

NOT HOREMHEB, BUT MERYNEITH: The Fields of Iaru Relief in the Liebieghaus

by Jacobus van Dijk

The Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung in Frankfurt am Main houses a justly famous Late Eighteenth Dynasty relief block showing the tomb owner paddling a papyrus skiff in the Fields of Iaru, part of the well-known vignette of BD Chapter 110 (Inv. No. 270; Fig. 1).¹ It was purchased in 1909 by F.W. Freiherr von Bissing from the Cairo dealer Panayotis Kyticas² and although it is not known where the latter acquired it, its provenance from the New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqâra has never been in doubt. Although the relief is assigned a date in the reign of Amenhotep III in the first publication dealing with it,³ all subsequent discussions of the piece agree that it dates from the later years of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The name of the tomb owner is not mentioned, however, and several authors have proposed that it derives from the Memphite tomb of Horemheb. The first one to do so was the Dutch scholar C. Kern, who devoted part of an article entitled ‘Een fragment van het Memphitische graf van Horemheb in Frankfort aan de Main’⁴ to the relief. Like all scholars after him Kern assigned the block to Horemheb mainly on stylistic grounds, comparing it to the reliefs in Leiden and Bologna known to have come from the Memphite tomb, but he also drew attention to the fact that both the Aten and the Memphite god Ptah-Sokar are mentioned in the inscriptions, something Kern considered to be not only ‘typical for a Memphite monument from the time around \pm 1355’, but also ‘very characteristic of the syncretism of Horemheb’s religious policy’. He also pointed out that the uraeus added to Horemheb’s brow in the Leiden and Bologna reliefs is not present on

¹ PM III²/2, 757. Further bibliographical references are given in G.T. Martin, *Corpus of Reliefs of the New Kingdom from the Memphite Necropolis and Lower Egypt*, I (Studies in Egyptology; London/New York, 1987), 15–16 [No. 25].

² W.R. Dawson, E.P. Uphill, M.L. Bierbrier, *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, third ed. (London, 1995), 233.

³ *Städtische Galerie Liebieghaus, Verzeichnis der ausgestellten Bildwerke* (Frankfurt am Main, 1930), 43.

⁴ Section I (pp. 56–60) of C. Kern, ‘Enkele blikken in weinig belichte hoeken van Egyptische verzamelingen (Frankfort aan den Main, Turijn, Angers)’, *JEOL* 9 (1944), 55–63.

the Liebieghaus block, but somewhat surprisingly concludes from this that the person in the boat is not Horemheb himself, but a 'secondary figure', whereas the standing man to the left may well be Horemheb.⁵



Fig. 1. Liebieghaus Inv. No. 270 (after Martin, *Corpus I*, Pl. 9 and *MTH I*, Pl. 135)

⁵ Kern, *op. cit.*, 59–60. – W. Wolf, *Die Kunst Ägyptens: Gestalt und Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1957), 731 (referring to p. 525 and Fig. 502) also expressed the opinion that the Liebieghaus relief was 'probably from Saqqâra, tomb of Horemheb'. In S. Curto, *L'Egitto antico nelle collezioni dell'Italia settentrionale* (Bologna, 1961), 82–4 the relief is included without question in the list of reliefs deriving from the Memphite tomb.

The absence of the uraeus was a decisive argument for Robert Hari to doubt Kern's attribution,⁶ along with the observation that the orientation of the Frankfurt fragment towards the left does not agree with that of the Fields of Iaru scene from the tomb of Horemheb in Bologna, which is orientated to the right. Hari therefore firmly rejects the provenance of the Liebieghaus block as from Horemheb's tomb. The simultaneous occurrence of the names of the Aten and Ptah-Sokar he sees as an indication that the block dates either from the very end or the very beginning of the reign of Akhenaten, 'précédant immédiatement le schisme atonien', eventually opting for the second possibility on stylistic grounds.⁷

After the tomb of Horemheb had been rediscovered by the EES-Leiden expedition in 1975 Geoffrey Martin's publication of the monument also included a discussion of the Liebieghaus relief.⁸ After listing a number of observations he concluded that 'these ... do not amount to a proven, but only to a possible, attribution', and this stance has been adopted by most scholars since.⁹ This reluctant acceptance of the relief as coming from the Memphite tomb changed with the appearance of the scholarly catalogue of the Liebieghaus Egyptian collection in 1993, to which Beatrix Gessler-Löhr contributed a long and careful analysis of the relief,¹⁰ concluding that it derives not from the tomb of Horemheb, but from a different tomb of the same period at Saqqâra. In Geoffrey Martin's re-edition of the tomb the relief is still mentioned (though not illustrated), but its attribution to Horemheb is now rejected.¹¹

