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Herausgegeben von
Jochem Kahl und
Nicole Kloth



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Richardstraße 48

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sak@buske.de

Herausgeber:

Prof. Dr. Jochem Kahl

Ägyptologisches Seminar

Freie Universität Berlin

Fabeckstr. 23–25, Raum 0.0056

D-14195 Berlin

jochem.kahl@fu-berlin.de

Dr. Nicole Kloth

Sondersammelgebiet Ägyptologie

Universitätsbibliothek

Plöck 107–109

D-69117 Heidelberg

kloth@ub.uni-heidelberg.de

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Finding a Voice in a Hymn to Ramesses IX (MMA 59.51a, b)

Niv Allon

(The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

(Taf. 1)

Abstract

This paper proposes that an unpublished relief at The Metropolitan Museum of Art is a part of a lintel displaying a hymn to Ramesses IX and his image. Its inscription finds its closest comparison in an ostrakon in the British Museum whose inscription otherwise compares to a scene from Medinet Habu. Following the common thread to these texts, this paper explores the social aspects of praise and its forms of expression through its contexts and prisms of registers, quotations, and voice. Praise and its language, it argues, are constantly negotiated among the elite as well as between elite voices and royal authority.

All eyes are on Ramesses IX in a relief at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Taf. 1 a).¹ The king sits enthroned, his figure youthful and slender. To the right, five columns of text present a royal hymn, one of the few to survive in stone from the late Ramesside Period.² The text likens the king to the sun god Re and the creator god Khnum, praising his good nature and care for his people. The hymn mentions neither victory nor conquest, but a mace and a spear in the sovereign's hand speak to his aptitude for war.³ As the text and the image complement each other, the relief seemingly preserves a complete and self-standing pair.

Aside from the hymn and the royal image, however, much in the relief appears missing. The two slabs of stone from which it is made do not perfectly align, and the text's final column is missing its framing line to the right. More importantly, the hymn's speaker is absent. Whereas most stone-inscribed hymns state their adorer's name and often have him depicted, neither name nor image remains on Ramesses IX's relief.

The speaker's obscurity, I argue, is more than just a byproduct of the relief's history.⁴ It is a political statement with social ramifications.⁵ Whereas a now missing final column might have given the speaker's name, the speaker never refers to himself or says "I," even though the hymn addresses the king directly ("Praised be you, O good ruler"). In doing so, he positions himself as the Pharaoh's conversant while ascribing all agency to the king. The speaker's positioning is especially important when considering the hymn's intended audience. As

¹ MMA 59.51a, b; A photograph of the left half of the piece with Ramesses IX's image was published in S. Glubok, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, New York 1962, 46.

² See C. Maderna-Sieben, *Königseulogien der frühen Ramessidenzeit: politische Propaganda im Dienst der Legitimierung einer neuen Dynastie*, Heidelberg 2018, 7–8. However, her focus lies on royal ideology as expressed in official texts. This study will employ a broader definition of eulogies that encompasses a larger corpus of texts.

³ The pointed end of the spear differentiates it from a similarly looking staff, like the one which Senwosret I holds alongside a mace on his shrine at Karnak, see H. G. Fischer, *Notes on Sticks and Staves in Ancient Egypt*, in: *MMJ* 13, 1978, 24, fig. 38.

⁴ According to Anthony Spalinger, "only sometimes can the eulogies be connected to a speaker or speakers" (A. J. Spalinger, *New Kingdom Eulogies of Power: A Preliminary Analysis*, in: *Es werde niedergelegt als Schriftstück: Festschrift für Hartwig Altenmüller zum 65. Geburtstag*, N. Kloth/K. Martin/E. Pardey (eds.), *SAK Beihefte* 9, Hamburg 2003, 419.) However, his focus lies in identifying speakers in paratextual elements, while this paper studies how speakers make themselves present within the hymn's text.

⁵ Imperfect as the terms *social* and *political* might be, they are employed here in order to locate the hymn within the interpersonal imagination of subjecthood and viewership.

a fragment of a lintel, its hymn and image of Ramesses IX would have expressed to a broad audience the themes of royal authority and loyalty to the crown while evoking a shared sentiment toward the king.

Obscuring himself, its speaker could have fashioned his royal eulogy after divine hymns, in which Jan Assmann identifies strict genre constraints that prohibit references to the speaker, his situation, or relationship to the praised.⁶ However, while some royal hymns employ this model, others ascribe agency to their speakers. These variations shift the focus away from the genre's constraints and toward the relationship between Ramesses IX's hymn and elite speech in other royal eulogies.

To explore this relationship, this paper will follow a tentative genealogy connecting the relief and two other adoration scenes. Part of the relief's hymn echoes a eulogy to Ramesses IX on an ostrakon in the British Museum (O.BM EA 5620).⁷ This ostrakon finds, otherwise, a close parallel in a scene on the walls of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III in Medinet Habu, where members of the elite are recorded singing praise to Ramesses III.⁸ These texts and other royal hymns were often studied with an eye towards their oral pasts or their *Sitz-im-Leben*.⁹ Instead, this paper's line of inquiry calls to focus on the objects themselves and their display of royal praise.¹⁰ Moreover, studying their hymns as representations of speech,¹¹ this paper will analyze their use of personal pronouns (or the lack thereof) through register and voice to explore how praise is fashioned, negotiated, and disseminated.

The relationship between these texts, even if provisional, points at the negotiation of language-use and the ideology it carries between royal and non-royal spheres, for which the use of quotation and direct speech plays an important role. Eliciting admiration, the relief—and others like it—take part in establishing this sentiment toward the king and defining its expression. Through this prism, royal discourse does not appear to emanate solely from the king and his immediate circle. Instead, praise and its language are constantly negotiated among the elite as well as between elite voices and royal authority.

⁶ “Das Ich des Sprechers ist diesen Texten fremd.” (J. Assmann, *Altägyptische Totenliturgien. I: Totenliturgien in den Sargtexten des Mittleren Reiches*, *Supplemente zu den Schriften der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 14*, Heidelberg 2002, 30; cf. J. Assmann, *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete: übersetzt, kommentiert und eingeleitet.*, OBO, Freiburg, Schweiz/Göttingen ²1999, 65.

⁷ R. J. Demarée, *Ramesside Ostraca*, London 2002, 15, pl. 1. See more below.

⁸ Medinet Habu II, pl. 75; Reliefs I, 122–23. A similar scene appears on the walls of the Mut precinct at Karnak; on which, see more below.

⁹ See, for example, A. J. Spalinger, *Two Ramesside Rhetorical Poems*, in *Fs. Parker*, 136–64; Spalinger in: *Es werde niedergelegt*; Spalinger, *Five Views on Egypt*, *LingAeg, Studia Monographica 6*, Göttingen 2006, 87–121; Maderna-Sieben, *Königseulogien*. This paper will also avoid court terminology that often posits oral and interpersonal interactions, cf. L. Coulon, *Célébrer d'élite, louer Pharaon: éloquence et cérémonial de cour au Nouvel Empire*, in: *Élites et pouvoir en Égypte ancienne; colloque*, Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 7 et 8 juillet 2006, ed. J. C. Moreno Garcia, *CRIPPEL 28*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 2010, 211–38.

¹⁰ This position also entails focusing on the relief's text over possible antecedents which it might have copied, especially given how fraught are any distinctions between copyist and author in such texts. For a similar approach, see F. Hagen, *An Ancient Egyptian Literary Text in Context: The Instruction of Ptahhotep*, OLA 218, Leuven 2012; M. Geoga, *Receptions of a Middle Egyptian Poem A Textual and Material Study of The Teaching of Amenemhat in the New Kingdom*, Ph.D. Thesis, Brown University 2020.

¹¹ In contrast to studies that employ broad definitions of royal eulogies (cf. Spalinger, in: *Es werde niedergelegt*, 418), this study only focuses on royal hymns that address the king as an interlocutor and thus embed the social interaction in the text itself.

1 Ramesses IX's Relief at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 59.51a, b)

Little is known about the relief before it arrives at the Museum in 1959. The relief was acquired in two pieces with no additional information regarding its prior history and its original provenance. With its backs and sides cut smooth, more traces of the relief's original setting are now lost.¹² However, its dimensions and style point to a possible context where it brought together its owner, his king, and their potential viewers.

