Block 7
A3
Historical overview of the Amarna Period

HPAH5003/6003: Amarna – Materiality of a religious revolution

AHAR7005: Akhenaten and Amarna: Religion, culture and people

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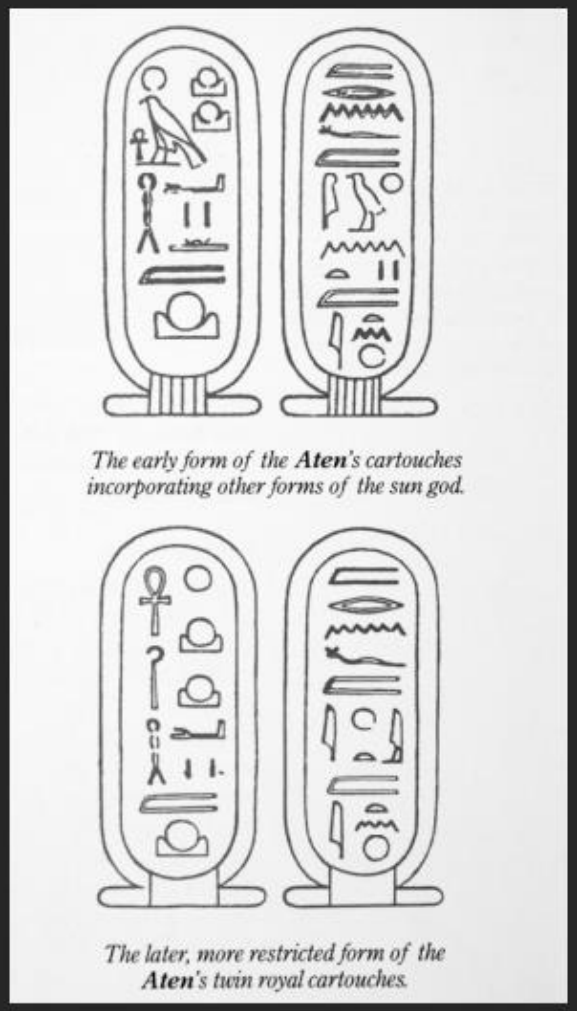
Amenhotep III

- 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

Deification of Amenhotep III

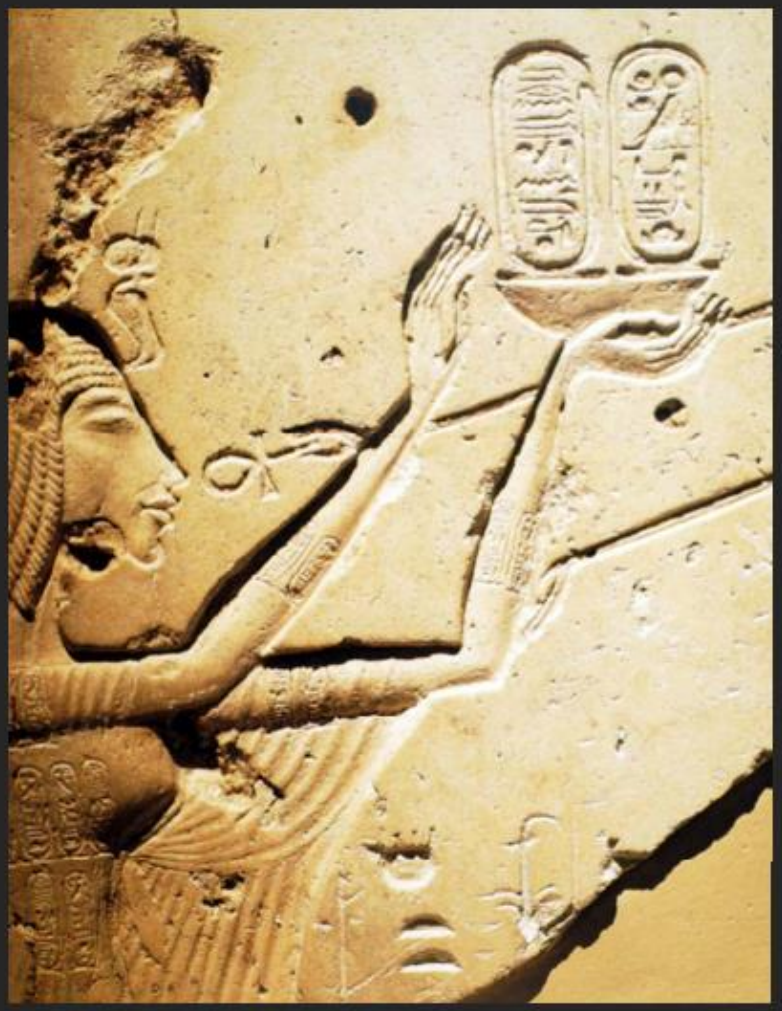
- After *sed*-festival of Regnal Year 30, king is depicted as being assimilated with the sun god Re, as well as Ptah (creator god of Memphis), and the Aten
- Some foreign kings refer to Amenhotep as "my sun" in letters

The name as dating tool



*The early form of the **Aten**'s cartouches incorporating other forms of the sun god.*

*The later, more restricted form of the **Aten**'s twin royal cartouches.*



Amenhotep IV his original throne name

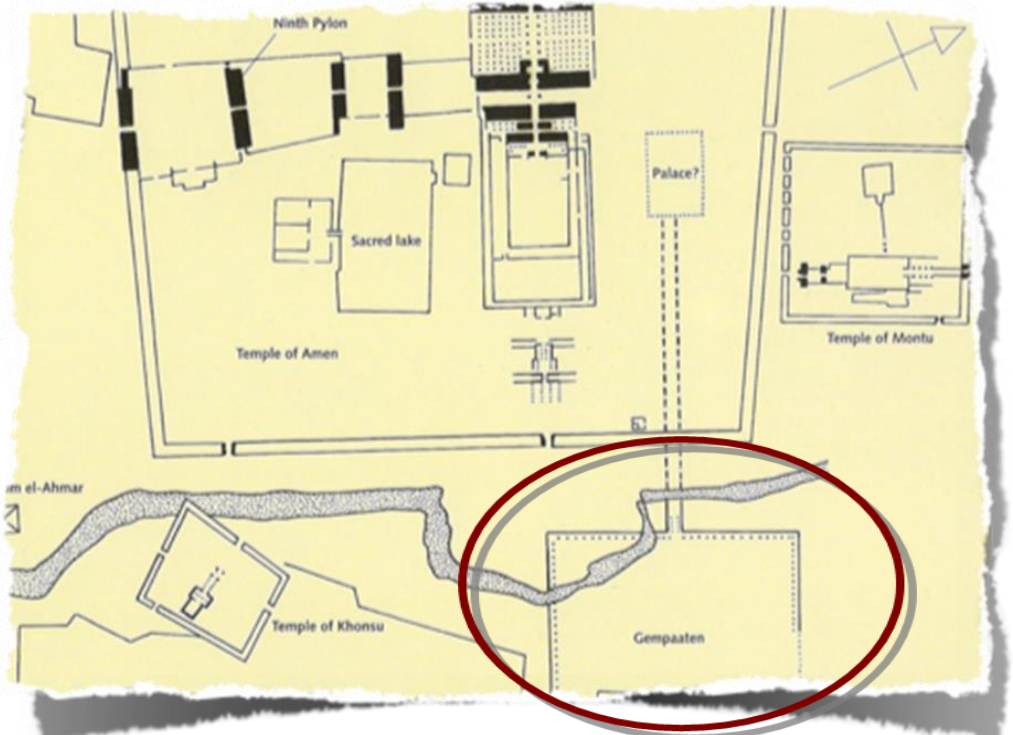
- Nefer-kheperu-Re wa-en-Re [“Perfect are the manifestations of Re, the one of Re”]
- Amenhotep Netjer Heqa-Iunu [Amen is satisfied, God, Ruler of Waset”]

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

Akhenaten in Karnak

- Completed monuments left unfinished by his father
- By Regnal Year 3, construction had begun on temple(s) of the Aten at east Karnak
- Built in anticipation of a very early sed-festival
- work initiated by AIV /Akhenaten (4 buildings mentioned in texts):
  - 3rd Pylon
  - Benben
  - Aten Temple (Gem-pa-Aten):
    Destroyed by: Horemheb - 1323 BCE to 1295 BCE



Benben (Gebel el-Silsila stela)

- Amenhotep IV before Amun:

Main Text:

The living Horus, mighty bull "Tall-Plumed"; Two Ladies, "Great of Kingship in [Karnak]"; Horus of Gold, "Who Elevates the Crowns in Upper Egyptian Heliopolis"; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, first prophet of Hor-Aten, NEFERKHEPRURE-WAENRE; Son of Re, [AMENHOTEP IV], long in his lifetime—may he live forever continually!—<beloved of> Amun-Re, Lord of Heaven, Ruler of Eternity.

The first occasion that his Person laid a charge on [the king's scribe (?)], the general Amen[. . .] to carry out all the works projects, starting from Elephantine and ending at Sambehdet, and on the leaders of the army to perform a great forced-labor-duty of quarrying sandstone, in order to fashion the great *benben* of "Horakhty in his name, 'Light which is in Aten'"[1] in Karnak, the officials, companions and chief standard-bearers being the taxing-masters for the stone image.

