

HOREMHEB AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE OF TUTANKHAMUN*

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With the accession of the young Amarna prince Tutankhaten at the end of the fourteenth century B.C., Akhenaten's religious revolution, which had plunged Egypt into a deep crisis, came to an end. Egypt reverted to the traditional gods, the court left Amarna and returned to Memphis, and Tutankhaten changed his name to Tutankhamun. The king was still too young to rule alone, however, and a few high officials, including Horemheb, Ay, and Maya, exercised the real power. When Tutankhamun unexpectedly died without an heir after a reign of about nine years, first Ay and then Horemheb succeeded him. The circumstances surrounding these accessions are unclear, and the relationship between Ay and Horemheb is especially puzzling. Did they work harmoniously together or was there a question of rivalry or even enmity between the two?

After the death of Thutmose IV, the youthful Amenhotep III ascended the throne. He was then probably about 10 or 12 years old, and for this reason his mother Mutemwia functioned as regent during the first years of his reign. Shortly after his accession Amenhotep III married a girl called Tiy, who cannot have been much older than he and who from that moment on bore the title of 'Great Royal Wife'. Tiy was of non-royal blood; on the so-called marriage scarabs of Amenhotep III, sent to high officials both inside and outside Egypt as a kind of marriage announcement, the king mentions the names of Tiy's parents, Yuia and Tjuiu. Yuia was a very distinguished man. Among his many titles are that of Commander of the Cavalry (*imy-r ssmf*), High Priest of Min in Akhmim (*hm-ntr tpy n Mnw m Ipw*), and God's Father (*It-ntr*). Although the exact meaning of this last title still eludes us, it is clear that it was given to senior court advisors with a particularly close connection to the royal family; in some cases the God's Father appears to have been involved in the education of the princes, including the future monarch. It is therefore quite possible that Yuia was in charge of the political, religious and military education of the young Amenhotep III, and that this teacher-pupil relationship was rewarded by a marriage between the prince and Yuia's daughter. We shall return again to these titles and also to a few other members of this obviously very influential family.

Amenhotep III ruled for about 38 years, but towards the end of his reign he appears to have been weak and ill. The crown prince, called Thutmose in the

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tradition of the family, had already died before his father, and thus it was a different son, Amenhotep, who succeeded to the throne. It is uncertain whether this only happened on the death of Amenhotep III, or already during his lifetime. The probability and possible length of such a co-regency is one of the most troublesome problems in the history of Egypt, mainly because the standpoint one takes in this question has far-reaching consequences for the further chronology of this era, not only as far as Egypt is concerned but also for the rest of the Near East. A small group of Egyptologists support a long co-regency (of about 11 years), but generally speaking it is accepted that a co-regency between the two Amenhoteps is not very likely and, if it did occur, the period of joint rule lasted for one to two years at the most. Of course it is possible, and perhaps not even unlikely, that the son had already taken over part of his ageing father's royal duties before the latter's death, without, however, having officially assumed the kingship.

Not long after his accession, Amenhotep IV implemented a radical reform of the Egyptian religion. More has probably been written about this intriguing episode than about any other period in Egyptian history, and therefore it is hardly necessary to dwell on it at any length here. Amenhotep IV pushed the gods of Egypt, and in particular the national god Amun and his divine family, to one side and replaced the polytheistic religion of Egypt with a monotheistic one. In this religion there was only room for a single deity, one, moreover, who was not revered in the traditional human or animal form, or in a combination of the two, but in a form immediately perceptible to everyone, the celestial body of the sun. In Egyptian this was *ꜥꜣ itn*, the (sun) disc, or the Aten. Shortly after his fourth regnal year Amenhotep IV changed his name to Akhenaten, turned his back on the residence at Memphis and the religious capital of Thebes, and in a very short space of time built a brand new capital on virgin soil: the city of Akhetaten, 'Horizon of the Aten', now known as Amarna. The king's tomb was carved in the rocks at Amarna instead of in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, and the most important court dignitaries followed suit by having rock-cut tombs made for themselves at Amarna.

