



Two Compositional Tendencies in Amarna Relief

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It must be admitted that there are difficulties with such an interpretation. First, Dionysus is facing not the prow but the stern, which itself lacks the usual double, swan-headed *aphlaston*.²³ Secondly, he is holding none of the usual implements: cantharus, thyrsus or grape vine. Finally, there is no firm evidence connecting the *carrus navalis* with the Anthesteria.²⁴

The greatest problem is the poor condition of the *chous* itself, to judge from the pictures in Caputo, Webster and Brommer.²⁵ Since it is at present impossible to examine the original or obtain new photographs, one must rely on the drawing of E. Gilliéron (here fig. 1) and the description of Caputo. Still, I think the problem of the parallel curved lines should be raised. If it is a boat and if the bearded spectator is Dionysus, we lose our evidence for a fifth century raised stage but we gain a piece of evidence that may link the *carrus navalis* with the Anthesteria.²⁶ And if Perseus is a comic actor, as the tights suggest,²⁷ we have our first manifestation of the shadowy *chutrinoi agōnes*.²⁸

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TWO COMPOSITIONAL TENDENCIES IN AMARNA RELIEF*

It is widely believed that the art of Amarna did not

constitute an overwhelming revision of tradition. For our purposes, it is therefore necessary to fix upon a precise formulation of this "tradition" of which Amarna art was supposedly but an extension or exaggeration.

It seems that almost all of the important compositional laws were laid down in the Egyptian Old Kingdom and were maintained, with few contrary interludes, into the Hellenistic era. One scholar has remarked that the reliefs of the Fifth Dynasty might be called "classical" Egyptian art.¹ These reliefs present us with some of the best examples of Egyptian relief art, and clearly exhibit the tendencies and techniques of the genre at its height. On the other hand, those who hold that Amarna relief was an extension of tradition mean to refer in particular to the tradition of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The innovations of Amarna art, including many of the well-known stylistic exaggerations, were a manifestation of a general disintegration of cultural formality characteristic, it is believed, of the entire Eighteenth Dynasty. I shall not consider developments preparatory to the reforms of the Amarna period, but I do believe that gradual changes in artistic method and a general broadening of world-view during the early New Kingdom had a significant effect upon Amarna art. Yet despite this, there were specific changes in art which can be dated only to the Amarna years, including changes in the composition of relief representations.² With

judges (and trainers), however, are not unknown: see E.N. Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London 1910) figs. 38, 48, 54, 66, 79, 82, 114, 115, and perhaps 116. Figure 38, a Panathenaic amphora in the British Museum (CVA 1 III H c pl. 4, 3b), shows a victor being crowned by a judge closely resembling our mystery figure: beardless, seated, with bare torso.

²³ See Frickenhaus (supra n. 17) 63. However, one of his three ships clearly does not have a swan's head. Presumably the basketlike contraption seen hanging to the left or right of the sterns of his ships would not be visible on ours.

²⁴ Nor is any of the three vases showing it of the appropriate shape. Still, most recent statements favor the connection, e.g. *DFA*² 12 n.2; G.M. Sifakis, *Studies in the History of Hellenistic Drama* (London 1967) 10 but not W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berlin 1972) 223-24.

²⁵ Caputo (supra n. 2) fig. 1-4; Webster, *ArchEph* fig. 4; F. Brommer, *Satyrspele* (Berlin 1944) fig. 17-19.

²⁶ One must be cautious in view of the strong negative conclusion of A. Rumpf, "Attische Feste—Attische Vasen," *BonnJbb* 161 (1961) 212: "es dürfte aber auch endlich einmal an der Zeit sein, zu fragen, ob und wieweit der Zeugniswert der oft angeführten Kannen und Kännchen als 'Choen-Kannen' für die Rekonstruktion des Choen-Festes berechtigt ist. Die Darstellungen auf den Kannen sprechen nicht dafür." This may be excessive: "so schüttet er das Kind mit dem Bade oder besser das Kinderfest mit den Choen aus," E. Simon, "Ein Anthesterien-Skyphos des Polygnotos," *AntK* 6 (1963) 8 n.10. See also Schmidt (supra n. 19) 78.

²⁷ The tights seem clear from the two lines around Perseus's right hand. I cannot see the "twisted-up phallos" mentioned

in *DFA*² 211, following Webster, *ArchEph* 200.

²⁸ If not, then perhaps we have a representation of the "dances in costume" that shocked Apollonius (see *DFA*² 16). I would like to thank Professors M.L. Lang, G. Pinney and E. Simon for reading this paper and offering very helpful suggestions and the Journal's referee for catching two egregious blunders. I am also indebted to two students, Monica Barran and Raymond Liddell, for asking the right questions.

* I am grateful to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for supplying me with information on Amarna reliefs in the MMA collection, to the Egypt Exploration Society for assisting me in queries regarding Flinders Petrie's notes and records of his excavations at Tell el Amarna in 1892, and to Dr. M.A.S. Cameron of the University of Western Ontario, Prof. W.K. Simpson of Yale University and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the editor of *AJA*, and Mr. Peter Sidman, for comments and criticism on earlier drafts of this paper. I am especially grateful to Prof. Dr. Jürgen Settgast, Director of the Ägyptisches Museum, West Berlin, for kind permission to reproduce the relief in his museum's collection.

