
Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt

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TEXTS FROM THE AMARNA PERIOD IN EGYPT

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37. The “Earlier Proclamation” on the Boundary Stelae at El-Amarna

The actual foundation decree for the city of Akhet-Aten was initially carved on two stelae located at the northern and southern tips of the city's territory on the east bank (stelae X and M). The sudden deterioration of M, the southern monument, led to the making of another copy some distance farther south (stela K). Only the initial third of the text is substantially preserved, the rest being full of lacunae before it disappears altogether. This is a pity, for in this “earlier proclamation” the king not only set guidelines for the development of his city and its regular activities, but he also provided insights into his own motivation and the events which led to his revolution.

1. Introduction

Regnal year 5, fourth month of the Growing season, day 13: long live the Good God who rejoices [in Maat], Lord of heaven, lord of earth; [great living] Aten [who illumi]nates the Two Banks; the Father, HOR-ATEN—great living Aten who is in jubilee within the [House] of Aten in Akhet-Aten; and the Horus, “Beloved [of Aten]”; Two Ladies, “[Great of Kingship] in Akhet-Aten”; Horus of Gold “Who Raises Up the Name of Aten”; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt who lives on Maat, Lord of the Two Lands, NEFER-KHEPRURE-WAENRE; the Son of Re who lives on Maat, Lord of Crowns, AKHENATEN, [long in his lifetime], who is on [the seat of his father HOR]-ATEN, manifest on Re's throne of the living like his father Aten every day. The Good God [. . .] the Aten [. . .] when he rises; a possessor of [provisions], rich in food, [. . .] everything [. . .] who does useful things for the one who fashioned him, the living Aten, lord of the sky—may he cause

him to rise [as] master of [. . .] for as far as Aten encircles; may he cause him (to exist) forever, [. . .] seeing his rays while he is on earth [every] day: the King [of Upper and Lower Egypt] who lives on Maat, the Lord of the Two Lands, [NEFERKHEPRURE-WAENRE]; the Son of [Re] who lives on Maat, Lord of Crowns, AKHENATEN, long in his lifetime, living forever.

And the princess, great in the palace, fair of face, beautiful in the double plumes—the mistress of joy, at the hearing of whose voice one rejoices; possessor of graciousness, great of love, whose arrangements please the Lord of the Two Lands; chieftainess [of] the Aten's female entourage, who satisfies him when he rises in the horizon; for whom is done what she has said about any [thing]: the King's Chief Wife, his beloved, Lady of the Two Lands, NEFERTITI, may she live forever.

2. Initial Appearance and Speech by the King

On this day, when One was in Akhet-[Aten], his Person [appeared] on the great chariot of electrum—just like Aten, when he rises in his horizon and fills the land with the love and [the pleasantness (?) of] the Aten. He set off on a good road [toward] Akhet-Aten, his place of the primeval event, which he made for himself to set within it daily, and which his son Waenre made for him—(being) his great monument which he founded for himself; his horizon, [in which his] circuit comes into being, where he is beheld with joy while the land rejoices and all hearts exult when they see him.

A great oblation was presented to the Father, HOR-ATEN, consisting of bread, beer, long- and short-horned cattle, calves, fowl, wine, fruits, incense, all sorts of fresh green plants and everything good in front of the mountain of Akhet-Aten; [and also the] offering of a good [and pure] libation on behalf of the life, prosperity and health of the Lord of the Two Lands, NEFERKHEPRURE-WAENRE. After this, One performed the rites of the Aten, who was pleased with what was done for him. One rejoiced, and the heart [of this god] was joyful [concerning] Akhet-Aten with exultation as he hovered over [his] place, so that he could be glad concerning it and about the elevating of his beauty [in it daily in the course of every day]. His Person [stood] in the presence of his father, HOR-ATEN, as Aten's rays were upon him, with life, stability, [dominion, health, and joy] forever and ever.