Gem-Pa-Aten

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

Akhenaten in Karnak

- Aten Temple – Gem-pa-Aten
  - fronted by an open court with a colonnade of square pillars, against which rested alternating colossal statues of king Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV) and his queen Nefertiti
  - Decoration courtyard: king and queen during various parts of the royal jubilee festival (entering and exiting the palace, offerings to the gods)
  - eastern section not yet been excavated → ground plan and exact size unknown
  - Complex enclosed with a mud brick wall
  - Estimated size: 130m x 216m, court walls ca. 7m high
  - "talatat" blocks: roughly 52cm long by 26cm wide and 22cm high

Akenaten / Nefertiti colossi

Gem-pa-Aten temple

fronted by an open court with a colonnade of square pillars, against which rested alternating colossal statues of king Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV) and his queen Nefertiti

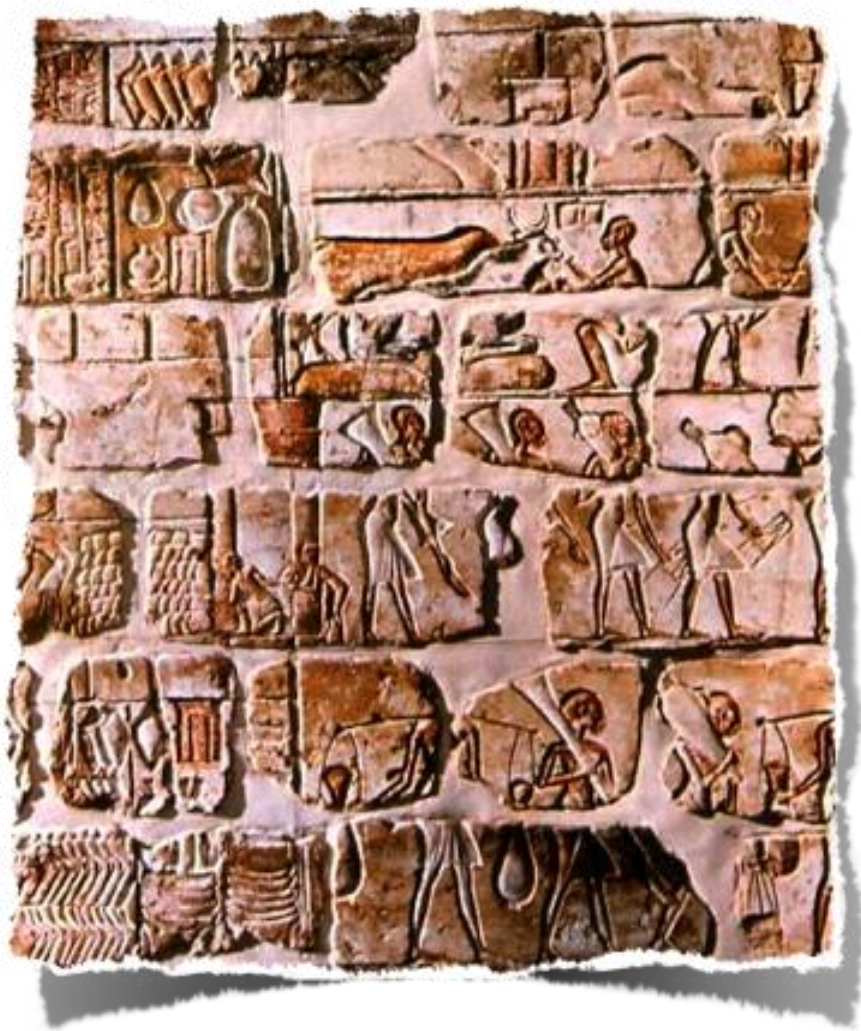
Cairo Museum JE 49528

- from pillared courtyard of the Gem-pa-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.)

Queen Nefertiti. Egypt, Temple of Aten, Karnak (?). Sandstone. Brooklyn Museum, 78.39.542

Talatat

- Built from *talatat* (from Italian *tagliata* “cut-masonry”), standardized building blocks
- ½ x ½ x 1 ancient Egyptian cubits (*ca.* 27 x 27 x 54 cm
- Not used after Amarna period
- Standardized, relatively small size allowed for quick building methods
- Each block could be moved by one man
- Most found reused as fill within the 2nd, 9th, and 10th pylons at Karnak, foundation columns in Hypostyle Hall; also Luxor



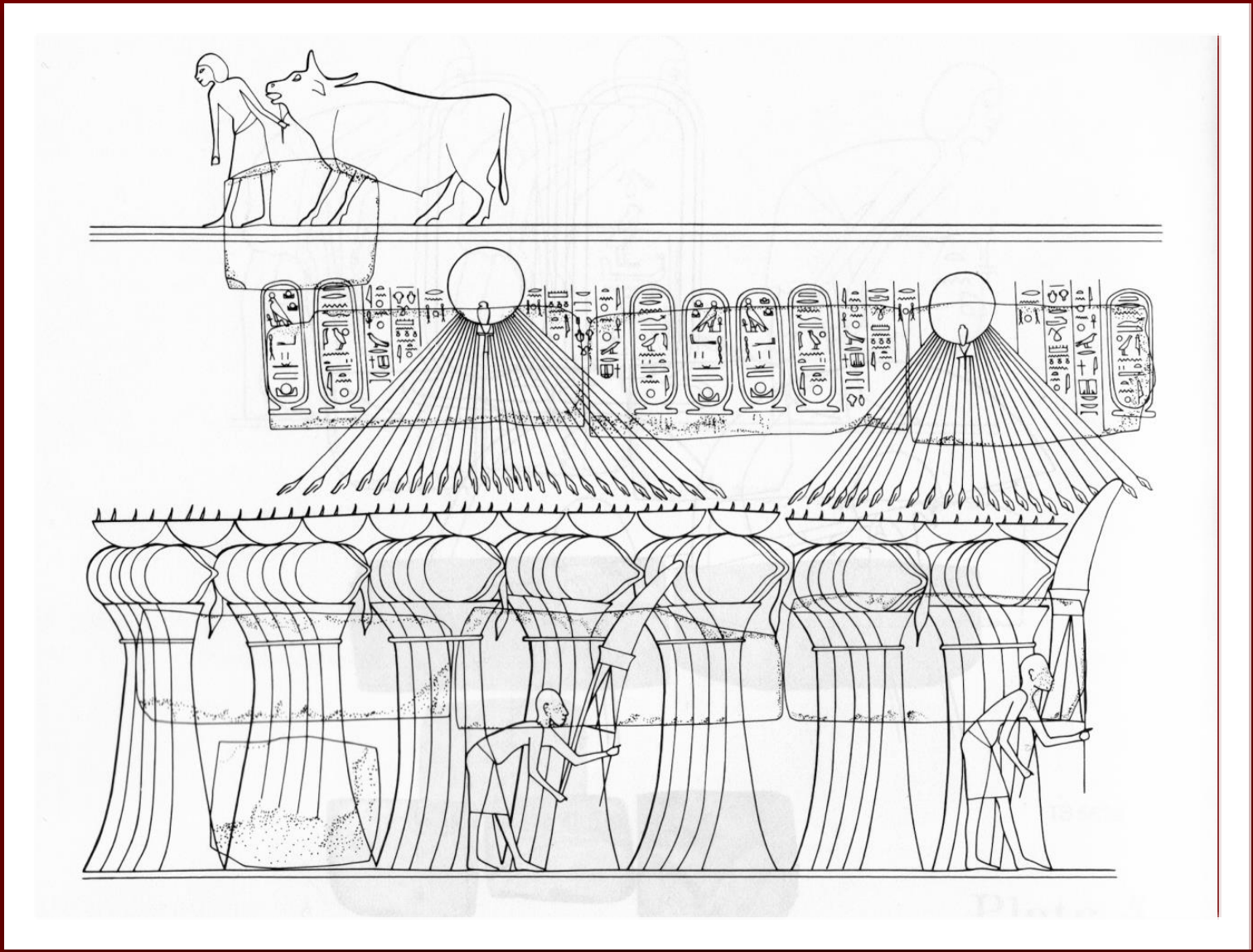
RECTANGULAR PIERS, dismantled almost to the foundation level, mark the southern colonnade of Akhenaten's jubilee temple; the view is toward the west. The south wall of the temple, running behind the colonnade, was completely demolished but much rubble remained.

