

Masculinity and Femininity in Amarna

HPHP4014 – Gender, Sex, & Sexuality:
Historical & Critical Perspectives

2022/23 – Block 6

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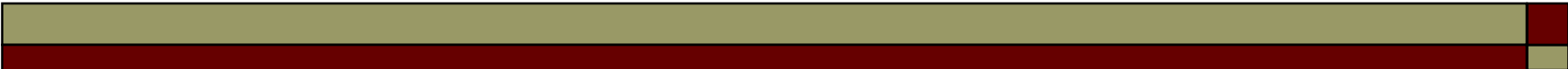
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and Heritage

Cairo Museum

JE 49528

- from pillared courtyard of the Gempa-Aten temple in east Karnak
- colossal statue of Akhenaten standing with his arms folded, holding the flail and heka scepters
- depicted with particular features: long face, narrow eyes, long protruding chin, fleshy lips (naked, without distinctive sexual organ → thought to represent the king as "the primordial god considered as the father and the mother" of the people.)





What is the Amarna Period?

- ❑ Approx. 30 years long
- ❑ From end of the reign of Amenhotep III until the beginning of Horemhab
- ❑ Egypt was at its imperial height
- ❑ Focused around the ancient city of Akhetaten (new foundation)

Amenhotep III

- Amenhotep III is the father, and immediate predecessor of Akhenaten
- Ruled *circa* 1390–1352
- Son of Thutmose IV and a minor consort named Mutemwiya
- Came to the throne as a child, no more than 12 years old



Amenhotep IV

- Was married to Nefertiti before becoming king
- Possibly fathered Meritaten and (less likely) Meketaten by Regnal Year 1
- Seems to have resided at Malqata



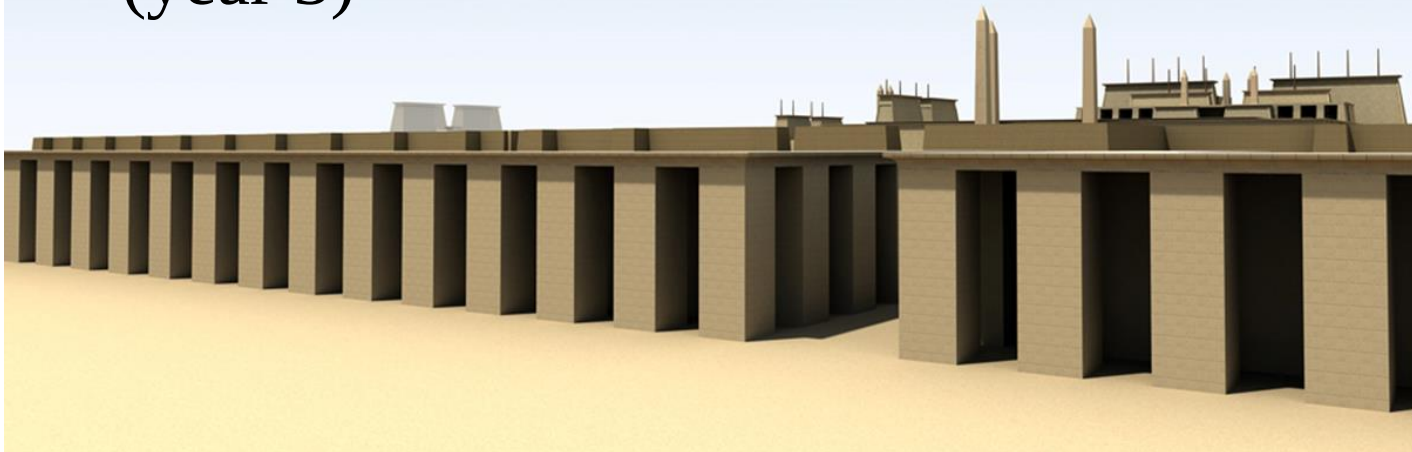
The Aten & Akhenaten

- Between RY 3 & 4, there was a complete revolution (?!)
- The Aten was given a “didactic” [teaching] name: Re-Horakhty, who rejoices in the horizon in his name of Shu, who is the Aten”, written in cartouche



Gem-Pa-Aten

- Oriented to the east (sunrise)
- Colonnade of piers, including colossal statues
- Altar to Re-Horakhty
- Focused on *sed*-festival (year 3)



The Move to Amarna

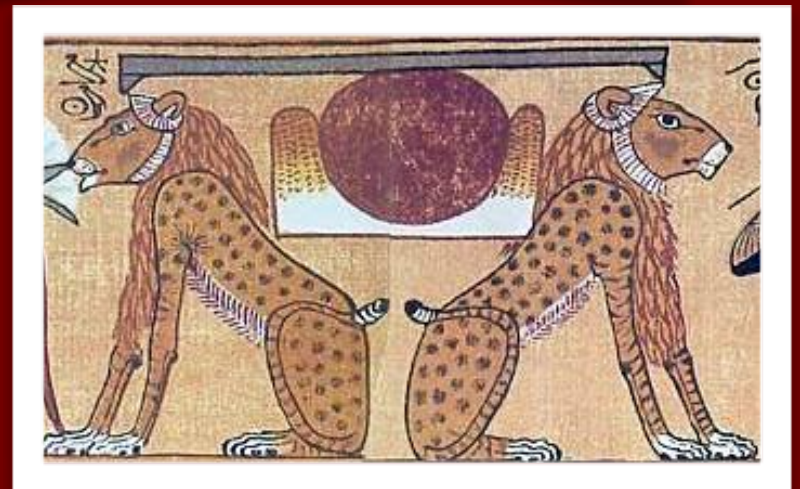
- Location of Amarna
- Middle Egypt
- 402 km north of Thebes, 312 km south of Memphis
- Quarries for construction located to the north