Then said his Person, "Bring me the king's companions and the great ones of the palace, the supervisors of the guard, the [overseer]s of works projects, the officials and all the [court] in its entirety." So <they> were led in to him at once, and they lay on their bellies in his Person's presence, kissing

[the ground before the Good God]. Then said his Person to them: "Behold Aten! The Aten wishes to have [*something*] made for him as a monument with an eternal and everlasting name. Now it is the Aten, my father, who advised me concerning it, (namely) Akhet-Aten. No official had ever advised me concerning it, nor had any people in the entire land ever advised me concerning it, to tell me [a plan] for making Akhet-Aten in this distant place. It was the Aten, my father, [who advised me] concerning it, so that it could be made for him as Akhet-Aten. Behold, I did not find it provided with shrines or plastered with tombs or porticoes (?) . . . or covered with . . . (or) with the remnant of anything which had happened to it, so that it was not [. . . ing] me . . . Akhet-Aten for the Aten, my father. Behold, it is pharaoh, I.p.h., who found it, when it did not belong to a god, nor to a goddess; when it did not belong to a male ruler, nor to a female ruler; when it did not belong to any people to do their business with it. [Its . . .] is not known, (but) I found it *widowed*. . . It is the Aten, my [father], who advised me concerning it, (saying), 'Behold, [fill] Akhet-Aten with provisions—a storehouse for everything!' while my father, HOR-ATEN, proclaimed to me, 'It is to belong to my Person, to be Akhet-Aten continually forever.'"

"Behold, I am making an oath about it, saying: 'I shall make it [as] the horizon [*for the*] Aten, my [father, . . . them], for they are desired [. . .] for Aten to arise out of them daily, filling them with his fair and loving rays, at the seeing of which every land lives, and shedding them on NEFERKHEPRURE-WAENRE [while he] ordains [for] him [all happiness (?)] in life and dominion continually forever. So make Akhet-Aten as an estate of [the] Aten, my father, in its entirety—for I have made [it as a memorial (?), whether belonging to my name] or belonging to [her] name—namely, the King's Chief Wife, NEFERNEFRUATEN-NEFERTITI—or belonging to his name forever and ever."

3. The Courtiers' Reply

Then said the companions, as they replied [to] the Good God: "May your father, HOR-ATEN, act as your father, whose names are (*constantly*) invoked, has decreed, and you will be continually king, enduring forever on the boundary-marker of the Aten. There is no king of [your time who has done the like in providing benefits for his father, consisting of] every [. . .], every [. . .], (and) every [. . .] with every [. . .], monument [upon] monument for the Aten. [He has provided] guidance [for] love of you, so that you might act in accordance with all he has decreed. You are the ruler who [marshals] effective things, one who knows the limits of eternity, while he is the one who sets (things) in your heart at any place he wishes. He did not raise up

any other king except for your Person; he did not ordain all that he gives for another, but [he acted for you because you made] for him the House of Aten [in] Akhet-Aten—a great [. . .] that had not known anything functional of Egypt, being perfect (?) like the horizon of heaven—Aten's palace, filled [with] all [sorts of] provisions—for the sake of making a monument for the Aten, at [the seeing of whom] everything that breathes lives, since he is the one who guides the living forever.”

“May his lordship govern from Akhet-Aten. May you conduct every land to him. May you tax the towns and islands for him. Every city [down] to every [. . .], its [entirety belongs to] Aten, acting in accordance with what he himself ordains. All flat lands, all hill countries and the islands of the sea are bearing their tribute, their products on their backs, to the maker of their life, at the seeing of whose rays one lives. The breath of his love is caused to be breathed eternally, while his rays are seen, and while his lordship does [as] he pleases and [gives] commands [for you . . . while you] are in Akhet-Aten, rejuvenated like the Aten in the sky forever and ever!”

4. The Decree

Then his Person lifted his arm up to heaven, to the one who fashioned him, HOR-ATEN, declaring: “As lives my father, HOR-ATEN—

The beautiful living Aten who began life and ordains life,

My Father who is with me among [. . .] in his journey,

My rampart of millions of cubits,

My reminder of continuity,

My witness to eternal things,

The one who constructed himself with his own two hands, no craft knowing him;

The one who makes guidance by rising and setting every day without cease, in the sky or on earth, while (all) eyes behold him;

Who has no [equal] when he has filled the land with his rays, causing every face to live;

The one at whom my eyes are sated, seeing him risen daily when he rises in this house of Aten in Akhet-Aten, having filled it utterly with himself, with his fair and loving rays.

