

New Evidence on the Length of the Reign of Horemheb

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Abstract

Based upon new finds from excavations at the tomb of Horemheb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 57) the author discusses the probable length of the reign of Horemheb of the 18th Dynasty. After noting the findings of numerous wine jar labels, the initial interpretation supports a reign length of 14 years with probable burial at the beginning of the 15th regnal year at the latest. A survey of the many discussions of the length of Horemheb's reign is included.

The length of the reign of Horemheb is one of those thorny issues in the chronology of the New Kingdom that keeps Egyptologists firmly divided into two camps.¹ In most histories of Ancient Egypt Horemheb is credited with a reign of some 27 or 28 years, and sometimes even a figure of 30–35 years² is given. Those who advocate such a long reign are clearly in the majority; among them are such highly respected authorities as Von Beckerath,³ Hornung,⁴ Kitchen,⁵ and Krauss.⁶ These scholars readily admit that the highest indisputable date for Horemheb is his Year 13, but they believe that synchronisms with notably the Babylonian kinglists force us to assume that he reigned for a period of more than twice as long. A graffito from Medinet Habu mentioning a Year 27 in connection with Horemheb and the famous, or should I say infamous, passage in the inscription of Mose (Mes) which refers to a document allegedly dated to Year 58 or 59 of Horemheb are two of the most important pieces of circumstantial evidence adduced to support the 27/28 years option.

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, Rhodes, 22–29 May 2008. Other than adding footnotes I have left the text as read there virtually unchanged.

² Cf. the table on the foldout at the end of E. Hornung, *Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und Geschichte des Neuen Reiches*. ÄA 11 (Wiesbaden, 1964), where the dates assigned to Horemheb by various authors provide interesting comparisons; advocates of a 30-year reign include Borchardt (1935), Wilson (1951) and Von Beckerath (1961); Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt II* (New York, 1959), xv, gave Horemheb 35 years, but in 1962 (in the *CAH*) he lowered this to 28 years. Cf. also D. B. Redford, "On the Chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty," *JNES* 25 (1966), 124 (29/30 years).

³ J. von Beckerath, *Tanis und Theben. Historische Grundlagen der Ramessidenzeit in Ägypten*. ÄF 16 (Glückstadt, 1951), 103–4; idem, "Nochmals die Regierungsdauer des Haremhab," *SAK* 6 (1978), 43–49; idem, "Das Problem der Regierungsdauer Haremhab," *SAK* 22 (1995), 37–41; idem, *Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten. Die Zeitbestimmung der ägyptischen Geschichte von der Vorzeit bis 332 v. Chr.* MÄS 46 (Mainz, 1997), 116–17.

⁴ E. Hornung, *Untersuchungen*, 39–40; idem, "Neue Materialien zur ägyptischen Chronologie," *ZDMG* 117 (1967), 11–16; idem, *Das Grab des Haremhab im Tal der Könige* (Bern, 1971), 19–20; idem, in E. Hornung, R. Krauss, and D. Warburton, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*. HdO I/83 (Leiden-Boston, 2006), 209.

⁵ K. A. Kitchen, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of Egyptian Chronology—A Reconsideration," *Ä&L* 16 (2006), 293–303 [302–3].

⁶ R. Krauss, "Nur ein kurioser Irrtum oder ein Beleg für die Jahre 26 und 27 von Haremheb?," *DE* 30 (1994), 73–85; R. Krauss and D. Warburton, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 476–77.

On the other side of the divide there is a minority of scholars who feel that such a long period with no securely dated inscriptions from years later than Year 13 is highly unlikely, given the fact that virtually every single year from 1 to 13 is well attested and that such a major gap in the evidence cannot simply be explained away. Wolfgang Helck and John Harris are among the supporters of this very much shorter reign; Harris admitted that no firm conclusion was yet possible, but writing before the discovery of a Year 13 wine docket in the Memphite tomb of Horemheb, suggested a reign of “8 or even 12 years.”⁷ Helck strongly believed that Horemheb reigned for no more than 13 or possibly 14 years.⁸ In the chronological table in the *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* of Baines and Málek, which, if only for reasons of convenience, is followed in many other books on Ancient Egypt, Horemheb is dated c. 1319–1307 BC, that is, a reign of 12 full years.⁹ Back in 1993 I myself suggested a slightly longer reign of about 15–17 years.¹⁰