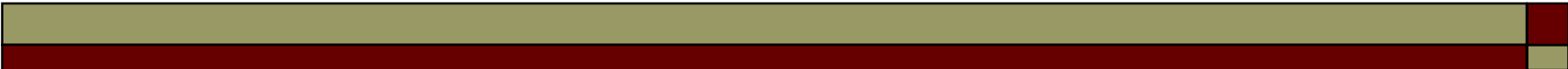




Theological motivations for the site

- Politically neutral due to absence of occupation
- Topography
 - large, flat area in the desert; plenty of room to build
 - close to Nile and farming
- Solar symbolism: Akhet-Aten = "Horizon of the Solar Disk"





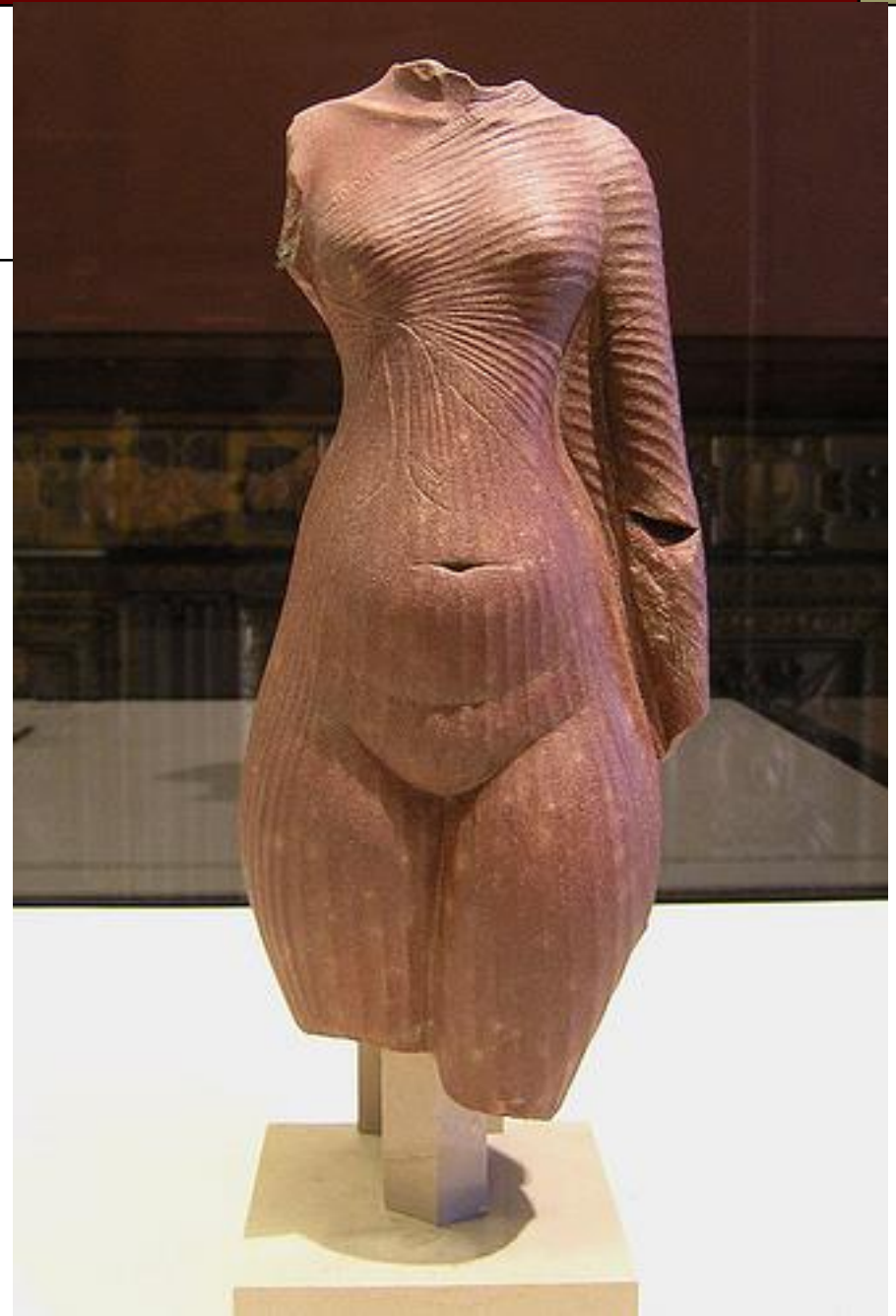
The special status of royal women in Amarna

- Who are royal women?
- What is their status?
- Who is (the female) who in Amarna?

- → chronology and genealogy

Royal Women?

- ❑ King's Chief Wife
 - ❑ King's Daughters
 - ❑ Other royal women
-
- ❑ BUT: some daughters became wives and rivalled (?) the Chief Wife, their mother