“Since he casts them on me, in life and dominion continually forever, I shall make Akhet-Aten for the Aten, my father, in this place. I shall not make Akhet-Aten for him south of it, north of it, west of it (or) east of it. I shall not go past the southern stela of Akhet-Aten toward the south, nor shall I go past the northern stela of Akhet-Aten downstream, in order to

make Akhet-Aten for him there. Nor shall I make <it> for him on the western side of Akhet-Aten; but I shall make Akhet-Aten for the Aten, my father, on the orient (side) of Akhet-Aten—the place which he himself made to be enclosed for him by the mountain, on which he may achieve happiness and on which I shall offer to him. This is it!”¹

“Nor shall the King’s Chief Wife say to me, ‘Look, there’s a nice place for Akhet-Aten someplace else,’ nor shall I listen to her. Nor shall any officials in my presence—be they officials of favor or officials of the outside, or the chamberlains, or any people in the entire land—say to me, ‘Look, there’s a nice place for Akhet-Aten someplace else,’ nor shall I listen to them—whether it (=that other place) be downstream, whether it be in the south, in the west or in the orient. I will not say, ‘I shall abandon Akhet-Aten so that I may hasten and make Akhet-Aten in this other nice place [. . .] together with it forever’; but [I will remain] in this Akhet-Aten, with which he himself has wished to be satisfied forever and ever!”

“At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the House of Aten² for the Aten, my father.”

“At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the Mansion of Aten³ for the Aten, my father.”

“At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the sunshade⁴ of the [King’s Chief] Wife [NEFERNEFRUATEN-NEFERTITI] for the Aten, my father.”

“In the ‘Island of Aten, whose jubilees are distinguished’⁵ at Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the ‘House of Rejoicing’ for the Aten, my father.”

“In the ‘Island of Aten, whose jubilees are distinguished’ at Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the ‘House of Rejoicing in [Akhet]-Aten’⁶ for the Aten, my father.”

“At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make all revenues that [are] in [the entire land] to belong to the Aten, my father.”

“At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make oblations overflowing for the Aten, my father.”

“(And) at Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make for myself the residence of Pharaoh, l.p.h., (and) I shall make the residence of the King’s Chief Wife.”⁷

“Let a tomb be made for me in the orient mountain [of Akhet-Aten], and

let my burial be made in it, in the millions of jubilees which the Aten, my father, decreed for me. Let the burial of the King's Chief Wife NEFERTITI be made in it, in the millions of years [which the Aten, my father, decreed for her. (And) let the burial of] the King's Daughter MERITATEN [be made] in it, in these millions of years.⁸ If I should die in any town of the downstream, the south, the west, or the orient in these millions of years, let me be brought (back) so that I may be buried in Akhet-Aten. If the King's Chief Wife NEFERTITI—may she live!—should die in any town of the downstream, the south, the west, or the orient, in these millions [of years, let her be brought (back) so that] she [may be buried in Akhet-Aten. (And) if the King's Daughter MERITATEN dies] in any town of the downstream, the south, the west, or the orient in these millions of years, let her be brought (back) so that [she] may be buried in Akhet-Aten."

"And let a cemetery [be made] for the Mnevis Bull in the orient mountain of Akhet-Aten, so that he may [be buried] in it. Let there be made tomb chapels for the Greatest of Seers, for the God's Fathers of the Aten [and the ...]s [of the] Aten in the orient mountain of Akhet-Aten, so that they may be buried in it."

"Now, as my father HOR-ATEN lives! As for the [...] in Akhet-Aten,

it was worse than those which I heard in regnal year 4;
 it was worse than [those] which I heard in regnal year 3;
 it was worse than those which I heard [in regnal year 2;
 it was] worse [than those which I heard in regnal year 1];
 it was worse [than] those which (King) [NEBMAAT]RE heard;
 [it was worse than those which] (King) [OKHEPRURE (?) heard];
 it was worse [than] those which (King) MENKHEPERRE heard;
 [(and) it was] worse [than] those heard by any kings who had (ever)
 assumed the White Crown.

If I heard a report in the mouth of an official, in the mouth of [...], in the mouth of [...], in the mouth of a Nubian, in the mouth(s) of any people [...] against [my] fath[er] to [...], [they] were offensive [...]. [I] did not leave (?) [... saying], 'it was offensive,' until it would not be offensive. As for the offensive things [...] in every mouth, saying, 'I will commit an offense' [against the lord of Akhet]-Aten, my father, HOR-ATEN [...] arisen (?) [...] any [...], nor shall I hear the [...] from it either."