In cases like this the problem cannot satisfactorily be solved unless some new and hopefully conclusive evidence turns up, and this is exactly what by some miracle has happened recently. In 2006 Geoffrey Martin initiated a project to reinvestigate the royal tomb of Horemheb (KV 57) and to clear the debris left inside the monument by previous excavators and restorers.¹¹ During three short seasons in 2006 and 2007 Prof. Martin and myself worked in the tomb, which was discovered, at least officially, by Theodore Davis in the final days of February 1908, now a hundred years ago.¹² Davis and his archaeologist Edward Ayrton cleared the tomb and the objects that were considered worth preserving were sent to the Cairo Museum, where the most significant of them have been on display ever since. Much debris remained inside the monument, however, for instead of taking everything all the way up to dump it outside the tomb they disposed of a lot of the limestone chippings, rubble and sand in the undecorated chambers beyond the sarcophagus hall and in the great shaft, the so-called Well Room (E).

From the publication it appears that Davis and Ayrton did actually clear this Well Room down to the bottom, but they subsequently started filling it up again with debris from the adjacent rooms and corridors. When we began our work the Well was about 3 meters deep, and we finally reached the true bottom at a depth of nearly 7 meters. In the four meters of densely compacted debris we discovered a very large quantity of pottery sherds, almost all of which belonged to wine amphorae. The sherds were distributed evenly throughout the full four meters of rubble. We found the first sherds almost immediately after we began clearing the top of the Well, and the last ones were at the bottom. About 250 of these sherds were inscribed in hieratic. Some of them are very small, containing sometimes no more than one or two signs, and the process of joining as many of them as possible to form coherent dockets is still going on, but the picture that has emerged from studying them is clear enough.

From a count of the diagnostic sherds carried out by David Aston, he estimated that there must have been a minimum of 92 amphorae. Not all of these need to have been inscribed, but most of

⁷ J. R. Harris, “How Long was the Reign of Horemheb?,” *JEA* 54 (1968), 95–99.

⁸ W. Helck, “Probleme der Zeit Horemhebs. 2. Länge der Regierungszeit Horemhebs,” *CdE* 28 n. 96 (1973), 253–64; idem, “Zur Chronologiediskussion über das Neue Reich,” *Ä&L* 3 (1992), 63–67.

⁹ J. Baines and J. Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 1980), 36, 46.

¹⁰ J. van Dijk, “Maya’s Chief Sculptor Userhat-Hatiay. With a Note on the Length of the Reign of Horemheb,” *GM* 148 (1995), 29–34.

¹¹ The mission (*The Cambridge Expedition to the Valley of the Kings*) is directed by Geoffrey T. Martin, to whose unfailing archaeological instinct due tribute is paid here, and was financed through the generosity of Piers and Jenny Litherland, to whom warm thanks are extended.

¹² T. M. Davis, et al., *The Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatânkhmanou* (London, 1912). Cf. the excellent account by G. B. Johnson, “The Royal Tomb of Horemheb in the Valley of the Kings: Its Discovery, Design & Decoration,” *Amarna Letters* 4 (2000), 121–59.

them probably were, as the sheer number of inscribed sherds shows. The total count of inscribed sherds found by us was 254; a fair number of these I have been able to join together. As a result of this joining, the tally at the present moment stands at 168 inscribed sherds, some of which may eventually be able to be joined as well. Even then, however, many of the docketts found by the expedition will remain incomplete and it is clear that many inscribed sherds must have disappeared, if only because Davis and Ayrton did certainly dispose of part of their debris outside the tomb as well as dumping it in the Well. Given the fragmentary nature of many of the sherds, it is difficult to give a reliable estimate of the original number of docketts, but counting only the sherds containing the beginning of the text, that is, the year date, it transpires that there were at least 60 docketts. Of these, 14 have nothing but *h3t-sp* (or part of it) preserved, leaving us with a group of 46 docketts with a year date. On 30 of these the year date is complete; 22 mention Year 13 and 8 have Year 14. The incomplete dates can be divided as follows:

- 5 docketts have Year 10 + x; in all 5 the sign for “10” is well preserved and cannot be read as 20 or 30; this means that these 5 docketts belong to any of the Years 10 to 19, but not higher;
- 3 docketts have Year 11 + x; since the hieratic signs for the numbers 5 to 9 are not written with a series of vertical strokes, the presence of the first vertical stroke after the sign for “10” means that these 3 docketts belong to Years 11–14, but not higher;
- 2 docketts have Year 12 + x, i.e., they can be assigned to Years 12, 13 or 14, but not higher;
- 1 docket has Year 13 + x, i.e., either Year 13 or 14, but not higher; and
- 5 docketts have Year x + 3, which theoretically could mean Year 13/14, 23/24, 33/34, etc.

