

## ***W3st*: A PERSONIFIED LOCALITY and GODDESS**

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### **Abstract**

Despite the inclusive research into personified localities and deities of ancient Egypt, little is known about *W3st*, the goddess and personification of the Fourth Upper Egyptian nome, Thebes. New Kingdom Theban temples reveal a number of scenes with presentations of *W3st*. Examples can be found in the triple shrine of Hatshepsut and Tutmosis III in the temple of Luxor as well as the triple shrine of Seti II in the open court of the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak. *W3st* was frequently depicted in anthropomorphic form as a goddess, holding the *W3s* scepter, the symbol of power, to which a plume and a ribbon were attached. She was also often recognized by her headdress consisting of the *W3s* scepter and a feather, the hieroglyphic symbol of the nome. Moreover she could be represented in a martial guise with bow, arrows and mace. Through studying the epigraphic sources and iconographic aspects of *W3st*, this article aims at investigating the iconography, epithets and functions of the goddess in ancient Egypt till the end of the Late Period.

**Keywords:** Thebes, Theban nome, personification, Victorious Thebes, Waset, nome, province.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The ancient Egyptians visualized their ideas and objects in many different anthropomorphic forms. These personified forms were usually applied to ideas and deities, whose original identities and roles were abstract or not easily symbolized in the natural world. Personified male and female forms were used more than any other to depict the interactions of humans and divinities in religious iconography. (Guglielmi, IV, 1982, col. 978) Various examples of anthropomorphic figures represented specific topographical and geographical features such as domains, cities, provinces as well as monuments and buildings. Geographic personifications were usually depicted as male or female figures, depending on the grammatical gender of the toponym they personify. Upon their heads they carry the attributes or logograms of their correspondent toponyms. (Jaquet-Gordon, 1962; Helck, 1974; Baines, 1984) Several topographical personifications could be thought as deities. These divinities would have no names other than that of the domain itself, which was usually displayed as a symbol upon their head. Personified nomes had in fact no role in myth and seldom appeared as independent figures; they were rather represented in interaction

with other deities or kings. Among the anthropomorphized-deified localities is an important ancient Egyptian province, known as Waset, the Fourth Upper Egyptian nome.

The present research consists of a theoretical study of W3st with a strong emphasis on pictorial and textual aspects, followed by a detailed analytical study of the iconography, epithets and functions of the deity. In this respect Waset was examined in all textual and iconographical sources including sculpture and scenes. The temple - scenes are presented first, those depicted on stelae and tombs next. Scenes are followed by textual sources, and lastly the sculptures of Waset are examined. The scenes were catalogued by documenting the dating with reference to the king represented and the location of the scenes. All the sources followed the historical chronological order and were categorized as follows:

1. Scenes of Waset attested in cult temples at the east bank of Thebes
2. Scenes of Waset attested in mortuary temples at the west bank of Thebes
3. Scenes of Waset attested on stelae
4. Scenes of Waset attested in private tombs
5. Reference to Waset in texts
6. Sculptures of Waset

## II. PICTORIAL AND EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

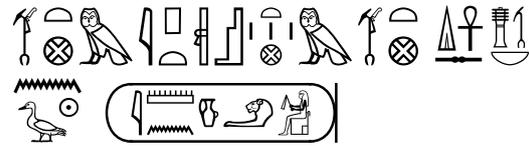
### 1. Scenes of Waset Attested in Cult Temples at the East Bank of Thebes

#### 1.1 Scene of Hatshepsut - Karnak, Red Chapel, sanctuary, south wall, 7<sup>th</sup> register

The scene depicts Hatshepsut offering milk jars to three divinities, the middle of whom is Waset. The enthroned goddess is wearing a long robe covering all her body and is holding the w3s scepter and the ʿnh-sign. (Lecau et al.,

1977, p. 322-324; Burgos & Larché, 2006, p. 254) (Fig. 1)

Inscriptions above Waset:



W3st m ipt iswt m W3st di.s ʿnh dd w3s nb n s3 R<sup>c</sup> H3t špswt hnm̄t Imn.

Waset in Karnak Temple in Thebes, may she give all life, stability and happiness to Hatshepsut.

#### 1.2 Scene of Sety I - Karnak, Hypostyle Hall, exterior north wall, eastern section, bottom registers

The scene depicts Sety I accompanied by his ka smiting enemies before Amun-Re. Beneath the king, Waset was represented in a much smaller scale. The hieroglyphic sign of the nome is mounted above her head. In her right hand she grasps a bow and a sheaf of arrows while in the other hand she holds a compound mace and ropes that bind the name-rings of the enemies. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 55-56; OIP 107, 1986, pp. 47-57, pl. 15-16; El-Saady, 1992)

Inscriptions accompanying Waset:



W3st [nh̄tt] nbt hpš hnw̄t [sp3t] nbt.

[Victorious] Thebes, lady of the scimitar (sickle sword), (Wb III, p. 270) mistress of every [nome, district].

#### 1.3 Scene of Ramses II - Luxor Temple, Triple Shrine of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III, central shrine of Amun-Re, east wall

Ramses II is shown incensing a statue of Amun Min, behind whom stands Waset, who is recognized by the symbol of the nome upon her head. She is raising one hand in an attitude of adoration, while the other hand holds the ʿnh-sign. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 310; Von Bissing, 1930, p. 146)

Inscriptions above Waset:



W3st s3t R<sup>c</sup> nbt dt.

Thebes, daughter of Re, lady of eternity.

1.4 Scene of Ramses II - Karnak Temple, Hypostyle Hall, interior east wall, south half, bottom register, north end

Ramses II, accompanied by Waset, is receiving years and jubilees from Amun-Re and Mut. The goddess stands behind the king and raises one hand in an attitude of adoration.<sup>1</sup> (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 49; Nelson, 1981, pl. 104; Brand et al., I, 2018, p. 169-170; II, pl. 104) (Fig. 3)

Inscriptions accompanying Waset:



Dd mdw in W3st nht nbt hpš hnwt t3 nb



dd mdw [di].n. (i) n.k hr s3.k mry.k

Hr.....nhh m nswt t3wy.

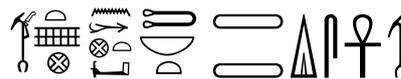
Words spoken by Victorious Thebes, lady of the scimitar, mistress of every land. I have [come] to you bearing your son whom you love, Horus .....(that you may give to him) eternity as king of the Two Lands. (El-Sharkawy, 1997; Brand et al., 2018).

1.5 Scenes of Ramses II - Karnak, Hypostyle Hall, south outer wall, east part, 1<sup>st</sup> register

The scene shows a heraldic figure of Ramses smiting the enemies in the presence of Waset. The goddess is recognized by her attributes and weapons.