Only the sovereign remains in view from the original scene, sitting atop a raised platform in a baldachin in front of a column that ends in a bud-shaped capital. Below the canopy, a winged sun disk hovers—an image of Horus of Edfu, as the adjacent inscription states.¹³ The other inscription identifies the Pharaoh as the “Lord of the two lands, Neferkare Setepenre (Ramesses IX), given life.”¹⁴ The king—an uraeus extending from his brow—wears a mid-length wig with longer front locks that partially cover the two shebiu collars around his neck.¹⁵ He holds a crook and flail in his right hand and a mace and a spear in the left. Bare-chested, he wears a long kilt and curved sandals. His garment is adorned with an apron and sashes, one of which falls freely to the side.¹⁶ A cornice curves above the royal image and the adjacent hymn.

Despite the royal subject matter, the execution of the relief leaves much to be desired. Most glaring is the crude and uneven rendering of the winged sun disk at the top of the scene. Its shortcomings notwithstanding, the stark figure of the king heightens the elaborate insignnia, conveying a sense of majesty and power that the hymn celebrates and amplifies:

j(3).w-t<w> p3 hḳ3 nfr
ᶜn m nswt t3.wy
ntk rᶜw
tjt=k tjt=f
ᶜhᶜ=k mj ᶜhᶜ=f
di=f n=k nsw.yt=f hr-tp t3
hrw=f hr d3y nn.t
ntk z3 ḥd.t
ms.n dšr:t
ntr:t tn – hnm.n=s jnh.wy=k(y)
ntk hnm.w
ḳd nmḥ.w

¹² Acquired from Nicolas Koutoulakis in Paris with its back and sides already sewn. Its obscured context further intensifies questions of (un)grounding, as pointed out by E. Marlowe, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Provenance: A Response to Chippindale and Gill*, in: *International Journal of Cultural Property* 23, 2016, 217–36.

¹³ *bḥd.tj ntr ᶜ3 s3b-šw.tj*, “(Horus) of Edfu, the great god, the many-colored of plumage”.

¹⁴ *nb t3.wi nfr-k3-rᶜw-stp-n-rᶜw di(.w) ᶜnh*.

¹⁵ On the significance of the shebiu collar, see W. R. Johnson, *Images of Amenhotep III in Thebes: Styles and Intentions*, in: *The Art of Amenhotep III: Art Historical Analysis. Papers Presented at the International Symposium Held at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 20–21 November 1987*, ed. L. M. Berman, Cleveland 1990, 26–46; P. J. Brand, *The Shebyu-Collar in the New Kingdom: Part 1*, in: *JSSEA* 33, 2006, 15–42.

¹⁶ On the royal sash, see L. Török, *The Costume of the Ruler in Meroe: Remarks on its Origins and Significance*, in: *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 4, 1990, 151–202.

jr sr.w m k3(.t)=f
di wnn gs m wd3
jw.tj m nb-wn.w
ntk nb
n^c-jb jw.tj b(w)-fny
fnd nb
jm β.w rwd m r[?]=k r^c nb
di=k ḥs.wt=k

Praised¹⁷ be you, O good ruler,
 who is fair as the king of the two lands.
 You are Re,
 His image is your image.
 Your lifetime is like his lifetime,
 as he gives you his kingship upon the earth,
 (on) his day ferrying across the heaven.
 You are the son of the White Crown,
 whom the Red Crown bore.
 This goddess – she¹⁸ has united with your (eye)brows.
 You are Khnum,
 who builds the humble man,
 who makes the nobleman through his work,¹⁹
 who causes a half to be whole,
 (and) a have-not—an owner-of-what-exists.
 You are a master,
 merciful of heart, with no weakness.²⁰
 (As for) any nose²¹ –
 give steady breath from your mouth every day,²²
 May you give your favor ...

¹⁷ For *j(3).w-tw*, see J. Osing, *Der spätägyptische Papyrus BM 10808, ÄA 33*, Wiesbaden 1976, 155–57; H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Die Ankunft des Königs nach ramessidischen Hymnen et cetera*, in: SAK 27, 1999, 67–8.

¹⁸ Said about the snake goddess (principally Wadjet) appearing on the king's brow; In another instance in Medinet Habu, it is clear that the crowns rest on the king's head (with the Atef crown), while another goddess is the one between the eyebrows (Medinet Habu II, pl. 79, l. 17–18).

¹⁹ *k3* can also be rendered as “substance, food,” as well as god's “work,” i.e. creation, see Fischer-Elfert, forthcoming.

²⁰ The group of signs between *jwty* and *jm* presents a few difficulties, and the reading here is, therefore, tentative. A verb *bfn* is attested in Philae and Denderah, but there it seemingly means “to bark” or “dog” (Wb 1, 456.3–5). Instead, *bw-fn.y* is suggested as a substantivized form of *fn* is ‘to be weak,’ (Wb 1, 576.10–12; Faulkner, CD 98).

²¹ At first inspection, the sign above the plural marker resembles the hieroglyph of a forearm (Gardiner Sign List D36 or perhaps D37). In a closer examination, the hieroglyph's right end has a darkened area above it that is not part of the sign, while the left end suffered a slight damage. Therefore, it is suggested that it represents a *nb* basket (W30) whose dimensions were reduced due to the two diagonal strokes above it.

²² See, for example, Inscription of year 11 in Medinet Habu, *n^c dd.y β.w r fnd nb* (Medinet Habu II, pl. 83, l. 60).

Though the king initially appears passive, the hymn quickly turns to praise him for fashioning Egypt's society, from the lowly to the noble, from the pauper to the rich, culminating in an appeal to him to give life and favor. This bond between the king and his subjects is among the hymn's central themes, but while the king's agency becomes fully pronounced, the speaker remains inert throughout the hymn.

Arguably, the inconspicuous positioning of the speaker is dictated by the genre, which draws its inspiration from divine hymns. Aspiring to establish contact between a speaker and a divine listener, these texts must—according to Assmann—remain one-sided and focused on the addressee. With these constraints in mind, the speaker of Ramesses IX's hymn is seemingly obliged to obscure himself. However, a few Ramesside hymns beg the question of whether strict constraints are actually in place. Sety I's viceroy Yuny, for example, makes himself present and active in his rock-inscription through his use of first-person pronouns (fig. 1):

Praise (*j3.w*) to your *k3*, the beautiful and pleasant ruler born (of) Amun,
the light at whose seeing one lives
the sustenance of all (lit. every face)
my god, who created **me** so that **I** might act,
causing me to mingle with noblemen.
How prosperous is he who follows you daily!

For the *k3* of the stable overseer of the stable of Sety Merneptah, the charioteer of [His] Majesty, king's son of Kush, chief of Medjay, Yuny who repeats life and who is glad in ...²³

Yuny emphasizes his relationship to the king, while another official named Ipi inscribes on his lintel a text that highlights his agency in the act of adoration:

May **I** give you praise,
my heart being in joy,
as **my** eyes see your beauty.
The ruler who lives in Maat,
who makes the two lands come into being through his work...²⁴

²³ *j3.wt n k3=k p3 hḳ3 nfr ʿn ms(.w) jmn p3 šw ʿnh.tw m ptr=f p3 k3 hr-nb p3y=i ntr kd w(i) r jr=i di=k šbi=i sr:w w3d wy šms tw m mnḥ.t n k3 n hr:j-jḥ.t n p3 jḥw.t n stḥ-mr.y-ptḥ ktḥ n ḥm[=f ʿ(nh) (w)d3 s(nb)] z3-nswt n kš wr n md3.y jwni whm ʿnh 3w jb m...* (KRI I 303–4; KRITA I 247).

²⁴ Berlin, ÄM 21597 (J. Budka, Der König an der Haustür: die Rolle des ägyptischen Herrschers an dekorierten Türgewänden von Beamten im Neuen Reich, Veröffentlichungen der Institute für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie der Universität Wien 94, Wien 2001, Abb. 30, cat. no. 22). Ipi's lintel is one of the few to open with a statement introducing the speaker *rdi.t j3.w n ntr nfr sn t3 n nswt nḥt jn zh3.w-nswt jm.j-pr n mn-nfr jpj m3^c hrw dd=f di=i n=k j3.w jb=i m rš.wt jrt.y=i hr m33 nfr:w=k p3 hḳ3 ʿnh m m3^c.t šḥpr t3.wy m k3=f*; similarly, a stela from the reign of Amenhotep III evokes similar notions. Its hymn, which appears next to the image of the king, says: *jj.n=i hr=k j3w=i nfr:w=k s^c3y=i nḥt.w=k*, "That I came before you is to praise your beauty (and) to aggrandize your victories." (CG 34170).



