

## The *damnatio* against Amun-Ra in five private stelae discovered in the Temple of Millions of Years of Thutmose III in the West Bank

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[The works carried out since 2008 in the Temple of Millions of Years of King Thutmose III, known in ancient times as *Henket Ankh* and located in the West Bank of Luxor, between el-Assasif and el-Khokha hills, have provided an important amount of material, including a large number of stelae. Although most of the stelae are incomplete and too fragmented, they still offer interesting information about the worship that took place in the temple, the iconography, style and quality of the objects manufactured during this period, as well as political, historical and social data, which improves our understanding of the function of the temple, the role of the pharaoh Thutmose III and the XVIIIth Dynasty. The majority of material discovered during recent excavations in the *Henket Ankh*, has not yet been published. In this paper, we gather five fragments of stelae that were subjected to a process of *damnatio* against the image and name of the god Amun-Ra, presumably under the reign of the King Akhenaten at the end of the XVIIIth Dynasty].

**Keywords:** Temple of Millions of Years, Thutmose III, Stelae, *Damnatio*, Amun-Ra.

The excavation and restoration of the Temple of Millions of Years, known as *Henket Ankh*, located in the West Bank of Luxor, have been taking place since 2008 by a Spanish-Egyptian team of archeologists and restorers<sup>1</sup>. Since the end of the XIX century several works were carried out in

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1. The excavation and restoration project of the Temple of Millions of Years of Thutmosis III which, at present, consists of nine seasons, began in 2008 as a result of the cooperation between the Ministry of Egyptian Antiquities and the Academy of Fine Arts of Seville. The project has been financed since 2010 by Botín Foundation and Santander Bank. Since 2013 it has also been supported by Cemex Company and since 2016 by Cajasol Foundation. The project collaborates with the University of Granada and the University of Tübingen. To find out more please refer to: Seco Álvarez, M. *et al.*, “First Season of the Egyptian-Spanish Project at the Funerary Temple of Thutmosis III in Luxor”, *ASAE* 84, 2010, pp. 27-61; Seco Álvarez, M., Radwan, A., “Egyptian-Spanish Project at the Temple of Thutmosis III in Luxor West Bank: Results of two Seasons”, *Memnonia Cahier supplémentaire n°2*, 2012, pp. 59-71; Seco Álvarez, M., “Últimos descubrimientos en el proyecto de excavación, restauración y puesta en valor del Templo Funerario de Tutmosis III en la orilla oeste de Lúxor”, *Novos trabalhos de Egiptologia Ibérica. IV Congreso Ibérico de Egiptología*, Vol. II, Lisboa, 2012, pp. 1027-1037; Seco Álvarez, M. *et al.*, “Second and Third Excavation Season of the Egyptian-Spanish Project at the Mortuary Temple of Thutmosis III at the West Bank of Luxor (2009 and 2010)”, *ASAE* 86, 2012-2013, pp. 329-395; Seco Álvarez, M., “The Temple of Millions of years of Tuthmosis III”, *EA* 44, 2014, pp. 21-25; and the project’s website: [thutmosisiitempleproject.org](http://thutmosisiitempleproject.org).

the temple<sup>2</sup>, which together with the current research, has provided a better understanding of this site and its plane, as well as a large amount of architectural materials and objects associated with the worship and the practices that occurred in the temple. Among these materials, there are a significant number which are classified as stelae or fragments of stelae. Despite the damaged condition of many of these stelae, they are still able to provide us with interesting information about the type of worship that took place in the temple, the iconography, style and quality of the objects manufactured during this period, as well as political, historic and social data.

The majority of the material found during recent excavations in the *Henket Ankh* has not yet been published and is currently being examined. In this paper, we present five unpublished fragments of stelae located in their original archeological context that share a common distinguished characteristic: each one has been subjected to diverse processes of *damnatio*<sup>3</sup> against the image or name of the god Amun-Ra, presumably at some stage under the reign of the King Akhenaten at the end of the XVIIIth dynasty<sup>4</sup>.

