Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Atenism: Controversy and Evidence.

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Sources

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Introduction

Even by the 1920s with well over a hundred books had been written about Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Atenism and the Amarna era, so why write another?

There are several essential reasons. In the last few years a great deal of new information about Amarna, Karnak, Tutankhamen, Nefertiti and Akhenaten and their families has emerged, much of it in television documentaries. It amazing to find that our image of the last Atenist to rule at Amarna, Tutankhamen is based on what is comparatively a few objects found in the 1920s, compared to over five thousand others which were found then, but not studied in detail.

Howard Carter, the finder of Tutankhamen’s tomb and the cataloguer of so many objects there, did refer in the 1920s to boxes full of finds lying derelict in museum storerooms. 1 He then goes on to describe how if even rudimentary cataloguing and in situ recording had taken place with these objects 1920 knowledge of Ancient Egypt would have increased by at least fifty per cent. 2 The truthfulness of Carter’s regretful statement has been indicated by recent revelations.

This treasure trove was packed away in the 1920s and only over ninety years later are many of its contents being studied. 3 Even within that smaller proportion many connect to the world of Tutankhamun’s parents. What is revealed by investigating only two such objects, a bow and a throwing stick, already change biographies of Nefertiti. Like the famous Nefertiti bust, the equally world famous gold mask of Tutankhamen has also come under reassessment with some surprising results. Other surprises have come from reports and articles concerning recent finds at Amarna. Earlier indications that Amarna was not a paradise were essentially tentative. Recently archaeological

2 Ibid.,
evidence, much of it concerning the workforce there, revealed much, so Akhenaten’s utopia now appears very differently to earlier depictions which came to their conclusions based on art, architecture and idealistic religious hymns.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century Joann Fletcher, a Yorkshire Egyptologist, returned from Egypt and investigated an Egyptian mummy at a Yorkshire museum, having found a brief mention of this in an old newspaper clipping. This led to Fletcher cataloguing bequests, many from Petrie’s 1890s excavation at Amarna. When the bequests were made the museums had not enough space to display Petrie’s collection, so it was left in crates for seventy years. Many of these objects also change our image of Amarna. Kew’s documentary on the most famous Nefertiti bust also changes perceptions of her which have lasted a hundred years.

Investigations using DNA has also confirmed some theories and discredited others. Most importantly Egyptologists now know that they have the mummy of Akhenaten and have proved his link to Tutankhamen. These same investigations have created new conundrums and controversies.

Other underused or overlooked information comes from out of print books which have been found at last. These include James Baikie’s The Amarna Age: A Study of the Crisis of the Ancient World. (1926), Mary Chubb’s eyewitness report on the 1930 Amarna excavations, originally published in 1954 as Nefertiti Lived Here and Joann Fletcher’s The Search for Nefertiti (2004). Nearly a hundred years old, Baikie’s work survives as relevant despite some of his ideas being proved wrong. Much more of what he stated or suspected has been proved right. His other great virtue is that he reproduces so many rare and important documents and inscriptions in full.

While this book has the advantages of using recent revelations and sources, it can only be considered updated until today. Given the way so many new finds are emerging so rapidly and so many mysteries and gaps within the topic remain, it cannot be the final word – but then can any book?

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The Enigma of Akhenaten and Nefertiti

Many of the studies of Akhenaten and Nefertiti focus on different disputed points. These usually include the following:

- How long his rule lasted, and was he a co-regent with his father?
- Was he suffering from diseases that left him physically and/or mentally odd?
- Was he a staid, happy family man or was he incestuous or bisexual?
- How original were his ideas?
- Were he and Nefertiti pacifists?
- What was Nefertiti’s role?
- What happened to Nefertiti?
- Who succeeded him?
- Why did this first attempt to found a monotheistic religion fail?
- What was the reality of the Atenist era?
- Which of the differing viewpoints on these questions can be seen to be the most accurate?

Each of these questions could take years of research – and not produce a decisive answer. The focus here is on the evidence about the controversial nature of the rule of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, their lives and their religion. These questions have been asked since Akhenaten and Nefertiti were rediscovered in the nineteenth century. Even as early as 1926 when so much more information had yet to be found, the English historian Reverend James Baikie stated that over the previous forty years more had been written about Akhenaten than all of the other ancient eastern kings put together. 4 Baikie went on to describe the often heated fascination caused by the pharaoh who had been

dead for 3,300 years. We can now make that 3,400 years without any need to change anything else in Baikie’s 1920s statement about overheated arguments. In his introduction to Baikie’s work Cambridge editor and lecturer Stanley A. Cook also noted that Akhenaten caused passionate and prejudicial controversies. 5 Cook also expressed his doubts about the view that Akhenaten was a hero, noting obscurities in the evidence and raising the possibility that he was a villain. 6 While giving this simple and opposing division for a man who as he notes may have contained elements of both hero and villain, Cook’s comments are also still valid nearly a century later, even if the answers are yet to be conclusive. The above questions have had attempted answers many times, both before and after Baikie’s and Cook’s 1926 comments and questions, but the answers have often been proved inadequate or erroneous. Others read as being or suspiciously dogmatic on thin evidence.

Another contemporary attitude emerged with Howard Carter’s comment that the importance of Akhenaten probably being overrated. 7 That viewpoint has steadily gained many adherents, but even they frequently divide on believing which characteristic is most overrated - his originality, abilities or reputation.

To some extent the problem still remains because the passions and prejudices noted in the 1920s and 1930s have never faded. Another existing problem is that even the most calm, objective writer on this topic finds that their conclusions must keep changing as new information emerges. Books from as recently as the first decade of the twenty-first century cannot contain important new recently revealed information. More information is extremely likely to emerge. In 2009 Doctor Zawi Hawass, Egypt’s Minister of Antiquities and the world’s foremost Egyptologist, stated that around 70% of Ancient Egypt’s finds remain unexcavated. 8 His finds around this time give veracity to that statement. Even in the Valley of the Kings, where excavations were going on since the nineteenth century and were supposedly complete by the 1920s, Hawass found

5 Stanley A. Cook, Introduction, to The Amarna Age p. xii.

6 Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

7 Carter, p. 9.

another tomb. At Luxor on the famed avenue of the sphinxes a stone head looking larger than four soccer balls combined was located, covered by only a few centimetres of sand. If such important finds can still be found in Luxor and The Valley of the Kings, two of the most investigated and excavated sites in Egypt, what else awaits discovery? A great deal it seems. Radar surveys by Professor Sarah Parcak bears out both this observation and Hawass’s estimation. Using radar from outer space, by the end of 2016 she and her team had found over three thousand ancient settlements, a dozen pyramids, over a thousand lost tombs and the grid pattern for the ancient city of Tanis. The three most important sites concerning Akhenaten and Nefertiti, Karnak, Thebes and Amarna have been excavated several times since the nineteenth century, but even with these three, new discoveries have been made in the twenty-first century. And who knows what could be found by radar in other locales? We have little evidence about how the rest of the Egyptian Empire outside these three cities was ruled in the Atenist era. It is impossible to tell what might turn up in future.

While there are so many holes remaining in the story of Atenism several have been recently filled and errors have been corrected. We now know that Nefertiti was an extremely powerful figure and was not dead or exiled during Akhenaten’s last years, but was alive and at least to some extent still in favour near the very end of Akhenaten’s reign and that she ruled Egypt directly for three years or more after his death. One of her daughters Ankhsenamen is now known to have married to Ay, Tutankhamen’s successor to the throne. This confirms many other theories and makes others untenable. Not mentioned in most fact and fiction is that Nefertiti also abandoned Atenism sometime after Akhenaten’s death. Tutankhamen’s parentage has been much discussed - often erroneously. Akhenaten was Tutankhamen’s father by an incestuous relationship with a sister. Nefertiti might be that sister. A mummy examined


10 Ibid.,


12 Doctor Zawi Hawass, ‘The Discovery of the Family Secrets of King Tutankhamun.’ Undated Press Release. These findings are a summary of another article ‘Ancestry and Pathology in King Tutankhamun’s Family.’ Written by members of the international investigating team in ‘The Family of Tutankhamun Project.’ Hawass, Yehie Z. Gad and
in 2003 has strong evidence for being Nefertiti. The male mummy found in 1907 and believed by many at the time and for a hundred years after to be Smenkhkara and by only a few to be Akhenaten, is indeed Akhenaten. 13 Amarna has been disproved to be a utopia, even for the royal family.

Akhenaten has often been acclaimed not only as the founder of monotheism and the first man to worship a benevolent God, but as the first individual in history: he also emerges as one of the most controversial. Despite massive amounts being written about both him and Nefertiti, despite being amongst the few figures from Ancient Egypt to achieve lasting fame, few writers can give a shared overall opinion. They do not even agree on how to spell his name, giving at least four choices! Some writers may agree on what some points mean, but even there wide disagreement seems more common. This pharaoh has more comments and speculation made about him than any other pharaoh; he inspires loathing and admiration. 14 Novelists and historians, essayists, cultists, cranks, theologians, archaeologists, documentary makers and Hollywood film makers all give very different interpretations to his life, his beliefs, his personality, his motivations, what he intended to do and what he did. Fascination with Akhenaten has long ago reached the stage where that fascination itself has become the subject of a book, Dominic Montserrat’s interesting Akhenaten: History Fantasy and Ancient Egypt. (2003).

Montserrat asks again that still very good question from 1926: why are people fascinated by an Egyptian pharaoh who died over three thousand years ago? First he remains an enigma and they always fascinate. Another point is that his intensely dramatic story attracts creators of fiction, historians and their readers. They are so many turbid holes in our historic knowledge: they virtually begs writers of both fact and fiction to create possible answers and scenarios. With their tantalising hints and fragmentary, ambiguous evidence they also supply a wide range of possibilities over which imaginations can roam widely, creating myriad narrative possibilities. Akhenaten gets a passing mention in fiction as early as 1906 in Rider Haggard’s novel The Way of the Spirit. Since then over a hundred novels about Akhenaten and /or Nefertiti have gone into print: try finding two that essentially match in their depicted characters.

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13 Jama; Brando Quillici, King Tut’s Final Secrets. DVD. National Geographic, 2005.

The final reason concerns what may well be his great importance on influencing human history. His attempt to establish monotheism, a seemingly benevolent monotheism for all humanity, may have been an isolated attempt that was several hundred years ahead of its time and died out unremembered and unknown – or it may have heavily influenced the development of Mosaic aspects within Judaism, which of course went on to influence Christianity and then Islam. Did the religion of the Aten stop without further contact? Or was there a now untraceable and developing influential path from Judaism into Atenism, or the reverse, from Atenism and Egyptian traditions into Judaism? The answer remains unknown; thin evidence exists for this connection, but that evidence offers no conclusive proof, only grounds for speculation. Even so, most of the world remains dominated by laws and religions which now express concepts first expressed in Akhenaten’s Hymn to the Aten, inscribed on the wall of the Amarna tomb of Ay, a onetime leading Atenist.

If the links are ever found this would make Akhenaten one of the most influential men who ever lived. It would also change our perceptions of the origins of the world’s dominant religions. Much of this theological development may have come from Nefertiti. While some consensus on Nefertiti exists, the listing below gives some idea of how numerous, divergent and oppositional views of Akhenaten are. This is of course simplified as many writers are cautious in expressing opinions. Others allow for mixtures of the views listed below.

Akhenaten was a visionary and a religious genius aiming to unite all the peoples of his empire in a rule of peace. He was an internationalist and a pacifist.

Akhenaten was a short sighted, dictator who probably could not see that his empire was disintegrating. If he could see he did not care.

Akhenaten was a great man, hundreds of years ahead of his time, brought down by small minded people.

Akhenaten was a naïve fool and perhaps a lunatic, who devastated Egypt and had to be stopped.

Akhenaten was a liberator, aiming to establish a humane religion based in one benevolent God who would overcome the darkness and fear that came from superstition.

Akhenaten was a tyrant and a megalomaniac, enforcing a cruel religion with a god he created as a reflection of himself.
Akhenaten was a uxorious husband and a devoted family man to his children.

Akhenaten was a bisexual, a womaniser and an incestuous paedophile who exiled Nefertiti.

Akhenaten was a true and original revolutionary, rapidly changing Egyptian religion, society and culture.

Akhenaten was only developing ideas and trends that had emerged in his father’s reign.

Akhenaten was the first monotheist.

Akhenaten was not a monotheist. He allowed other religions and never denied the existence of other gods.

Fiction writers give us many such views and all of these views have some basis in evidence. In Mika Waltari’s *Sinuhe the Egyptian* (1949) Akhenaten talks like a 1930s peace pledge parson, making naïve sentiments about peace, the brotherhood of man and the love of God. While he dreams of such a world his undefended kingdom experiences invasion and near civil war rips Egypt apart. The same idea emerges in the 1954 film version of that book, *The Egyptian*. Both these works show a mentality influenced by the 1930s failure of those European leaders who wanting peace, and in striving for that, failed to contain Hitler. These 1950s depictions also reflect the naivety of those in the west who hoped for peace during the Cold War. Coming from the opposite direction, seeing humanist calls for peace and equality as desirable, something of this mentality seems evident in historian F. Gladstone Bratton’s admiring 1961 work *The Heretic Pharaoh*. Here he emphasises Akhenaten’s humanity and genius as he seems to be a figure striving for peace and international goodwill. In Allen Drury’s *A God Against the Gods* (1976) and the sequel *Return to Thebes* (1977) this novelist creates an epic, striving to plausibly explain the conflicting evidence. Here Akhenaten emerges as a well-intentioned religious genius, but a disastrously inept politician unable to make judgements on realities. He is naïve and his homosexual relationship with Smenkhkare alienates Nefertiti, the mainstay of his religion. Something of the mid 1970s disillusionment with the idealism of the Vietnam War era comes through in Drury’s two books. By 1984 when Pauline Gedge’s *The Twelfth Transforming* was published, the world was very disillusioned with alternative religions, utopias, and radical messiahs of assorted kinds. This attitude comes through in her portrayal of Akhenaten, a simpering, egocentric, and a hideously deformed megalomaniac with a taste for incest. He has to be stopped before his wild schemes to transform Egypt
destroys that civilisation. By the time this novel was written Akhenaten had been the subject of over a hundred novels. Clearly writers perceive Akhenaten not only through interpreting primary source evidence, but through the developments of their own eras and the influence of the dominant or striking personalities of their times.

