

Horemhab's Tomb and its implications

Introduction

The tomb of Horemhab at Saqqara (Memphis) was excavated by a Dutch team headed by G. Martin. Many Egyptologists deemed this an important investigation because Horemhab is thought to be the connection between the 18th and 19th Dynasty. The purpose of excavating the tomb of Horemhab was to expand the understanding of Horemhab's career and his connection to the 18th Dynasty. In this Martin must have been disappointed. Aspects of his military career were illuminated a little but no new information was revealed about the pharaoh who appointed him. Many classify Horemhab as a 19th Dynasty pharaoh but others as the last pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty. The expedition failed to resolve this question although Martin claimed without much justification that he was the last 18th Dynasty pharaoh.

In the opening pages of Martin's preliminary report he writes, "The chronology of this monument is uncertain." [Martin, G. 1976. Excavations at the Memphite Tomb of Horemhab, 1975, JEA Vol. 62, p. 9]. Despite this statement, a page later he writes without fear of contradiction, "There is little doubt that the main part of the decoration was carried out under Tutankhamen." [Martin, p. 10]. One cannot be blamed for having suspicions that Martin had already decided this issue even before he wrote the preliminary report. The evidence that would support Martin's position will be examined after a brief description of the tomb and its structure. Then some inexplicable results will be examined.

The excavation revealed that the construction of the tomb happened in three phases. Phase One consisted of the Inner Courtyard with sixteen-column peristyle and an Outer Courtyard. The Inner Courtyard contained many reliefs of Horemhab, illustrating his appointment to national military leader and deputy to the king. The Outer Courtyard occupied the whole space which later would be occupied by the Statue Room and two storage rooms. Initially, it acted as a pylon for the Inner Court. Phase Two consisted on extending the north-south enclosure walls of the Outer Courtyard forming a third courtyard, or First Courtyard, which is by far the largest in area. Phase 3 consisted of building the Pylons onto the First Courtyard. The First Courtyard was developed for Ramesside burials and the tomb was converted into a cult place to honour the deified Horemhab. Among the remains was a plinth with the cartouches of Ramesses II. At each stage of the construction previous elements were altered and rebuild [p. 9-11].

This process suggested to Martin that the first stage was planned when Horemhab was a military commander and deputy. After being elevated to the position of Pharaoh the plans were expanded to

include a statue room. After a successful career as pharaoh a third stage including the First Court was added to establish his mortuary cult. This would mean that the three stages need not be dated together.

Although this view was adopted in Martin's report, there is another possibility. First, the Inner Court and Outer Court of Phase 1 may have been a previously existing tomb, which Horemhab took over when he was appointed the national military commander and deputy. He had these two courts redesigned and extended (Phase 2) to be his tomb to declare his glorious achievements. Then Ramesses II expanded the First Court (Phase 3) to make it into a mortuary cult and later buried his daughter in a previously existing tomb. This explains the need for three phases in the construction of the tomb for one pharaoh.

In the First Court, the excavators found Shaft I, at the bottom of which was the burial place of an Old Kingdom prince and which contained 19th Dynasty burials in a side tunnel. This turned out to be the grave of Bintint, daughter of Ramesses II. There was no material from the 18th Dynasty but there was Mycenaean IIIA pottery.

Shafts II and III were found in the chapels of the Inner Court or Statue Room. They too were straight shafts but they contained only material of burials from the Ptolemaic and Coptic periods.

In the Second Court the excavators found Shaft IV. It was by far the largest and most extravagant of all the tombs. Its long convoluted series of tunnels, doors and chambers were obviously meant to throw off would be thieves. The final resting place of Horemhab, though, was actually in Thebes and not Memphis. The only person buried in Horemhab's tomb was his queen, Queen Mutnodjemet. Much New Kingdom material was found in this shaft but no Mycenaean pottery. This finding was rather strange. Late Mycenaean IIIA pottery was found in Akhenaton, the capital of Egypt during the Amarna period. Following the Amarna period the pottery style became Mycenaean IIIB and this pottery is ascribed to the Ramesside period. Yet it is Mycenaean IIIA not Mycenaean IIIB that appears in the tombs of the Ramesside tombs and no Mycenaean pottery appears in Shaft IV, where Horemhab's wife was buried.