¹ H.T. Mohr, *The Mastaba of Hetep-her-akhti*, Ex Oriente Lux 5 (Leiden 1943) 3. For traditional relief composition, see H.A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement* (London 1951) 114-41, W.S. Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven 1969) 137-47, 168-79, and F. Matz, "Zur Komposition ägyptischer Wandbilder," *Jdl* 37 (1924) 39-53.

² For composition in the Amarna period, see C.F. Nims, "The transition from the traditional to the new style of wall relief under Amenhotep IV," *JNES* 32 (1973) 181-87; C.R.

several exceptions, the changes may be dated to the early years of Akhenaten's reign at Akhetaten (approximately Years 5-9); the later years witnessed a partial return to older manners—perhaps due to alterations in the political situation, the development of a more accomplished and sensitive style, and the appearance of new artists at Akhetaten.

It is appropriate briefly to review the features of "classical" relief composition, which we may justifiably call "appositive composition." In the appositive type of two-dimensional representation, the major figures and/or objects in the composition, when viewed in relation to each other, act as appositives, as adjunct entities or terms rather than only as subunits of a greater compositional system. A typical tomb-stele shows the tomb-owner, rendered in the traditional proportional canon of the human form, occupying a large central area while his wife and/or child(ren) fill smaller areas behind and below him. The entire group may be facing an offering table or other figures or objects, and the representation may be bounded by descriptive and explanatory registers of inscription. The relationships of individuals to one another are indicated by their general narrative association (for instance, their familial association, common participation in a rite, or some other shared status). Any structural meaning which could be introduced by an integration of lines, by a parallelism or construction of larger geometric forms (as in the familiar "cone" of Italian high Renaissance composition), or by other compositional devices, is barely perceptible. An appositive composition concentrated the artistic vision upon the form of each individual element in the representation so that often individual figures attained high quality.

Amarna art introduced "relational" details of anatomy, as any viewer who has remarked upon the lifelikeness of several Amarna "caricatures" will attest. It might be supposed that Amarna artists attempted to capture a series of fleeting moments and, as others have remarked, that Amarna art symbolically created a transitory world.³ At the very least, the importance of the whole of a form or scene equalled the importance of individual elements therein. Just as Amarna artists loosened conceptions of the human form in art, they also altered established compositional practices.

An example of the new style is the famous portrait of the royal family dated to approximately Year 8 of Akhenaten's reign (fig. 1).⁴ The king and queen face each other and, as Aldred has pointed out, it is unusual to find them placed at an equal height.⁵ The king has raised his daughter Meritaten to his lips, while Maketaten rests lightly on her mother Nefertiti's knee and Ankhesenpaaten leans playfully against her mother's shoulder. Above them, the disc of the sun-god is depicted, bearing the royal insignia and extending incised rays. The symmetry of the whole seems at first glance to be achieved by the balance of two main compositional masses, Akhenaten with Meritaten, and Nefertiti with the two young princesses. Aldred comments that the "psychological unity" of the grouping is accentuated by the gestures of the two princesses and by the indiscriminate blessing bestowed by the rays of the sun.⁶ Such a general view of the relief would lead one to suppose that no radical reinterpretation of compositional formulae has been attempted by the artist, and that the true value of the work lies in the new manner of rendering the human figure and in an informality of subject matter. Further analysis shows that the fundamental syntax of the composition consists of a series of circular movements (presented on ill. 1 as lines I-IV), a modification of the traditional appositive structure.

Two compositional forces serve to focus these circular movements. (These appear on ill. 1 as lines A and B.) The A-force is particularly evident in the extended headdresses and floating scarves of the king and queen, but also finds another set of termini in the delicate arm-spans of the elder princesses. The B-force appears in the thrust of the adults' hips and lower legs; we note, also, that the adults' lower legs present barriers to a prolonged sweep of lines II and III. Yet these forces do not fragment the composition but rather focus and balance it. The harmony of the composition is maintained by these moderating forces, and by the fact that no one of the curved lines forms a complete circle in itself. The circular composition assumes, more accurately, a concentric arrangement, as the "circle" is distributed among the various visible arcs of the composition.

A second example of circular composition is a relief once set in a boundary-wall niche and now in the

Williams, "Wall decorations of the main temple of the sun at el 'Amarneh," *Metropolitan Museum Studies* 2 (1929-30) 135-51; and H. Frankfort, ed., *The Mural Painting of El-'Amarneh* (London 1929) ch. 1. In this paper, I cite Amarna reliefs by museum number or similar collection identification; for the reliefs upon which I concentrate, I have supplied references to standard works on Amarna and Egyptian art in addition to the museum number. I use the following abbreviations: Aldred, *AN*, for C. Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti* (New York 1973); Aldred, *Akh.*, for C. Aldred, *Akhenaten: Pharaoh of Egypt—a new study* (London 1968); and Davies, *RT*, for N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, 6

vols. (London 1903-1908).

³ Aldred, *AN* 72.

⁴ West Berlin 14145; Porter and Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings* 4 (Oxford 1934) 232, with bibliography brought up to date in Aldred, *AN* no. 16. A block from Hermopolis now in a private collection may have belonged to a similar scene (Aldred, *AN* no. 128).