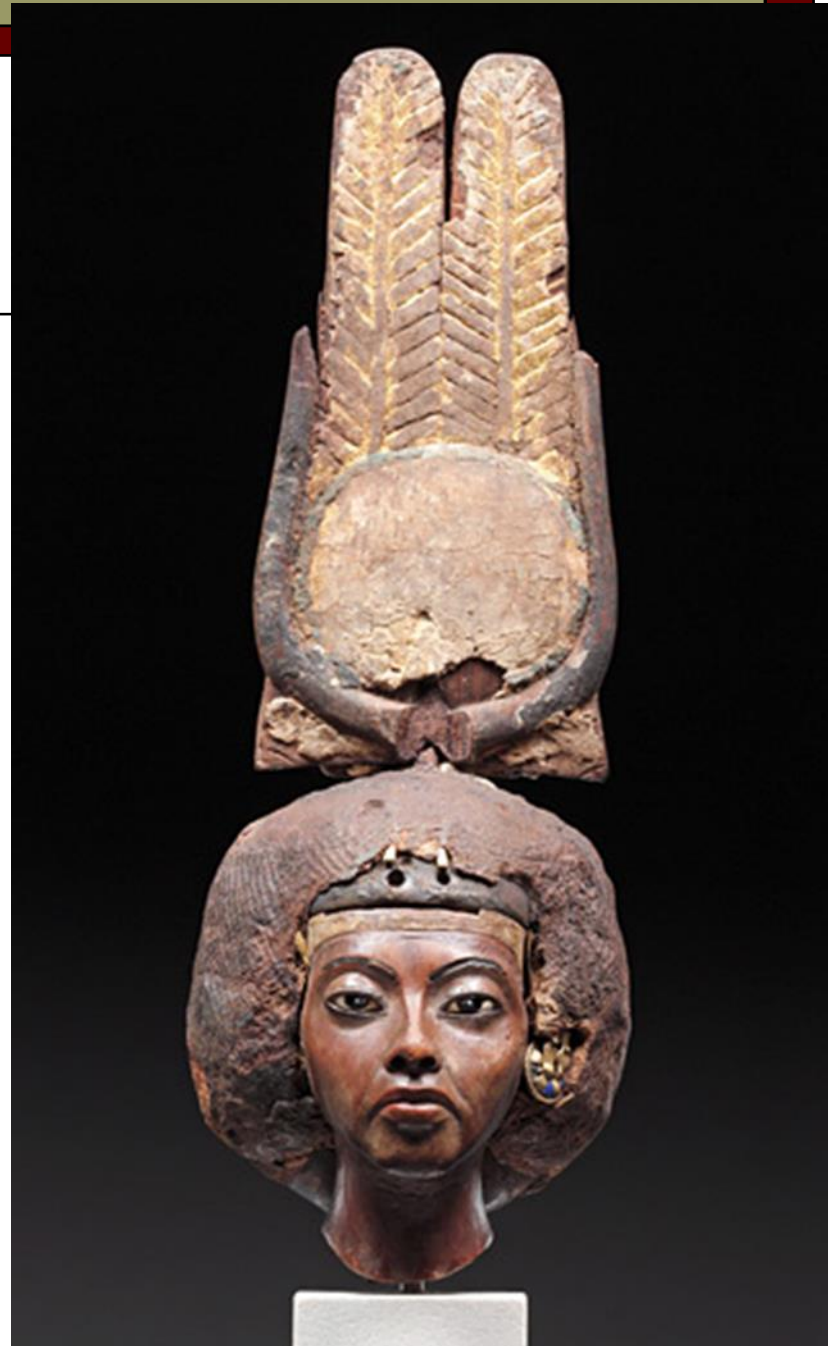


Royal Women?

- ❑ Far more information about women of this period than any time else in AE
- ❑ Married their fathers? – religious marriages, “consumed” marriages → modern scholars in difficulties to explain (modern taboos about incest)
 - Incestuous relationship might be difficult to understand
 - But we have no proof of offspring coming from such a relationship

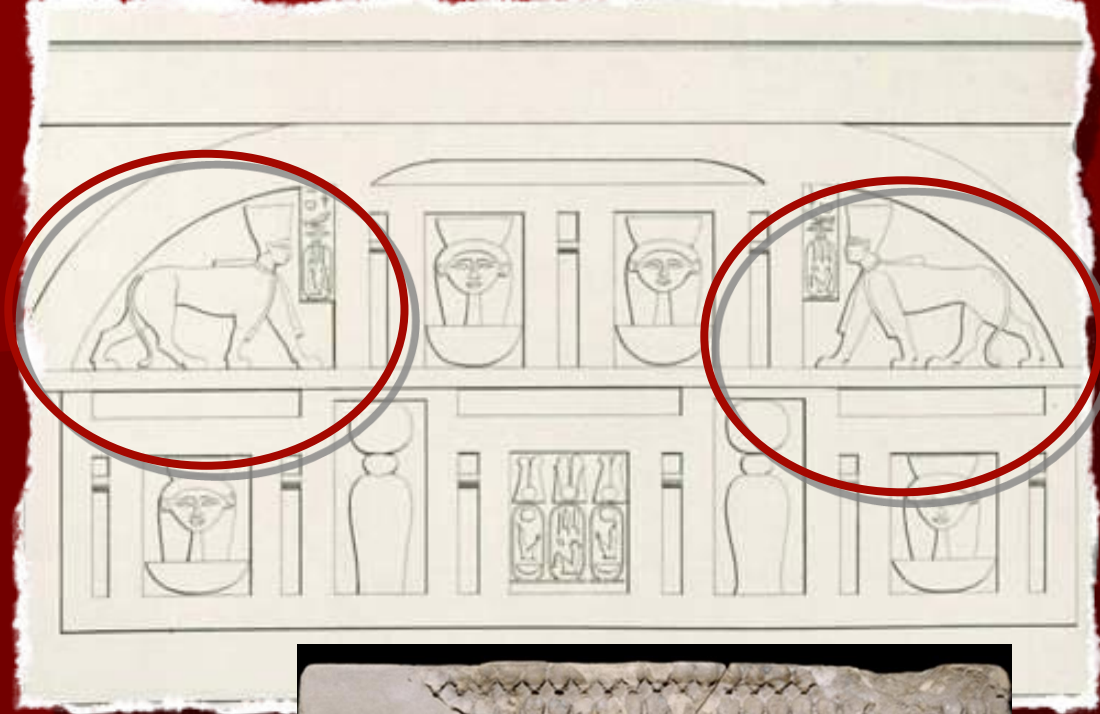
Amenhotep III's family

- ❑ **King's Chief Wife Tiye:**
- ❑ Remembered as “Commoner Queen” – non-royal birth: daughter of God's Father and Commander Yuya and Priestess of Min, Tuya (normally not used to express royal relationship)
- ❑ Mentioned in Amarna letters
- ❑ Wrote Amarna letters