Inscriptions accompanying Waset:

<sup>1</sup> A parallel scene of Ramses II is represented on a block found in the court of the Cachette at the temple of Amun Re at Karnak. The scene depicts Ramses II kneeling and receiving years and jubilees from Amun-Re in the presence of Waset, who is holding bows and arrows. W. Helck, "Ramessidische Inschriften II", ZÄS 83, 1958, p. 28.



W3st nht nbt t3wy di.s rh w3s.

Victorious Thebes, mistress of the Two Lands, may she give all life and happiness. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 58; Gaballa, 1969; Kitchen, 2017, p. 21-24)

1.6 Scene of Sety II - Karnak, Triple Shrine, central chapel, east wall, principal register

Sety II is depicted offering flowers to the sacred bark of Amun, behind which stands Waset raising her hands in an attitude of adoration. The sign of the nome is portrayed above her head.

Inscriptions above Waset:



W3st nht nbt hpš t3w nbw.

Victorious Thebes, lady of the scimitar, mistress of all lands. (PM<sup>2</sup> II, p. 26; Chevrier & Drioton, 1940, p. 24 f.; Kitchen, IV, 1982, p. 254)

1.7 Scene of Ramses III - Karnak, Temple of Ramses III, Sanctuary, Chapel of Amun, west wall

Waset is represented standing behind Ramses III, who is incensing the sacred bark of Amun. The goddess is depicted wearing a long dress and holding a sistrum. The text enclosing the figure of the goddess is called the "Litany of Waset". (Fig. 4) (PM<sup>2</sup> II, p. 31; OIP 25, 1936, pl. 56 [A], 57, 59; Helck, 1968) The Litany of Waset is a hymn recited by Waset, in which she praises the god Amun. The goddess presents to Amun the homage of 49 major goddesses of the cities between Elephantine and Heliopolis listed in a geographic order, and welcomes the personifications of these nomes. (Legrain, 1915).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The inscribed scene includes the most complete version of the Litany of Waset, which is also inscribed in the hypostyle hall in a scene of Sety I, on the west

The inscriptions accompanying Waset:



*Dd mdw in W3st nh̄tt nbt hpš hnwt sp3t nbt.*

Words spoken by Victorious Thebes, lady of the scimitar, mistress of every nome. (Kitchen, 1979, II, p. 591 f.; Kitchen, 1999, II, p. 388 f.).

*1.8 Scene of Ramses IV - Karnak, Hypostyle Hall, central bay, column 001*

The scene portrays Ramses IV offering wine to Amun in the presence of Waset. The goddess is holding the w3s sceptre in one hand and a compound mace in the other.

The inscriptions above Waset:



*Dd mdw in W3st nh̄tt nbt hpš hnwt t3w nbw*



*d̄i.n.(i) n.k Kmt Dšrt p̄dt psdt*



*d̄i.n.(i) n.k kn nb nh̄t nb.*

Words spoken by Victorious Waset, lady of the scimitar, mistress of all lands. I have given you Egypt and the foreign nine bows. I have given you all force and all power. (Christophe, 1955, p. 9 ff.)

Parallel scenes dating to the reign of Ramses IV were also depicted on several columns of the hypostyle hall; on the north side columns 085, 093, 099, 114, 134, and on the south side columns 027 and 066. (Christophe, 1955, p. 9 ff.)

*1.9 Scene of Ramses XI - Karnak, Temple of Khonsu, first hypostyle hall, west wall, lower register*

wall of the courtyard of the hiding place that was usurped by Sety II, and in a scene of Ramses XI in the temple of Khonsu (scene 1.9). Another parallel but fragmentary scene of Seti I is located on the east wall, north wing, bottom register of the hypostyle hall. (Brand et al., vol. I, 2018, p. 313 ; vol. II, pl. 232)

Ramses XI is represented incensing and offering to the Theban triad. Waset is shown standing behind the king holding in one hand bows and a mace, while in the other hand she holds a sistrum. The figure of the lady is enclosed within the text of the "Litany of Waset". (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 233; OIP 100, 1981, p. 53 f., pl. 179)

The inscriptions accompanying Waset:



*Dd mdw in W3st nh̄tt nbt hpš hnwt sp3t nb(t).*

Words spoken by Waset the victorious, lady of the scimitar, mistress of every district.

*1.10 Scene of Herihor - Karnak, Temple of Khonsu, portico following the court, shaft of column 23*

Herihor is represented thurifying and pouring a libation for Khonsu in the presence of Waset, who is standing behind the deity. The goddess is shown holding bows, arrows and a scepter in one hand, while the other hand grasps the ḥnh̄-sign. (Fig. 5) (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 232; OIP 100, 1979, p. 51, pl. 100)

The inscriptions above Waset:



*W3st nh̄tt nbt hpš hnwt sp3t nbt*



*d̄i.n.i n.k w3s ḥnh̄ nb snb nb d̄i.s kn nh̄t.*

Waset the victorious, lady of the scimitar, mistress of every nome, I have given you all life and dominion and all health, as she gives valour and victory.

*1.11 Scene of Shoshenq I - Karnak, Bubastian Portal, south gate, south face, 1<sup>st</sup> register*

Sheoshenq is depicted smiting Asiatic enemies before Amun and Waset. Captives are all linked by a rope around the neck with the end held by Waset and Amun. Waset is

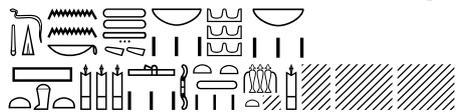
represented beneath Amun in a much smaller scale. In her right hand she grasps a bow and a sheaf of arrows, while in her left hand a compound mace can be seen. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 35; Maspero, 1890; OIP 74, 1954, pl. 3)

The text accompanying Waset:



*Dd mdw in W3st nht nbt hps hnwt nyt h3swt nb(wt).*

Words spoken by Victorious Thebes, lady of the scimitar, mistress of all foreign lands.



*Dd mdw [di] n.i n.k t3w nbw h3swt nbwt st3wt Twntyw-Sty Hnty-hn-nfr [...]*

Words spoken, I will give you all lands, all foreign lands, difficult to access, the nomads of Nubia.<sup>3</sup>



*Dd mdw [di] n.i n.k h3swt nbwt phw Stt H3w nbwt r [...]*

Words spoken, I will give you all foreign lands, distant marshlands, Asia and the Greek lands.