Even before the foundation of Amarna, Akhenaten had married Nefertiti, who remained his Great Queen throughout his reign. Nothing at all is known about the origins of this famous queen; it has been speculated that she was of foreign extraction or that she was related to the family of Yuia and Tjuui, but there is not a shred of evidence to support either claim, and thus these speculations can hardly be taken seriously. What is known is that early on in the reign of Amenhotep, even before the move to Amarna, Nefertiti already had a very influential position, one which virtually made her co-regent with her husband. Further, we know that she bore Akhenaten six daughters. The successive appearance of these daughters in reliefs and paintings in the tombs, temples and palaces of Amarna form an important point of departure for the relative chronology of this period. In none of the many representations of the royal pair with their six daughters does a male descendent appear, so that it can be taken as virtually certain that Akhenaten had no sons by Nefertiti. In

recent years, however, more and more material has appeared which proves that Akhenaten had at least one other important wife, whose name was Kiya. Unfortunately, once again we know nothing about her origins or relationships. Her name not only appears on a number of burial objects which were later used for other royal burials, but also on a relatively large number of blocks from a palace at Amarna, blocks which, like so many others, were later reused as building material for a temple of Ramesses II at Hermopolis. It is on one of these blocks that we find the only record of a male descendent of Akhenaten. He is referred to as 'king's son of his body', and his name is Tutankhuaten. It is often assumed that this Tutankh(u)aten is a son of Akhenaten and Kiya, even though neither of the parents is mentioned by name on the block in question. It is also possible that this young prince was a son of Akhenaten's eldest daughter Merytaten, or perhaps even of the second daughter, Meketaten. At any rate, Kiya appears to have borne Akhenaten a daughter called Baketaten, who for a long time was assumed to be an afterthought from the marriage between Amenhotep III and Queen Tiy.

The last years of Akhenaten's reign are shrouded in mist. In his twelfth regnal year, Nefertiti suddenly drops out of the picture; at roughly the same time a co-regent appears on the throne who is nearly always referred to in Egyptological literature as Smenekhkre. Most of the monuments give him a different name, that is, 'Nefer-neferu-aten, beloved of The-Only-One-Of-Re (= an epithet of Akhenaten)' with the throne name 'Ankh-kheperu-re, beloved of Nefer-kheperu-re (= the throne name of Akhenaten)'. This latter name also appears in the feminine form *Ankhet-kheperu-re* and, in addition, Nefer-neferu-aten is one of the most common names of Nefertiti. The British Egyptologist J. R. Harris, therefore, has suggested the elegant and very attractive hypothesis that this Ankh(et)-kheperu-re is none other than Nefertiti, who ruled as the official co-regent from Akhenaten's twelfth regnal year on, and after Akhenaten's death in his year 17 ruled on alone as Smenekhkre for a short period. The greatest difficulty about this is that this co-regent is several times mentioned (and once even depicted) with a royal consort, Merytaten, Akhenaten's and Nefertiti's eldest daughter. Whatever the solution to this mystery is, after the death of Akhenaten and his co-regent there was only one male heir who could be considered for the accession, the young prince Tutankhaten.

At this time the boy was only about nine years old. He married one of the six daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, his half-sister Ankhesenpaaten. Unlike the situation at the accession of Amenhotep III, there was no Queen Mother who could function as regent. Nevertheless, the young king could hardly be expected to be able to rule by himself, and there are several inscriptions which, in a discrete but unmistakable manner, make clear that the actual power was exercised by a relatively small group of high officials at court. Before we move on to the introduction of these figures, though, something more needs to be said about the further course of events. To begin with Tutankhaten still resided in Amarna, but by his second regnal year at the latest a radical end was made to Akhenaten's religious experiment. There is

some evidence that Neferneferuaten (Smenekhkare/Nefertiti) had already begun to propitiate Amun of Thebes again, for a hymn inscribed in hieratic in a Theban tomb and dated to this king's Year 3 was composed by a 'scribe of offerings of Amun in the chapel of Ankhkheperure in Thebes'. But now Amarna was completely abandoned, the court returned to Memphis, the traditional religion was restored to its former glory, neglected temples all over the country were started up again, and the king and the queen changed their names to Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun. Then, in his tenth regnal year, the young king suddenly and unexpectedly died. Now there was no male descendent of the dynasty left. The throne was first occupied by a certain Ay. This Ay was old enough to be Tutankhamun's grandfather, and it is therefore hardly surprising that he only occupied the throne for less than four years before he died. Then Horemheb ascended the throne, a man with no relationship at all to the royal house, and with him the new dynasty, the Nineteenth, to all intents and purposes begins.