Deification of Amenhotep III and Tiye

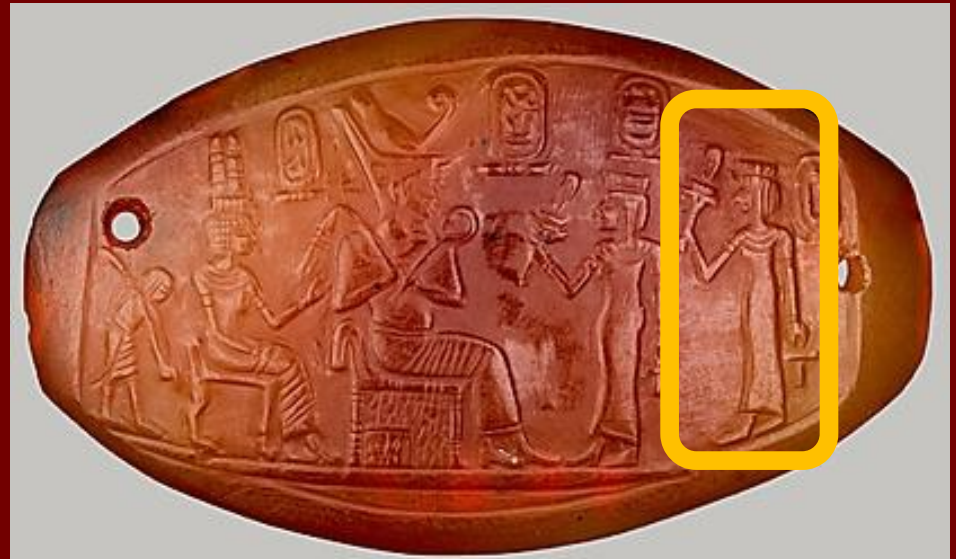
- AIII worshipped as the sun and Lord of Nubia at Soleb
- Tiye worshipped as the sun god's consort, Hathor, at Sedeinga
- On house altars

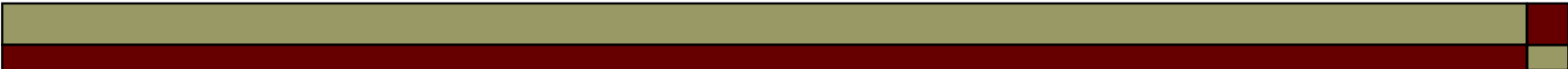


Who is who?

- Amenhotep III's family
 - The King's Chief Wife Tiye:
 - Sisters of AIV / Akhenaten
 - Sitamun
 - Henut-taneb
 - Isis → her name sometimes in cartouche, once addressed as King's Wife

Queens: daughter AND wife





Who is who?

- **Akhenaten's family:**
- → unique roles and unique appearances (style and iconography!)
 - The King's Chief Wife Nefertiti:
 - Most important role as part of the triad
 - Her own headrest → based on blue crown?
 - From first years = distinctive due to her role in cult scenes (equal to her husband, already in Karnak → there even sometimes dominant)
 - Disappears from year 16 onwards: death? (but later shawabtis), change of name? (was Semenkhkare), full co-regent?

Nefertiti



Queen offering (Nefertiti?)

MMA 1993.326



- **limestone block (temple scene): king and queen making an offering to Aten.**
- **face, usually identified as Akhenaten, actually depicts an Amarna queen, probably Nefertiti, following her husband**
- **king's shoulder just visible at the left side of the block**
- **Nefertiti wears the royal "afnet" headcloth with a uraeus cobra at the forehead**

Special features of Nefertiti

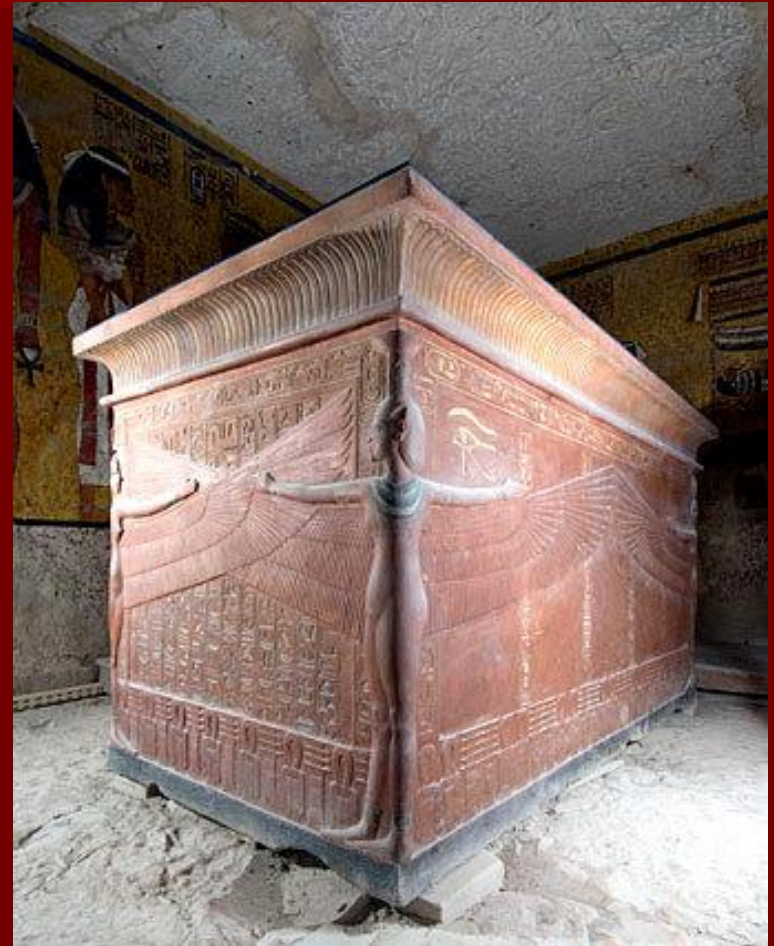
- ❑ Nefertiti depicted at corners, not protective goddesses
- ❑ → like Isis, Nephtys, Hathor, Selket, Neith



