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Covadonga en la Caldera del Teide. José Miguel Barrios Mufrege.



# The Framework of the Meeting Narrative Uses of Stelae in Egyptian Literary Texts

José Ramón PÉREZ-ACCINO

Egyptian stelae, whether private (funerary) or royal (commemorative), share a series of formal and structural elements, which allow them to be considered as two expressions of the same intellectual process and of a similar message. In terms of content, the relationship between the monarch and the deity is framed for purposes that may vary depending on the use and location of the stele, but beneath which lies an analogous structure. This relationship framework also seems to be expressed in various passages of the Story of Sinuhe, the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor and the Report of Wenamun, in each of which a reference to a stela, defined by terminology and the appropriate formal context, seems to present the reader with a framework which indicates the relationship between the individual and a character of a higher category.

*El marco del encuentro. Usos narrativos de estelas en textos literarios egipcios*

Las estelas egipcias, ya sean privadas (funerarias) o reales (conmemorativas) comparten entre sí una serie de elementos formales y estructurales que permiten considerarlas que permite considerarlas como dos versiones diferentes de la expresión de un mismo proceso intelectual y de un mismo mensaje. En su contenido, la relación entre el monarca y la divinidad se enmarca en razón de propósitos que pueden variar en función de la ubicación de la propia estela, pero bajo la cual subyace una estructura similar. Este marco de relación parece haber sido expresado en algunos pasajes de la historia de Sinuhé, la historia del Naúfrago y en el viaje de Wenamón, en los cuales hace su aparición una referencia a una estela, con el uso de una terminología y contexto formal apropiado. Esto parece presente al lector con un marco referencial que apunta a la relación del individuo con una figura de mucha mayor categoría.

**Keywords:** Egyptian stelae, Egyptian Literature, stone, Sinuhe, Shipwrecked Sailor, Wenamun.

**Palabras clave:** Estelas egipcias, Literatura egipcia, piedra, Sinuhé, Naúfrago, Wenamón.

Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
Dylan Thomas

**Sometimes,** words fall short of expressing what emotions demand. In such moments, the air that holds them is too thin to sustain the intensity of the feelings that motivate them. The following is born out of the pain of personal loss and came into being once the passage of time allowed the words to take form. For words need time to be fruitful and their endurance, their capacity to exist in time, is often all that is left of the original emotions and the feelings they provoked. As other losses are too, the loss that motivated the following words is wholly bound to the author's life, without disappearing or vanishing, until finally its nature and his own become indivisible.

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The typical content of a so-called private funerary stela—the well known “offering stela” introduced by the phrase “an offering which the king gives to X”, where X is the name of a God—has a series of common characteristics:<sup>1</sup>

- The king is the creator of the divine offering and of the cult from which it emanates, and acts on behalf of a specific individual whose identity is established in writing in the document.
- The document expresses the relationship between the king and the individual, in terms of exchange, inasmuch as the latter receives

the monument (stela) and the subject of the text (offering and cult) as a reward after a life of service and dedication to the monarch.

- The stone on which the document is presented expresses the eternity of the aforementioned relationship, in addition to other relevant factors.

In fact, the document—that is, the private funerary stela—presents a discourse susceptible of syntactic analysis such that it can be conceived as a phrase (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

This structure represents the syntactic skeleton of the key phrase in the offering formula (*htp-di-nsw*), which acquires a meaning