AIV/Akhenaten in Karnak: Other Karnak Installations

- Three more structures located; but archaeology is not clear
- *Hut-benben* ("Mansion of the *Benben*-stone") was inspired by an obelisk shrine at Heliopolis
- Obelisk of Thutmose IV at Karnak?
- Shows Nefertiti as celebrating the offering scenes, *not* Akhenaten; nowhere depicted
- Meretaten and Meketaten are depicted (RY 4)
- *Rewed-menu-en-Aten* "Sturdy are the monuments of the Aten"
- Teni-menu "Exalted are the monuments"
- Cannot be located or assigned a cult purpose
- Possibly located near the 9th Pylon as most blocks come from its interior

Rewed-menu-en-Aten

massive amounts of food offerings in the open sun



7. A Royal Speech from Amenhotep IV's Earliest Building at Karnak

Of this lengthy composition only a fragment (lying in the middle of fourteen columns) is preserved on two blocks from the Tenth Pylon. This part of the king's harangue apparently contrasts the perishable images of orthodox deities with the uncreated and enduring nature of the solar orb: . . . Horus (?) . . . , . . . [their temples (?)] fallen to ruin, [their] bodies (?) shall not . . . : . . . [since the time of] the ancestors (?). It is the ones who are knowledgeable. . . . Look, I am speaking that I might inform [you concerning] the forms of the gods, I know [their (?)] temples [and I am versed in] the writings, (namely) the inventories of their primeval bodies [and I have beheld them] as they[3] cease, one after the other, (whether) consisting of any sort of precious stone . . . , [except for the god who begat] himself by himself, no one knowing the mysteries . . . : he goes where he pleases and they know not [his] going . . . toward him at night. Further, [I] approach. . . . [As for the . . .]s which he has made, how distinguished they are: . . . their [. . .]s are as stars. Hail to you, in [your . . .] rays. . . . What would he be like, another one of your sort? It is you [who . . .] to them, in your name of. . . .

What does this suggest?

- first two years of the reign: nothing seems to change
- king crowned in Thebes
- Adopted traditional titulatur (clear reference to Amun, kept birth name of Imen-htp
- rare representations adopting traditional cannon
- → lintel of entry of tomb of Kheruef (TT192, Amenhotep III and IV): sees king (cartouches hacked out) making a classic offering to Amon

lintel above entry tomb of Kheruef (TT192)

From year 2

- introduces a new solar divine entity based on Horus of the horizon (Horakhty) which he/it names "Ra-Horakhty in his nature of solar light which emanates from the Aten disk", thus making of Ra a "sovereign of the horizon", thus establishing his proximity to the terrestrial royalty
- Keeps this imagery, but calls god Aten

A sandstone block from Karnak preserving the remains of two scenes. On the left, the Aten is seen in its earliest manifestation – not as a rayed solar disc but in anthropomorphic form with a falcon's head. The fragmentary scene on the right shows Amenophis IV himself, in the style current during his father's reign.

Berlin Museum

Inscriptions from Karnak

KHES 180: . . . you while seeing your beauty. You say to me, "(My) heart [is glad with what you have done for me (?)]. . . . How prosperous is a son who does effective things for his father, who begat him . . . your limbs. I give to you my office and my position . . . , . . . beloved of . . . (and) favored [by . . .] . . ." . . . [the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, NEFERKHEPRURE-WAENRE, the Son of Re, AMENHOTEP IV, long in] his lifetime. He says: "[. . . , I am one] who hastens (?) to do effective things in the presence of. . . ."

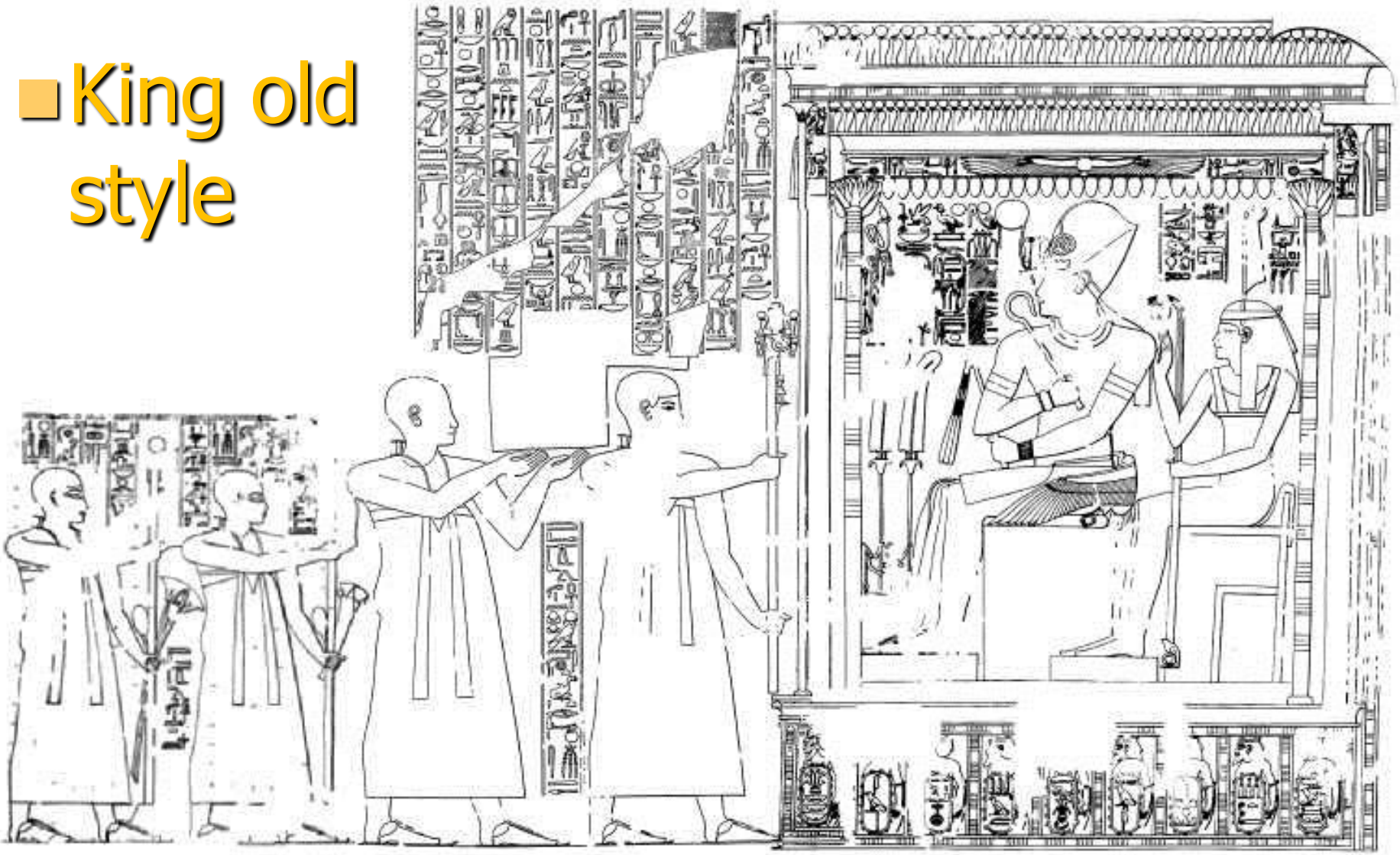
Inscriptions from Karnak

NR C: . . . HOR-ATEN . . . every [thing (?)]. He says: "I adore Horakhty, pure, pure, upon . . . of heaven at dawn in order to create him(self) every day, as you appear in . . . adoration because of your rising, when you shine . . . [your (?)] temple, that [your (?)] Person might rest in [it]. . . ."

NR J: [Regnal year . . . , month . . . of] the Inundation season, day 10 under the Person of Re-Horakhty, [mighty] bull . . . ; [Two Ladies . . . ; [Horus of Gold], "Who Elevated the Crowns in Upper Egyptian Heliopolis"; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, NEFERKHEPRURE-[WAENRE] . . . the youth, the child (?) . . . .