## 2. Scenes of Waset Attested in Mortuary Temples at West Thebes

### 2.1 Scene of Sety I - Temple of Qurna, Room II, east wall

The scene depicts Upwawut offering to Sety I and Waset, who are seated before an offering table piled with various goods. The enthroned goddess puts her right hand on the shoulder of the king in a gesture of embracing. The other hand holds the 'nh-sign. Behind Waset the gods of the ennead are shown. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 411; Champollion, 1844, p. 305)

<sup>3</sup> The term "Twntyw" means race of people and may have originally referred to nomads, who lived on the borders of Egypt and were armed with bows. (Jéquier, 1922, p. 206)

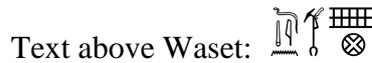
Text above Waset:



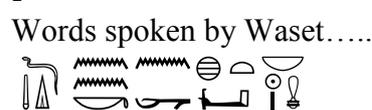
Words spoken by Waset.

### 2.2 Scene of Sety I - Temple of Qurna, Sanctuary, south wall, west side

The scene represents Sety I worshipping Amun and Mut. Behind the king stands Waset holding the w3s scepter and bows in one hand and a compound mace in the other. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 415; Arnold, 1962, pl. 14.)



Words spoken by Waset.....



Words spoken by Waset, I have given you all power like Re.

Words spoken by Waset, I have given you all power like Re.

## 3. Scenes of Waset Attested on Stelae

The stelae examined in this section are arranged according to chronological order with reference to the material of the stela, followed by reference to the owner of the stela, the dating and the provenance.

### 3.1 Limestone Stela of King Šhm-s3-nht-t3wy-R' Neferhotep, Dynasty 16, Cairo JE 59635

This stela was originally found in 1933 amongst the filling blocks of the third Pylon of the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak. The scene on the stela is framed on the right and left by two representations of the goddess Waset, facing the exterior of the monument as if to prevent the attacks of a possible enemy; in one hand she holds the bow and arrows, and the compound mace in the other. In the center, Monthu, with his hand resting on the king's shoulder, introduces him to Amon. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 73; Venus, 1982)

The text above Waset:



*In.n (i) n.k h3swt nbt*

I will bring to you all the foreign lands.

Waset was mentioned also in the second register of the stela as:  *W3st nht*, Thebes the victorious.

### 3.2 Sandstone Stela of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III, Dynasty 18, Gregorian Museum, Vatican Cat. 22780

This stela was erected by Hatshepsut to commemorate her restoration works in West Thebes. The scene depicts Hatshepsut accompanied by Tuthmosis III offering wine jars to Amun-Re in the presence of Waset. The goddess is facing right towards the exterior of the stela. She is recognized by the symbol of the nome upon her head as well as the bows, arrows and the *nh*-sign carried in her hand. (Fig. 6) (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 535; Sethe, IV, 1907, p. 311-312; Botti & Romanelli, 1951, p. 85, pl. 59)

Text before Waset:



*W3st hftt hr nb.s*

Waset, (who lies) to the opposite of her master. The term *hftt hr nb.s* means: "who lies to the opposite of her master (Amon)" refers to West Thebes or the west necropolis of Thebes. (Wb III, p. 276; Otto, 1952, p. 49; Wenzel, 2007). This epithet will be further examined in the analytical study.

### 3.3 Granite Poetical Stela of Tuthmosis III, Dynasty 18, JE 3425 - CG 34010

The stela was discovered at the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak in the court located to the north of the western "Hall of Annals". The text takes the form of a triumphal poem. The stela depicts a double scene, in which the king is

offering water and incense to Amun. Behind the king on both sides of the lunette stands the goddess Waset holding a bow and arrows in one hand and the compound mace in the other. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 94; Sethe, IV, 1907, p. 611; Lecau, 1909, p. 17-21, pl. 7.)

Text above Waset:



*Hftt hr nb.s*

(She who) lies to the opposite of her master.

### 3.4 Limestone Stela of Ramses III, Dynasty 20, Cairo JE 41209

The stela was originally found at the Karnak Temple. It depicts a scene of Ramses III offering to Amun. Waset stands behind the king, on whom she turns her back facing the exterior of the stela. She is holding bows and arrows along with the *w3s* scepter in one hand and the *nh*-sign in the other. The text above Waset is identical to that from the previous stela. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 294; Habachi, 1970)

### 3.5 Sandstone Stela of Ramses III, Dynasty 20, Sheikh Labib Magazine

The stela was found in 2003 at the bottom of a pit near the Sacred Lake, east of the New Kingdom walls at the Karnak Temple, and is now preserved in Sheikh Labib Magazine. It shows a scene of Ramses III offering to Amun in the presence of Waset. The figures are identical to those of the previous stela. (Habachi, 1970; Martelliere, 2007)

Text above Waset:



*W3st nht nb(t) hps hnwt t3w nbw.*

Thebes the victorious, lady of scimitar, mistress of all lands.

3.6 Sandstone Stela of Ramses III, Dynasty 20, Sheikh Labib Magazine Nr. 214

The stela also discovered at Karnak in 2012 represented a scene of Ramses III offering *mw* jars to Amun and Amaunet. Behind the king stands Waset oriented to the exterior of the stela. She is holding arrows along with the *nh*-sign in one hand and a bow with a *w3s* scepter in the other. The text above Waset reads:

 *hft (t) hr nb.s*, (She who) lies to the opposite of her master. (Martelliere, 2007)

3.7 Sandstone Stela of Ramses III, Dynasty 20, Cairo JE 33003

The stela was discovered to the north of the second pylon of the temple of Madinet Habu. The text inscribed on the stela commemorates the constructing of a wall dedicated to Amun-Re. The scene on the stela depicts Ramses III offering two vases to Amun-Re in the presence of Waset, who is standing behind the king facing the stela's outside. The goddess is represented in her typical iconography holding a *w3s* scepter and bows in one hand and the *nh*-sign along with arrows in the other. The

inscriptions above Waset read:  *W3st hft(t) hr nb.s*, Waset (who) lies to the opposite of her lord. (Habachi, 1970)

3.8 Limestone Stela of Paser, Dynasty 20, BM EA 1214

The well preserved stela dates back to the reign of Ramses IX. (Helck, 1958) The stela is divided into two registers; the first of which represents the Theban triad being worshipped by Paser, the mayor of Thebes. The second register depicts Waset being adored by a kneeling man. The enthroned goddess is represented holding a bow and a *w3s* scepter in one hand and the *nh*-sign in the other. Surprisingly, her head is surmounted by the

symbol of the nome along with a cobra. (Fig. 7) (Bierbrier, 1982, pl. 48.)

Text above Waset:



*W3st nh(t) nb(t) hps hnwt t3wy nb(t) sp3wt nbwt.*

Victorious Thebes, lady of the scimitar, mistress of the Two Lands, lady of all nomes.