Martin described Shaft I as "re-used or perhaps used for the first time for the burial of a Ramesside princess, probably the eldest daughter of Ramesses II..." If the tomb is used for the first time, one might suppose the pottery in the shaft was from the previous burials, thus negating his conclusions. Otherwise one might suppose the pottery was contemporary but, in stratified context, Ramesses II is not associated with Mycenaean IIIA pottery. The ambiguity of the report gives rise to uncertainty in his conclusions.

So what evidence did Martin find that helped him arrive at his conclusions? A panel in the tomb in the Second Court is the one conclusive piece that Martin uses to demonstrate Horemhab's connection to

Tutankamun. In it the King and Queen are seated on their thrones and pictured as adults. A man runs down the ramp towards Horemhab and translates some message to Horemhab. Several groups of dignitaries stand behind them both. Martin explains,

“A panel in front of the king, although fragmentary, preserves part of the royal titulary and thus is of fundamental importance for dating the tomb and specifically the scenes in the courtyard. The upper part of the panel was found in the shaft of the tomb of Paser, immediately west of the tomb of Horemhab, Only the lower parts of Tutankhamen’s cartouches are extant and read. . . .”
[Martin, p. 63]

Although the panel preserves the royal titulary, it does not preserve the name of the king. The cartouche claimed to be that of Tutankhamen contains only the Neb sign at the bottom of his prenomen. This ‘Neb sign was carved over by the symbols used in Horemhab’s nomen. The left cartouche ends in Setep-en-re, the last part of Horemhab’s prenomen. The result is seen in image No 76. Martin claims the only other cartouche that fits is that of Amenhotep III, which is chronologically impossible. [Martin, 1978, p. 63, Note 5]. There is an obvious problem with this theory of an overwritten cartouche. In Tutankhamen’s name the nomen is on the left and the prenomen is on the right. If Horemhab had overwritten the order of the nomen and prenomen would have been preserved, but it is not. The prenomen is on the left and the nomen is on the right..

The tomb of Horemhab presents many problems to Martin’s position and leaves serious doubts concerning his chronological conclusions. We can start first with some of the architecture of Shaft IV. Obviously, it was originally intended for Horemhab. However, he was actually buried in Thebes in the Valley of the Kings. What changed? Perhaps when he became pharaoh, he was no longer restricted to a tomb at Saqqara and so established his tomb there. Yet, Martin supposes that Phase 2 of the Saqqara tomb is a response to Horemhab becoming the Pharaoh, so why then is there a Phase 2? It makes more sense that, even after Horemhab became pharaoh, he did not have access to Thebes because it had been held by his enemies. Once he became pharaoh he could have made a successful attack against his enemies at Thebes, after which, his plans for burial in Saqqara would naturally change. Who then were his enemies and where in Egyptian history would this place Horemhab?

If the tomb of Horemhab was built during the Amarna period it ought to conform to the Amarna pattern of tomb architecture. In one of the chambers in Shaft IV, there are columns with scalloped capitals carved out of the rock. Martin comments,

Thus Horemhab’s tomb is a departure from Amarna period practice and Martin admits that this tomb architecture is “inexplicable”.

Another problem with material in Shaft IV was the presence of material from Ay. Ay had succeeded Tutankhamen to the throne of Egypt. If Tutankhamen had appointed Horemhab as pharaoh that would have made them rivals. Wine docketts were found, many of which dated to the 13th year of Horemhab. Another docket was dated to year 1, but without naming the pharaoh. Martin reasoned that since year 1 was too early in the reign of Tutankhamen to be part of the construction of Horemhab's tomb, it was judged to be year 1 of Ay. If, however, Horemhab took over a pre-existing tomb, then year 1 could refer to any almost any 18th Dynasty pharaoh.