This survey shows that of the 46 sherds with year dates, 36 have either Year 13 or 14 or a year not higher than 14. From this fact and from the fact that for the 5 docketts with Year 10 + x the reading of the first sign as “20” can be ruled out, it can be deduced with a reasonable degree of certainty that the 5 docketts with Year x + 3 must be assigned to Year 13 or 14 too, bringing the total number of docketts with a maximum date of Year 14 to 41. This in turn makes it likely that the 5 remaining docketts, those with Year 10 + x, belong to either Year 13 or 14 as well. In other words, it seems highly probable that none of the docketts can be dated later than Horemheb’s Year 14 and that the majority date from his Year 13.

Before we discuss the possible implications of this find let me briefly mention a few other interesting details. As far as can be ascertained the Year 13 docketts all mention “wine” without further additions. Where the name of the vintner is preserved it is always the same man, called Ty. Several sherds which cannot at present be joined to other sherds also mention Ty and it is likely that the docketts to which these belong also once mentioned Year 13. The full text of a Year 13 docket reads as follows (fig. 1):

- (1) “Year 13. Wine of the estate of Horemheb-meren-Amun, L.P.H., in the domain of Amun.
- (2) Western River. Chief vintner Ty.”

All of the Year 13 docketts are identical; they all use this very succinct style, without the usual prepositions or other connecting phrases, and the second line always begins with *itrw imnty* “Western River.” The Year 14 docketts, on the other hand, are all individual. These docketts all mention special wines, *irp nfr* “good quality wine,” *irp nfr nfr* “very good quality wine,” or in one case *irp ndm* “sweet wine.” The location of the vineyard is specified and varies from docket to docket, and so does the name of the vintner. A typical example (fig. 2) reads:

- (1) “Year 14. Good quality wine of the estate of Horemheb-meren-Amun, L.P.H.,
- (2) in the domain of Amun, from the vineyard of Atfih. Chief vintner Haty.”