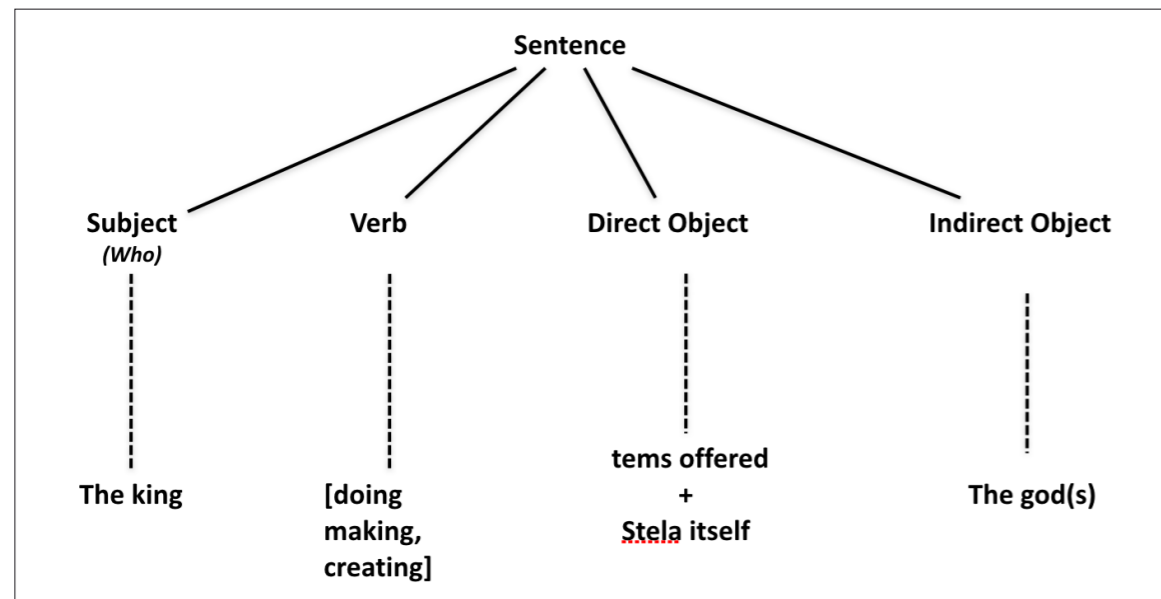


Figure 1.

- 1 The following text took shape from talks at two different events separated by a considerable period of time. It seemed appropriate to present them together on this occasion in memory of Covadonga Sevilla, who has been on the author's mind and with whom several of the ideas contained herein were discussed. The first event was a talk delivered at the Egyptian Culture Bureau of the Embassy of Egypt in London in May 2009, under the title *Egyptian Stelae: Contracts for Eternity*; the second was a communication to the meeting *Ancient Egyptian Language and Texts 7* (AELT 7) held in Glasgow in November 2015, with the title *From Stone to Speech. Narrative uses of Stelae in Literary texts*.
- 2 The diagrams shown in this paper are presented only as a way to better illustrate the relevant point without any suggestion of logical/syntactic accuracy.

more focused on the individual when the (usually) final phrase indicating the beneficiary is added (*n Y*, or *n k3 n Y*). Because Y is the identity of the individual who can be seen syntactically as a second indirect object (an offering ... for X and for Y), it would seem straightforward to understand it as a final circumstantial clause. The stela has been created “for the god” with “the purpose” of feeding the *k3* or the eternal life of the individual beyond death. Moreover, syntactically the location of the stela would fulfil a circumstantial function too, specifying the spatial moment at which the action of the phrase defining the monument takes place. In the case of a stela of the so-called private funerary kind, this verbal action takes place in the tomb itself.

Now, a distinction between private and royal stelae allows an easy operative classification but nevertheless fails to reflect the essential underlying unity of the categories. In fact, the syntactic scheme we have applied to the private funerary stela can also be applied to a stela of the so-called royal type. An example would be the well-known border stela of Senusert III from Semna (fig. 2),<sup>3</sup> which commemorates the establishment of the Egyptian border in Nubia and in which the monarch provides a statement that is fundamentally a self-laudatory encomium. The text ends with an exhortation to the soldiers stationed in the fortress to maintain the border. Here, the reader's attention is drawn to the fact that both types of stelae represent an act of creation—of materialisation—on the part of the monarch: each is about the establishment of a funerary cult and about the establishment of the monument itself (fig. 3). In both cases—to continue with the syntactic

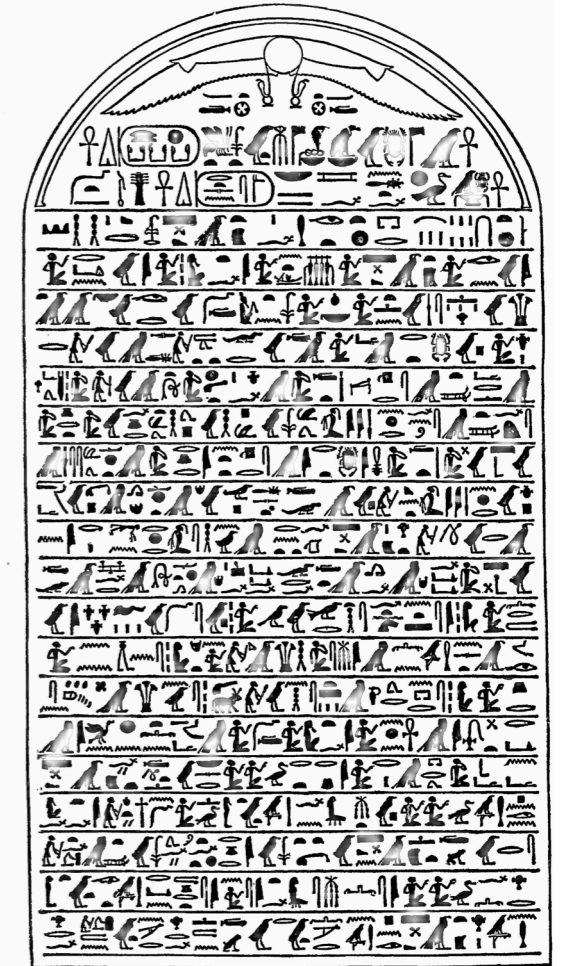


Figure 2. Border stela of Senusert III from Semna, now in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Berlin, Inv.-Nr. 1197 (Wallis Budge 1907: 545).

model—the subject of the verbal action is the king and the action itself is “do, create”. The direct object of the Semna stela in one sense is the actual border, but is also the stela itself and the text that defines it. Insofar as the final subordinate clause of the Semna stela implies that the establishment of the border occurs in the context of the fulfilment

<sup>3</sup> Eyre 1990; Obsomer 2017.