A plaque of with the nomen of Ay was found along with a miniature stela of (presumably) Ay, holding a staff in front of an offering table. He is wearing the Khepresh crown and uraeus. Exactly why these artefacts of Ay, Horemhab's rival, would be in Shaft IV makes no sense and Martin makes no attempt at an explanation. If, however, Horemhab took over the tomb, he would not regard Ay as a rival and the material left in Shaft IV would not be offensive.

The presence of Atenism in Shaft IV is another enigma. An alabaster vase of Amenhotep III was discovered in Room B of Shaft III and was assumed to have been taken there from Shaft IV by thieves. This vase was stated to be an heirloom, since it had already had been determined that the Shaft was dug in the reign of Tutankhamun. Yet the nomen of the cartouche of Amenhotep III on the alabaster vase had been erased. It was Akhenaton who had erased the name of his father, Amenhotep III, in favour of his own god, Aten. Horemhab was anti-Atenist and would not have erased Amenhotep's name. The presence of this vase with the erasure in the tomb of Horemhab is inexplicable.

An equally inexplicable artefact is a seal of the Temple of Aten at Heliopolis. Again this is a strange find in the tomb shaft of an anti-Atenist unless there had been a burial in the reign of Akhenaton. Such a burial might explain the presence of material from the Amarna period without resorting to the idea that Tutankhamen appointed Horemhab. It might also explain the existence of Mycenaean III pottery in the surface debris around the tomb.

The excavators found several bricks with the prenomen of Amenhotep II, Aakheperure, in a cartouche. These were found in burials located in the magazines of the Statue Rooms. They could hardly have been made during the reign of Tutankhamen nor were they treasured heirlooms. According to the excavators they came from a "chapel somewhere in Memphis." But where and how did it get in the tomb of Horemhab? The most likely answer is that there was some previous structure containing these graves, which was built during the reign of Amenhotep II. This structure was taken over and the graves incorporated into the tomb of Horemhab. This also implies that the site had a history prior to the Amarna

period.

If Horemhab was appointed pharaoh by Tutankhamen, he might think that he would honour Tutankhamen with something that bore his name. Strangely, there is nothing of Tutankhamen found in Shaft IV. There are many objects of the Amarna period as judged by style or design but nothing containing the name of Tutankhamen.

One relief of the Second Court has Horemhab receiving honours from the king. Horemhab is surrounded by attendants putting pectorals of honour around his neck. To the right is a figure of much larger scale, the king, with a hand lowered in a gesture of welcome or greeting.

"From parallels the episode should represent the honouring of Horemhab by the sovereign, in this instance Tutankhamen or conceivably Ay." [Martin, 1976, p. 10]

The larger figure is wearing a costume "normally associated with private persons of rank in the late 18th Dynasty." The pharaoh is not wearing his pharaonic garb during this important ceremony honouring one of his loyal subjects. One has to question if this man is a true Egyptian pharaoh. Indeed Martin states the alternate view that it is Horemhab honouring one of his subjects.

"There remains the possibility that the scene depicts Horemhab honouring an unnamed colleague. Such a representation would be unprecedented..." [Martin, 1976, p. 11]

Martin is again stuck with the facts he cannot make sense of. It cannot be Tutankhamen because of his non-pharaonic dress but it cannot be Horemhab because the scene would be "unprecedented". In addition the head of the king in the relief is missing. This too suggests that it has been removed along with the cartouche as an act of damning the memory. But who would damn the memory of Tutankhamen. It cannot be Horemhab because it was his tomb. Another problem is that the figure of the king represents an adult. Tutankhamen, however, came to the throne as a juvenile. Is the figure a misrepresentation of Tutankhamen or is it not Tutankhamen?