Fig. 1: Rock Inscription of Yuni near Kanais (Roland Unger, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

Thus, while the adorer of Ramesses IX's hymn remains obscure throughout his hymn,²⁵ others—like Ipi and Yuni—speak in first-person. Together, they point at a certain latitude in self-positioning in hymns to the king.

These texts also participate in a broader phenomenon that emphasized royal praise in the Ramesside Period. Starting in the Eighteenth Dynasty, officials took pride in their adoration of their king in their autobiographies,²⁶ and royal hymns were often collected together on papyrus,²⁷ copied on ostraca, or included in the so-called Late Egyptian Miscellanies.²⁸ Some of

²⁵ As noted above, the hymn might have stated his name in a now missing column, but his role in speaking to the king would have nevertheless remained obscured.

²⁶ H. Guksch, *Königsdienst: zur Selbstdarstellung der Beamten in der 18. Dynastie*, SAGA 11, Heidelberg 1994, 73–75; R. Gundlach, “Hof – Hofgesellschaft – Hofkultur im pharaonischen Ägypten,” in: R. Gundlach/A. Klug (eds.), *Der ägyptische Hof des Neuen Reiches: seine Gesellschaft und Kultur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Innen- und Außenpolitik. Akten des Internationalen Kolloquiums vom 27.–29. Mai 2002 an der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Wiesbaden 2006*, 26–30. For more generally on eloquence and speech, see Coulon, in: *Élites et pouvoir*.

²⁷ See, for example, Papyrus Chester Beatty I vso B (KRI VI 227–29) and Papyrus Turin 54031 (V. Condon, *Seven Royal Hymns of the Ramesside Period: Papyrus Turin CG 54031*, München, 1978; L. Popko, “Die Königshymnen an Ramses VI. und VII. des Papyrus Turin CG 54031,” in: B. Janowski/D. Schwemer (eds.), *Hymnen, Klagelieder und Gebete*, TUAT.NF 7, Gütersloh, 2013, 197–210).

²⁸ For example, Papyrus Anastasi II includes many eulogies, see C. Ragazzoli, *Scribes: Les artisans du texte en Égypte (1550–1000)*, Les Belles Lettres ancienne, Paris 2019, 318 (fig. 5.7).

these hymns can be traced back to special occasions like the king's coronation or his arrival at a site, suggesting their original setting was intertwined with oral delivery.²⁹

Yuny and Ipi's hymns and others like them point, however, to another context of royal hymns. Unlike the papyri and the ostraca, they place their owners' adoration on display, and their audience extends far beyond the king they address. They convey one's adoration in text and image, as does Hori, a high priest of Sobek-Shedty, whose lintel depicts him in adoration of the king's cartouches while the accompanying text on the proper right reads:

Praise (*j3.w*) to you, the divine king, Re of kingship,
May you praise and love the beloved god's father, (who is) privy to the secrets in the eternal horizon, the first priest of Sobek Shedty, Hori true of voice.³⁰

and on the proper left:

Praise (*j3.w*) to you, the beautiful ruler who enlivens the land through his sustenance,
May he give provisions with the sustenance of what he gives to the *k3* of the wab-priest, the scribe of the army Hori of the domain of Sobek Shedty.³¹

Like Ipi and Hori, other elite members in this era decorate their doorways with adoration scenes, displaying their reverence of the ruling king in doorways to rooms, houses, and chapels.³² Most of these lintels represent cartouches instead of the Pharaoh's image, but one other instance depicts the adorer before a figure of the enthroned king (Taf. 1 b).³³ Ramesses IX's relief thus fits well within this corpus in its dimensions, cornice decoration, and address to the king in the second-person.³⁴ Like them, its text is written as if it were spoken and opens without an introductory statement (*dd mdw* and the like) that would identify the speakers.

²⁹ See Fischer-Elfert, in: SAK 27. One of the hymns he mentions specifically talks about arrival in Thebes (J. L. Foster, *Oriental Institute Ostrakon 25346* (Ostrakon Wilson 100), in: D. P. Silverman (ed.), *For His Ka: Essays Offered in Memory of Klaus Baer*, Chicago, 1994, 87–97). See also K. A. Kitchen, *Review: Condon, Seven Royal Hymns*, in: *Or* 48: 3, 1979, 417–18; J. Assmann, *Review: Condon. Seven Royal Hymns*, in: *JEA* 70, 1984, 165–68.

³⁰ Cairo JE 29334 (KRI VI 554, 5–16; Budka, *Der König an der Haustür*, 240–1, cat. no. 252). For more on Hori and his titles, see M. Zecchi, *I rilievi del Museo del Cairo del 'primo profeta di Sobek Shedety' Hori*, in: *Ricerche di egittologia e di antichità copte* 4, 2002, 17–33.

³¹ (right) *j3.w n=k p3 nswt ntr.y r^cw n nsw.yt hs=k mr=k jt-ntr mr.y hr:j-sšt3 m 3h.t nhh hm-ntr tp.y n sbk šd.ty hri m3^c hr:w* (left) *j3.w n=k p3 hk3 nfr n^ch t3 m k3=f di=f sdf3.w m k3 n dd.t=f n k3 n w^cb zh3.w-mš^c.w hri n pr sbk šd.ty.*

³² For a comprehensive study of this corpus, see Budka, *Der König an der Haustür*. To this corpus, one can now add doorjambs and lintels from private houses in the Medinet Habu precinct from the end of the New Kingdom and the early Third Intermediate Period, see J. Schmied, *Doors to the Past: Rediscovering Fragments in the New Blockyard at Medinet Habu*, in: M. C. Guidotti/G. Rosati (eds.), *Proceedings of the XI International Congress of Egyptologists, Florence Egyptian Museum, Florence, 23–30 August 2015, Oxford 2017*, 563–67. The non-funerary context of similar architraves was already pointed out by L. Habachi, *Khatâ'na-Qantir: Importance*, in: *ASAE* 52: 2, 1954, 443–562; J. Berlandini, *Portes d'édifices privés et de bâtiments de service: problèmes de typologie*, in: *L'Égyptologie en 1979: axes prioritaires de recherches*, Paris 1982, vol I. 169–73.

³³ Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim 1890, Budka, *Der König an der Haustür*, 137 (cat. no. 49), and fig. 37. See also Habachi, in: *ASAE* 52: 2, 543–44, pl. XXXVIII; D. Raue, *Heliopolis und das Haus des Re: eine Prosopographie und ein Toponym im Neuen Reich*, Berlin 1999, 51.

³⁴ In Budka's corpus, nos. 4, 8, 21, 22, and 85 resemble in height, and given the fragmentary nature of the relief, possibly in length. Other examples from the time of Ramesses IX were found in Heliopolis/Tell Hisn-West

Such lintels are found in sites throughout Egypt as well as in Nubia. There, they express one's loyalty to the crown, while making the ruling Pharaoh present and communicating his power to their viewers.³⁵ Their actions share many features with praise as it is articulated in Hindu India, which according to Arjun Appadurai, "create[s] a community of sentiment involving the emotional participation of the praiser, the one who is praised, and the audience of the act of praise."³⁶ Building on Appadurai's analysis, Ramesside lintels can be said to create a community of sentiment that involves the lintel's owner, the king, and the viewers.

Through their praise, these adorers align themselves with each other, creating a community of sentiment — to extend Appadurai's terminology — through specific expressions of praise.³⁷ As these forms of expression circulate in various media, their intertextual affinities extend across different media. Nevertheless, a tentative genealogy connecting Ramesses IX's hymn to the walls of Medinet Habu invites us to consider the role of royal inscriptions in the reproduction and dissemination of these forms of praise.

2 *Medinet Habu*

Otherwise unattested, the hymn to Ramesses IX is a novel bricolage of oft-used eulogistic phrases. The king's fairness (*ʿn m nswt*) is a standard Ramesside turn of phrase,³⁸ while his comparison to Khnum as humanity's creator dates to the Amarna Period and even further back to the Middle Kingdom.³⁹ Ramesses IX's relief thus shares its phraseology with many

inscribed with the name of Ramesses IX's son Nebmaatre. According to Dietrich Raue, the lintels belong to a residential or an administrative building (Raue, Heliopolis, 208–10).

