

Akhenaten

Egyptian Museum
in Cairo



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Akhenaten's Ancestors

The 18th Dynasty c. 1570 - 1320 BC turned Egypt into an imperial power. The Hyksos who occupied Egypt for a century and a half were driven out by Alimose I, the Theban prince who founded the 18th Dynasty. He followed them into Syria and returned in triumph to become pharaoh of Egypt with his capital at Thebes. Throughout most of its history Egypt has not been a particularly warlike nation, but in response to its humiliation under Asiatic domination, it became militantly aggressive.

1. Colossal Statue of Akhenaten

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Temple of Aten, Tell el-Amarna,

Sandstone, 11.4 m, Ground floor, room 3, JE 49529

Prior to founding the new capital of Tell el-Amarna, Amenhotep IV, who changed his name to Akhenaten between the fifth and sixth year of his reign, erected his principal temple of the Aten on the east side of the temple of Amun-Ra, the *Gempaaten* which translates as 'The solar disc has been found'. This temple was demolished by rulers of the late 18th and early 19th Dynasty following condemnation of the 'heretic' pharaoh.

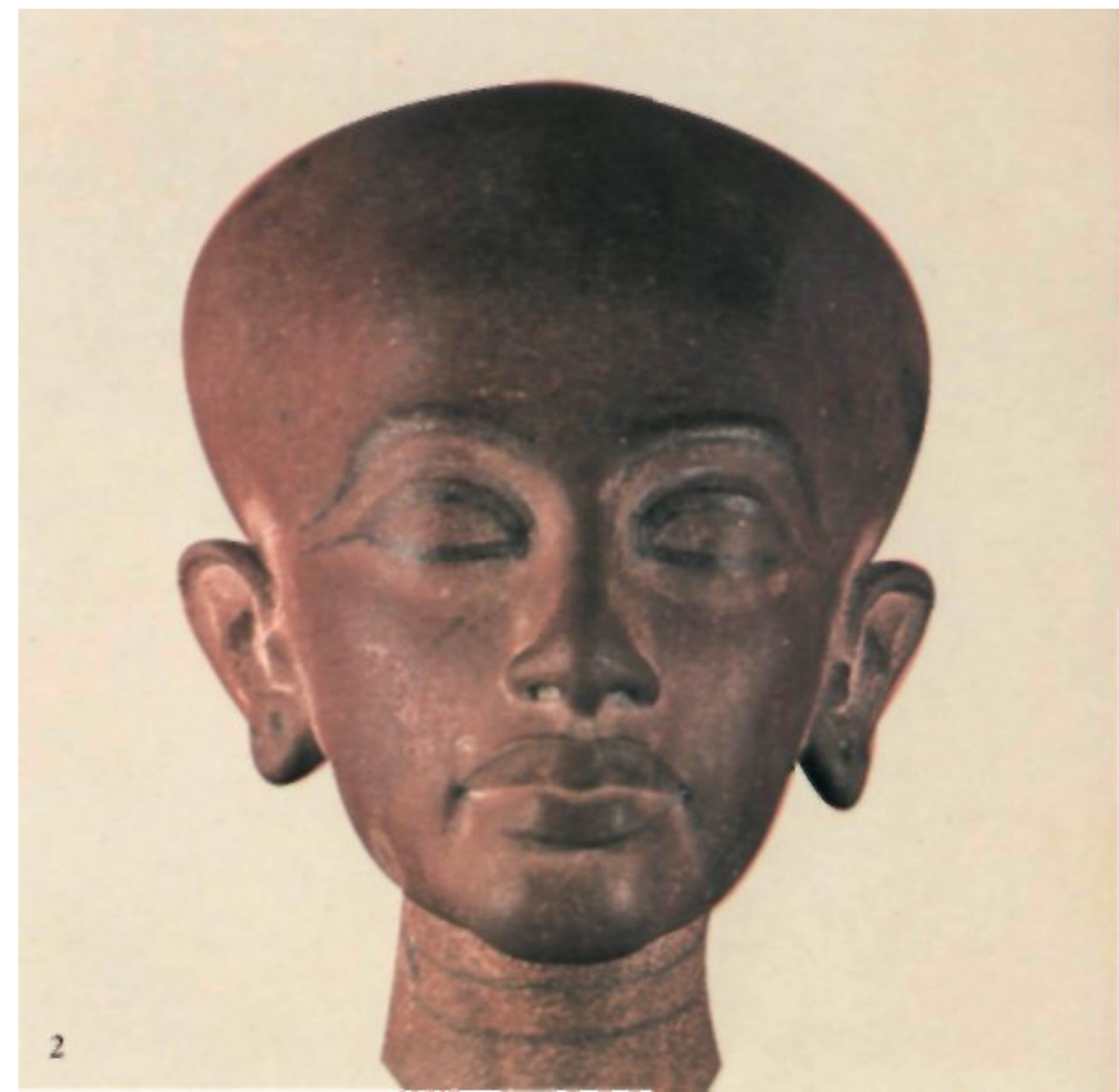
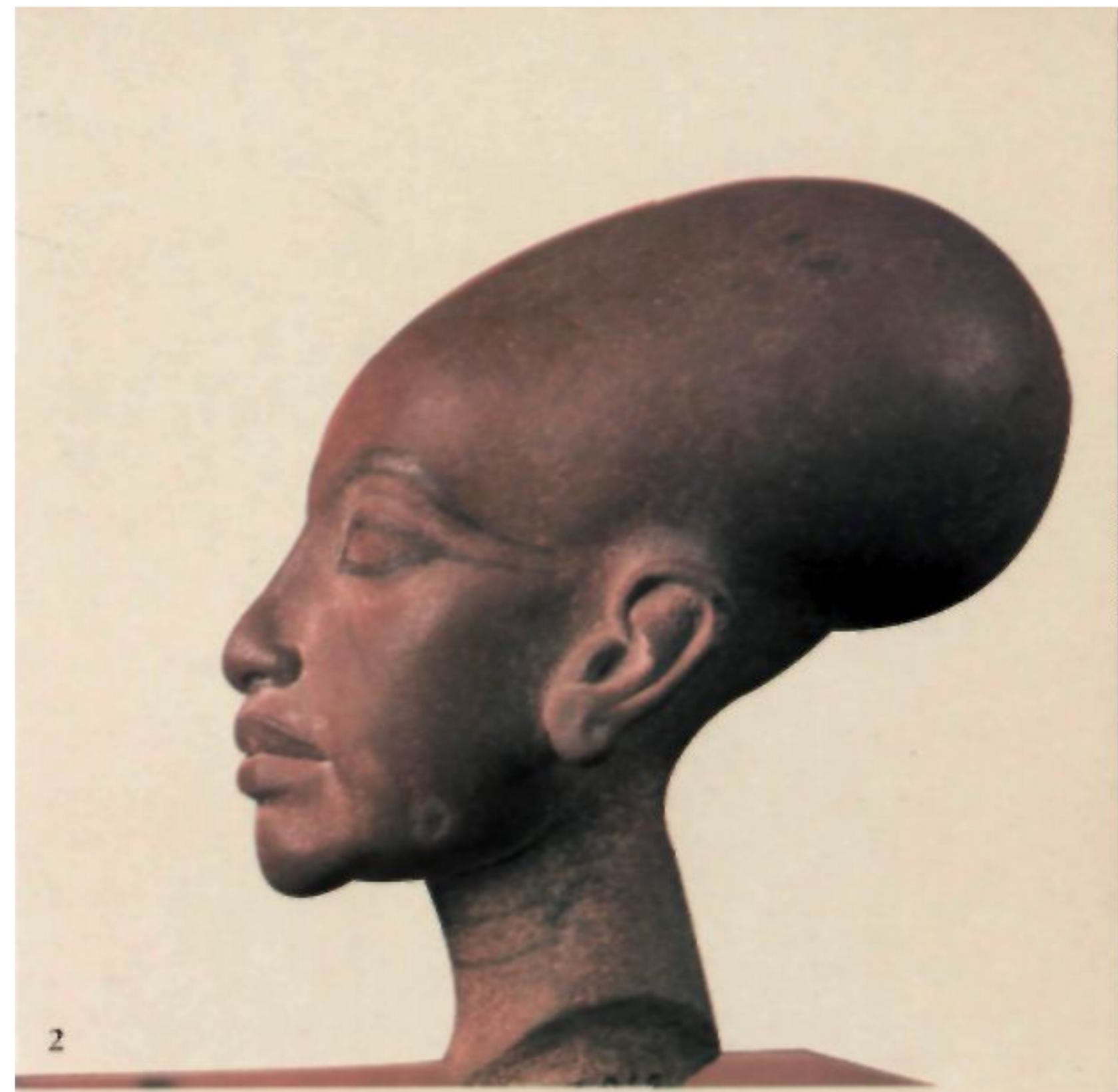
The temple contained a priestly court whose twenty-eight pillars were supported by colossal figures of the pharaoh. Six of these statues are to be found in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo; two others in Luxor Museum; one in the Louvre; one in Munich; and the others in the museum depots in Karnak; some more fragments are stored in the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The statue represents Amenhotep IV standing, hands crossed over his chest, holding the royal insignia, the crook and the flail. He wears the *khat* headdress, similar to the *nemes* but baggier, combined with the double crown. The pharaoh appears with his characteristic features including the long, tapering half-closed eyes with heavy eyelids, long delicate nose, large protruding mouth, exaggerated chin, and long ears with pierced lobes, a ceremonial beard attached to his chin. He is wearing a knee-length pleated kilt with a central tape, decorated with two uraei.

