

Civilisations: Collapse and Regeneration
Addressing the Nature of Change and Transformation in History

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Miroslav Bárta and Martin Kovář (eds.)

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The paper contains an account of what happened some 30 to 22 thousand years B.C. – the impact of the Last Glacial Maximum (MIS2) on the natural landscape of the preceding Interpleniglacial (MIS3) and on the society of the Moravian Gravettian. It is evident that the impact of climate change was harsher as the economy of the hunter-gatherer society became increasingly specialised and its social structure more complex. Of the several variants of possible reaction to the change, what occurred in this particular case (judging on the basis of the environmental and archaeological record) was the migration of large herds of hoofed animals and of a part of the hunter populations to more favourable climate refugia.

2. Jan Turek

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The subject of this contribution is the phenomenon of development of prehistoric monuments as symbols of shared social identity, their disappearance from human culture and replacement by individualised

burials, natural shrines and a beaker ideology linked to growing social differentiation and, possibly, a new cult. The collapse of the tradition of collective values started unfolding in the middle of the 5th millennium BCE. A marked change – or even collapse of traditional values – did not occur however until the beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE. Hence the changes that took place stemmed mainly from the development of social relations and the transformations of the cosmology of Later Stone Age agricultural communities.

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Celtic colonisation of our territory spanned almost the last five centuries BCE. During this period several phases of stability alternated with times of great change that transformed the whole society. The Celts were unable to withstand the last of these changes, which occurred after the middle of the first century BCE when the vacated area was swiftly filled in by Germanic tribes. The search for the causes of the decline of the Celtic civilisation in our part of the world involves an attempt to introduce the reader to available sources from various angles: historical, archaeological, palaeoeconomic, and the relation of human society to the natural environment. The discussion of these issues suggests that one perspective is often not enough.

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Despite our knowledge of Neolithic and Bronze Age Crete being just over one hundred years old, recent times have been able to provide us with a fairly reliable history of the society's rise from its early Neolithic settlements to its collapse just prior to the Iron Age. The reasons for the rather swift collapse of this vibrant society were many and complex:

from systems failures to invasion, from climate change to the inexorable heavy hand of geological misfortune. The following account is a snapshot view of Minoan Crete's development and achievements and the forces which led to its collapse.

6. Jiří Janák

***Akhenaten: Monotheism or Monopoly?* 187**

Few personalities of the ancient world continue to hold as much interest as Akhenaten who carried out a fundamental reform of religion and political ideology in Egypt of the mid-14th century BC. Was Akhenaten then an enlightened religious and political reformer, an idealistic ruler, a sage, a mystic and an ecstatic? Or was he a mentally ill and a physically frail human being? This article represents an attempt to look into the theological and ideological background to the Akhenaten's rule and explore his motivation for carrying out such a momentous political, social and economic reform. Our focus shall be on often overlooked aspects of the Amarna reform, which include the issue of the structure of the Egyptian pantheon, the manner in which the gods were depicted under the classical, pre-Amarna cult, and during the radical change enforced by Akhenaten, as well as on the changes in the concept of the justification of a person after death and the fate of that person in the Afterlife.

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The *Heraclitus Law* describes a mechanism according to which the factors responsible for the rise of a particular civilisation or culture are usually the same as those which, in the end, instigate its crisis, meaning thus a quick and deep loss of its complexity, usually followed by a stage of regeneration and a following rise. Therefore, if we want to understand why a system is exposed to a crisis, it is necessary to analyse the stage

during which the civilisation or culture was emerging. It is there, if the factors involved in its rise are identified, that we usually find the key to understanding the actual stage of the crisis.

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13. Josef Opatrný

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As late as the 1760s the Spanish colonial empire was one of the largest world empires of all times, at least by land area. The economic decrepitude of the metropolis, its inability to avail itself of the economic possibilities extended by the colonies, and the political development in the Atlantic area at the end of the 18th century then sparked off an independence movement in the Spanish overseas territories, which in 1826 resulted in the collapse of the empire.

14. Jaroslav Pánek

White Mountain and Black Fall of a State Ruled by the Estates 437

Over the course of almost four centuries the Battle of White Mountain

(8 November 1620) turned into a symbolic milestone of Czech history and became rated as a national catastrophe or a return of the Czech Lands to the bosom of the Catholic Church. It is from this angle that national tradition and often also professional historiography evaluate both the prelude to the battle (the Czech Uprising of the Estates against the Habsburgs in 1618-1620) and the long-term preconditions leading to the crushing defeat of the Czech Estates. The current paper is an attempt to capture the White Mountain turn in history from the point of view of the drastic nature of the change, of long-term accumulation of inner tension (political, social, ideological and religious) in the Czech Lands, gradated external pressure (international policy, financial and military) and also from the point of view of the impossibility of return to the previous state of affairs after 1620. The collapse symbolised by White Mountain thus brought far-reaching and complex changes of Czech society, changes of a kind that made it impossible to later restore the classical state ruled by the Estates.

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Allah created the world and will bring it to an end at a time only He knows. Both this general belief and the real experience of their own societies make the Muslims view their history as a course towards a climax, which was attained in the revelation sent to Muhammad and in his accomplishments. Afterwards, however, followed a gradual decline. Our paper gives a survey of interpretations offered by Western and by Muslim scholars to explain the undeniable decline and stagnation of the world of Islam after the glorious period of its rise and expansion. Our account is focused on the roots of decay perceptible in the social and cultural life, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Thereafter, a detailed analysis is given to modern discussions. Attention is paid to a variety of efforts to restore the erstwhile vigour and respect in the world as well as to opposite violent trend to bring about a final apocalyptic clash, such as manifested in the ideology and practice of the "Islamic State".

MODERN PERIOD AND THE LATEST PERIOD

16. Eduard Gombár

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The Ottoman Empire was founded on the traditions of Islamic universalism, the Turkish military fief system and Iranian bureaucracy. The first phase of the crisis of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th to 18th century was characterised by the decline of the classical model and, in consequence, military defeats of the Ottoman sultan by

the European Great Powers. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire entered the second phase of the crisis, which it tried to overcome by modernisation modelled on the European example. However, the pressure applied by the European Great Powers under the diplomacy of the Eastern Question impeded the modernisation process; the involvement of the Turks on the side of Imperial Germany during the Great War led to the definite demise of the Ottoman Empire.

17. Robert Kvaček

***The Fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire And the Founding of Czechoslovakia* 509**

The paper's objective was to prove that although the fall of Austria-Hungary only happened due to its war adventure, which started in the summer of 1914, serious existential crises had been weakening the multinational monarchy for decades earlier. The relative political repose in Austria factually ended with the resignation of the Count Taaffe's long-term government in 1893; since then, the "old Austria" was heading – more or less obviously – towards its fall. With regard to the "starting position" of the Czech national movement 100 years earlier, the foundation of the sovereign Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1918 seemed a "small miracle". In reality, its foundation was a result of the fact that the Czech national polity program had not been implemented in Austria-Hungary even after decades of trying; the world war then completely stopped it: considering what happened with Austria after the war started, neither the Czechs, nor the Slovaks, or members of other nations could expect that the victory of the monarchy would enable them to carry out their national aspirations. This resulted into the above-mentioned foundation of the independent Czechoslovakia and other so called "successor states" in Central Europe.

