

Maya's Chief Sculptor Userhat-Hatiay
With a Note on the Length of the Reign of Horemheb

by Jacobus van Dijk

IN a short but very informative article published in this periodical in 1983, Heike Guksch has proved conclusively that two officials known from a stela (V 1) and a door frame (K 9) in Leiden as well as from a number of other monuments were actually one and the same man, a Chief Sculptor of the Lord of the Two Lands whose full name was Userhat, but who also called himself by the shortened form Hatiay and the patronymic Pen-Ya.¹ Only one of his monuments is dated, a stela from the temenos of the Great Sphinx at Giza which shows Seti I adoring the Sphinx as Hauron-Harmakhis.² A further indication is afforded by a votive shabti from the Serapeum at Saqqâra which can be associated with the Apis-Bull burials of either Year 16 or Year 30 of Ramesses II.³ From this it has generally been concluded that Userhat-Hatiay lived during the first decades of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

Perhaps the most interesting of Userhat's monuments is the stela in Leiden,⁴ which, although it is unprovenanced, must on internal evidence surely come from Abydos. The long inscription for which the stela is famous begins with a hymn to Osiris and Thoth, but soon launches into an autobiographical account of Userhat's career as a sculptor in the service of an unnamed king. After mentioning his humble background and the exalted position given to him by the King in spite of it, Userhat becomes more specific:⁵

"He (i.e. the King) appointed me to direct the works (*ḥrp k3t*) when I was only a youngster, for he had found that I was someone he could count on. I was initiated (*bs.kwt*)⁶ into the Mansion of Gold (*ḥwt nbw*) in order to fashion the cult statues (*sšmw*) and the sacred

¹ H. Guksch, "Wsr-ḥ3t und Ḥ3tj3jj zur Zeit Sethos I.", *GM* 64 (1983), 23-24. See for the texts on Userhat-Hatiay's monuments *KRI* I, 78; 357-363; II, 369; 6; VII, 26-29.

² Cairo JE 72269; S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza VIII: The Great Sphinx and Its Secrets* (Cairo, 1953), 363, fig. 199; C. M. Zivie, *Giza au deuxième millénaire* (Cairo, 1976), 189-190 [NE 51] (with bibl.). On Hauron-Harmakhis see J. van Dijk, *GM* 107 (1989), 59-68.

³ *KRI* II, 367.

⁴ Inv. AP 12 = Leemans V 1; P. A. A. Boeser, *Beschrijving van de Egyptische verzameling in het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden VI: Stèles* (Den Haag, 1913), 1-2, Pl. I; H. D. Schneider/M. J. Raven, *De Egyptische Oudheid* ('s-Gravenhage, 1981), 110 [109]. Cf. n. 10 below.

⁵ For a complete translation of the text see A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* I (Oxford, 1947), 51-53 and, more recently, J.-M. Kruchten, "Un sculpteur des images divines ramesside", in M. Broze/Ph. Talon (ed.), *L'atelier de l'orfèvre. Mélanges offerts à Ph. Derchain* (Leuven, 1992), 107-118.

⁶ J.-M. Kruchten, *Les Annales des prêtres de Karnak (XXI-XXIII^{es} dynasties) et autres textes contemporains relatifs à l'initiation des prêtres d'Amon* (Leuven, 1989), 147-204.