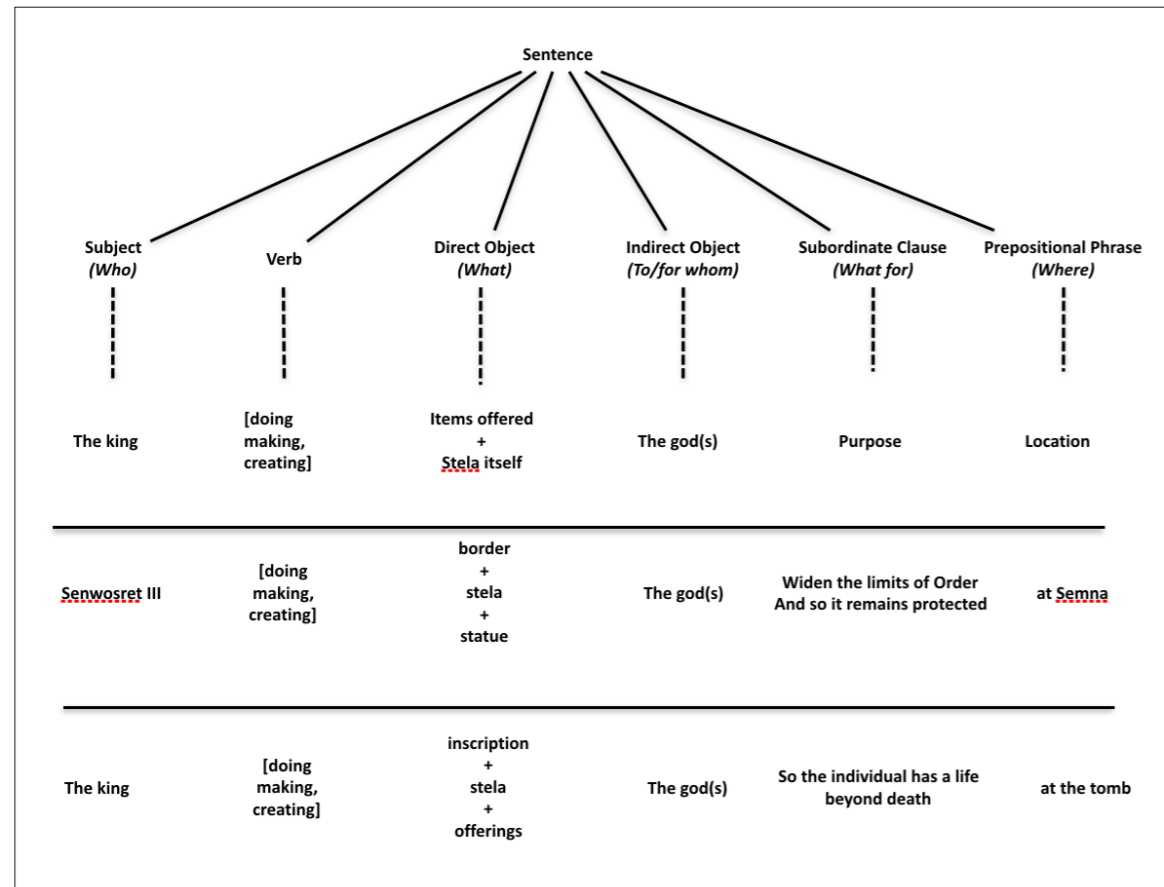


Figure 3.

of divine designs and expanding the ordered realm, the act of creation in both instances is an act of integration with the gods. Of course, the spatial moment of this stela is precisely Semna, where the act of creation materialises.

The operational similarity between the two types of stelae, private and royal, offers a series of suggestive angles of observation. For example, the first kind of stela, created by the king, establishes the framework of the relationship between him and an individual who has behaved as his/her social position would require. The second kind, also created by the king, frames the relationship between the divinity and the monarch

himself. The common element is the creator of the monument, but in turn the latter constitutes an object materialised by the act of creation on the part of the monarch. So a stela establishes a framework of posterity for a concrete act of the monarch's creation but it it establishes another framework for the reader: that of an encapsulated event centred on the exchange and relationship between two figures, one of whom is necessarily the monarch himself. Interestingly, we may find echoes of this same presentation in at least three literary works of the first order, in which exchange and relationship is evidenced and materialised in a stela.