18. Ondřej Houska

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The peace organization that arose after World War I is traditionally denounced as a short-sighted Diktat that knocked defeated Germany to its knees. One of the main reasons for the Nazis' ascension to power and the start of World War II is often seen in the supposed exaggerated harshness of the so-called Versailles Peace System. This study indicates that historiography refuted such a claim upon the discovery of archives. In reality, the Versailles System could have been a functioning foundation for the peaceful reconciliation of international relations. Its main problem was not an exaggerated harshness, but the inability of Germany to admit its military defeat.

19. José Manuel Serrano Álvarez***War as a Phenomenon of Collapse and Regeneration******in the 20th Century* 553**

This article is an overview of the origins and causes of wars focused primarily in the twentieth century. The main elements of analysis are related to the philosophical and ideological motivations, as well as by structural changes in industrial societies in technology. The article tries to analyze whether the idea of progress and war have had a relationship in the perception of armed conflicts during the twentieth century. Finally, ideas and concepts that, from a political point of view, were important in the magnitude and increased war, especially until 1945, will be searched.

20. Martin Kovář***The Collapse in Time******The Fall That Saved Great Britain* 573**

The goal of this study has been to consider the causes and circumstances surrounding the fall of the British Empire and whether the Imperium Britannicum could have, in some modified version, survived, and potentially, for what amount of time. The result of this consideration is that the effective collapse of the Empire, which the British public came to accept in connection with Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, and especially with the Suez Crisis in 1956, was already beginning at the close of the World War I, not to mention that most of the symptoms of the crisis could already be observed at the turn of the 19th century. The deciding factors were economic. The war that Great Britain led from 1914–1918 was beyond its means, and this applies even more so to the war from 1939–1945. The island nation was a victor at the war's end, however, the price that it paid for this triumph was terrible: complete economic exhaustion, financial, military, and political dependence on the USA, and – finally – the collapse of the Empire. With regard to the circumstances that accompanied the collapse of the colonial empires of other European states, the Brits managed the complicated situation rather well; the sentiment for “the good old times”, felt, and to some extent still observed in today's modern British society cannot change this.

21. Michal Pullmann***The Decline and Fall of the Communist Regimes in Central and (South) Eastern Europe* 591**

This contribution analyses the collapse of the Communist regimes from three perspectives – economic-political, socio-historic, and cultural. According to the central argument, the primary integrative ties of

the state socialist system were weakening and gradually falling apart during the later phase of Communism: the Communist ideological rhetoric, the homogeneity of society, and the ability to reach economic effectiveness and political unification. The unsolved problems culminated in the mid-eighties: Gorbachev made an attempt at systemic change with perestroika and glasnost; however, this attempt did not lead to the revival that Gorbachev had hoped for, but instead to the collapse of the entire system.

22. Jiří Ellinger

The United States of America after September 11, 2001

The Beginning of the Decline of the American "Empire"? 613

The analysis of the position of the United States after September 11, 2001 points to the arguable degree of success of America's response to the unprecedented terrorist attacks of 9/11, which together with the financial and economic crisis of 2008 have created the impression that the United States is finding itself in a deep crisis and that its global influence has been dwindling to give room to newly emerging powers. The current debate among leading American experts provides the material for this research into the question about whether the United States (marked by many as a present-day empire) is truly in a critical initial phase of decline and whether there are any useful historical analogies to its current situation as well the question about what the new 21st century global order might be.

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23. Jan Kozák

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The first part of the article introduces, discusses and compares two basic categories of collapses – those of natural origin and collapses due to anthropogenic causes. In the second part the reader is presented with a gallery of commented images – engravings depicting the world's largest natural disasters (seismic and volcanic) spanning a period from the 13th until the end of the 19th century, which document and illustrate both the advancement in Earth sciences and the development of the global civilisation today. The brief conclusion describes the current state.

24. Petr Pokorný***When Processes Meet Events: Late Holocene Degradation And the Collapse of Temperate Forest Ecosystems* 685**

This chapter aims to show that collapse dynamics can be a part of natural processes at landscape level as well. To illustrate this phenomenon, we chose an example of the transformation of forest communities in prehistory. During 2nd millennium BC, productive, nutrient-rich broadleaf deciduous forests, which formed at the end of the Older Holocene, and which survived relatively steadily over the Middle Holocene, came to sudden decline in Central Europe. “Modern” types of less productive and nutrient-poor beech, fir and pine forests have replaced them. The working hypothesis, which has succeeded in supporting rich documents, points to a natural change in connection with the progressive depletion of the ecosystem through decline in biologically active mineral compounds. It is the same kind of development that was characteristic of the temperate ecosystems of our planet during all previous interglacial stages of the Quaternary. Nutrients, especially biologically active forms of phosphorus, have arrived to the ecosystems in the form of a wind-transported dust during the loess accumulation phase of the Last Ice Age. The humid and warm Holocene climate, which has been acting for many millennia to soil substrates enriched with this wind-transported dust, has resulted in progressive soil degradation due to the successive loss of nutritive compounds; surface acidification thus resulted in a retrogressive soil and biological successions. Against the backdrop of such gradual controlling climatic and related geochemical processes, numerous biotic and abiotic events can be observed – forest fires, windswept occurrences, erosion, immigration and expansion of new organisms. Were also people responsible? To answer this question, a comprehensive environmental-archaeological research has been conducted in the Czech Republic. Indeed, correlations suggest that people really could participate in the changes, especially through logging and nomadic animal herding.

25. Karel Černý***Epidemics in Human History* 699**

The chapter attempts to unpick the complex interaction between epidemic crises, the history of human society and its possible collapse. While epidemics have been “plaguing” the human race for millennia, we argue that they are by no means a homogeneous phenomenon. Careful historical examination has shown that they have to be studied from various perspectives. We start first with the term “epidemic” as it was understood by physicians in the past. The next section

presents three frameworks for historical research about epidemics: paleopathological, cultural, and bio-medical. Each has its own specifics and leads to a different understanding of epidemic crises. The final section is based upon the selection of several prominent microbiological agents (plague, leprosy, TB, syphilis, smallpox, HIV, flu) in order to comment on the specific aspects of their interaction with society. Although societal collapse, or fear of it, is an important theme throughout this chapter, we also suggest that “plagues” have often had a rather heterogeneous impact because the threat which they posed was sometimes eagerly answered, leading to progressive cultural, social or scientific changes.

26. Lenka Lisá

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Using two episodes from different periods and different parts of the world, the text introduces the reader to a way of understanding the surrounding landscape and its predicative value in pointing out the possible causes and consequences of collapses of human societies. The reader is offered an excursion to the Bronze Age on the north-western margin of Prague where in that age the unrestrained activities of farmers triggered an ecological disaster. History is repeated in the second episode when the reader is transferred in mind to the eastern coast of Scotland, to the romantic landscape of the Culbin Forest.

27. Václav Cílek

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to Regeneration 753

Due to population growth and the increasing demands of mankind, we currently find ourselves in yet another transitional period of European civilisation. A characteristic feature of this period is that we have reached the limits of traditional growth and face both relative and absolute scarcity of certain raw materials and resources. The raw materials which will soon irreversibly run out are not many, but there will be a relative scarcity of practically all of them, with the exception of aluminium, iron, natural gas and a few others. Most of the traditional deposits of gold, silver, tin, and also oil are approaching the last third of their lifetime. The author anticipates that in approximately the coming three decades there will be a concurrence of climate, economic, food and energy crises which thanks to our historical experience and the ability for regeneration we shall probably be able to successfully overcome, albeit at a palpable cost.