The Temples of Millions of Years situated in the West Bank of Luxor, much like the complex Karnak and the temple of Luxor, were targets of the Amarna persecution. The temple of Thutmosis III was not left undamaged, as has been proven by recent excavations in the site<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, limestone and sandstone blocks bearing Amun's iconography, name and epithets, were carefully erased. However, this persecution was not focused exclusively on public monuments or

2. Two "clean-up campaigns" conducted by Daressy in 1889 and 1890. Daressy, G., "Le voyage d'inspection de M. Grébaut en 1889", *ASAE* 26, 1926, pp. 13-14. Weigall led one campaign in 1906. Weigall, A.E.P., "A report on the excavation of the Funeral Temple of Thoutmosis III at Gurneh", *ASAE* 7, 1906, pp. 121-141; Weigall, A.E.P., "Plan of the Mortuary Temple of Thoutmosis III", *ASAE* 8, 1907, p. 286. Finally, Herbert Ricke, who directed a more methodical excavation between 1934 and 1939. Ricke, H., *Der Totentempel Thutmoses III. Beiträge zur ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde*, BABA 2,1, Cahier 3 (I), Cairo, 1939.

3. We are using the Latin term *Damnatio memoriae*, damning the memory, to describe the practice whose objective was to eradicate the name and image of an individual, usually in a radical way. The Egyptology distinguishes between this procedure and the practice of usurpation. Brand, P., "Usurpation of monuments", *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (W. Wendrich ed.), Los Angeles, 2010.

4. There are a multitude of references and opposing opinions regarding when the persecution of the image of Amun took place. To consult about the subject: Aldred, C., *Akhenaten, king of Egypt*, London, 1988, pp. 289-290; Redford, D., *Akhenaten the heretic King*, Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 175-176; Hari, R., *New Kingdom Amarna period: the great hymn to Aten*, Leiden, 1985, pp. 14-16; Hoffmeier, J. K., *Akhenaten and the origins of monotheism*, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 198-203; Reeves, C. N., *Akhenaten Egypt's false prophet*, London, 2001, pp. 154-155; Johnson, R., "Amenhotep III and Amarna: some new considerations", *JEA* 82, 1996, pp. 65-82; Quirke, S., *The cult of Ra: sun-worship in ancient Egypt*, London, 2001, pp. 167-169.

5. Seco Álvarez, M., Martínez Babón, J., "La *damnatio* contra Amón en la capilla de caliza del templo de Millones de Años de Tutmosis III en Lúxor", *Ex Aegypto lux et sapientia: Homenatge al professor Josep Padró Parcerisa, Nova studia aegyptica* 9, Barcelona, 2015, pp. 523-535. It is remarkable that Arthur Weigall (Weigall, A., "A report on the excavation...", p. 122), recorded the following statement in his report for the Egyptian Antiquities Service: "... It was wrecked, in all probability, before the age of the heretic King, for although the name of Amen-Ra is several times mentioned upon the fallen wall-blocks, etc., in only one case is erased. Here, however, the name has been rewritten, suggesting a later restoration of the temple". We can therefore assume that from all of the material found by Weigall, just one block showed evidence of *damnatio* and this led him to theorize that the temple must have already been destroyed or completely abandoned before the Amarna period, due to the lack of evidence. This unique piece also presented evidence of having been restored in the antiquity. However, the only example provided by Weigall contrasts with the abundant amount of architectural material found *in situ* in the temple.

royal stelae<sup>6</sup>, but also on small items, signs of personal piety, such as private votive stelae<sup>7</sup> similar to those presented in this paper.

The archeological context in which the stelae were found is significant and has offered valuable information. First, we must note that during the archeological season 2013, the excavations in the temple confirmed a structure in the northeast area with bricks sealed with Akhenaten's cartouche. This fact indicates that this zone was still somewhat active during this period<sup>8</sup>. This same sector was also occupied during Ramesside times, when a structure containing material evidences that points to the revival of Thutmose III worship<sup>9</sup> was built.