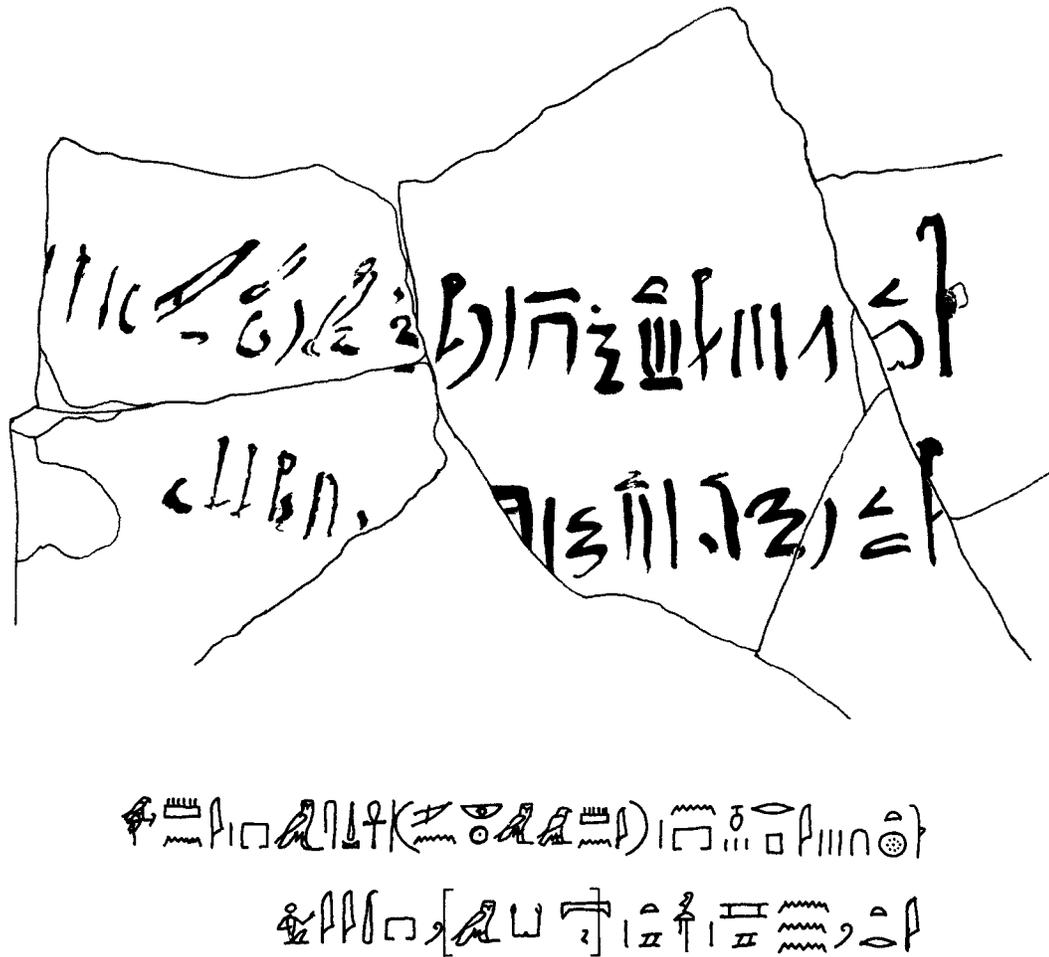


Fig. 1. Year 13 Jar Label from the Tomb of Horemheb (KV57).

Other Year 14 docket mentions wine from Memphis (?), the Western River, and “the vineyard of this domain which is adjacent to the domain of Thoth” (*k3mw n pr pn nty r-gs pr Dhwtj*). The vintners in the labels are called Nakhtamun, [Mer-]seger-men, Ramose, and others. The Year 14 docket is usually inscribed on a different surface as well, a highly burnished slip with a greenish tinge which stands in stark contrast to the ordinary buff-colored amphorae from Year 13. From all of these observations it is clear that the royal tomb of Horemheb was supplied with a large shipment of ordinary wine from the Western Delta bottled in Year 13 and a limited number of choice wines from selected vineyards in Egypt bottled in Year 14.

The quantity and consistency of the KV 57 docket strongly suggest that Horemheb was buried in his Year 14, or at least before the wine harvest of his Year 15 at the very latest. It has recently been suggested that, despite the limited storage life of Egyptian wine due to the porous amphora walls, a very old vintage was occasionally included among the wines supplied for a king’s burial and that perhaps the famous Year 31 amphora from the tomb of Tutankhamun represents such a case.¹³ The wine was then not included because of its quality or potability, but for commemorative or symbolic

¹³ P. Tallet, “Une jarre de l’an 31 et une jarre de l’an 10 dans la cuve de Toutânkhamon,” *BIFAO* 96 (1996), 369–83.

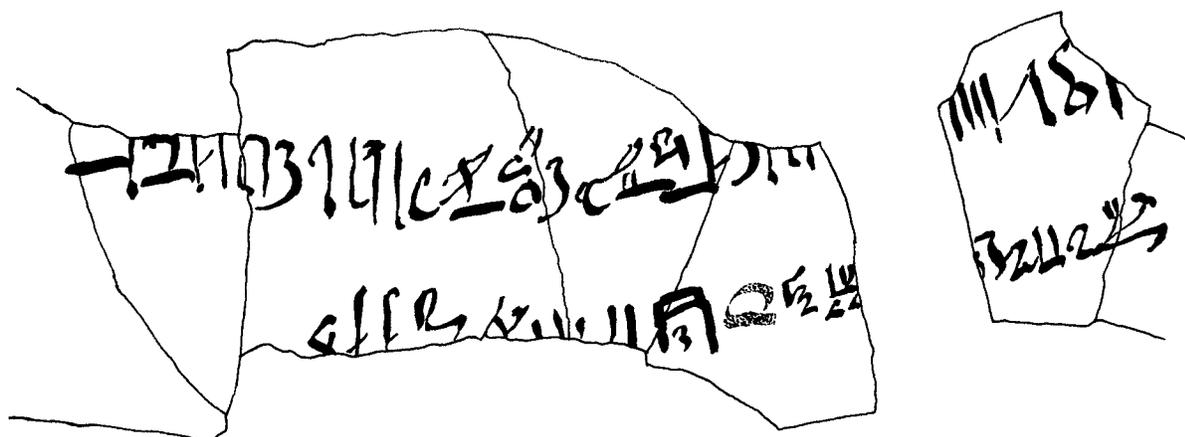


Fig. 2. Year 14 Jar Label from the Tomb of Horemheb (KV57).

reasons.¹⁴ Even if one accepts this interpretation, this can hardly be the case with a large quantity of wine like the one we are dealing with here. It is equally hard to imagine that such a large quantity of wine was assembled years in advance of the burial of a king when wine from the most recent vintages was always readily available from the king's many estates.