³⁵ J. Budka, *Constructing Royal Authority in New Kingdom Towns in Nubia: Some Thoughts Based on Inscribed Monuments from Private Residences*, in: T. A. Bács/H. Beinlich (eds.), *Constructing Authority: Prestige, Reputation and the Perception of Power in Egyptian Kingship*, Budapest, May 12–14, 2016. 8. Symposium zur Ägyptischen Königsideologie, 8th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology, Wiesbaden 2017, 29–45. A comparable case involves the image of Thutmose III in Amara West. Highlighting its political aspects, Neal Spencer comments that "the inhabitants of house E13.6 were ensuring visitors were aware of the importance of the room, but may also have been seeking a bold statement of identification with pharaonic Egypt and its control of Nubia, through a revered king of the past." (N. Spencer, *Creating and Re-Shaping Egypt in Kush: Responses at Amara West*, in: *JAIE* 6:1, 2014, 48–49).

³⁶ A. Appadurai, *Topographies of the Self: Praise and Emotion in Hindu India*, in: *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, L. Abu-Lughod/C. Lutz (eds.), *Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction*, Cambridge/Paris, 1990, 94.

³⁷ For examples of discussions on specific communities and groups in ancient Egyptian, see C. Ragazzoli, *Weak Hands and Soft Mouths: Elements of a Scribal Identity in the New Kingdom*, in: *ZÄS* 137, 2010, 157–70; Ragazzoli, *Scribes*; N. Allon, *Writing, Violence, and the Military: Images of Literacy in Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt (1550–1295 BCE)*, Oxford 2019.

³⁸ N.-Ch. Grimal, *Les termes de la propagande royale égyptienne de la XIXe dynastie à la conquête d'Alexandre*, *Mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, nouvelle série* 6, Paris 1986, 128–33.

³⁹ *Sehetepibre's stela (CG 20538)*. On this stela and its relationship to its Ramesside versions (with further bibliography), see R. J. Leprohon, *The Stela of Sehetepibre (CG 20538): Borrowings and Innovation*, in: *Archaism and Innovation: Studies in the Culture of Middle Kingdom Egypt*, eds. D. P. Silverman et al., New Haven, CT; Philadelphia, PA, 2009, 277–92; U. Verhoeven, *Von der 'Loyalistischen Lehre' zur 'Lehre des Kaïrsu': Eine neue Textquelle in Assiut und deren Auswirkungen*, in: *ZÄS* 136, 2009, 87–98; A. M. Gnirs, *Zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Geschichte in der 18. Dynastie*, in: S. Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Studien zum historischen Bewusstsein in der Thutmosidenzeit*, Basel 2013, 127–86. See also E. Blumenthal, *Untersuchungen zum ägyptischen Königum des Mittleren Reiches I: die Phraseologie*, *ASAW* 61, Berlin 1970; D. Franke, *'Schöpfer, Schützer, Guter Hirte': zum Königsbild des Mittleren Reiches*, in: R. Gundlach/Ch. Raedler (eds.), *Selbstverständnis und Realität: Akten des Symposiums zur ägyptischen Königsideologie in Mainz 15.–17.6.1995*, Wiesbaden 1997, 175–209.

other hymns, but a cluster of phrases at the beginning of the hymn finds an exact comparison on an ostrakon depicting the same king.⁴⁰ This ostrakon otherwise closely matches an earlier scene on the walls of Ramesses III's mortuary temple in Medinet Habu, which this section will first discuss before turning to its copy on the ostrakon.

The scene, to which the ostrakon relates, shows Ramesses III reviewing captured men and their horses and chariots in the aftermath of the second Libyan war.⁴¹ The scribes and courtiers around him attend to piles of cut hands and penises, but the king leans forward and extends his hand towards three men before him (see fig. 2). The inscription to his side reads:

Words spoken by His Majesty to the hereditary prince and the two viziers:

See the many good things which (*i.ir*) Amun-Re, King of the Gods, has done for Pharaoh I.p.h, [his] child! He has indeed given the chief of <Me>sh[wesh] in my hand with his army of chariots. His property and cattle were captured, (and) they were brought to Egypt. I slaughtered them in the completion [of an instant]. See, Pharaoh I.p.h himself wrote them (down) as a victory.⁴²

To the right, another inscription says:

Words spoken by the hereditary prince and the two viziers who are in front of His Majesty paying honor to th<is> good god, the Lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre-Meriamun (Ramesses III):

You are Re, being risen like him. Humankind lives when you appear. Your strong arm is powerful in overthrowing the Nine Bows, while the heart of Egypt is sweet with victory. The strength of Montu imbues your limbs. Your counsels are efficient; your plans transpire. Amun has found himself [a child] to make firm the throne of Egypt. [You are] his [son] whom his heart loves, a ruler excellent of monuments [in] Southern [Heliopolis]. He has given you his kingship which he made, while the great [ocean] and the great sea⁴³ are under your soles.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ BM EA 5620 (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA5620; accessed December 9, 2020), see more below.

⁴¹ On the west face of the First Pylon (Medinet Habu II, pl. 72).

⁴² *dd mdw jn hm=f n p3 jr:j-p^c.t p3 B.tj 2 ptr n=tn n3 nfr:w kn.w j.jr.w jmn-r^cw nswt-nt^r:w n pr-^c3 (nh) (w)d3 s(nb) p3y[=f] šri di=f3 p3 wr n <m>š[wš] m dr:t=i hn^c mš^c=f n.t htr:w=f(j)h.t=f mnmn.t=f h3k).w(stjn).w(r km.t sm3=i st m km 3[.t] ptr jry st pr-^c3 (nh) (w)d3 s(nb) m nht.w m zh3.w=f ds=f*; See also KRI V 51–52, KRITA V 41–42, notes in W. F. Edgerton, *Historical Records of Ramses III. The Texts in Medinet Habu Volumes I and II*, SAOC 12, Chicago 1936, 64. and D. B. Redford, *The Medinet Habu Records of the Foreign Wars of Ramesses III, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East* 91, Leiden 2018, 48.

⁴³ In the New Kingdom, *phr-wr* is a term for the Euphrates. However, its use here and in other sources suggests it refers to a northern sea or the primeval water surrounding the earth, see LÄ II 47, A. J. Spalinger, *A New Reference to an Egyptian Campaign of Thutmose III in Asia*, in: *JNES* 37:1, 1978: 37–38; P. Wilson, *A Ptolemaic Lexikon: A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, OLA 78, Leuven, 369.

⁴⁴ *dd mdw jn p3 jr:j-p^c.t p3 B.tj 2 n.tj m-b3h hm=f m sw3š ntr p{t}<n> nfr nb t3.wi wsr-m3^c.t-r^cw mr(.y)-jmn ntk r^cw wbn.tj mj-kd=f h^c=k rnh rh.yt hps=k wsr:w hr dh pd.t 9 ndm jb n km.t hr nht.w ph.ty mnt^r.w 3bh m h^c.w=k n3y=k zh.w mnh(.w) shr.w=k hr hpr gm n=f jmn [šri r] smn jsb.t n t3-mrj [ntk z3]=f mrr jb=f hk3 mnh mn.w [m jwn.w] rs.y di=f n=k nsw.yt jr:n=f [šn]-wr phr-wr hr tbw.tj=k(y).*



Fig. 2: The two viziers and the hereditary prince before Ramesses III in Medinet Habu (Medinet Habu II: pl. 72); Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

Thus, within a bustling scene, verbal interaction takes place. The king calls the three elite men to admire his victory over the Libyans; their applause goes above and beyond this specific event. Both the king and the elite men mix in their speech Middle Egyptian (the form of the participle, for example) with Late Egyptian grammatical forms (the possessive article) and orthographies (*mntk*).⁴⁵ However, the viziers and the prince neither refer to themselves nor speak in first-person—like Ramesses IX’s relief—while the king does so very freely.

⁴⁵ See discussions in T. J. Gillen, *Ramesseid Registers of Égyptien de Tradition: The Medinet Habu Inscriptions*, in: J. Winand et al. (eds.), *On Forms and Functions: Studies in Ancient Egyptian Grammar*, Hamburg 2014, 41–86; Sh. Israeli, *Ceremonial Speech Patterns in the Medinet Habu War Inscriptions*, *ÄUAT* 79, Münster 2015, and more below.