What is the nature of the primary source evidence? Before presenting what does exist, the essential problem with evidence about Akhenaten and Nefertiti should be clarified. About seventeen years after Akhenaten’s death, after the passing of the last Pharaohs who had once been Atenist, a massive, and ferocious eradication of anything connected with Akhenaten and the Atenist heresy began. Portraits were defaced, often with chisels, even in Amarna’s abandoned tombs, remote from other centres, the faces of Nefertiti and Akhenaten were systematically defaced with a ferocious hatred still obvious thousands of years later. Statues were smashed and Atenist temples were demolished and used for rebuilding. His name was scratched out of inscriptions, king lists and cartouches. For Egyptians removing names and pictures from monuments and tombs was extremely vicious as it removed them from the afterlife. The defaced bust pictured in Plates 9, 27 and 50 are unambiguous examples. The royal couple became Ancient Egypt’s equivalent to a modern communist non-person. Mentioning his name was avoided, but when

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19 Fletcher, p. 18.
it had to be used he was labelled “the criminal of Aket-aten.”

20 As American academic Mark Damen points out, ironically these attempts to eradicate Akhenaten from history actually preserved much of the evidence we have. Instead of many of his inscriptions at Karnak being left in place, but with his cartouche scratched out, the building blocks for his temple at Karnak were reversed or placed upside down. This not only concealed images and inscriptions of Akhenaten and Nefertiti; this was also rebuilding by later pharaohs. 21 In the period between the world wars French and German teams found these blocks in assorted locales and started putting them together, but in 1939 the war meant the reassembling stopped until 1966 when an American businessman financed further assembling. 22 The new team used photography to put about forty-five thousand talats together. Archaeologists now have much of an Atenist temple with inscriptions preserved, despite some losses due to black market sales, mainly to Americans. 23 After visiting the site Egyptologist Joann Fletcher has aptly described the other, larger problem, reassembling the temple resembles doing a gigantic jigsaw. 24 Ironically because Aketaten and much of Amarna were built and destroyed equally quickly they were not built upon by later generations, so the ground work remains. 25 The rushed eradication attempts also left much not found by vandals and therefore preserved.

Surviving primary source evidence divides into four interrelated sections.

First there is the architecture: The prominent examples are the remnants of a whole city at Tel el Amarna and the temples of Karnak. In one sense Karnak provides too much information. Hawass estimates it was the largest temple on earth. 26 Although Amenophis III authorised and completed much and

20 Aldred, p. 188.
22 Fletcher, pp.70-71.
23 Ibid.,
24 Ibid., p. 19.
25 Ibid.,
started much of the other work, Akhenaten and Nefertiti had much to do with making it amongst the great architectural wonders. They were great builders, much given to leaving revealing inscriptions on their architectural works, temples, palaces and boundary stelae. Although much of what they created has been destroyed or shattered, much has also survived. Since archaeologists, archivists and writers have used computers much of the architectural evidence has been restored in some form, particularly in computer projections, aerial surveys and models. Computers now mean speed. Computerised work at Karnak means putting the talats together is now possible, without costly photographs or the expense of using hundreds of workers over decades. For an idea of how time and money in archaeology can be devoured by a combination slow manual labor, intensive record keeping and communications, compare Mary Chubb’s account of what it was like to be an archaeologist and secretary at Amarna in 1930 with now.

Closely related to the architecture is the archaeology, especially the work going on in Karnak and Amarna. Dates and named kingship which are simultaneously inscribed on excavated jars are vital for chronology. These jars and other finds there and at Karnak are changing knowledge of the Atenist era. The term Atenist era works more accurately than the frequently used ‘Amarna period’ because the worship of the Aten began in Thebes as the established religion, about five years before Amarna’s establishment. References to the ‘Akhenaten era’ also mislead as the cult stayed the dominant state religion for a few years after Akhenaten’s death.

Amarna’s royal archives a vitally important primary source. The first and largest collection of these clay tablets were discovered in 1887 by a peasant, but how large the original collection was before damage, vandalism and surreptitious sales remains uncertain. What is probably missing are Akhenaten’s last years and those of his successors. Plundering is one problem, another might be that due to conflicts and plague in Amarna later communications might not have been created. Archaeologists made other smaller finds in subsequent decades, so around 350 to 380 tablets survive and despite massive problems with damage, omissions, translation and chronological order, they reveal much about the kingdom in the Atenist era.

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27 Aldred, p. 144-145; Baikie, pp. 2-3.
particularly concerning foreign relations. They date from Year 30 of Akhenaten’s father’s reign into Year 3 of Tutankhamen’s rule.

What might be an even bigger problem with the evidence than deliberate political obliteration is indicated by the fate of the Amarna archives; modern vandalism. This problem becomes even worse when combined with commercial sales. A vandalised object can be at least to some extent reconstructed, even the act of vandalism tells us something. A sold object rarely exists in an examinable form for experts. Usually they have vanished into vaults and the homes of the wealthy and so can tell us nothing; usually it cannot even tell investigators that it once existed. This makes for holes in history and narrative, sometimes very big, very puzzling ones.

Many accounts tell us of the Amarna archive find as if this was the beginning of the western world’s discovery of Akhenaten and the plundering of this site. These are fallacies. As early as 1714 a French priest visited the site and noted the then indecipherable inscriptions. Over the next hundred and thirty years a group of Napoleon’s invading soldiers, English antiquarians and German investigators also visited the site. Several noted the strangeness of the statues which were different from anything else found to that time in Egypt. The ancient ruins were accredited to disc worshippers. Up to the 1880s the foreign visitors seem to have done no harm, but then in 1881 after a wealthy American bought a recently found stone plaque (Plate 26) local villagers looking for loot found Akhenaten’s tomb and plundered it, selling parts of a royal mummy found there. In 1882 they sold a motley collection of jewellery from Akhenaten’s tomb, including a gold knuckleduster with Nefertiti’s name on it to an Irish clergyman and when he returned in 1893 to buy more, much had gone, including a gold winding sheet inscribed with Queen Tye’s name.

By the 1920s the astoundingly beautiful riverside pavement that Flinders Petrie had so painstakingly restored in the 1890s was drawing in large groups of tourists who regularly walked through fields to see it, crushing crops. One night

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29 Reeves, p. 63.

30 Fletcher, p. 39-47.

31 Ibid., p. 47.

32 Ibid., pp. 47-49
a vexed farmer smashed up most of the site to save his fields. A few pieces ended up at the Cairo Museum.

Mummies were often a favourite target for the vandals and robbers. If the mummy that was in Akhenaten’s tomb had been saved we would know much more. For years the missing mummy was mistakenly assumed to be Akhenaten, leading many an expert astray into incorrect theories. It was probably their oldest daughter Meritaten as the tomb had depictions of her. Akhenaten swore that his wife daughter and himself would all be buried in that tomb it cannot be discounted that it was Nefertiti or Smenkhkara and so its loss might be vitally important. While what remains of royal mummies and their tombs have always been used by historians and archaeologists for information about this time, fortunately the twenty-first century use of DNA has revealed much more, filling in many gaps caused by sellers and vandals. DNA has proving and disproving earlier theories and hypotheses. Some of the study of mummies has moved away from royalty to examine the ordinary workers and this has also revealed much about the Atenist religion and life at Amarna. While DNA reveals easily interpreted reliable information. Architecture, seemingly the most reliable source, has inbuilt conundrums with interpretation.

The massive Atenist era architecture initially seems to indicate that there was once a massive, flourishing, popular and wealthy Atenist cult, but this is not so. To compare, in 1989 after six years of preparation Felix Houphet Boigny, the president of the Ivory Coast, opened the world’s largest church in Yamoussoukro, ‘The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace.’ Much of this was built of expensive Italian marble, with 7,000 square metres of imported French glass. Only one of the many depicted faces was of a black person, Boigny himself. Included in the building program was a papal villa. From this evidence archaeologists of the far distant future who did not have evidence available to us would deduce that Ivory Coast was a predominantly wealthy, predominantly white Catholic nation, very important in the Catholic world, that the Pope was a frequent visitor, and that the basilica was a centre of religious power.

All of these logical and obvious deductions are not only wrong but they are the opposite of reality. Only 20% to 30% of Ivory Coast’s population are Christians, let alone Catholics. Whites are a tiny minority of the population

33 Chubb, pp. 59-60
34 Fletcher, p.140
36 Ibid,
and the Ivory Coast was a poor nation when the basilica was built. Yamoussoukro is an unimportant town, not a centre of power. Even the local Catholics worship at the nearby cathedral, which is the bishopric, not the basilica. Felix Houphet Boigny chose the town for the site because it was his birthplace and in over a quarter of a century only one pope stayed at the villa, and that was once and for a day.

Plate 1. The world’s biggest Church. Our Lady of Peace. If an archaeologist of the distant future found this basilica would they even consider that the Ivory Coast was a very poor nation with only a small minority of Catholics in its population? The same problems are evident in Egypt’s Atenist architecture. Courtesy: Wikipedia

Interpreting a ruler’s personality through architecture can be even more misleading. Going by three website guides General Franco’s monument and eventual tomb ‘The Valley of the Fallen’ purportedly exists as his magnanimous gesture of reconciliation to commemorate the dead on both sides in Spain’s 1930s Civil War. The burial of around forty thousand soldiers

37 Ibid,
38 Ibid,
39 ‘The Valley of the Fallen’ www.feelmadrid.com/val; ‘What is Vale de Los Caidos?spanishsabores.com>daytrips; ‘El Valle delos Caidos’
from both sides supports this view, but two of the websites mention that Republicans worked in enslavement and some died to build the monument, which really exists as a memorial to Franco and the founder of Spanish Fascism. Primo De Valera. Far from being magnanimous, Franco ruled over a viciously repressive regime and was summarily executing Republican survivors while the memorial for reconciliation was being built. Although the memorial contains the world’s largest cross, an ornate basilica and decorations from the gospels, Franco’s murderous road to power, support for the Nazis and repression within Spain are the opposite to what Jesus Christ preached.


Architecture and art can indeed reveal much about society, but they can also conceal, and with revelation and concealment both are not always as intended. At times architecture can even reflect the concerns of one man: the Valley of the Fallen and Egypt’s pyramids (being also tombs for dictators) provide obvious examples. Akhenaten’s statues at Karnak provides another.

https://blufton.edu/~sullivanc/spain/madrid/fallen/fallen.html. All three websites do not credit an author or give a posting date.
Amarna is less obvious. Atenist architecture and arts do reveal, reflect, puzzle and mislead.

These modern examples show how wrong archaeologists and historians can be on any plausibility deduced from architecture: Atenist architecture provides similar examples. This architectural evidence desperately needs and has supporting material to interpret correctly. One interpretative mistake that has not been recently made with Atenist architecture is to assume that these many grandiose works reflect popular appeal amongst Egypt’s population. One important point that scholars of the Atenist period agree on is that the new religion had little popular support outside the court.

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The Influence of Amenophis III and his Era

Egypt’s Atenist period developed late in the eighteenth dynasty, fourteen hundred years before Christ. As an important belief system in Egyptian society this period emerged even before Akhenaten ascended the throne and lasted until the early years of Tutankhamen’s rule, when he or what is more likely, his courtiers, re-established Egypt’s traditional religion. ⁴⁰ Although several writers disagree on the exact length of the Atenist era, on the succession order and identities of Atenist rulers and their reigning dates, a timespan of around twenty years or a little more in the middle third of the fourteenth century B.C. is probably accurate, if definitely imprecise. ⁴¹

Very little is revealed about the lives of Akhenaten and Nefertiti before they came to power. Akhenaten was initially called Amenophis and was not expected to rule as he had an older brother Thutmosis, but the crown prince died years before their father. Due to the finding of the tomb of Thutmosis’s favourite cat we know more about the crown prince’s favoured pet than about his brother. ⁴² On his ascension and then for the first five years he was still titled Amenophis IV. Nefertiti’s early years attract speculation, but very little firm knowledge. She had a sister and may have been a daughter of the Master of Horse, then vizier and eventual pharaoh Ay, a leading Atenist while the Atenist Pharaohs lived. Other possibilities are that she may have been a sister or cousin to Akhenaten or a foreign princess in an arranged marriage; nobody knows. Atenist art does show such a strong facial resemblance that they could easily be siblings, even twins.


The Aten cult did not start as a monotheistic religion, nor was it original as it is often claimed. The Aten cult was ancient even three thousand three hundred years ago. It was one of Ancient Egypt’s first religious manifestations with Ra as a supreme deity when the Amen cult was a minor factor in Egyptian religion. The cult of Osiris which contained the idea of rebirth after death and regeneration became popular and sun worship lost its prominence and some of its appeal.

It was restarted with one barely noticed sun god cult. This was the Aten, one amongst Egypt’s plethora of gods. Akhenaten’s great-grandfather Amenophis II began this move and his grandfather Thutmose IV continued that development. What these two pharaohs did was on a comparatively small scale compared to what Amenophis III did – but then anything would look small scale when compared to the gargantuan building and grandiose edicts of Amenophis III. He encouraged and financed this sun worshiper’s nebulous cult and during his rule it grew in power, wealth and prestige - to some extent. This growth was not on the scale Akhenaten would give it and solar worship initially did not have the intolerance for other cults or the monotheistic leanings which he developed. Modern speculation is that Amenophis III encouraged the Aten cult as a balance to the increasingly powerful Amen cult, whose leaders were having grandiose and ubiquitous monumental temples built and by doing so were growing increasingly rich and playing a dominant role in society. Amenophis III may have also expanded the idea of the pharaoh as divinity for the same reason. His massive building program, much of it portrayals of himself possessing godlike power, reinforced that powerfully expressed inchoate idea. His successor would have the cleverness and the audacity to link himself to a divinity upheld by priests, temples ancestry and finance.

Other tendencies originating in the thirty-eight yearlong rule of Amenophis III which would permeate his son’s reign were the developments of art and architecture. Egyptian architecture concerned with royalty or religion was usually grandiose and its art depicting the gods and pharaohs was in a stilted, stylized style that showed little change through many dynasties. However a brief change developed before Akhenaten’s rule, then flowered during his years in power. The Atenist Period’s art and architecture does not

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43 Baikie, pp.303-305.


45 Silverman, p. 13.
reflect the whole of Egyptian society during the years of Atenism’s existence: it reflects the focus of a small elite. It also reflects a massive fissure in Egyptian society between its leader and its traditional religion.  

In what way the Atenist religion influenced and inspired Judaism and perhaps Christianity has become a vexed question. As early as 1903 the husband and wife team of Norman and Nina de Garis Davis noticed the similarities with Christianity while working on recording details of Amarna rock tombs. Akhenaten the simultaneously divine and human son on earth worshiped his father, since death resident in the heavens.  

They went further, describing the sun as the third part of an Atenist trinity with the father and son. Despite ubiquitous depictions and prayers to the sun in Akhenaten’s religion, the sun was only a symbolic representation of the god, not an equal force. In Christianity the Holy Spirit is part of the trinity, without a symbol. Akhenaten insisting he was the only way to the father and the paradise that awaited also bears strong similarities to the statements of Jesus.