Further support comes from other wine docketts from Horemheb's reign. A team from the University of Basel (MISR) directed by Elina Paulin Grothe has recently cleared a large ancient dump between the tombs of Seti I and Ramesses X yielding a large quantity of hieratic docketts.¹⁵ This material is being prepared for publication by Nicolas Sartori, to whom I owe the knowledge of another 4 docketts with the name of Horemheb; only one of these bears a date, and it is once again Year 14 in connection with *irp nfr*. This docket may originally have come from the tomb of Horemheb, but there are also docketts from Deir el-Medina, where wine docketts from many other kings from both before and after Horemheb have been found. The Horemheb docketts from Deir el-Medina mention Years 2, 3, 4, 6, 13, and 14,¹⁶ but again no higher years are found at all. The docket from the Memphite tomb of Horemheb already mentioned also has Year 13¹⁷ and a docket ascribed to Horemheb from Sedment

¹⁴ Tallet, "Une jarre de l'an 31," 373-75.

¹⁵ Cf. the brief report in "Digging Diary," *EA* 29 (Autumn 2006), 27, s.v. Western Thebes #1.

¹⁶ G. Nagel, *La céramique du Nouvel Empire à Deir el-Médineh* (Cairo, 1938), 15: 6 (Year 2); Y. Koenig, *Catalogue des étiquettes de jarres hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh* (Cairo, 1979-1980), nos. 6299 (Year 3), 6295 (Year 4), 6403 (Year 6), 6294 (Year 13), 6345 (Year 14); the last example is incomplete, but Koenig's restoration as "Year 34," perhaps based on the assumption that a date in the reign of Ramesses II is meant, is unwarranted; cf. also Helck, "Zur Chronologiediskussion über das Neue Reich," 65, n. 1.

¹⁷ G. T. Martin, "Excavations at the Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, 1978: Preliminary Report," *JEA* 65 (1979), 15, pl. III, 2; idem, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tut'ankhamūn I* (London, 1989), 162, pl. 150; C. J. Eyre, in H. D. Schneider, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tut'ankhamūn. II: A Catalogue of the Finds* (London, 1996), 12, n. 22, pls. 2, 4, 50.

has Year 12.¹⁸ The picture emerging from this agrees with that from monuments of Horemheb other than wine docketts where Years 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12 are attested.¹⁹ An inscription mentioning Year 16 on a granite bowl seen in a dealer's shop in Cairo in the early 1970s and published by Redford²⁰ has been recognized since as a blatant forgery.²¹ Von Beckerath has tried to explain the total lack of dated inscriptions from years later than Year 14 by referring to an information gap from Horemheb's residence Memphis, and from the fact that dated material from Deir el-Medina does not really become abundant until the reign of Seti I.²² Both arguments can easily be refuted, however: Memphis had been the residence for most of the Eighteenth Dynasty prior to the Amarna Period, so any paucity of dated monuments would apply to all of the kings from this period, not just to Horemheb, and the absence of docketts from Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings from years later than Year 14 cannot be explained by an information gap there; after all, if Horemheb had reigned on for another 14 years or more after his Year 14, the Theban West bank, the location of his tomb and mortuary temple, would be the first place where one would expect to find evidence for it. In reality, however, as we have seen, such evidence is totally lacking. It seems to me, therefore, that the conclusion is inescapable that Horemheb reigned for no more than a maximum of 14 full years and that he was buried early in his Year 15 at the very latest.

Such a date is also suggested by the fact that the royal tomb of Horemheb remained unfinished, a fact not taken into account by any of those defending a long reign. The tomb is comparable to that of Seti I in size and decoration technique, and Seti's tomb is far more extensively decorated than that of Horemheb,²³ and yet Seti managed to virtually complete his tomb within a decade, whereas Horemheb did not even succeed in fully decorating the three rooms he planned to have done, leaving even the burial hall unfinished. Even if we assume that Horemheb did not begin the work on his royal tomb until his Year 7 or 8, as has quite plausibly been suggested,²⁴ it remains a mystery how the work could not have been completed had he lived on for another 20 or more years.