Three of five stelae fragments: Inv. N° 15516, Inv. N° 15523 and Inv. N° 15527, were discovered in the same sector and layer: 900-N5-L2, a perimeter area outside the northeastern corner of the enclosure wall. This zone is characterized for having been the landfill site used by the temple during its life time, the XVIIIth and XIXth dynasty<sup>10</sup>. Part of this landfill was located on an old necropolis dated from the XIth dynasty, discovered in 2014, and settled in the limit of the natural hill that the temple occupies. In ancient times, its surface had to have a wide and deep cut, where the waste was thrown, allowing the accumulation of a several meters thick stratum of waste and sand. The first level, under the surface deposit, presented a compact layer of pottery of about one meter in depth. According to the pottery studies carried out by our colleague Bettina Bader<sup>11</sup>, this layer pertains to the end of the XVIIIth dynasty and mainly, the XIXth dynasty. Under this layer, another level of filling was found, the Layer 2, which contained diverse materials and the stelae fragments here studied<sup>12</sup>. The Layer 3 corresponded to a sandier filling with inclusion of human remains originating from the plunder of the surrounding burials. Inferior levels are likely to be associated with the XIth dynasty necropolis.

The stela Inv. N° 15426 was found within Layer 2 of the sector 930/940-N5, a little further west of the landfill, in similar conditions to those previously described. This level is also covered with a compact superior layer of Ramesside ceramic, the Layer 1, with the difference that the Layer 2, a filling of diverse materials and sand, rested on the mother rock.

6. See: Leprohon, R. J., *Stelae II: The New Kingdom to the Coptic Period*, Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1991, Boston MFA 23733; Porter, B., Moss, R. L. B. *et al*, *Topographical bibliography of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts, reliefs and paintings* 2. Theban temples, Oxford, 1972, p. 535 (For a image visit Vatican Museum webpage).

7. Some examples: Peterson, J., "Two Egyptian stelae", *OrSuec* XIV-XV, 1965-6, pp. 7-8; Mogensen, M., *Stelaes égyptiennes au Musée National de Stockholm (Middle Kingdom to Late Period)*, Copenhagen, 1919, pp. 33-34; Hall, H. R., *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum*, Part 7, London, 1925, pp. 9-10, pl. XXV BM 341; Martin, G. T., *Stelae from Egypt and Nubia in the Fitzwilliam Museum, c. 3000 BC – AD 1150*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 93.

8. Seco Álvarez, M., Jodar Miñarro, A. (Eds.), *The Temples of Millions of Years in Thebes*, Granada, 2015, p. 116; Daressy, G., "Le voyage d'inspection..." note. 3, pp. 15-16.

9. *Ibidem*, pp. 116-117.

10. For an updated plane of the Temple see Figure 1.

11. Bader, B., "Results of five years of pottery analysis in the temple of Millions of Years of Thutmose III in Western Thebes (2011-2015)", *Ä&L* 26, 2017, pp. 253-256.

12. This sector, like the surrounding ones, is quite rich in terms of the number of fragments of stelae discovered. However, the pieces were found dispersed throughout the layers and in no case as part of a deposit or intentional accumulation. This points to that the stelae were discarded.

The stela Inv. N° 7895 was discovered in the 890-N6 sector, within Layer 1, which corresponds to the ceramic dump. Once again, the fragment was recovered from the lower part of the pottery deposit, in a similar context to those previously described.