Similar juxtapositions appear throughout Medinet Habu.⁴⁶ Its scenes show Ramesses III defeating Egypt's enemies and returning from battle bearing copious booty to a jubilant court and content gods—and they all speak. The king addresses Amun, Mut, and other gods, and they bless him with power and dominion; foreigners plead with the king for their lives, and the elite celebrate their sovereign and his victories with elaborate adulations. In all these speeches, first-person pronouns follow clear patterns:

1. The gods and the king speak in first-person in its singular forms:
 - a. “**I** returned in victory; **I** plundered what **I** wished.”⁴⁷ (Ramesses III to Amun)
 - b. “**I** rejoice (for) **my** plans have come to happen.”⁴⁸ (Amun to Ramesses III)
2. Foreigners speak in first-person in its plural forms:⁴⁹
 - a. “give **us** the breath of life that you give; lo, **we** are under your sole[s]”⁵⁰ (Nubian chiefs to the king)
 - b. “Your father Amun has put **us** under your feet forever, so that **we** may see (and) inhale the breath, and so that **we** may serve his temple.”⁵¹ (Syrian chiefs to the king)
3. The elite does not employ first-person pronouns when they speak to the king. Only once, they refer to him as “our lord.”⁵²

While the king and the gods speak in a singular voice, foreigners and the elite always talk in multitude. Only the elite never place themselves as actants before the king among these different speakers. However, this feature changes, when the king is not the addressee. When weapons are distributed before the war, for example, officials and military men say to the king's son: “We will act! We will act! ... our Lord goes out in valor so that we may plunder the lands and the foreign countries, being like mighty Montu.”⁵³ When the king is not the interlocutor, non-royal speakers can act and even plunder — an otherwise royal prerogative in these texts. Therefore, the reticence toward first-person pronouns is not only tied to the speaker but also the addressee.

⁴⁶ This paper focuses on speech in the various scenes, but these tendencies are also found in the so-called historical inscriptions. Todd Gillen has also studied the distribution of pronouns in Medinet Habu, focusing however on the distribution of $=sn/=w$ for the third person plural suffix (T. J. Gillen, Thematic Analysis and the Third Person Plural Suffix Pronoun in the Medinet Habu Historical Inscriptions, in: P. Kousoulis/N. Lazaridis (eds.), Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists: University of the Aegean, Rhodes. 22–29 May 2008, Leuven 2015, vol. 2. 1351–61).

⁴⁷ *jw.kw m nht ḥ3k=i mrr=i*; said to Amun (Medinet Habu II, pl. 93).

⁴⁸ *wf.kw shr.w=i smn(.w)*, said to the king (Medinet Habu I, pl. 43). Other instances include pls. 26 (Amun and Mut), 43 (Amun), 44 (Amun and Mut), 78 (Amun and Mut), and 93 and 99 (Amun and Khonsu), 102 (Re).

⁴⁹ This paper focuses on direct speech in the scenes, but this pattern also applies to the lengthier inscriptions. In the fifth-year inscription, for example, the king speaks in a singular voice, the elite employs no pronouns, while the foreigners say: *jw=n r dh3=n* “**we** will advance **ourselves**” (Medinet Habu I, pl. 27; KRI V 51–52, KRITA V 41–42).

⁵⁰ *jm n=n p3 ḫ.w n dd=k mk n hr tbw.t[y]=k(y)* (Medinet Habu I, pl. 11, above the second register).

⁵¹ J. M. Galán, The Use of Šalāmu and Barāka in Ancient Egyptian Texts, in: ZÄS 124, 1997, 37–44.

⁵² *pr-ḥ3 (nh)-(w)d3-s(nb) p3y=n nb* (Medinet Habu I, pl. 23, inscription in the upper register); a group of officials standing nearby the wrestlers also refer to the king as “our lord,” but their speech is not addressed at the king.

⁵³ *jr:y=n zp-2 ... wd3 nb=n m kn r ḥ3k=n t3.w ḥ3s.wt jw=f mj mnt.w nht* (Medinet Habu II, 29; KRITA V 25).

Similarly, the singular first-person pronoun (“I”) is not solely reserved for gods and kings. On the south wall of the first court, men appear wrestling. One wrestler says to his Nubian competitor: “I will cause that you fall,” and another contestant says to his opponent: “Now see, I hold your legs, throwing you on your side.”⁵⁴ In a different part of the temple, a butcher turns to his colleague and says, “may one fill for me ...,”⁵⁵ and in another scene, a lector priest calls the god Min “my lord.” The king’s eight sons even employ it when speaking to the king, each saying, “I have come, bringing you ...”⁵⁶

The distribution of first-person pronouns suggests an alignment between patterns of language-use and social roles.⁵⁷ In Egyptology, this sociolinguistic phenomenon has been examined concerning registers, focusing mainly on Middle and Late Egyptian grammar and égyptien de tradition.⁵⁸ However, registers can be described as “a linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture-internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices,” thereby encompassing more than just grammar.⁵⁹ According to the distribution of first-person pronouns, non-royal praise appears to have its own linguistic repertoire on the walls of Medinet Habu. As Ramesses IX’s relief indicates, this linguistic repertoire and its associations are shared beyond the temple walls.

Registers need to be continually disseminated and reified for them to exist, as their forms and values have to become differentiated from the rest of the language for a given population of speakers. In juxtaposing different speakers, the scenes on Medinet Habu’s walls clearly contribute to the demarcation of certain speech-patterns as those relating to praise. By displaying the speech next to its speaker, these scenes make the link between register and elite voice visible.⁶⁰ This use of quotations also distracts from any processes that turn speech into an inscription, aiding in their representation as if they are spoken.⁶¹ Whatever the relationship between these inscriptions and oral composition might be, their representation on the

⁵⁴ *di jr=k h3y; hr mk mh=i m rd.wy=k(y) jw=i (hr) h3c=k hr dr.w=k* (Medinet Habu II: pl. 111–12; KRI V 114; KRITA V).

⁵⁵ *mh.tw n=i...* (damaged area), Medinet Habu III, pl. 173, KRITA V 155.

⁵⁶ Medinet Habu V, pl. 339; KRI V, 324; KRITA V 275.

⁵⁷ This role-related tendency is at odds with T. J. Gillen, Review: Israeli, Ceremonial Speech Patterns, in: *LingAeg* 24, 2016, 153. It is worth noting, though, that the tendencies he identifies are based on royal speech.

⁵⁸ On registers in ancient Egypt, see O. Goldwasser, On the Choice of Registers: Studies on the Grammar of Papyrus Anastasi I, in: S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology: Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, Jerusalem 1990, vol. 1.200–40; Goldwasser, ‘Low’ and ‘High’ Dialects in Ramesside Egyptian, in: S. Grunert/I. Hafemann (eds.), *Textcorpus und Wörterbuch: Aspekte zur Ägyptischen Lexikographie*, Leiden 1999, 311–28; Gillen, *Ramesside Registers*; S. Polis, Linguistic Variation in Ancient Egyptian: An Introduction to the State of the Art (with Special Attention to the Community of Deir El-Medina), in: *Scribal Repertoires in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Early Islamic Period*, eds. A. Boud’hors et al., Oxford 2017, 60–88; S. Polis, The Scribal Repertoire of Amennakhte Son of Ipu: Describing Variation across Late Egyptian Registers, in: *Scribal Repertoires*, 89–126.

⁵⁹ A. Agha, Registers of Language, in: A. Duranti (ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, 2005, 23–45.

⁶⁰ A. Agha, Voice, Footing, Enregisterment, in: *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15:1, 2005, 38–59. Cf. also the notion of typification in W. Keane, Indexing Voice: A Morality Tale, in: *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 21: 2, 2011, 166–78.

⁶¹ If such a moment of speech even actually occurred; on studying ancient Egyptian as text language, see for example Polis, *Amennakhte Son of Ipu*, 4–5. Cf. J. Holsanova, Quotations as a Vehicle for Social Positioning, in *Analysing Citizenship Talk: Social Positioning in Political and Legal Decision-Making Processes*, eds. H. Hausendorf and A. Bora, *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture* 19, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2006, 271.

walls of Medinet Habu endows them with immediacy coupled with the authority of a royal monument.

Without a doubt, Medinet Habu is only one source among many that articulate and thereby fashion praise. Not only does the scene have a copy in the precinct of Mut at Karnak, but also other oral and written forms take part in this reflexive social practice, as mentioned before. Monumental hymns on lintels and doorways have an essential role in these processes as well, placing on display scenes and texts of adoration. The British Museum ostrakon to which the next section will return nevertheless suggests that Medinet Habu's texts of praise continue to exert power years after their inscription.

3 *The British Museum Ostrakon (BM EA 5620)*

On the British Museum ostrakon (fig. 3), the viziers and the hereditary prince praise their king again. However, in this instance, Ramesses IX is receiving their adulation and not Ramesses III. Despite this and a few other dissimilarities, the compositions have much in common, suggesting they are closely linked. Together, they point at the interplay between royal and non-royal spheres, as the ostrakon—itself non-royal—refers back to (or perhaps even quotes) a royal quotation of non-royal praise.