2. Head of a Princess

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna,

Quartzite. H. 21 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 44869

The workshop of the sculptor Thutmose contained, in addition to many plaster heads, a number of the quartzite heads now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and in the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin. This egg-shaped head has a broad, elongated cranium, a slim neck and severe features. The head is rendered in the Amarna style which, influenced by religious concepts, emphasized hereditary traits and natural representations. On this beautifully modeled head, the sculptor outlined the eyes and eyebrows in black, perhaps intending to carve them out for inlay; additional black lines on the neck designated areas for the work. The tenon at the base of the neck indicates that this head was attached to a separately sculptured torso and was part of a composite statue that was assembled after both parts were finished.





The descendants of Ahmose I pushed conquest further into Palestine and Syria. Greatest of those was Tuthmosis III, the most competent general Egypt had produced. In his 54-year reign he carried out many successful campaigns against the Nubians to the south and the Asiatics to the north. His eighth campaign (c. 1457 BC), when he crossed the Euphrates, marked the summit of his imperial activities. Kingdom after kingdom was conquered and brought under the domination of Egypt. Rich tributes were paid to Thebes. The descendants of Tuthmosis III, Amenhotep II and Tuthmosis IV had no imperial ambitions but they preserved Egypt's borders. When Amenhotep III came to the throne in 1386 BC, he had no military ambitions of conquest either. After the seventh year of his reign, he never led his armies out of Thebes. He spent the rest of his life living luxuriously in his capital with his wife, Queen Tiye, of whom he seems to have been fond. Her name appears beside his in most inscrip-