The tantalising nature of the scant evidence is the major problem with making these connections between Egypt and Judaism. Even outside Atenism the Egyptian influence has frequently been put forward as the inspiration for the Ten Commandments. This relies on the forty-two negatives which Egyptians had to testify before Maat and the jury of Gods and Goddesses in the afterlife.

In both the Jewish and Egyptian instructions an overall idea of Godly reward for a good life and punishment for a bad one in the afterlife exists. Half of the Ten Commandments are also negatives against killing, stealing, adultery, bearing false witness and coveting. Although the wording is different and the Egyptians expand the essential idea into other negatives with some differentiations, the essential ideas are the same. However the similarities end there and the differences in the remaining commandments are wider than the similarities. The remaining commandments contain positives which are unlike the forty-two negatives. While not taking the Lord’s name in vain and the

46 Bratton, p. 80; Budge, ‘Development of The Cult of Aten Under Amenheep VI.’ pp. 75-100.


48 Ibid.

49 Both the forty-two negatives and the Ten Commandments are in the appendices.
honouring the father and mother could be fitted into the Egyptian’s ethics and commandment framework by not blaspheming or dishonouring the parents, the others cannot. Keeping the Sabbath because God created the world in six days fits with the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, not at all with Egyptian mythology. The first commandment, not to worship any other God but the one God and the second, not to make craven images, cannot possibly be matched with the forty-two negatives. Ancient Egypt had a plethora of Gods and pharaohs to worship; images of both were ubiquitous. The first two commandments read almost as a declaration of war against traditional Egyptian beliefs. Were they Atenist? While Atenism went on an iconoclastic rampage against images of other Gods, some images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, such as the colossi at Karnak and her pictures there, were clearly meant for worship. The Aten represented there was also frequently clearly being venerated by depicted figures.

The Ten Commandments were not copied from the Egyptians and were probably not inspired by them. Almost every society, no matter how small or simple in its structure, has some basic rules. Like the Ten Commandments and the forty-two negatives, they usually cover adultery, theft, blasphemy, unlawful killing, religious requirements, oath breaking and stealing. One could go to accounts of pagan Melanesia, the Aleutians, Kalimantan, Siberia and Buddhist Tibet and find similar rules for the residents there. These obviously cannot be derived from ancient Egypt.

One similarity between Atenist thought and Judaism was noticed by the 1920s and cannot be easily explained away. This is the similarities between Psalm 104 and The Great Hymn to the Aten. These go beyond general ideas to structure and terms. It is almost absurdly impossible that a Jewish psalmist somehow got into Ay’s sealed tomb in the middle of nowhere to copy out a poem. Akhenaten sending papyrus copies to his missionary outposts, perhaps the one found in Syria, where either in a stone inscription or a papyrus roll it was picked up hundreds of year later, remains the most likely explanation.

Was Moses inspired by Akhenaten or was it the reverse? To answer this it must be proven when Moses lived and that he did write the first five books of the Bible, which include the Hebrew sojourn in Egypt the exodus from there and the subsequent establishment of the Hebrew kingdoms in what had once been part of the Egyptian empire before Akhenaten lost it to foreign powers. Some scholars reject this and state that Moses and the whole history of the Jews

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50 Both texts are in the appendices.
before their conquest and removal to Babylon in the seventh century BC was a concoction for nationalistic propaganda purposes. While evidence for dating the lifetime of Moses and the exodus is literally fragmentary and thin, some does exist apart from the undated biblical stories and goes against this concoction theory. An inscription of Ramses II does refer to Semites working on his name city in the Nile’s delta.  

This matches the account in the Book of Exodus where it is stated that the Hebrews worked as slaves for pharaoh in his city of Tanis. Ramses II began his sixty-seven year long reign around eighty years after the Amarna period ended. This would place Moses and the Exodus occurring around a hundred years or more after any attempts to spread Atenism and several decades after a fierce and apparently pervasive obliteration. There are also references in the New Kingdom records to the Habiru, a troublesome people in Canaan and Egypt’s eastern provinces (modern Israel, Jordan and Sinai). Proof that these Habiru were the Hebrews cannot rest on alliteration and assonance - or even on locale. The first clear mention of Israel outside the Bible is in a stela from the decade long rule of Ramses II’s successor Merneptah, who ruled from 1213 to 1203 BC. This means that early evidence for the Exodus story and Hebrew monotheism starts nearly eleven hundred years before the first full Mosaic accounts appeared in Biblical manuscripts. Two other inscriptions give credence to the biblical accounts of the Jews before the Babylonian exile. The first was found during excavations in the city of Dan in Israel in 1993. Apparently part of a commemorative inscription raised soon after the events it describes, the victor boasts of devastating the land and of the killing of Ahaziah and the defeat of his father King Jehoram, son and heir of King Solomon and of “The House of David.” These four names are the first people to be found outside biblical records. The way the boasting matches what the Book of Kings recounts and go a long way to disproving that much of the Old Testament was a Babylonian concoction. The existence of a later king of Israel, Omri who ruled around three hundred years before the Babylonian conquest is verified by clear references in a stela inscription created by his

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51 Baikie, pp. 443-444.


53 Ibid., p. 8.

54 Ibid., pp. 154-155. The original stone fragment and its translation are both reproduced.
Moabite enemies. Omri is mentioned in the Old Testament in ways similar to what the stela describes. Further strong evidence against this Babylonian concoction theory came in 1982 with the deciphering of a Hebrew scroll blessing that was almost a perfect match with a blessing from The Book of Numbers, which is credited to Moses. This scroll is dated to around 600 BC, not long before the Babylonian exile.

Clearly all this differing evidence shows that Moses, the Exodus and the Jewish kingdoms being fictions created several hundred years after Akhenaten lived cannot be sustained. Yet the Babylonian exile lead to a Jewish diaspora that may have created links between the two forms of monotheism. Jewish refugees set up a colony in Egypt’s border with Nubia at Elephantine Island where a cultural blending with the Egyptians took place perhaps a religious one, as both a Jewish temple and Egyptian ones existed there together. Alexandria would also become a haven for Jews. With one of the world’s great libraries located there, were Atenist texts found by Jews and their ideas absorbed? Or could it have been the other way? Did Akhenaten and/or Nefertiti absorb monotheistic ideas from the Jews who were in Egypt before Moses? The story of the unnamed Pharaoh who made Joseph the most powerful man in Egypt does indicate strong links and much influence long before Atenism emerged.

The strongest evidence for a Jewish sojourn in Egypt must be around Tanis, but until Tanis has been fully excavated, links between Atenism and Judaism are not proven.

While clearly paucity of evidence creates one puzzle the opposed differences in what the two versions of the one God reveals create more. From the evidence we have the God of the Aten does not reward belief or punish evil-doing: Yahweh, God of the Hebrews, does. The God of the Aten appears nebulous, revealing few expectations or rules. These were apparently left to Akhenaten and Nefertiti to detail. Yahweh gives precise instructions on what he expects from both his leaders and his people. These expectations go down to diet, what clothing priests wear and when his people work and rest. The Aten was a God for everyone under his sun rays; Yahweh was the God of his chosen people, the Hebrews. Even this summary may mislead with a comparison suggesting Atenist tolerance and benevolence in contrast to Hebrew rigidity and

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55 Ibid., pp. 178-179. The original stella and its translation are both reproduced.

56 Ibid., pp. 200-201. The original scroll blessing and its translation are both reproduced.

57 Ibid., pp. 188-189.
strictness. Akhenaten and Nefertiti were the harsh side of Atenism, living Gods who repressed other beliefs. Yahweh was strict but merciful, protective and benevolent to those who followed his ways. Clearly the two forms of monotheism were at opposites on many points.

Even so, these two similar and original monotheist belief systems being not very far apart geographically or in time came indicates a link. If no synchronicity exists, what are the odds of two monotheist religions emerging so closely on a globe dominated by polytheism until that time?

What is clearer is that Atenist architecture does clearly reflect is Egypt’s enormous wealth and architectural skill: Akhenaten and Nefertiti launched massive building programs at Thebes, Karnak and Amarna. 58 What frequently fails to be reflected so obviously, but remains to some extent concealed through Atenist architecture and the art and inscriptions it contains, is the more alienating, hypocritical and tyrannical underside of the Atenist cult. Akhenaten’s cult, art and architecture owed its beginning to long before his father’s successful reign; it was the product of successes by earlier eighteenth dynasty rulers.

The Hyksos takeover of Egypt north of Thebes lasted around 108 years, ending the ruling dynasty and what Egyptologists label the Middle Kingdom, although Thebes and points south survived as a remnant by paying the Hyksos tribute. 59 Around 1580 BC the hated Hyksos were expelled after a war and the victorious Pharaoh Aahmes succeeded to the throne, even going on to drive the Hyksos out of their refuges in southern Palestine and adding new conquests as far north as Syria. 60 For the next two hundred years Aahmes’s successors to the throne were at the least, able and a force for some territorial or financial expansion. Amongst them was Thutmose II, who conquered Palestine, Phoenicia and Syria and subdued Nubia. Before him Pharaohs had won victories in these lands, but he subdued them, adding them to Egypt’s expanding, but generally stable empire

After tumultuous decades under the Hyksos domination without unity, central royal rule and then weak pharaohs, the first XVIII dynasty Pharaohs


59 Gardiner, Manetho and Joseph are quoted. pp. 151-157.

60 Baikie, pp. 14-20.
would re-establish the traditional system and a sense of order. They would also turn Thutmose’s conquests into a virtual empire which stretched along the Nile from Libya in the west, to Nubia in the south and to the Nile’s delta, through Sinai, and then through Palestine and Syria.  

Beyond these were allies and trading partners going as far away as Minoan Crete, Mycenae, Cyprus and the upper Euphrates.  

This expansion had the flow on effect of increased prosperity: therefore trade increased dramatically.  

With gold flowing northwards from conquered Nubia’s mines, Egypt had never been so rich.  

Starting with Thutmose II this abundant wealth led to an abundant and grandiose series of building programmes.  

Thutmose IV, grandfather of Akhenaten, continued this pattern in his decade long rule and began the steady, then seemingly unimportant expansion of the Aten cult. His son and successor, Amenophis III aged around twelve, continued and expanded these policies.  

Many subject peoples in the empire and some outside it came to Egypt for job opportunities, or enrichment, bringing with them new skills, ideas and materials.  

This influx of talent contributed to a freeing up of Egyptian art: Amenophis III, not Akhenaten, was the first pharaoh to be shown not always as a superman, but realistically, cheerful and self-confident and then in his last years as a vulnerable, old individual.  

This combination of new talent and materials, peace, wealth and the frequent and grandiose building schemes of Amenophis III and his patronage system created a perfect mix of conditions for a new art. Royalty financed and encouraged the self-confidence and experimentation of painters, architects, sculptors, and craftsmen.  

This situation, rather than Akhenaten’s personal

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61 Redford, p. 19 p. 23; Aldred, pp. 47-51.  
63 Aldred, p. 51; Gardiner p. 205; Booth, p. 22.  
64 Tyldesley, pp. 16-18 p. 58; Baikie, pp. 55-56.  
65 Baikie, p. 88.  
66 Aldred, pp. 50-51; Redford, pp. 28-29.  
67 Tyldesley, pp. 95-96; Aldred, p. 89; Fletcher’s, Egypt’s Sun King Amenhotep III has abundant photographic evidence of this pharaoh as a happy individual.  
68 Aldred, p. 51.
tastes, caused a delightful artistic upheaval. Akhenaten seems to have enthusiastically encouraged the new development and would later add to it to the extent that one of his man artistic creators, Bek, inscribed that he was an apprentice who was taught his art by Akhenaten. 69 As Bek’s comment suggests, the future Pharaoh may have played a great part in encouraging these developments under his father’s rule. Many a prince has shown a strong interest in cultural activities while waiting to succeed. As pharaoh he would show a strong and consistent enthusiasm for art, particularly at Karnak and Amarna. This interest was unlikely to be a sudden development. Under his rule the artistic changes which began in his father’s reign flowered. Instead of figures as stiff as cardboard cut outs, suppleness was depicted and movement and emotions in depictions emerged and life in all its sensual beauty, rather than war scenes, self-aggrandisement and powerful gods, emerged as themes. 70

Apart from art and architecture Amenophis III achieved much in his thirty-eight, perhaps thirty-nine year reign. For thirty of these years Egypt enjoyed a stable peace, except for when he personally waged a successful campaign against Nubian rebels. 71 Although he encouraged the Aten cult through much of his building program, his gargantuan building of traditional temples and polytheistic themed architecture at Luxor, Karnak, Elephantine Island, Thebes and his own tomb, demonstrate that he was no monotheist. 72 Plate 5 reinforces that message. He even portrayed himself as Osiris and built temples to divinities who had few temples, Maat and Mantu, Amen’s son. 73 Even his development of the Aten cult was not a revolution, at least not an intended one, but the revival of a traditional and old cult which had faded. 74 Obviously this man did not want a confrontation with the religious status quo.

Even so, whatever he intended, he was setting up a situation which under his son would develop that confrontation. This would happen because he was

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69 Fletcher gives quotes from the inscription. p. 94; Aldred, p. 63 p. 102. Aldred is quoting from an inscription Bek left at the royal quarries.

70 Vanenberg, pp. 114-118 text and one illustration. Other architectural illustrations are on pages 85 86 89 111 117 127 128 130; Aldred, p. 63 text. Plates 1 to 44 and plates I to XVII n.p.; Van Meiroop, p. 381; Gardiner, pp. 211-212.

71 Baikie, p. 82.

72 Ibid.

73 Wilkinson, p. 264.

74 Baikie, pp. 303 pp. 313-314.
doing something new in the Pharaonic world beyond expanding the Aten cult and financing and organising the largest building program Egypt had ever known. While earlier pharaohs appeared in inscriptions and art as associating with the gods, having their attributes or blessings or being semi-divine, Amenonophis III went further. He became a living god, blending himself into a trinity of “the king, the god and the sun.” As Toby Wilkinson points out when Akhenaten prayed to his god as “the Aten his father” he may not have meant this only in the figurative manner it seems, but also literally.

During Amenophis III’s reign the flourishing of Egyptian arts characterised with the an opulent new vividness was not only applied to grandiose statues and temples, it filtered down to everyday objects and household effects – amongst the well off. Aldred notes that a taste for luxury was widespread among the wealthier Egyptians who developed a zest for luxury doubtlessly stimulated by Asia’s tastes. Like so many cultural revolutions which the modern world associates with a whole society, this reflected the tastes of only a small proportion of the population in what was a predominantly peasant based empire. This was the new culture for royalty, and some among the nobility, the urban rich, artisans, officers, merchants and the gentry.

For the most of people within the Egyptian empire peace and prosperity would bring stability, but no fundamental change in either culture, religion or social hierarchies.

