguet 1962: 263.

- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: top crown with two high vertical feathers.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.
- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

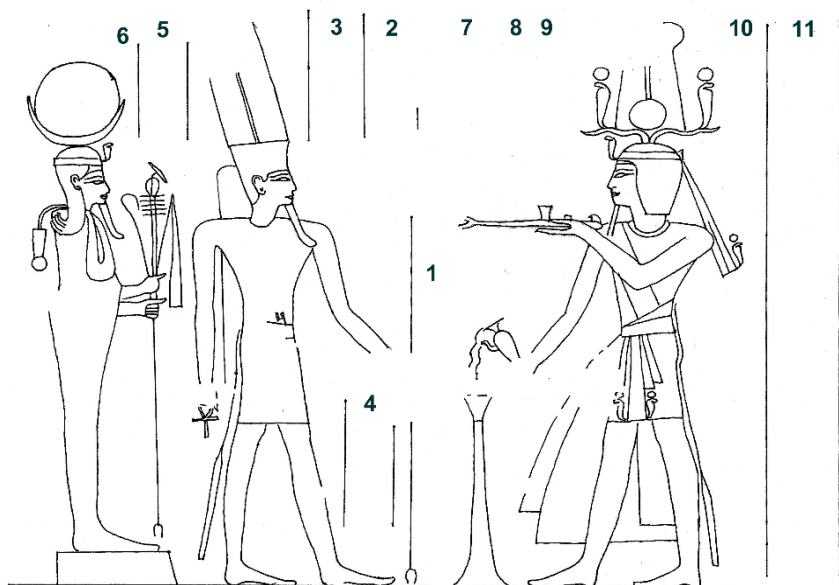


Figure 15: Scene 9 (KG 117)

**Khonsu**

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing, static, on *maat* socket.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods; *menat*-necklace.
- Headdress: in his role of the divine child in the Theban Triad, he wears the ‘lock of youth’; 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-was* composite sceptre, the *heqat*-sceptre and the *nekhakha*-flagellum.

**Hieroglyphic texts:**

*Label:* Censing and libation to his father.



*By Amun:* [Amun-Re], lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, lord of heaven: “(I) have given to you all life, stability, and [dominion] every day. (I) have given to you jubilees like Re”.



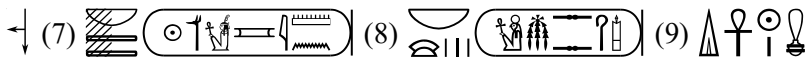
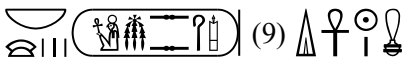



By *Khonsu*: Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep.

↳ (5) 

→ (6) 

By *Ramesses III*: The Lord of Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, Lord of Diadems, Ramesses III, given life like Re.

↳ (7)  (8)  (9) 

Behind the king:

(May) protection, life, stability, and dominion attend him like Re forever.

↳ (10) 

The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun; the son of Re, lord of Diadems, Ramesses III, beloved of Amun.

↳ (11) 



Figure 16. Scene 10 (KG 116)

Scene 9 (KG 117)

**Scene 10**

**Location:** bottom register, scene 6 (KG 116; see *fig. 2*).<sup>21</sup>

**Scene:** Ramesses III offers wine to Ba, Lord of Mendes (*figs. 16-17*).<sup>22</sup>

Ramesses III

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing flanked by *uraei* devoid of crowns.
- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: blue crown, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: combination of long kilt and short kilt with triangular protection and frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: the king carries a globular bowl of wine in each hand.

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

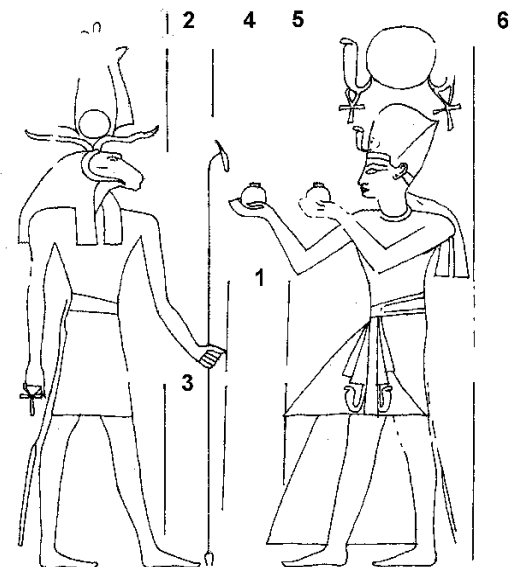


Figure 17: Scene 10 (KG 116)

Ba, Lord of Mendes

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: man with the head of a ram, with a curved horn around the ear.
- Headdress: *atef* crown surmounting tripartite wig.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull's tail.