3.9 Sandstone Stela of High priest Mn-hpr-Rc, Dynasty 21, Cairo Temp. No. 3.12.24.2

The stela belongs to the son of Penedjem and dates to year 48 of his service. It was originally discovered in the Ethiopian colonnade in the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak. The text on the stela commemorates the construction of a wall in the temple of Amun-Re. The scene on the upper part of the stela depicts the high priest offering to the Theban Triad. Behind *Mn-hpr-Rc*, Waset is shown turning her back on the proper scene. She is holding bows and arrows in her hand. The text above Waset is destroyed, yet the inscriptions in the 4<sup>th</sup> line mention the goddess. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 210; Barguet, 1962, p. 36 f.)

Text mentioning Waset:



*[Hft(t) hr] W3st nb.s*

[(She who) lies] to the opposite of her lord, Waset.

3.10 Diorite Stela of Kneeling Statue of Bn-thi-Hr, Dynasty 26, Louvre A. 83

The stela dates to the first year of the reign of King Necho II. The lunette of the stela depicts a scene, in which the king followed by Waset and the deceased are offering the city of Thebes to the Theban Triad and Monthu. The kneeling deceased is shown in an attitude of worship, while Waset is depicted as "Victorious Thebes" with the compound mace in one and the bow and arrows in the other

hand, in addition to the ideogram of the Theban nome upon her head. (PM I<sup>2</sup>, p. 793; Vittmann, 1978, p. 74-5; Perdu, 1986, p. 24-5, fig. 1; Jansen-Winkel, IV, 2014 p. 291)

### 3.11 Sandstone Stela of Nectanebo I, Dynasty 30, Cairo Temp. No. 28-6-37-2

The scene on the stela portrays Nectanebo I adoring and offering a conical bread loaf to Amun-Re. Waset is depicted with the same iconography holding a *w3s* scepter and bows in one hand and the *nh*-sign along with arrows in the other.<sup>4</sup> (Habachi, 1970)

Text before Waset:



*Rpwt W3st hnwt t3wy.*

The Lady of Thebes, mistress of the Two Lands.

### 3.12 Sandstone Stela of Nectanebo I, Dynasty 30, Luxor Museum<sup>5</sup>

The scene on the stela is almost identical to the previously mentioned stela of Nectanebo I. Waset is also depicted with the same iconography and attributes. (Abd Er-Raziq, 1978)

Text above Waset:



*W3st nht(t) [nb(t) t3wy.]*

Waset the victorious, mistress of the Two Lands.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The stela was originally in the possession of an antiques dealer in Luxor, and was later acquired by the Antiquities Service in 1937 and is now preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The monument is thought to have been originally erected at the Karnak Temple to commemorate the construction of a wall dedicated to Amun-Re, who resides in Karnak. (Habachi, 1970)

<sup>5</sup> This stela was part of a collection possessed by a rich man in Luxor. In 1965 it was acquired by the Antiquities Service and is now preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Luxor. (Abd Er-Raziq, 1978)

<sup>6</sup> The inscriptions on the stela were eroded and difficult to decipher. Abd Er-Raziq suggested that the

## 4. Scenes of Waset Attested in Private Tombs

### 4.1 Tomb of Chief Steward of Amun Amenemope TT 41, transverse hall, north wall, middle register

The tomb of Amenemope TT 41, located at Sheikh Abd El-Ourna dates back to the late Eighteenth Dynasty and the early Ramesside Period, most probably between the reign of Horemheb and Ramses I. The scene shows Amenemope, the owner of the tomb, led by Anubis towards the goddess of the West. The deceased is followed by two goddesses, one of whom is the goddess Waset recognized by the symbol of the nome above her head. The text above says "May the body of your mummy rejuvenate". (Fig. 8) (PM I, p. 79; Assmann, 1991, p. 111 f., pl. 43)

### 4.2 Tomb of the Prophet of Amun Tjanefer TT 158, passage, south wall, second eastern section

The tomb of Tjanefer is located at Dra Abu El Naga. It dates back to the Twentieth Dynasty, most probably to the reign of Ramses III. The scene depicts the deceased Tjanefer adoring divinities among whom is Waset. She is shown with the symbol of the Theban nome upon her head and carries bows, arrows and the *w3s* scepter in her hand. (PM I, p. 270; Seele, 1959, pl. 31; Wenzel, 2007)

The text above the goddess:



*Imntt W3st hft(t) hr [nb.s]*

Imentet (West) Waset, [(who) faces her master.]

## 5. Reference to Waset in Texts

This section surveys the textual sources, which refers to the goddess Waset without being

epithet could be *nbt pt* "Lady of the sky" instead of *nbt t3wy*. (Abd Er-Raziq, 1978)

represented figuratively. The sources are arranged according to chronological order.

### 5.1 Limestone Stela of King Mentuhotep S<sup>nh</sup>-n-r<sup>c</sup> (?), Late Middle Kingdom (?)

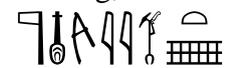
Five fragments of the stela were discovered in 1965 in the foundation of the third pylon of the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak. The owner of the stela is probably to be identified with King Mentuhotep S<sup>nh</sup>-n-r<sup>c</sup> from the end of the Middle Kingdom or the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period. The stela alludes to the king's military achievements in the autobiographical style. The Fifth line of inscriptions on the stela mention Waset as follows:

  
W3st nht(t) ink nsw n hn W3st niwt.i tn nbt  
t3w nb(w).

Waset the victorious, I am the king in Thebes, the city of mine, mistress of all Lands. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 73; Vernus, 1989)

### 5.2 Limestone Stela of King Dd-nfr-R<sup>c</sup> Dedumose II, Second Intermediate Period, Cairo JE 29239<sup>7</sup>

The stela was originally found at Gebelein. On the stela Dedumose claims that he was acclaimed to the kingship. Among the titles of the king, which were cited on the stela is:



Ntr nfr mry W3st; Good God, (who is) beloved of Waset. (Gauthier, 1912, p. 50; Morenz & Popko, 2010, p. 106; Leprohon, 2013, p. 86)

### 5.3 Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, Deir El-Bahari, the lower terrace, lower row

<sup>7</sup> Dedumose II was a native ancient Egyptian king, who ruled during the Second Intermediate Period. The exact time when he ruled was a matter of debate. According to Kim Ryholt he was a ruler of the 16<sup>th</sup> Theban Dynasty. (Ryholt, 1997) However, J. Beckerath and T. Schneider suggested that he was a king of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. (Schneider, 2006)

The inscription which mention Waset accompanies a scene of the transportation of the two obelisks erected by the queen in the constructions she made in the great temple of Amon-Re at Karnak. It describes the situation at the arrival in Thebes and the erection of the obelisks. (Neville VI, 1908, pl. CLIII.)