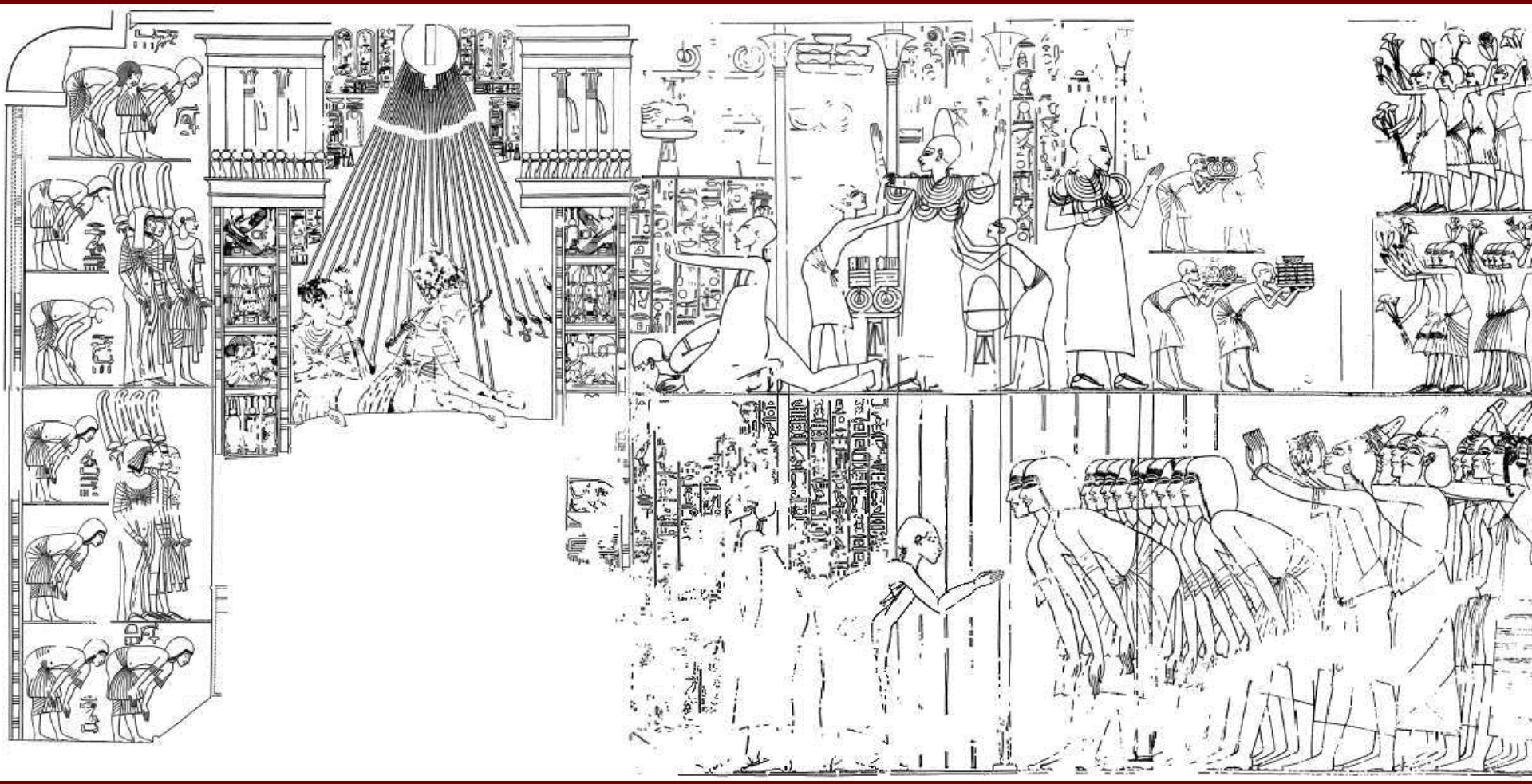
TT55: Ramose

- King old style



TT55: Ramose

- King new style



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

The Aten & Akhenaten

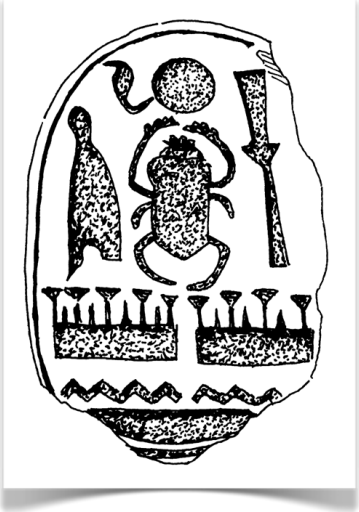
- The Aten is hereafter depicted solely as a solar disk with human hands emanating from it
- Amenhotep IV changes his name to Akhenaten, “(one who is) Beneficial for the Aten”

The Aten & Akhenaten

- Often added the epithet, “Beautiful Child of the Living Aten”
- Nefertiti given an additional name: Neferneferuaten “Aten is most perfect”

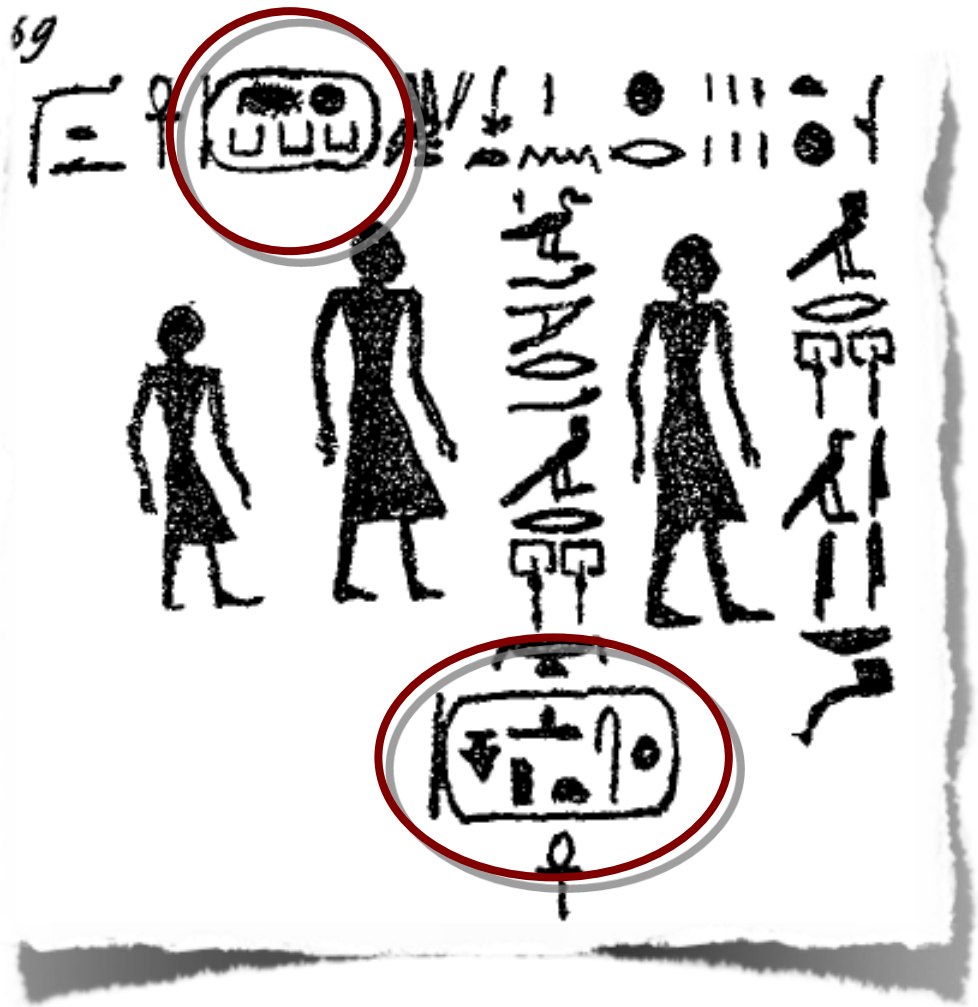
The Coregency Problem

- Did Amenhotep III share the throne with his son, Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten)?
  - Practice of senior king sharing the throne with a junior
  - Intended for a smooth transition of power
  - Often suggestion for chronological reasons but difficult to prove



The question of coregency

- Practice is well-known from the Middle Kingdom
- Amenemhat II & Senwasret II
- Often exemplified by "double dates"



The New Kingdom

- Particularly difficult to detect during the New Kingdom
- Hatshepsut & Thutmose III clearest example
- General during time of coregency: no usurpation!
- Overlap between Amenhotep III and Akhenaten?

Amarna coregency

- Long argued, both *pro* and *contra*
- Main adherents: Aldred (*pro*) & Redford (*contra*)
- *Pro:* mainly art historians (object-based)
- *Contra*: mainly historians (text-based)

Amarna coregency

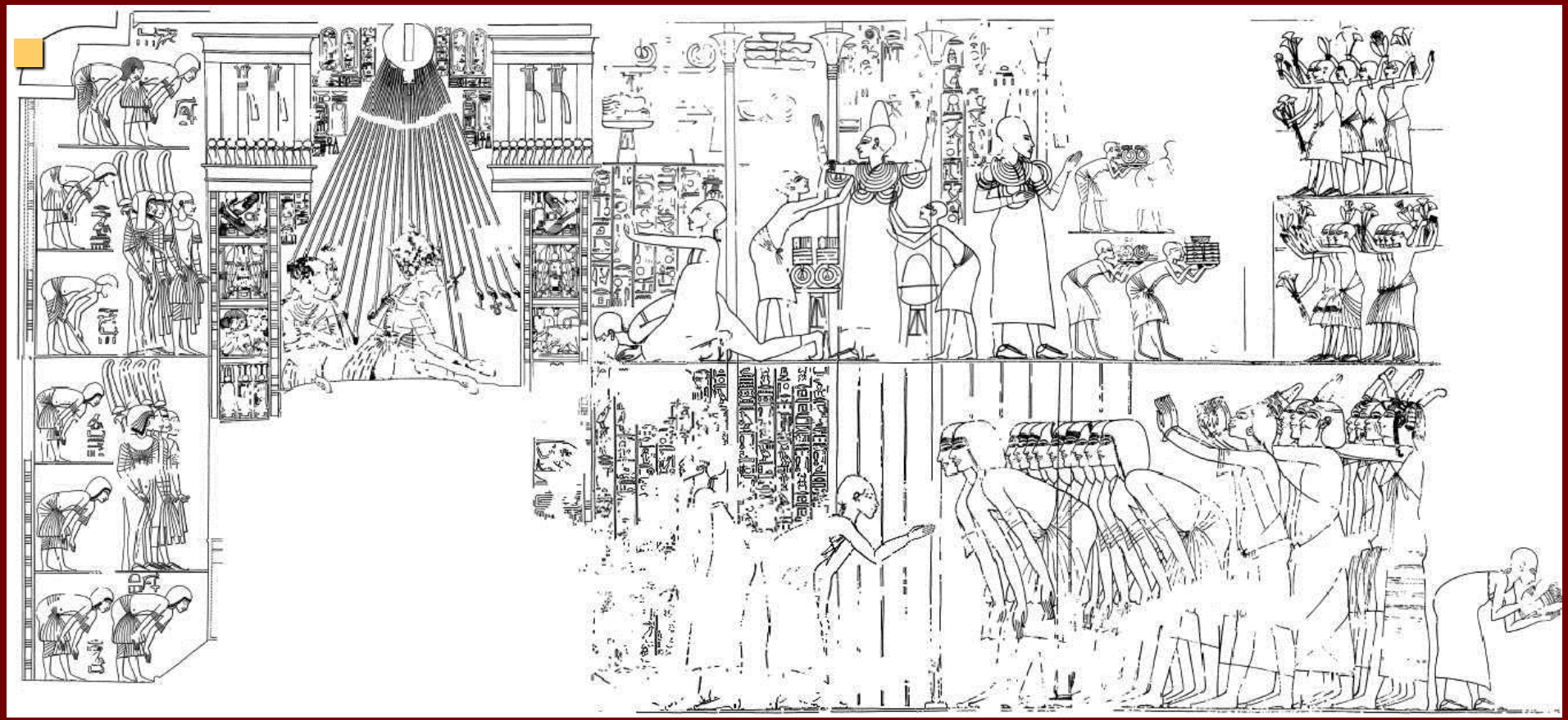
- Stela from the private residence of Pa-nehesy ("The Nubian") at Amarna
- Depicts Amenhotep III & Tiye beneath the Aten
- Shown as a living couple
- Aten's name is the "late" form (post RY 9)

