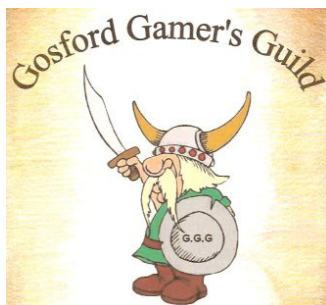




# The Podhammer Guide to Tomb Kings

Based on Podhammer Episode 51 – “Walk like an Egyptian”  
Recorded September 2009  
Narrated by Jeff Carroll and Lachlan Macwirter

Transcription and additional comments by Mark Croxford



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## Introduction

### Podhammer

*Podhammer* is a podcast dedicated to Warhammer Fantasy. The show covers all the latest tools, tips, tales and tactics from the Warhammer World. You can access the show from <http://podhammer.net/>, or subscribe to the show from iTunes.

Podhammer is hosted by Jeff Carroll and features witty and experienced co-hosts and special guests from Australia and across the world.

Podhammer is famous for its in-depth army review episodes, in which some of the world's best generals discuss tips and tricks to get the most out of the army. For Episode 51 – “Walk like an Egyptian”, Jeff invited Lachlan Macwirtinger onto the show to discuss Tomb Kings.

Lachlan Macwirtinger is an experienced Warhammer player who has consistently qualified for the Australasian WFB Masters each year, and Tomb Kings is the army that he is most consistently successful with.

This document is based upon the discussion between Lachlan and Geoff on Podhammer Episode 51 “Walk like an Egyptian”.

### Assumptions

The Australian Warhammer tournament circuit is typically 2250 pts army lists, and the discussion assumes that the games being played are at or around this point limit.

The podcast was recorded in September 2009 and the current Tomb Kings army book was released in Warhammer 6<sup>th</sup> edition. In the period since the show was recorded there have risen rumours of Warhammer 8<sup>th</sup> edition being released in 2010 and a new Tomb Kings army book possibly being released in early 2011.

### Disclaimers

This document is a fan written write up of the Podhammer Episode 51. As such Podhammer and its guests are not responsible for any errors or omissions. Any problems with this document should be addressed to MarkC on the Podhammer Inner Circle forums.

Podhammer is completely unofficial and is not endorsed by Games Workshop in anyway.

## Overview

### Strengths

Tomb Kings are the most reliable army in Warhammer Fantasy Battles. The whole army is Immune to Psychology and unbreakable. Leadership can bring undone your best laid plans, and Tomb Kings don't have to worry about that.

Tomb Kings have a special type of magic, called Incantations. These incantations are spells that have no casting value and so are always successfully cast, although they can be dispelled. Also the incantations cannot be miscast.

Another strength of the Tomb Kings is their movement. It's often stated that Warhammer is won in the movement phase. Even though Tomb Kings are slow (in that they can't march), they potentially get another move in the magic phase. This means that they can potentially out manoeuvre other armies. Although their combat ability is not particularly great, Tomb Kings can get into a position where despite inferior troops they still come out on top.

Tomb Kings also have great shooting. The archers hit on 5+ at all times, despite moving, long range, shooting at skirmishers or at targets behind cover. Not only do they have effective shooting, they can potentially double their amount of shots by getting to shoot in the magic phase.

The Screaming Skull Catapult is a great war machine. It's a stone thrower that counts as magical and flaming attacks, and units that take one or more wounds from a shooting attack by the catapult has to take a panic test. In addition, with the potential of having an extra shot during the magic phase you can take a targeting shot in the magic phase and then get a second shot in your shooting phase.

The Screaming Skull Catapult is so good that most tournaments in Australia won't permit you to take two of them in your army.

The main purpose of the shooting is a tool to let you engage the opponent on your own terms.

### Weaknesses

One weakness of the Tomb Kings army is that it can be predictable. Being Immune to Psychology means that they can't flee as a charge reaction. Their incantations have to be cast in a set order, allowing the opponent to plan the use of their dispel scrolls and dispel dice.

They also lack magic defence against armies with a lot of spells such as Vampire Counts or Chaos armies. Standard Tomb King magic defence is 4 or 5 dispel dice and a couple of dispel scrolls. You can't get much more magic defence than that.

## Magic

The Tomb King magic phase isn't like any other magic phase and it takes some adjustment to make it effective.

You should concentrate all your magic in the area that is important to you. If you want to make sure that you can get off a spell on a certain unit you need to make sure that all your casters are able to throw it at the one unit. The Prince can only cast on his own unit. The Tomb King can cast on units in a 6" radius and Liche Priests can target units in a 12" radius.

Concentrate your casters to give a 24" diameter magic zone of effect. Anything outside of that zone will probably only get one or two spells cast on it and it will be easy for the opponent to dispel if they really want to. Pick the one unit that you want to take an action with and focus your magic on that.