Spr m htp r W3st nht pt m hb t3wy m hwt.... šsp 3wt-ib m33.sn mnw pn nhh....it.s.

The landing in peace at Thebes the victorious; there is a festival in the sky, (the Two Lands) Egypt is rejoicing ... is in joy, when they see this monument everlasting (which the queen erected) to her father (Amon).

### 5.4 Tuthmosis III - Karnak, Temple of Amun-Re, Festival Temple, pillared hall, architrave

Dedication text mentioning Waset:



Ntr nfr mity R hmw-ib mi rsy mnw.f sš hr m k3t W3st.

Good God, likeness of Re, skillful like (God) the south of his wall (Ptah), knowledgeable in her work (war craft) (Wb IV, p. 543-544) (the goddess) Thebes. (PM II<sup>2</sup>, p. 111; Sethe IV, p. 555; Blumenthal et al., 1984, p. 127)

### 5.5 Statue of High Priest of Amun, 'Irt-Hr-Irw, Walters Art Museum of Baltimore 22.215. Dynasty 22

This statue was discovered in the Karnak Cachette and was later exhibited in the Museum of Baltimore. The statue represents a standing figure of the priest 'Irt-Hr-Irw holding a mummified figure of Osiris. Waset was

mentioned in the text inscribed on the rear column supporting the statue. This text mentions the titles of the statue owner. Among the titles is: *ḥm-ntr W3st nḥtt nbt ḥpš*, prophet of the goddess Waset, the victorious, lady of the scimitar. (Steindorff, 1946, p. 60; Bothmer, 1960, nr. 44)

### 5.6 Inscriptions of High Priest of Amun, Montuemhat - Karnak, Temple of Mut, Dynasty 26



*Ḥw ms.n ḥnwt wʿt grg W3st W3st nḥtt nbt ḥpš m tīt.*

I made the image of the unique regent (lady), founder of Thebes, Thebes the victorious, lady of the scimitar in (her) image. (Wreszinski, 1910, p. 386, pl. 2/4; Leclant, Montouemhat 1961, p. 214 f.)

### 5.7 Limestone Stela of Sšn-Nfr-tm, Tomb of Sheshonq (TT 27), Assasif

This stela was discovered at the funerary complex of Sheshonq, high steward of the god's wife in the Assasif necropolis (TT 27) West Thebes dating to the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. However, the stela does not belong to the owner of the tomb, but to a man named Seshen-Nefertem, and dates back to the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty or perhaps to the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period. The upper half of the stela is divided into two scenes; below there are seven lines of text mentioning the titles of *Sšn-Nfr-tm*. Among the titles given to the owner of the stela, the first line reads:



*Dd mdw in Wsir it-ntr ḥm-ntr n Imn m Ipt-swt ḥm-ntr n W3st nḥt nb(t) ḥpš nḥt ḥpš.*

Words spoken by Osiris, god's father, prophet of Amun in *Ipt-swt*, prophet of Waset the victorious, lady of the scimitar, strong of arm.

(Contardi, 2006)

### Reference to Waset the Victorious in Papyri

Furthermore, Thebes "the victorious" was also mentioned in several papyri as the pBerlin papyrus (Verhoeven & Derchain, 1985), the papyrus of *Ns-b3-nb-dd* II, which includes a hymn for Osiris (Burkard, 1986; Bukard 1995) as well as the pTurin CGT 54031, which records a hymn for Ramses VI and Ramses VII. (Condon, 1978)

## 6. Sculptures of Waset

### 6.1 Greywacke Triad of Menkaure, Cairo JE 40678

Waset was portrayed accompanying the king in a triad statue from the pyramid complex of Menkaure at Giza. The triad shows the king flanked by the goddess Hathor and Waset. Thebes was personified as a male figure, recognized with the symbol of the nome surmounting his head. The male figure was portrayed in a much smaller scale than the king and the goddess Hathor. (PM III, p. 28; Woody, 1974)

### 6.2 "Lost" Lifesized Statue of "Victorious Waset"

A text inscribed on the doorway of the Seventh Pylon of the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak mentioned that Tuthmosis III ordered for the first time the erection of a lifesized statue for "Victorious Thebes" portrayed holding bows and arrows. It is unfortunate that this statue might have been lost and no traces of this statue have survived. (Sethe, IV, 1914, p. 89; Sethe, III, 1927, p. 190) This might be the same statue mentioned by Montuemhat, (5.6) who stated that he restored it in gold. The statue might have been plundered by the Assyrians. (Helck, 1986)

### III. ANALYTICAL STUDY

The examination of the previously represented epigraphic and pictorial sources of "W3st" has revealed valuable information about the iconography, epithets, and functions of the goddess as follows:

#### a. *Iconography and Attributes*

The first surviving representation of Waset dates back to the Old Kingdom. Waset is documented first in the Fourth Dynasty in the composition of one of the triads from the pyramid complex of Menkaure, in which the nome was exceptionally personified as a male figure. No other statues representing Waset as a male or female figure have survived. Yet, two surviving texts refer to the erection of a statue of Waset "the Victorious". The first text dates to the reign of Tuthmosis III whereas the second was stated by Montuemhat from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty.

Subsequently, in the reliefs of the solar temple of Neuserre, Waset is personified as a female figure, in conformity with the feminine gender of Waset. Upon her head is the w3s scepter, the symbol of the province. (Edel & Wenig, 1974, pl. 5; Seyfried, 2019, p. 41- 47, pl. III.)

Starting from the Middle Kingdom onwards, Waset was frequently depicted in anthropomorphic form as a goddess dressed in a long robe with a wide collar. She is often recognized by her headdress consisting of the w3s scepter and a feather, the hieroglyphic sign designating Thebes. It should be noted that there is a minor difference in the goddess's headdress depicted on the stelae of the early Eighteenth Dynasty and those of the late New Kingdom. In the Eighteenth Dynasty stelae the

symbol of the nome  was missing. (Abd Er-Raziq, 1978) In various scenes Waset was represented holding the w3s scepter, the

symbol of power, to which a plume and a ribbon were sometimes attached. The *nh*-sign was also one of her emblems. A unique representation, on the stela of Paser from the Twentieth Dynasty, shows the lady with a copra surmounting her head along with the w3s scepter. (Bierbrier, 1982, pl. 48)

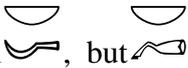
As "Victorious" Thebes, the goddess was depicted in commemorative context in a warlike appearance with bows, arrows and a compound mace representing the military might of the city and nome. In royal scenes of smiting enemies, Waset was shown holding the robe binding name rings of foes.