As we have already seen, history from the moment of Tutankhamun's accession was determined by a small number of influential people, who ruled in the name of the young pharaoh and two of whom even succeeded to the throne themselves after his death. These figures will now be briefly reviewed. First of all there is Ay. This official first appears at Amarna, where he is one of Akhenaten's most distinguished courtiers. He had a large rock tomb cut for himself near the city, among other things renowned because it contains the most detailed version of Akhenaten's famous Hymn to the Aten. Unfortunately we are not sure who Ay's parents were, because he does not mention them anywhere in his tomb nor on any of his later monuments. Nevertheless, it is possible to find a reasonably attractive solution to this problem. Ay's most important titles are identical to those of Yuia, Amenhotep III's father-in-law. Ay, too, was Commander of the Cavalry and God's Father; it is true that he was not High Priest of Min in Akhmim, but this is hardly to be expected at Amarna where, after all, the traditional gods of Egypt were banned. We know that various members of Ay's family came from Akhmim, and some of them we find later, when Ay is king, serving as High Priest of Min. Moreover, King Ay had a rock temple for the god Min carved at Akhmim. It seems fairly obvious that Ay was directly related to Yuia, who was one generation older, and the most probable solution is that Ay was a son of Tuia and Tjuu. This would make him a brother of Queen Tiy and brother-in-law of Amenhotep III. Ay was married to a namesake of this great queen; Ay's wife Tiy occupied a very prominent position among the wives of the Amarna courtiers. In the reliefs and inscriptions in Ay's rock tomb her position is virtually on a par with that of her husband; she is one of only two women in Egyptian history to join her husband in receiving the 'Gold of Honour', a high royal honour which in almost all known instances is awarded to men on their own. Tiy owed this honour to the fact that she was the 'nurse of the Great Queen' Nefertiti. This fact makes it a virtual certainty that Nefertiti was not a daughter of Ay and Tiy, as is sometimes assumed. Tiy is only the Queen's nurse and only she carried this title, nowhere is Ay connected with this function, and nowhere

are Ay and Tiy called the father and mother of Nefertiti. Ay's most important title is undoubtedly that of God's Father; this title was so prominent that in Amarna texts Ay is sometimes referred to solely as 'the God's Father', without his name or other titles. Further, Ay included this non-royal title in his cartouche when he later ascended the throne, something highly unusual. This title and the emphasis which is placed on it make it probable that Ay bore the same relationship to Akhenaten as his father Yuia had borne to Amenhotep III: that of tutor. In addition, this would balance well with Tiy's function as nurse to Nefertiti. During the reign of Tutankhamun Ay continued to carry the title of God's Father, and for this reason it is quite possible that he carried out the same function at Amarna as the tutor of Prince Tutankhaten.

The next player on the stage is a certain Nakhtmin, a man who clearly belonged to Ay's circle. There seem in fact to have been at least three persons of this name, although it is possible that two of them are actually one and the same Nakhtmin. These two or three persons are very probably all relatives of Ay, and come from Akhmim. The Nakhtmin who interests us the most here was a high military official, a general; he presented five very beautiful wooden shabtis to Tutankhamun's burial equipment, a high honour which indicates a close relationship with the king. Further, this Nakhtmin is known from two fragments of a magnificent pair statue of himself and his wife, which is considered to be one of the greatest masterpieces of Egyptian sculpture. In the remains of the inscription on the back of this statue, Nakhtmin calls himself 'King's Son'. Unfortunately the text breaks off immediately after this title, and it has been suggested that the title should be extended to 'King's son of Kush', the official title of the viceroy of Nubia, who was often not a son of the king at all. However, the various viceroys of Nubia from this period are well known, and there is no gap in the succession of the various occupiers of this office, so that there is no place for a viceroy Nakhtmin. But if Nakhtmin was really the son of a king, who was his father? From a stylistic point of view, there can be no doubt that the statue dates to the post-Amarna period; this reduces the number of candidates significantly. Amenhotep III is out of the reckoning, as is Akhenaten, not to mention the young Tutankhamun who died childless. The only possibility left is Ay. Unfortunately this solution is not very straightforward either. There is another (very inadequately published) fragment of a statue of Nakhtmin which, just like the above-mentioned statue, is in the Cairo Museum. It is the lower half of a statue group depicting Nakhtmin sitting between his wife and his mother. Sadly the name of the wife has been omitted so that we still do not know the name of the famous 'Wife of Nakhtmin' of the first statue. The name of Nakhtmin's mother, a priestess of Min and Isis from Akhmim, is Iuy. Because Ay's wife (and later queen) is called Tiy, it is unlikely that Nakhtmin was a physical son of Ay. Perhaps Nakhtmin was a grandson of Ay who, because Ay had no son himself, was chosen by him to succeed him as king.

The third person around the throne of Tutankhamun is Maya. We can be brief about him because in the struggle for the throne which broke out after