The first example is found in the Story of Sinuhe.<sup>4</sup> In the encounter between the protagonist and the asiatic Ammunenshi, there is a well known exchange in which the latter asks about the state of Egypt following the death of Amenemhat I. The Egyptian's response constitutes the passage known as the "Encomium of Senusert", in which Sinuhe

offers a laudatory description of the new monarch. Beyond the internal logic of this question/answer sequence, the textual content of Sinuhe's statement before Ammunenshi presents interesting formal similarities with, specifically, the border stela from Semna (table 1). Both the phraseology and references reinforce the distinct sensation of

Semna	Sinuhe
	(Berlin 3022, 45-51) <i>s3.f<sup>c</sup>kr<sup>c</sup>h it.n.fiw<sup>c</sup>i nt it.f n<sup>r</sup> pw nn snw.f nn ky h<sup>r</sup>pr r hr-h3t.f nb s3t pw ikr shrw mn<sup>h</sup> wdwt</i> Lunette: represents Horus of Behdet and presents the complete titulary of the king. His son has entered the palace And taken up the inheritance of his father He is a god without equal, with no other who existed before him
(Semna ll. 5-6) <i>k33t jb.j pw h<sup>r</sup>prt m-<sup>c</sup>j 3dw r jtt</i> What conceives my heart is achieved by my arm	(Berlin 3022, 51-59) <i>nht pw grt ir m hpš.f</i> He is truly a strong man made by his strong arm,
(Semna ll. 12) <i>3d.tw r=f dd=f s3=f</i> One attacks him and he turn his back	(Berlin 3022, 51-59) <i>nn phwy n dd-n.f-s3</i> There is no retreat for him who turn his back to him <i>h<sup>c</sup>-ib pw m 3t s3s3</i> Firm of heart is he in the moment of attack
(Semna ll. 4-5) <i>jw rdj.n.j h3w hr swdt n.j</i> I have added to what was bequeathed me	(Berlin 3022, 65-70) <i>s<sup>c</sup>š3 pw msyt hn<sup>c</sup>.f</i> He is one who augments those born with him
(Semna ll. 7) <i>hmt tw3w h<sup>c</sup> hr sf</i> Just to inferiors, firm in mercy	(Berlin 3022, 65-70) <i>nb i3mt pw<sup>c</sup>3 bnit</i> He is the possessor of mercy, full of kindness
(Semna ll. 4) <i>jw jr.n.j tš.j hnt.j jtw.j</i> I have made my boundary further South than my forefathers	(Berlin 3022, 65-70) <i>swsh tšw pw iw.fr itt t3w rsw</i> He is one who extends his borders, he will conquer southern lands

Table 1.

<sup>4</sup> The relevant literature on this text is too abundant to be singled out here. The hieroglyphic text can be found in Blackman 1932, translations and commentaries include Parkinson 1999, and there are recent studies such as Obsomer 2018.



finding ourselves in the presence of a distinct sense-unit within the text of Sinuhe's narrative, as has been pointed out before now.<sup>5</sup> The whole passage apparently lacks an immediate relationship with the Ammunenshi's original question and seems encapsulated within the flow of the narrative: one would dare say it is a "framed" passage, with its own structure and boundaries. The first part of the passage makes clear references to Horus as heir, continues with the description of the monarch, and ends with an exhortation to loyal action on the part of the listener (in this case, Ammunenshi).

In other words, in the narrative of the text a passage which appears formally as though it were a border stela plays a defined role in explaining how the character of Sinuhe is positioned in a liminal situation, one in which he will actually surrender his loyalty to a new lord and abandon the old one. As we have seen, the 'stela' establishes a clear and permanent relationship between monarch and courtier, albeit a link that will be broken or supplanted for a period of time equivalent to the time he will be in Ammunenshi's service. Nevertheless, Sinuhe's departure still allows him to act as he would have done if he had remained in the service of his king in Egypt: the relationship between monarch and noble is maintained in the service Sinuhe renders his lord and in obedience to his commands, the basis of loyalty. Eventually Sinuhe returns to his first lord, an event that occurs at the very moment when a royal envoy presents him with a letter from the king, addressed to him personally, which gives the order to

return. The key word used here is *wḏ*, which indicates both a mandate (the letter received by Sinuhe is exactly that) and a stela: in the case of the Semna border stela, both the erection of the monument and the command to maintain and protect the monument come about through a *wḏ* of the king. So, through a 'stela' Sinuhe first left the loyal service of the king, and through another he returns.<sup>6</sup>

A similar phenomenon seems to occur in a well-known later text, the so-called report of Wenamun.<sup>7</sup> The verbal exchanges here between the eponymous priest, Wenamun, and the Phoenician monarch of Byblos, Djekerbaal, are rich in nuance and contrasts, not least because there are so few testimonies in which an Egyptian puts his values on the same table as another. In a sequence curiously reversed from the Sinuhe narrative, the first meeting between the characters is a scene in which the Egyptian is introduced into the presence of the monarch, who then asks for the royal documents that would validate his mission to get timber. This is not going to be especially comfortable for the Egyptian because he cannot produce the documents, whether Smendes had kept them or they were stolen on the way; and several passages reveal, on the one hand, the Egyptian's awkwardness in this difficult situation and, on the other, the patience of the monarch of Byblos. However, the final act of the encounter takes place in lines 2/55ff., after the delivery of wood for the holy boat has been accomplished and Wenamun is about to leave for Egypt. Now the Theban priest addresses the Phoenician monarch:

