

The Death of King Seqenenre Tao

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Abstract

Two theories are commonly cited in relation to Seqenenre Tao's death: either that he was assassinated while sleeping or that he was killed fighting alongside his troops on the battlefield. In this article all evidence relating to Seqenenre's body is presented, from the unwrapping of the mummy by Maspero to the most recent analyses by medical professionals. This is followed by a critical analysis of the arguments for and against the two commonly cited theories in which it is shown that neither fully take into consideration all the available evidence relating to Seqenenre's death. Then, based on an analysis of the technology available to the Thebans during the late Second Intermediate Period, the statistical likelihood of death by hand-to-hand combat and by blows to the head in battlefield situations, the textual evidence for kings personally fighting alongside their troops, evidence for the king's personal bodyguard and body-armor, and the physical evidence of the Eighteenth Dynasty royal mummies, it is concluded that kings of this period did not personally act as frontline war leaders, fighting alongside their troops. Finally, by combining all of the available evidence, it is argued that the most likely cause of Seqenenre's death is ceremonial execution at the hands of an enemy commander, following a Theban defeat on the battlefield.

Introduction

Since the initial discovery and subsequent analyses of the body of Seqenenre Tao, there have been two major theories concerning the circumstances of the king's death, namely that he was either killed during combat with the Hyksos or that he was assassinated, probably when sleeping in the palace.¹ In this article the evidence relating to the death of Seqenenre Tao will be re-examined in order to logically assess the plausibility of the existing theories in light of recent research into the extent of the king's personal role in fighting on the battlefield.

Evidence for the reign of Seqenenre

There is little major evidence connected to the reign of Seqenenre Tao: the soldier Ahmose son of Ibana refers to his father as having fought in Seqenenre's naval fleet.² A Ramesside literary tale known as The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre³ presents the king receiving a communication

¹ Grafton Elliot Smith and Warren R. Dawson, *Egyptian Mummies* (London, 1924), 83; James E. Harris and Kent Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs* (New York, 1973), 122–23. I would like to thank Dr. Gonzalo M. Sanchez, Ms. Julie Patenaude, Mr. Campbell Price, Mr. Henning Franzmeier, Dr. Jennifer Cromwell, and Ms. Maggie Bryson for their valuable help, comments, advice and encouragement during the writing of this article.

² *Urk* IV 2, 10.

from the Hyksos king Apophis concerning Theban hippopotami that were keeping him awake. This is followed by a debate in which Seqenenre discusses how to react to this message with his courtiers. Although the end of the text is lost, it may have concluded with a description of war between the Thebans and Hyksos.⁴ Part of a limestone doorway bearing two of the names of Seqenenre was found at Deir el-Ballas by Daressy.⁵ Here, 40 km north of Thebes, an observation tower and palace were built during Seqenenre's reign, indicating that military activity was already occurring at this time.⁶ This is emphasized by the presence of Kerma Nubians at the site, who were likely part of the army based there.⁷ The Ramesside Papyrus Abbott gives an account of the condition of Seqenenre's tomb, located in Thebes, during a period of tomb robbery.⁸ Finally, two stelae from Seqenenre's reign were found at Karnak,⁹ while a third may also come from this area.¹⁰ None of the available evidence, however, sheds light on how Seqenenre met his violent end.

The King's Mummy

Early investigations

The body of Seqenenre Tao was found at Deir el-Bahri in 1881, likely in its original coffin.¹¹ It was then identified and unwrapped by Maspero on June 9, 1886.¹² In his report, Maspero first records that the mummy's outer shroud was greasy to the touch and gave off a foul odor; then, after cutting through the final layers of cloth, which had become stuck to the skin, he revealed the body.¹³ Maspero notes three injuries to the king's head: first, a large irregular wound above the right eyebrow, surrounded by whitish material that was likely brain matter (Smith's no. 2);¹⁴ second, a wound inflicted by a mace or battle-axe into the left cheek that had broken the bottom jaw (Smith's no. 4); and third, a wound, originally hidden by the king's hair, at the top of the head which took the form of a

³ P. Sallier I; see E. A. Wallis Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, 2nd Series (London, 1923), pls. 53–55; Alan H. Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Stories*, BA I (Bruxelles, 1932), 85–88; Hans Goedicke, *The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre* (San Antonio, 1986).

⁴ Goedicke, *Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre*, 36.

⁵ Georges Daressy, "Notes et Remarques," *RecTrav* 16 (1894), 44, no. 107; Daniel Polz, *Der Beginn des Neuen Reiches, zur Vorgeschichte einer Zeitenwende*, DAIK, Sonderschrift 31 (Berlin, 2007), 76–77.

⁶ Peter Lacovara, "Deir El-Ballas and the Development of the Early New Kingdom Royal Palace," in Ernst Czerny, Irmgard Hein, Hermann Hunger, Dagmar Melman, and Angela Schwab, eds., *Timelines, Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak*, Vol. I (Paris, 2006), 188, 192; idem, "Deir el-Ballas and New Kingdom Royal Cities," in Manfred Bietak, ed., *Haus und Palast im Alten Ägypten* ÖAW, Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie 14 (Vienna, 1996), 139–47; idem, *Deir el-Ballas, Preliminary Report on the Deir el-Ballas Expedition, 1980–1986*, ARCE Reports 12 (Winona Lake, 1990).

⁷ Janine Bourriau, "The Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650–1550 BC)," in Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2000), 198–99.

⁸ Herbert E. Winlock, "The Tombs of the Kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty at Thebes," *JEA* 10 (1924), 217–77, for Seqenenre see 248–59; Polz, *Neuen Reiches*, 86.

⁹ Jean Jacquet, "Fouilles de Karnak-Nord, huitième campagne (1974–1975)," *BIFAO* 76 (1976), 134–42; Helen Jacquet-Gordon, "Two Stelae of King Seqenenre' Djehuty-Aa of the Seventeenth Dynasty," in Emily Teeter and John A. Larson, eds. *Gold of Praise, Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*, SAOC 58 (Chicago, 1999), 179–84; Polz, *Neuen Reiches*, 80.

¹⁰ Jacquet-Gordon, "Two Stelae," 182–83; Polz, *Neuen Reiches*, 80.

¹¹ CG 61001, see Georges Daressy, *CGC No. 61001–61044, Cercueils des cachettes royales* (Cairo, 1909), 1–2, pls. I–II.

¹² See Gaston Maspero, *Momies royales*, Vol. I, 526.

¹³ Maspero, *Momies royales*, 527.

¹⁴ Throughout this article I refer to each head wound using the numbers assigned to them by Grafton Elliot Smith, *CGC, Nos 61051–61100, The Royal Mummies* (Cairo, 1912), 4–6, pls. 2–3. The numbers assigned and their respective wounds are outlined below. By using a standard system of reference throughout the article it is hoped that the reader will not become confused as to which wound is meant as the discussion develops.

long slit through which brain matter must have leaked (Smith's no. 1). Maspero suggests that this was made by an axe.¹⁵ He adds that the ears had disappeared and that the mouth was full of healthy teeth, between which the tongue had been clenched.¹⁶ He states that decomposition must have begun by the time the embalmers began work and that the mummification process was irregular and hastily done: the broken chest and ribs had been squeezed by people in a hurry, the arms, vertebrae and legs were disarticulated, while the pelvis was in pieces. He adds that the mummy's shrouds had been penetrated by worms and that beetle larvae had left their shells between the king's body and one of his arms, as well as in his hair. He further states that Seqenenre had been about forty years old at the time of death, and that he had shaved on the day.¹⁷

In the same volume, Fouquet also reports on Seqenenre's body; as with Maspero he notes the tongue being between the teeth, the fact that the king had shaved, the cerebral matter that had escaped from the skull, and the king's age being between forty and forty-five at the time of death; he adds, however, that the trunk of the body had been completely putrefied, with the vertebrae, ribs, bones of the pelvis, and entire left arm denuded of soft tissue. He also describes the three wounds to the head, noting a wound below the left eye (Smith's no. 4); a large wound made by a sharp and blunt instrument to the middle part of the frontal bone (the upper forehead area, Smith's no. 1); and a third wound above the right eye, in line with the eyebrow (Smith's no. 2). This wound was surrounded by brain matter.¹⁸ Fouquet notes that the state of decomposition made it impossible to see if there were any more wounds.¹⁹ He also adds that the king's nose had been squashed to the right during transport of the body, and that this had not been fixed during mummification.²⁰