the death of the king he plays a role in the background; he was not himself a pretender to the throne. Maya, or May as he is called in older inscriptions, probably grew up at the court of Amenhotep III. He also served Akhenaten and had a rock tomb carved for himself at Amarna. At Tutankhamun's accession he was promoted to 'Overseer of the Treasury' and to 'Overseer of All Building Works' of the king. In this guise he was the person chiefly responsible for the reconstruction of the country and the restoration of the temples after the disastrous Amarna period. That he was one of Tutankhamun's most important advisors, who in fact carried out some of the functions which usually fell to the king, is shown by some of his inscriptions, both in his tomb at Saqqara and elsewhere. Thus he says on a statue base in Copenhagen that he 'pacified the Two Lands for his lord' (*sgrh tswy n nb.f*), a phrase which elsewhere is only used by kings and gods and which directly refers to one of the official names of Tutankhamun himself, 'He who pacifies the Two Lands' (*sgrh tswy*). In another text Maya says of himself that he 'joined the Two Lands together with his (wise) plans', again an epithet strictly confined to the king. Besides Nakhtmin, Maya is the only other person who contributed to the burial equipment of Tutankhamun - in this instance a wooden shabti figure and a substantial model sarcophagus with inscriptions dedicated to Tutankhamun by Maya. The burial rites were carried out by Ay, and the fact that Maya was permitted to donate these votive objects may allow us to suppose that Maya managed to keep out of the struggle for the throne. On the other hand it is noticeable that not a single monument of Maya can be dated to the reign of Ay, and that he subsequently became the most important functionary in the reign of Horemheb.

Finally we come to the last major figure in this royal drama: Horemheb. Unlike the people mentioned thus far, we know virtually nothing about the background of this Horemheb; he appears to have come from Hutnesu, present-day Kom el-Ahmar near Sharuna in Middle Egypt, but his parents or other members of his family are unknown. It is sometimes suggested that he is to be identified with a certain Paatenemheb who had a very modest tomb at Amarna, which was incidentally never finished. The titles of this Paatenemheb, however, only partly coincide with those of Horemheb and the identification is therefore very doubtful. Horemheb's other monuments are very limited in number: two statues showing him as a seated scribe, a small limestone door frame in the Louvre, an anonymous but virtually certain reference on a tomb relief in Berlin (the so-called *Berliner Trauerrelief*), and the impressive tomb which Horemheb had built for himself in the necropolis of Memphis at Saqqara. All of these monuments show him already at the peak of his pre-royal career and we know virtually nothing of the earlier stages. These monuments confirm that Horemheb was the highest military commander under Tutankhamun, the 'general of the generals', as he himself puts it in his tomb.

There is, however, one further important source for his pre-royal position, viz. the account which Horemheb as king left of his coronation. It is this text, inscribed on the rear of a pair statue of Horemheb and his queen Mutnodjmet,

now in the Egyptian Museum in Turin, which we will examine first. We will here pass over the details of the actual coronation rituals which are sometimes difficult to interpret, and concentrate on the 'historical' facts in the first part of the text. Here Horemheb describes how his god Horus of Hutnesu (perhaps his birthplace) had intended him from childhood to be the king; it was this Horus who 'distinguished him from all other people' and who made him the one whose exploits pleased the king (that is, Tutankhamun), so that he, the king, was content with the choice he had made. The king therefore 'appointed him as Supreme Chief of the land in order to carry out the laws of the Two Lands (Egypt) as Hereditary Prince of this entire land'. It had been Horemheb who reassured the king 'when chaos broke out in the palace', a unique sentence which perhaps refers to the chaos at the Amarna court after the death of Akhenaten or of his co-regent; it was Horemheb, then, who calmed the king in this emergency with wise words. Perhaps this passage must be interpreted to mean that it was Horemheb who was the driving force behind the young Tutankhamun leaving Amarna and returning to Memphis and Thebes. In this capacity of wise adviser to Tutankhamun Horemheb compares himself with no one less than the god Thoth, the god of wisdom, who assists the sun god Re to govern the world: 'his (Horemheb's) plans were like the (assured) steps of the Ibis, his government followed the example of the Lord of Heseret, he rejoiced in Ma'at like the Long-beaked One'. Horemheb goes on to describe how he acted as regent of the Two Lands for many years. Once again he calls himself 'Supreme Chief and Hereditary Prince of this entire land'. That the latter title should here be taken seriously and literally is shown by the fact that he says that he performed this function as the 'Eldest Son (*s3 smsw*) of Horus', a designation which is only used for the heir of god and pharaoh. Horus is here the king who as Re-Atum, the creator god, rules on earth, and his eldest son is Shu, the son, deputy and successor Re-Atum. Then follows the second part of the text with a summary description of the coronation of Horemheb as king, the office which his god Horus of Hutnesu had chosen for him and with which Amun of Karnak whole-heartedly agreed.

This unique text has been known since the early years of Egyptology. As it is quite clear, however, that Horemheb did not directly succeed Tutankhamun, and that old Ay occupied the throne for at least three full years instead, it has so far been virtually unanimously agreed that Horemheb's description of his position before his coronation has to be regarded as a fabrication, as an attempt to legitimate his kingship after the event. This interpretation can be found in almost every history of Egypt. For the same reason it is steadfastly believed that Ay was higher in rank than Horemheb during the reign of Tutankhamun. These widespread interpretations are seriously undermined, however, by Horemheb's tomb at Saqqara. This tomb, probably the largest in the entire Late Eighteenth Dynasty necropolis, was for the most part built and decorated during the reign of Tutankhamun, as is amply demonstrated by inscriptions and representations. The texts in the tomb thus present an accurate picture of Horemheb's position during the reign of Tutankhamun,

that is, from before the latter's death, before the period during which Ay ruled, and before Horemheb's own accession.