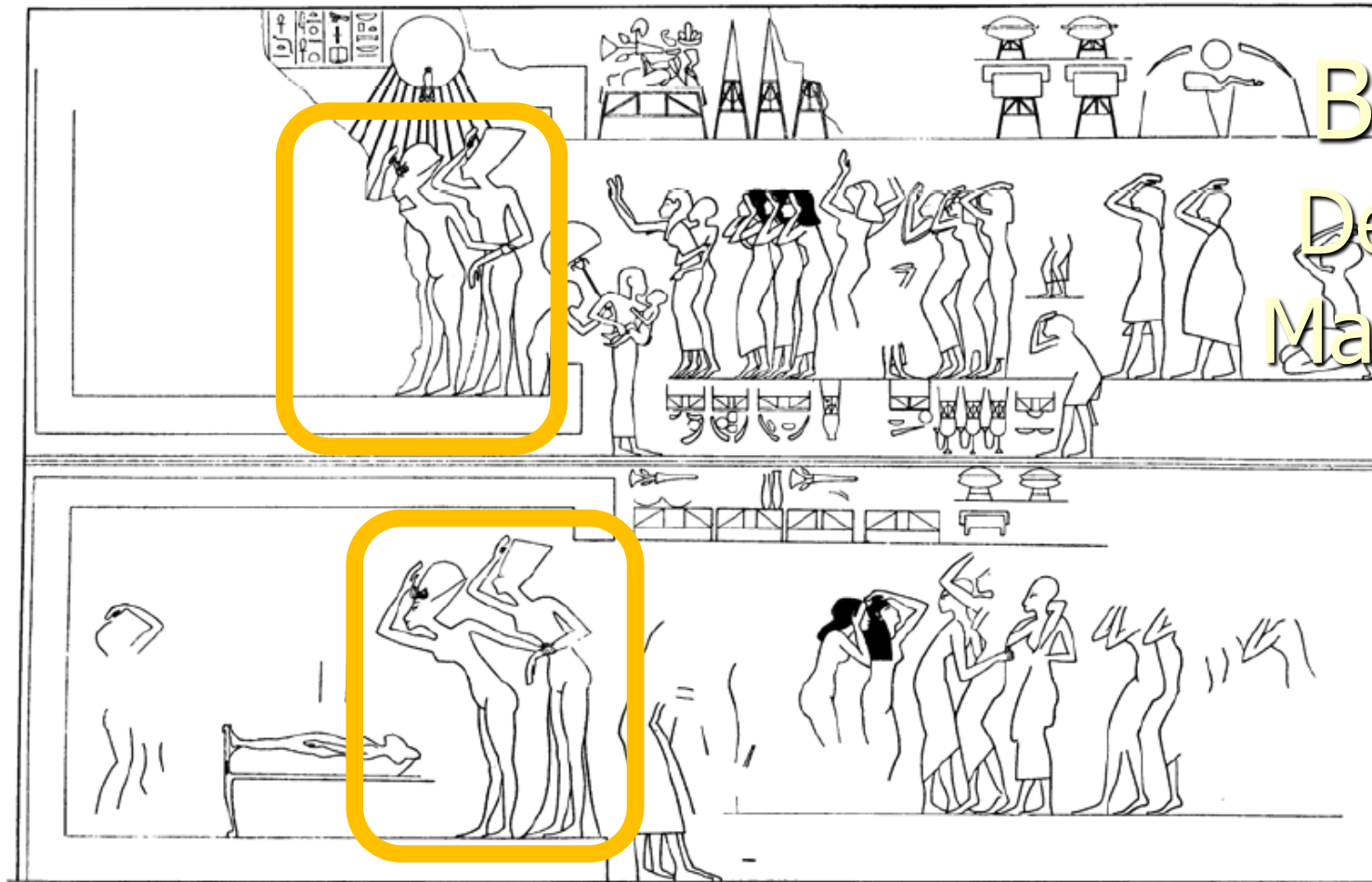
Nefertiti as safeguarding goddess



Fig. 85. Fragment with the head of Queen Nefertiti from Akhenaten's sarcophagus, the Royal Tomb at Amarna. Granite. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin



Burial: Death of Maketaten



- Supports spiritual needs for protection during death
- But also humane and sympathetic family needs: kings need assistance, Nefertiti supports his arm in grief (Aldred: Akhenaten, 305)

Who is who?

- Akhenaten's family:
 - The King's Chief Wife Nefertiti
 - Kiya:
 - was rediscovered 1960/70ies from cosmetic vessels in BM,
 - foreigner? (Tadukhepa?)
 - was honoured with a temple (sun-shade) in Amarna (= combined with ownership of land)
 - bore A. at least one child (daughter, name unknown)

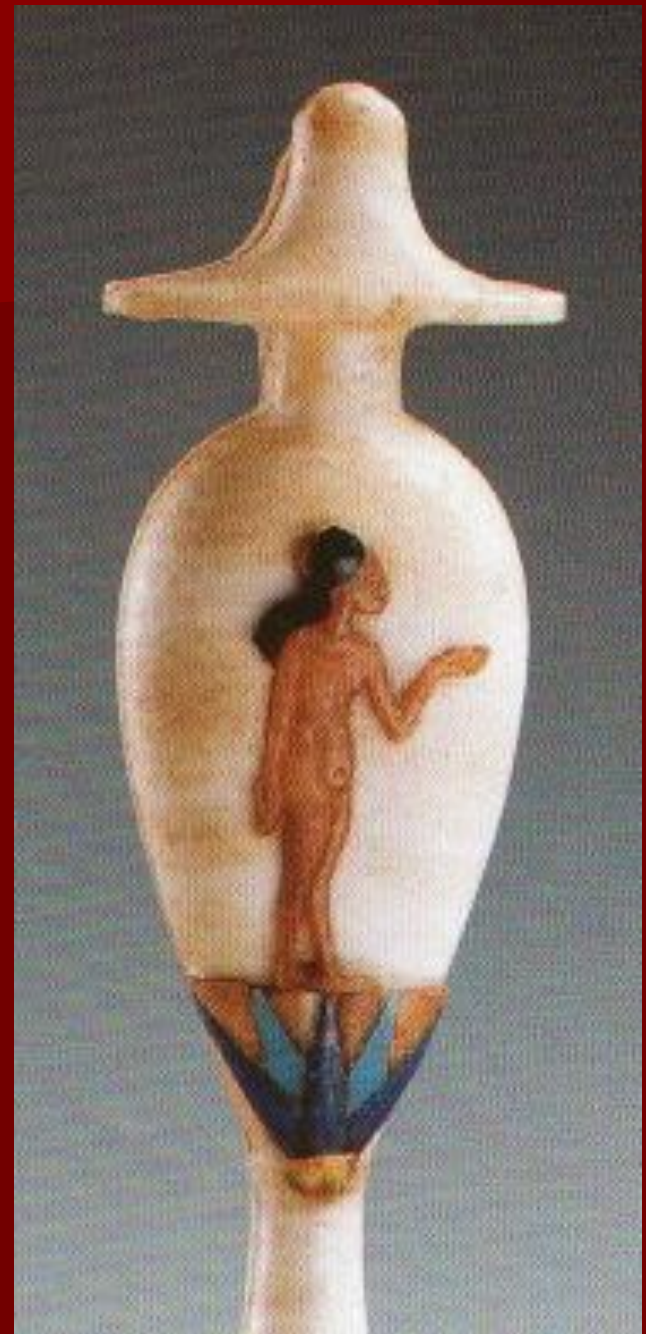
Kiya “The Lady - Akhenaten’s “other” wife