⁶ R. Hari, *Horemheb et la reine Moutnedjemet ou la fin d'une dynastie*, (Geneva, 1964), 78–80 with Fig. 21. It should be pointed out, however, that after the tomb had been discovered it became clear that the addition of the uraeus to Horemheb's brow is not consistent within the relief decoration of the tomb, see G.T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tut'ankhamûn, I. The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary* (EES Excavation Memoirs, 55; London, 1989), 182 s.v. 'Uraeus' and in particular pp. 58 with n. 1, 73, and 126 n. 2.

⁷ Hari, *op. cit.*, 80.

⁸ Martin, *op. cit.*, 125–6, Pl. 135 [120].

⁹ e.g., B. Gessler-Löhr, in *Ägyptische Kunst im Liebieghaus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1981), no. 19; W. Seipel, *Bilder für die Ewigkeit: 3000 Jahre ägyptische Kunst* (Konstanz, 1983), 82–3.

¹⁰ B. Gessler-Löhr, in *Liebieghaus – Museum alter Plastik: Ägyptische Bildwerke, III. Skulptur, Malerei, Papyri und Särge* (Melsungen, 1993), 139–53 [35].

¹¹ Martin, *Tutankhamun's Regent: Scenes and Texts from the Memphite Tomb of Horemheb for Students of Egyptian Art, Iconography, Architecture, and History* (EES Excavation Memoirs, 111; London, 2016), 114 [120].

Fortunately, however, the true origin of the Liebieghaus paddler can now be established with certainty. In May 2015 the Leiden-Turin expedition at Saqqāra found a fragment of relief showing part of a standing figure worshipping a god;¹² beneath them is an expanse of water and behind the man a column of text mentions ‘... the Field of Iaru, for the Ka of the Greatest of Seers Meryneith, justified’.¹³ Below the scene are the remains of six columns of text in raised relief. This fragment turns out to join the Liebieghaus relief on the right. No measurements of the new fragment are given in the preliminary report, but one look at the photograph of the two pieces joined together (Fig. 3) is sufficient to remove any lingering doubt that they form one block. Both are unfinished and on both, the scenes and the inscription in the lower register are in raised relief. Even the damage caused by the crowbar prizing the relief off the wall is visible on either side of the break between them. The Liebieghaus relief thus derives from the tomb of Meryneith, discovered by the Leiden expedition in 2001.¹⁴

Now that the provenance of the Frankfurt block has been established the occurrence of the Aten in the inscription in the top left-hand corner can also be explained: it is almost certainly part of the titles of Meryneith, most likely that of *wr m3w n p3 Itn* ‘Greatest of Seers of the Aten’, as in the inscription on the right.¹⁵ The location of the relief within Meryneith’s tomb must for the time being remain uncertain; perhaps the most likely place for it is the central chapel or its antechapel, where very little decoration has survived,¹⁶ but it could also come from the peristyle court, as is the case in the recently discovered tomb of

¹² M.J. Raven, L. Weiss, B.G. Aston, S. Inskip and N. Warner, ‘Preliminary Report on the Leiden-Turin Excavations at Saqqara, Season 2015: The Tomb of an Anonymous Official (Tomb X) and its Surroundings’, *JEOL* 45 (2014–2015), 3–17. It may be mentioned here that the anonymous tomb X has now brilliantly been identified by Nico Staring as that of the troop commander and overseer of horses Roy (PM III²/2, 715).

¹³ Raven et al., *op. cit.*, 9–10 with Fig. 8.

¹⁴ M.J. Raven and R. van Walsem, *The Tomb of Meryneith at Saqqara* (Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities, Egyptology, 10; Turnhout, 2014).

¹⁵ For Meryneith’s titles, which also include those of *imy-r3 pr n pr Itn* and *sš n pr Itn m 3ht-itn m Mn-nfr*, see R. van Walsem in *The Tomb of Meryneith*, 39–53.