⁵ Aldred, *AN* 102. See also J.A. Wilson, "Akh-en-Aton and Nefertiti," *JNES* 32 (1973) 235-41.

⁶ Aldred, *AN* 102. Compare W.C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* 2 (New York 1959) 282.

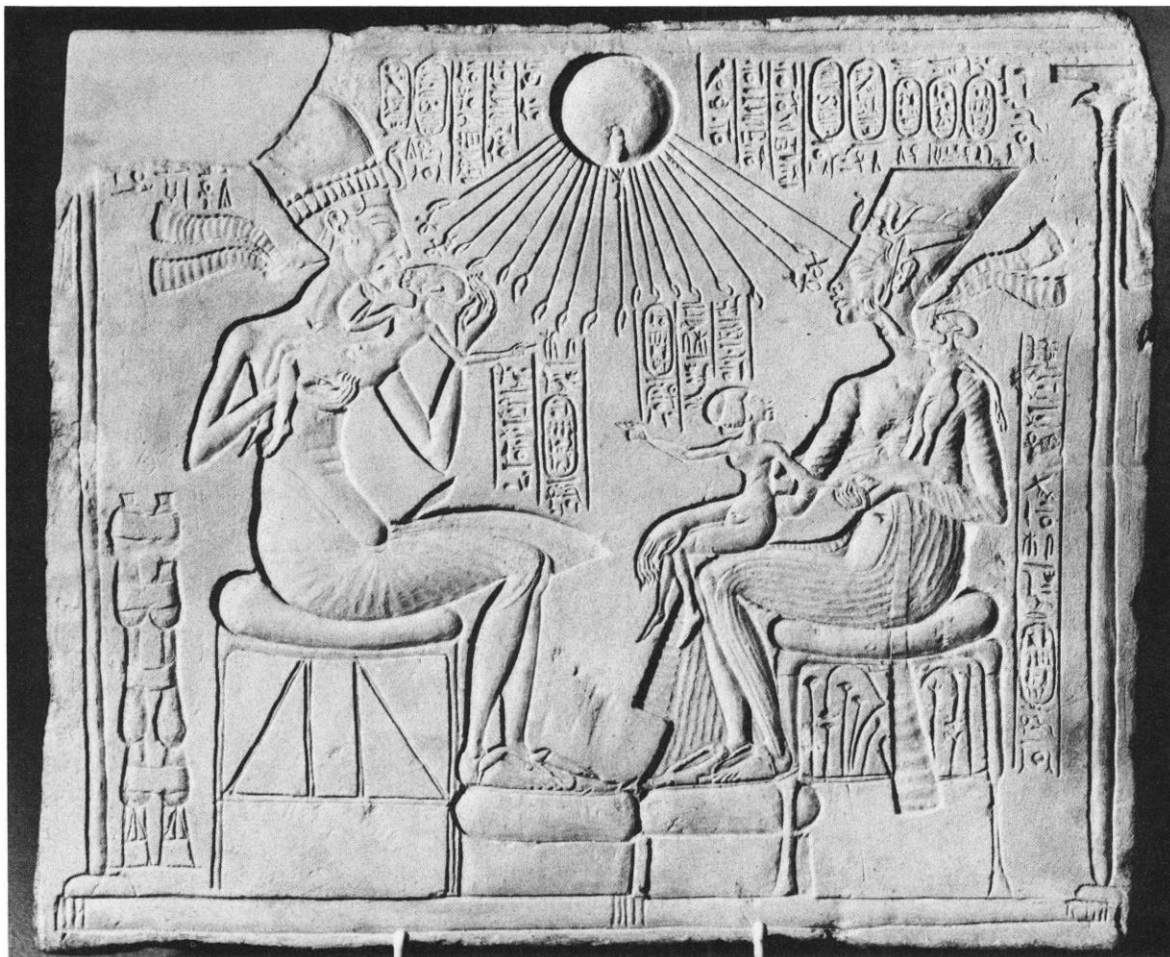


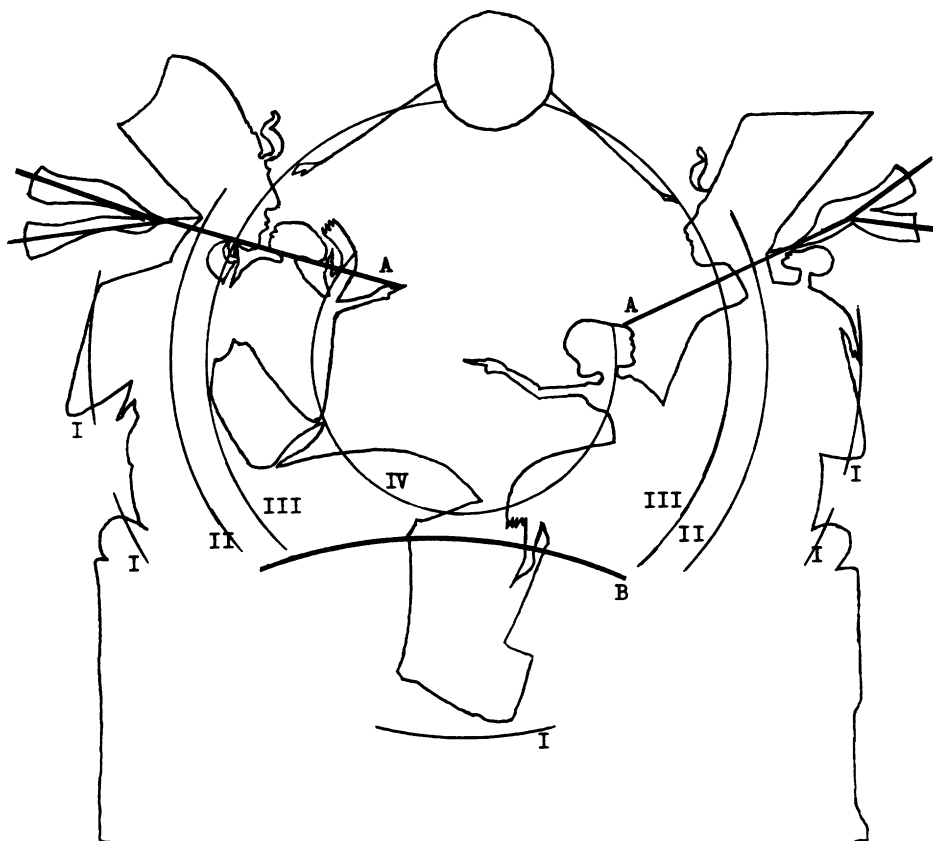
FIG. 1. Relief stela of the Amarna royal family (West Berlin 14145). (Courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, West Berlin)

Egyptian Museum at Cairo.⁷ It is not as effective as the Berlin relief, perhaps because of a lack of subtlety in the use of the concentric arrangement; the circularity of the composition does not harmonize with the square setting of the stela. The composition lacks moderating structural forces, such as we see on the Berlin relief. Meritaten stands between the two adults, her body forming a "bridge" which allows the concentric disposition to form a circle that is well-nigh complete. In this relief the king is represented as larger and taller than his wife, but he is nevertheless included in the concentric arrangement.

A subtlety of circular composition is a feature of the appositive style; although forms are not constructed to act with and upon one another, there is a definite attempt to prevent the occurrence of empty space in the representation. The fact that dead space was considered unsightly accounts for some Egyptian com-

positions in which figures and inscription cover the background. The use of a concentric arrangement in composition would create a large empty space in the center of the circle, thus presenting a problem to Amarna artists. In the examples cited above, portions of the empty space have been filled with inscriptions, but they have little aesthetic significance and are not as important as the clear attempts to create a center for the circular structure. In the Berlin relief, the gesturing finger of the princess is used as a central point so that all other elements of the composition curve around it; in the Cairo relief, the little ball that Akhenaten is giving to his daughter fills this function. Henri Frankfort sensed the compositional unity of Amarna graphic art. Actual lines and shapes, actual compositional patterns, were used to unify Amarna representations. Frankfort perceived that the figure of the gesturing princess, for example, has a great deal to do with the

⁷ Cairo JE 44865; Aldred, *AN* fig. 2.



ILL. 1. Outline sketch of relief stela (West Berlin 14145), with curving lines (I-IV) and moderating forces (A and B) indicated