21. Porter and Moss 1972 174-175 (519, III, 5).

22. Barguet 1962: 263.







- Physical appearance: barefoot.
- Headdress: blue crown, with frontal uraeus.
- Dress: combination of long kilt and short kilt with triangular protection and frontal ornament; he wears ceremonial bull tail.
- Attitude: the king holds the figure of Maat on his right hand, while performing the adoration gesture with his left hand.

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

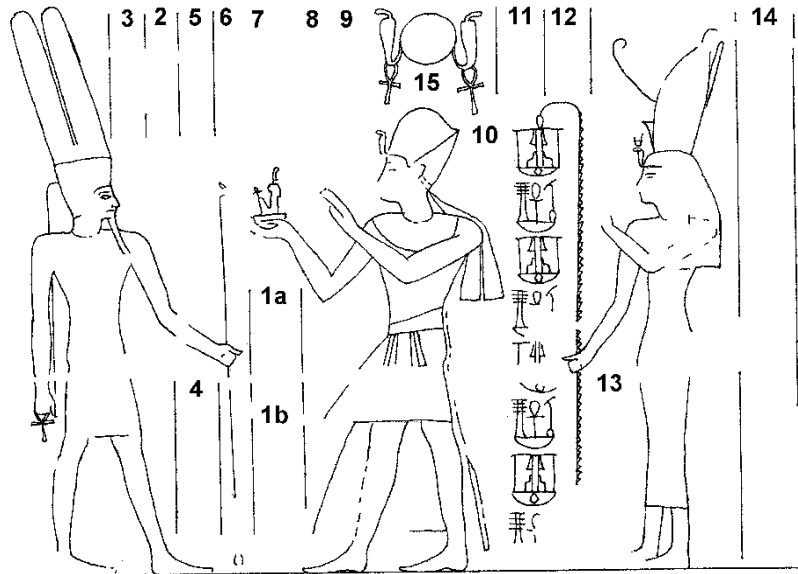


Figure 20: Scene 12 (KG 114)

#### Mut-Bastet-Weret-hekau

- Orientation: ←
- Posture: standing.
- Headdress: tripartite wig, with frontal uraeus; on the headdress rests the double crown.
- Dress: tight long dress.
- Attitude: with the left hand the goddess makes the gesture of protection; with the right, she grasps a year-staff ending in a  $\text{𓄏}$  sign (*hfn*, “a hundred thousand” or “myriad”). Four *heb-sed* signs, three groups  $\text{𓆎}$ , and a group  $\text{𓆎𓆎}$  that hang from the year-staff read: “a hundred thousand of years of all stability, life, and dominion with *Sed*-Festivals”.

#### Amun-Re

- Orientation: →
- Posture: standing.
- Physical appearance: ceremonial beard of the gods.
- Headdress: top crown with two high vertical feathers.
- Dress: short kilt, with ceremonial bull’s tail.

- Attitude: on the left hand, which is more advanced, the god holds the *was*-sceptre; on the right, the *ankh*-sign.

**Hieroglyphic texts:**

*Label:* Presenting Maat to the lord of Maat that he might achieve ‘given life’ like Re.



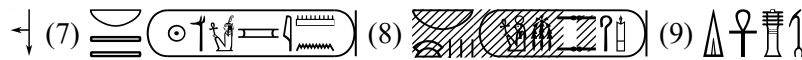
*By Amun-Re:* Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, preeminent in Karnak, [... who is loved]: “(I) have given to you eternity as king of the Two Lands”.



*In front of the king's cartouches:* Min-Amun, the great god, his beauty like [...].



*By Ramesses III:* The lord of Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun, [lord of Diadems, Rames]ses III, given life, stability, and dominion.



*Behind the king:* (May) protection and life attend him like Re forever.