In ritual scenes, in which the goddess was accompanied by the text of the "Litany of Waset", she was always portrayed holding the sistrum, one of Hathor's emblems. An exceptional representation in the red chapel of Hatshepsut depicts Waset receiving offerings. The enthroned goddess was portrayed as a human mummiform with a long gown covering all of her body holding the w3s scepter and the *nh*-sign.

#### b. *Epithets*

• *Nhtt*:        , "The victorious". (Wb I, p. 260, 314; Leitz, 2002, II, p. 255) In the majority of the textual and pictorial sources, Waset was mentioned as *W3st nh*. Without doubt this is one of the most important epithets of Waset, which occurred in the late Middle Kingdom and has become very frequent in the New Kingdom. It came to refer specifically to the nome of Thebes, from which the figure, "Waset the victorious" derives. The earliest surviving occurrence of this epithet is mentioned on a stela of King Neferhotep III from the time of the Hyksos. (Vernus, 1982) This title reflects the warlike aspect of the goddess, which

evolved in the troubled times of the Second Intermediate Period. It is also to be related to the warlike attributes of Thebes personified, and with the circumstances in which this personification is constituted. Accordingly Waset symbolized the powerful and victorious state of the province and country. As a goddess providing valor and victory, she had the role of bringing all the captured foreign regions and enemies to the king. Hence, Waset was also depicted in scenes of triumphing over enemies, where she holds the robes binding the name rings of enemies. The texts accompanying these scenes mention that she brings all the foreign lands and enemies to the king. (Helck, 1968) There are some few cases where the epithet *nht* victorious was missing and thus the bows, arrows and mace were thus missing in these scenes.

• *Nbt hps*  This epithet was frequently translated as "lady or mistress of the sickle sword or scimitar". (Leitz, 2002, IV, 118) The two references cited by P. Vernus in support of the reading of the epithet are somehow misleading and do not bear a scrutiny of the epithet as "lady or mistress of the sickle sword. (Vernus, 1982) The first reference is based on J. Leclant's incorrect reading of a text in the hypostyle hall of the Karnak temple after Lepsius Denkmäler III, 221, in which *nbt hps* is not written  but . The second reference does not support such translation either, since the writing is also . However an inscription from the temple of Ramses III at Karnak preserves the writing . (Leclant, 1961, p. 225 note [av]). Moreover, the epithet was translated as "possessor of strength", a wise interpretation which reflects the warlike aspect of the goddess. (Contardi, 2006)

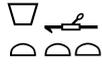
• The previously mentioned titles were usually followed by a number of other imperative epithets of "Thebes the victorious" as *hnwt sp3t*, "mistress of the nome"; *hnwt t3wy*, "mistress of the Two Lands"; "*nbt t3wy*", lady of the Two Lands; *nbt t3w nbw*, lady of all Lands and "*hnwt nyt h3swt*", mistress of the foreign lands. These epithets further indicate the conception of the goddess, who personified strength and power not only for the nome she personified, but also reflects the dominance she may have granted for the country and the foreign lands.

• *S3t R<sup>c</sup> nbt dt*,  "Daughter of Ra, lady of eternity". A unique epithet of Waset, which was only recorded once in the triple shrine of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III in Luxor Temple. The epithet was also given to Hathor. (Hart, 1986) In this case the goddess was shown in an attitude of adoration.

• *Rpwt W3st*  "Lady (of) Thebes". This epithet applied to Waset seems unique. It is only recorded once on the stela of Nectanebo I dating to the Late Period. Thebes, bears the title *rpwt W3st* in the same way that goddesses like Hathor and Nut were given the title "*rpwt Iwn*", lady of Heliopolis". (Wb. II, 415; Leitz, 2002, IV, p. 662)

• *Hft(t) hr nb.s*  This term is made up of the preposition *hft-hr*, the noun *nb* and the feminine suffix pronoun *s*. It is translated as "she who lies to the opposite of her lord or "she who faces her lord". The word *nb* refers to Amon or rather his princint at Karnak. Thus the geographical term *hft(t) hr nb.s* designates the west area of Thebes or occasionally the whole of the province. In fact the earliest occurrence of the term as a name of a locality referring to the west area

of Thebes dates back to the Middle Kingdom. (Žaba, 1974, fig. on p. 99) Since the Eighteenth Dynasty it became an epithet of some goddesses, namely Waset, Imntet, Meretseger and Hathor as well. Remarkably, this epithet of Waset was only mentioned along with the figure of the goddess on stelae, with the exception of the scene from the tomb of Tjanefer from the Twentieth Dynasty. Helck states that with the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty the center of the Theban province was not to be situated in the Karnak temple on the east bank, however it was located on the western fortified district, where the royal palaces, mortuary temples and the administration concentrated. (Helck, 1954, p. 204 f.) Helck based his conclusions on the occurrence of the term in several references. Among these references is a text inscribed on ostarca stating a festival of Amun to be celebrated in *hft(t) hr nb.s.* (Gardiner & Černý, 1957, p. 31), whereas another inscription describes the journey of the Vizier Rekhmire from the north to *Hft(t) hr nb.s.*, which indicates that the residential town of the officials was situated on the west bank of Thebes. (Sethe, 1907, II, p. 60) The occurrence of this epithet on two stelae of Ramses III and a stela of the high priest Menkheprre from the Twenty-First Dynasty indicates that this epithet was still used until this period, and hence, may refer to the goddess's control over the whole area of the district including the east and west areas of Thebes. (Habachi, 1970)

• *Hnwt wʿt*  "unique lady". (Wreszinski, 1910, p. 386) This epithet is only documented during the Kushite Period. It is attested in the inscriptions of Montuemhat in the precinct of Mut at Karnak. It seems that the epithet was given to Waset to express the significant status of the

city and the goddess during the Kushite Period and to present a race of the theological discourse at a time of struggle for legitimacy.

• *Nht hps*  "strong of arm" (?). This epithet was once applied to the goddess on the stela of *Sšn-Nfr-tm* dating to the Thirteenth Dynasty. (Contardi, 2006) It reflects the aspect of the goddess as a mighty protective deity and personified locality.

### c. Roles and Functions

It is evident from the above mentioned sources that Waset can perform various functions. The roles and functions of the goddess may be divided into four categories according to the epigraphic and pictorial sources.