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75 Ibid., 261.
76 Ibid, pp. 273-274.
77 Aldred, p. 51.
Plate 3. Amenophis III with a god. Wikipedia

Plate 4. Amenophis III. The face here hints at his pleasure loving nature. Wikipedia
Plate 5. From Amarna: Glass and Bronze grapes with a timber stem. Photographer Jon Bodsworth. 2007. Egypt Archive /Wikimedia /Creative Commons.

Plate 6. An Armana find. Made of polychrome, this bottle looks startlingly modern. British Museum/ Public Domain
Plate 7. A broad collar. Wikimedia.

Plate 8. An Amarna talat. The Free Thinking Mind/ Brewminate/Creative Commons.
Plate 9. Nefertiti worshipping the Aten. A talat from the great temple. Note the face has been scratched out. Wikiwand/com

Plate 10. The combination of naturalness and depicting a royal body unflatteringly was rarely seen before or after the Atenist era. Unlike the stilted representations of children in much of Egyptian art, these are recognisable as real humans. Note Akhenaten’s spindly arms, puny chest and paunch. Ankh symbols gives blessings. Wikimedia.
Plate 11. The royal family worshipping the Aten. Wikipedia.
Plate 12. Amarna schoolchildren with papyrus and writing implements. Realistic figures and flowers showing suppleness and movement were something new in Egyptian art. Wikipedia

Plate 13. Although the Egyptians had always used bright colours in their art and pottery, that of Amarna was especially distinctive. Blue made from cobalt was especially beautiful, as this example shows. Commons Wikipedia
Plate 14. The most famous and one of the last and best examples of Atenist art. Tutankhamen being oiled by his queen. This was the backing for his throne, found by Howard Carter in 1922. The rich blue comes from imported Greek cobalt, which was in popular usage in the Amarna years. Note that the Aten blesses them. Image scanned by Pataki Mârta. GNU Free Document. Wikimedia/Creative Commons.
Akhenaten and Nefertiti Rule

To what extent Amenophis III was responsible for the peace, prosperity and stability of Egypt in his last years remains uncertain. Reverend Baikie’s 1926 portrayal of Akhenaten’s father as an indolent, prematurely old man who died at perhaps fifty has been proved accurate by twenty-first century modern science.\(^78\) What Baikie got wrong, (not having the computerised autopsy report written decades later) was that the reasons for this indolence were physical, not personal. Egypt’s God in human form suffered from arthritis, obesity and what must have been extraordinarily painful abscessed teeth.\(^79\) Being the richest man the world had ever known up to that time could not save him from several illnesses almost anyone can have solved today.

Given his condition it is obvious that in these last years Amenophis III was either virtually incapacitated in the palace at Thebes or could not travel far. He is unlikely to have done more than issue edicts, approve plans and officiate at banquets, parades and official and religious events – if he did this much. Other functions and even some of these just mentioned must have been given to the designated heir who obviously would soon be Pharaoh, Akhenaten.

Despite some trouble in Syria and the Levant when Akhenaten and Nefertiti took over, Egypt’s empire had never been so prosperous, powerful and secure. When Akhenaten and Nefertiti first came to the throne at Thebes, then the capitol, it seemed that seventeen hundred years of pharaonic traditions would continue. He had been named Amenophis IV and met standard expectations by doing what new pharaohs usually did first, completing a traditional architectural project his father had started using traditional decorations. He also had a temple built to Amen-Ra in Nubia.\(^80\) This usual pattern of behaviour did not last long. Within a year of their ascension trouble was starting. Thebes was not only the political capital, but Egypt’s religious centre for the powerful cult of Amen.\(^81\) Within easy sight of this city Akhenaten started a grandiose temple to the Aten. How the trouble started remains unclear, but Akhenaten himself claimed that it worsened year by year.\(^82\) This idea is

\(^{78}\) Baikie, p. 81; ‘Amenophis III.’ Wikipedia.

\(^{79}\) ‘Amenophis III.’

\(^{80}\) Wilkinson, p. 280.

\(^{81}\) Ibid., p. 283.

\(^{82}\) Booth, p. 24. Baikie, p. 272 quoting the original inscription. See Source Note 95.
clarified by his listing his reign’s first five years in columns, mentioning after each he has written “It was worse.” 83 Charlotte Booth gives the full quote which concludes with the petulant “worse than those things I heard by any kings who had ever assumed the White Crown.” 84 He wrote that he considered the priests to be “more evil” than the things he has heard and what he has heard is more evil than what was “said by Negroes” to his grandfather, Pharaoh Thutmose VI. 85 This reference apparently refers to a then famous lost insult given generations earlier and also suggests a loss of authority and the beginnings of an unprecedented contempt for the Pharaoh. Other, later evidence supports this speculation. By then some of his actions deserved it, both by ancient Egyptian standards and by modern ones.

Although he does not specify what “it” was, or how the undescribed situation worsened, hostility coming from the priesthood and worshippers of Amen could only be an extremely dangerous threat. For anyone outside the royal family it would have meant at the least ostracism, at the worst death. His insistence on worshipping the Aten alone and the unorthodox role given to Nefertiti, combined with his massive building program for the Aten in Thebes, the most important stronghold of Amenism, were obvious causes of conflict. Another even worse cause would have been the opulent and massive temple of pylons decorated with the Aten. This was built for Nefertiti and possibly by her, as Akhenaten rarely appears anywhere in it. 86 In one rare depiction he sits on a stool before her while she sits enthroned. 87 This was one of many sure signs that she had a role in kingship and was at the least a major power behind the throne, if not the real ruler, at least during their six years in Thebes. In other Karnak depictions she wears the traditional crown, false beard and clothes of a pharaoh and holds the crook and flail, obvious signs of kingship. 88 She bestows gold collars, ankh and a sceptre, and rides in an armed chariot, all of which are further signs of royal dominion and she even personally executes bound

83 Booth, p. 24 reproducing the text of Akhenaten’s stele. Much of this is missing, as Gardiner and Vandenberg both separately admit. Baikie gives a differing translation.

84 Booth, p. 24.

85 Ibid.,


87 Fletcher, p. 73.

88 Ibid.,
captives before her throne, a traditional image in ancient Egypt. The last example is perhaps more a symbolic image of pharaonic power than a depiction of reality, but with Nefertiti we can never be sure.

These are very traditional royal images for ancient Egypt, but what emerges as very untraditional is the treatment of his favoured wife. Nefertiti gets many more mentions than Akhenaten and her name prominently and commonly appears, being inscribed on Atenist sacred offering stones sixty-seven times, while Akhenaten gains only three such mentions. This strongly suggests that her role in the Aten cult and in Egyptian society was vital. Megalomania and narcissism may not have been her husband’s prerogatives. She depicts herself as making offerings to herself, simultaneously as both goddess and a queen. She also appears twice as often as her husband in art of Karnak and appears as a happy warrior-executioner in one beheading scene, surrounded by captive males. What the male dominated priesthood would have thought of these depictions and the extremely assertive woman who featured in them can only be fairly obvious. Males were not the only ones to know the queen’s wrath. One illustration shows a bare-breasted Nefertiti executing a woman who raises her hands in supplication, while the Aten beams down in apparent approval. These were standard images put on royal buildings, tombs and stella. However they may have had the same motivation of creating an image of royal power as more recent examples. How much military reality exists for modern royalty, who have never spent a second in battle, but wear ostentatious, bemedalled uniforms and hold high military rank? Yet with Nefertiti some evidence exists that at the least she was a huntress and perhaps a warrior. A beautiful inlaid bow with her name on it was found in Tutankhamun’s tomb and in Amarna throwing stick was found, also inscribed with her name. Both are hunting weapons which could easily be used in war. Were they practical weapons - or useless gifts of the type frequently given to royalty and stored away somewhere to be forgotten?

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89 Ibid.,
90 Ibid.
92 Redford p. 78.
93 Tyldesley, p. 61 Figure 2.5.
94 Fletcher, p. 300 p. 301.
Another piece of evidence suggests that she had power separate from Akenaten. A gold scarab inscribed with only her name as it was used in the first five years of her husband’s reign was found by archaeologists in the Uluburun shipwreck. Such scarabs were no mere trading good, decoration or personal property, but a sign of official power. So why was it found in a shipwreck off the Turkish coast? Was it an antique even then? Was this a reminder of an era unwise to remember and traded for something more useful?

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What we can be sure of is that writings on Akhenaten before the Karnak talats were put together in the 1970s and 1980s are obsolescent because they underestimate both her role in the years in Thebes and her personality. Clearly she was no meek pacifist, dutifully following her husband’s role in establishing the new religion: she was a key player, perhaps the most important one for much of the Atenist era. That revaluation of her role now clearly reveals another motivation for the hostility between the Amenists and the Atenists.

Even though the priesthood must have hated their chief Akhenaten, Nefertiti’s actions were probably perceived as the pushy behaviour of a parvenu - or at the least of someone overreaching their traditional position. It was also as a calculated insult to the traditional role, prestige and vital religious importance of a pharaoh and could have only exacerbated the already existing tensions. Ancient Egypt was a patriarchal, traditionalist society in which the pharaoh was the high priest and for Nefertiti to behave like this, to virtually usurp the position and then blaspheme, could only lead to an irrevocable schism. The way uxorious Akhenaten accepted her behaviour puzzles. Did he let her do these things or even encourage her to infuriate the priesthood as a deliberate sign of

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contempt for them - because of some contempt, perceived threat or defiance or a desire for revenge that that they had given to him?

Despite these conflicts Akhenaten would complete his grandiose temple to the Aten at Karnak, just as his father built Atenist temples and a grandiose luxurious barge dedicated to the Aten, but unlike his father little if anything would be built for other gods after the first year. Despite the great Atenist temple offering employment to builders in a city full of workers needing employment, Akhenaten had to put empire wide levees on workmen, army officers and court dignitaries to build it. 97 This suggests that Akhenaten and Nefertiti were so unpopular that those who usually worked for the pharaoh would not work for him or that Amen’s priests were working behind the scenes to block the supply of labor to the pharaoh, who was also technically Amen’s chief priest. It could also be that the workforce believed that they would be cursed in the afterlife for blasphemy against the gods. Whatever the cause, this levee clearly indicates trouble in Thebes and a pharaoh who has to battle his underlings to get his own way.

Although the Karnak temple was demolished and its stones reused decades after the Amarna period ended, the Akhenaten Temple Project has been researching the site since 1966. A mosaic section has been constructed on a new wall. Computer regenerated images have restored two thousand images from early in Akhenaten’s reign. 98 Apart from Nefertiti’s role they show other surprising facts. Akhenaten mercilessly vanquishes his enemies, a traditional Pharaoh’s image, whatever the reality. 99 Soldiers are ubiquitous. 100 The radical lover of humanity who supposedly wanted to give God’s benevolence to all reveals a different reality here. He has rows of chamberlains prostrating themselves full length as they grovel in the dust before his entrance in a traditional ceremony known as kissing the earth. 101

Whatever Nefertiti had built, Akhenaten had also instituted a massive building program at Karnak, which featured a row of thirty-five very similar massive statues of himself. 102 These temples contained no similar

97 Baikie, p. 254.
98 Tyldesley, p. 58.
99 Aldred, pp. 172-173.
100 Ibid,
101 Redford, p119 Figure 7.2.
102 Gardiner, p. 208.
accompanying representation of the traditional gods. What may have been worse to Amenists was how he represented himself. In contrast to the idealised images of previous pharaohs Akhenaten would be depicted as so physically grotesque and effeminate that many writers have speculated on the causes and come up with different answers, including that he was castrated, a female transvestite or suffering from assorted diseases which caused his deformities.\textsuperscript{103} For decades before the DNA tests disproved the idea Frolich’s and Marfan’s diseases are the most common medical explanations.

In another statue (Plate 15) he has been given an obviously female torso without clothes or genitals.\textsuperscript{104} Perhaps only sculptors employed by extraordinarily hostile and powerful priests or generals who knew they could get away with it would create such a degrading thing that challenged the King’s authority by making him bizarre, effete and ridiculous. His comments about unprecedented disrespect might apply here. Although he did order distorted images of himself, this seems a parody of that idea. It may well have been a propaganda piece, implying that after building her own temple, that Nefertiti was now the man of the family and Akhenaten the submissive woman. While most writers focus on the odd body, the face also suggests contempt. Goony is the first word that comes to mind: it has the vacuous smile and general look of a fool. This could have been placed in the temple after Akhenaten left, a mocking, visual parody of the row of the nearby statues that Akhenaten did create, apparently to emphasise his power as they tower over anyone walking along the colonnade. If this mockery happened this way and Akhenaten eventually heard of it, this would explain both his “it was worse” comments and the ferocity of his attacks on the Amen cult in his Year 9.

Another possibility is that Akhenaten ordered this depiction, but that immediately raises the question of why? Even allowing for cultural differences, creating this statue could easily be seen as a sign of insanity. Others have given more charitable explanations, apart from physical or mental disease. Tyldesley sees this as combining the male and female elements in a representation of a god to be worshipped, rather than as a realistic portrayal of a man.\textsuperscript{105} Nicholas

\textsuperscript{103} Aldred, quoting the differing opinions of Mariette and Lefèbure pp. 14-15 and expressing his own pp. 100-102; Vandenberg, pp. 118-122. In this section he expresses his own opinions and reproduces excerpts from two doctors, Hans E. Kehrer and Karl Abraham.

\textsuperscript{104} Aldred, Plate 2 n.p. text pp. 100-102 p. 105. This illustration also appears in Mark Damen’s work

\textsuperscript{105} Tyldesley, p. 102.
Reeves believes this to be a portrait of Nefertiti. Reeves may be right. This may be a portrait of Nefertiti using the male pharaoh’s regalia of crook and flail, false beard, crown and cartouche. If so this was usurping, blasphemous and dangerous. Apart from the way the face does not look like her, her early images depict her as lithe, while the figure here is plump with wide hips. The usual modern accreditation is to Akhenaten and the double cartouche supports this.

Akhenaten would usually depict himself as a very tall figure with an elongated physique and face, a prognathous jaw, massive lips and ears and womanly breasts. This grotesque depiction invites medical opinions about deformities, but we now know the invited medical opinions should be from psychiatrists. It may well be that this statue is the ancient equivalent of a clothing dummy, which are not given genitalia because they are meant to be clothed. Was this thing meant to be covered with ceremonial robes? Others speculate that he was uniting the feminine and masculine in one godlike pose, because in a pantheon of Gods both masculine and feminine existed.

After five years it must have been obvious that Thebes would not be converted to Atenism and the conflict was causing stress, defiance and contempt – and probably an erosion of royal authority leading to defeat if he stayed there. Their attack on the state religion during their five or six years resident at Thebes was almost suicidal; the polytheistic religion was the mainstay of the Egyptian empire’s stability at its centre. This in itself was a crucial problem, but others seethed below the impressive surface.