Like the scene in Medinet Habu, the ostrakon draws attention to the interaction between the high officials and their king.⁶² The king also leans forward, extending his hand toward the hereditary prince and the viziers, who are only drawn as one figure but appear as two individuals in the text. The dignitaries' speech mostly replicates the praise from the monumental scene, including its accompanying heading:

[Words spoken by] the hereditary prince and the two viziers [who are in front of] His Majesty pay[ing ho]nor to this good god [the Lord of the Two Lands Nefer] kare-Setepenre.⁶³

Their words elaborate, however, on the original speech:⁶⁴

You are [Re,] rising⁶⁵ like [him.] Humankind lives when you appear. Your strong arm is powerful (in) overthrowing the Nine Bows, while the heart of Egypt is sweet with victory. The strength of Montu imbues your limbs. Your counsels are efficient; your plans transpire. Amun *himself* has found...of Egypt. You are his son whom his heart loves, a ruler excellent of monuments in Southern Heliopolis. *the inundation...like...*

You are Re, his image is your image. Your lifetime is like his lifetime.

You are the son of Amun who came out of his body, [may he] give ... lifetime of Re, years of Atum, strength of Montu in Thebes, kingship of Horus in ... lifetime of Re in Heaven.

⁶² Demarée, *Ramesside Ostraca*, pl. 1.

⁶³ [*dd mdw jn p3*] *jr:j-p^c.t n [p3]* *B.tj 2 [n.tj m-b3h]* *hm=f m s[w3š]* *ntr nfr pn [nb t3.wi]* [*nfr-]* *k3-r^cw-stp-n-r^cw.*

⁶⁴ Italics are used here to mark sections in the ostrakon that do not appear in Medinet Habu, and bold for the section that it shares with Ramesses IX's relief.

⁶⁵ The word appears in Medinet Habu with a stative ending, while here it has a suffix pronoun.

He has given you his kingship which he made, while the great ocean and the great sea are under your soles.

*Lord of the Two Lands Neferkare-Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Appearances Ramesses-Khaemwaset-Mereramun given life, a ruler who is fair as the king like Horus ... who established the land in his good affairs, a mighty warrior who knows his strength as a raging lion ... his fury is upon ... his war cry ...*⁶⁶



Fig. 3: The two viziers and the hereditary prince before Ramesses IX on Ostrakon, BM EA 5620
© The Trustees of the British Museum

The ostracon presents Ramesses IX with a more extended hymn, with one section interpolated in the middle of the praise and another at the end. The former — which the opening lines of Ramesses IX's relief resemble — speak of the king in relation to various gods, while the latter is dedicated to his warring characteristics. The ostracon preserves a few other differences from the scene. For example, it shows the king standing inside a kiosk, which is missing in Medinet Habu.

⁶⁶ *ntk [r^cw] wbn=k mj-ḳd[=f] ḥ^c=k ḥnh rh.yt ḥpš=k wsr.w ḥr dh pd.t 9 ndm jb n km.t ḥr nḥt.w ph.ty mnt.w 3bh m ḥ^c.w=k n3y=k zh.w mnḥ(.w) s{t} ḥr.w=k ḥr ḥpr gm jmn ds=f ... t3-mrj ntk z3=f mrr jb=f ḥḳ3 mnḥ mn.w m jwn.w rs.y ḥ^cpi ... mj ... ntk r^cw tjt=k tjt=f ḥ^c=k mj ḥ^c=f ntk z3 jmn pr n ḥ^c.w=f dī[=f] ... ḥ^c n r^cw rnp.wt n jtm.w nḥt n mnt.w m w3s.t nsw.yt n ḥr.w m ... ḥ^c n r^cw m ḥr(.t) dī=f n=k nsw.yt jr.n=f šn-wr phr-wr ḥr ḥbw.tj=k(y) ... nb t3.wi nfr-k3-r^cw-stp-n-r^cw z3 r^cw nb ḥ^c.w r^cw-ms-sw-ḥ^c-m-w3s.t-mrr-jmn dī(.w) ḥnh ḥḳ3 ḥ^c n m nswt mj ḥr.w ... smn t3 m shr.w=f nfr(.w) ḥ3 shm.tj rh ph.tj=f m m3j ḳnd ... nšn.t=f ḥr-tp ... hmhm.t=f ...* (KRI V 51–52, KRITA V 41–42).

Though differing in scale, the monumentality of the scene is not entirely lost on the ostrakon. Almost half a meter high, the limestone piece is of a considerable size, weighing about thirty kilograms.⁶⁷ While its unsmoothed surface and inked execution might justify its description as an ostrakon, its dimensions challenge any notion of its medium as pertaining to practicing artists and scribes.⁶⁸ Along with other ostraca dedicated to Ramesses IX from the Valley of the Kings, it could have been associated with the decoration of an edifice for this king, as Tamas Bács suggests.⁶⁹ As a presentation drawing, the ostrakon would have communicated a design proposal, in which the monumental scene in Medinet Habu was to be reproduced.⁷⁰

Compared to the monumental scene, however, the ostrakon offers a significant shift in focus. In Medinet Habu, the king is almost twice his dignitaries' height, while the ostrakon depicts them all in comparable heights. This shift in relative proportions could have been explained away as the result of the change in medium, but the scene in Medinet Habu also shows the king surveying the spoils of war, while the ostrakon only reproduces the verbal interaction. More importantly, the monumental scene has both the king and his subject speak, but the king remains mute on the ostrakon.⁷¹ Therefore, these differences in scale and speech might indicate a shift in focus from the king to the elite and its praise.⁷²

The shift in focus might point at another understanding of the ostrakon. As a presentation drawing, it would have existed in between the original and its future reproduction. Candy Keller points, however, at another practice surrounding ostraca, in which they function on their own as donations.⁷³ This practice is tied to the Valley of the Kings, in whose sacred site similar inscribed and figural ostraca were deposited and from which the ostrakon is said to derive.⁷⁴ A few of the site's ostraca show scenes of adoration to a variety of gods, in which the worshipper is sometimes depicted or named. Moreover, at least two other ostraca represent a

⁶⁷ See discussion in T. A. Bács, *On the Military Themes of a Group of Twentieth Dynasty Figural Ostraca*, in *Text-Bild-Objekte im Archäologischen Kontext*, in: A. Loprieno-Gnirs et al. (eds.), *Festschrift für Susanne Bickel*, Hamburg, 2020, 18.

⁶⁸ The assumption that ostraca are preliminary media has been questioned both for documentary as well as literary and figural ones, see, for example, B. J. J. Haring, *From Single Sign to Pseudo-Script: An Ancient Egyptian System of Workmen's Identity Marks*, *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East* 93, Leiden 2017, 155–57. Cf. F. Hagen, *Ostraca, Literature and Teaching at Deir El-Medina*, in: R. Mairs/A. Stevenson (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2005: Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Symposium which took place at the University of Cambridge, 6–8 January 2005*, Oxford 2007, 39–40.

⁶⁹ Bács, *Military Themes*, 26–27.

⁷⁰ Cf. T. A. Bács, *Traditions Old and New: Artistic Production of the Late Ramesside Period*, in: T. Gillen (ed.), *(Re)Productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Liège, 6th–8th February 2013*, Liège 2017, 305.

⁷¹ The inscription only contains his name, Neferkare Setepenre Ramesses-[Khaem]waset-Mereramun (Ramesses IX).

⁷² Similarly, while the king often appears larger than life in monumental scenes, these stark differences are often absent when the king is represented in non-royal images. See for example, the representation of the royal kiosk in the tomb of Khaemhat, and M. K. Hartwig, *Tomb painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes (1419–1372 BCE)*, *IMAGO* 2, *MonAeg*10, Brussels 2004, figs. 21, 24 and possibly also 11–13.

⁷³ C. A. Keller, *Private Votives in Royal Cemeteries: The Case of KV 9*, *Varia Aegyptiaca* 10: 2–3, 1997, 139–56. See also A. Dorn, *Arbeiterhütten im Tal der Könige: ein Beitrag zur altägyptischen Sozialgeschichte aufgrund von neuem Quellenmaterial aus der Mitte der 20. Dynastie (ca. 1150 v. Chr.)*, *AH* 23, Basel 2011, 103.