The body was next investigated thoroughly and published by G. Elliot Smith.²¹ Smith, who completed the unwrapping of the mummy, notes that no attempt had been made to put the body into the traditional position for the period,²² and that Seqenenre had been between thirty and forty years old when he died. Smith also mentions the disarticulation noted by Maspero. According to Smith, the embalmers cut into Seqenenre's left flank and removed the organs there. Within this incision and inside the body, they then cut open the diaphragm and removed the organs in the chest—the lungs and heart. The opening into the thorax was likely on purpose, but this area was not packed with linen, unlike the abdomen, and the organs within were no longer present. As the opening was most likely a definite move it would seem that these organs were removed on purpose, rather than simply decayed.²³ Smith notes that there is no evidence of wounds to the arms or any other part of the body.²⁴ He also adds that Seqenenre's skeleton is covered in "an imperfect sheet of soft, moist, flexible, dark-brown skin, which has a highly aromatic, spicy odour."²⁵ The body had not been treated with natron, while the spicy odor was caused by powdered aromatic wood that had been sprinkled on the body.²⁶ The brain had not been removed, and no packing had been inserted into the skull

¹⁵ Maspero, *Momies royales*, 527.

¹⁶ Maspero, *Momies royales*, 527–28. The tongue being between the teeth is also found among the 'slain soldiers of Montu-hotep' found in the Deir el-Bahri cache, see Herbert E. Winlock, *The Slain Soldiers of Neb-Hepet-Re' Mentu-Hotpe*, MMA Egyptian Expedition 16 (New York, 1945), 20.

¹⁷ Maspero, *Momies royales*, 528.

¹⁸ Daniel Fouquet, "Notes sur la momie de Soqnounri," in Gaston Maspero, ed., *MMAF*, Vol. I (Cairo, 1889), 776–77.

¹⁹ Fouquet, "Notes sur la momie de Soqnounri," 777.

²⁰ Fouquet, "Notes sur la momie de Soqnounri," 778.

²¹ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 1–6, pls. I–III.

²² Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 1; Smith and Dawson, *Royal Mummies*, 84.

²³ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 3–4.

²⁴ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 6.

²⁵ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 1; Smith and Dawson, *Royal Mummies*, 84.

²⁶ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 1; Smith and Dawson, *Royal Mummies*, 84.

through the wounds in the head,²⁷ even though it was more usual for the skull to be emptied at this time.²⁸

The series of violent wounds evident on the head received their most detailed analysis by Smith, who numbered them as follows:²⁹

1. A horizontal (transverse) wound in the upper frontal bone—the area of the upper forehead. A patch of bare bone is left where the scalp has been pulled from the skull either by a second blow or when the instrument that inflicted the wound was pulled free from the head. A strip of bone was found in the cranial cavity and had become stuck to the dura—the coating of the brain. Smith suggests that this wound was caused by an axe.
2. A fusiform scalp wound that had fractured the lower frontal bone—below wound (1), just above the right eye, also probably inflicted by an axe.
3. A blunt injury, perhaps caused by a stick or the handle of an axe or spear, that had caused the fracture of the nasal bones and the destruction of the right eye. This wound also caused a perforation in the skin below (indicated by Smith's 2 on his pl. II), caused by the entire area being depressed by the blow.
4. Cuts through the skin of Seqenenre's left cheek, below his eye, caused by an axe or "some edged tool."
5. A sharp injury below the left ear at the base of the skull, perhaps caused by a pointed instrument such as a pike or spear.³⁰

Based on his analysis of the body, Maspero suggested that Seqenenre was mummified hastily on the battlefield and then sent to Thebes for burial. However, Fouquet suggested that the corpse decayed during the return journey to Thebes, where it would have been mummified upon arrival.³¹ Smith agreed with Maspero, suggesting that the body was embalmed on or near the battlefield, with the decomposition being the result of haste, but also the form of mummification that was typical at the end of the Seventeenth Dynasty and start of the Eighteenth Dynasty.³² He argues that if the body had been delivered to embalmers with suitable facilities the mummy would have been prepared properly, with the body arranged in the normal manner and the face receiving treatment.³³

Recent investigations

In the late 1960s x-rays taken of the royal mummies provided further evidence regarding Seqenenre's body. Significantly, although earlier scholars had noted that Seqenenre's skeleton was disarticulated, the x-rays confirmed that none of his bones displayed fractures, except for those in the skull,³⁴ verifying Smith's assessment that only Seqenenre's head was attacked. They also suggested that Seqenenre died between the age of 35 and 40,³⁵ in general agreement with the age assigned to the body following earlier examinations.

²⁷ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 2.

²⁸ Aidan Dodson and Salima Ikram, *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt, Equipping the Dead for Eternity* (London, 1998), 117.

²⁹ These numbers do not reflect the order in which the blows were made.

³⁰ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 4–6, pls. 2–3.

³¹ Fouquet, "Notes sur la momie de Soqnounri," 776.

³² Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 2.

³³ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 2; Smith and Dawson, *Royal Mummies*, 85.

³⁴ Walter M. Whitehouse, "Radiologic Findings in the Royal Mummies," in James E. Harris and Edward F. Wente, eds., *An X-Ray Atlas of the Royal Mummies* (Chicago, 1980), 289.

³⁵ Wilton M. Krogman and Melvyn J. Baer, "Age at Death of Pharaohs of the New Kingdom, Determined from X-Ray Films," in Harris and Wente, *X-Ray Atlas of the Royal Mummies*, 202.

Later, Strouhal and Bietak used a first-hand analysis of the body to show that the wounds inflicted upon Seqenenre's skull were made by Hyksos and Egyptian weapons.³⁶ They argue that the wound in the left cheek, below the eye (Smith's no. 4), and the wound immediately above the right eye (Smith's no. 2) were caused by a Syrio-Palestinian MBII bronze battle-axe; the type typically found at Avaris and likely used by supporters of the Hyksos. The wound in the upper forehead (Smith's no. 1) was caused by an axe or hatchet with a broad blade, which may have been of an Egyptian type.³⁷ A blunt object caused the fracture of the nasal bones (Smith's no. 3), while the cause of the sharp wound at the base of the skull (Smith's no. 5) was left undetermined.³⁸

Bockenheimer et al. used the x-rays of Seqenenre's body to perform a densitometry study; after which they concluded that the lower frontal wound (Smith's no. 2) was more radiolucent than the upper frontal wound (Smith's no. 1)—a possible sign of fracture healing. This thus opened the possibility that Seqenenre survived this blow, with the rest of his injuries inflicted at a later date. These results, however, may be inaccurate as the reaction of embalming fluids on the skin tissue can cause artificial bone dissolvment.³⁹ Furthermore, Metzel has argued, based on the unnatural attitude of the king's left arm, that Seqenenre suffered post-traumatic hemiparesis from a right sided brain lesion inflicted at the time of the lower frontal wound (Smith's no. 2)⁴⁰—effectively meaning that Seqenenre's left arm was paralyzed—adding to the evidence that Seqenenre survived the lower frontal blow to the head. However, Gonzalo Sanchez has argued that it is unlikely that Seqenenre survived this wound, stating that the blow will have penetrated the brain's dura to a depth of 21 mm, leading to an extensive injury that would have been impossible to heal. He also adds that there is no evidence of healed skin over the wound in question, which would be expected if Seqenenre had indeed survived the attack. Sanchez further argues that there is no evidence that the king suffered from spastic hemiparesis; this causes the wrist and fingers to be contracted in a flexed position, and, although Seqenenre's left wrist is indeed flexed, his fingers and hand are extended, something that would not occur if he suffered from this form of paralysis. He further suggests that the posture of the left arm is probably a result of the king falling and lying on it for some time after death.