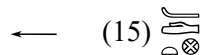
*By Mut-Bastet-Weret-hekau:* Mut-Bastet-Weret-hekau, lady of heaven: “(I) have given jubilees like Tatenen”.



*Behind the goddess:* The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun; the son of Re, lord of Diadems, Ramesses III, beloved of Amun.



*By the Disk:* The Behdetite.



### 3. *The middle register. “Confirmation of royal power”*

The scenes depicted on the middle register describe, in a schematic way, the confirmation of the royal power to Ramesses III. Likewise, they convey the desire of the sovereign to keep on enjoying a long reign that should allow him to celebrate many *Sed*-Festivals. Taking into account the ceremonial sequence of the ritual as it is preserved in the Brooklyn Papyrus 47.218.50<sup>27</sup>, we can distinguish in this middle register two groups of depictions, very different in nature, made up by two scenes each one.<sup>28</sup>

The first one involves **scenes 1 and 2**. There we can see the purification of the king (**scene 1**) and the ceremonial dressing of Ramesses III with the royal attributes (**scene 2**). These events could be carried out either at house of the morning (*pr-dw3.t*), at dawn, or at the door of the pylon that led to the temple.<sup>29</sup>

In the first scene (**Scene 1**), the king is purified by four priests wearing the masks of the divinities that have a role in the purification ritual and that incarnate the four cardinal points: Horus (North), Seth (South), Thoth (West), and Dewen-‘anwy (East). Here, Ramesses III stands between the Behdetite and Thoth, who pour over him streams of water represented as signs of life.

In the second scene (**Scene 2**), after this ablution, Ramesses III, dressed in an outfit overloaded with symbolic ornaments (the crown *atef*, the *heqat*-sceptre, the *nekhakha*-flagellum, and the *ankh*-sign), is crowned by two other priests wearing the attributes of Atum and Re-Horakhty. Re-Horakhty, the great god, lord of heaven, ruler of the Ennead, says to the pharaoh: “(I) establish for you the diadems upon your head, the ornament of Re” (**Scene 2, 3**), while Atum, lord of heaven, tells him: “receive for yourself the diadems upon your head, the ornament of your father Re, that you may celebrate jubilees like Tatenen” (**Scene 2, 10-12**). As we can see, the text alludes both to the diadems and the ornament of the god Re, and to the *Sed*-Festivals that Ramesses III will celebrate like the god Tatenen, embodiment of the primeval earth that emerges from Nun. These divinities, Atum, Re and Tatenen, are often mentioned in Ramesside texts, because in that period the king’s *Sed*-Festivals was usually correlated to those of Atum, Re, Ptah-Tatenen, and Tatenen; divinities that had celebrated jubilees when they were kings of the first divine dynasty at the very beginning of time. The comparison is evident, for instance, when the sons of Ramesses III request that his father could celebrate jubilees like those “which Re has celebrated”, or in the expression/utterance “the jubilees that Re has celebrated” that the god Amun-Re<sup>30</sup> and the goddess Mut<sup>31</sup> address to the king. Also, in the great temple of Medinet Habu,<sup>32</sup> two princes offer bouquet to Ramesses III. Above the princes, we read: “Presenting all (kinds of) beautiful flowers to the king, by the chief king’s sons; they say: ‘Your appearing is beautiful, (O) king, victorious like Re, who rises at dawn, all lands being under your sandals. Everyone is in praise before you; may you

27. For the papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.50, see Goyon 1972.

28. According to Pierre Grandet, the scenes on the central register depict the main ceremonies of the King’s investiture/enthronement. Cf. Grandet 1993:49-51.

29. Dedreff 2009: 27; Goyon 1972: 19, 53-54.

30. Medinet Habu. Great temple. Second court, west portico, pillar 41, bottom north face (*MHA* 211c). We read: “Amun-Re, king of the gods, lord of heaven, ruler of Thebes, the great god, as he gives the jubilees which Re has celebrated to the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Usermaatre Meryamun”; see Epigraphic Survey 1957: pl. 272A.

31. Medinet Habu. Great temple. Second court, north wall, lower register, second scene (*MHA* 146). In the scene, Ramesses III, following the king’s bark, meets the barks of the Theban Triad carried by priests. The goddess said: “(I) have given to you the jubilees that Re has celebrated”; see Epigraphic Survey 1940: pl. 231, 16; Kitchen 1969-90: V, 217, 4.