3. Bust of Akhenaten

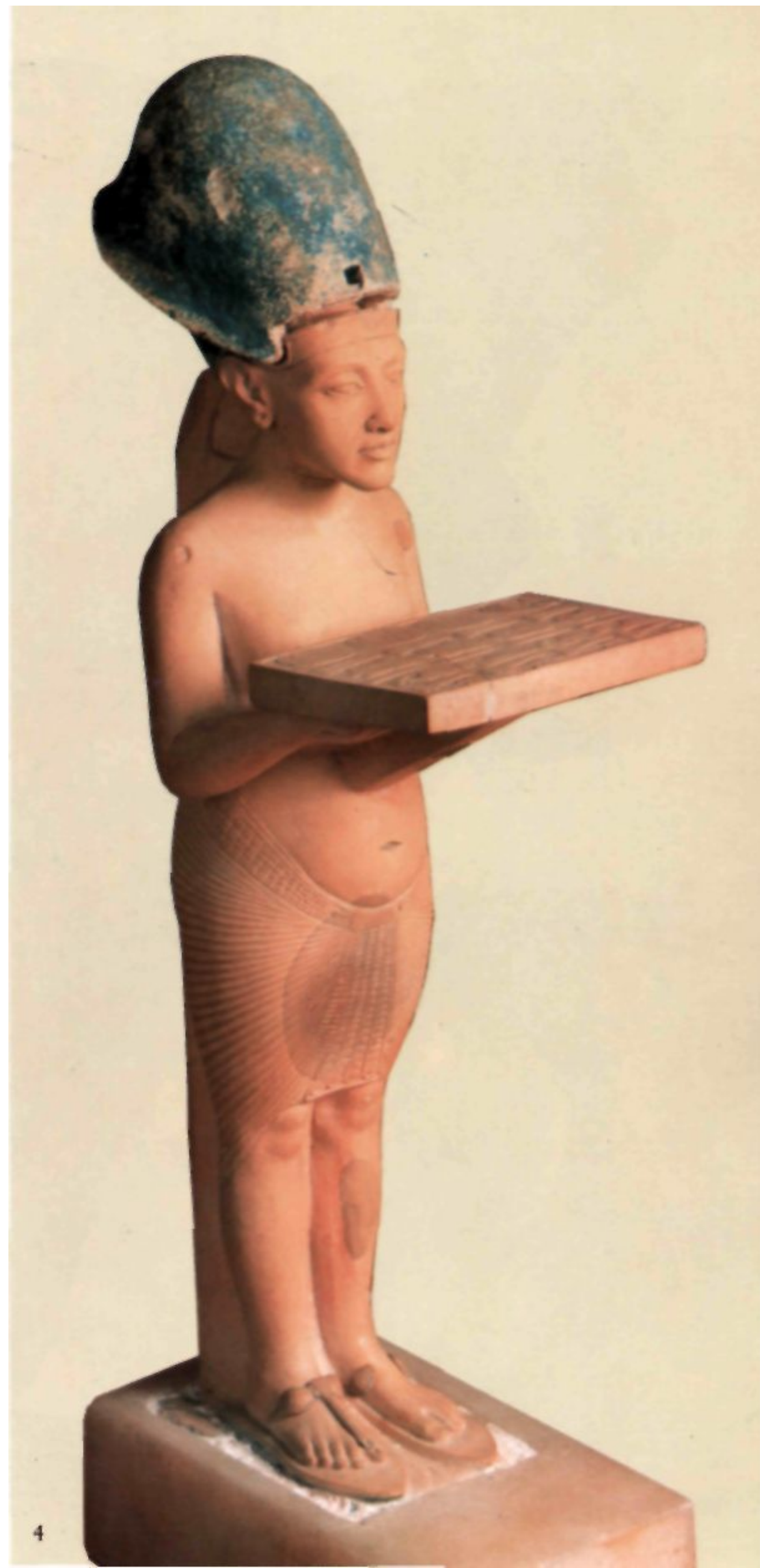
18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350- 1333 BC, Temple of Aten, Karnak, Sandstone, H. 1.85 m. Ground floor, room 3, [E 49528

Amenhotep IV, the future Akhenaten, ruled Egypt for about seventeen years. His temple, Gempaaten, in Karnak, consisted of a large porticoed courtyard covering an area roughly 130 by 200 meters, oriented on an east-west axis. Placed against each of the pillars in the courtyard was a colossal statue of Amenhotep IV, over five meters high and painted in bright colors. This bust, from one of these colossal statues, represents Amenhotep IV, his hands crossed, holding the royal insignia, the crook and the flail, wearing around his wrists and on his arms cartouches of the god Ra-Horakhty. The pharaoh wears the *nemes*, the classic headcloth, with an uraeus attached to his front, and above it the two plumes of the god Shu (Air). His face is elongated, with a pendant chin, extended with a false beard, narrow eyes with upper lids projecting sharply outward, the nose is straight and very long, the mouth extends into a V-shape. The pharaoh's ears are also represented in this exaggerated style and are extremely long with pierced lobes.

4. Akhenaten making an offering

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Painted Limestone, H. 35 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 43580

This small statue would have originally been located on the altar that was usually found in gardens and where the daily rituals in honor of the Aten were performed. The pharaoh is represented standing in the act of making an offering. His hands are holding a slab on which different varieties of food and lotus flowers are depicted. The pharaoh wears a short plaited kilt with a central tape, his belly is deformed, showing his navel, in accordance with the artistic style of the early part of his reign. A blue crown, carved separately, which was used mainly in military images surmounts his head. A hole at the front was made to hold an asp produced in a different material.





tions, a new development which was to be carried even further in the reign of his son and successor. Tiye was the daughter of a nobleman called Yuya and his wife Tuya. Yuya was an important officer in the army and he owned a lot of land in the Delta. Amenhotep III kept an excessively large harem including the daughter of the king of Mitanni of Syria who brought with her 'the chief of the harem, namely 317 persons'. There was a considerable Asiatic influence at the Egyptian court.

Amenhotep III was the first pharaoh to be worshipped as a god in his own lifetime. The view held by most modern Egyptologists is that the origin of the cult was political and arose first because of the need to set up a rival to Amun whose priests became too powerful and second, because of the need for a universal god who would be recognised not only in Egypt but in the pharaoh's foreign lands.

Tiye gave birth to six children, two boys and four girls. The eldest boy died before assuming any office. Amenhotep III also married two of his daughters, Isis and Sitamun. Great building activity took place during his reign. The princes of Syria and Palestine which were under Egyptian do-



5. Head of Akhenaten

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1550 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Limestone, H. 24.5cm, Ground floor, room 3,

This head of Akhenaten is typical of the Amarna style. The statue shows him tranquil but also vigorous, this reflects a strong personality. In fact, Akhenaten is one of the most controversial and least understood men of the ancient world. The crown, *fyieprcsh*, was originally coloured blue. This statue was found while paving a road at Tell el-Amarna for the visit of King Fuad I of Egypt.

6. Sculptor's model with two royal portraits

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Limestone, H. 23 cm, W. 31 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 59294

This slab, like many of the trial pieces found at Tell el-Amarna, represents two royal faces carved in stone. They have been identified as two portraits of Akhenaten, or one of Akhenaten and one of his successor Smenkhkare. The two faces are similar. Only the upper part of one side of the slab has been incised. The face to the right was more likely to be sculpted first. The two faces are wearing a headcloth with an asp on the forehead, the head of the right serpent is missing, the right face has deeply caned features. The two portraits' eyes are almond-shaped, very narrow, and enclosed between heavy lids. The nose is long, the mouth fleshy and down-turned, and the chin prominent, the ears have pierced lobes and the neck is long and thin.

The great similarity between the two faces leaves no doubt that they are portraits of a single figure, almost certainly Akhenaten.





minion were educated at the Egyptian court. From these and from the kings of other neighbouring states, letters flowed into the office of Amenhotep III. These letters still survive.

Aki-izzi, lord of Kama, another Egyptian province, warns the pharaoh of a threat to his states by Aziru the Amorite :

'O my Lord, if the trouble of this land lies upon the heart of my Lord, let my Lord send troops, and let them come.'