The first category includes the commemorative scenes, in which Waset accompanies the king. The role of Waset reflects her iconography being represented in martial guise with bows, arrows and a compound mace. Her function was to provide victory and stability to the district and the country as well as to bring the captured enemies or foreign lands to the king. To this category belong the scenes of smiting enemies before deities of King Seti I, Ramses II and another of Sheshonq in the temple of Amon-Re at Karnak.

Commemorative scenes on stelae, depict Waset with her weapons facing the exterior of the monument as if to prevent the assaults of a possible aggressor. (Habachi, 1970) Another possible explanation of this phenomenon was suggested by Traunecker, who had been examining a group of stelae commemorating the construction of a wall. He concluded that these stelae must have been embedded in the exterior of the walls; an assumption that might explain the unique representation of Waset as "She who faces her lord"; so she turns

outwards to avoid the bad and evil from the temple. Therefore, Waset might have an apotropaic function. In this sense, the king enters the temple, where Amun welcomes him. (Traunecker, 1975, p. 141; Wenzel, 2007)

The second category reveals the divine role of Waset as a goddess and reflects her role in rituals including offering and libation. In this regard we may differentiate between three more types of scenes. The first includes the scenes, in which the goddess was represented behind the king making the offering. To this type belong two scenes of Ramses II, the first comes from the triple shrine of Luxor Temple, whereas the second is depicted on the interior walls of the hypostyle hall at Karnak and shows Ramses receiving years and jubilees from Amun in the presence of Waset.

In the scenes, where the goddess was accompanied by the "Litany of Waset", she undertakes the function of praising Amun and rejoicing him, therefore she was depicted holding the sistrum, one of Hathor's symbols. In this case, Waset represents one of the aspects of Hathor. This further explains the reason Waset bore the title "daughter of Re", which is one of the epithets of the goddess Hathor.

The second type of ritual scenes represents Waset behind the main deity benefiting from the rites. Two examples belong to this type; the first is located in the central shrine of the bark chapel of Seti II at Karnak, while the second comes from the temple of Khonsu, where Herihor was offering to Khonsu and Waset. Apparently, ritual scenes which occurred in cult temples in the east of Thebes represent the living king either receiving or presenting offerings to Amun or the Theban triad in presence of Waset, who acts as a protector and supporter of the king.

The third category occur in a funerary context. It echoes Waset's divinity and her protective role for the deceased. Two examples of this type come from the mortuary temple of Seti I at Qurna. In room II, the enthroned goddess is depicted embracing the king, while in the sanctuary she is shown standing behind the king while worshipping Amun and Mut. In both examples it is the deceased king who is involved.

In addition to royal scenes, Waset played an evident role in the private funerary context as well. The earliest example exists in the Nineteenth Dynasty tomb of the chief steward of Amun, Amenemope TT 41 at Sheikh Abd El-Qurna. The goddess accompanies the deceased, who is being led by Anubis to the Western goddess. Yet again, Waset provides support and protection for the deceased. Moreover, the goddess was being worshipped or adored in two instances dating to the Twentieth Dynasty. She was being adored by a kneeling male figure on the funerary stela of Paser and by the deceased in the tomb of Tianefer at Dra Abu El-Naga. In fact, it seems that the divine aspect of Waset was further emphasized and her cult was deeply established in private context from the late New Kingdom onwards. She might have been elevated to the status of a national goddess. This is also evidenced by the reference of two *hm* priests or prophets of the goddess in private accounts, the first was the prophet *Sšn-nfr-tm*, whereas the second is the priest *ʿIrt-Hr-Irw*. The two examples date to the Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period.

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A synthesis of different types of sources examined in this paper allowed better understanding of the conception and aspects of Waset throughout the ancient Egyptian history. Thebes was first personified in the Old

Kingdom triad of Menkaure as a male figure with the symbol of the nome surmounting his head. The small size of the personified nome might refer to the modest status of Waset during this period. In the Fifth Dynasty Sun temple of Ny-wsr-Re, Thebes started to be personified as a female figure, corresponding to the grammatical feminine gender of Waset.

The war-like confrontations with Hyksos during the Second Intermediate Period led to the establishment of a mighty Theban city state and the capital of the Egyptian empire. The stelae of the kings Neferhotep III, Mentuhotep and Dedumose give a strong indication that the residence of the Sixteenth Dynasty was situated in Thebes. It was then, when the personified nome was developed into a female goddess known as "Waset the victorious", who was conceived as a theopolitical personification of the province under the rulers of this period. This figure was represented in iconography with bows, arrows and a compound mace to reflect her warlike aspect. The conception of the goddess Waset, who personified strength, power and victory was clearly confirmed by the epithets applied to the deity. She was described as lady of the scimitar, strong of arm, unique lady, mistress of the nome, mistress of the Two Lands, etc.. The epithet *hftt hr nb.s* given to the goddess alludes to her dominant role over the entire area of the nome, including West Thebes. It further describes her apotropaic function in averting evil from the area and preventing any harm to the deceased in funerary context as well. Moreover, epithets given to Waset as "*s3t R*" or "*rpwt W3st*", which were also applied to female deities as Hathor and Nut reflect the divine aspect of the personified nome.

New Kingdom temples, tombs and stelae reveal a number of presentations of the goddess Waset in commemorative, ritual and funerary context. She was depicted in

commemorative scenes with the king providing victory and valor to the nome and country. These triumphal scenes were located on the walls of the hypostyle hall and the Bubastite portal at Karnak. In ritual scenes Waset acted as a protector and supporter to the living king receiving or presenting the offerings. The majority of these representations are found in the central shrines of bark stations in Luxor and Karnak Temples as well as on the columns of the hypostyle hall at the temple of Amun-Re and the temple of Khonsu at Karnak. In mortuary temples and private tombs Waset acted as a guardian accompanying the deceased.

By the end of the New Kingdom, the Theban state lost part of its prominence, yet the cult of Waset still gained popularity until the Late Period. In spite of the fact that Waset was a minor local goddess and was seldom depicted as an independent figure, she was being worshipped in a scene shown on the stela of Paser and in the tomb of Tjanefer from the late New Kingdom. Moreover, in the inscriptions of Montuemhat from the Twent-Sixth Dynasty the determinative designating Waset is sign of

a female deity  which confirms that Waset was elevated to the status of a national goddess during this period. Moreover, a reference of two *hm* priests from the the Third Intermediate and Late Period were mentioned as prophets of the female deity.