Should you not rejoice and have a stela [made] for yourself, and say on it: 'Amen-Re, King of Gods, sent me Amun-of-the-Road, his envoy, together with Wenamun, his human envoy, in quest of timber for the great noble bark of Amen-Re, King of Gods. I felled it; I loaded it; I supplied my ships and my crews. I let them reach Egypt so as to beg for me from Amun fifty years of life over and above my allotted fate: And if it comes to pass that in another day an envoy comes from the land of Egypt who knows writing and he reads out your name on the stela, you will receive water of the west like the gods who are there.'<sup>8</sup>

Wenamun's proposal is important because it is the very last argument that, as an Egyptian, he puts on the negotiating table: the argument closes the discussion about whether or not Djekerbaal is going to do Amun's will. Simply put, he proposes to the Phoenician that a stela be made in which the latter may state that he carried out what Amun has asked him to do from the beginning of the meeting (speaking through his envoy's mouth). The answer he receives is sufficiently ambiguous to deserve attention: the monarch uses the phrase "it is a good speech you have made", a statement which has been interpreted as an ironic allusion to the Egyptian's values. In any event, the passage quoted allows us to observe both an exchange between an Egyptian mentality and a Phoenician one, and also the statement of a context in which the erection of an Egyptian stela may be justified and explained.

The stela proposed by Wenamun may be interpreted as a memorial, but one wonders what exactly the Theban is proposing the Phoenician should commemorate. If it were the fact of having traded with Egypt, Djekerbaal himself has already mentioned that he is accustomed to dealing with Smendes and

this is not a matter that deserves special attention: it seems unlikely that even the stubborn cleric would discern something worth honouring in something that happens every other day. Rather, what the little Theban zealot suggests is consistent with his previous speeches. Every time they met previously, Wenamun bombarded Djekerbaal with an argument from Egyptian religious authority: "you have to fulfil the will of Amun". Djekerbaal could have exclaimed with justifiable intensity that Amun's will was no concern of his but, in his favour, it should be noted that he abstained from doing so. Rather, at the moment when the monarch has carried out what the Egyptian has asked him to do and, therefore, carried out the orders issued (as Wenamun never ceases to repeat) by Amun—precisely at this moment—comes the proposal to make a stela stating the fact that he has fulfilled the god's will. Such a stela corresponds perfectly to an Egyptian royal stela. Wenamun argues that he, the monarch, is precisely the one who can have such monument created. This links to the 'stela' in the Story of Sinuhe: a stela is something a king makes, with the purpose of validating the existence of a loyal courtier through an offering the king creates for the gods. In addition, the stela is made with the purpose of expressing the acts or deeds that define the king's own role in the present.

The third case for consideration occurs in the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor.<sup>9</sup> Specifically it begins when a storm has cast the protagonist on the beach of an island of the *k3* (line 40).

I spent three days alone with my heart as a companion. Lying in a shelter of wood I hugged the shade (lines 40-45).

5 Goedicke 1985.

6 Pérez-Accino 2011.

7 This is another well-studied text. The hieroglyphic transcription can be found in Gardiner 1932 and recent commentaries abound, general or specific such as Vandersleyen 2013 or Tait 2013. For a more detailed analysis of the passage commented on here, see Pérez-Accino 2008.

8 Lichtheim 1976: 224.

9 Again, one of the most fertile texts in Egyptian literature. Hieroglyphic transcription in Blackman 1932.

After three days, the character is moved by hunger to find something to put in his mouth (lines 45-55).

I found figs and grapes there, all sorts of fine vegetables, sycamore figs, unnotched and notched and cucumbers that were as if tended. Fish were there and fowl; there is nothing that was not there. I stuffed myself and put because I had too much in my arms. Then I cut a fire drill, made a fire and gave a burnt offering to the gods (lines 48-55).<sup>10</sup>

The perceptible funerary tone is consistent with the protagonist's near-death experience. Lying alone inside a wooden container, the need to put something in his mouth leads to the long, detailed inventory of foods. A funerary stela may well come to mind, especially given that this sequence of actions culminates, appropriately, with a burnt-offering.

At this precise moment, a magnificent snake makes its entrance. Terrifying at first, unnatural in size, she opens her mouth to ask the protagonist a question:

Who brought you, who brought you, little man, who brought you? (line 69).