Interpretations with regard to coregency

- From a domestic shrine in a private house
- Possible interpretations from an art historian's point : depiction as living individuals, not a posthumous cult
- Claim made that Amenhotep III lived at Amarna, at least in old age
- Historians regard the "deified" Amenhotep III as "living" through cultic worship
- However: *maa-kheru* "true of voice" = Osirian connotation
- Other kings mentioned at Amarna too

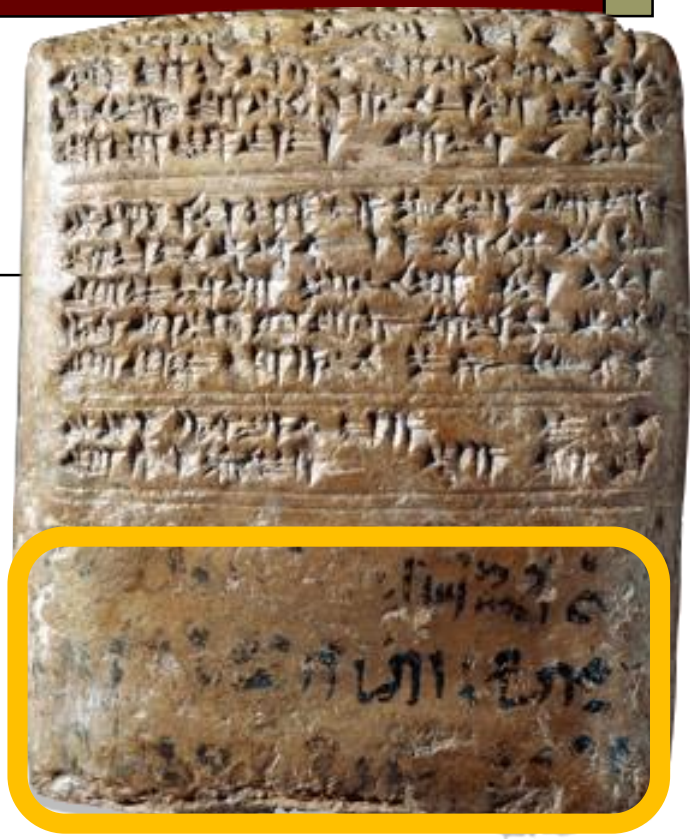
TT55: Ramose

King new style: Artist familiar with "Amarna" style art early in reign of Amenhotep IV, Ramose did not move to Amarna; died before name change, somehow "proof" of coregency?



Historical Arguments

- History based on textual sources
- Amarna Letter 27: letter of Tišratta of Mittani to Akhenaten on the death of Amenhotep III
- Hieratic docket in Egyptian



Say to Napkhurreya *[= Neferkheperure]* my brother, my son-in-law, whom I love and who loves me: Thus, Tušratta, Great King, the king of Mittani [. . .] My brother said this: "Just as you always showed love to my father Mimmureya *[= Nebmaatre]*, so now show love to me."

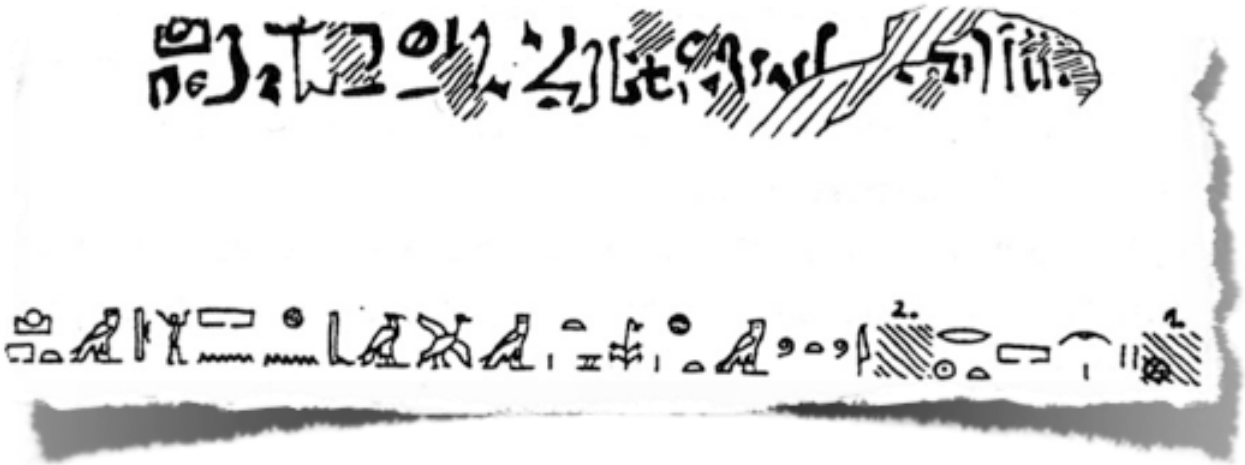
Historical Arguments: Amarna Letter 26

Say to Teye *[= Tiye]*, mistress of Egypt: Thus, Tušratta, the king of Mittani [. . .] You are one that knowns that I myself always showed love to Mimmureya *[= Nebmaatre]*, your husband [. . .] And now you are the one that must not forget your love for Mimmureya, your brother. Increase it for Napkhurreya *[= Neferkheperure]* and maintain it for him.

Historical Arguments

- Amarna Letter 26 is addressed to Tiye, and *not* to Amenhotep III as he is dead
- Tušratta requests Tiye's help in obtaining statues promised by Amenhotep III, which Akhenaten has apparently failed to send
- These statues are likewise referred to in Amarna Letter 27, with the "Regnal Year [1]2" hieratic docket
- Clearly cannot be late in the reign of Akhenaten

Historical Arguments – discussion or regnal years



Regnal Year **[///]2**, 1st month of *peret*, [day ///], when **one** *[= the king]* was in the southern city, in the fortress of "Rejoicing on the Horizon." Copy of the letter that the messenger Pirizzi and the messenger [Tulubri] brought.

Historical Arguments

- If “Regnal Year 2,” then absolutely no chance for a coregency longer than a few months
- If “Regnal Year 12,” then a coregency is assured
- Bulk of the evidence points to “Regnal Year 2”

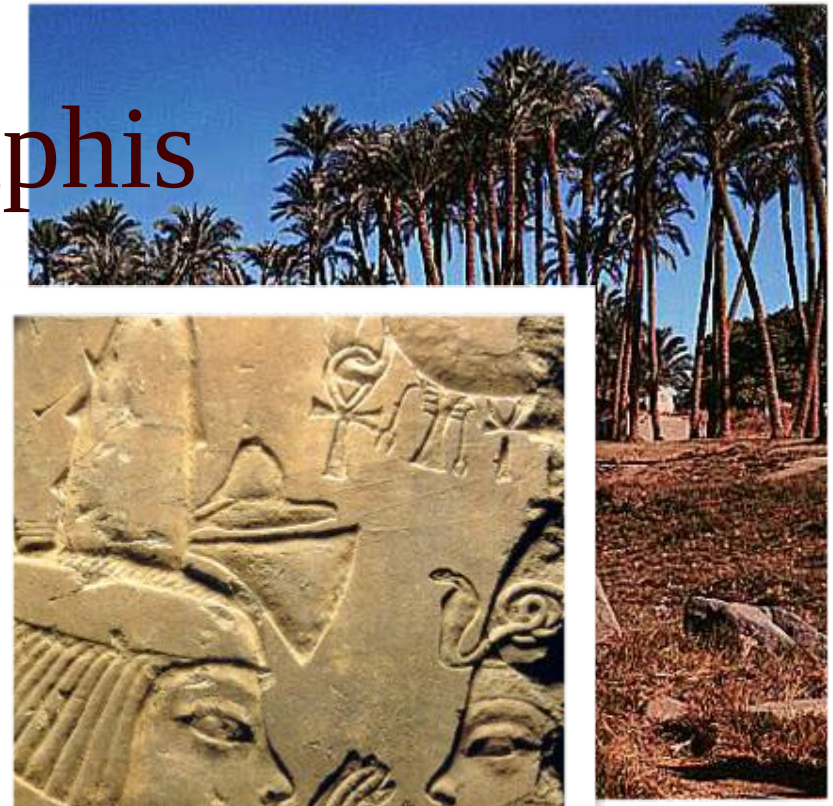
Regnal Year [///]2, 1st month of *peret*, [day ///], when one *[= the king]* was in the southern city, in the fortress of “Rejoicing on the Horizon.” Copy of the letter that the messenger Pirizzi and the messenger [Tulubri] brought.