Unfortunately the limited space of this preliminary report prevents us from discussing the implications of this conclusion at any length here. First of all, we have to explain the documents allegedly providing higher year dates for Horemheb, notably the curious Year 27 of the hieratic graffito from Medinet Habu²⁵ and the Year 59 from the inscription of Mose.²⁶ The Medinet Habu text is very probably Ramesside and the Year 27 mentioned is that of either Ramesses II or III.²⁷ It records the "entry," perhaps the "inauguration" of a statue of Horemheb called "Amun-loves-the-one-who-hates-

¹⁸ G. T. Martin, "Three Objects of New Kingdom Date from the Memphite Area and Sidmant. 3. An inscribed amphora from Sidmant," in J. Baines, et al., eds., *Pyramid Studies and Other Essays presented to I. E. S. Edwards* (London, 1988), 118–20, pl. 21.

¹⁹ Helck, "Zur Chronologiediskussion über das Neue Reich," 64.

²⁰ D. B. Redford, "A New Dated Inscription from the Reign of Horemheb," *SSEA Newsletter* 4/1 (July 1973), 6–23; idem, "New Light on the Asiatic Campaign of Horemheb," *BASOR* 211 (Oct. 1973), 36–49.

²¹ See most recently the detailed analysis by J. R. Harris, "Historieförværgning," *Papyrus* 27/2 (2007), 24–27.

²² "Das Problem der Regierungsdauer Haremhab's," 41.

²³ Cf., for example, the plans in E. Hornung, *Das Grab des Haremhab im Tal der Könige* (Bern, 1971), unnumbered foldout (decoration is limited to Rooms E, I, and J, plus one small scene in K), and idem, *The Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I* (Zurich-Munich, 1991), 60–61.

²⁴ D. Valbelle, "Les ouvriers de la tombe": *Deir el-Médineh à l'époque ramesside* (Cairo, 1985), 162; cf. J. van Dijk, *The New Kingdom Necropolis of Memphis* (Groningen, 1993), 44–45; idem, "Maya's Chief Sculptor Userhat-Hatiay," 34, n. 27.

²⁵ U. Hölscher, *Excavations at Ancient Thebes, 1930/31* (Chicago, 1932), 51, 53, fig. 35; R. Anthes, in Hölscher, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu II: The Temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty* (Chicago, 1939), 107–8, pl. 51c; R. Hari, *Horemheb et la reine Moutnedjemet, ou la fin d'une dynastie* (Geneva, 1965), 353–55, fig. 84.

²⁶ G. A. Gaballa, *The Memphite Tomb-Chapel of Mose* (Warminster, 1977), 25, pls. 57 (top right), 63 (S8).

²⁷ H. W. Fairman, in J. D. S. Pendlebury, *The City of Akhenaten III* (London, 1951), 158; cf. J. van Dijk, "Maya's Chief Sculptor Userhat-Hatiay," 34, n. 25.

his-enemies,”²⁸ and not the date of the burial of Horemheb, as was recently stated again by Hornung.²⁹ In this connection we must also mention a Deir el-Medina ostrakon with a list of days on which a certain workman was absent from work and which shows an unexpected change from regnal Year 26 to Year 27 between 4 *pṛt* 28 and 1 *šmw* 13 and this has led Krauss to suggest that the unidentified king here is Horemheb,³⁰ but again the ostrakon appears to be Ramesside and the passage in question is far more likely to be what its editor, J. J. Janssen,³¹ called it, “a curious error.” The Year 59 in Mose can hardly be taken seriously, and indeed is not taken at face value even by the staunchest supporters of a long reign. These authors believe that the figure includes the years of all the rulers between Amenhotep III and Horemheb, but as Helck has already made abundantly clear, there is no evidence for such a practice in any other document from the reign of Horemheb or from the time of his successors, in fact there is ample evidence to the contrary.³² The Mose date must surely be the result of some error; either the scribe mistakenly copied the cartouches of Horemheb instead of those of Ramesses II, perhaps led astray by the elements *mry/mr.n* ‘Imn and *stp.n R* common to both, or the date itself was miscopied. The latter is perhaps more likely, given the suspiciously unusual way it is rendered in the inscription of Mose, with the “50” written with five 10–signs arranged as 2+3 instead of the other way round and with “8” or “9” written as a series of very tall individual vertical strokes (fig. 3).³³

²⁸ Von Beckerath, “Nochmals die Regierungsdauer des Haremhab,” 47; cf. pAnast. III 3, 4 (Gardiner, *LEM* 23, 4–5) *hrw* *ḳy n Wsr-m* *ḳr-stp.n-r* (‘w.s.)-*Mntw-m-twy dw’w hb K3-hr-k3* “the day of the entry of (a statue called) ‘Userma’at-setepenre-(l.p.h.)-Montu-in-the-Two-Lands’ on the morning of the Khoiak Festival.” Perhaps the “entry” indicates the occasion on which a statue became part of the regular offering cult in a temple or tomb-chapel. For statues of Ramesses II called Montu-in-the-Two-Lands see L. Habachi, *Features of the Deification of Ramesses II*. ADAIK 5 (Glückstadt, 1969), 28–33, 41–3.