If we start from the premise that the five fragments of stelae stood originally as part of the votive material that was once deposited in the temple of Thutmose III by private individuals<sup>13</sup>; they had to be damaged at one or several moments during the Amarna persecution. They were posteriorly discarded prior or at the beginning of the Ramesside reuse of the Northeastern sector. We also note that none of the fragments present evidence of restoration. Therefore, considering all the archaeological data, we can weigh up two hypotheses: on one hand, the fragments could have been discarded during the course of Amarna period after having been damaged or, more likely, after the reestablishment of the clergy of Amun in the last years of the XVIIIth dynasty. The other option, more plausible, is that they were discarded in the Ramesside era. Many evidences indicate that the temple was subjected to different processes of restoration in the course of this period<sup>14</sup>, mainly on architectural elements, such as limestones and sandstones reliefs damaged during the government of Akhenaten. This could suggest that the stelae, perhaps due to their small size, little significance or battered condition, were discarded and thrown into the dump of the temple at this time.

The fragment of stela Inv. N° 7895 (figure 2) is made of limestone and measuring 13, 1 cm. (height), 13 cm. (width) and 4, 2 cm. (thickness). It originates from the upper left hand side of the round-topped stela and contains an engraved borderline. The design is simple, without many details. In fact, the motif of the lunette, a solar disk of extended wings and long horns, only shows some traces in bas-relief. Under the wing, a wide strip defined by two vertical lines and completely destroyed, indicates where the name and epithets of god Amun-Ra should be inscribed. The *damnatio* is meticulous and integral. We cannot distinguish a single trace of writing due to the fact that the chisel has not focused on signs, but on the entire space as a whole. On the left side, a representation of Amun can be seen. Only part of his body, shoulder, neck and head, with his characteristic crown of double feathers, have been preserved. Traces of red polychrome are visible on his skin. The facial features are simplified. However, the most remarkable feature is that the figure, while incomplete, is still intact. We are therefore facing an example in which the name and epithet of the god have been harshly erased<sup>15</sup>, while the image, easier to identify, has not suffered damage.

The stela Inv. N° 15426 (figure 3), is a limestone fragment measuring 15, 8 cm. (height), 10, 4 cm. (width) and 4, 3 cm. (thickness). It preserves the central and left part of the lunette, as well as part of the left side of the whole piece. The stela is framed by an engraved line that still retains blue paint. On the left side, we can identify that Amun's figure has been subjected to an intense *damnatio*. Despite the persistence of the chisel, especially over his face and shoulder, we can

13. Vandier, J., "Les Stèles", *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne, Tome II*, Paris, 1954, pp. 387-520. We can consider these stelae as votive offerings of private offerers that were deposited into the court of the temple, seeking for royal and divine protection.

14. The royal stela CG 34015, founded by Weigall, shows evidences of Amarna *damnatio* and Ramesside restoration. Klug, A., *Königliche Stelen in der Zeit von Ahmose bis Amenophis III*, Monumenta Aegyptiaca VIII, Fondation Égyptologique reine Élisabeth, Brepols, 2002, pp. 147-148.

15. It is not unusual for the effigy of Amun to remain intact, even in great monuments and perhaps because of a simple intention to save effort. Eradicate the name was a more effective and symbolic method. Hoffmeier, J.K., *Akhenaten...*, p. 200.

distinguish some elements of his anatomy and attributes: the double feathers crown on its quadrangular base, his beard and the profile of one of his arms. Some traces of red paint, corresponding to the skin of the divinity, have survived where the mutilation was not as exhaustive. At the right edge, with signs on a larger scale than the rest of the piece, aligned from left to right, the following text appears: “nfr nTr [nb...]”, “the good god, [Lord of...]”. The traces are in shallower sunk-relief and retain a few hints of blue paint. In the central area, two incisions with red polychrome create a vertical space where an inscription from right to left appears. Again, bright blue paint fills the sunk-relief characters. We can read the entire engraving clearly as it has not been damaged by the *damnatio*: “Imn-Ra nb pt mri”, “Loved by Amun-Ra, Lord of the Sky”. Therefore, this is an example where the figure of Amun-Ra has been erased, but his name and epithets were left untouched.