Based on his research, and that of Bietak and Strouhal, Sanchez has recreated the order of the attacks on the king's head as follows: first, the king received the blow to the left face (Smith's no. 4) with a Syrio-Palestinian axe. The attacker then likely pulled Seqenenre forward as he tried to free the axe from the king's head. A spear thrust into the cranio-cervical junction at the base of the skull (Smith's no. 5) came from the left, cutting the spinal cord and killing him. Probably at the same time as this blow Seqenenre received the right lower frontal injury from the right (Smith's no. 2) from an attacker with a Syrio-Palestinian battle-axe. Then, while the king was lying face up, and likely already dead, a broad (Egyptian-type) axe caused the wound to the upper forehead (Smith's no. 1), and a mace blow came down upon the right side of the face (Smith's no. 3).⁴¹

³⁶ Manfred Bietak and Eugen Strouhal, "Die Todesumstände des Pharaos Seqenenre' (17. Dynastie)," *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien* 78 (1974), 29–52.

³⁷ Bietak and Strouhal, "Die Todesumstände des Pharaos Seqenenre," 51.

³⁸ Bietak and Strouhal, "Die Todesumstände des Pharaos Seqenenre," 49.

³⁹ S. Bockenheimer, U. Eickhoff, E. Metzel, and K. Voigt, "Radiologisch-äquidensitographische Untersuchungen der Kalottenverletzungen des Pharaos Seqenenre," *Fortschritte auf dem Gebiete der Röntgenstrahlen und der Nuklearmedizin* 128:6 (1978), 691–94; R. L. ten Berg and F. R. W. van de Goot, "Seqenenre Taa II, the Violent Death of a Pharaoh," *Journal of Clinical Pathology* 55:3 (2002), 232.

⁴⁰ Eberhard Metzel, "Neurotraumatologie im Alten Agypten," *Neurochirurgia* 33 (1990), 78–80.

⁴¹ Lecture given in 2008 in Seattle at the 59th annual ARCE meeting entitled, "Coup de Grace Human Remains, Weaponry, and Medical Commentary Middle Kingdom—Late Second Intermediate Period," and personal communication.

Theories Regarding the King's Death

Based on the evidence presented above, two major theories are typically cited in discussions on the death of Seqenenre, namely that he was assassinated (likely in the palace), or that he was killed in battle.

Assassination theory

Smith has argued that it would be very unlikely that a man of Seqenenre's size, about 1.70 m in height,⁴² would receive two horizontal blows to the top of the head from the front or left side if he were standing up without offering any resistance.⁴³ In Smith's opinion four of the five wounds are horizontal indicating that Seqenenre was lying down at the time of the attack; he argues that any blows inflicted while both Seqenenre and his attackers were standing would have left vertical, rather than horizontal, wounds. Based on his investigation he suggests that there is evidence of at least two attackers, one possibly armed with a spear and the other an axe, although another weapon may also have been used. These wounds were inflicted when Seqenenre was lying on his right side as wounds four and five, and quite possibly all five, were inflicted from Seqenenre's left.⁴⁴ Consequently, Smith suggested that Seqenenre was most probably asleep at the time of the attacks, citing the lack of wounds or damage to other parts of his body as evidence that he could not defend himself.⁴⁵ Smith does state, however, that Seqenenre could have been felled by one blow and then received the remaining four, suggesting that an arrow or spear thrust through the occipito-atlantal joint may have felled him (Smith's no. 5), with the successive attacks coming when he was unconscious.⁴⁶

Smith's assassination argument has subsequently been repeated by others: Harris and Weeks have stated that the "dagger" wound to the back of the head, below the left ear (Smith's no. 5), could indicate that the king was killed when lying down in the palace,⁴⁷ while Dodson and Ikram have suggested that the king, having been weakened by the wound above the right eye, and thus unable to command his army on the battlefield, may have later been assassinated in the palace.⁴⁸

Killed on the battlefield theory

Both Maspero and Fouquet, after their initial analysis of the mummy, concluded that the king must have died on the battlefield. Maspero argued that an initial blow striking the king's jaw felled him (Smith's no. 4), after which the attackers hit him a further two times while he lay on the ground: one with an axe to the top of the forehead (Smith's no. 1), the other with a spear or dagger above the eye (Smith's no. 2). He adds that the Egyptians must have been victorious in the battle as they succeeded in bringing back the king's body.⁴⁹ Fouquet states that Seqenenre found himself in the middle of a "free for all," attacked by at least three aggressors. He suggests that the first blow, the one to the forehead (Smith's no. 1), was made by a blunt battle axe, coming from the left and almost in front. This knocked him to the floor and was followed by two successive blows: the one on the left by an axe

⁴² Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 2.

⁴³ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 6.

⁴⁴ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 5–6; Smith and Dawson, *Royal Mummies*, 85.

⁴⁵ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 6; Smith and Dawson, *Royal Mummies*, 85–86.

⁴⁶ Smith, *The Royal Mummies*, 6.

⁴⁷ Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 122. However, they note that the poor condition of the body at the time of burial would seem to argue against the palace assassination theory.

⁴⁸ Dodson and Ikram, *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt*, 117–18.

⁴⁹ Maspero, *Momies royales*, 528.

(Smith's no. 4), the enemy being to the left; the one on the right by a dagger (Smith's no. 2), with the enemy in front and a little to the right. He also suggests that Seqenenre may have been thrown from his chariot,⁵⁰ and that after being killed the body was sent to Thebes to be mummified. As the trip took a few days, the body had begun to decompose by the time mummification could begin.⁵¹

Bietak and Strouhal disagree with Smith's assessment that four of the five blows were horizontal, and thus with the argument that Seqenenre was killed when lying asleep. They argue that the wound to the left cheek (Smith's no. 4) and the injury at the base of the skull (Smith's no. 5) were caused by an attack from the front-left. The wound to the right lower frontal region (Smith's no. 2) came from the front-right; the blunt injury (Smith's no. 3) could also have come from front-right, while the upper forehead wound (Smith's no. 1) could have come from the left or right. They thus argue that the variety of weapons used and the multitude of directions from which the attacks came suggest that the king fought a group of enemies, but because his extremities are not injured he did not come under lengthy attack, and did not put up any resistance.⁵² Based on this analysis, they argue that the wound to the left cheek (Smith's no. 4) was probably the first. This wound can be shown to have been inflicted from below—about 45 degrees from Seqenenre's left and 30 degrees from below. Bietak and Strouhal argue that this difference in height can be explained by the king standing on his chariot at the time of the attack, creating a difference in level between Seqenenre and his attacker of about 50 cm. The second attack was to the right lower frontal region (Smith's no. 2); this was inflicted from roughly the same level as Seqenenre, or perhaps slightly higher, as if the attacker was looking down or perhaps a result of Seqenenre's head hanging after the first blow. The blow against the upper forehead (Smith's no. 1) came from above during Seqenenre's collapse, perhaps after he had lost his protective headdress or wig.⁵³ Thus, they argue, as at least two of the five wounds were caused by a Syrio-Palestinian MB II bronze battle-axe—a weapon so far only found in the northeast Delta and associated with the Hyksos—and because one of the blows may have been caused by an Egyptian hatchet or hand-axe, Seqenenre must have died during a battle against the Hyksos and their loyal Egyptian vassals, while fighting in the thick of battle.⁵⁴

Problems with the Established Theories

These theories, although commonly cited, are problematic. A number of factors need to be considered when judging their plausibility.

Killed on the battlefield theory

Head wounds

In a study of the battle reliefs of Seti I Sanchez showed that head injuries caused by missiles only accounted for 8.1% of those shown dead or dying, while chest injuries accounted for 70% of injuries. He notes that chest and abdominal wounds are in the largest and most exposed areas,⁵⁵ and so this statistic is to be expected. He continues, stating that 17.1% of the injuries in the battle reliefs are to the neck and head, and that most injuries were caused by long range weapons such as composite

⁵⁰ Fouquet, "Notes sur la momie de Soqnounri," 777.

⁵¹ Fouquet, "Notes sur la momie de Soqnounri," 776.

⁵² Bietak and Strouhal, "Die Todesumstände des Pharaos Seqenenre," 49.

⁵³ Bietak and Strouhal, "Die Todesumstände des Pharaos Seqenenre," 50.

⁵⁴ Bietak and Strouhal, "Die Todesumstände des Pharaos Seqenenre," 51.