unity of the Berlin stele,⁸ and his view is confirmed by the observation that the gesture of the central princess acts as the focal point of a circular composition. The focal points suffuse the space with structural purpose and prevent the negative area from seeming blank, while Akhenaten's game and the princess's gesture are meant to epitomize the domestic intimacy portrayed in these scenes.

Four other relief fragments, and several tomb-reliefs, possess affinities with the reliefs considered above. A relief fragment in the Louvre⁹ shows Akhenaten with Nefertiti on his lap, while she in turn supports two little daughters.¹⁰ The Louvre relief is a highly

unusual one and the composition, while it exhibits the unity of elements characteristic of circular compositions, finds no parallel.¹¹ A fragment of a private stele, now in East Berlin,¹² may be a fragment of a circular composition, possibly similar to the Louvre scene. The two royal figures are close together, and it is likely that the princesses, if they appeared at all, were not shown as they are in the Louvre scene. Akhenaten rests his left arm on a pillow or chair arm; in the background are lotus plants and possibly an enclosure similar to the ones which protect the royal group in other reliefs, such as West Berlin 14145 and the Louvre fragment. An unfinished relief plaque

⁸ Frankfort (*supra* n. 2) 10.

⁹ Aldred, *AN* no. 56 and fig. 53.

¹⁰ N. de G. Davies has made a hypothetical reconstruction of the scene: see Davies, "The graphic work of the expedition," in "The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition 1922-1923," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*

of Art Part 2 (December 1923) 42 and fig. 4.

¹¹ Aldred however finds two possibly similar scenes: see Aldred, *AN* 134.

¹² East Berlin 14511. Eleonore Bille-de-Mot, *The Age of Akhenaten*, trans. Jack Lindsay (London 1966) pl. 46a.

in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge¹³ shows Akhenaten embracing and kissing Nefertiti while a daughter stands behind him. Again, although certain features of the circular composition do not appear here, the intimacy of compositional units is characteristic of the general trend in this era. A relief fragment now in the Brooklyn Museum¹⁴—which depicts Nefertiti and a daughter—may have been intended to belong to a larger circular composition. Although none of these fragments is comparable in every respect to the Berlin and Cairo steles, they demonstrate that Amarna artists were modifying the apposite mode of arranging figures. Whether the composition exhibits all features of the concentric structure is less important than the fact that in many ways artists were working toward the creation of complete, unified compositions, whereas in the traditional style they had produced complete and idealized, but isolated and individual, figures and forms.