By inheriting an empire, even a prosperous peaceful one, Akhenaten and Nefertiti had inherited a problem inherent to all empires. Except for Nubia Egypt’s territories usually had their own administrative ways and indigenous rulers and just as long as they kept their oaths of allegiance and paid their tribute on time Egyptians did not rule harshly. Despite this policy an empire is an empire and the lesser beings or even junior partners in empires resent their situation as exploited inferiors. Sooner or later that resentment causes conflict of some kind, often when the imperialist power’s firm hand loosens. Akhenaten and Nefertiti loosened the royal grip on empire by policies that could only divide the empire and loosen both royal and religious control. Before their rule the pharaoh was a high priest to a polytheistic priesthood; this dual role meant that royalty and religion were theoretically and in at least public in tandem;

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106 Reeves, p. 165-166.
107 Wilkinson, p. 266.
Atenism set them in opposition. Monotheism and polytheism both trying to hold the one position of the official state religion could not be anything else.

Egypt was dominated not just by a royal family but by a religion with a god or goddess for every conceivable aspect of life; its stability not only rested on this comprehensive coverage, but on the concept of an eternal afterlife, where good was rewarded and evil punished – after a trial. An Egyptian’s life on planet earth was merely a trial and testing period for where they would spend eternity. Why condemn yourself in eternity when the powerful goddess Maat would judge your every thought, word and deed while you were being tried? Maat was the goddess of both truth and justice. All souls after death would face a trial, which is depicted in Plate 16. In this papyrus account shown below from around 1300 BC a married couple dressed in white enter while ten gods seated above watch and judge. The twin goddesses Renenutet and Mashkent and the judged one’s soul hovers above in birdlike form. The god Thoth records the verdict. In the centre are the scales where the deceased one’s heart will be weighed. The feather of truth will be dropped and if the heart proves to be good and balanced heaven awaits. If it is evil the scales will tip and the jackal god Ammut waits to devour the wicked. Ancient Egyptian beliefs differed from most religions in believing that preserving their bodies was necessary for an afterlife and that the goods they were buried with, (or at the least representations of them) would go with them. The destruction of the body meant damnation for eternity and was the most dreaded punishment and fate they knew of. Ancient Egyptians were usually buried with protective amulets and talismans. Even the poorest Egyptians were buried with ceremonies aimed at preservation unless circumstances were highly unusual.

The good are those who can truthfully make the forty-two negative confessions. These cover not doing such things as blasphemy, adultery, various forms of thieving, being angry without cause, thieving, killing, eavesdropping, deceiving, indulging in witchcraft, cursing, slandering, making people weep, grieving excessively, being a man of violence, being involved with another’s

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108 The Egyptian Book of the Dead. Director Peter Hafner. Narrator Michael Benyaer. Producer Morningstar Entertainment. DVD. History Channel. 2006. The narrator and several Egyptologists explain aspects of these Egyptian beliefs, using primary source material on screen; ‘Maat.’ In Wikipedia.

109 The Egyptian Book of the Dead.
Plate 15. Akhenaten (?) at Karnak. Brewmanite/ Creative Commons
Plate 16. Akhenaten at Karnak. He wears two symbols of authority, the false beard and the uraeus cobra and holds two others, the crook and the flail in the traditional way. This does look majestic. Wikipedia.

Plate 18. Maat. Daughter of the sun god Ra. The ostrich feather under her headband is the symbol of truth. The ankh she holds is the symbol of blessed life. Wikimedia
wife and causing disorder. 110 Clearly Egypt’s traditional religion was structured to uphold justice, order and harmony, and would eternally reward the good, with entry to a heaven, the land of reeds, where peace and abundance reigned. 111 That combination of afterlife carrot and stick reward/punishment made for a fairly law abiding society and a popular religion. While the Atenists would attack polytheism, they still adhered to the belief in the afterlife, preserving bodies with objects. One of their most commonly used objects which they adopted from the old religion was the ankh symbol as a sign of benevolent life. A central new idea would be a benevolent, merciful god for all peoples, not just Egyptians.

The Aten cult may have developed under the royal couple as an attempt to unite the empire with its newly conquered peoples in Libya, Nubia, Palestine and Syria. The new religion would also be a way to help peacefully assimilate the influx of foreigners. This could be achieved through sharing a common religion with one benevolent, vitally important, simply understood symbol that everybody knew and acknowledged in a supernatural way, the sun. Despite this, Akhenaten was not the sun worshipper he seems in so many fictions and accounts. In ‘The Hymn to the Aten’ he makes it clear that the sun is merely one of the many incantations that the one God could have chosen. He chose the sun out of benevolence to banish the darkness that causes fear. Just as the ankh sign was a symbol for life’s blessings, the sun was as symbol for God. In Appendix I another lesser known Atenist hymn celebrates the joy of life as God’s gift to all creatures and it is permeated with exuberance. This one God was not just a God for the king’s people, as was the usual belief in the world of the time. However these hymns may only express part of the Atenist belief. How accurate a picture of Christian theology would we get based on reading the most popular hymns?

It is notable in those Atenist hymns that they lack the frequent hostility to other peoples: Aten shines his benevolence on all that live, human and animal and this God has a place for “every man.” He makes their languages differ and gives them distinct skins. These different kingdoms, Khor and Kush, also share his light. 112 Less idealistically and less originally, there were obvious benefits

110 Ibid.,

111 Ibid.,

to Akhenaten from this belief. As his high priest, poet, interpreter and financier/instigator of the Aten’s temples, Akhenaten’s power would have been secure. Alan Gardiner shrewdly commented that while Akhenaten prayed to his Aten, his subjects just prayed to their Pharaoh. 113 He did insist that only he was the pathway to heaven and that he would rule for millions of years. Such talk issued as royal edicts shows not only alienating rampant megalomania, but a fatal flaw within spreading Atenism which is also implied in Gardiner’s comment: it gives belief not to an unseen God as did Islam and Christianity, but to a mortal man – so what happens when he dies? This problem hits every cult which has its leader as either the end in itself or the only bridge to God.

If this unity is what Akhenaten intended then his concept was brilliant, but his application of his idea looks weak. Although later destruction of Atenism leaves little evidence, what evidence we have shows no great conversion attempts occurred. After five strife filled years centred on Thebes and Karnak, Akhenaten began his new capital and within a year retreated there rather than evangelize benevolent monotheism to any great extent throughout his empire. 114 Apart from those Atenist temples in Egypt at Thebes, Memphis and Hermon, he did establish known Atenist temples in the wider empire, in Kawa in Nubia, another in Syria and at a colony or temple the third Nile cataract in modern Ethiopia, named Gem-Aten. 115 Given what Parcak’s recent Egyptian scans reveal, there may easily be others remaining to be found.

How strong were his evangelising efforts? A few foreign temples was a paltry effort given Egypt’s fabulous wealth – or was a manpower shortage of Atenist minded evangelising volunteers the problem? Historians also write of his ignoring threats to northern vassals and allies rather than converting them. 116 Perhaps his evangelistic enthusiasm had waned in Thebes and realising he would have no success, he left to establish a new capital where he could rule, if not an empire, than a capital city.

113 Gardiner, p. 222.

114 Booth, p. 24 pp. 96-99; Gardiner, p. 224; Vandenberg, p. 92. Vandenberg admits, the evidence is scanty.

115 E.A.W. Budge Amenism, Atenism and Egyptian Monotheism. New York, 1923. p. 89; Baikie mentions the Syrian temple as at an unknown locale; it has since been found. Baikie alone mentions the Ethiopian example. p. 263.

116 Aldred, pp. 172-173.

Plate 20. Akhenaten as depicted in Karnak. While this does give some hint of the distortions evident in other works, this is not as extreme and gives a regal impression. Photograph by Jose-Manul Benito Alvarez. 2006. Creative Commons/Wikipedia.
The Amarna Years

Plate 21 (above) and Plate 22 (below) Amarna. Both images Wikipedia
Inscribed boundary stela proclamations by Akhenaten makes it clear that he and started building a new capital starting in Year 5 of his reign and had moved there from Thebes in Year 6. Those same stelas reveal his utopian enthusiasm, that he never intended to be buried elsewhere, that the new capital was centred on himself and the new religion he had developed came out of the Aten Cult. Secondary sources frequently misquote, stating that he meant he would never leave, but what he did proclaim in this text was that he was to be buried there and not even the queen can move his body. While this obviously suggests a fissure between the royal couple it also suggests a curbing of Nefertiti’s power, both by what is written and what is deducted. By leaving Thebes Akhenaten was separating Nefertiti from her temple, a source of her power and his loss of it. Although they would be frequently depicted as equals in Amarna art, nothing from there would give her such grandiose and powerful images again.

He named the new city Akhet-Aten (city of the Aten) which clearly showed that it would be a religious centre. The similarity to his name showed how closely he linked himself, the city and the religion. Nefertiti did not rename herself, but at this time she did give herself a new epithet: Nefer-neferu-Aten. (fair is the goodness of the Aten). More breaks from tradition similar to those which had been made in Thebes were developing. Akhenaten gave two reasons for this. He claimed that God inspired him to build the capitol and told him where to place the boundary stones. His sacred vision was his second reason.

This vision may have been caused by epilepsy as such hallucinatory visions are a symptom. Some medical evidence for this being an inherited trait has emerged in the examination of his son Tutankhamen’s body, who with his hormonal imbalance, showed signs of being an epileptic. Alternatively his father may have considered the sight of the extraordinarily beautiful sunrises and sunsets which modern travellers noted as a supernatural vision. Sunrise across the flat river lands was remarkable. Eyewitness Mary Chubb described how the limestone cliffs of the western boundary would sometimes turn rose, purple and gold. For a sun worshipper this was surely a miraculous sign.

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117 Aldred, pp. 62-63; Gardiner, pp. 212-215; Budge, p. 87.
118 Aldred, p. 130; Redford, p. 79 p. 192.
121 Damen.
122 Chubb, p. 43.
Some think it was an unwisely chosen locale, basing that opinion on it now being mostly devoid of vegetation and being extraordinarily hot, arid and isolated.\(^{123}\) In the ancient world it did have advantages. Although the setting had massive drawbacks, the city’s layout was practical for a river city, with agricultural areas, factories and separated quays for the temple, royalty and common usage.\(^{124}\) Much of the city stretched out along the Nile’s banks, so the river’s proximity would make transport, irrigation and domestic water usage much easier.\(^{125}\) Across the Nile where food growing areas and the few fields on the east bank were preserved for food production. The Nile provided ample water, fish and ducks and easily watched transportation. Nearby were abundant building materials; limestone, clay, sand and alabaster. Being located two hundred miles up from Thebes and the same distance from Memphis meant that neither major city was being favoured. Another advantage was that Heliopolis, the empire’s sun worshiping religious centre, was a short distance upriver. Isolation was an advantage. By being away from the delta Akhenaten had a capitol that could not be easily invaded. The way the Hyksos had rapidly and successfully invaded from the east and by seizing the delta paralysed Egypt, could not happen with this capital established virtually in the centre of Egypt. The western border of Amarna provided protection by being sandy, waterless desert. That made it extremely difficult for an army to cross. Any attacking force would have to come down the Nile or march parallel to it and Egypt had a strong navy while the other great powers were comparatively weak at best in naval forces. It also reduced heat as well as sand and dust coming from the desert. He was also isolated from the Theban priesthood who vexed him. By removing himself he removed their finance and gave the priesthood an invidious choice, for a high priest to take over the pharaoh’s position would have been blasphemous and treasonous: an upheaval in the stability that was at the core of their beliefs. Not to have a leader would have paralysed their decision making processes and traditional ceremonies. Was Akhenaten wily enough to see all this? Like much that Akhenaten did, where he established his capitol initially looks foolish, but upon consideration shows some astuteness.

\(^{123}\) Golding, pp. 64-66; Kew’s film also shows a barren landscape.

\(^{124}\) Sloan, ‘Central City of Amarna Model’
http://www.thearchitecturestore.co.uk/files/includes/images/city-a4-model-drawing.jpg];
Vandenberg, reproduced map p. 102; Redford, reproduced map p. 143.

\(^{125}\) Vandenberg, reproduced map p. 102; Mieroop p. 391; Sloan, Pharaohs of the Sun.
[http://www.thearchitecturestore.co.uk/NationalGeographic.html] This artistic reconstruction recreates a boat arriving at the quay.
Today the remnants of his city and the surrounding area within his boundaries are named Tel el Amarna. The area has been compared to a bow, with the Nile being the string and the northernmost and southernmost points being the bow’s tips. The cliffs to the west are roughly shaped like a bow as they narrow at the tips and the land is at its widest point between the river and the limestone cliffs in the middle, being about three miles wide. The claimed area is about six to eight miles long. The boundaries were marked out by Akhenaten’s stela. Beyond it to the west are sand and rocks. Except for those few acres suitable for growing crops the locale was indeed bleak, stony and barren in his time, but aridity, temperatures and humidity then remain uncertain.

Aket-Aten’s population was probably around 20,000 to 50,000, of which perhaps ten thousand formed the elite. Even the larger figure was only a very small proportion of the Egyptian Empire’s total population.

This new capital was completed quickly, frequently at the cost of shoddy workmanship and apparently no town planning. Little if any planning also shows in the way workshops, slums and hovels were crowded into the spaces between the villas of the rich. The massive temple to the Aten was in many architectural ways the opposite of the traditional model. This temple was rectangular, large, made of stone and having parallel columns, as was usual. However no decorative statues were present, there was no roof and the usual pattern of an imposing statue of a God concealed in a dark room did not exist there: instead stone altars had Nefertiti’s name inscribed; this was

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126 Van Mieroop, pp. 384-386.

127 Chubb, pp.30-43 passim. Chubb’s 1930 eyewitness description is matched by others. Baikie gives the smaller length. p. 264.

128 Baikie, pp. 265-268. The inscriptions are reproduced in full.

129 Pringle, p. 25; Damen; Kew filmed there, showing the truth in the descriptions by Pringle and Golding. See source note 91.

130 Booth, p. 26; Silverman, p. 105; Van Mieroop gives an estimate of 45,000 p. 391. Kew, 30,000.

131 Pringle, p. 25; Gardener, p. 213; Baikie, pp. 275-277; Wilkinson, p. 286


The lack of a roof was so that the sun could dominate proceedings. The tombs were also placed in an opposite way to usual Egyptian tradition. Usually tombs were placed westwards, so that departing spirits would journey westwards towards the setting sun, but at Aket-Aten some were placed on the eastern bank, facing the dawn, as if to greet the sun or to be covered by its rays for the longest possible time. In ‘The Hymn to Aten’ the writer, probably Akhenaten, expressed a fear of darkness (which he attributed to all living things) being overcome with dawn.