⁵⁵ Gonzalo M. Sanchez, "A Neurosurgeon's View of the Battle Reliefs of King Sety I: Aspects of Neurological Importance," *JARCE* 37 (2000), 159.

bows and arrows. Although acknowledging the ideological bias present in such imagery, Sanchez argues that the reliefs are so precise in their detail in regard to the representation of wounded soldiers that the artists must have had access to military physicians, or experienced war first hand, or perhaps even both.⁵⁶ The statistics thus may be representative of true battle. Sanchez also analyzed the evidence for the "Slain soldiers of Montuhotep"—the bodies of sixty warriors discovered in a Middle Kingdom cache at Deir el-Bahri.⁵⁷ Of this sixty, forty-five were shown to have ante-mortem injuries with only 18.3% killed by blows to the head. 5% of these were caused by arrows, 13.3% by rocks or clubs. 36% were shown to have received finishing blows—given to those who could not escape.⁵⁸ The low number of deaths by blows to the head is again simply the result of the difficulty in hitting the head—a small target when compared to the size of the torso. Finally, Sanchez has also analyzed the injuries depicted in the 'camp' scenes at Luxor Temple relating to the Battle of Kadesh; 80% of the injuries depicted here were inflicted by sword(s), daggers, and maces, and so are representative of close combat; of these, 87.5% were inflicted against the chest and neck, with head injuries only accounting for 12.5% of cases.⁵⁹ Such results, taken as a whole, leave it unlikely that Seqenenre would be killed entirely by blows to the head during hand-to-hand combat in a battlefield situation.

Finally, regarding whether this pre- and post- Second Intermediate Period battle evidence can be applied to the reign of Seqenenre it must be noted that although warfare changed over the course of this time, especially with regard to the technology used, the statistics on both sides of the Second Intermediate Period emphasize the unlikelihood of death entirely by blows to the head; in all cases it is the torso that receives the most injuries. Thus, the means of killing may improve, but the overall statistical outcome remains the same from the Middle Kingdom to the New Kingdom.

Chariot technology

There is currently no firm evidence that the Egyptians prior to the reign of Ahmose had access to chariot technology.⁶⁰ Kamose, Seqenenre's successor, makes no reference to using chariots in his inscriptions, although he does refer to enemy horses, or possibly the farm animals of the Hyksos.⁶¹ Rather, from the little detail there is about the wars of Kamose, the warfare he conducted appears to have been mainly naval in character.⁶² There is thus no indication that chariots were used at this time.⁶³

Although much of the material necessary for chariot construction was likely available to the Egyptians from the Middle Kingdom, certain important elements such as imported wood, the actual expertise necessary to make chariots, and access to horses would all have been necessary. Thus, as the Egyptians were cut off from Asia and Nubia during the Second Intermediate Period, it is likely that the Hyksos acted as a barrier to the Egyptians' gaining such new technology.⁶⁴ Similarly, Säv-Söder-

⁵⁶ Sanchez, "A Neurosurgeon's View," 158.

⁵⁷ Published by Winlock, *Slain Soldiers*. For a recent re-evaluation of Winlock's arguments see Carola Vogel, "Fallen Heroes?—Winlock's 'Slain Soldiers' reconsidered," *JEA* 89 (2003), 239–45.

⁵⁸ Sanchez, "A Neurosurgeon's View," 162–64.

⁵⁹ Gonzalo M. Sanchez, "Injuries in the Battle of Kadesh," *KMT* 14:1 (Spring 2003): 60–61.

⁶⁰ Ian Shaw, "Egyptians, Hyksos and Military Technology: Causes, Effects or Catalysts?," in Andrew J. Shortland, ed., *The Social Context of Technological Change, Egypt and the Near East, 1650–1550 BC* (Oxford, 2001), 60.

⁶¹ Shaw, "Egyptians, Hyksos and Military Technology," 65; for the use of *htry* in this text as potentially referring to the farm animals of the Hyksos, or just horses, and not chariots, see Alan R. Schulman, "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," *JSSEA* 10 (1970–80), 112–13; James K. Hoffmeier, "Military: Material," in Donald B. Redford, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 2 (Oxford, 2001), 411, notes that the lack of a chariot determinative may add to Schulman's theory.

⁶² Anthony J. Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2005), 2–4.

⁶³ Schulman "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," 109; John Van Seters, *The Hyksos, A New Investigation* (New Haven, 1966), 185, n. 25; Torgny Säv-Söderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," *JEA* 37 (1951), 60.

⁶⁴ Shaw, "Egyptians, Hyksos and Military Technology," 65–69.

bergh has argued that both the Hyksos and the Egyptians only began to use chariot technology shortly before the former's expulsion.⁶⁵ It is only under Ahmose that chariots are first associated with an Egyptian king; textually in the tomb of Ahmose Son of Ibana,⁶⁶ and perhaps pictorially at King Ahmose's ritual complex at Abydos, although the scenes of chariots here do not necessarily depict Egyptians.⁶⁷ It is possible, however, that these sources are not trustworthy. They may draw on royal imagery and technology only available and standard after the events described and shown, given that the autobiography of Ahmose Son of Ibana dates to later than the reign of Ahmose. Finally, the presence of chariots does not necessarily mean the existence of chariotry—a military organized and disciplined body.⁶⁸

The actual utilization of chariots during battle also needs to be considered. Chariots were not used to directly attack the enemy as a frontal assault, charging at the enemy ranks—they were used as high-speed mobile platforms for archers to fire at the attacking infantry and were typically deployed to chase down a defeated and fleeing enemy, although they could be used to open a battle.⁶⁹ None of these situations would lend itself to a reconstruction involving Seqenenre dramatically charging the enemy in his chariot, only to be knocked down by an enemy wielding an axe. His role, if he played any active role at all, and if he did somehow have access to chariot technology, was perhaps as a raised and visible rallying point for the troops, a symbol of royal power⁷⁰ much like a military standard,⁷¹ or, if in actual combat, riding at a safe distance along the enemy front line firing arrows. One must also wonder, given that the prime function of the chariot was speed and mobility and that full military exploitation of the vehicle did not occur until the late Eighteenth Dynasty,⁷² if the kings may have used chariots as an effective way to stay away from danger, rather than to confront it head on.

Bodyguards, body-armor, and protection

Both pictorial and textual evidence presents the king as being protected:⁷³ scenes from the Amarna tombs of Mahu,⁷⁴ Panehesy,⁷⁵ Ahmose,⁷⁶ and Meryre⁷⁷ show the royal bodyguard running alongside the king's chariot at Amarna. The Horemheb Edict makes reference to the custom concerning the protection (*mkt*) of the king; this was the practice of bringing a different set of provincial soldiers to act as royal bodyguard every ten days.⁷⁸ Herodotus also makes reference to the king's personal guard, which, although late, reflects this service concept.⁷⁹ The Teachings of Amenemhat presents

⁶⁵ Säve-Söderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," 59–60.

⁶⁶ *Urk* IV 2, 10.

⁶⁷ Although the larger scale of the horses on one fragment, compared to the horses in other fragments, means that it is very likely that the royal horses and chariot were shown here. For the scenes, see Stephen Harvey, *The Cults of King Ahmose at Abydos* (Unpublished PhD thesis; University of Pennsylvania, 1998), 316–20; idem, "The Monuments of Ahmose at Abydos," *Egyptian Archaeology* 4 (1994), 3–5;

⁶⁸ Schulman, "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," 113.

⁶⁹ Schulman, "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," 121–24, 130–31.

⁷⁰ Schulman, "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," 150–52.

⁷¹ Schulman, "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," 115 with nn. 31, 147.

⁷² Schulman, "Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos," 144–46.

⁷³ See Garry J. Shaw, *Royal Authority in Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty*, BAR International Series 1822 (Oxford, 2008), 120.

⁷⁴ Norman de. G. Davies, *Amarna* 4, pls. 20–22.

⁷⁵ Davies, *Amarna* 2, pls. 13, 17.

⁷⁶ Davies, *Amarna* 3, pl. 31.

⁷⁷ Davies, *Amarna* 1, pls. 10, 15.

⁷⁸ *Urk* IV 2158, 3–5; Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt, Anatomy of a Civilization*, 2nd Ed. (London-New York, 2006), 297; Jean-Marie Kruchten, *Le Décret d'Horemheb, Traduction, commentaire épigraphique, philologique et institutionnel* (Brussels, 1981), 162–77.