- ❑ Unknown until 1959 when her name was rediscovered
- ❑ Now known from Series of textual erasures and recarved blocks
- ❑ Akhenaten’s secondary wife
- ❑ Greatly beloved wife of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt
- ❑ NEVER called Great Royal Wife - Nefertiti



Who is who?

- Akhenaten's family:
 - The King's Chief Wife Nefertiti:
 - Kiya
 - Daughters of AIV / Akhenaten:
 - → **Amarna art: daughters express new religion**



Who is who?

- Akhenaten's family:
 - The King's Chief Wife Nefertiti:
 - Kiya
 - Daughters of AIV / Akhenaten:
 - → **Amarna art: daughters express new religion**
 - → **suggest creative force**
 - → **emphasize the sacred grouping (royal family)**
 - → **enact the intimacy as subject for newly expressive art**

Royal Princesses MMA 1985.328.6



Who is who?

- Akhenaten's family:
 - → The King's Daughters of His Flesh
 - Baketaten ???
 - Meretaten
 - Meketaten
 - Ankhesenpaaten: born year 7?, married Tutankhamun, maybe wrote letter to Shuppiluliumash (Zennanza affair???)
 - Nefernerefuaten-Tahserit ("Nefertiti the younger")
 - Neferneferure: tomb in the Royal Wadi?
 - Setepenre – appears only on few monuments

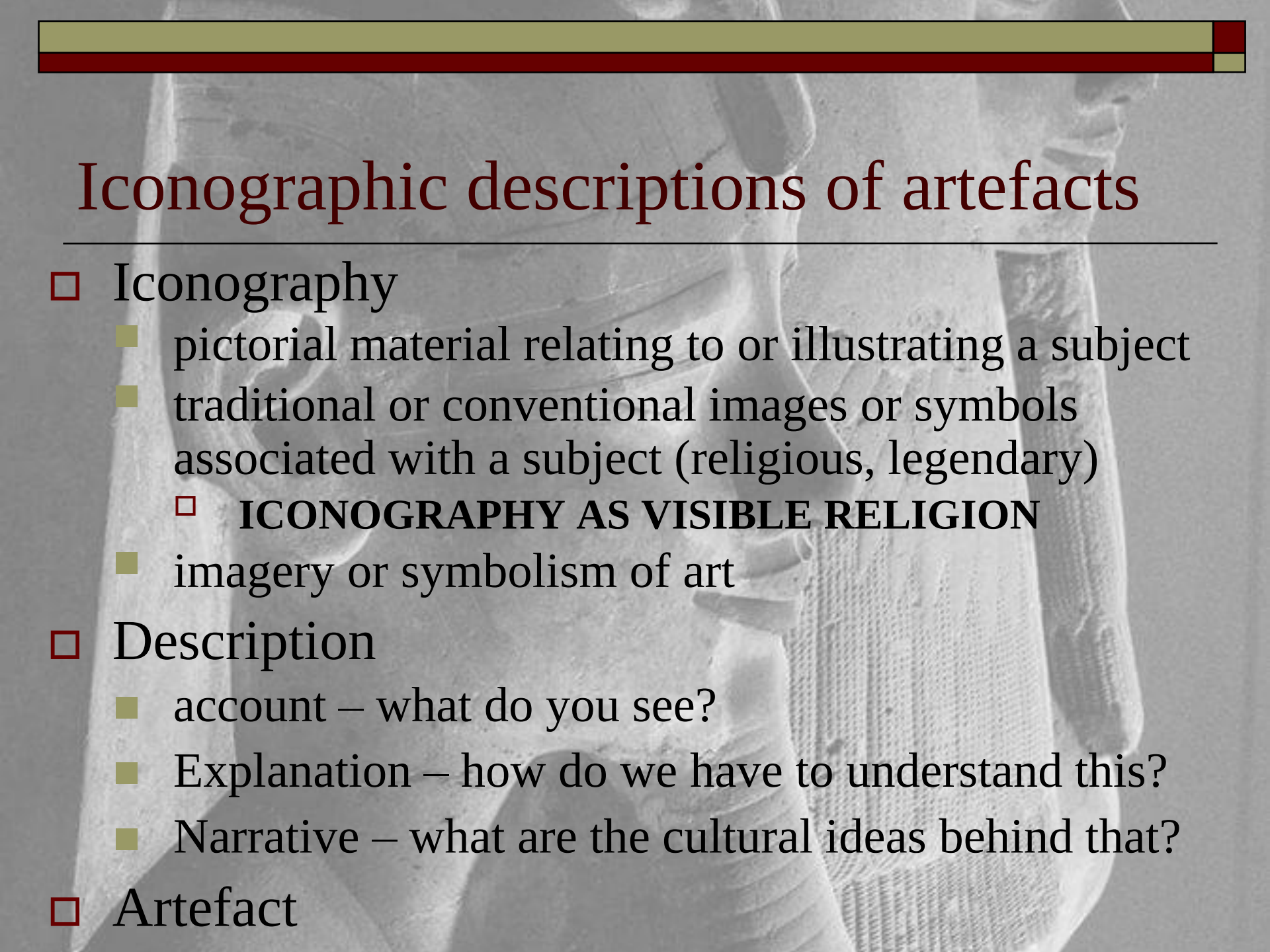
Who is who?