The fragment Inv. N° 15516 (figure 4) is made of limestone, with measurements of 21, 8 cm. (height), 18 cm. (width) and 10, 5 cm. (thickness). The posterior face shows large destructive marks, while the anterior face appears much deteriorated. On the whole, the stela seems to be a piece of rough manufacture, perhaps some kind of reuse. Several large patches of red paint on its right side are the only surviving polychrome. We cannot make a thorough analysis of the fragment due to its damaged state, nevertheless there is no doubt that it is a piece that fell victim to *damnatio* on Amun-Ra's name. From the upper register, only a line that delimits a broad band can be recognized and under it, two other uncertain lines seem to belong to another strip. In the inferior register a cobra carved in bas-relief may be appreciated. The cobra, in an upright posture facing right with horns and solar disk is undoubtedly an *Uraeus*. We could hypothetically assign this iconographic element to the Ram of Amun, as this type of headpiece is commonly found on the forehead of the animal<sup>16</sup>. In front of the *Uraeus*, we can see that the name of Amun has been mutilated, with small and parallel marks of chisel. The erased work was not exhaustive enough to leave the name of the god unrecognizable. In fact, we can distinguish traces of the three sunk-relief signs that composed it oriented to left. Under the name of Amun, the two signs which correspond to the name of Ra are preserved in perfect condition<sup>17</sup>.

16. The ram could appear with an *Uraeus* with solar disk and horns: Lacau, P., *Stèles du Nouvel Empire*, Catalogue général des Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Le Caire, 1926, pl. LXI 34.152, 34.153, 34.154. Without disk: Hodjash, S., Berlev, O., *The Egyptian Reliefs and Stelae in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow*, Leningrad, 1982, p. 39, UC 14605; Stewart, H. M., *Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs and Paintings from the Petrie Collection*, Part I: The New Kingdom, Warminster, 1976, p. 39, pl. 30.2. Other times with a small *Uraeus* and the double feather crown: Leprohon, *Stelae II...*, 72697; Edwards, E. S. (Ed.), *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum*, Part 8, London, 1939, pl. X BM 1387. Seldom, without anything: Koefoed-Petersen, O., *Les stèles égyptiennes*, Copenhagen, 1948, p. 39, AEIN 1676.

17. The syncretism between the god Amun and the solar deity Ra, successfully performed by the Amun priesthood during the XVIIIth dynasty (Hornung, E., *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt, the one and the many*, London, 1982, pp. 91-92; Assmann, J., *Egyptian solar religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the crisis of polytheism*, London, 1995), now appears as a problem for the *damnatio*, since Ra, as solar deity, was a form of Aten together with other deities such as Ra-Horakhty, Atum and Shu (Cruz-Urbe, E., “Atum, Shu, and the Gods during the Amarna Period”, *JSSEA* 25, 1995, pp. 15-22). The solar hymns and the solar image appear closely linked to the reign of Amenhotep III (O'Connor, D., *Amenhotep III: perspectives on his reign*, Michigan Press, 1998, pp. 277-278; Johnson, R., “Amenhotep III...”, p. 68). The influence of Amenhotep III over his heir would have initiate Akhenaton's disposition. During the co-regency, Amenhotep III presented himself as the solar disk father and Akhenaton as his successor (Quirke, S., *The cult of Ra...*, pp. 155, 161-162.). This is probably the reason why, and when the carver knows how to distinguish them, the name of Amun was erased and the name of Ra respected.

The fragment 15523 (figure 5) consists of the following measurements: 18, 3 cm. (height), 13 cm. (width) and 5, 4 cm. (thickness). It is made of limestone and derives from the upper left edge of a round-topped stela. On the right side of the fragment, we can see part of a decorative motif, possibly a solar disc with at least one cobra. Only the silhouette of the god Amun-Ra remains, as this piece has suffered the most meticulous disfigurement among the fragments until now presented. We can recognize the double feather crown with its back ribbon, the chin and nose of the deity, his outstretched arms as well as his shoulder with small remains of red polychrome. At the bottom, two vertical lines correspond to the throne of the divinity, thus confirming that the figure of the god was represented in a seated position<sup>18</sup>. The inscription in front of the god should have included his name and some epithet. However it has been almost completely erased. We could only vaguely infer the form of the sign “mn” and the solar disc of Ra. Therefore, this is an example of *damnatio* that includes the name of the solar deity Ra, which is occasionally respected. A careful observation reveals that the writing had to be carried out in sunk-relief, as usual, and aligned from right to left.