Trouble had already begun within the Egyptian Empire, but it had not yet reached serious proportions. Most of these letters are unashamed requests for gold. 'Send me much gold, more gold', writes the prince of Mittani, 'for in the land of my brother (Amenhotep), gold is as common as dust.' And further, the king of Babylon writes,

'Send me a great deal of gold. If, during this harvest, you send the gold, then I will give you my daughter.'

The rise of Akhenaten

When the Crown Prince was 21, he married the lovely Nefertiti whose name means 'the beautiful woman has come'. She is the queen whose features have become famous through the sculpted head which was found by the German expedition at Amarna. She was the daughter of the vizier Ay, who was the brother of Queen Tiye and a son of Yuya and Tuya. We do not know who Nefertiti's mother was. She must have died early, and Nefertiti was brought up by another wife of Ay called Tey. By marrying Nefertiti, the future Akhenaten did not follow the old custom,

7. Unfinished head of Nefertiti

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Brown Quartzite, H. 35.5 cm. Ground floor, room 3, [E 59286

Nefertiti, whose name means 'the beautiful one is here', was the chief wife of Akhenaten. They had together six daughters. She supported her husband in his new religion and participated in its rituals. The date of her death is difficult to ascertain and it has been suggested that she was buried in the royal tomb at Tell el-Amarna late in Akhenaten's reign or shortly after his death. This beautiful head of the queen is one of a vast number of pieces discovered in the workshop of the chief sculptor Thutmose at Tell el-Amarna. It was to be part of a composite statue made of several elements, each sculptured separately and assembled together after completion. A crown of a different material would have been fitted on the upper part of the head.

This unfinished head is particularly elegant, representing the grace of a woman of great spirit with its eyebrows elongated towards the temples, the eyes half shut by slightly downcast eyelids and its mysterious mouth. The artist's guidelines are still visible.

that of the pharaoh marrying his eldest sister, who was the legal heiress of the kingdom after the Egyptian matriarchal system and chose a bride who was not a direct member of the royal family. Other wives were soon given to the young pharaoh among whom was a Syrian princess.

It is difficult to understand how Akhenaten's personality developed during his childhood and adolescence at the Theban court. Here we only give bare facts.

During the first four years of the co-regency with his father, the young pharaoh ruled from Thebes. In the sixth year of his reign, he left Thebes and established a new capital which he called Akhetaten, 'Horizon of the Disk'. He introduced a new art style and a new cult of the sun disk and changed his name from Amenhotep IV, which means 'Amun is satisfied', to 'Akhenaten', meaning 'It is well with Aten', and later ordered that the name Amun be chiseled out on every tomb, temple and monument on which it appeared throughout all of Egypt, even on his father's monuments. This heresy brought him and his successors down and brought down the 18th Dynasty after its magnificent start.

Those are facts, but what lies behind them and what questions do they pose? What type of man was this young pharaoh, and what pushed him to carry out such a sheer change? Why did he choose such a lonely site for his new capital? Akhenaten reigned for 11 years from Akhetaten, now the capital of the Egyptian Empire. His palace was more elaborately decorated, with paintings on the walls, ceilings and floors, than that of his parents at Thebes, and beautiful gardens were laid around it. The rock-cut tombs and mortuary shrines of the nobles were built in the desert cliffs towards the east which formed the back of the city. On their walls are many drawings of the houses and palaces of the city, and inscriptions about life therein.

To Akhetaten came the envoys from the furthest limits of the known world and in the pharaoh's foreign office near his palace were stored the royal letters from foreign kings. They were similar to those received by his father: requests for gold, and sometimes from Akhenaten's Syrian and Phoenician feudal lords, pressing demands for military aid. The Hittites, long-time enemies of Egypt, started to expand southward. Some of pharaoh's subjects surrendered and others resisted falling in the hands of the Hittites. Among these were Abdi-Ashirta and his son Aziru the governor of the threatened city of Tunip. They wrote to Akhenaten,



My Lord, Tunip, thy servant, speaks saying, who formerly could have plundered Tunip without being plundered by Menkheperre (the great Thutmose III, Akhenaten's ancestor). The gods of the Pharaoh or Egypt, my Lord, dwell in Tunip. May our Lord ask his old men if it is not so? Now, however, we belong no more to our Lord, the Pharaoh of Egypt- If his soldiers and chariots come too late, then the Pharaoh of Egypt will mourn over those things. And now our enemy will do as he pleases in the land of our Lord the Pharaoh...and now Tunip, the city, weeps and her tears are flowing and there is no help for us. For twenty years we have been sending to our Lord the Pharaoh of Egypt, but there has not come to us a word.

Gabal (Byblos) was loyal to Egypt for centuries, even as far back as the Old Kingdom. The governor of Gabal, Rihbadi wrote to the pharaoh a series of letters which were discovered at Amarna over a century ago. In one of these he writes :

It is painful to describe what the dog of Aziru has done. Smyra, a station of my Lord, a fortress... has fallen, and they spoil our fortress... the cries of the place... a violent man and a dog...

Another tablet says the following :