32. First court, south wall, doorway E, east side of passage (*MHA* 86), cf. Porter and Moss 1972: 495 (79, c).



celebrate for us the million(s) of jubilees which Re has celebrated during (his) kingship. (O) lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre Meryamun”<sup>33</sup>

**Scenes 3 and 4** make up the second group. **Scene 3** depicts the processional entry to the temple, while in **scene 4** the king receives the jubilees from Amun-Re.

In the third scene (**scene 3**), Ramesses III is led into the temple, after the coronation ceremony, by priests wearing attributes of Mut and Khonsu, the wife and the son of the god Amun-Re. Last, in the fourth scene (**scene 4**), the King enters the sanctuary of the temple, where he is greeted by Amun-Re and Amonet, female counterpart of Amun, particularly at Karnak. Between the pharaoh and Amun-Re, like a propitious oracle, the text narrates the ceremony that is taking place there: “Receive for yourself the jubilees of Re and the years of Atum, (O) Horus, great in kingship” (**scene 4, 1-2**). The god Amun-Re intensifies even more the prominence of the scene while saying: “(I) have given to you millions [of jubilees]” (**scene 4, 4**) and “(I) have given to you myriads [of years]” (**scene 4, 5**). Also, the goddess Amunet, residing in Karnak and mistress of the gods, announces to Ramesses III: “(I) have given to you the lifetime of Re and the years of Atum” (**scene 4, 7-8**) and “(I) have given to you eternity as king of the Two Lands like Re” (**scene 4, 9**). Behind the goddess, there is a text that illustrates how much concerned Ramesses III was during his reign to assure for himself an eternal period of existence like his father Re, the solar demiurge god. The inscription reads: “So long as Re exists, so shall your name exist (and) so shall your deeds exist with life and dominion united with your limbs” (**scene 4, 11**).

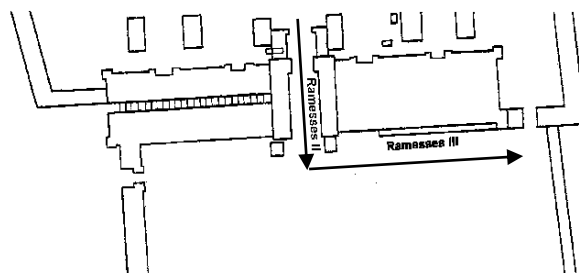


Figure 21: Location of the scenes from Ramesses II and Ramesses III on the eighth pylon

#### 4. *Ramesses III follows in the footsteps of Ramesses II*

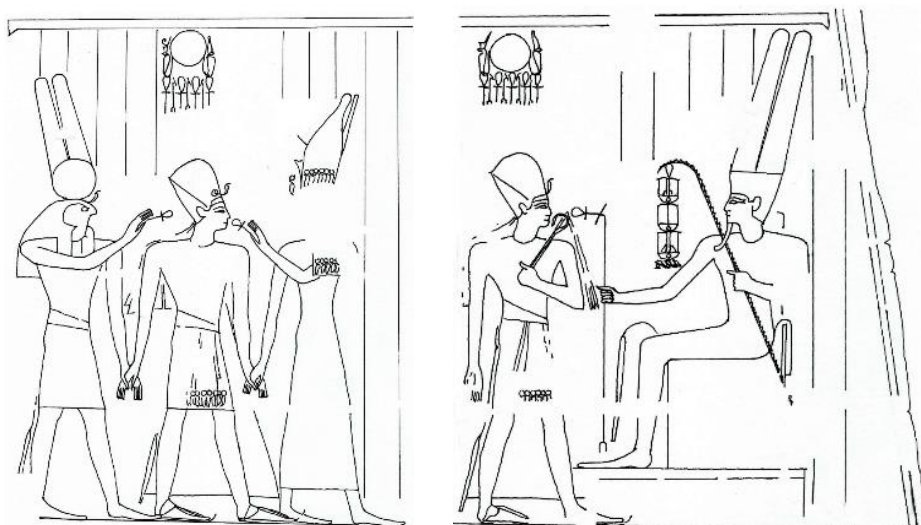
Indeed, if we carefully observe the decoration of the north tower of the eighth pylon, we can notice that the place that Ramesses III chose to carve in these scenes was not at all decided by chance. There, on the west side of the central passage of the axial gate, three scenes from Ramesses II time are located, distributed in two registers. These scenes convey the scenic iconography and textual formulas related to the *Sed*-Festival of this king of the 19th dynasty (*figs. 21-22*). On the upper scene (*KG 134*), Ramesses II, equipped, as king of Lower Egypt, with a *mekes* in his right hand and a flail in his left, performs a ceremonial run before Amun-Re-Kamutef, Amunet, and Lower Egypt Meret-goddess.<sup>34</sup>