- Akhenaten's family:
 - The King's Chief Wife Nefertiti:
 - Kiya
 - Daughters of AIV / Akhenaten
 - Mysterious daughters'-daughters?
 - Meretaten-Tasherit –daughter of Meretaten?
 - Ankhesenpaaten-Tasherit ??? Problematic, on blocks in Karnak and Hermopolis (mother Ankhesenpaaten or Kiya???)



Art of ancient Egypt

- ❑ **What about masculinity and femininity????**
- ❑ uniquely stylized and symbolic
- ❑ connected with hieroglyphs as visual language
- ❑ followed specific rules in order to be read and understood
- ❑ artists not concerned with creating highly realistic images but followed a system called the Canon of Proportions to represent an ideal and harmonious version of reality

The background of the slide features a grayscale image of a classical statue, likely a Greek or Roman figure, shown from the waist up. The statue is positioned on the right side of the frame. At the top of the slide, there is a decorative horizontal bar consisting of a light olive-green segment on the left and a dark red segment on the right, separated by a thin white line.

Iconographic descriptions of artefacts

□ Iconography

- pictorial material relating to or illustrating a subject
- traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject (religious, legendary)

□ **ICONOGRAPHY AS VISIBLE RELIGION**

- imagery or symbolism of art

□ Description

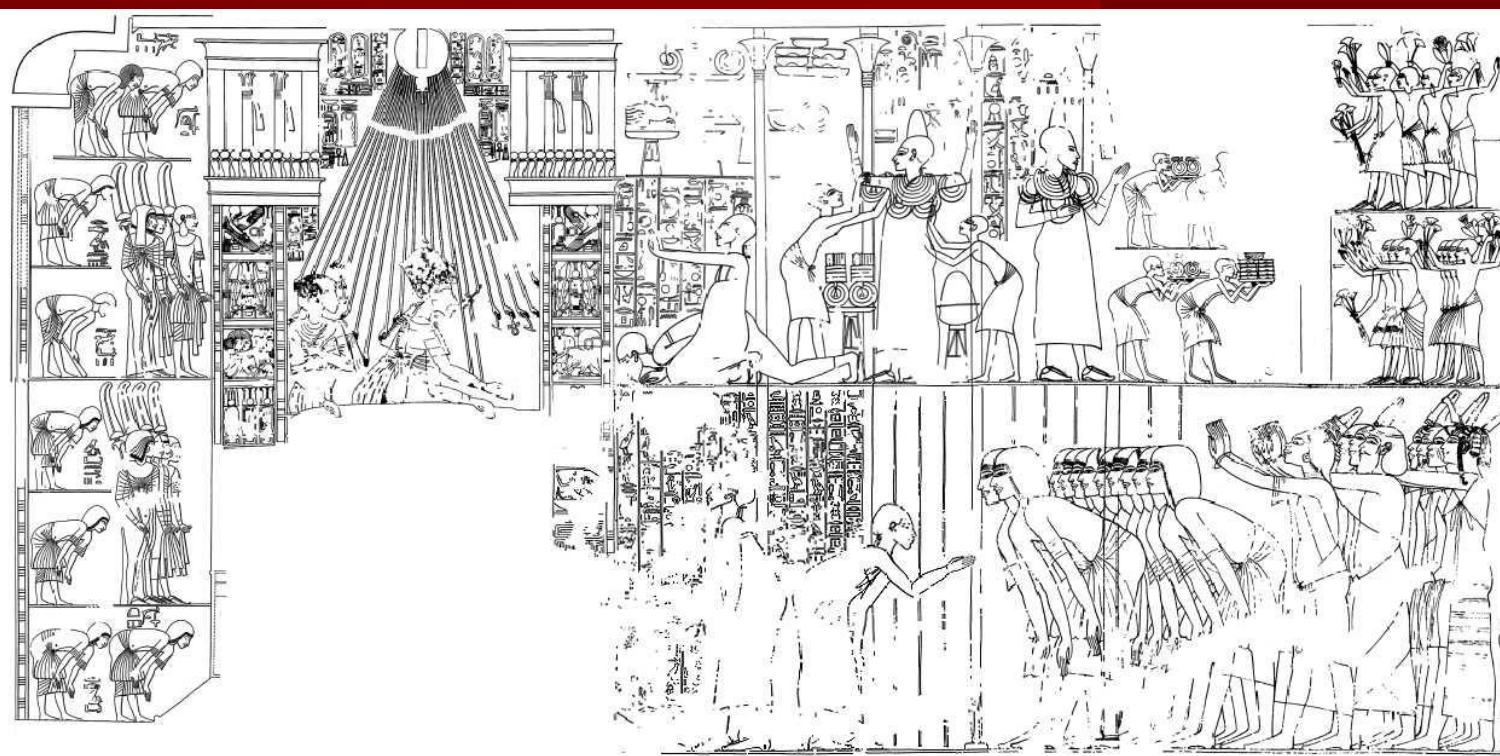
- account – what do you see?
- Explanation – how do we have to understand this?
- Narrative – what are the cultural ideas behind that?

□ Artefact

Pre-Amarna Period

- During the reign of Amenhotep III (Akhenaten's father) artists began to depict nature in all its glory in a naturalistic way not common to traditional Egyptian art. This art form was also apparent during the reign of Akhenaten as his worship of the sun disc included a reverence for the natural world. The depictions of nature from this period are amongst the most beautiful works of art recovered from Ancient Egypt.