28. Vladimír Brůna, Kateřina Křováková, Peter Chrastina***Memory of the Most Landscape* 777**

The authors reflect on the landscape as a space in which since time immemorial man has moved around, worked, lived and also ended his road through life. The specific subject is the Most Basin, known today especially for its up to 45-metres-thick coal seams. It has been the exploitation of this brown coal that has brought about irreversible changes of the Most landscape – a loss of its memory. The study offers a view of the Most landscape from many angles: it deals with its structure, the functions of the individual elements of the landscape and also with the identification of changes that took place in space and time – all this by applying many scientific research disciplines.

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6. Akhenaten: Monotheism or Monopoly?⁴

Jiří Janák

Few personalities of the ancient world continue to hold as much interest for scholars, the general public, artists, religious believers and proponents of various religious and ideological trends as Akhenaten – the king who, in the mid-14th century BC, carried out a fundamental reform of religion and political ideology. The individual views on this historical figure differ widely, as documented both in scholarly and general non-fiction literature (Redford 1984; Aldred 1988; Kemp 1989; Hornung 1999a; Reeves 2001; van Dijk 2003; Dodson 2009; Kemp 2012), and in literary as well as popular fiction, (pseudo-)religious tracts, film and music (Monserrat 2000). Was Akhenaten then an enlightened religious and political reformer, a ruler too idealistic and much ahead of his time, a sage, mystic and ecstatic? Or, on the contrary, was he a mentally ill and a physically frail human being? Should we see in him the predecessor of Moses or Thales? Was he an Egyptian Jesus, philosopher on the throne, or the World's first sectarian and a dictator?

This article represents an attempt to look into the theological and ideological background to the Akhenaten's rule and explore his motivation for carrying out such a momentous political, social and economic reform. As in all the other chapters of this book, the focus here will be especially on the reasons for the – in this case twofold – collapse of his regime. We shall try to provide an explanation both for the radical changes imposed by the king upon the society that led to actual downfall of the traditional system and for the subsequent swift

⁴ This paper represents an outcome of a research of the Charles University research programme Q11 *Complexity and Resilience. Ancient Egyptian civilisation in multidisciplinary and multicultural approach*. The work was also supported from European Regional Development Fund-Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

disintegration of this precipitately designed religious and political ideology. It is the speed of the dual collapse that represents one of the most fascinating aspects of the Amarna Reform.

During the reign of Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III, Egypt was at its zenith. The territory under its direct political, military and economic influence stretched from present-day Syria deep into the heart of the Sudan. Egypt then was experiencing a relatively peaceful period, free from immediate military threat and, in addition, disposed of material wealth expressed, for instance, in an unprecedented building boom (Kozloff, Bryan 1993; Cline, O'Connor 1998). In the background of the royal achievements of the first half of the New Kingdom, three attributes of non-royal power and influence grew in significance and power. They were, firstly, the group of elite officials surrounding the king, secondly, the important and increasingly powerful military men and thirdly, and especially, the circle of priests bound to the cult of Amun-Ra of Thebes, who (as a universal god and creator) himself became the most influential deity within the Egyptian pantheon and was even pervasive among all local cults (Redford 1984, 154–165; Kemp 1989, 197, 208–209; Bryan 2000, 269–271; van Dijk 2000, 272–274; Mynářová 2014).

The kings often leaned on these secondary centres of power, supported them, and tried to use them to his own advantage to shore up royal power and authority. Hence, the rulers surrounded themselves with competent officials who oversaw the smooth running of the state apparatus; they strengthened the role of the army, which maintained order both within and beyond the country's borders; and they also supported the god Amun, to whose cult most aspects of the New Kingdom royal ideology (as well as the centralisation of local cults) was bound. But this support that the officials and cults gave the king had its price. It enhanced the real as well as the symbolic significance of the highest ranks of the afore-mentioned elite groups, who then, not only because of their assets, influence and authority, but also, when it came to religion and ideology, drew nearer to roles traditionally undertaken by the king.

Thus, for instance, the intensified building agenda of Amenhotep III and the emphasis on the celebration of the *Sed* Festival according to ancient formulae (Redford 1984, 138) were both focused on the ideological elevation of the royal office and on the direct interconnection between the person of the king and the creator god (Coppens, Janák, Vymazalová 2011). These aspects probably reflected not only the king's wealth and availability of resources, but mainly his perceived need to re-elevate the prestige of royal power and cut the ruler off ideologically from the advancing elites. This situation

resembles the imaginary race for power and authority (or the *race for status*) between the ruler and the non-royal elite that had taken place as early as during the Old Kingdom (Bárta 2016).

When Akhenaten (initially prince Amenhotep, i.e., “Amun is satisfied”) assumed power after the death of his father, Amenhotep III, and was crowned as Amenhotep (IV) Neferkheperure, it happened in Amun’s cult centre in Thebes and in accordance with the traditions observed by his predecessors. However, the deeds performed by the new king in the early years of his reign already reflected three motives that in the end set him apart from other Egyptian rulers. They included a clearly targeted emphasis on the cult of the sun-god as the celestial ruler of the world and his position as the immediate father of the king (Murnane 1999). The divine authority of the king’s person (not the royal office) was thus elevated or at least re-assured.

One event that deserves our attention in the first five years of the reign of Amenhotep IV is the *Sed* Festival held by the king for himself and the sun-god (Aten Ra-Harakhty) in the 2nd or 3rd year of his reign in the newly constructed Gempaaten (The Sun Disc Is Found) temple in Thebes (Gohary 1992). An unusual – and therefore important – component of this variant of the *Sed* Festival was the special emphasis placed on the royal authority of the sun-god and the divine role of the king (Smith 2017, 274 with references). In some scenes the king assumes the role of local gods and the accompanying texts sometimes even mention the existence of the king’s priest, literally “the priest of Neferkheperura Waenra”. Again, such a title (“the priest of the king N.”) was attested in the latter half of the Old Kingdom (Baer 1960, 253–254) when the first attempts to elevate or re-assure the position of the king and centralize power in the palace using solar ideology occurred. Among other interesting aspects are the inscriptions accompanying scenes from Akhenaten’s *Sed* Festival, which present the dignitaries very generally, only by their titles, not their specific names as was the custom earlier (Redford 1984, 111–132; van Dijk 2000, 275). By doing so, the king emphasized the distance between the royal-divine spheres of power on the one hand and the officials or the rest of the society on the other.

The first major change in the manner in which Amenhotep IV ruled occurred around the fifth year of his reign. At that time he decided to distance himself ideologically and physically from Thebes and no longer to bind royal power and its union with the cult to any of the traditional religious centres of Egypt (e.g. Memphis or Heliopolis). Thus, he planned to build a new city for a new god (Kemp 1989, 266; van Dijk 2000, 277; for the religious aspects of this decision, see below). The diversion of the royal cult from the hitherto all-powerful

Amun and its new focus on Ra-Harakhty is reflected in what is probably the most noted change made by the king in the fifth year of his reign – the change of his name when Amenhotep became Akhenaten (The Efficient One for/on behalf of the Aten).