The titles and offices which Horemheb lists in the many inscriptions in the tomb are identical in every way to those which he mentions in his later Coronation Text. He is 'the one on whose words the king relies', and 'the one who speaks to the courtiers in the name of the king'; he is 'commander of the entire land' and above all he is 'Hereditary Prince of Upper and Lower Egypt' and 'Deputy of the King in the entire land'. Further, in the tomb of Maya, beside that of Horemheb, which was also built during the reign of Tutankhamun, there is a reference to Horemheb as 'Eldest Son'. Unfortunately this text is incomplete, but in it Maya says that he had access to the 'sublime image' (*tît špsy*), a reference to the king as Re-Atum, and that it was 'the Eldest Son who ...' (the text breaks off here). As the youthful Tutankhamun died childless, this 'Eldest Son' can hardly be anyone other than Horemheb. But there is yet another remarkable parallel with the Coronation Text just discussed. A large stela from the tomb, which has been in the British Museum since the beginning of the last century, contains an elaborate hymn to the sun-god Re, who is depicted in the lunette of the stela together with the god Thoth and the goddess Maat. This hymn has been translated many times and is considered to be a classic example of a sun hymn from the post-Amarna period. At the end of this text Horemheb turns to the god Thoth, the god of wisdom and just rule, and says to him: 'may you cause Horemheb to stand firmly by the side of the sovereign, just as you yourself are by the side of the Lord of the Universe as you foster him when he comes forth from the womb (of his mother)'. Here is an obvious reference to Horemheb's position at the side of the child-pharaoh Tutankhamun, one which agrees remarkably well with the passage in the Coronation Text where Horemheb compares his position as adviser of Tutankhamun with that of the god Thoth.

These texts confirm Horemheb's virtual royal status: even during the reign of Tutankhamun he was the uncrowned king of Egypt. It is therefore most unlikely that Ay was in any way Horemheb's superior. Nor can there be any question that Horemheb could have assumed these prerogatives and titles without the permission of Tutankhamun; after all, Tutankhamun himself is depicted at least twice in the tomb, accompanied by his queen Ankhesenamun. The conclusion is thus unavoidable: broadly speaking, Horemheb's Coronation Text gives an accurate and true picture of his position. Tutankhamun had already appointed him as his successor during his lifetime, even though Horemheb himself may have 'advised' him to do so. After all, everyone must have been aware that the young king was the last representative of the dynasty and that the chances of him dying early with no heir were very real.

It is often suggested that Horemheb tried to legitimize his accession by marrying a sister of Nefertiti called Mutnodjmet. Such a marriage is not mentioned in the Coronation Text and it is also unlikely for other reasons. In the first place the reading of the name of this sister of Nefertiti is not certain;

some Egyptologists read it as Mutbeneret instead of Mutnodjmet. Secondly, the skeletal remains of Horemheb's wife Mutnodjmet discovered in his Memphite tomb show that she was about 35 years old when she died in Horemheb's thirteenth regnal year, probably in childbirth. Nefertiti's sister is already attested before Akhenaten's ninth regnal year, and combining these facts makes it practically impossible to identify the two with each other. Finally, the fact that one of the canopic jars of Horemheb's queen Mutnodjmet (now in the British Museum) and another jar fragment found in the Memphite tomb bear the completely unique title for a queen of the New Kingdom of 'Songstress of Amun' suggests that Horemheb was married to her before his accession. It is therefore hardly surprising that a relationship between Queen Mutnodjmet and the old royal family is not mentioned in the Coronation Text; such a mention would in fact also go against the tenor of this text because Horemheb is actually deliberately emphasizing his non-royal background. His appointment to crown prince he owes to his divine election and his outstanding qualities, not to an affiliation with the royal family, and it is this appointment by Tutankhamun which Horemheb, in addition to his divine election, produces as the sole legitimation for his accession.