"It is the Aten, my father, who [has] desired (?) the House of Re [...] taken like [...] any [...]. I shall [...] sealed for Akhet-Aten ... inasmuch as [this] land prospers [...] before (?) them in Akhet-Aten; similarly Kharu [...]

of [Akhet]-Aten [for the Aten], my [father], [. . .] continually [forever. As for the . . .]s of Kush, as far as [. . .], [. . .] the [. . .] hasten [. . .] Aten [. . .] therein [. . .] which are fixed at the [. . .]ern borders because it . . . in [. . .]. And one shall not say to me, 'The [. . .] ordains (?) . . . seasonally (?) . . . mansion (?) . . . my (?) every . . . in [the House of Aten in Akhet]-Aten (?)' [. . .] there [. . .] my [. . .] the festival (?) of the Aten, my father [. . .] my [. . . for (?)] my father, the [Aten]."

"Now as my father, HOR-ATEN, lives [. . .] on [earth] and similarly in [heaven], . . . oryxes and ostriches for [the House of] Aten, . . . cattle in [their] running . . . for the Aten [in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten] continually forever. [Similarly the feast of the] Aten on New Year's Day [. . .] Aten being in festival eternally, . . . festival similarly . . . oblations; (and) similarly all feasts at every season, festivals . . . effectively, long ago (?) . . . me to . . . the King's Chief Wife NEFERTITI, may she live—they belong [to] the Aten, . . . his . . . in [Akhet]-Aten. . . her . . . with which he is happy in order to offer therewith. Let me not make the royal . . . in the *harbor area* . . . , the . . . of the . . . ; and I shall [not] make it for him in . . . the crag of the . . . with the [north]ern stela of Akhet-Aten; and [I] shall not make [it for him at the crag of the southern stela of] Akhet-Aten; (but) I shall [make] it (?) . . . offerings (?) . . . within them, with fresh lands within them, with new lands within them [. . . in Akhet]-Aten, his [favorite] place [daily, in the course of] every [day]."

"Now make the stelae [for the] offerings (?) which I dedicate to the Aten, my father, in Akhet-[Aten. I myself am the one who should make offerings to the Aten, my father, in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten. Offerings are not to be made to him there . . . when I am in any (other) city (or) in any (other) town . . . his horizon, the mountain of the Aten, my father, in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten, being [happy] daily (?) continually . . . festive forever. . . . Similarly the feast of Aten with oblations on the river, [*something*] being . . . offerings of the queen.

If I detect (?) a man of the household;

if I hear a man [. . . of] the officials;

if I hear [. . .] in the mountain of the Aten;

if I detect . . . name (?) [. . .] anything in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten,

[if . . . *some sort of*] bovine which the [. . .]-man has gathered,

it is its foreleg . . . kissing the ground at . . . [for the] Aten in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten. I am . . . on which (?) my heart is set, offering these [. . .]s of mine which are on [the . . . of] the temple, . . . at every place wherein it is my wish to journey (while) the House [of Aten celebrates] the festivals of [the Aten which are established with every] thing I [provided] for the Aten, my father, in Akhet-Aten."

"Now as for [*the thing*]s which [. . .] make [as a] monument . . . , my father

receives them . . . on the day when [the] Aten, my [father], . . . [for (?) the] Aten in [Akhet]-Aten, this place which he himself found for himself [continually] forever."

"Now if (?) . . . going about downstream, [or in the west, in] the south, (or) in the orient, in order to make domains [for] the [Aten], great of [. . .], (which) the Aten, my father, has given to me . . . land (?) . . . , I shall make [. . . for the Aten], my father, in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten. Let there be [. . . for the queen (?)] in her house . . . , with everything in Akhet-Aten to cause him to cross, (whether) crossing downstream (or) to the south, to the west (or) to the orient. Make the [. . . of the] Aten, my father, . . . for the Aten, my father, in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten continually forever."

"As lives the father HOR-ATEN! Regarding the [millions] of jubilees which [the Aten, my father], decreed for me, . . . utterance (?) [of] the . . . the southeastern stela of [Akhet]-Aten, I shall [not] celebrate a jubilee upriver from them in [the millions of years which the Aten decreed for me (?) . . . , [but I shall celebrate the jubilee at Akhet]-Aten [in this place], eternally and forever, [in the House of] Aten [in Akhet-Aten . . .]. I shall celebrate it in . . . , [. . . the] Aten, my [father], for my [lord] in [Akhet-Aten] continually forever."