According to official reports (preserved for example on the boundary stelae of the new town, Murnane 1995, 75; Kemp 2012, 33), the site for the new development was selected by the king himself (Kemp 2012, 34). He chose a locality in Middle Egypt, on the east bank of the Nile not far from Thoth's temple at Hermopolis. The choice was probably made after taking into account two facts: the site was vacant (there was no town or village there) nor was it occupied symbolically (it was not consecrated to any other god), and it was situated on a plain not far from rocky cliffs to the east that had a shape resembling the hieroglyphic ideogram *akhet* depicting the “eastern horizon”, i.e. the place of resurrection and abode of the sun-god. That, too, is why the king named the new town Akhetaten – The Horizon of the Aten, i.e. The Place Where the Sun-God is Present and Reveals Himself (for a possible Theban precursor of Akhetaten, see Murnane 1999). Egyptologists sometimes refer to this town as Amarna or Tell el-Amarna – according to the modern names of two settlements close to the site where the remains of Akhetaten were found in the first half of the 20th century. The era of Akhenaten's reformist rule is thus often called the Amarna Period.

Akhetaten was more than just a town – or, to be accurate, more than just a settlement grouped around several temples and palaces (Kemp 1989; 2012) – founded on a “greenfield”; it was also a religio-political project. The buildings spread out on a virgin site and the people living in them, too, formed a completely new, almost “eschatological” society (Landes 2011, 169–174). Even some traditional building techniques were adapted for Akhenaten's early constructions in Thebes and subsequently also for Akhetaten. The size of the basic building blocks was altered from large limestone blocks to smaller, lighter sandstone units that a single man could move (Redford 1984, 66–85; Kemp 2012, 60–62). This innovation resulted in an unprecedented speed of construction within the town and, later, in the eventual dismantling and reuse of the blocks.

To support his rule, Akhenaten created a new social elite for Akhetaten – one comprising individuals who, for the most part, were not associated with traditional power centres and derived the source of their status, affluence and authority purely from the king's favour. Members of this elite stressed the fact that the king had elevated them to the highest levels of the society of the day; the king was their creator, their father and mother, their reviving spirit (*Ka*), the giver of

life and sustenance, as well as their sole teacher (Redford 1984, 165; van Dijk 2000, 284; Kemp 2012, 41). The loyalty of the members of the new elite, who also brought their dependants (families, workers, peasants, etc. Kemp 2012, 42–44) with them to Akhetaten, was secured by the king through targeted distribution of food and various benefits, ceremonial presentation of bonuses and celebration of public feasts at which he appeared in front of his people as a deity (Redford 1984, 165–166; Kemp 2012, 42). To quote the words of one devoted dignitary: “How prosperous is the one who places you (i.e., the king) in his heart, for then he will achieve old age in good fortune” (Murnane 1995, 117).

However, the choice of site for the new town, which appeared at first to be a suitable one both for the cult and for purely ideological reasons, turned out to present a great problem when it came to securing livelihoods and keeping the community running. It was probably not by chance that the area around Amarna had not until that time belonged to any town or its god. Indeed, it was inadequately irrigated by water from the Nile, and even the annual floods did not rise high enough in this place. The people of Akhetaten had to draw this very precious liquid from wells, using *shadoofs*; the alternative was to carry it several kilometres from the river. Moreover, they had to gather water in this arduous way not only for themselves, but mainly for the sovereign, his family and the dignitaries. Large amounts of water were also swallowed up by the demanding cult of the sun-god – not only water used for common sacrifices and libations, but also the water needed to operate the innovations introduced by Akhenaten, for example a new type of sun-temple with gardens and ponds (Kemp 2012, 50–55). The water crisis was matched by a scarcity of wood, which the Amarna people and builders had to bring in from other parts of Egypt or from abroad (Kemp 2012, 73–74), and by a lack of building stone, where resources did not match the excessive demand, and, last but not least, by the limited availability of labour (Kemp 2012, 60–62, 77). To keep Akhetaten running and its population alive required an enormous effort and demanded extraordinarily high production from an extraordinarily small area in extraordinarily aggravated circumstances (Kemp 1989, 291). It is thus evident now that Akhenaten’s original vision of a sunny garden in the middle of a plain at the eastern horizon of heaven was not feasible (Kemp 2012, 55).

Akhenaten thus needed to prop up his vision not only ideologically (by establishing a new elite with a new type of morale), religiously (by introducing a new type of cult), economically (by direct control over the whole economy, including the temple economy), but also militarily. Depictions of public scenes often show him accompanied by an army (Redford 1984, 72; Kemp 1989, 289–292).

And it is in the strengthening of the role of the military and the police that some scholars see the key to Akhenaten's swift success in establishing his dream town, as well as that which brought it to an end which was just as swift (van Dijk 2000, 291). At first, the army – unlike the priesthood and officialdom – need not have been affected too much by the reform of religion and sovereign ideology. In the beginning, it shielded Akhenaten's vision with force, maybe with the aim of gaining dominance over the other two non-royal power circles (Mynářová 2013; 2015). However, the army command may have decided to withdraw its support as time went by. Even Tutankhamun's Restoration Stela explicitly mentions the lack of sources available for the army under Akhenaten among the aspects of his heretical rule (Lacau 1909, pl. 70; Helck 1959, 2025–2032; Harris 1973, 9–11). In combination with the harsh living conditions in Amarna and the unsustainable changes in the style of religious thought (see further), this may have contributed to the fall of Akhenaten and his original vision (van Dijk 2000, 291).

The king died in the 17th year of his reign and soon afterwards not only was his reformist project abandoned, but Akhetaten also started losing its population until, several years later, Tutankhamun reverted back – symbolically and *de facto* – to the pre-Amarna tradition (Kemp 1989, 267; van Dijk 2000, 291; Dodson 2009) and once again set the centre back in Thebes and Memphis. However, the consequence of Akhenaten's reforms, which had a strong impact on many aspects of the Egyptian civilisation, from religion to language and art, and from the economy to the importance of the military, was that Egypt had changed forever. All the population groups, especially the important power groups, had learned from the critical developments and, in addition for some, the outcome meant a strengthening of their own position in the state. This was especially true of the army, whose leaders became, in the periods to follow, some of the most powerful rulers in Egypt's history.

It must be pointed out that many of the motives and iconic ideas of the Amarna reform had been present in Egyptian religion and politics long before the ascent of Amenhotep IV to the throne. This applies, for example, to the use of the expression *Aten* (sun-disc) in the cult (Redford 1984, 170–172; Bryan 2000, 262; Dijk 2000, 275; Kemp 2012, 28), to the concept of the singularity or uniqueness of the god (Baines 1982; Hornung 1983; Baines 2011, 42–43), to the union of the (sun-)god with the sovereign, and to the king's symbolic function as mediator between human beings and deities (Assmann 1970; Silverman, O'Connor 1995; van Dijk 2000, 273).