33. Epigraphic Survey 1940: pl. 240A, 1-7; Kitchen 1969-90: V, 192, 4-9.

34. Porter and Moss 1972: 175 (520, d, I).

Most probably, the two scenes of the lower register provided the inspiration to the group carved by Ramesses III on the central register of the north face of the eighth pylon, although there are some differences that deserve to be mentioned.

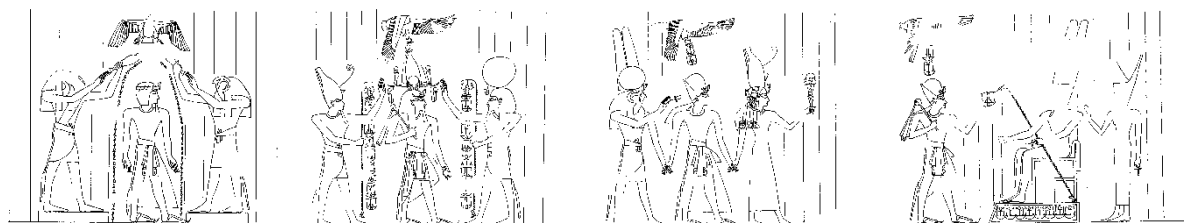
In the first scene of the lower register (left side; *KG 136*), Ramesses II is led by Mut and Khonsu into the temple.<sup>35</sup> Between the god Khonsu and the king, the representation is described as “coming in and going out: inducting the king into the temple”. Mut and Khonsu bestow the sign of life to Ramesses II. Mut the great, lady of *Isheru*, mistress of the Two Lands, says to the king: “Proceed to the temple of your father Amun-Re, (as) he gives to you jubilees, may you repeat jubilees, (and) that he might endow you with life, stability, and dominion”.



*KG 136*

*KG 135*

Direction of the scenes of Ramesses II: South → North



Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Direction of the scenes of Ramesses III: East → West

Figure 22: Ramesses II and Ramesses III on the eighth pylon

35. Porter and Moss 1972: 175 (520, d, II, 2); Oriental Institute of Chicago, photo number: 6197.



and built the great porticoes of the court, the previous monumental entrance to the temple, which was the north façade of the great colonnade of Amenhotep III, became part of the new court. The studies of the Epigraphic Survey have shown that the grand entrance to the Temple of Luxor, during the 18th dynasty, was decorated under the reign of Ay. Ramesses II also modified part of the original reliefs of the façade.<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, only half of the four figures that make up the lower register of the western half of the southern wall (*LA 54*) are preserved. There Ramesses II, accompanied by Khonsu, is represented before Amun-Re and Mut, and before Amun-Re, we read: “May you celebrate *Sed*-Festivals, may you repeat *Sed*-Festival(s), may you be rejuvenated like the moon”.<sup>38</sup>



It is obvious that the inscriptions from Karnak and Luxor clearly underline the desire of Ramesses II to celebrate more than one *Sed*-Festival. Unfortunately, we don't know the precise date of execution of these scenes, albeit we can make some guesses from Luxor. Thanks to an inscription located on the third register of the south face of the east tower of the temple's pylon, we know the pylon's dedication date<sup>39</sup>: “Year 3, 4th month of *Akhet*, day 3”. Next to the inscription, we found a relief, badly damaged, that depicts the façade of the building as it was in the 3rd year of the reign of Ramesses II. Before the pylon, in its north face, there are two obelisks and two colossal statues of the king that flank the entrance.<sup>40</sup> Regrettably, instead, we don't possess any information about the date when the scenes from the west side of the central passage that leads to the axial gate of the eighth pylon at Karnak were carved.