Before the Amarna period Osiris, one of the Egyptian gods, had little importance in Egyptian theology. By the 19th Dynasty, Osiris had become very important, equaling the importance as Ra himself. The tomb of Horemhab has a hymn to Osiris. A hymn to Osiris is unknown among the "other" Amarna pharaohs. The use of Osiris and Re to balance each other is considered a reaction to the monotheism of Aten and thus this change is dated to the reign of Tutankhamen. [Martin, 1989, p. 63]. But, no actual examples of hymns to Osiris occur in the Amarna literature. Thus this hymn to Osiris is an innovation in

the post-Amarna period. Horemhab is thus a post-Amarna pharaoh.

Another problem area is the papyrus of the Wisdom of Ani found in the Statue room. It is written in hieratic script. The script was initially thought to represent the Amarna period but later it became apparent that it belonged to a later period. Upon a closer inspection it was clear that it was at least late Ramesside and a “date from the 20th to the 26th dynasty cannot be excluded”. An additional text is known, which was written in the more everyday script called demotic. It was a taxation text dated to the late 25th or 26th Dynasty. [Martin, 1976, p. 12]. It is not just possible but even likely that the two documents were deposited at the same time. This is problematic because no 25th or 26th Dynasty people were buried there. Why are texts dated to this era found in an 18th Dynasty tomb structure that Egyptologists think had been abandoned late in the 19th Dynasty until the Ptolemaic era in the 4th century?

There is other evidence that ties the tomb of Horemhab to the time of the 25th and 26th Dynasties, which reigned in the 7th century. It was in the 7th century that the first Aegeans arrived in Egypt to stay. In Horemhab’s tomb is a scene, in which foreigners of various countries have come or have been forced to come to pay their respects to Horemhab. Among these foreigners are Aegeans. Martin comments,

“To find Aegeans represented at this period at the end of Tutankhamen or Ay, in an Egyptian tomb is unprecedented...” [Martin, 1989, p. 27].

Here again is a new phenomenon that never occurred in the 18th Dynasty but occurred in the time of Horemhab. This is not the only anomaly in the scene. Martin states,

“In the Windows of Appearances scene the king and queen are shown as adults. The figures are carved in bold raised relief in the Amarna style. The King leans forward in a rather curious, one might say a non-royal, pose...It is curious that the King receives envoys this way instead of being seated in state on his throne.”

A non-royal pose in a non-royal setting receiving Aegeans, whose presence is unknown in Egypt before the 7th century should set off some obvious questions. How can this be Egyptian royalty? How can this be the Amarna time? Can the tomb of Horemhab predate the 7th century? Why are the king and queen unnamed? The king who honoured Horemhab was not clothed in the manner of pharaohs and did not behave like an imperial pharaoh. He used an interpreter as if he did not know the Egyptian language. His face was destroyed as though to damn his memory. Add to this the innovations in tomb architecture and theology and it becomes plain that the explanations given by Martin are unconvincing to unsupportable.

Horemhab held office in the time when Aegeans were visitors to his kingdom and demotic tax documents of the late 25th or early 26th dynasty were left behind he must belong to the late 8th/ early 7th century. At

that time the Ethiopians and Assyrians were warring to gain control over Egypt. An Assyrian king, who had taken over Egypt, taken an Egyptian throne name, used a translator to translate Assyrian to Horemhab and whose name was later erased by Egyptian nationalists would be a perfect fit to the evidence available.

There are ten evidences that speak against a relationship between Tutankhamen and Horemhab:

1. Lack of cartouche of Tutankhamen in Horemhab complex,
2. Presence of material from pharaohs prior to Tutankhamen in Shaft IV,
3. Presence of an interpreter to speak to Horemhab,
4. Lack of Pharaonic garb,
5. Lack of Pharaonic poise,
6. Presence of Aegeans who honoured Horemhab,
7. Horemhab's hymns to Osiris,
8. Presence of Atenist material in Shaft IV
9. The presence of material from Pharaoh Ay
10. Taxation documents of the 25th or 26th dynasties
11. Tomb material of the time of Amenhotep II in the storage rooms of the Statue Room.

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