²⁹ *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 209, where it is stated that “the expression *jrjt ḳw n* with the meaning ‘burial’ occurs in the contemporaneous TT 50,” referring to R. Hari, *La tombe thébaine du père divin Neferhotep* (Geneva, 1985), pl. 10. The scene in question shows Neferhotep (holding the khrep scepter) and his wife seated receiving food offerings. The caption is damaged; after *jrjt ḳw n* there is a lacuna followed by “by the god’s father of Amun . . . Neferhotep.” Thus what is “entered” or “made to enter” is missing; that this phrase has a ritual significance is clear, but given the context in which it occurs it seems rather unlikely to me that it should refer to the actual burial of Neferhotep. The technical term *ḳi-ḳ* used in Demotic for the funeral procession of the Mother of Apis from her temple to her “Place of Rest” (H. S. Smith, “The Death and Life of the Mother of Apis,” in A. B. Lloyd, ed., *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths* [London, 1992], 203–4) only confirms that the verb *ḳ* on its own never refers to death or burial, but does so only in composite phrases, as was rightly pointed out by von Beckerath, “Nochmals die Regierungsdauer des Haremhab,” 46 with n. 23. Hornung does not repeat his earlier reference (*Grab des Haremhab*, 20) to oBM 5624, quoted below, where *hrw n sḳ . . . r p3 hr* in Year 7 of Horemheb does not refer to the funeral of a certain workman, but to the day he was allowed to enter the Tomb, i.e., became a member of the crew working on the tomb of Horemheb.

³⁰ Krauss, “Nur ein kurioser Irrtum oder ein Beleg für die Jahre 26 und 27 von Haremhab?,” 73–85.

³¹ J. J. Janssen, “A Curious Error (O. IFAO. 1254),” *BIFAO* 84 (1984), 303–6. As Janssen points out, the ostrakon comes from the “Grand Puits” at Deir el-Medina, which contained no ostraca that can be securely dated earlier than Dynasty 20, adding his strong impression that the writing, too, belongs to that dynasty.

³² The evidence need not be repeated here in detail; perhaps the most telling example is oBM 5624 (Blackman, “Oracles in Ancient Egypt II,” *JEA* 12 [1926], 176–77; Helck, *Urk.* IV, 2162) which, like the inscription of Mose, deals with a dispute over ownership, this time of a tomb rather than a plot of land, and which dates from the reign of Ramesses III. One party refers to an event involving an ancestor of his in Year 7 of Horemheb. If the years of the Amarna kings were regularly added to those of Horemheb during the Ramesside period, as many still claim, surely the date in this ostrakon should have been given as year 39 (7 + 32). The same applies to the Year 7 of Horemheb mentioned in Ostrakon Toronto A.11, a copy of a letter dated to the reign of Ramesses II; cf. J. Harris, “How Long was the Reign of Horemheb?,” 97.

³³ The block illustrated here resurfaced in the area of the SCA office at Saqqāra in the early 1980s and was shown to me by one of the local inspectors. The photograph I owe to the courtesy of Dr. Boyo Ockinga. As an alternative to adding the years of the Amarna kings to Horemheb’s, J. von Beckerath, “Das Kalendarium des Papyrus Ebers und die Chronologie des ägyptischen Neuen Reiches. Gegenwärtiger Stand der Frage,” *Ä&L* 3 (1992), 26, in an attempt to “save” the theory of a long reign, has suggested that the group “50” was misread from an original hieratic sign “20,” “womit sich wiederum eine Regierungszeit von mindestens 27 bzw. 28 Jahren ergäbe.”