Were in the third year or later, it is clear that it was well before the King could celebrate his first *Sed*-Festival, because that depended on the life span of the pharaoh. It was then a mere wish. The wish, although, came true in the 30<sup>th</sup> year of his reign when Ramesses II celebrated his first *Sed*-Festival, and even more when he repeated it 13 times. As we have a great amount of information relative to Ramesses II and we know that he celebrated fourteen *Sed*-Festivals between the years 30 and 65/66 of his reign, we can tentatively assume that the scenes he carved on the eighth pylon at Karnak had the same significance were they carved before or after the 30<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. The scenes would reflect the wish of the pharaoh to “celebrate *Sed*-Festivals”, if it were before the first celebration, and “to repeat *Sed*-Festivals”, once he had already celebrated one or some of them.<sup>41</sup>

37. Johnson 1986: 45-46.

38. Epigraphic Survey 1998: pl. 138; Mumane 1981: 375; Porter and Moss 1972: 309 (31); Oriental Institute of Chicago, photos number: 12465 and 12466.

39. Azim 1986: 35; Porter and Moss 1972: 306 (17, III, 2).

40. Porter and Moss 1972: 306 (17, III, 5); Yurco 1986: 40.

41. An antecedent that refers to the “repetition of the *Sed*-Festivals” is found in the hypostyle hall of the Luxor temple. In the third scene of the third register of the east wall (scene *LD 42*), where Amenhotep III presides at the erecting of the *sehnet* (sHn.t) before ithyphallic Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, lord of heaven, ruler of Thebes, we read before the god, “may you repeat millions of *Sed*-Festival(s)” (). Gayet 1894: pl. X, fig. 59; Porter and Moss 1972: 312 (102, III, 3). To compare Gayet's reproduction with the original scene, cf. Oriental Institute of Chicago, photo number: 6597.

In the great temple of Karnak, there are two references to an epithet which follows the introductory epithet of the *nomen*, that of the son of Re. In both inscriptions, we read: “The son of Re that repeats jubilees, the master of



Offering a <i>heb-sed</i> sign				
Mut →	Amun-Re →	← Ramesses III	← Weret-hekau	<b>Scene 6</b>
Presenting Maat				
Iusaas →	Amun-Re-Horakhty →	← Ramesses III	← Thoth	<b>Scene 8</b>
	Amun-Re →	← Ramesses III	← Mut-Bastet-Weret-hekau	<b>Scene 12</b>
Offering wine				
Tefnut →	Onuris-Shu →	← Ramesses III		<b>Scene 5</b>
	Ba →	← Ramesses III		<b>Scene 10</b>
Offering ointment				
Hathor →	Atum →	← Ramesses III	← Wadjet	<b>Scene 7</b>
Offering incense				
	Khonsu →	← Ramesses III		<b>Scene 11</b>
Offering incense and libation				
Khonsu →	Amun-Re →	← Ramesses III		<b>Scene 9</b>

The dialogue between the gods and the king in these scenes legitimizes the sovereignty of Ramesses III upon the throne of Egypt, granting him “eternity as king of the Two Lands” (Amun-Re in **Scene 12**), “the lifetime of Re” (Ba in **Scene 10**; Iusaas in **Scene 8**), and “myriads of years like Re” (Tefnut, **Scene 5**). Also, through the word the divinities grant the king: “the jubilees of Re” (Khonsu in **Scene 11**), “the jubilees of Re and the years of Atum” (Wadjet in **Scene 7**), “jubilees like Re” (Amun in **Scene 9**), “jubilees like Tatenen” (Mut-Bastet-Weret-hekau in **Scene 12**); “many jubilees” (Onuris-Shu in **Scene 5**), and “millions of jubilees like Tatenen” (Thoth in **Scene 8**).

While the contents of the scenes depicted on the central register of the eighth pylon at Karnak –purification, leading the king inside the temple, coronation, and delivery of hundreds of millions of years with Sed Festivals–, could be inserted in the usual iconographic cycle of renewal of the king’s power that could be found in many cultural centers scattered throughout the domain of Amun, the scenes where the king presents a *heb-sed* sign to a divinity is scarcely represented in the iconography related to the king’s *Sed*-Festival (see **Scene 6**). For example, away from ancient Thebes, a scene from Ramesses II with this theme has been preserved. It is located on a lintel of a door that probably comes from Qantir, in Lower Egypt, currently kept in the Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim (inv. 1107). In the right half of the lintel, Ramesses II presents a *heb-sed* sign to the god Ptah, in the presence of a [divinity] (*fig. 23*).<sup>46</sup>