⁷⁴ Acquired from the collection of Henry Salt in 1823, see the discussion in Bács, *Military Themes*.

man of the elite with a hymn to the king (CG 25031 and CG 25032).⁷⁵ The former compares the king to Khnum—much like Ramesses IX's relief. More importantly, its speaker is a vizier, who, like in the British Museum ostrakon, is left unnamed.⁷⁶

If indeed placed as a donation, the British Museum ostrakon presents another case in which quotation can also be seen as a vehicle of social positioning. Even if another text mediated between the ostrakon and the scene in Medinet Habu,⁷⁷ the link to the monumental scene might not have been lost to viewers, as Ramesses III's temple is assumed to have been the center of scribal administration in the late Twentieth Dynasty as well as a settlement at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty and the Third Intermediate Period.⁷⁸ Replicating this elite speech, the adorer here aligns himself with the figures of the viziers and the hereditary prince and their forms of praise.⁷⁹

Quoting a quotation, moreover, the ostrakon points at the negotiation of praise among royal and non-royal sources. In the royal monument of Medinet Habu, this elite voice was animated to show the multitude of voices celebrating the king in unison. This voice is re-animated in the ostrakon to express one's own praise, whether the draftsman or another person who deposited it.⁸⁰ He found his voice, so-to-speak, in the forms of eulogistic praise as they were defined and presented on the walls of Medinet Habu, and even as the praise is enlarged, the newly added sections neither alter the voice nor say "we" or "I." Quotation, therefore, is among the main vehicles for the dissemination of praise. It appears in royal monuments animating elite voices (such as the scene in Medinet Habu) and in non-royal sources that quote them (such as the ostrakon). Together they contribute to the correlation of registers and voices.

4 Concluding Remarks

On Ramesses IX's relief, the king sits alone, but another matter is on display here. The central theme is praise, whose speaker is obscured yet still present. The audience is also broader than the royal addressee. It encompasses visitors and passersby who encountered the relief

⁷⁵ CG 25001–25385, p. 7, pl. VII.

⁷⁶ Another ostrakon from the Valley of the Kings (BM EA5622) is inscribed with a hymn that addresses the king in the second-person (Demarée, *Ramesside Ostraca*, pl. 4).

⁷⁷ Bács notes, for example, that the ostrakon differs in its orthographies in a few places. However, one need not assume that copying entails accurately replicating with the intention of creating an exact copy. Dimitri Laboury's comments, for example, "[E]ven in the exceptional case of an author copying himself...there is a clear and indisputable process of reinterpretation and re-composition that makes his new work unique." (D. Laboury, *Tradition and Creativity: Toward a Study of Intericonicity in Ancient Egyptian Art*, in: T. Gillen (ed.), (Re)productive Traditions in Ancient Egypt: Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Liège, 6th–8th February, Liège 2013, 229–58.

⁷⁸ See Schmied, *Doors to the Past*, 2; B. J. J. Haring, *Divine Households: Administrative and Economic Aspects of the New Kingdom Royal Memorial Temples in Western Thebes*, *Egyptologische Uitgaven* 12, Leiden 1997. Therefore, while one can posit a relationship between the ostrakon and the scene's copy in Karnak, an awareness of the scene in Medinet Habu is probable, if not a more direct relationship.

⁷⁹ "[W]hen somebody positions somebody else, that always implies a positioning of the person him/herself." (L. van Langenhove and R. Harré, *Varieties of Positioning*, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 21: 4, 398; Holsanova, *Quotations*, 257.)

⁸⁰ This choice is possibly akin to stelae in which adoration is mediated by the figure of the vizier standing before the god, while the adorer appears in a separate register. See, for example, the stela of Nebuhotep, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 3415-D3 (<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/1268/>).

atop a doorway to a structure or a room. Through his display of praise, the adorer creates a community whose sentiment is directed at the king, thereby merging the social with political.

The assimilation of aspects appears within the relief's hymn and without it. The speaker hails the king as the creator of humanity with its social strata. Expressing these and other notions of kingship, he assumes an elite voice that obscures its speaker. His obscurity is neither unique nor obligatory. Obscuring himself, the speaker aligns himself with other adorers, who appear in other lintels, on the walls of Ramesses III's mortuary temple in Medinet Habu, and its copy on the British Museum ostrakon. As these relationships within the elite surround royal praise, they reinforce the king's centrality in social ties and make him present in various contexts. As the Pharaoh also stands for Egypt and its sovereignty, the hymn can be viewed as a speech act of state-making.

The thread running through the relief, the ostrakon, and Medinet Habu points to disseminating praise in various contexts. With non-royal sources (the ostrakon) copying a royal quote of non-royal figures (Medinet Habu), it is impossible to pinpoint an origin for this praise and its forms of expression. Nevertheless, the relief clearly takes part in the circulation of these forms since its owner associates the lack of first-person pronouns with praise and elite voice, much like the scenes in Medinet Habu. Recognizing this thread is thus also crucial to our identification of voices and their associated registers. Finding a voice—as it appears in this paper's title—is a movement in two directions. It considers a person's choice of phrase to express their relationship to the king and our attempt to identify and characterize such a voice within the polyphony of voices in ancient Egypt.

Three Blocks of the King Ramesses III from Tell Atrib (Benha)

Islam Amer

(New Valley University, El Kharga)

(Taf. 2)

Abstract

The present paper is a publication of three unpublished blocks of the king Ramesses III from the temple of Horus-Khenty-khety in Tell Atrib (Benha). The blocks are now exhibited in the Storage Museum of Prof. Abdel Halim Nour El-Din in El Shoubak. Two blocks belong to the king Ramesess III, while the third one belong to the scribe *Tjay*, who served in the temple of Horus-Khenty-khety during the reign of the king Ramesses III.

1 Introduction

Tell Atrib or *ḥwt-ḥry-jb (t)* is located in the southern part of the Delta, approximately 50 km to the north of Cairo, in the suburbs of the modern-day city of Benha. Atrib was an important political, religious, and administrative center of the Nile Delta and the capital city of the Tenth Nome of Lower Egypt.¹ The history of the site might date back to the early Old Kingdom.² In spite of the few monuments of Middle kingdom found in Tell Atrib, the city played a large role at that time.³ The monuments of the 18th Dynasty kings; Thutmosis III, Amenhotep II,⁴ Amenhotep III,⁵ Amenhotep IV,⁶ in addition to those of the kings of the Ramesside era⁷ found in Tell Atrib, indicate the important role of the city during the New Kingdom.⁸

According to Papyrus Harris I, restoration works have been conducted in the temple of Horus-Khenty-khety in Tell Atrib during the reign of Ramesses III.⁹ This restoration works might be confirmed by the three blocks under discussion.

¹ J. Mynářová, in: EAH I, 921–922, s. v. Athribis, Tell Atrib; P. Vernus, in: LÄ I, 519–524, s. v. Athribis; Vernus, Athribis. Textes et documents relatifs à la géographie, aux cultes, et à l'histoire d'une ville du delta égyptien à l'époque pharaonique, BdE 74, Le Caire 1978; P. Montet, Géographie de l'Égypte Ancienne I, 119–127, Paris 1957; H. Gauthier, Dictionnaire des Nomes Géographiques V, Le Caire 1927, 200–202.

² Hélén K. Jacquet-Gordon, Les Doms des Domaines Funéraires, BdE 34, Le Caire 1962, 144–150 (2R5); Urk I, 244; D. Wildung, Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewußtsein ihrer Nachwelt. Teil I. Posthume Quellen über die Könige der ersten vier Dynastien I, MÄS 17, Berlin 1969, 107.

³ Vernus, in: LÄ I, 521 s.v. Athribis; PM VI, 65; Montet, Le Lac Sacré de Tanis, Paris 1966, 68; Vernus, Sur une particularité de l'onomastique du Moyen Empire, in: RdE 22, 1970, 155–169.

⁴ Urk IV, 1443; 1448.

⁵ Urk IV, 1824; L. Habachi, Aménophis III et Amenhotep, fils de Hapou, à Athribis, in: RdE 26, 1974, 21–33.

⁶ A. Rowe, Short report on excavations of the Institute of Archaeology, Liverpool, at Athribis (Tell Atrib), in: ASAE 38, 1938 525; H. W. Fairman, A Block of Amenophis IV from Athribis, in: JEA 46, 1960, 80–82.

⁷ Rowe, in: ASAE 38, 1938, 525–526; PM VI 66; H. Brugsch, Recueil de Monuments Egyptiens I, pl. X(1); Gauthier, À travers la Basse-Égypte, in: ASAE 21, 1921, 212–213; L. Dabrowski, La topographie d'Athribis à l'époque romaine, in: ASAE 57, 1962, 24(4); R. Engelbach, A monument of prince Meneptah from Athribis (Benha), in: ASAE 30, 1930, 197–202.