images (*ḥmw*) of all the gods, without any of them being hidden from me. I was a Master of Secrets, one who saw Rē' in his transformations (*ḥprw*). Atum in his reincarnations (*mswt*), this very Osiris, lord of Abydos, foremost of the Lords of the Sacred Land, this very Thoth, lord of Hermopolis, foremost of Khery-Tjehenu. (I was) one who saw Shepses in his secret seclusion and Wenut in her transformations, this very Min who boasts of his potency (*ḥ m nfrw.f*), Horus who dwells in Hesret, Nehem- 'away, daughter of Rē', Sakhmet, beloved of Ptah, the Eight who are in Hermopolis, foremost of Hut-ibtjet, this very Khnum, lord of Herwer, Heqayt and Hathor, Amun-Rē' who dwells in Wenu, Hathor in Cusae, daughter of Prē'-who-protects-the-able-one (*lqr*),⁷ the Ennead which is in 'Agenu, Haroeris in Hut-Snefru, Hemen lord of Hefat, this very Montu who dwells in Tôd, Anubis Lord of Ta-hedj, this very Horus, foremost of Hebenu, Pakhet, mistress of Se(r)t, Thoth, the bull in Ra-Onet, Nemty in U-Nemty, Amun of Foreteller of Victories, the Bull the lord of Saka, Heqayt mistress of Gesy, and the Two Heryt-goddesses.⁸ I was the one who caused them to rest in their shrines of eternal recurrence, carrying them as Leader of the Festival of the King, (I was) the one who was put in charge of rowing the King in his sacred bark, being positioned on its prow, one who trod upon the Throne of White Gold in order to enquire after the affairs of the Two Lands, who ate bread from the King's breakfast and who washed it down with his ale;⁹ hence it was the King himself who awarded me the Gold of Honour".

The titles listed on the doorway in Leiden¹⁰ further document Userhat's career. Apart from chief royal sculptor, he is also "Master of Secrets of the Lord of Hermopolis" and "in the Temple of Osiris", "one who has free entry to (*ḥq n*¹¹) the Lords of the Thinite Nome", "to Osiris", "to the Lord of Hermopolis", and "to the Mansion of Gold"; he "fashions the incarnations (*ms ḥmw.sn*)" of the Lords of the Thinite Nome and "conceals their bodies (*sh3p dt.sn*)"¹², he "has access to Osiris' image (*tlt*) being unrestricted in seeing it (*wn m m33*)."

⁷ Presumably the word *lqr* in this "utterly obscure" (Gardiner) epithet refers to the blessed dead, cf. R. J. Demarée, *The 3ḥ lkr n R'-stelae. On Ancestor Worship in Ancient Egypt* (Leiden, 1983), 202 with n. 59. In CT Spell 442 the deceased identifies himself with Rē'-Atum in order to protect himself against the dangerous *mrwt*-goddesses "who take away the *3ḥw* of the *3ḥ*, who take away the *lqrw* of the *lqr*", Demarée, op. cit., 233.

⁸ Isis and Nephthys, see Gardiner, op. cit., 53 n. 6.

⁹ Cf. Kruchten, in *L'atelier de l'orfèvre*, 114-115.

¹⁰ Inv. Inv. AP 14a-c = Leemans K 9: P. A. A. Boeser, *Beschrijving ... IV: Graven* (Den Haag, 1911), 9, Pls. XXXIII-XXXVI; H. D. Schneider, *Beeldhouwkunst in het land van de farao's* (Amsterdam, 1992), 72-74. The provenance of this doorway is unknown, but its texts and the iconography of the lintel indicate that it came from Abydos. Userhat probably owned a cenotaph chapel there in which the Leiden stela was also set up.

¹¹ Kruchten, *Les Annales des prêtres*, index 280 s.v.

¹² i.e., from the eyes of the uninitiated.

The true impact of the impressive account of Userhat's activities given by these monuments has so far been somewhat obscured by the date assigned to his career and hence to his achievements as Chief Sculptor of the Lord of the Two Lands. It can be shown, however, that the events described in the text on the Leiden stela did not necessarily take place during the (early) Ramesside Period, but more probably at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, during the period of restoration under Tut'ankhamun and his successors. This restoration was led by the Overseer of the Treasury Maya, and it is in the latter's tomb at Saqqâra, built and decorated during the reign of Tut'ankhamun, that we find the earliest representation of Userhat. On the south wall of the inner courtyard of Maya's tomb the funeral procession is depicted in three (perhaps originally four) registers. ¹³ The second register shows the usual series of funerary booths with episodes from the ritual of breaking the red pots commonly depicted in Memphite