Compositions which may be more definitely classified as circular than those on surviving relief fragments are found in contemporary tombs. In the tomb of Meryre is an interesting scene similar to circular compositions, even in its use of a focal object.¹⁵ Two dinner scenes from the tomb of Huyu show Akhenaten and Nefertiti enthroned, and attended by Huyu; both scenes are circular compositions.¹⁶ In the lower left corner of one of these scenes, we see Meritaten and a younger princess sharing food while their elders feast;¹⁷ the little circular structure parallels the larger concentric structure prominent in the relief, and the angular lines of the chairs upon which the princesses are sitting serve to fit the little circular structure into the corner of the whole relief. On the left side of the lintel in the tomb of Huyu is a relief comparable to other circular compositions; in this relief, however, there is a marked tendency to isolation of the units of the composition.¹⁸ The figures of Amenhotep III

and Queen Tiy are far apart, the queen and her daughter Baketaten (who stands by the knee of her mother) raise their hands in what may be a gesture of greeting or praise, which sets up a barrier between the figure of the king and those of the females, and the rays of the sun-disc intrude into the center of the circle and break its unity. The separation of Amenhotep III and Tiy in the scene may have been a reflection of political reality; the artist may not even have desired to suggest domestic unity or intimacy in using a circular composition, which seems to have been best designed to emphasize these two qualities.

It is possible that Amarna painters used the circle as a stasis for composition. The well-known painting of two daughters of Akhenaten from Akhetaten (now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and dated to at least Year 14) is but a section of what was apparently a much larger composition, as Petrie described the discovery.¹⁹ Norman de Garis Davies's restoration exhibits what might be the lower half of a circular composition.²⁰ The representation of the king's daughters brings to mind a sculptor's sketch in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo,²¹ which shows a princess taking a meal; although it is unfinished, the princess is rendered with a fluid line and her posture suggests that she would form part of a composition similar to those cited above.

There are many examples of reliefs which exhibit a "triangular" structure.²² One of the clearest and best-preserved examples²³ shows Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Meritaten worshipping the sun-disc. The two adults hold offerings aloft and the princess shakes a sistrum. The rays of the sun are extended in the reciprocal gesture: to bestow breath and life, and to receive the prayers and offerings of the worshippers. The triangular structure is plain: the sun-disc is the apex, and the ground-line the base. Similar compositions in a good state of preservation include: a relief stele in Cairo,²⁴ a sunk relief slab at the University of Pennsylvania,²⁵

¹³ Aldred, *AN* no. 123.

¹⁴ Brooklyn Museum 60.197.8; Aldred, *AN* no. 92.

¹⁵ Davies, *RT* 2 (1905) pl. 32.

¹⁶ Davies, *RT* 3 (1905) pls. 4 and 6.

¹⁷ Davies, *RT* 3 (1905) pl. 4.

¹⁸ Davies, *RT* 3 (1905) 18-19 and pl. 18. Two important discussions of the lintel scene are by H.W. Fairman in J.D.S. Pendlebury, ed., *The City of Akhenaten* 3 (London 1951) 155(e), and C. Aldred, "Year Twelve at El-Amarna," *JEA* 43 (1957) 116-17.

¹⁹ W.M.F. Petrie, A.H. Sayce, F.L. Griffith, and F.J.C. Spurrell, *Tell el Amarna* (London 1894) 15; see N.M. Davies and A.H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Paintings* (Chicago 1937) III, 140-41, with II, pl. 74. Petrie's *Amarna* is not a full record of the rich discoveries he must undoubtedly have made at the site; see also the pamphlet prepared by Petrie for an exhibition held at Oxford Mansions, London, in 1892, entitled *Catalogue of Antiquities from Tel el Amarna*, and the *Catalogue of the Amherst Collection of Egyptian and Oriental Antiquities*, prepared by Sotheby and Co. (London 1921). Sotheby, Parke, Bernet and Co. informs me that it is not known

whether Petrie's notes or publications were used in preparing this catalogue, although J.D. Cooney, "Egyptian art in the collection of Albert Gallatin," *JNES* 12 (1953) 11, states that he was told by Percy Newberry that Howard Carter had prepared it. The Griffith Institute of the Ashmolean Museum holds the original copies of a journal which preserves Petrie's letters dealing with his Amarna excavations in 1891-92. Consult B. Adams, "Petrie's manuscript notes on the Koptos foundation deposit of Tuthmosis III," *JEA* 61 (1975) 102-11, for a brief discussion of this manuscript material.

²⁰ Davies, "Mural paintings in the city of Akhetaten," *JEA* 7 (1921) 1-7, with pl. 2.

²¹ Bille-de-Mot (supra n. 12) pl. 34.

²² For example, J.D. Cooney, *Amarna Reliefs from Hermopolis in American Collections* (Brooklyn 1965) 17-18.