The sometimes fictional, sometimes biographical image of an indolent Akhenaten, obsessed with his Aten, living isolated at Amarna and ignoring the collapse of his empire is overdrawn. This image depends to some extent on the Amarna letters, in which much of the correspondence is to Akhenaten from the northern vassals and other rulers. Their reports are full of trouble, appeals for help and complaints, often about not getting gifts, help or replies.

Most modern writers do not mention that these vassals and city governors had garrisons and Akhenaten told them to use the troops available. In the Wikipedia entry ‘Akhenaten’ they do reproduce two of his replies which reveal his concern with the situation in the north and contain clear and decisive instructions. In the letter to Aziru which is quoted below he expresses concern about the turmoil in Canaan. Were these the only three responses Akhenaten gave or the only ones we have? The Amarna archives are incomplete.

Donald B. Redford, a historian usually very critical of Akhenaten’s policy in the empire’s northern parts, writes that his foreign policy in Nubia was “followed with determination and intelligence.” Was this because Nubian gold was a necessity? In Year 9 of his reign a rebellion there was crushed, with several hundred rebels being killed and the captives being impaled on stakes. That may have been a local commander’s order: it may have been Akhenaten’s. Despite the praise of peace in the Aten’s hymns, the loving depiction of family life and his failure to send requested armies north to crush rebellions, the royal couple were not pacifists.

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134 Booth, p. 23.
135 Ibid.
136 Van Mieroop, p. 392.
137 Lichtheim, p. 1.
138 Redford, p. 195
139 Ibid., p. 194.

In Plate 24 Nefertiti has one arm raised with something like a scimitar, as with the other she holds a kneeling female captive’s head up by her hair as she is obviously about to behead her. The captive raises her hands in supplication, either for mercy from Nefertiti or from the god she will soon meet. This representation may be an imaginary scene of the type pharaohs were expected to
use to intimidate underlings and visitors, an “I have claws” routine to show what the ruler is capable of. Considering how often commentators on Amarna’s royal couple talk of their depicting “living in truth” this murderous scene may well represent a reality as life in Amarna was very different to the popular image of some ancient prototype of a pacifist haven.

In one reply to the traitor Aziru Akhenaten threatens to have him and his family go under the royal axe not just for his evil deeds, but as a warning not to set “words of evil in thy heart.” 140 Axing a whole family to death for the father’s thought crime while praying for peace? It would be easy to dismiss this as too contradictory to be possible if we did not have the examples of other dictators, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Mao and their assorted followers recruiting within twentieth century peace movements by reciting pacifist platitudes they really hold in contempt.

Akhenaten’s letter and depictions of Nefertiti as an executioner show the dual nature of Atenism: idealistic words and tyrannical deeds. The sudden purges of the Amenists show a pattern that would emerge many times in history: the practice of an enforced utopia by an idealistic tyranny. Idealistic is an ambiguous word: it can mean having humane, principled visions. Idealistic can also mean being disastrously out of touch with practical realities: the two meanings can often go together in the one situation. As usual idealistic plans were carried out through the first step being the destruction of what was considered bad and backward. Starting in Year 9, Akhenaten ordered that across Egypt, Amenist temples, obelisks, statues and shrines be smashed up; this was done using Nubian and foreign troops. 141 Cartouches were also scraped, particularly those with the word ‘gods.’ 142 He was indeed the first monotheist and the idea that he tolerated other Gods and beliefs seems based mainly on the way he tolerated what he had to until he could strike. The purge or its effects went as far as defacing scarabs and decorations on make-up jars. Nicholas Reeves, raises the possibility that this was not always enforced by Akhenaten’s zealots, but was cautious self-censorship.

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140 Baikie, pp. 371-372.

141 Reeves, pp. 154-155.

142 Reeves, pp. 154-155; Fletcher, p. 18.
done by a fearful populace. \(^{143}\) This is a long way from the idealistic humanistic pacifist image which emerged in the Edwardian era and lasted into the idealistic seventies in popular culture.


Trade, tribute and foreign representatives came to the new capitol and to the great festival at Amarna in Year 12. \(^{144}\) These trade connections reached far off lands as Aegean and Cretan pottery found in Egypt show and fragments of mother of pearl, lapis lazuli and ivory were also found by Thotmosis’s workshop, showing that goods were imported to Amarna from very long distances away, even as far as Afghanistan. \(^{145}\) His relationship with his Atenist

\(^{143}\) Reeves, pp. 154-155.

\(^{144}\) Silverman, p. 101.

\(^{145}\) Kew.
temples throughout the empire remains unclear after his move to Amarna. The fact that we know of the Syrian temple from a surviving Amarna inscription shows that they were not forgotten.  

Aket-Aten also differed from anywhere else in that its royal architecture contained references to no other gods existing but the Aten and edicts even prohibited them.  

The architectural illustrations were also very new and different.  

From the early dynasties until Amenophis III Pharaohs were depicted as gigantic and manly stilted figures, warriors, single-handedly slaughtering or enslaving foreign enemies by the dozen, killing lions or conferring as equals with welcoming gods: this style returned with Tutankhamen. Recent scientific tests show that traditional images of Pharaohs could be even further from reality than Atenist art. Tutankhamun has depictions where he rides a chariot while slaying his enemies; given his physical state where he needed crutches or walking sticks to be a pedestrian this is unlikely.

Whatever the reality, the inscriptions, art and architecture of Aket-Aten make Akhenaten seem the honest, modest and generous founder of a utopia.  

Apart from the already mentioned facial depictions, Akhenaten’s grotesque portrayals show him as pot belied, with spindly limbs and a weak chest with breasts. His head appears oddly shapped with a prognathous jaw and androgynous facial features. In some depictions he is only distinguishable from Nefertiti by their crowns and cartouches. This may reflect that they were siblings or related.

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146 Budge, p. 87.
147 Bratton, p. 120. He refers to the explicit prohibition on an Amarna tablet; Van Meiroop, pp. 386-387.
148 Bratton, p. 94 p. 128 pp. 130-132; Vanderberg, p. 115; Van Meiroop, p. 381.
149 Carter, illustration of a war scene on a casket p. 47 and an enlarged detail p. 81. 
150 Aldred, p. 63 text. Plates 1 to 6 20 21 26n.
Wall carvings show him as life sized and in modest guises, surrounded by his wife and six daughters. In comparison to previous pharaohs he also seems modest through these family portrayals. This modesty appears reinforced because he is depicted as Nefertiti’s equal: they are both usually under the Aten’s rays, receiving its blessings, approaching each other as equals. Art, architecture, and inscriptions at Aket-Aten suggests a paradise. Some of the most vividly coloured, delightful and natural art of the ancient world decorates its walls. In another refreshing contrast to the ponderous depictions and violent topics of so much ancient Egyptian decorative architecture, flowers, birds, feasts and processions are ubiquitous. The impression created by these works is that life is being celebrated: sensuality, beauty, abundance and optimism abound. These same emotions are reached by the three hymns to the Aten. He gives sunlight and warmth: the only fear is darkness, which he banishes with every dawn. Implicit in this idea is that goodness always wins. Akhenaten shows his god’s generosity and his own with his words “Abundant are the rewards which the Aton (sic) knows to give when his heart is pleased.” He also promises his priests that “they shall eat the food of Pharaoh” and that “There is no poverty for him who hath set thee in his heart.” This was more than rhetoric. Amarna carvings show the royal family on a balcony, tossing necklaces to the assembled believers below. Banquets are often depicted, so in 1988 Aldred assumed everyone at Aket-Aten was well fed and Bratton goes further stating that “slaves were not oppressed” and that “all were happy in their work.” With evidence such as this, it is not surprising that many see Aket-aten as a utopia. This view has since been reinforced through the recent archaeological efforts of both National Geographic and The Akhenaten Temple Project. Both published artist’s reconstructions which recreated bright, pleasing and plausible images of celebrations at Nefertiti’s temple, Aket-aten’s temples

152 Aldred, Plates 5 20; Vanderberg, p. 89. Reproduced wall illustrations p. 85 p. 86 p. 89.
153 Van Meiroop, p. 387.
155 Lichtheim, pp. 1-2; Bratton develops this theme in Chapter VI ‘O Living Aten.’ pp. 104-120.
156 Bratton, p. 92.
157 Ibid.
159 Bratton, Chapter V The Dream City.’ Pp. 84-103. Chapter VI ‘O Living Aton’ pp. 104-120; Vanderberg, Chapter 6 “The City of Dreams.’ pp. 95-123.
and also the paintings of ships arriving on the quays and temples at Aket-aten.

This impression of utopia should make us wonder. From the pharaohs to Pol Pot and Jim Jones, the world has seen a great many attempts at utopia started by a great many leader/saviours. They have points in common with each other and with Akhenaten. In their dreams these brave new worlds are going to be built very fast and be very big and often are started on virgin ground. In the initial stages at least they usually emanate a messianic atmosphere which originates with the leader/saviour. Despite cheery propaganda images they are usually dismal failures. Notable examples would include Russia’s Potemkin villages under Catherine the Great, America’s New Harmony Movement of the 1840s, Bolshevik rule in Russia, Stalin’s collectivisation of the peasantry, Henry Ford’s 1920s Brazilian utopia, Hitler’s paradise for all healthy racially pure Germans, Mao’s Great Leap Forward and his subsequent cultural revolution, Cambodia Year Zero, Jonestown and Gadhafi’s Green Revolution. One rare exception was the ornate 1930s Moscow rail system, which worked efficiently and still dazzles with its palatial stations, but the diversion of funding that should have gone to housing, the destruction of beautiful “in the way” architecture, the enforced horrific conditions for work and the massive death toll are a high cost. Similarly Aket-aten’s richer sections dazzled, but did it also come at a similar high cost in exploitation for those who built it?

The answer started to become clearer when in 1977 Barry Kemp began excavations at Amarna, bringing in specialist teams in assorted relevant sciences. Decades of research gives a different and detailed picture of Amarna life. Kemp states that: “the whole city was there to serve the king and court.” In Aket-Aten beneath the beautiful architecture, its illustrations and its vivid paint, lies rushed and shoddy workmanship. This is a literal and figurative example of Amarna’s realities. Kemp also noted Akhenaten’s desire to build on virgin ground, but did not make the comparison just made. A twenty-first century excavation by the University of Arkansas focused on

160 Sloan, previous citation; Strange, previous citation.
162 Pringle, p. 27.
163 Pringle, p. 28.
164 Redford pp. 144-145; Tyldesley. p. 117; Wilkinson, p. 286.
165 Kew, Kemp speaks on camera.
another Amarna workers’ cemetery using two hundred skeletons and in 2013 their released results virtually matched those of Kemp’s team.  

For many residents their lives were nothing like the beautiful depictions: they slaved to make them a reality for the royal family, but created the opposite for themselves. Crowded, filthy, vermin infested hovels were common in the Atenist utopia. Tyldesley also mentions armed police, foreign troops, fortifications and soldiers resident in this supposed pacifist paradise and rightly asked were they used to keep enemies out or citizens and workers in? One worker’s area was walled near high cliffs with the only exit being guarded. The police headquarters was adjacent to the rear of the main palace. This suggests that royalty was much concerned with surveillance and repression. Wilkinson wrote an overview of ancient Egyptian history and has no axe to grind either for or against Akhenaten, presents a similar picture to that of Tyldesley. Worker’s skeletons reveal why. Three hundred and fifty bodies found in one worker’s cemetery were examined in detail. Of these 67% had broken bones and 77% had osteoarthritis, caused by hauling water for the gardens and also for construction, which as ancient pictures at Akhetaten show, usually consisted of one man hauling a talat brick weighing around 150 pounds. Two of Kemp’s team found just lifting a talat exhausting. The University of Arkansas investigation into two hundred skeletons came to the same conclusion about lifting talats, with over 75% of the skeletons suffering arthritis in the spine and limbs, suggesting heavy labor which Wilkinson’s low life

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168 Tyldesley, p. 119.


172 Pringle, p. 29.

173 Pringle, p. 29. Booth also mentions many spinal injuries p. 26; Archaeology Newsroom.

174 Pringle p. 27 p. 29; Booth, p. 26.
expectancy reinforces – teenagers and people barely living to thirty-five suffering arthritis? Exactly the same percentage in The University of Arkansas investigation matches Kemp’s earlier study for suffering healed or healing injuries. Those workers aged between three and twenty-five frequently suffered from dietary deficiencies, particularly scurvy and rickets. 175 As this suggests, children were malnourished, with their teeth also showing sign of malnutrition and their skeletons showing constant use of muscles from hard labor. 176 Despite loving depictions of their children, affection or even basic concern for children was clearly a very selective process at Amarna. As the area was small and after the first year of the city’s construction the royal couple frequently travelled down the royal road where buildings were being raised, they must have known of the sufferings of the builders.

A few years before the conditions of the Amarna workers were revealed by archaeologists Fletcher assessed how Atenists there ate, based on ancient Amarna descriptions, art, reliefs, jar docket listings and remnants found by archaeologists. 177 This combination of sources makes for an extensive list. Beef, lamb, fish, duck, geese, oxen, chicken, wine, beer, milk, honey, dates, watermelon, grapes, figs, pastries, wheat, barley, bread, onions, garlic, beans, chickpeas, lentils, lettuce, cucumbers, olives and olive oil and the seeds of sesame, aniseed, caraway and coriander. One relief shows Akhenaten devouring a whole duck. So much bread was needed for the Aten’s temples that a hundred bakeries worked daily and one amongst the cities granaries covered around twenty thousand square feet. 178 Examining a priest’s mummy revealed a health hazard indeed; over indulgence in meat had led to trouble with the arteries. 179 While the Atenist court regularly banqueted and altars were loaded with ample food, their workers suffered from hunger, anaemia, scurvy, malnutrition and stunted growth, all caused by inadequate diets. 180 Over half the workforce died in their late teens, most were dead by thirty-five and only a few reached ages in their forties. 181 This was in the same place where carvings show offering tables in the temple were piled high with nutritious food as offerings to Aten. What

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175 Archaeology Newsroom.
176 Ibid.,
177 Fletcher, pp. 301-308.
178 Fletcher, p. 304 p. 305.
179 Ibid., p. 302.
180 Pringle p. 27; Booth, p. 26.
happened to that food? It may have been given to temple workers and priests. It may have wilted and wizened in the sun, quite possibly while the starving workers herded into temple services stared at it while Akhenaten or his priests chanted beautiful hymns about the goodness of the Aten and his generosity to the brotherhood of man.

It is unsurprising that among this underclass pendants and paintings which provide evidence for continuing the old religion have been found. Akhenaten apparently did not try to win over the underclass, through generosity or improving living standards, even in Aket-Aten. Paradise was only for royalty and courtiers. As Doctor Jerome Rose points out, something must have been very wrong in the capitol of a wealthy empire to have drastic food shortages. Fletcher’s account shows that scarcity was not the problem. That something Rose mentions is either extraordinary callousness or the common fault of being so in love with a utopian idea that its believers were oblivious to realities and their own hypocrisies.