Coming back to **Scene 6** from the bottom register of the eighth pylon, we notice that Ramesses III holds on his right hand a *heb-sed* sign that he presents/offers to the god Amun-Re. The king is accompanied by the goddess Weret-hekau, lady of the palace, while behind Amun-Re stands the goddess Mut the great, lady of heaven and mistress of the gods, holding a *heb-sed* sign with his left hand. Weret-hekau (Great-of-magic), the uraeus-goddess that symbolizes the royal crowns, was initially an epithet applied to different goddesses —Mut, Hathor, Isis o Nephthys. Afterwards,

46. Egipto milenario. Vida cotidiana en la época de los faraones. (Catálogo de exposición, Sevilla - Zaragoza - Valencia - La Coruña - Palma - Santa Cruz de Tenerife) 1998: 82 (cat. 40); Habachi 1954: 543, XXXVII [C].

during the New Kingdom, she became an independent goddess and hold an important role in the coronation ceremonies,<sup>47</sup> where she represented the crowns of the Upper and Lower Egypt, known as the Upper Egyptian crown Great-of-magic and the Lower Egyptian crown Great-of-magic,<sup>48</sup> or Werety-hekau, the two Great-of-Magic, when the Double Crown is denoted.



Figure 23. Lintel of a door inscribed for Ramesses II

The workmanship of the scenes from the bottom register is coarser than the central register. So, it seems probable that the bottom register was carved later and executed by other craftsmen, and this fact leads us to question why these scenes were carved later. The two aforementioned scenes that represent the king offering/presenting a *heb-sed* sign to a god, one from Ramesses II and another from Ramesses III,<sup>49</sup> concern sovereigns that celebrated *Sed*-Festivals. Taking into account this detail we think that it could be reasonable to suggest, as a working hypothesis, that the Pharaoh in these scenes offers to the gods a previously celebrated *Sed*-Festival. If it were so, it would be logical that the scenes of the bottom register of the eighth pylon at Karnak were oriented towards the outside of the temple, as Ramesses III would have already celebrated his first and only jubilee in the 30<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. The bottom register, then, would be carved after the celebration.

47. See, for example, the scene *KB* 286 of the great hypostyle hall at Karnak, in which Sety I, kneeling, is crowned by Re-Horakhty and Weret-Hekau, and receiving jubilees from Re-Horakhty. Cf. Nelson 1981: pl. 192.

48. *Pyramid Texts* § 1624, cf. Faulkner 1969: 243.

49. The upper register of the south wall of rooms 21a and 21b in the Osiris Complex at Medinet Habu (*MHA* 422), was originally decorated with a scene depicting Ramesses III kneeling in a *heb* sign, placed on a high plinth and beside the *Ished* tree, between two divinities: the god Thoth, represented standing, and Amun-Re, sitting on a throne. Both gods write on the leaves of the *Ished* tree. Ramesses III, who is touched with the nemes and wears a ritual false beard, present probably a leaf of the tree (today lost) to the god Amun-Re, who inscribes the name of the monarch with the traces of his own fingers. The sovereign, in turn, presents with his right hand a *heb-sed* sign to the “king of the gods”. When rooms 21a and 21b were added, this relief was modified and redecorated. The figure of king was oriented to the left in front of the god Thoth. Ramesses III was also represented kneeling on a *heb* sign, placed on a high plinth and inside the *Ished* tree. This new scene covers the south wall of room 21a, while the figure of the god Amun-Re occupies the interior of room 21b. The original figure of the pharaoh practically disappeared under the wall that separates both chambers. In the scene of room 21a, the figure of the king, touched with the blue crown, is in an unfortunate state of preservation. Remains of the arms are preserved, but not the hands. Due to all these modifications that this scene has undergone, it is impossible to establish whether Ramesses III originally presented a *heb-sed* sign to the god Amun-Re. Only an exhaustive study on the ground could give us a more precise clue. For the scene *MHA* 422, see Porter and Moss 1972: 510 (148, g); Epigraphic Survey 1963: pl. 448.