⁸ Tell Atrib only reached its peak during the second half of the first millennium BCE (Ptolemaic and Roman periods). See K. Mysliwiec, The Workshops of Ptolemaic Athribis: Religious and Political Aspects of their Production, in: Eyre, C. (ed.), Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995, Abstracts of Papers, Oxford, 1995, 131; Mysliwiec, Athribis entre Memphis et Alexandrie, in: DA 213, 1996, 34–43; Mysliwiec, In the Ptolemaic Workshops of Athribis, in: EA 9, 1996, 34–36; Z. Kiss, Effigie d'un notable d'Athribis romaine, in: ET 17, 1995, 44–51.

⁹ P. Harris I, 59, 7; 69 = W. Erichsen, Papyrus Harris I, BAe5, Bruxelles 1933.

2 Provenance

The three blocks were found by the SCA inspectors in Al Qalyubia Governorate. They have been housed in the storage of Tell Basta before they were transferred to the Storage Museum of Prof. Dr. Abdel-Halim Nour El-Din in El Shobak. The blocks were registered under the Nos. 360, 3055 and 3240.

Blocks Numbers	Storage	Date	Provenance
360	Tell Basta/ElShobak	N.K Ramesses III	Zawiyit Sheikh Sanad – Shibin al-Qanater Center
3055	Tell Basta/ElShobak	N.K Ramesses III (?)	Tell Atrib-Benha
3240	Tell Basta/ElShobak	N.K Ramesses III	Arab Al Tal – Shalqana Qalioub, Al Qanater Al Khiria Center

The blocks were found in different areas in Al Qalyubia, although they were originally parts of the temple of Horus-Khenty-khety in Tell Atrib. The monuments of Tell Atrib were scattered in various places after the modern construction (e.g. national stadium, hospitals and Banha University) crawled on the place.¹⁰ Whatever, the reports of Liverpool Institute of Archaeology,¹¹ and the Polish-Egyptian archaeological expedition working in Tell Atrib,¹² informed about the scattering of the monuments over the neighboring areas and only a few remains still in Situ. It is quite possible that our blocks were among the monuments of Tell Atrib, which scattered in separate areas in Al Qalyubia.¹³

3 Description

3.1 Block No.360 (Taf. 2a–b, fig. 1).

The block which is broken into two pieces (A–B), records the name of Ramesses III in bas-relief. It might be part of the inner jamb of one of the doorways of the temple Horus-Khenty-khety. Measurements: Block A: L. 65 cm, W. 38 cm, Th. 19 cm;

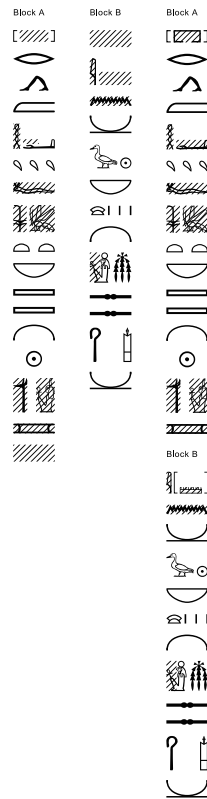
Block B: L. 71 cm, W. 38 cm, Th. 19 cm.

¹⁰ Al-Hussaini Saleh, *The End of a Pharaonic City*, Cairo 1991, 6; 77.

¹¹ Rowe, in: *ASAE* 38, 1938, 525–526.


¹² K. Kolodziejczyk, Report of the Polish Archaeological Mission's Excavations at Tell Atrib in 1963, in: *ET* 6, 1972, 138–145; K. Michalowski, Les fouilles polonaises à Tell Atrib (1957–1959), in: *ASAE* 57, 1962, 49–66; Michalowski, Les fouilles polonaises à Tell Atrib (1960), in: *ASAE* 57, 1962, 67–77; Michalowski, Les fouilles polonaises à Tell Atrib (1961), in: *ASAE* 58, 1964, 235–244; Michalowski, Sixième campagne de fouilles à Tell-Atrib (Saison 1962), in: *ASAE* 58, 1964, 245–254; K. Mysliwiec, Tell Atrib, 1985, in: *BCE* 11, 1986, 16–18; Mysliwiec, Polish-Egyptian Excavations at Tell Atrib in 1989, in: *PAM* 1, 1990, 5–9; Mysliwiec, Polish Egyptian Excavations at Tell Atrib in 1990, in: *PAM* 2, 1991, 25–30; Mysliwiec, Polish-Egyptian Excavations at Tell Atrib in 1991, in: *PAM* 3, 1992, 24–28; Mysliwiec, Excavations at Tell Atrib in 1985, in: *ET* 16, 1992, 383–391; Mysliwiec, Tell Atrib, 1992, in: *PAM* 4, 1993, 32–39; Mysliwiec, Tell Atrib 1993, in: *PAM* 5, 1994, 40–47; Mysliwiec, Tell Atrib 1994, in: *PAM* 6, 1995, 37–47; Mysliwiec, Tell Atrib. Excavations 1995, in: *PAM* 7, 1996, 53–60; K. Mysliwiec/S. Abu Senna, Polish-Egyptian Excavations at Tell Atrib in 1991–1993, in: *ET* 17, 1995, 206–240; K. Mysliwiec/T. Herbich, Polish Archaeological Activities at Tell Atrib in 1985, in: *The Archaeology of the Nile Delta: problems and priorities*, ed. E.C.M. Van den Brink, Amsterdam, 1988, 177–203.

¹³ L. Dabrowski, La topographie d'Athribis à l'époque romaine, in: *ASAE* 57, 1962, 19–31; Mynářová, in: *EAH* I, 921–922, s. v. Athribis, Tell Atrib.



[...] [p]ri m ^cwt.f nsw-bity nb-t3wy Wsr-m3^c.t-R^c mri-I[m]n s3-R^c nb-h^cw R^c-msi-sw ḥk3-iwn
[...]

“[...] Who <got out> of his body^(a), King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of Two Lands. Usimare beloved of Amun, Son of Re, lord of Crowns, Ramesses, Ruler of Heliopolis^(b) [...]”.

(a) May be the body of Horus-Khenty-khety, the deity of Tell Atrib, cf. The golden name of Ramesses III  ntri m pri .f m ht swht iḳrt sbkt n ḥr 3ḥti “The one who was divine (already) when he came out of the womb of excellent egg of Sobket Horus Akhty”.¹⁴

(b) The title (Ruler of *iwn*/Heliopolis) refers to the special relationship between king Ramesses III and Heliopolis, which is confirmed in the introduction of Heliopolis section in Papyrus Harris I.¹⁵



iri .i sw^cb iwnw n psdt .f kd.i n3y.f r-prw wn w3si “I cleansed Heliopolis for his divine ennead. I built his temples, which gone to ruine”¹⁶ This relationship was also mentioned

¹⁴ J. v. Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen*, MÄS 20, Berlin 1984, 94; 245.

¹⁵ P. Harris I, 25, 10; 27, 7; 29–31.

¹⁶ BAR IV, § 250, 143; P. Harris I, 25, 10; 29–30. See also P. Harris I, 27,7; 31.

on a stelae date to the twentieth year of the reign of Ramesses III, commemorating his works for the gods: $\text{sw}^c b <.i> iwnw n tm$ “<I> cleansed Heliopolis for Atum” $\text{iri.i sw}^c b iwnw hr bwt.s nb$ “I cleansed Heliopolis from all abomination”¹⁷.

The texts indicate that the city of Heliopolis was devastated ruined but King Ramesses III restored the city and removed the ruins, this may clarify why did he add the title (Ruler *Twnw*/Heliopolis) to his name.¹⁸



Fig. 1: The block No. 360 reconstructed (drawing by the author)

3.2 Block No. 3240 (Taf. 2 c, fig. 2)

Like the first block, this block is inscribed with two cartouches of Ramesses III in bas-reliefs, beside which is the head of the king wearing the crown with uraeus. It is possible that the block is the lintel of one of the doorways of the temple of Horus-Khenty-khety in Tell Atrib. Measurement: L. 26 cm, W. 43 cm, Th. 25 cm.

¹⁷ KRI V, 244, 13, 16; W. Helck, *Ramessidische Inschriften II. Die Inschrift Ramses' III. vom Cachette-Hof in Karnak*, in: ZÄS 83, 1958, 27–38.

¹⁸ See. P. Grandet, *Le Papyrus Harris I (BM 9999) II*, Le Caire, 1994, 3, n. 2; 109–10.