But if Horemheb had already been appointed crown prince during the reign of Tutankhamun, why did he not ascend the throne immediately after the death of Tutankhamun? This is not an easy question to answer because there is no direct evidence. There are, however, indications that the answer must be sought in Egypt's foreign policy. During the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, after long years of warfare, Egypt and Mitanni had come to the conclusion that neither of them was strong enough to defeat the other conclusively. They therefore signed a treaty that was sealed by diplomatic marriages; Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV-Akhenaten all married Mitannian princesses. During the reign of Akhenaten, however, this balance of power was upset by the kingdom of the Hittites growing steadily more powerful. For the small vassal states in the north of Syria-Palestine a period of relative peace and stability came to an end. During the last years of Akhenaten, at the earliest during his fourteenth regnal year, the Hittites dealt the kingdom of Mitanni a crushing blow, and the vassal states in the north of Syria had to decide which horse to back: Egypt or the Hittites. Thus an extremely unstable situation was created with constantly changing loyalties as the order of the day. The Hittites steadily increased their sphere of influence and the Egyptians appear not to have reacted adequately to this at all; in their correspondence with the Egyptian court (the so-called Amarna letters) some Egyptian vassal states continually complain about the insufficient military support from Egypt.

William Murnane in his book *The Road to Kadesh* has painted a convincing picture of the situation at court during and immediately after the reign of Akhenaten. He sees the reason for Akhenaten's completely inadequate and hesitant reaction to the appeals for help from the Egyptian vassal states as being the result of the existence of two factions at court, which we shall refer to for the sake of convenience as 'hawks' and 'doves'. The doves, who clearly

had the upper hand at the time, were in favour of allowing the situation in Syria to develop as it would and to trust in the loyalty of Aziru of Amurru. This vassal had been able to unite a group of city states under his leadership and thought that he would be able to profit from the uncertain situation by forming a more or less independent buffer state between the Egyptian and the Hittite spheres of influence. Despite this, the doves believed that Aziru would remain loyal to Egypt if the alternative was to be swallowed up by the Hittites. If Egypt were to become directly involved in the situation she would risk having to move further north than was desirable, disturbing the balance of power even more. Thus military intervention was to be limited and avoided as far as possible.

Such a limited military response was not very effective, however, as is shown by a passage from the so-called Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun, which describes the disastrous situation of the country during the reign of Akhenaten: 'When troops were sent to Syria to expand the boundaries of Egypt they had no success at all'. This passage undoubtedly reflects the opinion of the other faction. The hawks did not believe in the reliability of Aziru and were in favour of a much wider military intervention to support those vassals who were still loyal to Egypt. This faction, which was perhaps led by Horemheb, appears to have ruled the roost during the reign of Tutankhamun, as is shown not only by the text just mentioned, but also by the detailed scenes in the tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara, which document a war in the north. In these representations, which take up no less than three whole walls, Horemheb presents himself as the victor who returns to Egypt with a great number of prisoners of war, and is rewarded for this by Tutankhamun with the Gold of Honour. In an historical text accompanying these scenes Horemheb says of himself, among other things, that 'his name was renowned in the land of the Hittites' - once again a remarkable statement, one which is usually only applied to the king.

The situation in the disputed region in the north, however, became more and more difficult. The Hurrian elite troops belonging to the defeated kingdom of Mitanni did not want to give up the fight, and the Hittite king Shuppiluliuma thus became involved in what is known as the Great Hurrian War, a war which would last for six years. At the beginning of this war the Egyptians assaulted Kadesh from the south while at the same time the Hurrians attacked the Hittite territory from the north. A Hittite response was not long in coming. Shuppiluliuma defeated the Hurrians, captured Carchemish and also sent troops southwards where they inflicted a defeat on the Egyptians at Amki, in Egyptian territory. Of course this defeat is not mentioned in Egyptian sources, but it is described in a long Hittite text known as *The Deeds of Shuppiluliuma*. From this text it turns out that the news of the defeat reached Egypt shortly after the death of their king, Tutankhamun. It is quite possible that Horemheb was himself at the front in Syria and that he was directly or indirectly involved in the defeat. But even if that were not the case, as the highest general it was his responsibility. His position at court may very well have been considerably weakened by this defeat, especially since the

king, on whom he had such a great influence and on whose support he could depend, had just died.