## 6. Bibliography

- Azim, M. 1986: "Le grand pylône de Ramsès". *Dossiers d'archéologie* 101 (Egypte. Louqsor. Temple du Ka royal): 33-38.
- Barguet, P. 1962: *Le Temple d'Amon-Re à Karnak. Essai d'exégèse*. Recherches d'archéologie, de philologie et d'histoire. Institut français d'archéologie orientale 21. Cairo.
- Catálogo de exposición 1998: *Egipto milenario. Vida cotidiana en la época de los faraones* (Sevilla - Zaragoza - Valencia - La Coruña - Palma - Santa Cruz de Tenerife).
- Costa, S. 2004: *Las representaciones del rey recibiendo los jubileos en los templos tebanos de época ramésida*. Thesis *Ægyptiaca* I, 2 vols. Barcelona.
- Costa, S. 2013: *Medinet Habu: las escenas de las columnas y del pórtico Oeste del segundo patio*. Estudios sobre la antigua Tebas VII. Barcelona.
- Degreff, J.D. 2009: "The Heb-Sed Festival sequence and pBrooklyn 47.218.50". *Göttinger Miszellen* 223: 27-34. Göttingen.
- Epigraphic Survey 1957: *Medinet Habu, Vol. V: The Temple Proper, 1: The Portico, the Treasury, and Chapels Adjoining the First Hypostyle Hall with Marginal Material from the Forecourts*. Oriental Institute Publications 83. Chicago.
- Epigraphic Survey 1963: *Medinet Habu, Vol. VI: The Temple Proper, 2: The Re Chapel, the Royal Mortuary Complex, and Adjacent Rooms with Miscellaneous Material from the Pylons, the Forecourts, and the First Hypostyle Hall*. Oriental Institute Publications 84. Chicago.
- Epigraphic Survey 1964: *Medinet Habu, Vol. VII: The Temple Proper, 3: The Third Hypostyle Hall and All Rooms Accessible from It with Friezes of Scenes from the Roof Terraces and Exterior Walls of the Temple*. Oriental Institute Publications 93. Chicago.
- Epigraphic Survey 1970: *Medinet Habu, Vol. VIII: The Eastern High Gate with Translation of Texts*. Oriental Institute Publications 94. Chicago.
- Epigraphic Survey 1998: *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple, Vol. 2: The façade, portals, upper register scenes, columns, marginalia, and statuary in the Colonnade Hall*. Oriental Institute Publications 116. Chicago.
- Faulkner, R. O. 1969: *The Ancient Egyptian pyramid texts*. Warminster.
- Gardiner, A. H. 1947: *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*. 2 vols. London.
- Gayet, A. 1894: *Le Temple de Louxor*. Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française du Caire 15. Paris.
- Grandet, P. 1993: *Ramsès III. Histoire d'un règne*. Paris: Pygmalion.
- Goyon, J.-Cl. 1972: *Confirmation du pouvoir royal au Nouvel An (Brooklyn Museum Papyrus 47.218.50)*, Bibliothèque d'Étude. Institut français d'archéologie orientale 52, Cairo.
- Helck, W. 1972: *Die Ritualdarstellungen des Ramesseums*. Vol. 1. Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 25. Wiesbaden.
- Johnson, W.R. 1986: "Le décor de la façade". *Dossiers d'archéologie* 101 (Egypte. Louqsor. Temple du Ka royal): 45-46.
- Kitchen, K. A. 1969-90: *Ramesseum Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*. Vols. I-VIII. Oxford.
- Le Saout, F. 1982b: "À propos d'un colosse de Ramsès II à Karnak". *Cahiers de Karnak. Centre franco-égyptien d'étude des temples de Karnak VII, 1978-1981*: 267-274. Paris.
- Murnane, W. J. 1981: "The Sed Festival: A Problem in Historical Method". *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abt. Kairo* 37: 369-376.



Nelson, H. H. 1942: "The Identity of Amon-Re of United-with-Eternity". *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 1: 127-155.

Nelson, H. H. 1981: *The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*. Vol. 1, pt. 1, *The Wall reliefs*. Edited by W.J. Murnane. Oriental Institute Publications 106. Chicago.

Nims C. 1976: "Ramesseum sources of Medinet Habu reliefs". *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes*. *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* 39: 169-175.

Porter, B., and Moss, R. L. B. 1972: *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*. Vol. II, *Theban Temples*. 2nd ed. Oxford.

Rondot, V. 1997: *La grande salle hypostyle de Karnak: Les architraves*, 2 vols. Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak. Paris.