In Egyptological research we come across several different views of the origin, nature and significance of Akhenaten's religious reform

(for a well-structured overview of main aspects of Akhenaten's reform, see Smith 2017, 271–277). These views can be divided into three main streams (for other, but similar five significant features of Akhenaten's theology, see Smith 2017, 274–275). One of these views regards the cult of the Aten as the outcome of a search for the only, all-embracing, transcendent deity presenting itself as an extreme offshoot of the “new solar theology” of the first half of the New Kingdom (Assmann 2001a, 201–208; 2008, 66–70; for a different approach to the solar background of Amarna, see Baines 2011). According to another, the cause of the radical change involving the individual religious motives was a purposeful change in the way of thinking and the arrival of a new, non-classical logic (Hornung 1983, 237–250). A third stream of interpretation places the greatest accent on the prioritisation of the significance of light as the major and paramount (natural) principle and refers to the Amarna ideological shift as Akhenaten's natural philosophy (Allen 1989, 89–101). Our focus, however, shall be on such themes and aspects of the Amarna reform that for various reasons have either been often overlooked or have not had much importance attached to them. These include the issue of the structure of the Egyptian pantheon and the ranking of the individual deities, the manner in which the gods were depicted under the classical, pre-Amarna cult and the radical change enforced by Akhenaten upon his people, and, last but not least, the changes in the concept of the Afterlife – the justification of a person after death and the fate of that person in the Afterlife. This list alone makes it easier to comprehend why these themes have often generated only marginal interest. Is it at all possible to deal with a pantheon system in a religion that is considered to be monotheistic in general? Why analyse in great detail the forms of gods when studying a cult whose main subject was depicted exclusively as a sun disc with rays? And why examine the concept of justification after death in a religion that does not mention this phenomenon at all and, according to some scholars, does not cultivate a deeper theology of the Afterlife?

Far from People's Hearts

Besides their functions, roles and relationship (or “constellations”; Assmann 2001a) within the pantheon, Egyptian gods and goddesses were characterised mainly by their names and the forms through which they could be communicated with and comprehended. Both the names and images also expressed the manner in which a specific deity manifested itself in nature: these two aspects reveal how each

deity was made to be present in cult and its life story within a myth, describing in this way the essence of these hidden and otherwise non-discernible divine beings.

The traditional Egyptian way of depicting divine beings oscillated between zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representation. Most frequently the two were combined: the typical iconographic form of the image of a god was thus represented by a combination of a human body with the head of an animal (Hornung 1983, 100–141). Ever since the Old Kingdom, the sun gods Ra and Horus were depicted on Egyptian monuments as a man with the head of a falcon; Hathor, the celestial goddess, was frequently shown as a woman with a cow's head – although she increasingly appeared in fully human form and could, on occasions, be shown as a cow; and Anubis, the deity of the mummification and necropoleis, was depicted as a man with the head of a jackal. One of the reasons for matching an animal to a deity was to point out the characteristic features and functions of the respective entity, which in the real world were manifest in the appearance, behaviour and symbolic meaning of a certain animal. Such natural associations could then be the basis for emphasising various aspects of a specific expression of godhood. The god Amun could thus be depicted equally as a man, ram or gander, and those three forms might even be shown within a single stela (e.g. Ägyptisches Museum Berlin, Inv. 7259).

In Egyptian iconography, the head referred to the essence and characteristic features of the deity and, possibly, to its main functions. The human body, on the other hand, served mainly as the bearer of information about activities and functions; it allowed the depiction of the respective deity in action, in a certain pose or position, and the attachment of various attributes to it with the intention of executing a more detailed specification of the deities' characteristics or functions (Janák 2009). The Egyptians probably did not consider this manner of representation of deities to be a depiction of their accurate images (or of their real shapes); the representation was more like ideograms, attributes and symbols, whose purpose was not to capture the image of the entity in question, but rather to describe the nature of this entity. The cultic forms of the gods were hieroglyphs which had a specific shape, position and meaning prescribed specifically by an iconographic canon. First and foremost, the images of the gods were there to be read! This manner of depiction was used by ancient Egyptians to provide the most precise details of the essence, traits and functions of a concealed, invisible and elusive deity in a manner that would make the information widely coherent and applicable for cult purposes. And it was the same with the names,

epithets and titles of the gods (Hornung 1983; Janák 2009), as understanding the world of Egyptian gods was not so much a matter of faith as of knowing and cognition (Assmann 2001a, 92-110).

A comparison between the traditional way of depicting Egyptian deities and the form used to depict the one god during the Amarna period is symptomatic of this process. The Aten, as the sun disc and the light emanating from it, was considered the supreme creator and ruler of everything on earth, and in many ways his cult bore a number of identical features with the royal cult (Hornung 1999a, 54-55; Assmann 2001a, 208-219). This is evident in his name and titles (recorded in royal cartouches!), as well as in his iconographic image, hymns, prayers and feasts. The impression from the hymns is that the world exists, order and life prevail within it, people procreate, live and work, and there are various countries, races and natural conditions on earth only because of the Aten (Murnane 1995, 113-116; Assmann 1992, 152-155). These cosmological and political motives must be understood, however, especially in the context of the assertion that does not appear until the very end of the hymns that reveal the religious beliefs and perceptions of Atenism – that the Aten had created all these things *for his only son*, i.e. the King Akhenaten (Assmann 1992, 162; 2001a, 213-218). In religion and royal ideology, the Aten, as the life-giving sun, was raised to celestial heights. Though visible daily in the sky from where he brought everything back to life and looked down on his creation, he remained too distant from the world and the people (because he had created his heaven far away) to be able to enter it. He was only in a close relationship with his son, who was the sole person who knew his ways (Redford 1984, 178-179; Assmann 1992, 159-162; 2001a, 214-218; Grandet 1995, 98-133).

In the oldest documents of the cult of the Aten introduced by Akhenaten (still acting in his name of Amenhotep), which survived in the temple complex of Karnak in Thebes, the god appears in a form concordant with the traditional way of depicting the Egyptian gods of the sun and heavens. He is shown – similarly to Harakhty – as a man with a falcon's head and a sun disc complemented with a cobra (*uraeus*) above his head (e.g. Ägyptisches Museum Berlin, Inv. 2072). In the context of the later stages of the increasingly radical religious reform, this form of the god does not appear in the iconography, instead being depicted in art as a sun disc with the uraeus and with many rays emerging from the disc ending in hands to receive oblation offerings, to bless and present the sign of life (*ankh*) to the king and his family. Unlike the images of other deities with animal heads, human bodies and various attributes, the new manner of depicting the Aten did not offer any more detailed testimony about his essence, traits,

characteristics, functions and, especially, his mythological background. Moreover, images of the Aton were not equipped with caption referring to the god's speech (Baines 2011, 59–61). This “mute” image (Baines 2011, 54) of the light emanating from the disc was simply one any man could see: the god as a powerful, life-giving (light of the) sun, moving high in the sky, which could (and perhaps also should) be perceived as the primary cosmic principle, the foundation of Akhenaten's natural philosophy (Allen 1989).

Two important facts should not be overlooked in this context. First, in the surviving images, the Aten looks down on (or touches) exclusively his only son and representative, King Akhenaten, or possibly his family. Second, in the Aten's cult the absence of traditional, descriptive depiction goes hand in hand with an absence of mythological themes and motives. Indeed, even the choice of name for the new god might have been influenced by the fact that the expression had until then applied to a celestial (therefore objective, material and visible) body with no deeper symbolic bonds or thick layers of mythology (Redford 1984, 170–172; Assmann 1992, 152–162; 2001a, 208–221; van Dijk 2000, 275). In this point, he might have followed the royal ideology of the first half of the New Kingdom and the royal cult of his father, Amenhotep III (Bryan 2000, 262; Bickel 2002, Kemp 2012, 28), rather than being inspired by Heliopolitan theological speculations.