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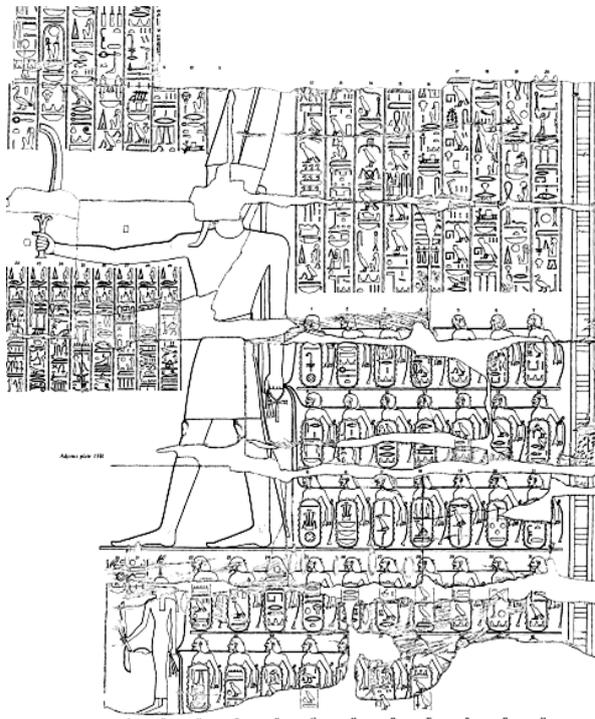
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**Figures**



**Figure 1:** Hatshepsut offering to divinities, the middle of whom is Waset. After, Lacau & Chevrier, *Une Chapelle d' Hatshepsout a Karnak*, 1977, pl. 19.



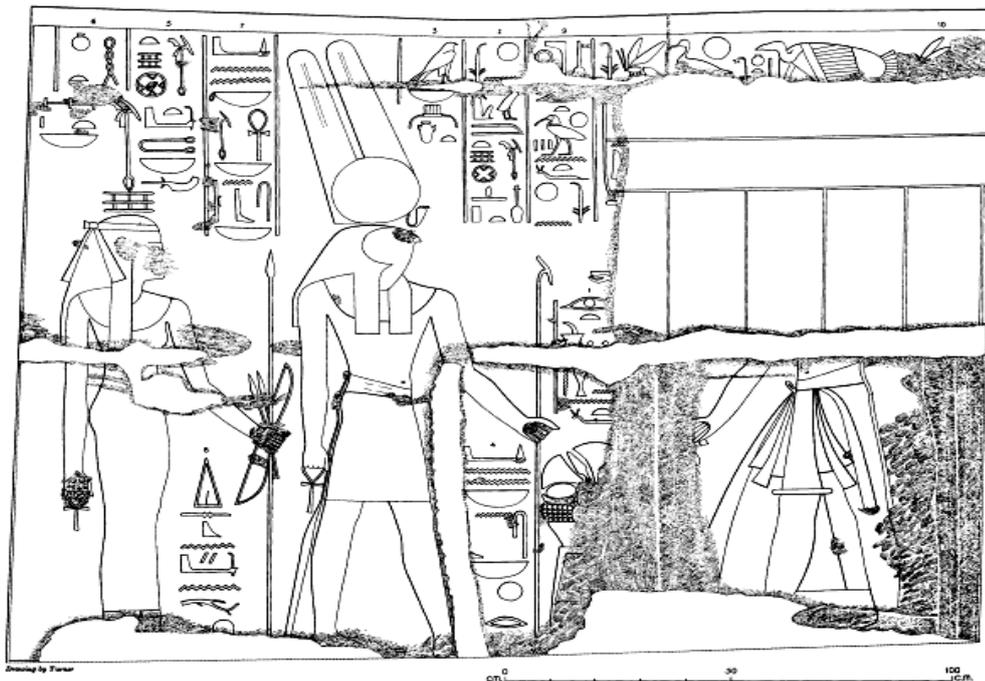
**Figure 2:** Eastern triumph (right part) scene of King Seti I smiting enemies before Amun-Re. Waset is represented beneath Amun-Re. After, OIP 107, pl. 15 B.



**Figure 3:** Ramses II receiving years and jubilees from Amun-Re in the presence of Waset. After, OIP 142/2, 2018, pl. 104.



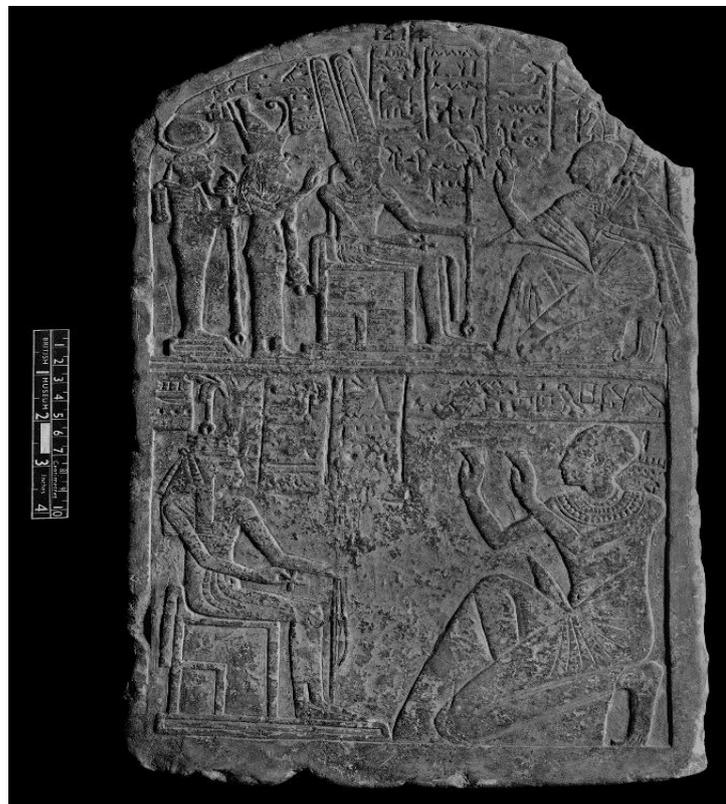
**Figure 4:** Ramses III incensing to the sacred bark of Amun. Behind the king Waset is standing holding a sistrum. After, OIP 25, 1936, pl. 56.



**Figure 5:** Herihor is pouring libation to Khonsu in presence of Waset. After, OIP 100, 1979, pl. 100.



**Figure 6:** Stela depicts Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III offering to Amun in presence of Waset. After, <http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-gregoriano-egizio>



**Figure 7:** Stela of Paser. Kneeling man adoring Waset. After, [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA1214](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA1214).



Figure 8: Stela of Nectanebo I. King offering to Amun in presence of Waset. After, Kemi 20, 1970, fig. 1.



Figure 9: Waset accompanying the deceased, who is being led by Anubis to the western goddess. After, Assman, Das Grab des Amenemope TT 41, pl. 43.