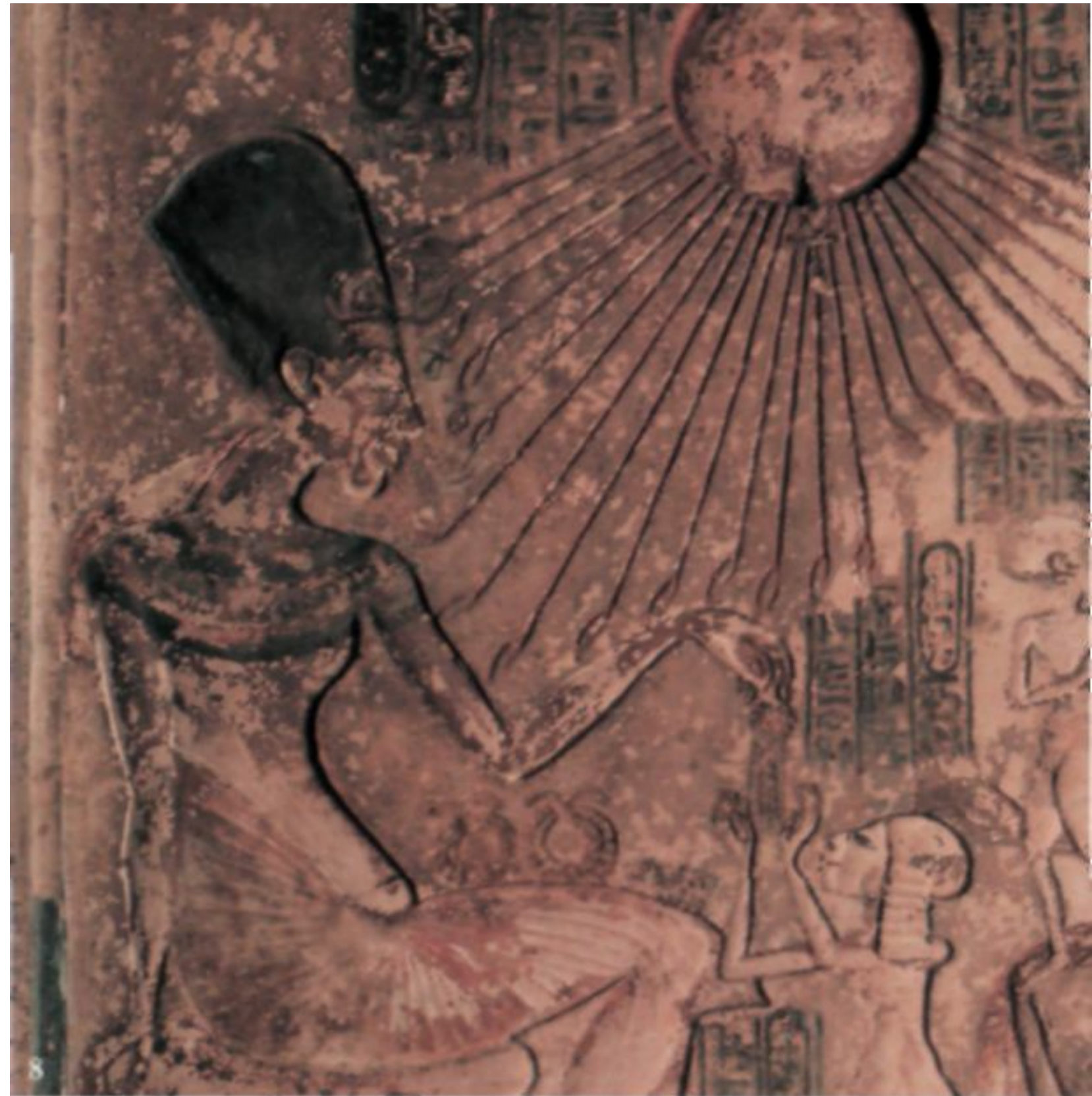
... march against him and smite him... the land is the pharaoh's land, and since I have talked and you have not moved, the city of Smyra has been lost. There is no money to buy horses all is finished, we have been spoiled ... give me thirty horses with chariots, men, men... there is none, not a horse.

These documents were written in cuneiform script on clay tablets. We don't know why the pharaoh ignored these petitions. Didn't he have the vision to see the empire his ancestor had made was collapsing? Was

8. Stela of the royal family

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1351 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Painted limestone, H. 44 cm, W. 39 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 44865
This stela similar to an icon was kept in the private chapel of Amarna houses. It was protected by two shutters of wood, whose hinges were fitted into pivots which are still visible on the corners of the stela.

The stela represented the royal family seated together as a holy family. On the upper part of the stela, the sun disc, with its rays ending in human hands, holds the signs *ankh* and *was* (life and might). Akhenaten and Nefertiti are seated on stools with cushions, their feet resting on a long socle. Between them, their eldest daughter Meritaten is trying to catch her father's earring. Meketaten and Ankhnesneferibre are sitting on their mother's lap. Meketaten is standing on the queen's knee and is trying to touch her chin, while Ankhnesneferibre is holding the earring strands. The pharaoh is wearing the blue crown, a collar around his chest and shoulders and a plaited skirt. The queen wears the high blue crown, a collar around her chest and shoulders, and a long, transparent robe.





he following a deliberate policy of non-violence? We may never know the answer to these questions. He had truly believed that it was possible to retain the loyalty of all of Syria by uniting the people to him in the worship of Aten. He had hoped to bind together the many countries over which he had ruled by giving them a single faith of love and happiness. In fact, there is no more tragic story in ancient history than the disillusion of the pharaoh and the fall of the Egyptian Empire.

On the north-eastern frontiers, the Egyptian Empire was losing ground while the Hittites were moving down from Turkey. But the pharaoh within his pleasant city, pursued his own philosophical and religious interests and extended a new realism in the arts inspired by the worship of one god. Akhenaten had removed the last traces of the older faiths. Beginning with Amun, he had moved on to forbid the worship of all other gods. Isis, Osiris, Hathor, Ptah and the entire pantheon of lesser deities were swept away. The demons and monsters which inhabited the underworld had no place in the tombs of his nobles.

The worship of Aten was not entirely new, but Akhenaten's revolutionary act was to believe only in Aten and to ban the worship of all other deities. Aten was understood as an absolute god, absolute truth, and absolute love. All that was good on earth was a demonstration of Aten : love,

9. Panel with adoration scene of the Aten

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC., Tell el-Amarna, Painted Limestone, H. 53 cm, W. 48 cm, D. 8 cm, Ground floor, room 3, TR 10. 11.26.4

This panel was found in the rubble blocking the royal tomb of Akhenaten. Its function within the funerary monument is not clear.

The scene represents the royal family, Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters Meritaten and Meketaten, worshipping the god Aten. On the surface between the figures, one can see traces of a red grid used by the artist to execute the decoration of the tomb. The solar disc is placed in the top right corner, with rays terminating in small hands, some of which are holding the signs of *was* (might) and *ankh* (life).

The rays of Aten pass behind members of the royal family and in front of the offering table. The contents of the offering table are almost completely obscured by the rays of the solar disc.

The pharaoh is wearing the blue crown, adorned by the uraeus; his skirt, partly plaited, shows his knee. The queen is wearing a wig, a diadem surmounted by two horns, a sun disk, and a tall feather; her long, transparent robe reveals her body. Their daughter Meritaten is holding her sister with her right hand and her sistrum in her left hand, the figure of Meketaten is damaged.





music, health, well-being, natural beauty, etc. The symbol of the new faith was the disk of the sun from which the rays stretched down like arms.

The 'Hymn or Aten', an expression of Akhenaten's faith, was written by the pharaoh himself. In the tomb of Ay, Akhenaten's vizier; who became pharaoh after the death of Tutankhamun, we find a long inscription of the Hymn of Aten. A piece of pottery was also found to contain part of the Hymn which is very similar to Psalm 104.