Importance of yes or no to coregency

- So what? Why is this even important?
- Chronological implications within Egypt:
  - If long, Amenhotep III could potentially be the father of Tutankhamun, something impossible if short
  - Aldred's idea of a 12± coregency would suggest that Akhenaten only reigned about 5 years on his own
  - If short—or none—this is all impossible

Question of Memphis

- Memphis: usually the *administrative* capital
- Amarna period tombs at Saqqarah
- Aten temple at Heliopolis and Memphis
- Palace at Heliopolis



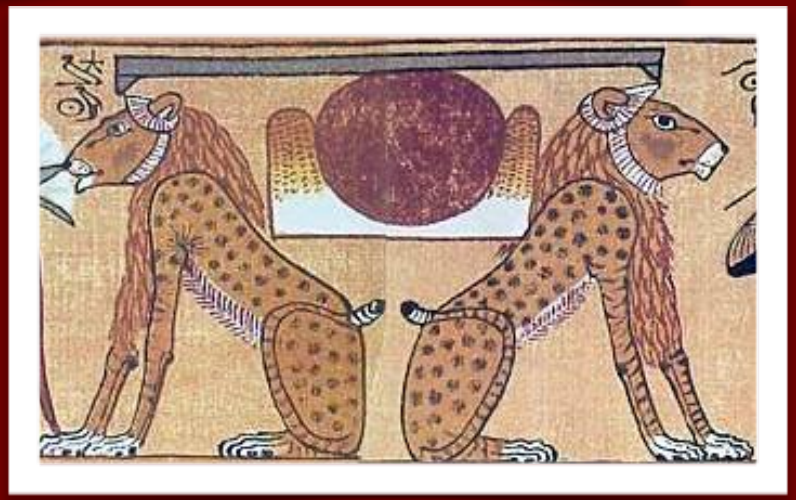
The Move to Amarna

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

Alexandria
Cairo
El-Minia
Tell el-Amarna
Asyut
Abydos
Luxor (ancient Thebes)
Aswan

Theological motivations for the site

- 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"



Theological motivations for the site

- Politically neutral due to absence of occupation
- No deity associated with the site
  - 15th UE Nome: Thoth (Ashmunayn)
- Geographically practical: Memphis & Thebes equidistant

Motivation

- King's command to relocate in RY 5/6 → Boundary Stelae
- Assassination Attempt? (suggested by Reeves)
  - Thin evidence but suggestive
- Attempt to "outflank" the Theban priesthood?

Boundary Stela

- Now, as for my father, Hor-Aten lives! As for the [. . .] in Akhet-Aten, it was worse that those which I heard in Regnal Year 4; it was worse that those which I heard in Regnal Year 3; it was worse that those which I heard in Regnal Year 2; it was worse that those which I heard in Regnal Year 1; it was worse that those which king [Amenhotep III] heard; [. . .] it was worse than those heart by any kings who had assumed the White Crown [. . .]

Boundary Stela

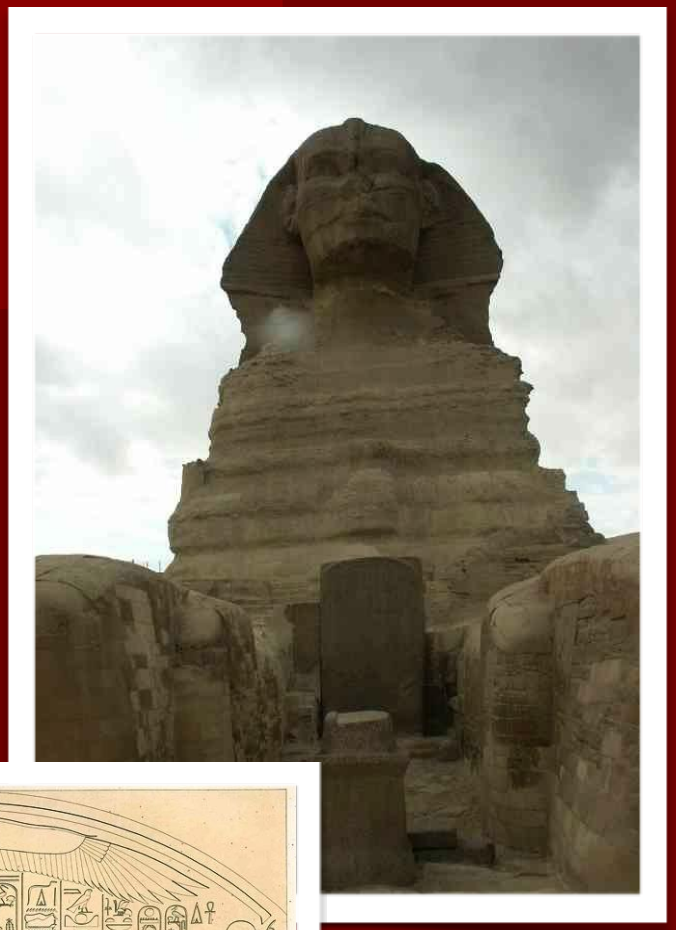
- I did not leave (?) [. . . saying], “it was offensive,” until it would not be offensive. As for the offensive things [. . .] in every mouth, saying “I will commit an offense” [against the lord of Akhet]-Aten, my father, Horus-Aten [. . .] arisen (?) [. . .] any [...], nor shall I hear the [...] from it either.

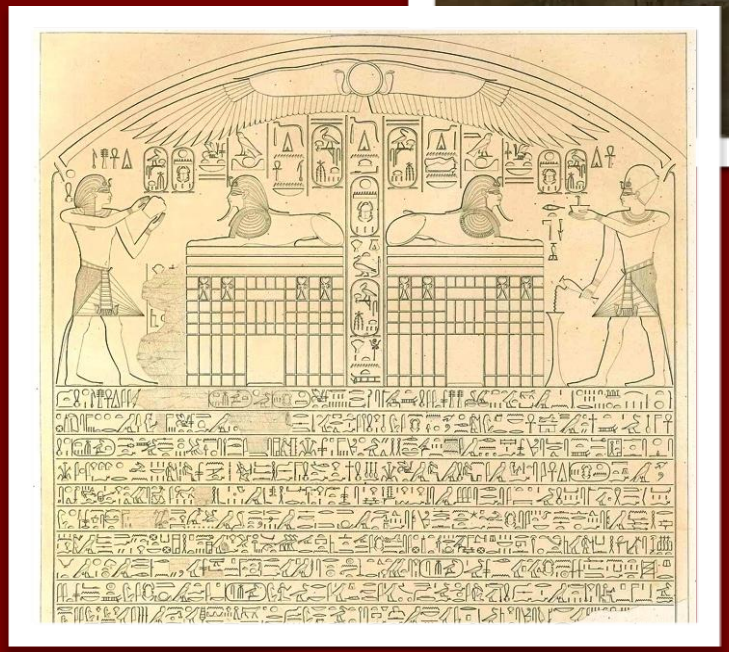
King vs. Priesthood

- General loss of royal power to the priesthood over the centuries
- Imperial donations to the domains of Amen were extensive
- Economically powerful, rivaling the king
- Tens of thousands of priests, farmers, labors, etc., supported by the temple cult, and dependent on it
- Huge swathes of farm land part of the temple domains

Return to Solar Orientation

- Later kings of Dyn 18 return to a solar orientation
- Thutmose IV received a divine blessing of Horemakhet (”Horus in the Horizon”; Harmakhis)
- Great Sphinx of Giza
- Appealed to Horemakhet, *not* Amen!
- Amun priesthood marginalized?





Return to Solar Orientation

- Amenhotep III continues solar trend, esp. *sed*-festivals, Aten association, etc., but also linked to Horus!