⁷⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 2, 168; for a recent translation see Herodotus, *The Histories*, transl. Robin Waterfield (Oxford, 1998), 163.

the king as relating the events of his assassination to his son and successor Senwosret I; having awoken to an attack by his bodyguard (*ḥꜥw n ḥꜥw=ḏ*),⁸⁰ the king states that, “no one can fight alone, there can be no successful deed (*sp mꜣr*) without a protector (*mkw*).”⁸¹ The Duties of the Vizier makes reference to an army contingent that follows the king when he traveled around Egypt.⁸² Finally, a scene from Medinet Habu depicts Ramesses III setting off to attack the Libyans escorted by followers armed with weapons who may be acting as his personal bodyguard.⁸³

Although the need to supply the king with protection when traveling at home is not surprising, there is also evidence that the king was protected when facing dangerous situations when abroad: the Middle Kingdom stele of Khusobek presents the king as surrounded by men of the residence when fighting,⁸⁴ while the soldiers Ahmose son of Ibana⁸⁵ and Amenemhab⁸⁶ describe protecting the king on campaign. Finally, and perhaps most importantly as the evidence derives from scribal daybook entries, there is a reference in the Annals of Tuthmosis III to the king being kept at the back of the army when entering hostile territory: here the king had been leading the army through the dangerous Aruna Pass on the way to Megiddo. Upon exiting, the entire army, speaking as one, request that he guard the rear of the army and his people at the outside of the pass. The king does as they suggest, halting at the exit and sitting, “protecting the rear of his army of victory.”⁸⁷ Stripping away the scribal narrative flourishes, the original daybook entry for the event probably read, “settling down outside. Sitting there (by the king).”⁸⁸ Such a statement demands explanation as it does not fit the ideological presentation of the hero-king—the scribe(s) who composed the Annals needed to give a reason for why the king did not continue at the head of his army and immediately destroy the enemy. They thus present him as a caring ruler, who listens to the pleas of his army, protecting them until they fully exit the pass. In reality, it is more likely that the army halted the king for his own protection, keeping him behind until the area was safe.⁸⁹

There is no evidence that soldiers of the Old and Middle Kingdoms wore body-armor. It was only in the Eighteenth Dynasty that armor in the form of bronze scales in tightly packed rows riveted to knee-length linen⁹⁰ or leather jerkins was first manufactured.⁹¹ The first textual reference to body-armor is in the Annals of Tuthmosis III,⁹² while it is first depicted among items associated with chariots in the tomb of Kenamun at Thebes.⁹³ Although the defensive equipment depicted as used by the Egyptians in the New Kingdom does not directly reflect reality,⁹⁴ there is no evidence to push back

⁸⁰ Following Stephen Quirke, *Egyptian Literature, 1800 BC, Questions and Readings* (London, 2004), 127.

⁸¹ For the text see Wolfgang Helck, *Der Text der “Lehre Amenemhats I. für seinen Sohn”* KÄT 1 (Wiesbaden, 1969), 50–51, discussed on 52–53; also see Francis Ll. Griffith, “The Millingen papyrus (teaching of amenemhat): with note on the compounds formed with substantivised *n*,” ZÄS 34 (1896), 35–51; Quirke, *Egyptian Literature*, 128.

⁸² Guido P. F. van den Boorn, *The Duties of the Vizier, Civil Administration in the Early New Kingdom* (London, 1988), 218–20.

⁸³ Guillemette Andreu, “Le policier [*sꜥḏ*]. À propos de quelques talâtât du IXe pylône de Karnak,” BIFAO 87 (1987), 7.

⁸⁴ John Baines, “The Stela of Khusobek: Private and Royal Military Narrative and Values,” in Jürgen Osing and Günter Dreyer, eds., *Form und Mass: Beiträge zur Literatur, Sprache und Kunst des alten Ägypten, Festschrift für Gerhard Fecht zum 65. Geburtstag am 6. Februar 1987*, Studien zu Geschichte, Kultur und Religion ÄAT 12 (Wiesbaden, 1987), 46.

⁸⁵ Ahmose refers to following the king on foot, which could be taken as him acting as royal bodyguard, *Urk IV* 3, 5.

⁸⁶ *Urk IV* 893, 14–894, 2.

⁸⁷ For the relevant section see *Urk IV* 654, 13–655, 7.

⁸⁸ Anthony J. Spalinger, *Aspects of the Military Documents of the Ancient Egyptians* (New Haven, 1982), 139.

⁸⁹ See discussion in Shaw, *Royal Authority*, 94, 120.

⁹⁰ Evidenced at Malkata, see Hoffmeier, “Military: Material,” 410.

⁹¹ Ian Shaw, *Egyptian Warfare and Weapons* (Buckinghamshire, 1991), 32, 42; Shaw, “Egyptians, Hyksos and Military Technology,” 67; Andrea Gnirs, “Military: An Overview,” in Redford, *Oxford Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, 403.

⁹² *Urk IV* 664, 3; 711, 7 (reconstructed); 732, 1. The leather determinative found with *Urk IV* 664, 3 indicates that this was the material to which the bronze scales were attached (Hoffmeier, “Military: Material,” 410).

⁹³ Davies, *Ken-Amūn*, 27–28, pls. 16, 24.

⁹⁴ Gnirs notes shield types produced at Pi-Ramesses are not depicted, and Egyptian soldiers are never shown wearing body armor, Gnirs, “Military: An Overview,” 403.

the usage of helmets and body-armor into the Second Intermediate Period. Helmets and body-armor likely developed as a result of the chariot and composite bow; the driver could not hold a shield and so needed some other form of protection.⁹⁵ However, as shown above, there is no evidence for chariotry under Seqenenre, either as a professional military force or as a means of rapid transport, and so it is unlikely that such technology was used by the Egyptians at this time. In the same manner that the Hyksos were probably a barrier to the Egyptians in access to chariot technology, they also likely acted as a barrier to other new technology such as body-armor and the composite bow.⁹⁶

As Smith noted, Seqenenre only received blows to the head; there are no signs of wounds or damage to any other part of his body. The lack of evidence for body-armor under Seqenenre thus makes this all the more unusual. Furthermore, even if the king had been wearing some form of leather body-armor, there would still be signs of fractures or serious damage to the bones that would have been evident under x-ray analysis. Finally, given the evident importance of keeping the king safe, one must also assume that any attackers would need to fend off Egyptian soldiers who would stop at nothing to protect their king; in this situation such precisely focused attacks on the king's head from a variety of assailants would seem like a bizarre effort amid the surrounding chaos of the battlefield.

Physical evidence for kings fighting

If kings did indeed fight during the late Second Intermediate Period and Eighteenth Dynasty, their mummies might display evidence of ante-mortem violence⁹⁷—a possible sign of involvement in warfare. Apart from the mummy of Seqenenre, the only other mummy of a king from the Seventeenth Dynasty was that of Kamose; however, this is described as having disintegrated to dust when it was found.⁹⁸ The body of Ahmose has been described as “delicately built”⁹⁹ and doubt has been cast as to whether he could have been a “front-line war-leader,”¹⁰⁰ despite the textual evidence to the contrary. The body often identified as that of Tuthmosis I suffered from a pelvic tilt, which could be indicative of a pelvic fracture at some point in his life;¹⁰¹ however, the specific site of the putative fracture has not been identified and pelvic tilt can have other causes, including bad posture while sitting. Also, an arrow-head was recently discovered in Tuthmosis I's chest; however, it now seems certain that this is not the body of the king.¹⁰² Tuthmosis II has been described as “frail,”¹⁰³ while there is no mention in any study of ante-mortem injuries to the great warrior Tuthmosis III. Amenhotep II had a “questionable” compression fracture in his vertebrae,¹⁰⁴ while Tuthmosis IV had a pelvic tilt.¹⁰⁵ Amenhotep III's body shows no signs of injury.¹⁰⁶ There is thus no firm evidence that any of

⁹⁵ Hoffmeier, “Military: Material,” 410.

⁹⁶ Shaw, “Egyptians, Hyksos and Military Technology,” 69.

⁹⁷ As is visible in some of the bodies from the Deir el-Bahri cache, see Winlock, *Slain Soldiers*, 8–9.