TT55: Ramose



King new style

King old style

The human figure

- Initially no difference with the art from Amenhotep III
- To be seen only by cartouche



The human figure

- Initially no difference with the art from Amenhotep III
- soon significant changes to traditional Egyptian artistic expression
- most radical changes are at the beginning of Akhenaten's reign



The human figure

- ❑ Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten are depicted with unprepossessing, ugly features in order to express a radically new concept of kingship and queenship
- ❑ “ugliness” is indictive intensity behind new beliefs
- ❑ Egyptian artists were in search for hitherto untried: hollow cheeks, hooded eyes, strong cheek bones, many lines in the face



Early style (Karnak) and early Amarna (king's third and eighth regnal year)

- Aten temple Karnak
- Colossal sculptures (about 5m) against massive pillars in temple court (at 3 sides)
- Enormous thighs, protruding belly over heavy belt, long arms crossed over thin waist, hands unnaturally close to shoulders, large bony hands
- Huge head, headgear and ceremonial beard
- Gods name like on rectangular plaques like stamp seals



Iconography of the human figure

- Androgynous/feminine nature
- Religious statement?
- King is the embodiment of the Aten, an androgynous creator deity: Karnak colossi
- compare with representations of Atum & Hapi as “fecundity figures”



How do we define masculinity here?

- Androgynous/feminine nature
- Religious statement?
- King is the embodiment of the Aten, an androgynous creator deity: Karnak colossi
- compare with representations of Atum & Hapi as “fecundity figures”



General Aspects of the human figure - summary

- Head: large with drooping features, long neck
- Shoulders and waist: narrow ("Feminine")
- Stomach, buttocks, and thighs all swell
- Belly: sags over the kilt
- Arms and short legs: thin and lack muscles



Queen Nefertiti:

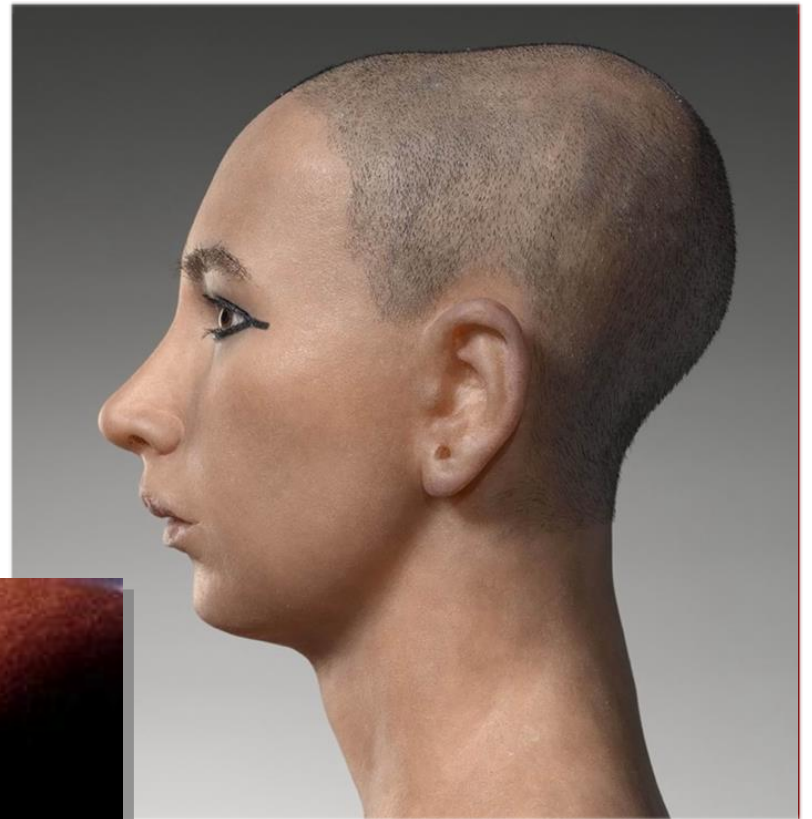
Fragment of a
limestone relief
showing Nefertiti
wearing disk, horns
and feathers, and
uraeus. Amarna Period.

From the Petrie
Museum in London



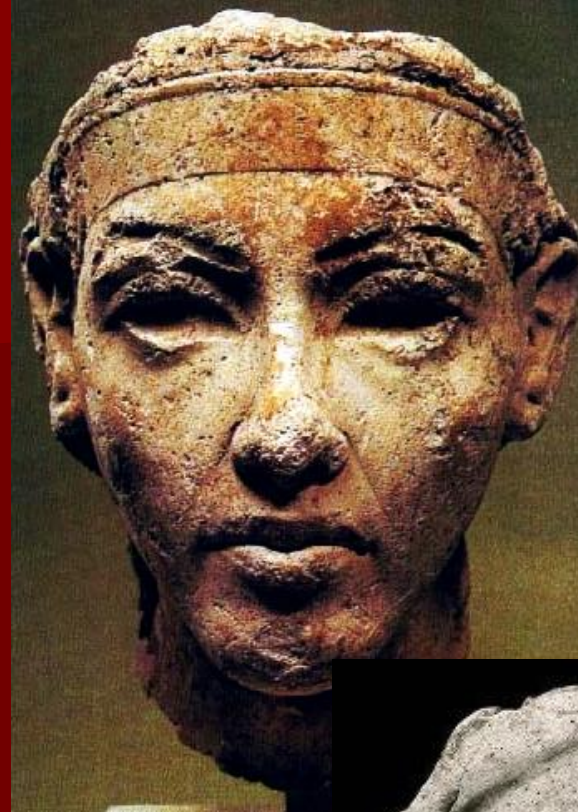
Medical explanations

- ❑ Many medical explanations for appearance suggested
- ❑ Fröhlich's syndrome: Cyril Aldred
 - ❑ “Feminine” obesity, sterility, mental retardation
 - ❑ Fathered 6 children!
- ❑ Marfan's syndrome: Alwyn Burrridge
 - ❑ tall; long, thin face; elongated skull; larger pelvis & thighs; thin limbs and digits; vision problems
- ❑ Difficult to account for change to “normal” later in the reign



“Portrait” Heads

- Gypsum Plaster heads
- many less than life-sized
- cast from clay heads, not actual face
- artists’ models?



Realistic Portraits?

Follow compositional grids; not realistic