The difference between the manner of pictorial representation of the only god of Amarna and of the traditional gods corresponds fully with both the legend of the Aten as preserved in texts in his name, titles and hymns, and the political line enforced by the king. In Amarna, the sun became a god who might be far way, but whose rays still reached the ground; a god people could look at, yet no one could know; a creator, who creates himself, yet craftsmen (i.e. creators of images) do not know him (Assmann 1992, 166). In spite of all his visibility and theological simplicity, the Aten was first of all a god uncomprehend to all, with the exception of his only son Akhenaten (Redford 1984, 178–179; Murnane 1995, 115; Assmann 1992, 159–162; 2001a, 214–218). The idea of the god's unknowability was stressed already in the first (Pre-Amarna) stage of Amenhotep IV rule as witnessed by an inscription from the tomb of Kheruef (Murnane 1999).

Both depictions of religious motives and cultic scenes and official scenes of everyday life appear in Amarna art without mythological reference and seem to depict only the real world perceivable by the senses and observed with the eyes (Allen 1989, 89–101; Assmann 1992, 155). It is as if Akhenaten took the symbolic and poetic literally (Baines 2011, 59) and scribes, craftsmen and artists had to stick to a *What You See Is What You Get* decorum. It must be borne in mind,

however, that our insight into Amarna “realism” need not be correct and complete and that the apparent reality and naturalism of Amarna may have been (due to the depth of the symbolic communication that traditional art) more of an artistic tool for *hiding* the visible god and his mysterious essence from human beings. The art of Akhenaten’s reform can also be interpreted thus: only the natural world illuminated by the life-giving sun and as seen by ordinary eyes is what common people *see* and what is available to them. But the king, as the son of the Aten, has been entrusted with much more. Only he (according to his own words as documented in the hymns) *knows* his divine father and the latter’s hidden ways. The Aten resides in the king’s heart when, in the form of the sun disc, he sets on the horizon (Assmann 1992, 157–162).

The mention of the god residing in the heart (as the organ of thinking, the senses, responsibility and emotions) is an important reference to a possibility of which the common people were deprived during the Amarna period. The Egyptians were convinced that a man’s heart was the abode of order and piety, a place where a man met a god. The ideal of individual piety and just life was the god inserted in the heart (Morenz 1996, 64–66), and for a man who did so, the god (e.g. Amun) became both a father and a mother (Assmann 2001a, 220). In the case of Amarna, however, this intrinsic link between a man and a god existed only at the king-god level and all the other people were left behind in a natural world without a direct relation to the god or deeper religious accountability (Landes 2011, 172, 179). The difference between the god and the king has become very vague in Amarna, not only in iconography, but also in royal titles and correspondence (Mynářová 2010). The official object of the public cult and devotion in Akhenaten’s time was not the Aten, but the king. Once the distant and unknowable celestial god abandoned the space he would occupy within an individual’s heart, it was assumed that it would be the king who would take on the role of the only agent bestowing divine gifts, order and life on earth (Redford 1984, 180; Kemp 1989, 265, 304–305; van Dijk 2000, 284), and the king who would assume the role of mother and father.

This change made to the god residing in the heart is reflected not only in texts and the new iconography where the king alone is in direct contact (literally “touch”) with the god and is given titles (e.g. “Living from *Maat*”) and attributes (e.g. “of the Feather Crown”) previously reserved for deities (Redford 1984, 102; Mynářová 2010; Kemp 2012, 29), but also in the archaeologically documented domestic cult (as witnessed by stelae bearing the image of the ruler and his family or in amulets with the king’s name Friedman 1986;

Kemp 1989, 285; Stevens 2006; Fitzenreiter 2008). It is possible that the new way of depicting the king was the result of an effort to distinguish him as somebody absolutely removed from the standards of the natural world rather than presenting a realistic image of a physically deformed individual (Kemp 1989, 265; 2012, 30; Allen unpublished). Besides, the figure of the king always dominates in the depictions; Akhenaten's role in the cult is thus accentuated also at the expense of the sun god (Redford 1984, 174). Thus, in the official Amarna religion – apart from the royal family's personal cult towards Aten – it was mainly the king who represented the object of individual reverence. Amarna texts did stress that the Aten resided in Akhenaten's heart and that the commoner (in fact, all non-royal persons) should put the king in their hearts (Assmann 2000, 113; Kemp 2012, 41). Hence, the king was the true source and receiver of the order of *Maat* (Kemp 2012, 29), and the people's ultimate support (Redford 1984, 180–181). The king was he who appeared in public as a divine being, kept his people alive and openly performed the cult/*Maat* (Kemp 2012, 105); and *vice versa*: the Aten – clearly visible, yet effective only through the king – dwelt in his heavenly isolation. Here, the Amarna reform reached its ultimate paradox: the visible sun-disk (the Aten), who was easily grasped by the eyes of everyone, resided far from the hearts of people and was kept in a much greater concealment than the Hidden One, the invisible Amun, a mysterious but hearing god, so consistently persecuted by Akhenaten.

One Town – One God – One Ruler

In Amarna, the number of officially acknowledged gods supported by the state apparatus was reduced to one to form a cult that some may view as monotheism (Hornung 1999, 88–94; among others), monolatry (Baines 1998, 278–282; 2011), or even an early form of atheism (Redford 1984, 234). In order to grasp other aspects of Akhenaten's possible motivation, we need to outline the scheme of the traditional pantheon which – at the first glance – resembles a disarray of hundreds of gods, goddesses and demons, in which it is hard to discern a clear structure (Hornung 1983; Meeks, Meeks 1996; Wilkinson 2003).

This seemingly chaotic tangle of divine beings, their ambivalent characteristics, flexible roles and changing relations must, however, be looked at as seen through the prism of the ancient Egyptian world-view, both in its cosmological (vertical) and geographical-political (horizontal) sense (Hornung 1983; Assmann, 2001a; Janák 2009). We therefore find two dissimilar, yet interconnected planes in the pantheon

of ancient Egyptian religion. The first was represented by the locally-specific cults of individual towns or *nomes* (administrative regions), the other by the nation-wide pantheon dominated by cults of major centres (e.g. Memphis, Heliopolis and Thebes) and tied into the royal ideology (Janák 2011b). Local cults were usually bound to a single deity (the Lord or Lady of the town in question) with whom other deities were connected in relevant constellations, such as the classical New Kingdom triads of major political centres, like Amun, Mut and Khonsu of Thebes, or Ptah, Sekhmet (Hathor) and Nefertem of Memphis. On the other hand, the importance of some deities (such as Meretseger of Western Thebes) may have been truly site-specific and limited to a single locality, not known or mentioned in other parts of the Egypt. Egyptian gods thus often appeared as the gods of towns, and the towns as abodes of these gods (Assmann 2001a, 17-27), as reflected in divine names (Nekhetbet – The Nekhebite or The One from/of Necheb), titles (Amun, the Lord of Thebes), and Greek designations of Egyptian towns (Heliopolis – the City of Helios, the City of the Sun/Ra). On the national level of the pantheon, which included representatives of individual town cults, the local deities retained at least some of their original roles, bonds and hierarchies but also yielded to the authority of the State-recognised king of gods (e.g. Amun-Ra, during the time of Amenhotep III). The authorities of the State could not ignore the importance of the region and the allegiance of every person to his or her town, nor was it possible to deliberately leave out the original, town-specific characteristics of any of gods in the State plane of religion. Though every Egyptian was a subject of the king, he was first of all an inhabitant of a certain town and thus fell under its administration and belonged to its cult. As one of later wisdom texts of the Papyrus Insinger (Lichtheim 1980, 207) puts it: the god of the town is the one on whom the life and death of its inhabitants depend. Hence, just as the Egyptian State represented the Two Lands composed of regions, Egyptian religion was rather a united (i.e. federalized) than a fully unified (i.e. monolithic) system.