- Mutemwiya: "one who soothes her Horus with her voice"
- Amenhotep III: "a divine Horus, variegated of plumage"
- "this Horus, strong armed"
- "a good Horus, lord of eternity"

Return to Solar Orientation

- Conservative: return to Old Kingdom fundamentals; in the case of Akhenaten, one could argue for “fundamentalistic”
- King as absolute authority with a divine nature
- Form of “solar” Horus
- Akhenaten continues this with the addition of an “ancestor cult” based on the worship of his “solar” father (Aten ≈ Amenhotep III)

Conclusion

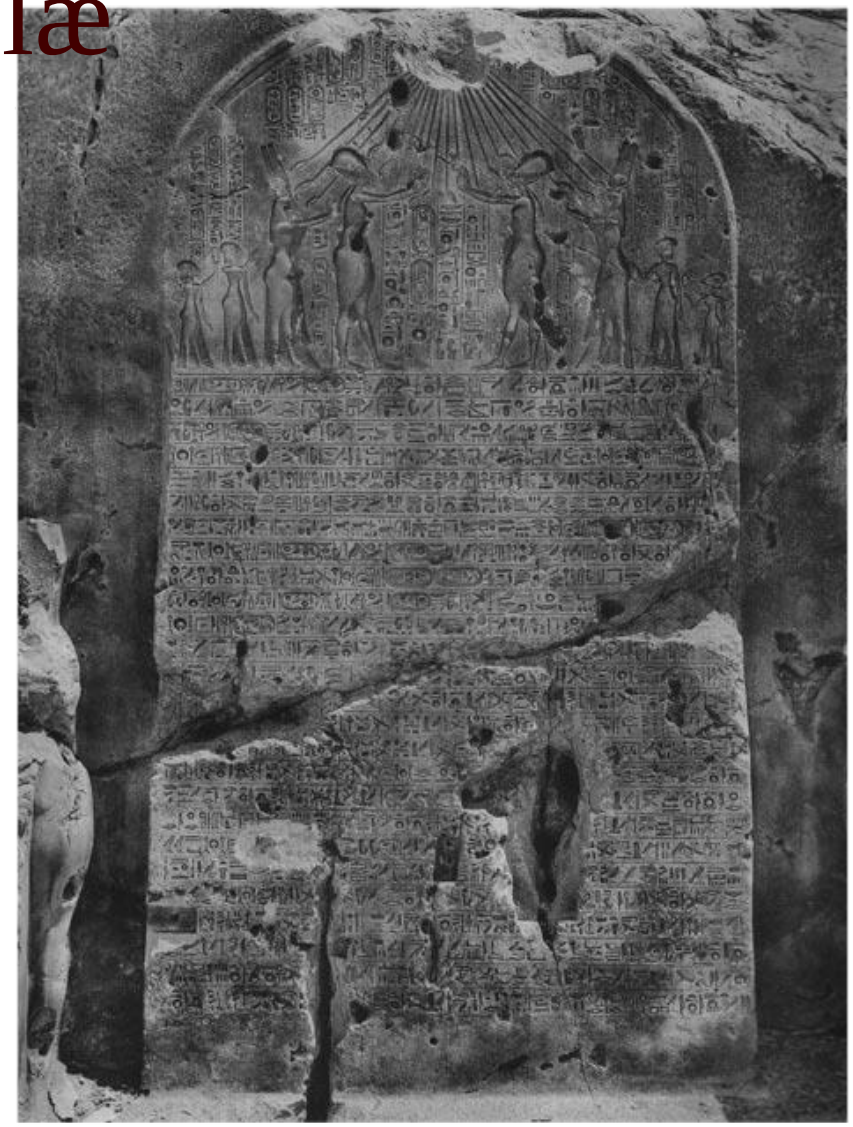
- Akhenaten, by adopting a solar deity (or even more radically, a divine form of his father, Amenhotep III)
  - Completely marginalized the cults of non-solar deities, especially Amen of Thebes
  - With the loss of royal support, the priesthood was "out of work," as well as completely losing their economic powerbase
  - Akhenaten's presence in Thebes would been disruptive and potentially dangerous

The Boundary Stelæ

- The establishment of the city of Akhet-Aten (Amarna)

The Boundary Stelæ

- 15 rock-cut stela recording proclamations made by Akhenaten, RY 5, 6, and 8
- Stela M and X are the earliest
- Text describes the "discovery" of the *akhet* of the Aten