²³ Cairo 30/10/26/12; Aldred, *AN* fig. 33; also recently published in Bille-de-Mot (supra n. 12) pl. 14, and Aldred, *Akh.* pl. 47.

²⁴ Cairo 10/11/25/4; Aldred, *AN* fig. 34, and Aldred, *Akh.* pl. 5.

²⁵ University Museum E16230; Aldred, *AN* fig. 35.

and the facades from a shrine in the official residence of Panhesy at Amarna²⁶; some of the great boundary steles at Akhetaten probably also presented triangular compositions—at least we know this for the well-preserved Stele “S,”²⁷ and steles “N”²⁸ and “R.”²⁹

The triangular composition appears in Amarna and Theban tombs in the “Window of Appearances” scene, which may be considered as a variation upon true triangular composition, in which all of the attention of Akhenaten and his companions is focussed on the sun-disc. Examples of triangular composition and its variations are found in the tombs of Ramose,³⁰ Parennefer,³¹ Ay,³² Ipy,³³ Meryre,³⁴ and Huya.³⁵ At least twenty fragments of relief representations have survived which probably possessed triangular compositions. They range in date from a fragment in the Louvre³⁶ (which must date to an early year of Akhenaten’s reign, since negligible interest is shown in the king’s peculiar physique), to fragments from the late years. The triangular composition was employed for as long as representations of the sun-disc of the god Aten were commonly used. These fragments are cited in the appendix to this paper.

I do not claim that the circular and the triangular compositional formulae account for all of the observable compositional concepts advanced or attempted in Amarna self-contained relief-work. Habachi, for example, has published a scene which places Akhenaten in a triangular structure but also includes other elements which are definitely “appositive.”³⁷ In the “Window of Appearances” scene from various tomb-reliefs, the continuous upward movement of the characteristic triangular composition is disturbed, as the human figures represented are not concentrating upon the sun-disc. “Transition reliefs,” in particular, exhibit features which are both traditional and novel. The Louvre fragment mentioned above is an excellent example of transition style.³⁸ We need only cite the several variations of and developments upon the two structural tendencies to realize the extent of experimentation. Although the circular composition was an innovation, it did not supplant the traditional

modes, nor did it successfully exclude contemporary but alternate innovations. Novel compositions did not totally supplant the older arrangements, but rather coexisted with them and later were replaced by them (especially in the case of circular compositions, which disappear in the late years of Akhenaten’s reign).

It is clear that the unity of the domestic group is celebrated in Amarna scenes: each figure, merely a tributary movement in a wider confluence of structural forces, becomes meaningful only in terms of the total interplay of forms. Thus the individuals represented are subunits of a series—a series which supercedes the isolated aggregates of form and meaning characteristic of appositive composition. But the further significance of the innovative compositions is elusive; they may imply a rejection of established social tradition. The family group is placed on a much higher level than in traditional representation: we might say that for the first time Egyptian artists were able to put into effect the concept of a united, organic family unit. But should we attribute the new technique to political necessity, or social re-thinking, or artistic reformation, or a combination of these factors? And it is likewise difficult to determine the narrative and/or the symbolic function of the sun-disc in these reliefs. The disc is compositionally intimate with human figures, joining with them in producing the encompassing concentric formation. It may be inferred that in the doctrine of Amarna the Aten was a being more concerned and involved with individual lives than the remote, distant deities represented in traditional relief.³⁹

The new compositions may point to the existence of a comparatively liberal social hierarchy in Amarna times; the king, in small self-contained Amarna reliefs at least, is less aloof than in traditional relief, and his figure appears to be but one element of a human ontology. But of course his figure is accentuated in ways not directly taken into account in the analysis of the compositional structures above—he is more active, there is more space around him, in one relief his daughter points to him, and he is of a larger scale.

²⁶ Aldred, *AN* fig. 52; originally published by H. Frankfort, “Preliminary report on the excavations at Tell el-Amarnah, 1926-1927,” *JEA* 13 (1927) pl. 45 (2 and 3) and pl. 47 (2).

²⁷ Davies, *RT* 5 (1908) pl. 26.

²⁸ Aldred, *AN* nos. 8 and 28; see also the discussion by John D. Cooney, “A relief from Tell el-Amarna,” *Art Quarterly* 2 (1939) 67-75.

²⁹ J. Vandier, “Les stèles-frontières d’El-Amarna: à propos d’une nouvelle acquisition du musée du Louvre,” *Mon Piot* 40 (Paris 1944) pls. 1 and 2, figs. 2-5.

³⁰ Davies, *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose* (London 1941) pl. 33.

³¹ Davies, *RT* 6 (1908) pl. 3.

³² Davies, *RT* 6 (1908) pl. 29.

³³ Aldred, *AN* fig. 47, and Aldred, *Akh.* pl. 105.

³⁴ Davies, *RT* 2 (1905) pl. 41.

³⁵ Davies, *RT* 3 (1905) pls. 9, 13, 16, and 18. For a dis-

cussion of the historical context and meaning of “Window of Appearances” scenes, see Aldred (supra n. 18) 114-16.

³⁶ Aldred, *Akh.* pl. 46.

³⁷ L. Habachi, “Varia from the reign of King Akhenaten,” *MittKairo* 20 (1965) pl. 27 and fig. 11.