This impression is strengthened by the fact that Horemheb, despite the very close links he had had with Tutankhamun, does not appear to have been involved at all in the burial of the young king. Ay carried out the burial rites and both Nakhtmin and Maya contributed to the tomb equipment, but Horemheb is conspicuous by his absence. The extraordinary correspondence which Tutankhamun's widow, Queen Ankhesenamun, carried on with the Hittites immediately after the death of Tutankhamun, and the events which followed on from this, must probably also be seen in that light. The queen is not mentioned by name in the Hittite sources but is referred to by the term *Daḥamunzu*, a rendering of the Egyptian title *ḥmt nsw* 'The King's Wife'. Opinions differ about the identity of this queen, but she can hardly have been anyone else but Ankhesenamun. The story is well known and does not need to be repeated here at length. Ankhesenamun sent a letter to Shuppiluliuma with the following request: 'My husband has died and I have no son. It is said that you have many sons. If you give me one of your sons he shall become my husband. Never shall I choose one of my servants and make him my husband; I fear (?) ...'. This request naturally caused the Hittite king great surprise. After all, at that time he was at war with the Egyptians and he is therefore reported to have cried out: 'Never in my whole life have I come across anything like this!' For obvious reasons the Hittites did not entirely trust the matter; they sent an envoy to Memphis to investigate and this man returned with the report that everything was in order. Furthermore, he was accompanied by an Egyptian messenger who carried a second letter from Ankhesenamun: 'Why have you said: "they are deceiving me"? - If I had had a son would I have written to a foreign land about my shame and the shame of my country? You did not wish to believe me and have even spoken evil things about me. He who was my husband is dead. I have no son. Never shall I take a servant of mine and make him my husband. I have written to no other country, only to you! It is said that you have many sons. So give me a son of yours! He will be my husband and he will be king in Egypt'. Thereupon Shuppiluliuma sent one of his sons, Zannanza, to Egypt; he never arrived, however, because he was murdered en route by Egyptians. Murnane has interpreted this whole tense episode as having been inspired by the doves, the party which preferred to come to an agreement with the Hittites rather than become involved in what they regarded as a hopeless fight at the furthestmost points of Egypt's borders. The intended marriage with Tutankhamun's widow would have been nothing less than a diplomatic marriage, one which indeed went further than the usual exchanges of princesses, but a diplomatic marriage nonetheless, a last-ditch effort to reconcile the two rival superpowers at the very moment that the Egyptians had suffered a defeat. This interpretation appears to be confirmed by a fragment identified not so long ago as coming from one of Ankhesenamun's original letters, in which she expresses the wish that Egypt and Hatti will become one land as a result of her marriage to a Hittite prince.

It is well-nigh inconceivable that Ankhesenamun would have made her request to Shuppiluliuma entirely on her own initiative and the sequel to the events shows that Ay was the driving force behind this affair. Tutankhamun's death must have been a complete disaster for the doves led by Ay; now the hawk Horemheb would be on the throne. It must be he whom the queen means when she writes: 'Never shall I take a *servant of mine* and make him my husband'. Never, never; even a Hittite on the throne would be better than that! The exchange of letters and messengers took a long time, and in order to complete the burial rites of Tutankhamun within the stipulated 70 days Ay ascended the throne, very probably only temporarily in the first instance, as a sort of 'interim king' alongside Ankhesenamun, but after the murder of Zannanza, for good. It is often supposed that Horemheb was directly responsible for the murder of Zannanza, and in the light of Horemheb's position as legitimate successor to Tutankhamun it certainly seems to be very likely. After all, Horemheb and his political sympathizers must have regarded the attempt to place a Hittite on the throne of Egypt as a direct act of treason.

With Ay's accession to the throne it looked as if the doves had won for the time being, and Horemheb's role appeared to be over. In a letter to the Hittites Ay denied any involvement in the death of Zannanza and tried to move the Hittites to reconciliation. But Shuppiluliuma was furious and would not hear of a reconciliation, and the result was a long-drawn-out war between Egypt and the Hittites. Without realising it, Shuppiluliuma played into Horemheb's hands because it is likely that this war, which started off to Egypt's disadvantage, once again made Horemheb indispensable. Thus the hawks won in the end for, after the death of Ay, Horemheb finally ascended the throne for which he had been destined since the beginning of the reign of Tutankhamun. Nakhtmin, designated by Ay as his successor, was pushed to one side and both he and Ay became the victims of a merciless *damnatio memoriae*; all depictions of Ay on monuments of Tutankhamun were hacked out, and Ay's own royal monuments, too, were demolished or usurped. Ay's royal tomb was defaced and his cartouches hacked out. The statues of Nakhtmin, too, were smashed to smithereens. It is precisely this rigorous attempt to wipe out the memory of Ay and his clan forever that once again amply demonstrates that there was no question of an understanding between Ay and Horemheb. At the most the two were forced by circumstances to temporarily work together, but there can be no doubt that they were, or at some point became, bitter rivals. We know nothing about the fate of Ankhesenamun; she has vanished into the mists of time. One silent witness is perhaps Tutankhamun's Restoration Stela, on which she was originally twice depicted standing behind her husband. After his accession Horemheb usurped this stela in the usual way by replacing Tutankhamun's names with his own, so that the depictions no longer represented Tutankhamun but Horemheb. It would have been easy to replace the names of Ankhesenamun in the same manner with those of Mutnodjmet, Horemheb's queen, but instead the representations of Ankhesenamun and their accompanying inscriptions were carefully erased.