Tomb King magic is performed in a fixed order.

- Bound items
- Tomb Prince (Urgency or Smiting, own unit only)
- Tomb King (Urgency or Smiting, 6" range)
- Liche Priests (Urgency, Smiting, Summoning or Vengeance, 12" range)
- Hierophant (Urgency, Smiting, Summoning or Vengeance, 12" range)

You have to think about how your magic phase is going to work when you are creating your army and have a plan on how you expect your magic phases to play out and the order that you cast things is important.

If you intend to use the Hieratic Jar (a one use only item that allows the caster an extra incantation), then it should be on the Hierophant to get the most benefit from it. By the time you use this item you want to make sure that the opponent can't dispel it.

At the start of the game you have to evaluate your opponent's magic defence. Four Dispel Dice and 3 scrolls can probably stop one Tomb King magic phase. Once you have burnt off one scroll your opponent normally will not be able to stop a whole phase.

The Screaming Skull Catapult can be used to draw out the dispel scrolls in the early turns. Many opponents are fearful of having to take a panic test from it while their troops are still near their own board edge. Use the Incantation of Righteous Smiting to let the catapult shoot in the early magic phases and your opponent can be forced to use dispel scrolls.

Drawing out the dispel scrolls early means that in later turns you are more likely to be able to get off incantations that allow you to move or charge your units.

## Lords

There are three different style of character setups or three effective ones anyway. The character setup is mainly defined by the choice for the lord level character – Tomb King or Liche High Priest.

### Tomb King on foot

In an army led by a Tomb King, the remaining three hero choices are either three Priests, or two Priests and a Prince. In Australian tournaments, a Tomb King and 3 Liche Priests possibly frowned upon and a Tomb King, Tomb Prince and two Liche Priests is normal.

A Tomb King on foot will normally be equipped with the Destroyer of Eternities or the Flail of Skulls. The Destroyer of Eternities is a great weapon that automatically hits each model in base to base contact multiple times. For defence use the Collar of Shapesh. This is can be considered to provide a “pretend” 4+ ward save, in that the wound is transferred to another model in the unit.

Another common configuration is Flail of skulls, Collar of Shapesh & Cloak of the Dunes. The Flail of Skulls does multiple wounds. The Cloak of the Dunes allows the character to move as he is flying, though there are restrictions on charging.

This is a more conservative approach than a Tomb King on a chariot. The Tomb King in a rank and file unit is less vulnerable to being hit with a cannonball and if things go wrong in combat the unit will be able to soak the wounds caused by combat resolution.

### Tomb King on chariot

The Tomb King on chariot configuration is a more all or nothing proposition than the Tomb King on foot. You can get off the big wins, but there is a greater chance of him getting killed.

Lachlan’s preferred equipment for the Tomb King on chariot is the Flail of Skulls and Collar of Shapesh.

The Spear of Antarhak allows unsaved wounds inflicted to regain lost wounds on the bearer or his unit. As such it is a more defensive configuration. A Tomb King army is defensive by nature, so you want to make the Tomb King character to be hitty as possible to buff up the army’s offensive power.

Once again, the remaining three hero choices should be either three Priests, or two Priests and a Prince.

## Liche High Priest

Note that your general must be either a Tomb King or a Tomb Prince. However, having a Liche High Priest in an army led by a Tomb Prince is a significant increase in the casting power of your army. A normal Liche Priest can cast one incantation per turn, using two dice. A Liche High Priest can cast two incantations per turn, each using three dice.

A common set up is the Liche High Priest, a Liche Priest and two Tomb Princes. Sometimes you will see an Icon Bearer replace a Tomb Prince or Liche Priest as the army has enough magic that the loss of one incantation is not a problem. The Icon Bearer is good for a construct army.

Typically the High Priest will have the Cloak of the Dunes to allow him to fly where he is needed or to get out of trouble. He will also have either the Hieratic Jar (one use only for an extra incantation) or Neferra's Plaques of Mighty Incantations which allows you to re-roll all your dice from any incantation cast by that Priest.

## Heroes

### Tomb Prince

Lachlan has a preferred combination for a Tomb Prince that is not often used by other players.

This combination is the Tomb Prince on foot with a great weapon and the Cloak of the Dunes. This allows the Tomb Prince to fly between the catapult, the archers or unit about to see combat so that he ends up where he is most needed. This means that you can use his magic effectively every turn. If he was in a chariot and the unit doesn't need to move during the magic phase, then his magic is effectively wasted that turn.

What a lot of other players do is to have a Tomb Prince in Chariot of Fire in a unit of chariots. Typically they will use this as a flanking force as the Tomb Prince will let the unit move during the magic phase. This problem with this approach is that with the unit out on a flank the opponent can ignore it until it becomes a threat. Once it does become a threat it is easy for the opponent to prevent it charging during the magic phase as they only have to dispel the Tomb Prince's incantation as it is out of range of the other casters.