Following on from the above-presented interpretation of the Sun-god's altered iconography, we shall now examine the fruits and possible motivation of Akhenaten's religious reform through the prism of the importance and partial autonomy of the site-specific cults. The texts of the Amarna period reveal that the Aten and his cult – like cults of the other great deities of the traditional religion – were fundamentally rooted in his town. The new administrative and residential town of Akhetaten was not only a new *royal* seat, but mainly the seat of the god Aten himself, as evident from its name. The expression *Akhet-Aten* (Horizon of the Aten) can be interpreted as “the place where the sun

disc effectively dwells and from where it rises". It was built in a pure place (Murnane 1995, 75) solely for the Sun-god whose close bonds to his cultic centre are also reflected in the town's direct association with the name of this god (Leitz 2002, 614, 616). Such nomenclatures denote the Sun-god's abode: "Aten of Akhetaten", in the same way as traditional names, epithets and titles of other deities did for other towns (e.g. Amun, the Lord of Thebes).

The conception of Akhetaten combined two seemingly opposite views: the first was the accent put on the Aten's idealized site-specific earthly abode, and the second was presented by the god's all-encompassing and truly universal rule mentioned in the hymns. The new 'town' thus represented the god's dwelling place, sacred territory or a temple-like settlement rather than a town or city in its traditional sense. Hence, the hieroglyphic sign *niut*, meaning "town", was not usually added to the term *Akhetaten* as one would expect (Kemp 2012, 40–41, 50). From the religious, political and largely also economic point of view it seemed as if the whole Egyptian empire (or the World dominated by the order of *Maat*) had materialised in a single sacred settlement covering an area of approximately 10 km² (Assmann 1972, 109; Kemp 1991, 267).

The fact that Akhenaten was very well aware of the inseparability of the Egyptian gods and their towns also implies that the withholding of official support from the majority gods (Redford 1984, 60) and the imposition of constraints on their cult (Redford 1984, 142; Kemp 2012, 25–27) had to result in the flattening of the above-mentioned two-tiered system of the pantheon and suppression of the autonomy of local (both divine and human) authorities. By restricting the number of officially recognized and supported gods to a single entity with a universal authority, the Egyptian religion and ideology would form a fully centralized state.

The state-sponsored and state-controlled cult of the Aten thus provided both the ideological background of Akhenaten's reform and a new means of subsistence to people through the redistribution of oblations (Kemp 2012, 92–96, 116–117). Besides being the Sun-god's representative, or representation, the king also became the true life-provider of the people. Although many of the inhabitants of Akhetaten remained attached to some of the traditional Egyptian deities, as we know from the many amulets and figurines of the abandoned, traditional religion (van Dijk 2000, 287; Stevens 2006; 2009; Baines 2011, 61–62; Kemp 2012, 235–245), these objects of unofficial personal or family piety were devoid of any major political, major power or economic influence, which thus remained exclusively in the hands of the Aten, or more precisely Akhenaten.

It cannot be positively proved that Akhenaten, with his vision of a single god dwelling in a single town, tried to achieve the elimination of the town power centres often interconnected with local temples, but the absolute centralisation of State power in one place and in one man was exactly what was achieved in the end according to Amarna ideology. It is therefore not by chance that Tutankhamun's Restoration Stela in Memphis, where in the introduction the king festoons the great gods (Amun, Atum and Ptah) with their town titles and epithets and which deals with the restoration of the original organisational system of the country, rehabilitates both the gods, and their towns and temples (Murnane 1995, 212-214; Baines 2011, 52-53); though Tutankhamun did not simply rehabilitate the pre-Amarna priestly elite, he – in a similar manner to Akhenaten – let new blood flow into older veins.

Justification by Grace Alone

According to classical Egyptian ideas about the Afterlife, the moment of death marked the point when a person lost control over in body, organs and senses, and was denied the possibility of living (breathing, speaking, eating, etc.). Even the person's life-giving spirit, the *Ka*, left the deceased and waited in anticipation of a later reunion with the body (Janák 2003a; 2003b). Thus, in dying (which was NOT identical with the ultimate death for the Egyptians), a person departed for the underworld (the *Duat*) through which he or she had to pass before reaching the eastern horizon, as the sun did overnight. This *Duat* did not, however, represent the final destination of the journey to the Afterlife. It was not the final place or state of the blessed dead, but rather a transitory region of darkness, demons, traps and tests. During the journey through the *Duat*, people had to prove their physical, moral, social and ritual readiness and integrity. In other words, they had to prove worthy of being accepted among the elite group of the powerful dead, the semi-divine *Akhu* who functioned as mediators between the human and the divine worlds (Janák 2011a; 2013). In the opposite case – if an individual did not pass the tests of the underworld – he or she experienced “the second death” and remained dead forever, being *Mut* (the Dead) instead of becoming an *Akh*.

The notion of existence after death, like their view of the cosmic order of *Maat*, did not require the Egyptians to seek salvation in the sense of redemption from personal sins, impurity or injustice. Quite the opposite – they longed for the restoration of life in a form resembling life on earth as much as possible. Dying was a manifestation of disorder within the world and represented an accusation against

which an individual had to defend. The ancient Egyptian notion of an Afterlife existence thus encompassed ideas on resurrection, elevation to a new “social” status and transformation of the deceased into a powerful and influential entity. It also had two ideological foci: the first centred on the symbolism of the birth, death and rebirth as witnessed in nature and cyclical movement of celestial bodies, mainly of the sun (*Imitatio Solis*); the second linked an individual’s fate with Osiris, the god of the dead and of resurrection, whom Egyptians hoped to follow and imitate in being resurrected and becoming a transfigured being (Smith 2017; for *Imitatio Osiridis*, see Assmann 2001b, 230–235, 247–256). In both cases, the primary issues were deliverance from death, restoration of life in a form endowed with greater power and elevation to a higher status. Both foci were inseparable in the Egyptian conception of resurrection. They are best described as an endeavour to reach both *moral mummification* and *corporeal justification* (Assmann 2001b; Smith 2008; 2009, 4). Besides ritual activities and spells (called *Sakhu* – “Those that make one an *Akh*”), embalming rites and mortuary offerings, the Egyptians used also religio-magical texts in their effort to ensure that the deceased reached the Afterlife. These textual compositions – which served both as passports and guides to the Afterlife – underwent many changes during the 2.600 years of their development and use; starting with the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, ending with shorter documents as Letters for Breathing in the Roman Period.

In Amarna, however, only very few of the afore-mentioned motives, ideas and ritual tools relating to the traditional concept of a person’s entry to the Afterlife are encountered. Most noticeably, the main divine character, the god Osiris, almost leaves the stage of official Amarna doctrine and is only seldom mentioned in private sphere (for attestations and discussions, see Smith 2017, 279–285). Moreover, textual and iconographic allusions to the journey through the *Duat*, its topography and obstacles, as well as the posthumous judgement are absent (Hornung 1999a, 95–103; van Dijk 2000, 283–285; Kemp 2012, 251). Nevertheless, the absence of data should not lead us to the conclusion that the Egyptians in the Amarna period did not believe in an Afterlife existence or that they did not consider it in a more profound way. The existence alone of the tombs, their furnishings, burial equipment and of the symbolic setting in the landscape surrounding the capital city are proof that even under Akhenaten’s reform the inhabitants of Amarna did believe in the possibility of achieving some existence after death (Smith 2017, 276–277), albeit (according to some scholars) bound to the daily rebirth of the sun and their share in offerings brought daily in temples to the Aten (van Dijk 2000, 283–285; Kemp 2012, 248–255).