Once Horemheb, now advanced in years, was on the throne he ensured that his successor was someone of the same mind by nominating his vizier Paramessu, also a military man, to be crown prince, with titles which are virtually identical to those he himself had held under Tutankhamun. This Paramessu did indeed ascend the throne after Horemheb's death as Ramesses I. With him the actual Nineteenth Dynasty begins. In the meantime the power struggle with the Hittites carried on unabatedly, and it was not until the twenty-first year of the reign of Ramesses' grandson, Ramesses II, that a peace treaty with the Hittites was eventually negotiated.

Much of what has been discussed above is hypothetical. Nevertheless it can now be considered certain that Horemheb's claim to the throne of Egypt was a real one, one which was sanctioned by the king under whose albeit nominal rule he had made his career. There is very little room for doubt about this interpretation of the material from Horemheb's tomb at Saqqara, which in turn throws a completely new light on the problems around the succession of Tutankhamun.

Despite the wealth of texts, representations and objects which have come down to us, the ancient Egyptians, whether they are kings or their subjects, are often no more than abstract names and titles to us. It is tempting, not to say dangerous, to put flesh and blood on the bare bones of history by attributing feelings and motives to those persons about which our sources remain silent. In the episode described above, however, this is virtually unavoidable. Everything points towards an enmity between Horemheb and Ay, even if this enmity was not primarily caused by personal rivalry, but rather by opposing views of Egyptian national interests. One gets the impression that Ay mainly played the role of an elder statesman, who became king almost against his will in order to keep Horemheb off the throne and thus preserve peace. Horemheb, on the other hand, conjures up the picture of a man of great ambition, even if he was himself convinced that his personal ambitions coincided with national interests. In this respect, too, there is nothing new under the sun.

Further reading

A brief survey of the whole period from Amenhotep III to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, with selected bibliography, is given by H. A. Schlögl, *Echnaton - Tutanchamun. Daten, Fakten, Literatur* (fourth revised edition, Wiesbaden, 1993). The reign of Amenhotep III is revealed in all its splendour in the exhibition catalogue *Egypt's Dazzling Sun: Amenhotep III and His World* by A. P. Kozloff, B. M. Bryan et al. (Cleveland, 1992). A virtually complete bibliography of the vast literature on the Amarna Period (over 2000 titles) can be found in G. T. Martin, *A Bibliography of the Amarna Period and its Aftermath. The Reigns of Akhenaten, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun and Ay (c. 1350-1321 BC)* (London, 1991); a supplement is in preparation. The most important controversies regarding the Amarna Period are discussed in a critical and highly informative review by M. Eaton-Krauss of two books on Akhenaten, viz. C. Aldred, *Akhenaten, King of Egypt* (London, 1988) and

D. B. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton, 1984); the review, entitled "Akhenaten versus Akhenaten", appeared in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 47 (1990), pp. 541-559. A recent book on Akhenaten and his 'new' religion is E. Hornung, *Echnaton. Die Religion des Lichtes* (Zürich, 1995). J. R. Harris' theory about the possible identity of Smenekhkaré and Nefertiti has yet to be published in full, but the reader will find a useful discussion in J. Samson, *Amarna, City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Nefertiti as Pharaoh* (Warminster, 1978). The Theban graffito from Year 3 of Ankhkheperure was published by P. E. Newberry and A. H. Gardiner in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 14 (1928), pp. 3-11.

On Ay and his family see O. Schaden, *The God's Father Ay* (diss. University of Minnesota, 1977; available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor). On Kiya: C. N. Reeves, "New Light on Kiya from Texts in the British Museum" in *JEA* 74 (1988), pp. 91-101 (with the older literature); on Baketaten as daughter of Kiya: M. Gabolde, "Baketaton fille de Kiya?" in *Bulletin, Société d'Égyptologie, Genève* 16 (1992), pp. 27-39. On Maya: J. van Dijk, "The Overseer of the Treasury Maya: A Biographical Sketch" in *Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 70 (1990), pp. 23-28; id., "A Statue Base of May(a) in Copenhagen" in *OMRO* 71 (1991), pp. 7-12. Egypt's foreign policy during the Amarna Period and afterwards is admirably treated in W. J. Murnane, *The Road to Kadesh. A Historical Interpretation of the Battle Reliefs of King Sety I at Karnak* (Chicago, 1985; second, revised edition 1990). The reliefs in the Memphite tomb of Horemheb, which, like that of Maya, was rediscovered by a joint Anglo-Dutch expedition at Saqqara, have been published by G. T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-chief of Tutankhamun I: The reliefs, inscriptions, and commentary* (London, 1989); volume II (by H. D. Schneider), which deals with the objects, is in press. The text of Horemheb's Coronation Text was published by Sir Alan Gardiner, "The Coronation of King Haremhab" in *JEA* 39 (1953), pp. 13-31.