⁹⁸ Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 125; Dodson and Ikram, *Mummy in Ancient Egypt*, 118.

⁹⁹ Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 127.

¹⁰⁰ Edward F. Wente, “Age at Death of Pharaohs of the New Kingdom, Determined from Historical Sources,” in Harris and Wente, *X-Ray Atlas of the Royal Mummies*, 239.

¹⁰¹ Whitehouse, “Radiologic Findings in the Royal Mummies,” 289.

¹⁰² As shown by recent CT-scans of the king performed by the Supreme Council of Antiquities, see summary of this work and related quotes by project director Zahi Hawass in Nevine El-Aref, “In Search of a Lost King,” *Al-Ahram Weekly* 900 (June 5–11, 2008), <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/900/he1.htm> (accessed May 14, 2009).

¹⁰³ Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 133.

¹⁰⁴ Whitehouse, “Radiologic Findings in the Royal Mummies,” 289.

¹⁰⁵ Whitehouse, “Radiologic Findings in the Royal Mummies,” 289.

¹⁰⁶ Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 142; James E. Harris, “The Mummy of Amenhotep III,” in Teeter and Larson, *Gold of Praise*, 163–74. Harris also notes the possibility that the mummy currently identified as Amenhotep III could in fact be Akhenaten, see Harris, “The Mummy of Amenhotep III,” 173.

the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty received any wounds in battle,¹⁰⁷ and Harris has commented that most of the articulated mummies of these kings lack the “obvious skeletal robustness and muscle mass” of the Ramesside Period kings.¹⁰⁸

It must be noted that the thick resinous paste that covers many of the royal mummies may hide scars or injuries; however, x-ray evidence reveals no cuts to the bones or healed fractures. Also, although it is difficult to spot arrow wounds due to shriveled skin hiding the area of impact or due to the arrow head having been removed before mummification, arrow wounds are likely to cause broken bones which would have been noticeable under x-ray analysis.¹⁰⁹ There is no such damage in the royal mummies, except in the body now known not to be that of Tuthmosis I, despite long range weapons, such as arrows, being the most likely manner by which a soldier would be injured or killed in the New Kingdom;¹¹⁰ furthermore, as Winlock states regarding the Middle Kingdom “slain soldiers” from the Deir el-Bahri cache, “None had died in hand-to-hand fights from slashes by axes, probably none were the victims of stabs by spears and daggers, nor had any of them arms broken by the blows of maces and clubs. These soldiers were killed and wounded with missiles, and such as were grievously hurt and were helpless when the garrison made its sortie had been clubbed to death. In only one case is there any wound suggestive of hand-to-hand conflict, and that may have been inflicted on a man already helpless from his wounds.”¹¹¹ Although this evidence does not show explicitly that the kings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Dynasties did not fight, it certainly pushes the likelihood on that side of the argument, especially when combined with the textual evidence discussed below.

Textual evidence for kings fighting

Egyptian military texts of the Eighteenth Dynasty conform to a series of rules of presentation that dictated what could be shown or described in different contexts, normally referred to as decorum.¹¹² Under these rules the king was the only person who could be presented as having made kills on the battlefield, as the soldier Emhab states, “when he (the king) kills, I keep alive”—meaning that the king is responsible for all deaths, leaving the soldiers to do nothing more than take captives or severed hands.¹¹³ This creates a presentation in which the king is said to have fought, but which consequently sheds no light on the reality of the situation, as Baines notes, “in reality the king may be the last person to kill in a battle. . . .”¹¹⁴ Although the king is said to make all kills, descriptions of the king fighting in the thick of battle are vague, simply being boiled down to him having “prevailed” over an enemy, sometimes without any reference to the army at all.¹¹⁵ Battles, as chaotic events, are placed into a system of order by using set themes. Both in textual and pictorial sources the king is presented as alone charging at his enemies on his chariot; this is a result of the king being defender of *Maat*. At times of disorder the king must be the one to restore the balance for the gods, thus, victories must be

¹⁰⁷ Shaw, *Royal Authority*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ Harris, “The Mummy of Amenhotep III,” 165.

¹⁰⁹ Winlock, *Slain Soldiers*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Sanchez, “A Neurosurgeon’s View,” 159.

¹¹¹ Winlock, *Slain Soldiers*, 23.

¹¹² For a recent overview of decorum see John Baines, *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2007), 3–30. For specifically military decorum see Shaw, *Royal Authority*, 117–20.

¹¹³ John Baines, “The Stela of Emhab: Innovation, Tradition, Hierarchy,” *JEA* 72 (1986), 42.

¹¹⁴ Baines, “The Stela of Emhab,” 45.

¹¹⁵ Shaw, *Royal Authority*, 117–18.

ascribed to him alone without his army.¹¹⁶ Other key themes include the king being presented in supernatural terms, flashing from side to side of the army, as the possessor of a fiery uraeus, as one who strikes intense fear into the hearts of his enemies, as one who rages like a panther, and as one capable of winning victories in mere moments.¹¹⁷ The king is the best warrior, the most able, and the strongest. Such accounts of the king on campaign are built upon daybook records, which recorded the king and army's activities during the campaign.¹¹⁸ It is clear from these texts that the king was present, but the imposition of hyperbolic literary embellishments upon these bland administrative records distorts the picture of events, leaving it impossible to say whether the king did indeed personally fight in the thick of battle or not.

Although there is no detailed textual evidence for military activity from the reign of Sequenre himself, beyond the fact that he had a naval fleet,¹¹⁹ it is possible to look at sources from the earlier and later Second Intermediate Period and the Eighteenth Dynasty to judge the extent of the king's personal role in fighting with the troops during campaigns.¹²⁰ On a stele from Karnak, King Montuhotepi is described as, "beloved of his army, his powers being great . . . one who drove back all foreign lands, and rescued¹²¹ his city in his might, without [subduing(?)] people in [. . .] throughout the two banks, like Sekhmet in a year of pestilence, one feared of his fiery blast [afar-off(?)],¹²² who felled the attackers [. . .] . . . his army comes, from his fortresses, like flames come [after] a high wind; there was none that could rise to face them aggressively. A[mun] is at the front of his army, he gave [his] arm [. . .]."¹²³ Standard imagery is employed here: the king is the one who drives back the foreign lands and rescues Thebes. The theme of fire is also utilized, in the form of the king's fiery breath that the enemy fear. Later the Egyptian army are described as a "fiery terror," led by Amun. There is no indication that the king himself personally fought.

The Karnak stele of King Ikhnofret described the king as, "a strong king beloved of his army . . . who caused his city to be protected when it had been immersed, who guarded it along with the foreigners, who pacified the rebellious foreign lands for her through the power of his father Amun, who overthrew [opponent]s [for her] that had rebelled against him, dealing slaughter against those that had attacked [him]."¹²⁴ Here the king is described as beloved of the army, as was Montuhotepi, and is said to have protected Thebes, pacified rebellious lands, and overthrown enemies through the power of Amun. This is typical of later military presentation in which the king is responsible for all action in the name of the god, but again, there is no specific indication that the king personally fought.

¹¹⁶ Shaw, *Royal Authority*, 117–18. However, if at the moment of battle each individual in the army was seen as an embodiment of the divine kingship—the word *hm* simply having the meaning of whatever mechanism allowed the intangible (in this case divine kingship) to take a form and have an effect in the physical world—the army and the king together could be seen as a singular *hm* attacking the enemy. For this interpretation of the meaning of *hm* see Garry J. Shaw, "The Meaning of the Phrase *m hm n stp-s3*," *JEA* (forthcoming).

¹¹⁷ Shaw, *Royal Authority*, 118–19.

¹¹⁸ For a general discussion of daybooks see Donald B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books: a Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History* (Mississauga, 1986), 97–126.

¹¹⁹ Ahmose son of Ibana refers to his father serving in the fleet of Sequenre (*Urk* IV 2, 10).

¹²⁰ For translations of the known texts of the Second Intermediate Period see Donald B. Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," in Eliezer D. Oren, ed., *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (Philadelphia, 1997), 1–44.

¹²¹ See Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 28, n. 70.

¹²² Following Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 9.

