

## **Scene from the Great Harris Papyrus: Ramesses III before the Gods of Memphis The British Museum**

From Thebes, Egypt  
20th Dynasty, around 1150 BC



At forty-two metres, the Great Harris Papyrus is one of the longest papyri still in existence from ancient Egypt. It is divided into five sections, with hieratic text and three illustrations of the king and the gods accompanied by hieroglyphic texts.

The first three sections describe the donations made by King Ramesses III (1184-1153 BC) to the gods and temples of Thebes, Heliopolis and Memphis. Each of these sections is illustrated, the king making offerings to three of the deities from each area. The amounts were colossal: The list relating to Thebes alone includes 309,950 sacks of grain and large quantities of metals and semi-precious stones.

This vignette is the third of those at the beginning of the papyrus. The king worships the gods of Memphis, one of the main administrative cities of Egypt. He holds the crook and flail, and wears clothing reserved for the king, including the banded cloth head-dress, sash, triangular-fronted kilt and bull's tail. Each god or goddess is shown in his or her most typical form. The close fitting and ornate costumes are typical of the traditional clothing the deities were thought to wear.

S. Quirke and A.J. Spencer, *The British Museum book of anc* (London, The British Museum Press, 1992)

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