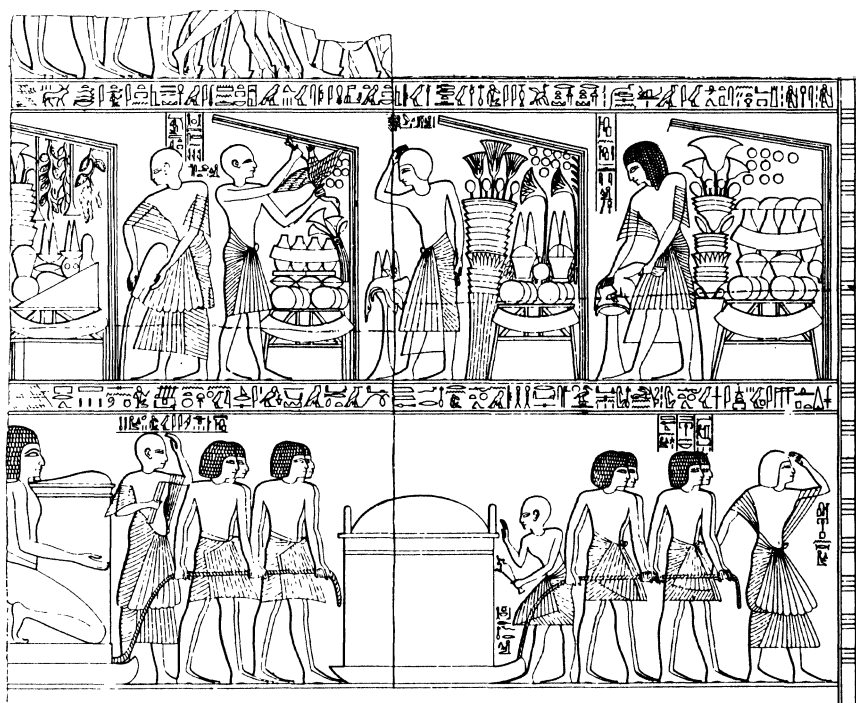


Fig. 1. Userhat (top left) in the tomb of Maya at Saqqâra (after LD III, 242b).

¹³ LD III, 242a-b; E. Graefe, *MDAIK* 31 (1975), 201-202, figs. 6a-b. The lower register was removed to Berlin by Lepsius, where it was badly damaged during the war. The upper register was probably destroyed in the Nineteenth century; only a small fragment with the head of Userhat and part of the text survives.

tombs of the New Kingdom.¹⁴ The people enacting the ritual are not the customary anonymous funerary priests but colleagues and subordinates of Maya.¹⁵ Among them is the “Overseer of Works in the Place of Eternal Recurrence (*imy-r k3t m st nhh*), the Chief Annalist (*hry smn gnwt*) Userhat” (Fig. 1). At first sight the titles of this Userhat appear to differ from those of the “Ramesside” Userhat-Hatiay, but a statue base in Cairo¹⁶ proves that we are indeed dealing with the same man. The titles mentioned on it are “one who has free entry to the Lords of the Thinite Nome” and “one uniquely capable, perfect of virtue in establishing the annals (*smn gnwt*) of the Lord of the Two Lands”. These titles form the missing link between the Userhat depicted in the tomb of Maya and the sculptor who owned the Leiden doorway and stela.

That Userhat’s career as described on the Leiden stela took place during the Restoration following the Amarna Period is also probable for other reasons. In his autobiography on the stela Userhat puts a great deal of emphasis on his humble background, describing himself as “a poor man (*hwrw*) among his relatives, a non-entity (*ktt*) in his town” who was singled out by the King when he was no more than a private citizen without office (*nmh*). This is a typical Amarna topos, expressed in words which are very similar to those used in autobiographical texts in Amarna tombs¹⁷ and in some Memphite tombs of the immediate post-Amarna period (Maya, Ahmose). In Rameside autobiographies this topos has virtually disappeared, even as early as the reign of Seti I.¹⁸ Stylistically, too, the Leiden stela and doorway belong to the late Eighteenth Dynasty rather than the Ramesside Period, and the same holds true for two doorjambes and a magnificent stela belonging to Userhat’s brother, the chief sculptor Sa, son of Ya,¹⁹ who figures among the rows of relatives depicted on the

¹⁴ J. van Dijk, *LÄ VI*, 1389-1396; id., *The New Kingdom Necropolis of Memphis: Historical and Iconographical Studies* (diss. Groningen, 1993), 173-188.