### Liche Priests

Most Tomb King armies will have either two or three Liche Priests.

If using two Liche Priests, Lachlan puts them both on skeleton steeds. He gives one two dispel scrolls and the Hierophant gets one scroll and the Hieratic Jar. The three dispel scrolls are needed for magic defence as the army has limited options in terms of magic defence.

If using 3 Liche Priests you have room for more magic items. For example the Staff of Ravening is an arcane bound item that casts a magic missile.

### Icon Bearer

Is not commonly used in most competitive tournament lists as it does not have any incantations. It is most likely to be found in an army that has a Liche High Priest and constructs (Tomb Scorpion and Ushabti).

Having an Icon Bearer will normally be looked on favourably (as cutting out a caster) in terms of army composition. The Icon bearer works well with undead constructs, as units within 12" can lose combat by up to two without crumbling..



## Core Units

### Skeleton Warriors

These come with bows by default, with the option of paying extra points to replace the bows with spears and shields.

Lachlan describes the spears and shield configuration as being more expensive and less useful. With or without spears and shields, the Skeleton Warriors are not going to win any combats by themselves and their role will be to tie up the enemy unit until you can take care of it with a more powerful unit.

Lachlan recommends using large units, with at least 20 archers. Large units last longer and make better use of firing in the magic phase via the Incantation of Righteous Smiting. They can be fully ranked and still have all models shoot at large targets or units on a hill.

To get the most use of the unit understand the rules on how to expand and manoeuvre.

If the general is a Tomb King, one unit of Skeleton Warriors may be given a magic standard. The Banner of Undying Legion is a bound spell with the Invocation of Summoning.

### Skeleton Light Horsemen

These are fast cavalry, which gives you flexibility of movement and 360 degree line of sight. As such they make great bunkers for your Liche Priests. A unit of 7 – 10 models is not too expensive and has spare wounds before you lose the “Lookout sir”.

### Tomb Swarm

Cheap and can be useful. If you have the spare points might as well include it for war machine hunting using “it comes from below”. However, if you have the spare special slots, Carrion do the job of hunting war machines better.

### Skeleton Heavy Horsemen

Most players agree that there is not much use for the Heavy Horsemen, and that they are too expensive for what they are. They are really more medium cavalry than heavy cavalry as they are not armoured or hard hitting enough to be used as shock troops, and without the advantages of fast cavalry aren't even worth being used as a bunker for your Priests.

In an army led by a Tomb King, Chariots are a better core choice for mobile combat units.

## Core / Special

### Chariots

Chariots are core in an army led by a Tomb King. If your army is led by a Tomb Prince then they count as a special choice.

Chariots are effectively a medium cavalry unit, but can move with all the flexibility of fast cavalry. Chariots are good against medium to light troops, and the impact hits from the chariots are resolved before attacks with Always Strikes First so they are effective against High Elves.

The recommended unit size is 4 chariots. This provides more survivability than 3 models, and you can almost always get the fourth model into combat. Each model gets four attacks – the two crew plus two steeds. This makes a chariots unit in close combat a good choice for the Incantation of Righteous Smiting

Lachlan normally runs at least two units of 4 chariots. If using a Tomb King on foot then he does not use any command upgrades. If using a Tomb King on a chariot, then have a standard bearer with a magic banner such as the Icon of the Sacred Eye (which gives +1 to hit).

The chariots are fast compared to the rest of the army, and will often be used out on the flanks. Don't be afraid to send chariots through terrain. One unit may wreck itself but you will still have 3 left, and can always heal back the model.

## Special

### Tomb Guard

Tomb Guard work best when running a Tomb King on foot. If you have a Tomb King and a Tomb Prince in the front rank you have a very powerful unit. If you give the unit the Icon of Rakaph banner (free reform banner) then the unit has a 12” radius of domination of the battlefield – reform, move 4” and charge 8” with the Incantation of Urgency.

Recommended unit size is 21 models including champion and standard bearer. A unit size of 21 means that you will still have full ranks bonus even if your champion is killed in a challenge. You can then raise up the champion again in your next magic phase.

### Ushabti

Tomb Guard and Ushabti perform the same role in an army, so you will rarely use both.

Ushanti are good, but the other special choices are even better. If going for the Liche High Priest with the construct army build then use Ushanti rather than Tomb Guard. Their offensive power makes up for the lack of the Tomb King. Recommend a unit of 4 for survivability and getting all the models into combat.

### Carrion

Carrion are the fastest unit in the game. With an Incantation of Urgency they can move 40” in a turn. They are the best war machine hunters in the game. They cause fear so will normally take out even Dwarf war machine crew.