Despite the abundant food and drink, grand architecture, gold and the luxury Aket-aten may have been a fool’s paradise even for the inner circle. Writer after writer describes the Amarna tombs for the nobles, courtiers and prominent individuals where Akhenaten’s speeches and depictions are found. Apparently nobody gives importance to the fact that even in death there was no getting away from him or his relentless god. Just as ubiquitous red stars, medieval crosses, swastikas, crescents with stars and the hammer and sickle started as symbols of liberation, but became oppressive, so do the Aten’s ubiquitous rays become pervasive symbols of a belief domineering life.

Akhenaten’s words and the high level of sycophancy in the court reinforce this impression. Vizier Ay even requested permission to kiss the ground where Akhenaten and Nefertiti stood while praising her beauty and sweet voice. This praise comes from an inscription in Ay’s tomb, also decorated with the Aten. Even in their tombs Atenists were allowed little individuality with the

182 Pringle p. 29; Gardiner p. 22; Tyldesley, p. 83.

183 Archaeology Newsroom, Rose directly quoted.

184 Wilkinson, p. 297; Baikie, Chapter X ‘The Collapse of the Egyptian Empire as seen in the Amarna Letters.’ pp. 342-391.passim. Although this chapter provides salient examples many others appear in his work and those of virtually every other biographer.

185 Fletcher, Ay quoted. pp. 138-139.
royal couple present even there. Enthusiasm, either sycophantic or not, was enforced as Akhenaten promised that upon rising from sleep he would use his power against anyone who ignored his teachings. This was not just rhetoric as his far reaching purge of all aspects of daily life showed.

Were the laborers the only ones who were oppressed and resentful? Reliefs show a large armed contingent of over forty protecting the Pharaoh when he moved around the city. After seeing this Fletcher identifies this bodyguard by their hairstyles and costumes as a mixture of Egyptians, Nubians and Syrians who were probably mercenaries and his inner circle included several highly placed foreigners. This recalls Roman emperors ruling with foreign mercenaries and Lenin with his elite regiment of Latvian mercenaries and highly placed foreigners ruling over a sullen Russia. Once again this bodyguard shows Akhenaten being astute - or was it Neferti? Mercenary foreigners were unlikely to overthrow their paymaster. They would not have been swayed by concerns over angering the foreign god Amen or worried by their leader’s disastrous policies on Egypt. Coming from peoples conquered by Egypt, they probably laughed up their sleeves at the havoc and enjoyed destroying aspects of Egyptian religion in the Year 9 purges.

Amazingly from the evidence we have the army stayed loyal to Akhenaten, despite his persecution of their traditional religion. Mark Damen has speculated that the army was becoming suspicious of the growing power of the priesthood and may have been losing out in budgeting to the ever enriching priesthood. This is certainly possible. Another possibility is that Akhenaten may have been paying the army more than they ever had earned before. Unless they gain plunder or higher pay troops do not like going on long distances to campaign and he definitely authorised only one campaign. This was the Egyptian victory in gold rich Nubia, where the troops brought back slaves, gold and almost certainly plunder.

Egypt’s army was not prone to coups; if they happened they would have needed great provocation: their disloyalty would be unrecorded. So little is certain about the Atenist ruler’s suspicious ends that military coups remain possible, but neither the records nor the archaeology give any indications that this is why any of the four Atenist rulers reigned briefly and died young.

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187 Fletcher, pp. 88-89. Fletcher reproduces a drawing of the relief. Figure 26- p. 90.
188 Fletcher, p. 89; Wilkinson also gives this identification, p. 297.
The Beginnings of Decline at Amarna

The celebrations at Aketaten in Year 12 marked the high point of the reigns of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. At that event they receive tribute and greetings from the empire’s vassals and allies. They bestowed appreciated gifts and could look over their capitol which if not complete, still impressed with its magnificent architecture and gardens. Although there was perennial trouble in the north it was not yet an obvious major threat and the greatest danger, Amen’s priesthood, had seen their practices amongst the common people crushed, their finances from the pharaoh curtailed and their temples closed.

Jubilees were supposed to be held every thirty years and usually were, but one of the very few points all of his biographers agree on is that Akhenaten was rarely a respecter of traditions or royal rules. So why have an early jubilee? Quite frequently celebratory grand events are not really about what they claim. These are just the excuse for money making. Mollifying and rewarding the followers and the leader’s self-aggrandisement are frequently other real motives. Atenism was a religious cult and he was the cult leader and every cult or organisation which succeeds needs to keep the followers optimistic and busy, so that they did not have time to ponder on their exploitation and the failings and illogicalities of their organisation and its leader. One thinks of Roman emperors at their processional triumphs, Hitler at Nuremburg or Mussolini on his Roman balcony giving diatribes and effusions to the multitudes below, turning using tanks and bombers to defeat Ethiopians armed with spears in skirmishes into great victories. Stalin’s fiftieth and seventieth birthday celebrations and Trotskyist Gerry Healy assembling his followers for thunderous speeches on the meaningless occasion of changing the name of his party in 1973 are other examples. Mao was also a master at staging this kind of thing. Cult mass weddings, soviet parades, grandiose royal weddings, popes declaring certain years to be pilgrimage years and turning on the celebratory effects for cash are others. Many of these occasions are money-making events. One reason Britain is unlikely to turn Republican is that royal pageantry, tours of royal places and staged events annually load billions into the national economy. Akhenaten’s jubilee did the same for Amarna as those powers owing tribute arrived for the event and to pay up.

With such obedience and opulence all looked secure, but little really was. The northern situation would worsen, the new religion had not put down roots and grown within the empire: it resembled one hothouse flower more than
spreading ivy. Even where it seemed strongest, within the royal family, problems emerged. Many writers state that Atenism went against centuries of Egyptian habit and accustomed belief, if the Egyptians were so attached to their polytheistic religion why did they not oppose Akhenaten’s purges? Could it be that they were oppressed by the various priesthoods that enriched themselves by taxing them into poverty or left them close to it, living lives of drudgery while they could see the priests lived in opulence created through their stolen efforts? Could it be that few really believed in the state enforced beliefs? Priests sold copies of The Book of the Dead to the rich so that they could use its charms and incantations to pass Maat’s test and get to heaven. 189 Meanwhile the not so rich had to take their chances; this must have alienated the vast majority and caused cynicism. Whatever the causes, the old gods had few defenders when the overthrow happened.

Why then did Atenism, which initially seemed to liberate and promise so much, gain so few adherents? Why did it become an enforced belief? The strangeness of the idea could only be a partial answer, but compare how strange the ideas of monotheists Jesus, Mohammed, Paul of Tarsus, Saint Patrick, the Spanish conquistadors and the thousands of later Christian and Islamic missionaries were in a world of pagan polytheists – and how quickly they were able to successfully spread those ideas, against traditions as strong as Egypt’s pantheon of gods – and without Akhenaten’s advantages of finance and force – with both these factors being as strong as anything the ancient world had ever seen at that point. Was this very position of power and displays of fabulous wealth in front of the deprived a cause for distrust, apathy or dislike for his new religion? Buddha, Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, Mohammed and their first followers of all these men were not wealthy and offered a dramatic change from their position of being the exploited underlings. Akhenaten did not seem to offer any social change. Why did the monotheism of Akhenaten, which also appealed to all people with a similar message of love, justice, and eternal life as a reward for commitment and righteous living, fail to spread? We do not know all the answers: his kingdom’s illiterate and alienated have no voice. Two rare pieces of evidence from them show contempt. One comes from a mine of Hatshepsut’s time and shows her having sexual intercourse with her chief builder. The other depicts Akhenaten as an ape. As most Egyptians paid taxes and worked their lives away both for little benefit and could be punished for disrespecting both royalty and religion, their attitude to monarchy and religion was most probably one of sullen fear and avoidance when they could get away with it and

189 The Book of the Dead
compliance when they could not. The ubiquitous grave robbers suggest a contempt for royalty and a disbelief of punishing gods. This can only be plausible speculation about how the vast majority of Egyptians outside the privileged groups felt. We have only a few indications, some plausible ideas, and too many assumptions.

Before looking at the alienating personal reasons two comparisons in failure suggest that settled traditions being toppled from above fail. Despite being back by an obedient efficient military force and ruling a prosperous nation disillusioned with its treacherous monarch, Oliver Cromwell could not make his mixture of puritanism and republicanism take hold. He also had other advantages; the outlet of migration for the disaffected, his way of making wise decisions and a staid life none could fault. Even so, Cromwell’s government and ideas faded away within less than two years of his death. A closer comparison to Akhenaten and Nefertiti is Akbar, Mogul ruler of most of India and Afghanistan and also modern Pakistan and Bangla Desh. He ruled from 1556 until his death in 1605. Like Akhenaten, he ruled over a fabulously wealthy empire and had access to that wealth, which he spent in a munificent style. Like Akhenaten he used some of it to build a grand new capital. Like Akhenaten he tried to spread a new monotheistic humanist religion – which did not outlive him. His grand new capitol was also a failure, fading away. Like Akhenaten he had problems with the succession and issued initiated practices which flaunted religious traditions. He could also wage war while praising peace without qualms. Despite such close similarities, on other points the two rulers were opposites. Akbar was an energetic, able, popular ruler, paying close attention to what went on in the Mughal Empire and ruling it wisely. He tried to develop his new religion by persuasion, not by force. Charismatic, courteous and affable, he impressed his subjects and foreign dignitaries. Despite having so much in his favour his efforts were as unsuccessful as those of Akhenaten, if less disastrous. It is to be noted that Akhenaten, Akbar, Cromwell, the rulers striving to establish a monotheistic belief system failed while those who were not rulers, Buddha, Jesus, Saint Patrick, Mohammed, and the conquistadores succeeded. Apart from being part of a self-serving elite, one clear difference from the successful monotheists is that Akhenaten and his family blatantly behaved in ways which alienate, as their own authorised depictions made this clear.

In several earlier histories and biographies the artistic evidence is presented as honest because it shows a relaxed, happy family gathered around Akhenaten, who supposedly has his alienating and sad abnormalities honestly depicted. Like so many depictions of prominent happy families, these depictions eventually emerge as at best one side of the picture and therefore false evidence, the surface image. In Tyldesley's *Nefertiti: Egypt's Sun Queen* she reproduces family carvings which defenders of Akhenaten and/or Nefertiti rarely show. They show the royal family together naked. In others they wear diaphanous see through robes, often so loosely that they may as well wear nothing. Even when mourning their dead daughter Nefertiti stands naked and Akhenaten nearly so. In a regal statue Nefertiti is naked, except for sandals and the Pharaonic crown. In the strangest of these carvings the royal couple and a daughter are riding in a chariot. While the parents are romantically engrossed with each other, not looking where the horse takes them, the Aten beams down ankh's on them while their little girl whips the horse. All three royals are naked. The vivid and realistic depictions of a daughter whipping the horse and the royal couple kissing make this carving seem more likely to be a depiction of a bizarre reality than of anything symbolic. Allen Drury included this scene in his novel, having the royals do this ride along the public causeway motivated through their concept of Maat, living in truth, to the derision of their subjects. Drury may well have been right, for also found at Amarna are crude limestone figurines and carved decorations of monkeys behaving like the royal family. Monkeys do not wear clothes. They are famed for their incessant meaningless chatter, frenetic energy, mischief and promiscuity. Historians differ on what this means. Tyldesley sees it as satire; Reeves as bitter, contemptuous hostility. In one depiction which looks more hostile than humorous an ape wearing the pharaonic crown rides by in his chariot: is this because this was as close as the artist got to his pharaoh?

This idea of nakedness as a truth to live in is still common, often as a sign of extreme mental disturbance, megalomania or eccentricity. Other questions

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191 Tyldesley, Figure 3.5 p. 77 Figure 4.1 p. 99 Figure 4.3 p. 107 Figure 5.2 p. 115

192 Vandenberg, reproduced illustration, p. 130.

193 Tyldesley, Figure 5.3 p. 120.


195 Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*. Milan, 1969. On page 133 he has a photograph of professional nudists dancing before their nude little daughter. It looks sick and strange here and probably would in ancient Egypt.
also quickly emerge if we begin to consider that over three thousand years ago human behaviour ambitions and responses my not have been very different.

What did Akhenaten’s daughters think of parents “living in truth” being naked before them? It gets worse in two cases, they became the mothers of their father’s children. Although this remains disputed, the strongest evidence is that this happened. Apart from carvings depicting them together, there are their cartouches with their names shown in the manner of royal wives and in the cartouches they are described that way. No recent major historian seems to have presented detailed evidence that goes against the evidence for this viewpoint. As the previous examples show, not all their art was wonderful or attractive. Another of these examples, often reproduced is of a vivid carved wall illustration showing Nefertiti standing naked with Akhenaten weeping over her dead daughter Meketaten, while a wet nurse takes away a wrapped baby. Historians Aldred and Reeves separately state this picture shows the princess dying in childbirth with Akhenaten as the father. Both writers state that he had incestuous relations with his daughters. Most writers date the death of Meketaten to either soon after the Year 12 celebration, Years 13 or 14 or soon after those dates. Clearly Amarna’s royal family gave their subjects much to cause alienation and contempt. Such strange behaviour was not indulged in by other monotheistic evangelists, which is perhaps one reason why they succeeded.

Another alienating factor was the exploitative use of slaves and peasants by extremely rich and hypocritical people. This must have been an alienating sight causing sullen contempt amongst Egypt’s poor. While exact proportions are unknown, peasants were the vast majority of Egypt’s population and of the remainder many were slaves. While some wealthy peasants could write and some slaves became scribes, the vast majority of the population were illiterate, so for whom were the Atenist hymns and edicts written? Perhaps proclamations were read to assembled crowds or in what had been Amenist temples. However this is speculative. Apart from the three known Atenist temples within the empire, what was built at Karnak and the purges, evidence that the royal couple continually tried to convert their people as a whole is lacking.