¹⁶ *The Tomb of Meryneith*, 136–9. The Fields of Iaru scene in the tomb of Horemheb was almost certainly located in the central chapel (Martin, *MTH* I, 123–5 and id., *Tutankhamun’s Regent* 112–14 [117–118], as was that of Paatenemheb (PM III²/2, 709–11 with Plan LXVI). In the tomb of Amenemone the scene is found on the front of the screen wall between the inner sanctum and the antechapel, see B.G. Ockinga, *Amenemone the Goldsmith. A New Kingdom Tomb in the Teti Cemetery at Saqqara* (The Australian Centre for Egyptology, Reports, 22; Sydney/Oxford, 2004), 58–59, Pls 15b, 62b [7B] and cf. pp. 29–30. The location of the scenes in the Saqqāra tombs of Iuty (Florence 2605), Kyiry (PM III²/2, 668 (i)) and Mose (PM III²/2, 554 (2)) cannot be determined. Cf. the discussion in M.J. Raven, ‘Book of the Dead documents from the New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqara’, *BMSAES* 15 (2010), 249–65, at 251–3.

Ptahemwia.¹⁷ A small fragment of a clearly unfinished Fields of Iaru scene in raised relief belonging to the top of the BD 110 vignette (Fig. 2) was found by the expedition reused in the rim of a shaft just south of the tomb of Meryneith,¹⁸ but as it does not join either the Frankfurt relief or its new addition there is no proof so far that it, too, comes from Meryneith.



Fig. 2. Fragment of BD 110 scene, possibly from the tomb of Meryneith

(after Raven, *BMSAES* 15 (2010), 263 Fig. 3)

The lower register of the completed scene and its inscription clearly does not belong to the Fields of Iaru chapter or vignette, but appears to be some kind of offering scene, perhaps with an officiating priest or the deceased seated. The large round object on the left has sometimes been described as the back of the head of a person,¹⁹ but this seems rather unlikely to me, given its position extremely close to the offerings to the right of it and the wavy lines it displays, which do not match those of a wig. A discussion of the

¹⁷ Cf. Raven, *BMSAES* 15 (2010), 253.

¹⁸ *The Tomb of Meryneith*, 166–7 [137]; Raven, *BMSAES* 15 (2010), 252 and 263 Fig. 3.

¹⁹ Martin, *MTH* I, 125; id., *Corpus* I, 15; Gessler-Löhr, *Ägyptische Bildwerke* III, 148.

inscription above it is perhaps best left until a facsimile drawing and a larger photograph has been published, clarifying some of the signs not clearly visible on the small photo in the preliminary report. The text introduces Ptah-Sokar addressing the tomb owner, which in itself is quite remarkable, something sooner to be expected for a king rather than a private individual. The only parallel for the phrase *sb3=k m pt* ‘your (i.e. the deceased’s) star is in heaven’ in col. 4 that springs to mind is a late inscription on a usurped Middle Kingdom statuette which has *s3h=k swy=k (= sb3=k) m hrt* ‘you will reach your star in heaven’.²⁰ Other noteworthy details are the curious writing in col. 5 of *wsht m3^c.tyw* ‘the Hall of the Double Ma‘at’ with the group *t3*, perhaps influenced by the phrase *t3 n m3^c.ty(w)* ‘the land of the justified’,²¹ and of the word *htpw* ‘offerings’ with what appears to be a lotus leaf in *šd.tw n=k htpw* ‘one will recite for you the (list of) offerings’²² in col. 6.

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(following page:) Fig. 3. Liebieghaus Inv. No. 270 + newly discovered fragment from Saqqâra

²⁰ G. Steindorff, ‘The Statuette of an Egyptian Commissioner in Syria’, *JEA* 25 (1939), 30–3 (see p. 31 n. iv).

²¹ *Wb* II, 21: 10–11.

²² Cf. the Old Kingdom phrases *šdi prt-hrw* ‘reading the offering-list’ and *šdi (zh n) krst.t* ‘reading the (list of) funerary equipment’, W. Barta, *Aufbau und Bedeutung der altägyptischen Opferformel* (ÄgFo 24; Glückstadt, 1968), 299.



POSTSCRIPT

On 19 November I met Beatrix Gessler-Löhr in Leiden and showed her the little article I had just submitted to the Göttinger Miszellen. It then transpired that she had already discovered the connection between the Liebieghaus block and the new fragment from the tomb of Meryneith and had told various colleagues about it, but had not published her discovery. She was adamant that I should not withdraw my article, however, and I therefore reluctantly comply with her wish, but not without thanking her again for her kindness and generosity.

JvD