It is recommended to take a unit of 5, so you can spread them out and keep them in range of your magic. A standard ploy is move carrion out with the front models positioned for the charge and the remaining models then strung them back so the last model is still in range of your Liche Priest and your Tomb King to be able to cast Incantations on them.

### Tomb Scorpion

The Tomb Scorpion is one of the best choices for Tomb Kings. They are flexible and tough. With “it comes from below” it can be deployed in the opponent’s deployment zone and can charge on the turn it comes up. Lachlan will tunnel one or two scorpions 30% of the time, depending on the opponent.

While Tomb Scorpions are great, for composition purposes Lachlan avoids having more than two scorpions.

## Rare

### Bone Giant

The unstoppable assault on the charge is okay but the main advantage of the Bone Giant is the small frontage which makes him manoeuvrable, and he's tough. It's easy to get him onto the corner of a combat, where he fights will full effect. In comparison a unit of chariots or Ushabti would only fight with one model if in corner to corner contact with the enemy unit.

### Screaming Skull Catapult

The catapult is one of the lynch pins of the Tomb Kings army. It allows you to dictate the battle on your turns. It forces your opponent to come to you and engage. If you don't have the catapult your shooting is not enough to control the battle and your opponent will soften you up before coming in for the kill.

Most of the time Lachlan will upgrade the catapult with Skulls of the Foe.

Lachlan advises to avoid having two catapults in games where army composition matters. It's not fun to play against and you deserve to be marked down. Most Australian tournaments would reject an army list containing two catapults.

Note that the Tomb Kings FAQ states that even if the crew is destroyed, as long as the catapult is still standing the crew can be raised back with the Invocation of Summoning.

### Casket of Souls

The Casket of Souls is an upgrade taken for a Priest or High Priest, but also takes up a rare slot. If the casket is left without a priest, the casket crumbles.

The casket is a war machine whose effect is resolved at the end of the magic phase. The Light of Death is cast like an incantation and, if it gets off, it affects all enemy units with line of sight to the casket.

It is most effective against units with not many wounds and low leadership.

To be effective it has to be exposed so that it can be seen by most of the opposing army. This means that the attached Liche Priest is also exposed to the most of the opposing army, and so having the casket makes it more difficult to protect your priests.

## Playing with Tomb Kings

In the hands of a good player, Tomb Kings are very effective. In hands of a moderate or poor player, they may not be that effective.

A common mistake is spreading out. If a player spreads his characters out so they can't concentrate their magic then you know that they are not that experienced.

### Favourite build for 2250 pts

Lachlan's favourite build for 2250 pts tournaments is

Tomb King on foot, with Destroyer of Eternities and Collar of Shapesh.  
Tomb Prince with great weapon and Cloak of Dune  
Liche Priest with 2 dispel scrolls  
Hierophant (Liche Priest) with dispel scroll plus Hieratic Jar.

20 – 25 skeleton archers with champion, standard bearer and banner of undying legion  
7 – 10 skeleton light horsement  
2 to 3 units of 4 chariots

21 Tomb Guard with champion and standard bearer  
5 Carrion  
2 Tomb Scorpions

Screaming Skull Catapult  
Bone Giant (depending on how many units of chariots he has taken)

### Worst match ups

The worst opponents for Tomb Kings are armies that can get to your Liche Priests – either fast units that can charge them or units that can shoot them.

Vampires are difficult to win against unless you can take out the Vampire lord. Games will often end up in stalemates or narrow victory/loss..

High Elves with Star Dragon and lots of Dragon Princes are immune to the Screaming Skull Catapult (which does flaming attacks).

## Anti-Tomb King tactics

Tomb Kings are different army and require a different approach when facing them. The way to beat Tomb Kings is to accept that they will get spells off and plan for it.

1. Go after their priests. This stops movement and raising back casualties.
2. Dealing with their magic phase – you can't stop everything, so don't even try. Decide what you are going to stop and what you can let through. Don't have half measures; if you decide that you are going to stop something commit the resources (DD/scrolls) that you need to stop it. Don't use one dispel scroll and then let it through the next time (that turn) that the player tries to cast it.
3. Try to make it that the Tomb King player has to achieve multiple things to do well, so that they have to spread / split their magic. Provide them with multiple threats on multiple fronts.
4. The crucial point in game where you still have all your magic defence in hand, hopefully enough to stop a phase. That is the stage where you want to exert maximum pressure on the Tomb King player – I'm going to get everything into you. This is normally turn two when it happens. Multiple threats good general advice for any army, but especially applicable against Tomb Kings. It does come back to getting those priests.
5. The importance of the Hierophant? Not as important as the Vampire. Killing Hierophant is not much better than killing a normal priest. If you have a Tomb King in the army then its leadership 10 for the 24" diameter. The stuff outside this range is normally scorpions and chariots whose LD is not too bad. Crumbling not big factor, the reduction in magic is more important.
6. Split the TK army up and deal with it piece meal, if you can.