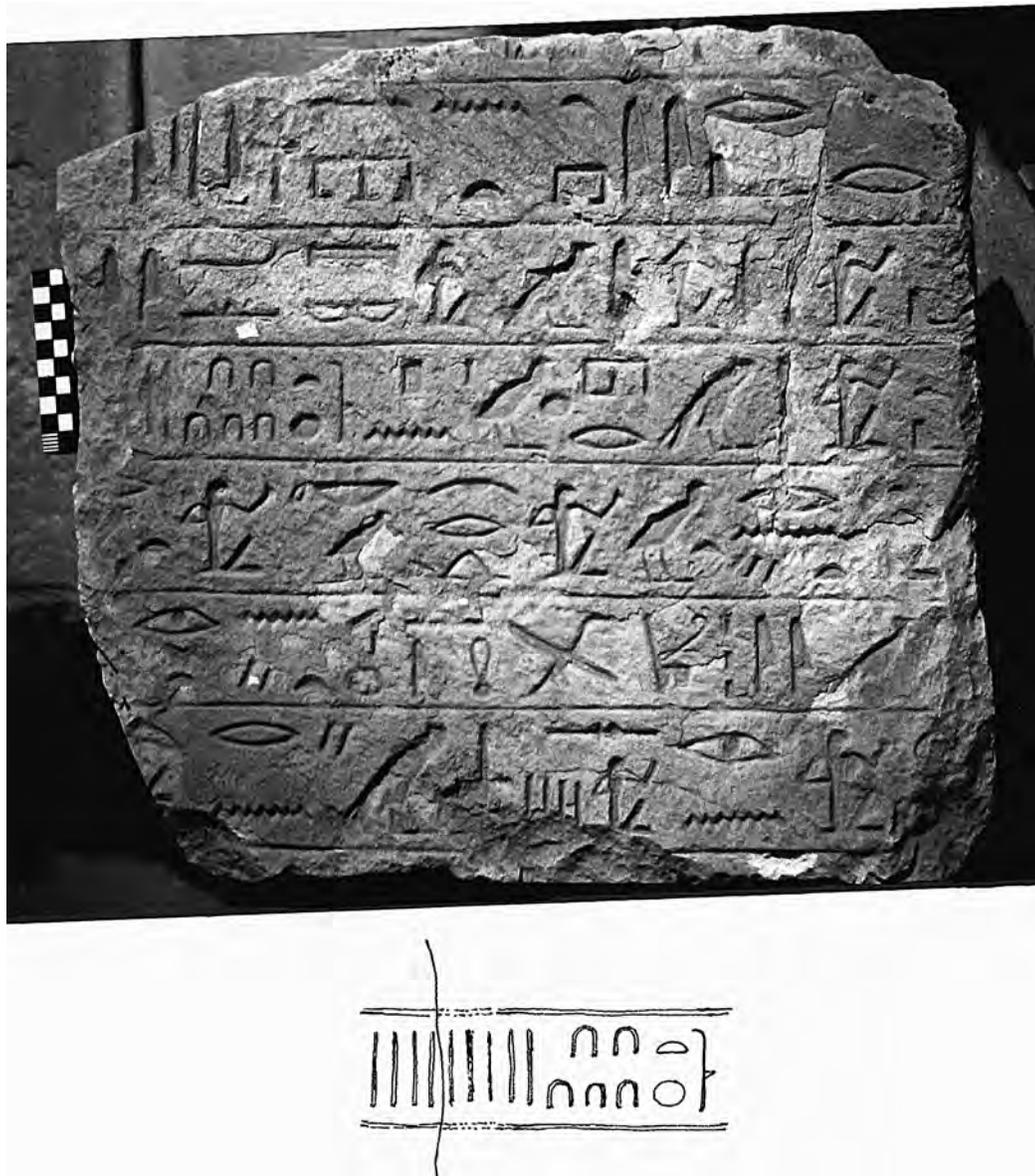


Fig. 3. Fragment of Inscription of Mose. Photograph courtesy of author.

The main obstacle to a 14-year reign for Horemheb remains the synchronism with the Babylonian and Assyrian king lists. This is a complicated problem which cannot be dealt with within the limited space at my disposal here. Perhaps it is appropriate to remind ourselves once again of what our Assyriological colleagues tell us time and again, viz. that their chronology depends in many respects on ours and not the other way round. Or, as Vera Müller concluded in a recent survey of New Kingdom chronology,³⁴ we tend to consider the Assyrian chronology as quite stable for this period, but even this chronology has to be critically examined again and its weak points established before we Egyptologists can fully rely on it.

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³⁴ V. Müller, "Wie gut fixiert ist die Chronologie des Neuen Reiches wirklich?," *Ä&L* 16 (2006), 203–30 (the quote is on 224).