³⁸ Aldred, *Akh.* pl. 46, and see comments by Nims (supra n. 2) 186.

³⁹ I cannot here investigate the relationship between the sun-disc in Amarna art and iconography and the doctrine of the Aten. Pertinent studies include L.V. Žabkar, “The theocracy of Amarna and the doctrine of the ba,” *JNES* 13 (1954) 92-93; J. Bennet, “Notes on the ‘aten,’” *JEA* 51 (1965) 207-209; S. Tawfik, “Aton studies,” *MittKairo* 29 (1973) 77-86; A. Badawy, “Aberrations about Akhenaten,” *Chronique d’Égypte* 46 (1971) 108-109; and see now the significant article by D.B. Redford, “The sun-disc in Akhenaten’s program: its worship and antecedents, I,” *JARCE* 13 (1976) 47-61.

The inscriptions describe the king as if he were the focal point of the piece. Yet the focussing of attention upon the king is achieved in a more sophisticated fashion than in previous works, for to maintain the primacy of the king yet definitely imply family intimacy and equality required a subtle handling of the thematic, stylistic, and compositional factors at the artist's disposal.

The Egyptians themselves must have been more concerned with thematic and stylistic matters than with composition, and we distort our judgment if we read too much into compositional practices and even innovations. What can be empirically demonstrated, however, is that the representation of family intimacy (involving as well the themes of kingship and human relations with god) is not only accomplished in narrative but is also underscored by compositional means. Stylistically, the figures may tend to caricature, and dress, symbolism, and inscriptions emphasize the formal aspects of the royal family's life. Intimacy is created by an organic composition. In a sense, the Amarna artist is struggling against traditional compositional formulations, from which he cannot altogether escape, in introducing his new compositional arrangements.

Traditional relief composition was not, of course, devoid of techniques and a purpose conferring unity. However, the unity, or harmony, of traditional compositions was in the idealization of individual forms upon which the artist focussed. Egyptian art implied, for example, that the individual human body was an ideal and perfect form; the canon of proportions was in part designed to extend to individual representations of the human body a measure of uniform harmony. The artist's vision concentrated upon the ideal and formal qualities of things was a manifestation of the Egyptian belief in the close and necessary relationship between earthly and cosmic order. In Amarna art, divinity and cosmic order, represented by the Aten, were still all-important and all-encompassing. In circular relief composition, the importance of the Aten was expressed by the position of the disc at the top of the scene, while in triangular relief composition the focal point of the arrangement was the disc of the god. Insofar as Amarna artists continued to emphasize the omniscience of the godhead, little can be said to have changed in religion. But the earthly reality depicted in Amarna art, apart from the metaphysical statement implied in most scenes, was itself suffused with energy and unity, and the new devices of composition exposed explicit relationships among the elements of earthly reality. The earthly order (expressed, for instance, in circular patterns uniting and integrating the representation of the domestic group

in and of itself) supplemented the metaphysical order, the omniscient godhead of the cosmos.

To stress the newness of Amarna art is perhaps to deprecate the traditional style. The break with tradition and subsequent burst of artistic energy in the Amarna years were responsible for an increasing degree of artistic freedom, manifested particularly in the new stylistic mannerisms, but this freedom could not have been achieved had the Egyptians been unaware of the expressive power of composition. Although the circular and triangular patterns naturally represent a modification, even a repudiation, of the appositional tradition, inherent in the introduction of novel structures was an appreciation of the important role of composition in the expression of artistic ideas. The Egyptians may have used the appositional mode of composition deliberately; they understood its formal meaning and consciously exploited its formal characteristics.

Egyptian aesthetics may not have been expressed didactically, and was certainly not as coherent as were the aesthetic canons of later civilizations, but to Egypt we must credit the first known sophisticated awareness and use of composition and artistic structure in the complex synthesis of style, canon, philosophy, and tradition contributing to the production of a work of art. The Amarna period and its attendant structural revision were relatively late, and their historical influence was comparatively slight, but I believe that the ability to change must have been latent in much of the art preceding the Amarna period. And therefore, if we are to understand Egyptian art, we must study the self-conscious and highly sophisticated extension in the Amarna period: the Amarna reliefs raise the question of the purpose of Egyptian compositional practices.

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APPENDIX

Some Relief Fragments with "Triangular" Compositions

I here list twenty-three relief fragments which may be classified as once having belonged to "triangular" compositions. In some cases, it is not possible to determine whether these fragments came from steles, altars, or other small, self-contained works, or from large wall-relief compositions, although it is likely that most were of the former type. As a convenient reference for the fragments I have used the number assigned to them by Aldred, *AN*, although the standard publications of Amarna reliefs and relief fragments⁴⁰ provide fuller discussions. If the fragment

(Hildesheim 1969); and the catalogue of an exhibition at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, cited in nos. 10, 16, and 17 in this appendix.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Aldred, *AN*; Cooney (supra n. 22); discussions of the Schimmel reliefs by Cooney in Herbert Hoffmann, ed., *The Norbert Schimmel Collection* (Cambridge, Mass. 1964); G. Roeder, *Amarna-Reliefs aus Hermopolis*

does not appear in Aldred's catalogue, I have attempted to cite the most recently published photograph of good quality.

1. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 37.3. Aldred, no. 24.
2. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1971.294. Aldred, no. 124.
3. Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum, 41.82. Aldred, no. 18.
4. Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum, 60.197.1. Aldred, no. 122.
5. Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum, 60.197.6. Aldred, no. 116.
6. Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum, 71.89. Aldred, no. 26.
7. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, 26.6.28.8. Aldred, *AN* fig. 31.
8. Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts, 66.8. Aldred, no. 127.
9. Haifa, private collection. Aldred, no. 27.
10. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1961.59. Lise Lotte Möller and Günther Roeder, *Ägyptische Kunst aus der Zeit des Königs Echnaton* (Hamburg and Mainz 1965), no. 11.
11. Hildesheim, Roemer-Pelizaeus-Museum, 4572. Hans Kayser, *Die ägyptischen Altertümer in Roemer-Pelizaeus-Museum in Hildesheim* (Hildesheim 1973), pl. 44(a).
12. London, University College, UC 040. Julia Samson, *Amarna, City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Key Pieces from the Petrie Collection* (London and Warminster 1972), fig. 24.
13. London, University College, UC 401. Samson, *Amarna*, fig. 20.
14. London, University College, UC 410 etc. Samson, *Amarna*, pl. 55(a-c).
15. London, University College, UC 24281. Samson, *Amarna*, fig. 25.
16. Munich, private collection. Möller and Roeder, *Ägyptische Kunst*, no. 4.
17. Munich, private collection. Möller and Roeder, *Ägyptische Kunst*, no. 5.
18. New York, collection of Mr. and Mrs. Norbert Schimmel. Aldred, no. 118.
19. New York, collection of Mr. and Mrs. Norbert Schimmel. Aldred, no. 129.
20. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 66.99.41, formerly in the collection of Albert Gallatin.
- Aldred, no. 14, and see John D. Cooney, "Egyptian art in the collection of Albert Gallatin," *JNES* 12 (1953) pl. 34 and no. 47. The MMA kindly informs me that among artifacts of various dates bearing accession numbers 21.9.1-609 may be found several Amarna reliefs; definitely known to be of Amarna date are 21.9.13 (published by Lansing in the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, n.s. 5 [1947]), 21.9.469, 21.9.573, 21.9.597, and 21.9.604.
21. Paris, The Louvre. Aldred, *Akh.*, pl. 46.
22. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1893.1-41(71). Aldred, no. 31.
23. Richmond, Va., Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 63-20-3. Helen S.T. Reed and P.L. Near, *Ancient Art in the Virginia Museum* (Richmond 1973), fig. 27.

ROBINSON'S KILN SKYPHOS

In 1938 D.M. Robinson published a fragmentary black-figure skyphos by the Theseus Painter in his collection.¹ Since that time the vase has traveled to Mississippi, been dismantled, had most of its pieces moved to the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had other portions lost and subsequently found, and had one new fragment added to it. The base and most of the main scene of side B with the lower portion of the vase under the handles had been reassembled in the Fogg Art Museum.² In reassembling the vase there had been added a joining fragment under one of the handles, which at one time belonged to Joseph V. Noble and was subsequently given by him to the Fogg³ (ill. 1). Recently the missing portions were rediscovered in Mississippi. They consist of a number of adjacent fragments, including both handles and most of the scene of side A (ill. 1). Cleaning had revealed some details that were covered with plaster by the restorer at the time Robinson's photographs were taken. Now the entire vase has been reassembled in the Fogg including all the fragments shown in the *CVA* photographs and Mr. Noble's fragment (figs. 1-4).

Robinson attributed the skyphos to the Theseus Painter and dated it to about 500 B.C., as part of the painter's work in the White Heron workshop.⁴ As such, the vase is typical of the workshop in shape, in the use of paired figures under the handles and in

¹ D.M. Robinson, *CVA USA 7*, Robinson Collection, Fasc. 3 (1938) III He, pls. 1 and 2. *ABV*, 520, no. 26. The vase is from Veredemmia (Coglio Messapica). Ht. 17.4 cm., Dm. 22 cm. Cf. *EEA* vii, 753.

² Fogg Art Museum 1960.321. The entire vase belongs to the Fogg as part of the bequest of D.M. Robinson. At the time of the bequest, most of the vase was found (in pieces) in Mississippi. Our thanks go to Prof. David G. Mitten for permission to publish the vase, photographs of the present reconstruction and advice. The reconstruction was done by Mrs. Carol Forsythe, Center for Conservation, Fogg Art Museum.

³ Fogg 1948.19. The identification of this fragment as belonging to the Robinson skyphos was made by Dietrich von Bothmer.

⁴ P. Mingazzini, *Vasi della Collezione Castellani*, I (Rome 1930) 313-17; Beazley, *JHS* 54 (1934) 89; Beazley, *ABV* 518-20, 703-704, Beazley, *Paralipomena* 259; C.H.E. Haspels, *Attic Black-Figure Lekythoi* (Paris 1936) 141-48, 249-53; A.D. Ure, "Krokotos and White Heron," *JHS* 75 (1955) 90-103; J. Boardman, *Athenian Black Figure Vases* (London 1974) 147; Eisman, "The Theseus Painter, Marathon and Chronology," *AJA* 75 (1971) 200.