The threatening gesture and context of fear and fury overwhelm the Egyptian, who is prostrated and probably faints; it also echoes the first time Wenamun encountered Djekerbaal. However, in the subsequent dialogue, threats disappear to be replaced by a paternal and beneficent attitude: terms of protection, wisdom and instruction on the part of the snake, and humility to the point of ungrateful servility on the part of the shipwrecked courtier. Eventually, at the moment of final separation, the snake asks what will be his only request of the Egyptian: to give him a "good name" upon his return. Leaving aside the fact that the courtier seems to ignore his request (the

snake is not mentioned again in the remainder of the text), the lavishness of the cargo the snake grants him indicates that a "good name" can only but mean a report of their encounter when the courtier gives the king an account of his journey. Such a scene duly takes place but no mention of the snake is forthcoming. Now, while all of this highlights the morally dubious conduct of the courtier, what is relevant here is the mention of allowing the snake's name to commemorate the event, which would have come in a stela arising from the courtier's interview with the king. In other words, the snake's parting remark is reminiscent of Wenamun's suggestion to Djekerbaal about a stela establishing his good name for posterity.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond the many and various considerations that the previous passages suggest, in the three cases discussed here there is a meeting between two characters in which the reader is presented with an unequal relationship. In each case, a number of circumstances are repeated both in the context and in the presentation of the characters:

1. The main character is stranded in a foreign land.
2. The situation has been determined by an event beyond the main character's control.
3. The main character is unable to return to Egypt.
4. The main character encounters a figure of higher (quasi-royal) status.
5. The higher-status figure asks the main character a question or questions and the answer is crucial for the advancement of the narrative.
6. The meeting of the two characters is "framed" by a reference to a stela or royal command at the time of their first contact and by another, at the time of their separation.

The circumstances outlined above have been compared in table 2:

Text	Characters	Circumstance	Authority figure	Question	Beginning	End
Sinuhe	Sinuhe Ammunenshi	Sinuhe has fled Egypt after the death of Amenemhat I	Ammunenshi	How is Egypt after the death of that great king?	Encomium of Senusert I	Letter with king's order
Wenamun	Wenamun Djekerbaal	Wenamun has arrived at Byblos without credentials, and has no ship	Djekerbaal	Where are your letters?	Request for letters from Smendes	Proposal to make a stela
Ship-wrecked Sailor	Sailor Serpent	The sailor is stranded after a shipwreck	Serpent	Who brought you?	Reference to objects and offering	Request to make a "good name"

Table 2.

A funerary stela, as noted in the first part of this work, frames and establishes an encounter within a text for eternity, probably the only one involving the two main characters, the monarch and the character whose funerary cult is established. A royal stela establishes a framework for the relationship between the monarch and a divinity or divinities; it is about defining the arc of a specific relationship. Likewise, the literary passages discussed here seem to refer to the pre-established framework of a relationship which is then evoked in specific moments when the encounter is materialized or formalized, as though the authors of the texts frame the relationships in the same way they are framed in the durability of the stone discourse. The possible permeation of literary texts by the formal presentation of a stela may be deduced from the fragments with an opening resembling that of the Shipwrecked Sailor in the tomb-chapel of Khnumhotep at Dahshur.<sup>12</sup> In the

same manner, one could envisage the formal framework of the setting of the text in a stela, with its clearly functional character, developing into a freer version of itself in a literary context.

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<sup>10</sup> Lichtheim 1976: 212.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, the passage is also analogous to the narrative of the royal sons in the presence of Khufu in the *Tales of King Khufu's Court*, where again the narration of a life event before the king ensures later success and reward. On the relation between these two texts Parkinson 2002: 182 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Quirke 2004: 24.



# En recuerdo de Covadonga

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**Mi** relación con Covadonga empezó a principios del siglo XXI, cuando mi esposa, Sofía, era estudiante de Historia en la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. En aquellos años, Covadonga fue profesora de Sofía en las asignaturas Historia Antigua y Egiptología.

Para Sofía, Covadonga fue siempre un ejemplo de excelente profesora y persona, y así me lo transmitió desde que la conoció. Era una docente que hacía sentir su pasión por la Historia y la Arqueología en el aula. Ese entusiasmo se transmitía a los estudiantes, que siempre le tuvieron un merecido respeto y admiración. La pasión de Covadonga por la docencia se mostraba, entre otras cosas, en el uso de técnicas docentes innovadoras con las que buscaba aumentar la motivación de sus alumnos. Una de sus propuestas más llamativas, y que con el paso del tiempo fue determinante para nuestra colaboración, fue sustituir el formato tradicional de los trabajos de las asignaturas por cuentos escritos por los alumnos.

Cuando empecé a trabajar como profesor de Informática se me ocurrió la idea de buscar una colaboración con la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras en el desarrollo de videojuegos con contenido histórico. Por supuesto, cuando pregunté a Sofía sobre la persona más adecuada a la que dirigirme, me contestó contundentemente y sin dudar: ¡Covadonga!. A pesar de que habían pasado casi una década desde que Sofía fue su estudiante, cuando llamé a su despacho me encontré a la misma persona alegre y motivada que Sofía siempre me describió. Covadonga me recibió con los brazos abiertos y estuvo encantada con la iniciativa que le propuse, a pesar de confesar que no sabía absolutamente nada de videojuegos.