¹²³ Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 50; Pascal Vernus, "La stèle du Pharaon MnTw-Htpi à Karnak: un nouveau témoignage sur la situation politique et militaire au début de la D.P.I.," *RdÉ* 40 (1989), 145–61; Wolfgang Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte der 2. Zwischenzeit und neue Texte der 18. Dynastie*, Nachträge, KÄT 6,2 (Wiesbaden, 1995), 3–5.

¹²⁴ Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 3; Wolfgang Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte der 2. Zwischenzeit und neue Texte der 18. Dynastie*, 2nd rev. ed., KÄT 6 (Wiesbaden, 1983), 45.

A stele from Abydos records that the battalion-commander Nakht had been in the following of the King's Son Antef, but the text is too fragmentary to shed any further light on royal military activity.¹²⁵ The stele of Tjau from Abydos similarly provides little detail on the king's role, even though Tjau relates that he traveled as far as Avaris in the favour of the king.¹²⁶ On a stele from Edfu Haankhef states that he was a "brave fighter" (*ḥ3ty kn*), and relates the rewards he took from a mission to Kush.¹²⁷ On a stele from Buhen, a man called Ahmose records that he was a brave fighter of the mighty ruler Kamose, who acquired forty six people while following the ruler.¹²⁸ The stele of Emhab¹²⁹ describes this soldier's role during the campaigns of either Kamose or Ahmose.¹³⁰ His text relates that he followed the king on his journeys and that he followed the king's commands; here there is no reference to the king personally fighting on the battlefield; there is, however, the statement referred to above, "when he (i.e., the king) kills, I keep alive."¹³¹

The most detailed information, produced closest in time to Seqenenre's death, is that inscribed upon the "Kamose Stelae" and the Carnarvon Tablet,¹³² which together describe an Egyptian campaign against the Hyksos rulers based at Avaris in the north, led by Kamose. As is typical of military texts, the action revolves around the person of the king; Kamose is described as initiating the campaign, against the advice of his courtiers, and is predicted success by Amun. He states that he sailed downstream to beat back the Hyksos (*Aamu*), "My valiant army in front of me like a flame of fire."¹³³ A possible interpretation here is that the king was protected at the back of his troops. Soon after, Kamose is described as sending a troop of Medjay to enclose Teti son of Pepi within Neferusi; the king states that he was on watch, providing a reason for why he did not go to enclose Teti son of Pepi himself. Here, the original daybook account may have simply recorded that Kamose stopped, leaving the scribes with the need to add a narrative elaboration to explain why the king himself did not continue at the front of the army into dangerous territory.¹³⁴

Although Kamose states that he sent the Medjay to enclose his enemies, it is he who takes responsibility for not allowing them to escape and imprisoning the *Aamu*. At this point Kamose is presented as a decision-maker, deciding on the tactics of the army, but not actually taking part in the fighting. However, this is because the enemy had simply been "enclosed" rather than killed. Kamose narrates, "When day dawned I was upon him like a falcon, and when breakfast time came I drove him back. I hacked up his fortress, slaying his people, and causing his women to descend to the shore: my army were like lions with their plunder—their servants, cattle, milk, fat and honey—dividing up their posses-

¹²⁵ Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 10; Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 75.

¹²⁶ Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 12; Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 78.

¹²⁷ Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 12; Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 79.

¹²⁸ Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 12; Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 99.

¹²⁹ Jaroslav Černý, "The Stela of Emhab from Tell Edfu," *MDAIK* 24 (1969), 87–92; Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 97–98; Baines, "The Stela of Emhab," 41–53; Alfred Grimm, "Calembour, Trommelwettstreit oder Kampf auf Leben und Tod in der autobiographischen Steleninschrift des Emhab?," *JEA* 75 (1989), 220–24.

¹³⁰ Ryholt has argued that Emhab was active under Ahmose rather than Kamose, on the basis that Emhab states that he reached Avaris while, according to his arguments, Kamose did not himself actually reach Avaris (Kim S. B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800–1550 B.C.*, CNI Pub. 20 [Copenhagen, 1997], 182–83, for Emhab and 171–74, for the extent of Kamose's incursion into Hyksos territory).

¹³¹ Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 98, 10–11.

¹³² Alan H. Gardiner, "The Defeat of the Hyksos by Kamose: the Carnarvon Tablet No. 1," *JEA* 3 (1916), 95–110; Labib Habachi, *The Second Stela of Kamose and His Struggle against the Hyksos Ruler and His Capital*, *ADAIK* 8 (Glückstadt, 1972); Harry S. Smith and Alexandrina Smith, "A Reconsideration of the Kamose Texts," *ZÄS* 103 (1976), 48–76; Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 82–98.

¹³³ Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 88, 5.

¹³⁴ Compare to the event described under Tuthmosis III in the Aruna pass, described above under "Bodyguards, Body-Armor, and Protection."

sions, their hearts joyful.”¹³⁵ Following standard decorum Kamose takes all responsibility for the kills, leaving the army to simply divide up the spoils. The area of Neferusi is then said to be in retreat, while those at *Per-Shak* had already fled by the time the Egyptians arrived.

At the start of the Second Stele, Kamose is making an aggressive speech to the Hyksos King Apophis, after which the Egyptian fleet is described as sailing in a single line, at Kamose's order, with his own ship sailing at the front. A second speech to Apophis is then presented in which the king's actions sum up that of the army as a whole, “Look, I am drinking of the wine of your vineyards I am hacking up your dwelling place, cutting down your trees”¹³⁶ Then, Kamose personally takes credit for capturing a Hyksos messenger, “I captured his message on the upland oasis (route)”¹³⁷ Kamose then summarizes his success by stating that he had placed foreign lands under him, that Apophis had been afraid of him even before he had arrived, and that, “he saw my flame,”¹³⁸ emphasizing the continuing theme of fire. Kamose then orders that the captured Hyksos letter be taken and left on the banks of the Nile at Aphroditopolis, after which a “victorious force” was sent to destroy Bahariya Oasis, while he was still in Sako, to prevent there being any enemies behind. He then journeyed back to Thebes with his army in front of him, without any loss having occurring during the campaign. Upon arrival there is reference to censuring for Amun, clearly in thanks for his divine prediction having come true, taking the narration full circle. Although, compared to later texts, the texts of Kamose are comparatively light on ideologically charged statements, the king is still said to be responsible for all kills that took place during the battle at which he was personally present, while the army is sent out by the king to ‘enclose’ enemies, or ‘destroy’ them when Kamose would not be there himself.

In light of the combined evidence presented above, although the textual evidence does not allow one to state for certain whether kings did or did not fight personally on the battlefield—the evidence being essentially neutral due to the ideological presentation hiding the reality of the situation—the evidence for the king being protected combined with the lack of physical wounds on the royal mummies tips the balance in favor of the latter option—of kings not fighting and staying protected at the back of their armies. It is possible, however, that Egyptian kings personally executed enemies after a military victory. The traditional scene of the king smiting his enemies is known from at least the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period; typically the king is shown standing above his enemies, who are restrained and cowering below him. He holds them with one hand, while in the other he raises a weapon ready to smite them.¹³⁹ Although an ideological statement showing domination, it is possible that kings enacted such stereotyped imagery at times: in the Eighteenth Dynasty it is recorded that Amenhotep I “smote” a Nubian bowman in the midst of his army;¹⁴⁰ Amenhotep II is described as having brought back seven chiefs from Djahy alive to be executed before Amun. He states that he did this with his own club,¹⁴¹ and that afterwards six were hung from the walls of

¹³⁵ Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 90, 3–12.

¹³⁶ Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 93, 2, 4–5.

¹³⁷ Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 94, 4.

¹³⁸ Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte*, 95, 8.

¹³⁹ For smiting scenes see Emma Swan Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites his Enemies*, MÄS 44 (München, 1986).

¹⁴⁰ *Urk IV* 7, 3.

¹⁴¹ Due to grammatical ambiguity the text can be taken as describing the king executing the prisoners before hanging them upside down on his boat and taking them to Thebes; however, as Ritner rightly points out, the corpses would have degraded quite badly by the time they arrived in Thebes and Napata, suggesting that they were brought back alive. See Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, SAOC 54 (Chicago, 1993), 171, n. 795. Further evidence indicates prisoners were brought back alive in wooden cages, Alfred Grimm, “Ein Käfig für einen Gefangenen in einem Ritual zur Vernichtung von Feinden,” *JEA* 73 (1987), 202–6; while Osorkon II performs a similar execution to that of Amenhotep II, see Ricardo A. Caminos, *The Chronicle of Prince Osorkon*, AO 37 (Rome, 1958), 48–51.