An example of careful manufacture is the piece Inv. N° 15527 (figure 6). His measures are 19, 5 cm. (height), 18, 2 cm. (width) and 4 cm. (thickness) and it is made of limestone. Unfortunately, the stela was found incomplete, with most of the base and almost all of the right side being missing. However, the angle of the round top gives us an idea of its original form. The small red paint marks that decorate the lunette are the only remained traces of polychrome in the whole stela. On the top, as a decorative element, a solar motif is displayed composed of a single wing and a cobra that descends from the disk directing his head to the right, bearing the sign of life in the curvature of his body. Under the disk, the sacred ram<sup>19</sup> is represented carved with care and well proportioned, showing all of the attributes normally associated with the god Amun<sup>20</sup>. On his head, an *Uraeus* cobra stands with little horns and a solar disk. The animal faces to the right and stands upright on a podium. In the lower part, a vertical inscription in sunk-relief was carved from left to right. Only some signs can be recognized, such as a determinative of a seated man and the hieroglyphs that correspond to “Sf.t”, “Ram head”<sup>21</sup>. The last sign appears incomplete but we can recognize it thanks to the long and twisted horns of the ram. In front of the *Ankh*, the name of the god Amun, also erased, was written in sunk-relief and oriented from right to left, in contrast to the earlier inscription. The marks of the chisel are clear and they glide in a parallel manner one after another. It is still possible to recognize parts of the signs “mn” and “n”, which therefore means that we are not dealing with a meticulous defacement. Under the sign “n”, the determinative that appears after the solar disk in Ra’s name is preserved with any sign of damage. Nevertheless, the

18. In terms of iconography, this piece and the Inv. N° 7895 and Inv. N° 15426, can be classified as votive private stelae where Amun-Ra appears enthroned –or standing–, usually carrying a *Was* scepter and an *Ankh* sign, and receiving an offering from a private or the king. For example see: Bosticco, S., *Museo Archeologico di Firenze: Le stelae egiziane del Nuovo Regno*, Rome, 1965, Pl. 23; Seco Álvarez, M., Martínez Babón, J., “Stela of the priest Ra found in the Temple of Millions of Years of Thutmosis III”, *Memnonia XXVI*, 2016, pp. 129-135; Stewart, H.M., *Egyptian Stelae...*, pl. 39.2 UC 14350.

19. Fitzenreiter, M., *Tierkulte im pharaonischen Ägypten*, München, 2013, pp. 90-91.

20. Sadek, A. I., *Popular religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim, Gerstenberg, 1987, pp. 162-163.

21.  Sethe, K., *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis, eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Wesen des Ägyptischen Götterkönigs*, Berlin, 1929, pp. 22-25.

line of rupture runs right between the two signs, so the disk is not preserved. Therefore, we could not be certain whether or not this disk had suffered *damnatio*.

In conclusion, these stelae were discarded in antiquity and discovered in their original archeological context. They come eventually to ensure that the persecution of Amarna acted alike over the small private objects deposited in the temples of the West Bank. The stelae were never restored, unlike the architectonical blocks and the royal stela stored in Cairo Museum. These stelae were probably thrown to the landfill during Ramesside period, without any consideration to the image of Amun. It is interesting to observe the different degrees of *damnatio* that the pieces present, inasmuch as they are similar in size and characteristics and were probably placed nearby. Undoubtedly, the data provided by the excavation of the Henket Ankh and the study of these stelae add a slight but significant contribution to the understanding of the Akhenaton's persecution.