Desde aquel momento, en torno al 2010, hasta el momento de su fallecimiento, Covadonga estuvo colaborando con nosotros muy activamente en varias líneas de investigación e innovación docente. Además de la propuesta inicial del desarrollo de videojuegos históricos, participó en la evaluación docente a través de test adaptativos y en los proyectos de reconstrucción virtual de excavaciones que han llevado al artículo que se presenta en este volumen de homenaje. De estas colaboraciones, desde el 2012 se han publicado siete artículos de investigación, han sido concedidos cuatro proyectos de innovación docente de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid y dos proyectos de investigación nacionales.

Estos resultados son un orgullo para mí por muchas razones, pero la principal es la forma en que se gestaron. Todo nació de la energía, alegría y empuje de una compañera que, desde el día que llamamos a su puerta, nos acogió entusiasmada y con una maravillosa sonrisa. Ha sido un honor trabajar y convivir con Covadonga todos estos años.

Sacha Gómez Moñivas

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## Prefacio

A Covadonga le gustaba conducir, le apasionaba estar al volante de su coche. “Pareces una chica del futurismo italiano”, le decía un amigo, aunque su primer automóvil fuera pequeño, blanco con un techo amarillo y a veces le costase llegar a su destino. Estuvimos años riendo cuando nos acordábamos del nombre con que habíamos bautizado aquella máquina. En nuestro recuerdo, ella sigue siendo la joven radiante y activa que conocimos a sus veinte años. Y su personalidad permanece entre nosotros como un perfume indeleble, retomando los versos del poeta alejandrino que tanto le gustaba. Quienes asistieron a sus conferencias conocieron la calidez de su voz; sus clases en la universidad crearon vocaciones; son, sin embargo, los que compartieron con ella su amistad quienes disfrutaron de los rasgos más sobresalientes de su personalidad: la generosidad, la entrega desinteresada a los demás. Cova tenía una capacidad excepcional para la empatía hacia los que se le acercaban. Eso le hizo ganar afectos en todos los ámbitos de su vida y conservarlos, desde los compañeros del colegio de la infancia y la pandilla de la juventud a los colegas de la madurez. Este tributo pretende también transmitir a las generaciones futuras el legado de una persona excepcional y la huella que dejó en su generación.

Un grupo de amigos que vivimos con ella sus labores de docencia, investigación o proyectos arqueológicos, decidimos rendirle un homenaje particular, uno más entre los que se le han dedicado desde el momento en que su *ka* voló al cielo. Este volumen es el resultado de esa voluntad de crear nuestro monumento a su memoria, por tantas experiencias inolvidables compartidas. El homenaje ha querido ser un caleidoscopio de miradas desde las que reflejar la personalidad de Covadonga y hemos preferido romper el formato académico tradicional. Los artículos se entrelazan con fotografías, dibujos, semblanzas o poemas que pretenden dejar constancia de la huella que ella legó a sus autores. Es nuestra ofrenda para que su *ba* siga regresando desde donde esté hasta nosotros, cada vez que la nombremos y en cada ocasión en que su recuerdo tome forma en nuestro corazón.



## Foreword

**Covadonga** enjoyed driving; she loved being behind the wheel of her car. A friend used to tell her “you look like a woman of the Italian Futurism,” although her first car was small and white with a yellow roof, and sometimes had difficulties reaching its destination. We laughed for years remembering the name with which we baptized that machine. In our memories, she is still the radiant and active young woman we met in her twenties, and her personality remains among us as an indelible scent, to draw upon the verse of an Alexandrian poet that she loved so much. Those who attended her lectures knew the warmth of her voice, her classes at the university created vocations, however, it is those who shared her friendship who enjoyed the most outstanding features of her personality: generosity, and selfless dedication to others. Cova had an exceptional capacity for empathy toward those who approached her. This allowed her to win affection in all aspects of her life and to retain it, from the classmates of her early schooldays, to the circles of her youth, to the colleagues of her adult years. This tribute will surely be transmitted to future generations as the legacy of an exceptional individual, and the mark she left on her generation.

As a group of friends who lived with her through teaching, research, or archaeological projects, we have decided to pay her a particular tribute; one more among the many that have been dedicated to her from the moment her ka flew to heaven. This volume is the result of our desire to create for her a monument to so many unforgettable shared experiences. We decided that this tribute should be a kaleidoscope, to reflect Covadonga’s personality, and we have thus preferred to break from the traditional academic format. The articles are intertwined with photographs, drawings, sketches, or poems that are intended to record the traces she left with their authors. It is our offering so that her ba keeps coming back to us from where she now is, every time that her memory takes shape in our hearts.