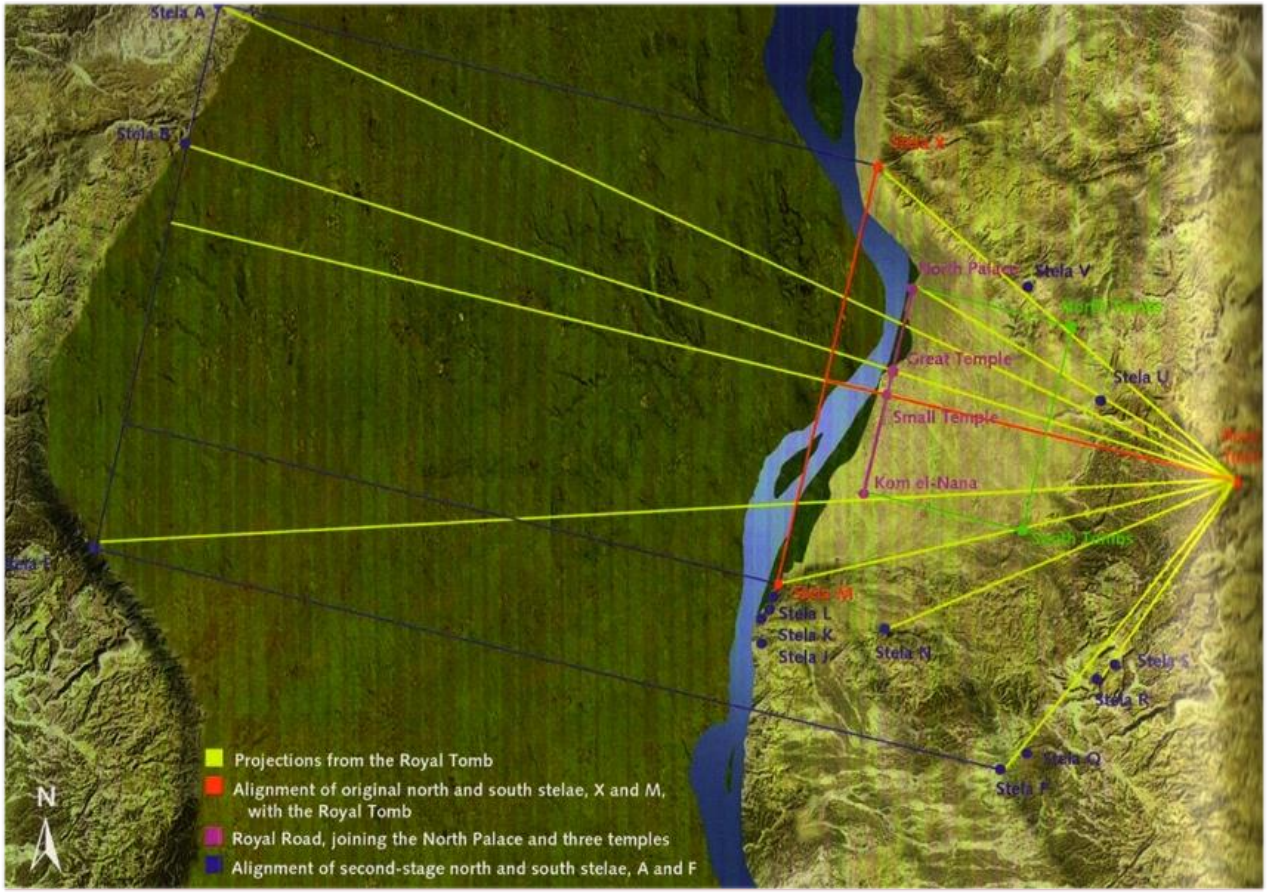


Formal foundation of the city

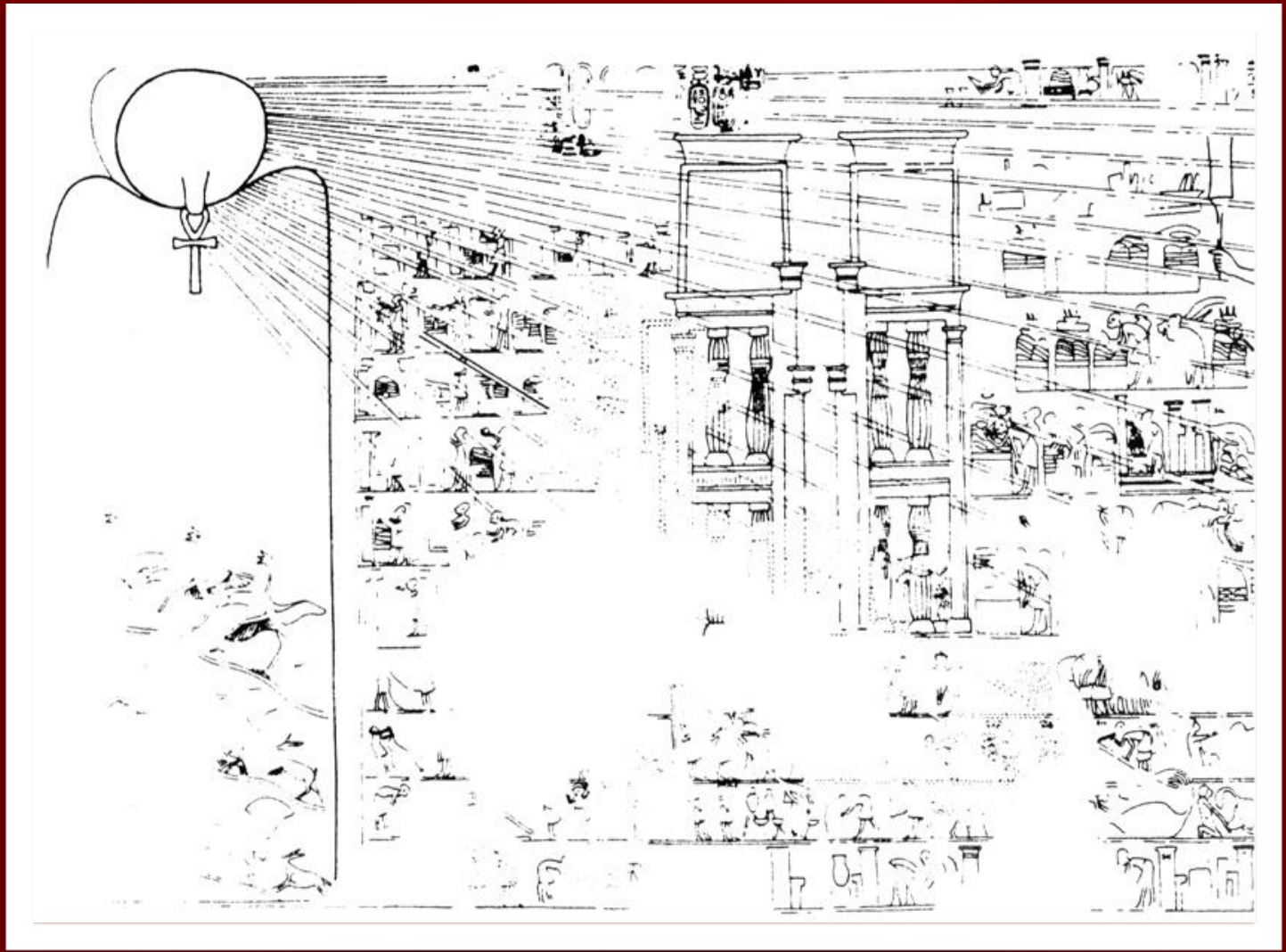
- The Aten founded the city: RY 5, *Peret* 4, day 13
- Enumeration of the buildings founded at the site
- Promotion of the Aten
- Role of the *sed*-festivals

Then said his Majesty 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.

Sacred Landscape



THe *Akhet* of the Aten

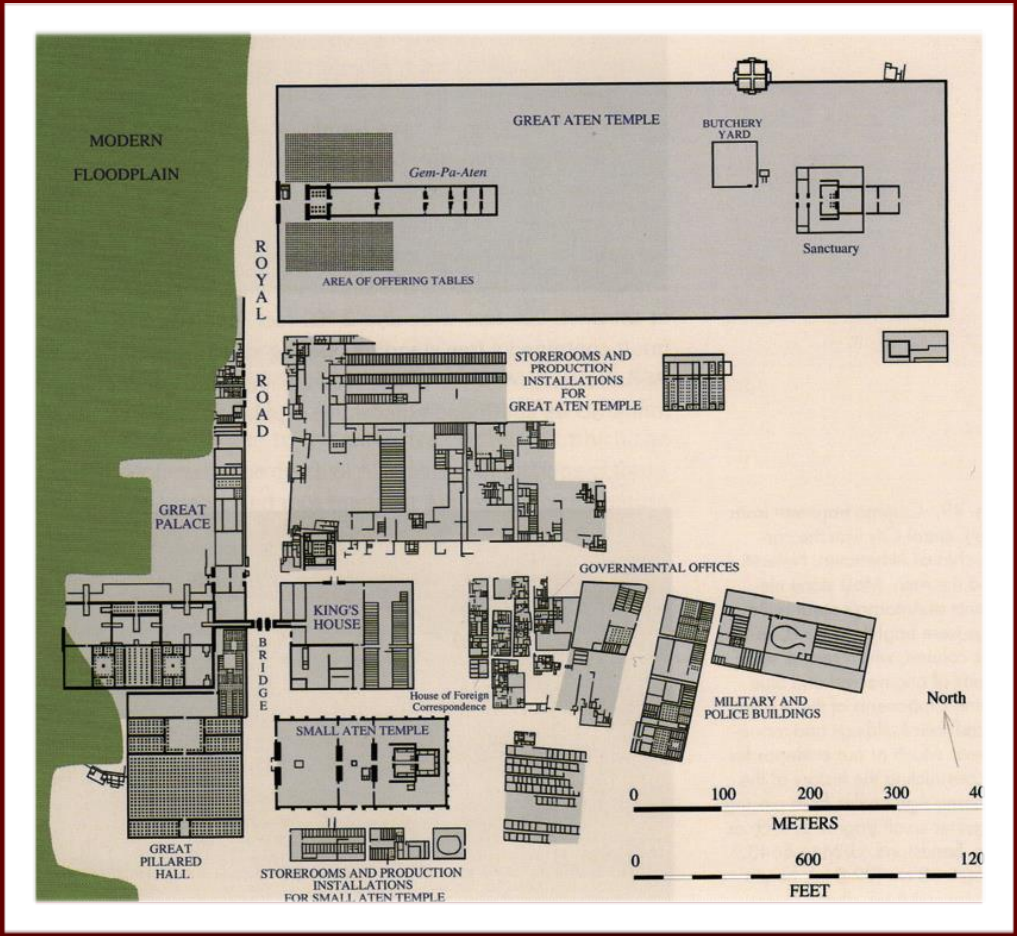


Building activities

- City built between Regnal Years 5–8
- Majority of Akhet-Aten completed by RY 8
- Use of *talatats* with mudbrick cores, led to quick building time
- *Talatats* taken to Hermopolis as fill for pylon of Ramesses II

Major works at Akhet-Aten (Amarna)

- Per-Aten (”House of the Aten”: Great Temple)
- Huwt-Aten (”Mansion of the Aten”): Small Temple
- King’s House
- Peripheral installations for royal women



Historical events

- Known activities of the king and his retinue at Akhet-Aten:
  - Regnal Year 5: Akhet-Aten established
  - Regnal Year 6: Akhenaten moves to Amarna; lives in a tent
  - Regnal Year 8: Confirms the boundaries of the city

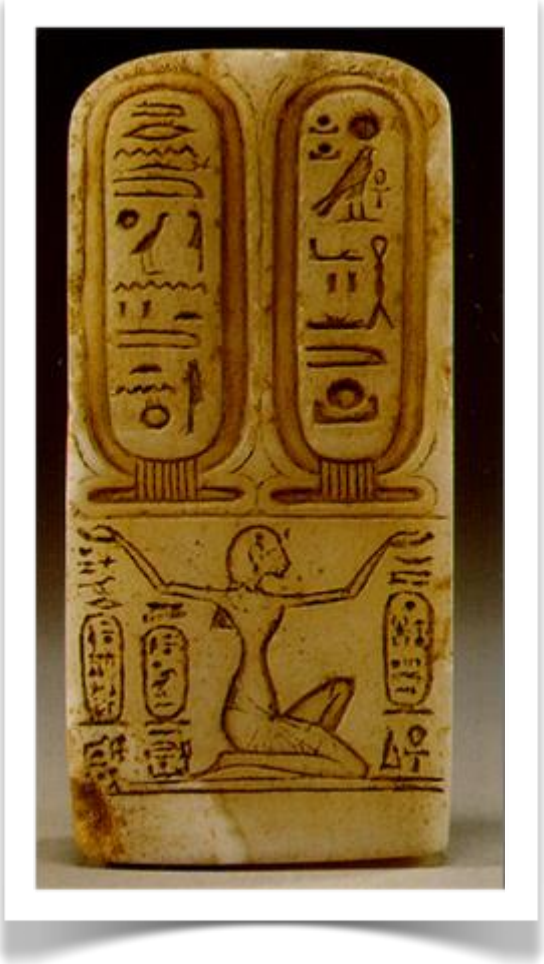
Amarna – from year 9

- red granite
- part of monumental statue of Akhenaten in Akhetaten (Amarna)
- three cartouches constitute last titulary of Akhenaten

❑ *nsw-bity*, "Lord of the Two Lands": *nefer-kheperw-re wa-n-re*, "Beautiful are the manifestations of Re. Sole one of Re."
❑ middle: *[nh]ra-hr-hty-ha-i-m-ht*, "[Live] Re Harakhti rejoicing on the horizon."
❑ left: *mm-rn-f-sw-nty-m-itn*, "In his name as Shw, as light in the globe (in Aten)."
❑ underneath: *di-ankh-nhh-dt*, "May he eternally live in eternity!"

Events

- Regnal Year 9 (?): name of the Aten changed
- Old “didactic” name: Live Re-Horakhty, who appears in the horizon in his name of Shu, who is the Aten”
- New: Live Re, ruler of the two horizons, who appears in his name as Re, the father who returns as Aten



Supporters

- Military
- Foreign troops more evident
- “New men” personally favored by the king