¹⁵ Cf. the case of the “Berliner Trauerrelief” (Berlin 12411), from the tomb of the High Priest of Memphis Ptahemhat-Ty, where the men involved in the ritual are an overseer of the offering-table, a cheironomer (*dhnw*) and three gardeners, presumably all employed by the Temple of Ptah.

¹⁶ CG 457. The provenance of this piece is Saqqāra, not Abydos as repeatedly stated in the literature; see A. Mariette, *Monuments divers recueillis en Egypte et en Nubie* (Paris, 1889), 26. The Memphite origin is confirmed by the offering formulae which mention Ptah lord of Ma’at, Sokar lord of the Shetayt, and Anubis lord of Ro-setau.

¹⁷ Cf. H. Guksch, *Königsdienst. Zur Selbstdarstellung der Beamten der 18. Dynastie* (Heidelberg, 1994), 28ff.

¹⁸ In the long autobiography of the High Steward and Overseer of the Granaries Nefersekeru, for example, this official of the reign of Seti I describes the thorough education he received *before* he entered the service of the King, see J. Osing, *Das Grab des Nefersecheru in Zawyet Sultan* (Mainz am Rhein, 1992), 43ff., Pl. 35.

¹⁹ Stela: JE 21772 (= TN 11.11.24.5, Spec. Reg. 13755), G. A. Gaballa, *MDAIK* 35 (1979), 75-80, Pl. 16 (a); doorjambes: Cairo JE 18927 (= TN 19.5.25.1 & .2); all from Abydos, cf. PM V, 76. On the stela Sa’s

Leiden stela.

The account Userhat gives of his activities, with its long enumeration of gods and goddesses whose statues he made, therefore refers directly to the restoration of the traditional cults in the temples of Egypt after the collapse of Akhenaten's attempt to introduce a monotheistic religion. This restoration, well known from Tut'ankhamun's great stela,²⁰ was directed and coordinated by the Overseer of the Treasury Maya, and in his tomb at Saqqâra there are several texts which refer to his role in this important affair: "I spoke for the King (*ḥnk r n nsw*) in order to make the temples function (*siqr*), and to fashion the sacred images (*ms šmw*) of the gods; I was one who entered the Mansion of Gold in person in order to satisfy their cult statues"²¹; "I [made] the temples [function again] by fashioning the sacred images of the gods for whom I was made responsible; I had access to the august image (*tît šps*)";²² Maya was also "Master of Secrets in the Mansion of Gold in the Temples of All the Gods".²³ Thus Maya was Userhat's direct superior, who supervised his work as Chief Sculptor and ordered him to replace the divine statues which had been destroyed by Akhenaten.

In addition to his work in the temples, which, judging by the list of deities on the Leiden stela, were mainly those situated in Middle Egypt, which had perhaps suffered more than temples further away from Amarna, Userhat was also Overseer of Works in the Valley of the Kings (*st nhh*), a title also held by Maya himself. Again, Maya must have been Userhat's immediate superior in this function, and Userhat was probably responsible for the production of the numerous sacred and symbolic images placed in the tombs of Tut'ankhamun and his direct successors, and perhaps also for their actual wall decoration. In the light of this association between Maya and Userhat and in view of the fact that Userhat is depicted in Maya's tomb, it is not at all impossible that Userhat was also the sculptor who directed the team working on the splendid reliefs in the tomb of his master, as has already been suspected by Hornung.²⁴ The superb quality of Maya's reliefs certainly matches the very high standard displayed by Userhat's Abydene doorway and stela, which also betray his affluence by the gold leaf with which the hieroglyphs were once covered.

The same cannot possibly be said about the Giza stela which dates from the reign of Seti I and which is a fairly poor affair, compared to the earlier monuments of Userhat-Hatiay. Although it is certainly possible that he survived into the Ramesside period, one might well wonder whether this is really the same man. The title Chief Sculptor of the Lord of the Two

titles are "Chief Sculptor of the Lord of the Two Lands" and "Chief Craftsman (*hry ḥmw*) in the Mansion of Gold of Ptah".