The Amarna period tombs followed the earlier tradition in their primary *function* which was to ensure that the deceased reaches life after death. Hence, in spite of all deviations and omissions in tomb decoration as well as in the content and style of the tomb inscriptions, there is not the slightest reason to assume that the *purpose* of these texts, ornaments and furnishings had changed radically. Just as before and after Amarna, the always pragmatic Egyptians had their eternal dwellings equipped with texts and images designed to secure a trouble-free entry to the Afterlife and the acquisition of the best possible status there. At this point it is irrelevant whether the new life of the deceased was localised in this world (e.g. in the form of participation in sacrifices in Amarna temples) or in a somewhat unspecified place or state beyond this world. But if the purpose of the tomb decorations remained the same, how should one interpret it?

The absence of the textual compositions referring to the successful passage through the *Duat* (i.e. the deceased's passage from dying, through justification to resurrection) has already been implied. Thus, we can juxtapose the omitted scenes with the newly established ones: instead of references to the deceased's ritual preparedness to enter the Afterlife or the judgement before Osiris and inquiry of the deceased's moral integrity, Amarna tombs list the person's deeds in service to the king and of the king benignly shedding gifts to his loyal officials. The relation of the deceased to the gods, including the Aten, was replaced by his dependence on the king and by emphasizing the king's personal contact with the Sun-god (Hornung 1999a, 101-103; Davies 1908; Murnane 1995, 107-120). Although there are attestations that even in Amarna, some people did address Aten with request relating to their Afterlife fate and existence (Smith 2017, 297).

It is also noteworthy that Amarna tomb inscriptions use mostly expressions like *Maatyu* (i.e., the True, Righteous or Just) or *Hesyu* (i.e., the Praised Ones, or the Favoured Ones) instead of the traditional term *Akhu* to refer to the mighty vindicated dead (Davies 1903-1908; Friedman 1981). When attested in Amarna tombs, the term *Akh* usually refers to its daily-life meaning, pointing towards effectiveness and usefulness of the deceased during his life. There is, however, an attestation from the tomb of Mehy I in which the tomb owner requests to achieve the status of *Akh* even after death (Smith 2017, 296-297 with references). But generally speaking, by acquiring the name Akhenaten (*Akh-en-Aten* or the "*Akh* of Aten"), the king proclaimed himself the only official super-human, powerful and influential entity that mediated contact between people and the god at all cosmic levels (Friedman 1981; Fitzenreiter 2008; Janák 2011a). The reverence for the influential dead did not exceed the line drawn by the king, since

these dead officials and heads of influential families (Kemp 2012, 245–247) were no longer perceived as true mediators to the realm of the divine. It was a mere extension of the devotedness to the king, as these ancestors blessed with (the king's) favour had achieved their elevated status (both the earthly and the posthumous) exclusively thanks to their loyalty and the king's grace. Hence, the king's all-permeating authority, the deceased's absolute dependence upon the monarch and the redistribution of offerings consecrated to the Aten literally stand out in the pictorial and textual decoration of the Amarna tombs (van Dijk 2000, 283; Kemp 2012, 248–254), although in minor cases we have attestations that even in Amarna some people pinned their hopes also on the Aten or even still on Osiris (Smith 2017, 279–285, 297–298). In the officially pronounced doctrine, Akhenaten's authority most probably dominated the conception of the Afterlife in the same way as he controlled the earthly religio-political system. As the only son and sole representative of the distant god whose power he executed, the king also assumed the *de facto* role of Osiris. It was *by the king's grace alone* that the line between the just and the damned was drawn. All the traditional tools facilitating the achievement of the otherworldly resurrection (e.g. texts for reaching the Afterlife, personal relations to the gods, magical means, etc.) must have been perceived not merely as heretical but mainly as unnecessary or redundant. If an official proved to be useful (*Akhl*) to the king during his lifetime (Janák 2011a), he had both his earthly and Afterlife existence provided for (van Dijk 2000, 285). Why would one set up additional obstacles – in the form of Osiris's court, for instance – if the justification was achieved by the king's grace and by mere devotion to the ruler?

Conclusions

Several crucial aspects of Akhenaten's reform (the focus on a visible, yet too distant god, the king's direct control over the cult, absence of official forms of personal piety, and the disappearance of posthumous divine justification) point out the inseparable links between “theological” concepts and “secular” forms of power. Regardless of whether the reform was motivated by political needs or not, its consequence was the centralisation of power, which allowed the king to gain control over spheres of power previously dominated by town-gods and their priests, by local authorities and high officials, by Osiris and deities of the individual burial sites. The reform even allowed him to usurp the influence that, formerly, had been ascribed to the powerful and influential dead on a personal and familial level.

The reform's swift progression, as well as its sudden collapse found a symbolic model in Akhenaten's decision to build the new town with smaller, easier to carry blocks. This innovative construction material enabled the king to proceed quickly in building temples for the Aten, palaces, monuments and barracks for himself and his devoted subjects; but all these structures were as easily dismantled after the fall of the Amarna ideology. Although one may seek the reasons for the collapse within Akhenaten's innovative theology, many (if not all) its major ideas and concepts had been present in Egyptian religion before Amarna, and even before Amenhotep III. Others may point towards his ideological radicalism, but that particular feature could cause a swift downfall of Amarna only secondarily. Both these partial causal agents probably contributed to the collapse of Akhenaten's reform but only in connection with two other reasons. The first is represented by a reduced participation of non-royal individuals in Amarna cult and official religion, the second by underestimating the agricultural and economic insufficiency of the Amarna region. Loyalty to the reformist king and enthusiasm in creating a new form of elite society might have served as sound stepping-stones but, when it came to hard work, harsh conditions and personal ideas about the blessed ancestors and the Afterlife, however, the new ideology did not provide much hope and support. Thus, Akhenaten built his Utopia on totalitarian ideology and the temple-town of the Aten literally on sand without deeper foundations.

We cannot see, of course, into Akhenaten's heart to read his mind and motives, the fruits of the reform suggest that he attempted to establish a political monopoly rather than to introduce religious monotheism. And should anyone still strive to draw analogies between Akhenaten and other monarchs or politicians, the following variants might spring to mind: Hezekiah and later Josiah, who tried to unite the country politically and strengthen their power by centralising the cult; or Henry VIII with his personally and politically motivated Church reform. If one was to search for comparisons among figures from the religious field, however, the effort would be much more problematic. Moses, who was associated with Akhenaten's reform already by Sigmund Freud (Hornung 1999a, 15; Assmann 1997, 6-7, 144-167), would have probably found the Aten's cult even more revolting than traditional polytheistic "idolatry" since, during the Amarna Period, no one but the king had access to the one god (Redford 1984, 32; Landes 2011, 178, 180). And should anybody like to see in Akhenaten an "Egyptian Jesus", they would have to admit that this was a Jesus who was seduced to rule the kingdoms of the world when tempted in the desert (Luke 4:1-13).

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