The god sheds his beneficence on all lands alike. He is universal. This stress on universality provided a unifying political symbol. However, the new faith was practiced only 'superficially' by the high society. The ordinary people carried on with the traditional beliefs. On a practical level, throughout Egypt, the new religion dismantled the Amun priesthood and closed the temples.

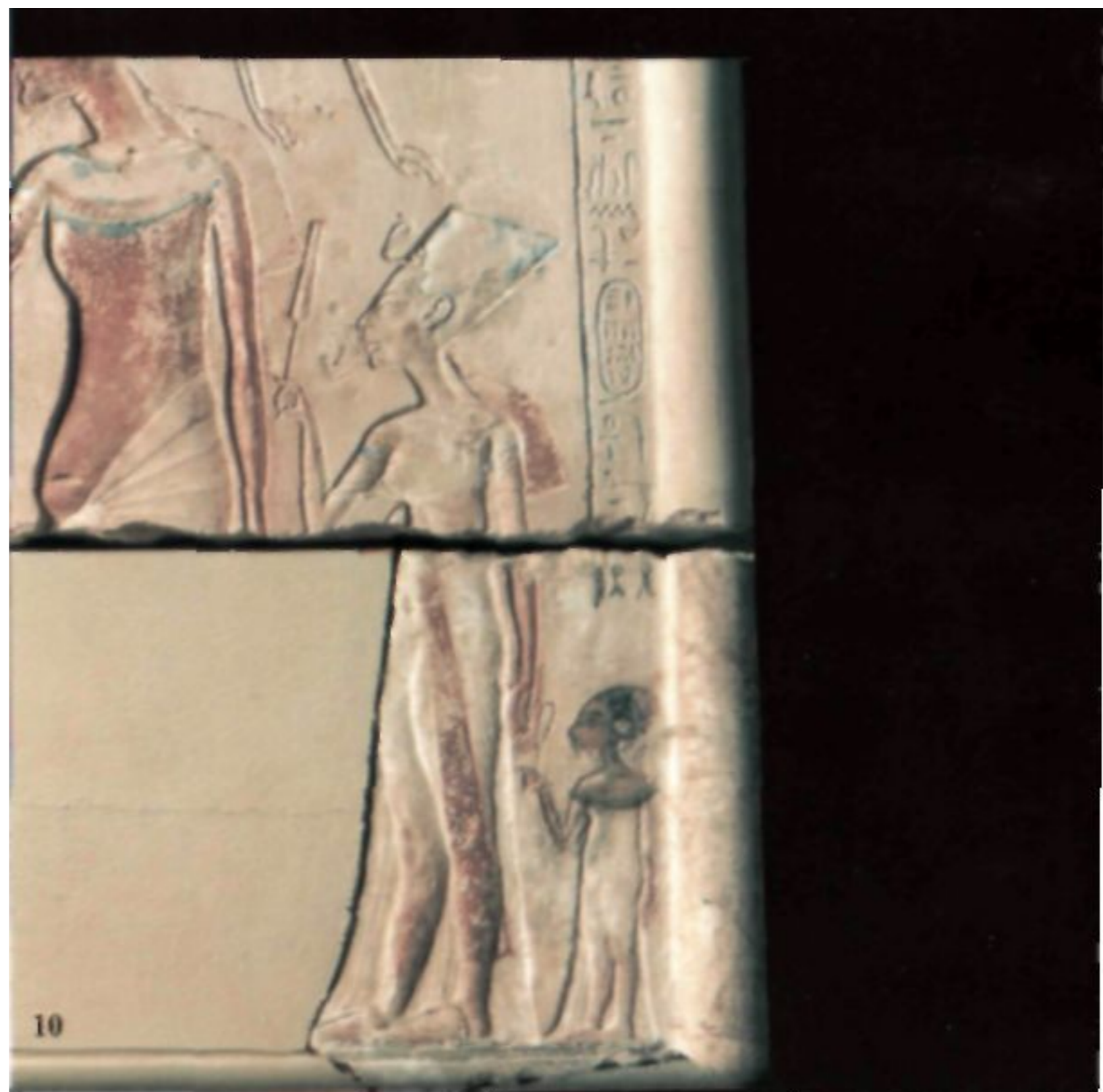
As Akhenaten was occupied with the things nearest to his heart, the country was run by two influential men. Ay and Horemhab. Both men later became pharaohs. Ay was both Akhenaten and Horemhab's father-in-law.

Accompanying the religious revolution came an even more astonishing revolution in the arts. For thousands of years art was bound by religious conventions, particularly in respect to royalty. There were only a limited number of positions in which the pharaoh could be represented. He was a god-king, and particularly in sculpture his might and dignity were emphasised. The queen, rarely shown with the pharaoh, had an equally dignified pose. Akhenaten had the courage to abolish all these deeply rooted traditions. Artists were encouraged to set down honestly what they saw before them. There was no hiding of physical deficiencies. If a man was fat and old, he was not to be represented as slim and young, no matter how important his position. The pharaoh himself seems to have suffered from a physical deformity. He was represented with a dis-

10. Facade of a Shrine

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Painted limestone, H. 98 cm. W. 118 cm. Ground floor, room 3, (K 65041) Akhenaten wears his typical blue crown and a kilt. He is represented devoting the offering. Nefertiti wears a transparent blue dress and a crown. Behind her stands her daughter Meritaten.

These type of shrines in a temple-like shape were quite often placed in private houses during Akhenaten's reign. Their purpose was to serve as a sort of altar first for the royal (holy) family, and later to the cult of Aten.





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tended belly, an elongated skull and a long neck. All these peculiarities in addition to his feminine-shaped body show that he asked his artists to make a faithful reproduction of himself. Nefertiti, like many contemporary Egyptians, had developed a cataract in one eye and in her famous head, now in the Berlin Museum this defect is clearly shown. Akhenaten liked his artists to represent him as a devoted husband and father; he had allowed Nefertiti to have a position equal to his. It is clear that he wanted to set the example of a family-oriented man, playing with his little girls, nursing them on his lap, or kissing them.