## Carta a una hermana en la luz

**Son** los hermanos y las hermanas quienes le hablan a su hermana en la luz, como el hijo que le habla a su padre, como la hija que le habla a su madre.

¡O Senet, Senet Meret! Que Osiris-Khentamentiú te otorgue millones de años respirando aliento en tu nariz, dándote pan y cerveza junto a Hathor, Señora de la Tierra de Luz.

Tu condición es como la vida millones de veces, por orden de los dioses que están en el cielo y la tierra. Que Ha, Señor de Occidente, actúe en tu favor de acuerdo a sus deseos, que Anubis, Señor del Buen Entierro actúe para ti como él lo quiera. Que pueda levantar una barrera contra los enemigos, hombres y mujeres malvados que se oponen a tu casa, tus hermanos, tus padres, tu memoria y tus obras.

Fuiste excelente en la tierra, por lo que también serás capaz y eficiente en el Más Allá. Que se te hagan ofrendas, que se realice la fiesta Haker para ti, que hagan la fiesta del Wag, que te den pan y cerveza del altar de Khentamentiú. Que puedas viajar río abajo en la Barca del Ocaso y que navegues río arriba en la Barca de la Mañana. Que estés justificada junto a cada dios. Que te conviertas en alguien elogiado por nuestros espíritus masculinos y femeninos.

¿Has visto estos lamentos ahora que estás allí en el Más Allá?

¡Oh, gran dolor! Útil es una queja para hablar de lo que se hace contra nosotros de una manera tan injusta. Aunque no hay nada que hayamos hecho contra los dioses, y aunque no hemos comido de sus ofrendas, ¡sin embargo nos han privado de ti!

Te han traído aquí a la Ciudad de la Eternidad, sin que albergues ira contra nosotros. Pero si hubiera un reproche en tu corazón, olvídale por el bien de tus hermanas y hermanos. Sé misericordiosa, sé misericordiosa, y así todos los dioses del nomo de This serán misericordiosos contigo.

Mantén alejadas todas las aflicciones dirigidas a nosotros, tus hermanas y hermanos, porque tú sabes que tenemos una gran necesidad de esto. Que vivas para nosotros y así el Grande te elogie. Que la cara del gran dios sea gozosa para ti, y que él te dé pan puro con ambas manos.

Todos los sacrificios funerarios se han realizado para la que está en la luz, a fin de que pueda interceder por nosotros, los sobrevivientes en la tierra que han quedado atrás. Por lo tanto, busca que el que causó aquello de lo que estamos sufriendo ahora te dé una explicación, porque necesitamos entender y queremos también ser justificados delante de los dioses como lo eres ahora, entendiendo todo, justificada y transfigurada.

Son los hermanos y hermanas quienes le hablan a su hermana, para quien la luz ya nunca se oscurecerá.

## Letter to an enlightened sister

**I**t is the brothers and sisters who are speaking to their sister like the son who is speaking to his father, like the daughter who is speaking to her mother.

O Senet, Senet Meret! May Osiris-Khentamentiui make millions of years for you by breathing breath into your nose, by giving bread and beer beside Hathor, Lady of the Land-of-Light.

Your condition is like life millions of time, by command of the gods who are in heaven and earth. May Ha, Lord of the West, act on your behalf as he wishes, may Anubis, Lord of the Good Burial act for you as he wishes. May you erect a barrier against male and female enemies, male and female evil ones who oppose your house, your brother, your mother, your memory, your deeds.

You are one who was excellent on earth, therefore you will also be capable in the hereafter. May one make offerings to you, may one make the Haker-feast for you, may one make the Wag-feast for you, may one give you bread and beer from the altar of Khentamentiui. You will travel downstream in the Bark-of-the-Evening and sail upstream in the Bark-of-the-Morning. May you be given justification at the side of every god. Make yourself into someone praised by our male and female ghosts.

Have you seen this lamentation now that you are there in the hereafter?

O, great grief! Useful is a complaint to speaking concerning this which is done against us in such an unjust way, although there is nothing that we have done against the gods, and although we have not eaten of his offerings, nevertheless they have deprived us of you!

You have been brought here to the City of Eternity, without you harbouring anger against us. But if there is a reproach in your heart, forget it for the sake of your sisters and brothers. Be merciful, be merciful, then all the gods of the Thinite nome will be merciful towards you.

Keep away all afflictions directed at us, your sisters and brothers, for you know we have a need for this. May you live for us in order for the Great One to praise you. May the face of the great god be joyous because of you, so that he will give you pure bread with both his hands.

All mortuary sacrifices are made for the enlightened one in order to intercede on behalf of the inhabitants of earth. Therefore seek an explanation from him who caused that of which we are suffering now, for we want to be justified in front of the gods same as you are now.

It is the brothers and sisters who are speaking to their sister, she for whom the light will never darken.