²⁰ *Urk.* IV 2025-2032.

²¹ *LD* III, 240a.

²² Autobiographical text in pylon gateway, as yet unpublished; cf. *JEA* 74 (1988), 12.

²³ Doorjambes of pylon, cf. *ibid.*, 13, Pl. III:1.

²⁴ E. Hornung, *Das Grab des Haremhab im Tal der Könige* (Bern, 1971), 23.

Lands strongly suggests that this is indeed the case, however, even though Hatiay's name is spelled slightly differently here (*H3tiy*, without the second 3). If so, the votive shabti from the Serapeum is probably his as well, which would mean that he survived until at least Year 16 of Ramesses II. If we add to these 16 years the years of the kings Userhat served, i.e. 9 for Tut'ankhamun, 3 for Ay, 13+x for Horemheb, 1 for Ramesses I, 10 for Seti I, we arrive at a time span of 52 years. To these must be added an estimated 15 years before he was appointed to his first independent office, making him at least about 67 years old when he dedicated the shabti at the Serapeum. This is perfectly possible, of course, but the more years one assigns to Horemheb, the less probable it becomes. If Horemheb reigned for at least 26 years, as Von Beckerath and others have suggested,²⁵ Userhat was 80 when he presented the votive shabti, assuming that he did so on the occasion of the Apis-burial of Year 16, not Year 30. For someone to live to the age of 80 was certainly highly exceptional in Ancient Egypt, although such an advanced age cannot be completely ruled out; on the other hand, if the identity of the Ramesside Hatiay with the Leiden and Saqqâra Userhat is accepted, it casts further doubt on the probability of a 26/7 year reign of Horemheb, especially since a similar problem arises in the case of the Deir el-Medinah chief of police Mininiuy, who was in active service from Year 7 of Horemheb until the time of the vizier Kha'y, who came into office sometime between Years 21 and 30 of Ramesses II.²⁶ The absence of any unambiguous year date between Horemheb's Year 13 and 27 and the fact that his royal tomb in the Valley of the Kings remained unfinished,²⁷ combined with the data provided by the careers of Userhat-Hatiay and Mininiuy, argue in favour of a shorter reign for Horemheb, say of some 15-17 years at the most.

²⁵ J. von Beckerath, *Chronologie des ägyptischen Neuen Reiches* (Hildesheim, 1994), 103-106 (20-31 years; probably at least 26 full years); id., *SAK* 6 (1978), 43-49 (25-30 years). The evidence for a long reign is mainly based on the interpretation of a graffito on a flake of limestone derived from a shattered royal or divine statue found in the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Medinet Habu, in which a Year 27 and the name of Horemheb appear, but not in direct connection with each other. Horemheb's name is not preceded by any title (cf. W. Helck, *CdE* 48 [1973], 255) and therefore refers to the deceased or deified Horemheb. I fully agree with H. W. Fairman (in *City of Akhenaten* III, 158) and others that "the writing is closer to Ramesside than late Eighteenth Dynasty hieratic" (pace Hari, *Horemheb*, 354; note especially the form of the sign for "19"; cf. Möller, *Hier. Pal.* II, No. 664), but would be inclined to date it to the reign of Ramesses III rather than Ramesses II.

²⁶ Cf. J. R. Harris, *JEA* 54 (1968), 95-99. Year 21 of Ramesses II is the last year in which the vizier Paser, predecessor of Kha'y, the recipient of Mininiuy's letter, is attested; cf. V. A. Donahue, *JEA* 74 (1988), 107. In Year 30 Kha'y is announcing the King's first jubilee.

²⁷ Harris, op. cit., 98. The unfinished state of Horemheb's royal tomb is difficult to reconcile with a long reign, even if one assumes that he did not begin work on this project until his Year 7, as has quite plausibly been suggested by D. Valbelle, "*Les ouvriers de la tombe*": *Deir el-Médineh à l'époque ramesside* (Cairo, 1985), 162; cf. van Dijk, *The New Kingdom Necropolis of Memphis*, 44-45.