In the 12th year of his reign, the Pharaoh received the Queen Mother Tiye who made a special visit to Akhetaten. The occasion is depicted on the walls of the tomb of Huy. Aware of the dangerous situation within the empire, and also within Egypt, the Queen Mother may have persuaded her stubborn son to come to terms with the priests of Thebes. Shortly after her return to Thebes, she died and was buried in a small tomb in the Valley of the Kings, a few metres away from the tomb in which her mother and father had been buried. Shortly after her death, there seems to have been a sort of mutiny by the priests of Amun at

II. Stela of Any

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna, Painted limestone, H. 72 cm, Ground floor, room 3, CG 34177, JE 29748
The charioteer Tjay driving Any.

Any was overseer, royal scribe of Two Lands and scribe of the offering table. In his tomb at Tell el-Amarna were six votive stela placed in three niches beneath the entrance portico. These were dedicated to Any by his brother and other members of his household, including his charioteer Tjay. This round-top stela represents Any standing in his chariot; on the left side is charioteer, Tjay, holding the reins in his hands; the chariot is equipped with a quiver of arrows. Any wears a heavy wig with an unguent vase, around his neck, the so-called "gold of valor" necklace, this type was awarded by the pharaoh to his officials as a mark of distinction. He wears a tunic with short wide belated sleeves and a loose skirt. The Amarna style is obvious in the bulging belly and high buttocks, as well as in the facial features and head of the charioteer, all of which recall Akhenaten's daughter's head with its elongated skull and tapering half-closed eyes. The stela includes six columns with hieroglyphic inscriptions which mention Any's name and titulary, and three short lines for the charioteer Tjay.

Thebes. Akhenaten's reaction was to give orders to completely destroy Amun's name in every inscription in which it occurred throughout Egypt. This was so carefully carried out that today the ancient wall paintings are pockmarked with scars which show where the name was hammered out. Even the tomb of Queen Tiye was reopened so that the word Amun might be erased out of the name of Amenhotep III. Towards the end of his reign, Akhenaten gave out orders to hammer out names of the other deities as well. But this decree was not carried out.

Also in the 12th year of his reign, his daughter Meketaten died while giving birth. The infant's father was probably Akhenaten himself. He also married two other of his daughters, Meritaten and Ankhesenpaaten and had a daughter by her. Later, Ankhesenpaaten became Tutankhamun's wife. It is also certain that in the 15th year of his reign, Akhenaten let his half-brother, Smenkhkare, marry his daughter Meritaten, and made Smenkhkare his co-regent. The significant fact is that Smenkhkare and Meritaten returned to Thebes and ruled from there. Akhenaten lived a life of insubordination. He looked down upon the old gods and banned their worship; he deserted the ancestral capital and built a new city dedicated to his 'sole god'. After such a start, we can't imagine him making any sort of compromise. It is possible that the fanatical drive in this story came from Nefertiti and not the pharaoh. Archeologists digging among the foundations of Akhetaten have discovered evidence that supports this possibility.

Indeed, in about the 14th year of his reign, Akhenaten seems to have quarrelled with Nefertiti who at the time moved to a palace in the northern part of the city. She took with her Akhenaten's other half-brother, Tutankhaten whose name appears with hers on objects found at that site. At the same time, in a series of monuments at the southern palace, her name was erased and replaced by that of her daughter Meritaten. The quarrel could have occurred because of an attempt to compromise with Thebes. Nefertiti remained a fanatical Atenist, maybe for religious reasons, but most probably because she knew that her political future depended on preventing the return to power of the Amun priesthood. Anyway, Smenkhkare had already gone back to Thebes to prepare for the swing back to Amunism. Akhenaten, left alone in his palace, married his own daughter Ankhesenpaaten.



12. Meryra and his wife Iniuia

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Sakkara

Painted limestone. Ground floor, room 3, JE 99076

Meryra was the scribe of the temple of the Aten at Akhetaton (Tell el-Amarna) and Memphis; his wife Iniuia was the 'favorite of the lady of the palace', that is the queen.

They are seated on a chair with a high back and lion's legs; Iniuia stretches her right arm behind the back of her husband.

Meryra wears a wig with wavy locks terminating in small curls; a necklace of honor of the type awarded by the pharaoh to his officials as a mark of distinction, and a hidden chain with a pendant, armband and bracelet; a tunic with plaited sleeves; and a skirt with a plaited frontal section attached to the waist. His hands rest on his thighs, the left hand holding a folded cloth. The name and the titles of Meryra are inscribed on the frontal section of his skirt.

Iniuia wears an extravagant wig of chevron curls, with a mass of braids wrapped to the right of her wig. Like Meryra, she holds a folded piece of cloth in her left hand. She is dressed in a long and tight robe reaching to her feet. The chair's back is inscribed with ten columns of hieroglyphic inscriptions mentioning the names and the title of the couple. Meryra's position proves that there was a temple of Aten at Memphis.

13. Thoth and a Scribe

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna

Steatite. H. 14 cm, W. 6.8 cm, D. 11.2 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JF. 59291

Thoth (Djehuty in Ancient Egyptian) was the deity of moon, wisdom and writing and was very often represented in the form of two animals: the baboon or the sacred ibis. In the Old Kingdom, he was usually portrayed as an ibis-headed man, holding a scribal palette and pen or notched palm leaf, performing some kind of act of recording or calculation. In the New Kingdom he appears both in his anthropomorphic, ibis-headed form, recording the results of the weighing of the heart of the deceased, and as a baboon perched on the top of the scales.

He was regarded the creator of sciences and arts and inventor of letters, because according to the beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians, a certain category of these animals actually knew the use of letters.

At Tell el-Amarna Thoth was mostly found represented with a scribe seated before him. This representation was extremely popular during the reign of Amenhotep III and, as demonstrated by this finely carved example, it continued to be so during the reign of Akhenaten. Though its owner is unknown we are sure that it belongs to Akhenaten's period because it was found in an Amarna house.





The Aftermath

In the 17th year of his reign Akhenaten died at the age of forty-one and almost simultaneously Smenkhkare also died, leaving the throne vacant. This gave Nefertiti her chance. She pushed Tutankhaten and married him to the heiress Ankhesenpaaten, Akhenaten's widow and daughter. In this way she legitimised his succession, and Tutankhaten, still a child, reigned for a short time from Akhetaten, under Nefertiti's guidance. Later, however, the boy-king was persuaded to return to Thebes, the most likely reason being that Nefertiti was now dead. At Thebes he changed his name to Tutankhamun (it was his tomb that Howard Carter discovered), and his wife became Ankhesenamun. Hence

14. Princess nibbling a roasted duck

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna

Limestone, H. 27cm, W. 16.5 cm, D. 11.2 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 48035

This charming little sculptor's model was excavated in 1924 just outside the entrance pylons of an open-air temple belonging to the North Palace, a queen's residence that appears to have been used in the later years of Akhenaten's reign. The drawing shows a figure whose wide sidelock identifies her as a princess, seated comfortably on a soft pillow. Her pose is similar to the princess's pose in a painting from the pharaoh's house. She holds a whole roasted duck to her mouth with one hand while stretching the other toward a table bearing other delicacies. She appears to be nude, but a thin garment is placed by lines at her neck and over her arm. The piece is unfinished because only the lower part was carved. It gives us a hint of the artists of the Amarna period.