Thebes, while the final one was sent to be hung from the walls of Napata.¹⁴² Furthermore, on his Karnak Stele, Amenhotep II states that he killed an enemy commander with his axe;¹⁴³ however, on his Memphis Stele, relating the same event, it is stated that the king killed the enemies by shooting arrows.¹⁴⁴ On a fragmentary block from Bubastis, Amenhotep III states that he beat enemies himself with his own mace.¹⁴⁵ Although such statements are again an idealising presentation of kingship and thus very likely do not reflect reality, in such situations the king would no longer be in danger—the enemy chief having been neutralized—allowing him to fulfill and enact his role as destroyer of Egypt's enemies. This could have been done on the battlefield itself, immediately after the battle, or possibly at a temple.¹⁴⁶

Assassination theory

Smith's suggestion that Seqenenre was killed while sleeping was a result of his argument that two, and quite possibly four, of the wounds to the king's head were inflicted when Seqenenre was lying down, combined with the lack of wounds to any other part of his body; however, as Bietak and Strouhal have convincingly argued based on their analysis of the angles of attack, the king could have received many of these wounds when standing, leaving a number of choices for the first blow. Both arguments have flaws: Smith's analysis was based on the assumption that a battle-axe swung at a standing man would leave vertical wounds, while Bietak and Strouhal only show that the wounds *could* have been inflicted when Seqenenre was standing, which does not prove that they were not inflicted when he was lying down. Also, Smith himself conceded that one initial blow could have knocked Seqenenre to the ground, at which point further blows rained down upon him.

The theory that Seqenenre was killed while sleeping is less an option if one accepts that there is no firm evidence to prove that Seqenenre survived the lower frontal wound (Smith's no. 2)—which would have left him paralyzed or disabled and so perhaps unsuitable to lead—leaving no overt reason for assassinating him. Also, even if the evidence did indicate that all five wounds were inflicted when Seqenenre was lying down, seemingly proving the case, it would still be necessary to ask why the attackers would be so violent against the head of the king, leaving the rest of his body untouched, why a mixture of Hyksos and Egyptian weaponry would be used, and why, and most importantly given that the king would likely have been in his palace, his body would have been mummified in so poor a manner, without the proper care taken to put the body into the correct ritual position and with no attempt to make the king's face appear more peaceful.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, those that performed the embalming did not have access to the proper materials necessary: natron was not used, causing body fluids to remain, and no attempt had been made to remove the brain or insert linen.¹⁴⁸ If the king had been killed in the palace by officials who had respect for the Theban monarchy yet wanted a new king

¹⁴² *Urk* IV 1297, 1-1298, 2.

¹⁴³ *Urk* IV 1311, 1-12.

¹⁴⁴ *Urk* IV 1302, 7-15.

¹⁴⁵ *Urk* IV 1734, 18.

¹⁴⁶ See Ritner, *Magical Practice*, 171, n. 795; Schulman has argued that foreign enemies were executed in the courtyards of temples in the New Kingdom (see Alan R. Schulman, *Ceremonial Execution and Public Reward, some Historical Scenes on New Kingdom Private Stelae*, OBO 75 [Freiburg, 1988], but this has not met with wide acceptance (see the comments of William A. Ward, "Book Review: Ceremonial Execution and Public Rewards: Some Historical Scenes on New Kingdom Stele," *JNES* 51 [1992], 152-55; and of John Baines, "Book Review: Ceremonial Execution and Public Rewards: Some Historical Scenes on New Kingdom Stele," *BASOR* 281 [1991], 91-93).

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *Cat. Gén.*, 2; Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 122, note that there is no evidence for palace intrigue under Seqenenre and state that a murder in the palace does not account for the poor condition of the body.

¹⁴⁸ Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, 123.

to come to power, perhaps due to some weakness of Seqenenre, or if the king had been killed by Hyksos assassins, it would be expected that his body would be mummified properly. If he had been killed by people wishing to overthrow his dynasty—people who would have no need to show his body respect—they would have simply ignored or destroyed the corpse, rather than attempt to mummify it without the proper materials. Essentially, natron would surely have been used in any scenario in which some level of respect would need to have been shown to the body.¹⁴⁹ The lack of this fundamental element of mummification practice shows that embalming occurred when there was no access to it, most probably when Seqenenre was away from Thebes or a major Theban controlled settlement. This then, rather than the angles of the wounds, makes it most likely that Seqenenre died on campaign.

New Interpretation

Given the lack of evidence for the assassination theory, Seqenenre is placed on the battlefield at the time of his death; however, the evidence does not support the theory that he died fighting in the thick of battle. The textual evidence from the Second Intermediate Period and Eighteenth Dynasty combined with the physical evidence of the pharaohs' mortal remains indicates that the kings were not frontline war leaders, fighting at the head of their troops. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Seqenenre was knocked from his chariot when facing a series of attackers, both due to the lack of availability of chariot technology and the manner in which chariots were utilized in warfare at the time. Also, this theory does not explain why Seqenenre only received blows to the head given the unlikelyhood of this area being the first-hit target during combat (both hand-to-hand and missile based), and the lack of body-armor during this period. It is also unlikely that in the chaos of the battlefield, when the king would be heavily protected by his personal guard, that a group of attackers could be so precise in focusing their blows entirely against the king's head.

The most likely situation in which Seqenenre could have received these blows without offering resistance, without protection from his personal guard, and without being at the head of the troops, is if the battle had been lost and the king had been taken prisoner. At this time, and still on the battlefield, the victorious Hyksos king or vassal could ceremonially execute Seqenenre in the presence of his army. Seqenenre would be restrained and so unable to defend himself, while the attackers could take their time in focusing their blows on Seqenenre's head, perhaps in imitation of traditional Egyptian smiting scenes or maybe just to leave him unrecognizable, both to his own followers and to his *ka*.

Without more detailed forensic analysis it is impossible to reconstruct the order in which Seqenenre received the blows to his head with certainty as numerous variations can be postulated. However, using the hypothesis that Seqenenre was ceremonially executed on the battlefield under controlled circumstances and the potential hierarchy of command as shown by the variety of weapons used, as well as Bietak and Strouhal's analysis of the angles of attack, a possible order can tentatively be suggested. First, the victorious Hyksos commander, as the most important person present, likely dealt the initial blows using his Syrio-Palestinian MB II battle-axe; this would leave either the blow to Seqenenre's right lower frontal area (Smith's no. 2) or the cut to the left cheek (Smith's no. 4) as the first dealt. As the blow to the lower frontal area came from roughly the same height as Seqenenre this may have come first assuming that both men stood roughly facing each other, the attacker slightly to Seqenenre's right side. The cut to the left cheek was then inflicted after Seqenenre had been knocked

¹⁴⁹ Although isolated at this time in Upper Egypt, the Thebans will have had access to natron from the region of El-Qab (A. T. Sandison, "The Use of Natron in Mummification in Ancient Egypt," *JNES* 22 [1963], 260; *LÄ* IV, 358).

to the floor by the initial blow, caused by the swing of a battle-axe from Seqenenre's left. Then, using the wooden handle of his battle-axe, or more likely, after having been handed a swinging mace,¹⁵⁰ the Hyksos commander dealt the finishing blow (Smith's no. 3). Having completed his spectacle and proving his domination over the Egyptians, the Hyksos commander left the body to a sub-commander, an Egyptian vassal perhaps, to inflict the upper frontal wound (Smith's no. 1) with an Egyptian weapon. A further soldier then inflicting the spear injury below the ear, severing the vertebrae, perhaps to completely finalize Seqenenre's execution if, by some chance, he was still showing signs of life at this time. In any case, Seqenenre was then left where he had been executed—leaving his nose bent and his arms squashed beneath his body. He probably did not lie there for long as there is no evidence that the body had been picked at by carrion birds. It was then recovered by the remaining defeated Thebans who proceeded to embalm it as best they could with the limited material at hand before returning it to Thebes for burial.

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¹⁵⁰ The typical ritualistic slaying weapon depicted in smiting scenes, see examples collected in Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites his Enemies*.