"Further, [I] shall [make] . . . , the double-plumed shade of the Aten . . . in the northern road which is at the crag of the [. . . ern] stela, . . . [. . .]s upon [them] . . . [at (?)] the great [mountain] of the Aten, my father, which he himself desired for himself [. . .] continually [forever]."

"[*Something about monuments for the*] Aten, [*probably temples built out of*] stone, [and with], every precious stone in [. . . by (?)] a craftsman (or) a controller [. . .] that the rites may be celebrated in them . . . their (?) city, . . . to say every day [when he] crosses [the sky and sheds light] with his rays, which make [humanity] to live . . . in its entirety . . . it in [. . . and he] fills the House of Aten [with his] graciousness (?) [and as he rejoices over his] monuments, [exulting over] his [. . .]s on earth. I will make the circuit [of Aten] to be administered [for him] . . . , (and) the city (?) similarly, stopping [*something which will produce*] a great [*offense by*] any god (or) any goddess against Akhet-Aten, in a document of any god (or) any goddess . . . [*but it will be in the care of*] the King's Chief Wife, NEFERNEFRUATEN-NEFERTITI in . . . [for the] Aten [continually forever]."

"Now as [for] any [. . .]-people, any adherent of yours, any deputy (or) any other people who shall make [*some sort of observance regarding the*] boundary stelae of Akhet-Aten, from the western mountain to the [eastern]

mountain . . . , [it amounts to so many] river-miles of sailing, (both) water (and) mountain [of] Akhet-Aten, being water [and mountain belonging to] the Aten, their lord, the lord of Akhet-Aten, (namely) [the father, HOR]-ATEN continually [forever (?), . . . going downstream (or) to the south], to the west, to the orient, to the mountain, to the water, in the river, by ship (?) which . . . in fields . . . , (with) every [. . .] (and) every [. . .], they belong [to my father, the Aten], . . . [consisting of] servants (?), consisting of groves, consisting of all things that exist in the entire land: they belong to my father, [the Aten, in the] House of Aten [in] Akhet-Aten continually forever."⁹

"[Now as for the . . .] which are in [Akhet-Aten . . . , they shall remain] in Akhet-Aten [under] the authority of the great steward of Akhet-Aten, while his scribal palette is in the [. . . of] Akhet-Aten while he [causes] his [subjects] to breathe, making themselves prostrate on their bellies before pharaoh, l.p.h., their lord, and to the queen . . . , . . . HOR-[ATEN as far as the downstream, the south, the west], the orient, the mountain . . . in Akhet-Aten, . . . with rejoicing . . . in the . . . of mine [while someone] takes possession [of the property of] Aten, [so that] I may prevent their being taken from me to another place. And let not . . . to do [it . . .]. I am the one who does. . . ."

From this point, for the next twenty lines, the text becomes too fragmentary for any attempt at restoration, resuming only for the last four lines of Stela K:

[. . .] continually forever. . . . the father, [HOR-ATEN], . . . and effecting the expulsion [of some group of] people, (with) the army in its entirety. [. . .]s (and) [. . .]s being arranged at the beginning of . . . with exuberant [rejoicing . . .] in Akhet-Aten, on behalf of everyone and upon [the king, the Aten's rays being] upon him, consisting of life and dominion, (namely for) NEFER-KHEPRURE-WAENRE. Then the entire land rejoiced, (being) on holiday [and making oblation] to the Aten, for one has allowed to make an end¹⁰ there, in Akhet-Aten, continually forever.

38. The "Later Proclamation" from the Boundary Stelae at El-Amarna

Exactly one year after the ceremonial foundation of his new city, Akhenaten visited the southeastern corner of Akhet-Aten and issued a second decree. This ordinance (which defined the boundaries with, apparently, more precision than before), was carved on eight stelae in the hills to the east of the city and at least three—all that have been discovered—on the west. Not all these monuments had been finished, however, when the oath embodied in the decree was renewed two years later. The substance of the decree was then confirmed by a supplement (the "colophon") later in the same year, found only on two stelae on the west bank (the last in the series) and probably commemorating their completion at the end of year 8.