15. Fragment of a painted floor

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna

Painted plaster, H. 1.01 m, W. 1.6 m, IE 33030/1

Most of ancient Egypt's buildings were built mainly of brick and wood, and thus ruined very quickly, some rare remains have come down to us to bear witness to their grandeur, refined construction and painting techniques. Among the features of the royal palaces at Tell el-Amarna were gorgeously painted pavements, walls and pillars. In the harim, columned courts were painted with refreshing false ponds containing fish, ducks, and lotuses amid rippling water. Several fragments of a painted floor from the southern palace at el-Amarna, the Maru-Aten (which was built for Meritaten, Akhenaten's eldest daughter) depict one of those marsh scenes with wild ducks living over tufts of reeds and papyrus which mix with the floating leaves of flowering plant. These scenes were a favorite subject for palace decoration.

16. Fragment of a painted floor

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC, Tell el-Amarna

Painted plaster,





the wheel had turned full circle, and the priests of Amun returned to power.

Later they took full revenge. Just as Akhenaten had caused the name of Amun to be erased from every monument, they in turn did the same to his name. Gangs of workmen were sent to the city of Akhetaten. Whenever they found the name of Akhenaten and Nefertiti in tombs, temples and palaces they wiped them out. The temples of Aten were destroyed. Akhenaten's mummy has never been found and we assume that his tomb was violated and his body destroyed. But this came a little later. The

17. Akhenaten with a female figure on his lap

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten. 1 S50 - [333 BC, Tell el-Amarna
Limestone, H. 39.5 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 44866

Many unfinished statues, sketches and roughly carved reliefs have been found in Egypt providing thorough documentation on the activities of painters and sculptors and vital knowledge about the employed techniques and the way they carried out the production of a work of art.

Akhenaten sitting and on his lap a female child. He is wearing an enormous blue crown and a robe with short tapering sleeves, the child looks naked except for a short wig. There is a cubic element below the child's feet. The scene shows the two figures in the act of kissing, is particularly unusual and strays from the classic repertory of Egyptian art. This statuette is from Tell el-Amarna and the female figure could therefore be identified as a secondary wife, perhaps Kiya who was frequently portrayed with a short wig, rather than one of his daughters.

18. Canopic Jar

18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten, 1350 - 1333 BC., Thebes, Valley of the Kings (KV 55)

Alabaster, H. 38.5 cm. Ground floor, room 3, JE 39637

Canopic jars were used to maintain the viscera (liver, lungs, stomach and intestines) removed during mummification. This jar was one of four found inside a niche in tomb KV55. One was sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the other remained in Cairo. Although the inscriptions have been carefully chiseled away so that neither the name of the deceased nor the title can be found, the jars have been attributed over the years to several members of Akhenaten's family, from Queen Tiy to the pharaoh himself. Recently, scholars had attributed the jar to Akhenaten's secondary wife Kiya. At present, most Egyptologists favour one of Akhenaten's daughters as the original owner. The stopper of each jar is formed by portrait of a royal female. The portrait is elegant, its face framed by a short wig ending with two side braids cut diagonally in front. The eyes are narrow with heavy lids; the eyebrows and the eyes are outlined in blue paste, while the white and the pupils are in quartz and obsidian. Traces of red colour are visible at the corners. The nose is small and narrow, the mouth fleshy and slightly down-turned. On the forehead was once an *ankh* whose body was caned on top of the wig.



priests still had to wait a little time for their revenge. They considered Tutankhaten closely associated with the heresy, and while he lived and ruled the era of Akhenaten would not be openly condemned. Even when he died, after a short reign of nine years, the story was not over. Some years ago in Turkey, archeologists discovered a cuneiform tablet that has caused a lot of controversy among Egyptologists. It is an account by one of the Hittite kings of certain letters received by his father, Suppiluliumas, from an Egyptian queen, whose name was Dakhamun. The letter reads the following :

Then their ruler (i.e. of the Egyptians) namely I'ip-khuru-riya just at the moment died; now the queen of Egypt was Dakhamun... she sent an ambassador to my father, and said to him, "My husband is dead, I have no children; your sons are grown up; if you give me one of your sons, he will be my husband, he will be of help, send him accordingly.

Suppiluliumas was too cautious in this respect. However, the marriage alliance with Egypt would have been to his advantage. He wasted a lot of time in thinking. Then the queen wrote again and these are her words :

What is this you say, "She has deceived me"... and you think I have a husband; but he is dead. I have no son; so I have taken a servant ... I have not written to you. however, I have written your sons are said to be grown up; so to me one of your sons give, and he as my husband in the land of Egypt shall be a king ...

One of Tutankhamun's name was Nebkheperure, which is not very different from I'ip-khuru-riya and Dakhamun might be Ankhesnamun, the widow of Tutankhamun. For many years Egyptologists had doubts over these two names. Now the truth is known, and it is certain that I'ip-khuru-riya was Tutankhamun. The story which the letter reveals adds a detail to this drama. Ankhesnamun was about 24 years old when she wrote this letter. She had been married twice, once to her father Akhenaten and a second time to Tutankhamun when he was a seven or eight-year old child. She was the heiress and she knew that the chief priest Ay wanted to marry her to ascend the throne. In desperation, the young queen sent a messenger to the king of the Hittites in Turkey, asking if one of his sons would marry her. She knew that time was not in her favour. We think that she had only 70 days to act, the time taken for the mummification and burial of the pharaoh's body. But the response of the Hittite king was too slow. Finally when he was convinced of the genuine-

ness of the request, it was too late. Ankhesnamun was married to Ay. Further, Ay saw to it that the Hittite prince never reached Thebes.

Ay reigned for five years and was succeeded by I'iamhab, last pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty. He would reign for over twenty-five years during which he worked to restore Egypt's economy and international status. The 18th Dynasty which had a glorious beginning ended up in humiliation.



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