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196 ‘Akenaten.’ Wikipedia.
197 Aldred p. 173; Reeves, p. 161.
198 Vandenberge, p. 158; Aldred, p. 173; Tyldesley, pp. 149-150; Redford, p. 186; Booth p. 30; Silverman, p. 101.
The difference between Akhenaten’s self-created public image and his reality must have also caused alienation from his ideas amongst those in direct contact with the royal family. He was definitely not the monogamous family man of many depictions and histories from the late nineteenth century onwards. Another wife, Kiya, was only recognised as such in 1959, after her name was discovered on a cosmetics jar. 199 This led to searches for information about her which found very little. She was for some time apparently a favourite and a lover, but her ultimate fate remains unknown, premature death or purging are equally likely as her name was scratched out of cartouches. 200 Akhenaten had a harem and DNA has proven that Tutankhamen was his son, and by a full sister. 201 Many writers state that Egyptian royalty viewed incest differently – or did women master their distaste because incest was enforced through ostracism or drastic punishments? To what extent can people be conditioned to except anything? Or can they? How would Nefertiti have reacted to her daughters as rivals? Or to Kiya? We do not have the free voices of Egyptian women to tell us what they thought of incestuous relations or polygamy. The world then and now remains full of religious and political beliefs upheld by customs that people follow habitually, but with a weary distaste because social ostracism, poverty, imprisonment or even execution comes with challenges. What Egypt’s subject peoples thought of royal incest stays unknown; it may have been accepted as normal, it may have caused a quietly held contempt. The overall Pharaonic tyranny may have caused political apathy, upheld by the peace and prosperity of the eighteenth dynasty. Salazar’s Portugal, Franco’s Spain and twenty-first century China provide similar examples of societies being apathetic to their dictators. Despite being different from these modern examples due his zealotry, did Akhenaten also rule over a society existing with a similar mixture of public apathy mixed with a cautioning fear? This apathy and alienation would eventually also be a reaction to the Atenists.

In earlier histories and biographies Nefertiti is sometimes incorrectly described as vanishing soon after because portrayals of her with Akhenaten stopped, but Redford and Tyldesley both separately mention that the number of depictions were reduced, not stopped, and that not only Nefertiti but Kiya was frequently replaced by Nefertiti’s daughters in wall decorations. 202 This was

199 Fletcher, p. 148.
200 Ibid., pp.148-149.
201 Shubberfield: Than.
202 Redford, pp. 188-189, p. 191; Tyldesley, p. 153. Fletcher also mentions Kiya’s name being scratched out. pp. 148-149.
taken as far as altering the faces of Nefertiti, Kiya or royal favourites on carvings so as to replace it with their daughter Meritaten. Was this an incestuous paedophile expressing his desire in art? Was it a dutiful father building up his daughters’ confidence and grooming them for their future royal roles? For decades these pictorial replacements have led many to assume that Nefertiti had died. The evidence against either death, ostracism or exile appeared thin for decades, but she was definitely still alive in his Year 16, a year after his death and she almost certainly outlived him by at least a few years. This idea is dealt with in more detail in the last chapter.

Problems with sexual tastes were compounded by the way Nefertiti had given six Egypt children – but they were all daughters and almost all pharaohs were males. Given the need for a male successor and given the beliefs in signs, Akhenaten would have concluded that Nefertiti was cursed by the Aten to give him only daughters and he needed a son by somebody. Tutankhamen, born of a relationship with a blood relative and born soon after the move to Amarna, fitted that need.

The way so many later found references to Nefertiti come from the northern palace while to the south Meritaten’s name replaces hers on cartouches led to conclusions where Nefertiti had died or was no longer in power. John Pendlebury, who found evidence for Nefertiti’s obliteration in the 1930-1931 Amarna dig, concluded that after being replaced as queen by her daughter she was banished, exiled or ostracised. This viewpoint was taken up by many in both fiction and history, even after a considerable amount of later evidence emerged showing that this was not so. Joann Fletcher argues that it was not Nefertiti’s name that was erased, but Kiya’s, who being unknown, was out of the developing narratives before 1959. Even after her discovery so little was known about her that she was usually not a factor in palace politics. She should have been. Described as a “Greatly loved Wife’ her name does appear in Amarna, despite some obliterations. Akhenaten or probably somebody complying with his wishes had a canopic jar decorated with her face placed in his tomb.

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203 Vandenberg, reproduces a diagram showing how this was done stage by stage p. 131; Redford, p. 186; Tyldesley mentions Kiya in this context, p. 150 p. 153,

204 Chubb, p. 102. Quoting Pendlebury speaking during the 1930-1931 excavations.

205 Fletcher, pp. 76-77.

206 Ibid.,
A bigger problem than the sexual politics involved ruling the empire. Many write that like his father, apparently years went by with appeals for help by underlings gaining no response from Akhenaten. This overstates the reality, which was inadequate but not totally unresponsive. Akhenaten did make some responses to the Northern crisis. Guy Aldred writes how forces with supplies were apparently being prepared for a military expedition to the north in Akhenaten’s last days of his reign: one campaign in the Gezer region may have happened. However Aldred also rightly sees this as tardy and not enough. He then gives a description of what should have been done years before to deal with the worsening problems in the northern sectors of Egypt’s new empire. Banditry was wrecking overland trade and corruption was spreading. The biggest threat was the emergence of expansionist warlike superpowers which were trying to win over his vassals: this was leading to mutinous intrigues. As Aldred states, it was the right time for Akhenaten to appear as the leader in a show of strength and to use the superior forces that he did have to suppress those in rebellion, remove the treacherous and reward the faithful – and then follow this up with a victory parade. 207

This was what Pharaohs had done before and such methods had ensured that Egypt remained a great and respected power. Akhenaten had the resources to do this, but lacked the vision and perhaps the energy. Despite the Nubian expedition, the disastrous use of Arab mercenaries in the one punitive expedition he did send north and the tardy plans Aldred mentions coming at the end of his life, E.A. W. Budge aptly describes the attitude which dominated Akhenaten: “He never learnt the kingcraft of the pharaohs and he failed to see that only a warrior could hold what warriors had won for him.” 208

Writing in 1923, Budge does make strong criticisms of Akhenaten’s foreign policy which showed a lack of the firm commitment needed and so left the empire weaker. 209 Using the Amarna letters, Budge reproduces many of the desperate warnings and pleas from the North as bandits strangle trade, raiders destroy villages and traitors conspire to change sides. Over three thousand years later their desperate, urgent blunt tones convey a vivid sense of unfolding tragedy - and a sense that they have communicated before and know that they are not being acted on and perhaps not even listened to. 210 Many other later

\[\text{\textsuperscript{207} Aldred, p. 171.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{208} Budge, p. 77.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{209} Budge, pp. 98-103.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.,}\]
writers expressed opinions similar to those of Budge. They have created a common image of Akhenaten indolently enjoying palace pleasures or obsessively praying to his god while ignoring the destruction of his empire.

Reverend Baikie used Amarna’s archives and frequently reproduced them in full, gives a more complex picture. Most writers do not mention that he sent an emissary named Khani to review the situation. 211 The one expedition he did definitely send north only made the situation worse. The vassals, governors, allies and foreign rulers were not sending similar messages concerning a single obvious threat; they were sending protestations of their loyalty frequently combined with warnings about others – and sometimes each other! Abdashita and his son and successor Aziru were the most consistent and opportunistic devourers of territory, people and wealth in Egypt’s northern lands and amongst Egypt’s allies, yet they were also sending this mixture of loyalty declarations, requests and warnings. This would have created a muddle which was not so easy to solve or which would quickly lead to wise decisions. Requests for gold also clouded trying to perceive the truth of the situation. It is not difficult to see the court suspecting that the northern situation as being invented or exaggerated by the assorted supplicants so as to obtain gold for their own purposes. The situation was made much worse by a fifth columnist within the court, an influential noble on Akhenaten’s council board named Dudu. This councillor was working for Aziru, who begged him to block the king’s ears against any slanders and not let such things be said in court. 212 This gives some idea of Dudu’s power and Akhenaten’s lack of it, despite all his grandiose titles, edicts and artistic depictions. Dudu must have been extremely successful in ensuring Akhenaten did not believe words against Aziru, but gave him even more of what Aziru wanted, not only because of his extreme, almost grovelling flattery to Dudu, but because he promised him extravagant things; his lands, his house and “whatever thou desirest.” 213 Such rich rewards and extreme flattery are unlikely to be for merely blocking information. While Reverend Baikie, who reproduces this document in full, does not develop the idea, this has another implication. Aziru’s flattering where he describes himself as Dudu’s son and where he is “my lord” while Aziru is his “servant” make more sense if Aziru intends to make Dudu pharaoh – or help Dudu make himself Pharaoh.

211 Baikie, pp. 369-370.

212 Baikie, pp. 362-363.

213 Ibid., p.362.
When Akhenaten did send an expedition of Arab mercenaries north under the command of an Egyptian officer, for unknown reasons they attacked the forces of his most loyal governor, Ribbaddi of Byblos. The reasons for this are unknown, but Dudu’s treachery could easily have been behind the disaster as Aziru benefited by having his main enemy weakened and demoralised. After this outcome it is understandable that Akhenaten waited years before preparing another northern expedition. Would Akhenaten have led this expedition?

Tardily Akhenaten was a wakeup to Aziru and told him so. Was the pharaoh planning an expedition to remove him or willing to let him hold what had gained by intrigue and murder if he now behaved himself and paid tribute and fought Pharaoh’s enemies? The same letter that contained death threats also contained a hint that this was so. Aziru’s violent death by other intriguers leaves this an open question.

Although the evidence shows a much more complex reality in the empire’s northern crisis than is generally portrayed, even the admiring Baikie refers to Akhenaten being “supine” before threats to the “supercilious stupidity” of court responses to loyalist pleas. This pharaoh was more ineffectual and desultory in his efforts than indolent. Decades later Seti I and Ramses II did not let such troubles fester, but went north and each of them regained some of what Akhenaten should not have lost. Even so, Akhenaten was no recluse, totally ignoring life outside Amarna. Although he apparently never left his new city, in Year 9 he organised the start of the systematic destruction of the old religions throughout Egypt. The punitive Nubian expedition also happened in Year 9.

If Amarna was not being torn apart by sexual politics it must have been to some extent preoccupied with them, the new religion and building the capitol. These three entwined factors became contributions to Egypt’s declining political power. Across the empire corruption and inefficiency became common in government and in the north the empire started crumbling away.

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214 Ibid., p. 365.
215 Ibid., p.364.
216 Booth, p. 48;
217 Budge, pp. 82-83; Wilkinson, pp. 292-293.
Plate 25. Kiya, from the head of a canopic jar. Photographer Keith Schegili-Roberts Creative Commons/Wikipedia
Images and Reality: Akhenaten and the Royal Family

Both the perceived personality and physiognomy of Akhenaten and Nefertiti have undergone great changes - at least in history, if not in public perceptions. The tall, thin, but misshapen idealistic peace loving pharaoh and his relentlessly beautiful, never ageing wife are now fading from history. Their tendency to violence has been dealt with in earlier chapters. Was Akhenaten a megalomaniac? His obsession with the sun just by itself is typical of the mentality, even without his claims to be a son of the sun. His promise that he would lead his followers to utopia and that he was the only way to it and god in this self-created, self-subsisting, self-absorbed religion must clearly be a typical megalomaniac illusion. The obliviousness to real dangers because they believe themselves to be invincible is also typical of the type. As is usual, tyranny, death and destruction will be meted out to those who try to block the way to utopia or even reject the purification of evil from this wicked world. What that meant for Egyptians in practical terms were home invasions by armed soldiers smashing up statuettes. Did it end there? What happened to those who resisted? If records exist those records are as yet unfound. They could tell us what happened to those resisted or who ignored advice and turned up to worship at what turned out to be vandalised or destroyed temples. Given the pattern of treatment for those who opposed or ignored ruling twentieth century dictators or megalomanics there are probably no records and little if any evidence. Think of those who vanished unnoticed in Hitler’s Germany while tourists came to the 1936 Olympics, the tens of millions who vanished in Stalinist Russia and Maoist China without a trace or the battles the Argentinian Mothers of the Disappeared have had to find out what happened to their children. Where the enslaved workers at Amarna imprisoned dissidents from the new religion?

Akhenaten’s warning to Aziru also shows signs of megalomaniac obsessiveness, intolerance, paranoia and ruthlessness. Waking up to plan the executions of those who not only oppose but just ignore his teachings? And then to exterminate their families as well! Another sign of megalomania and also one of extreme narcissism is marrying someone who bears such a strong resemblance that they look like twins, in the portraits that we have it is often extremely difficult to tell Akhenaten and Nefertiti apart unless they have cartouches. Making love to a physical substitute for oneself is taking narcissism as far as it can go. Rather than being an enthused partner, she may have been

Wilkinson, p. 287.
going along with her husband’s megalomania, but the evidence of executions from Karnak show that at the least, she was willing to appear as ruthless.

Plate 26. Akhenaten and Nefertiti from the Amarna Period. This was found lying in the sand and sold to a westerner for a few pennies. This started local plundering at Amarna. Brooklyn Museum/ Creative Commons.

We now know that whatever Akhenaten’s mental state, those well-known grotesque depictions are exaggerations. When a royal mummy was discovered in the tomb of the kings in 1907 good evidence such as his name on the magic bricks which were under the corners of the sarcophagus and his name on arm bands showed that this was Akhenaten. Unfortunately the tomb, sarcophagus and mummy could have provided more evidence, but as Guy Aldred and Joann Fletcher both reveal how initially investigating this tomb was at best extremely

careless, lacking in rudimentary protective and recording steps.  

One excavator even gave away bits as souvenirs to visiting tourists.  

The names of Queen Tye, Amenophis III, Tutankhamun and Akhenaten were found on some objects, with Tye’s being the most common. The tomb had been ransacked twice and sealed twice, once with a cartouche of Tutankhamun on the sealing. Debris and shattered fragments of funerary goods lay around, including several seals to caskets that had been taken. Several things suggested that this was not an ordinary tomb robbery. First many gold fragments and pieces and other valuable objects remained. Thieves are not interested in scratching names off cartouches, but somebody was very determined to erase the identity of the tomb’s remaining inhabitant, getting all the obvious references. Fortunately they missed the less obvious names and also the textual references, make it clear that the erased name was that of Akhenaten. References to Ty were left alone. A large timber shrine encrusted with gold and encrusted to Queen Ty had been left at the steps as it was too large to get past the entrance: thieves would have smashed this up to get the gold. Unlike in most tomb robberies where royal remains were pulled apart to get at jewellery and rings, this pharaoh’s body had been left alone, even if clawing away his face on the sarcophagus lid, stealing his amulets and erasing his name were all ways to consign him to hell. The ransacking of the tomb looked rushed, but then so did its construction.  

Walls were plastered, but not painted with illustrations as was usual. Excavations had begun on a side room but were stopped. The magic bricks which acted as supports for the sarcophagus and got the pharaoh into heaven were shoddy and made of mud; two had disintegrated. With the others his name was written in rushed hieratic.

Both aspects of intrusion, the ransacking and the defacements suggest that these were done by government orders. The removal of the caskets, the leaving of Tye’s name and shrine and the funerary goods suggests what Aldred states, that Tye’s body and two other royal personages and some funerary goods were removed to be elsewhere. Elsewhere was the nearby tomb of Amenhotep II. This must have been because she had the respect denied to the pharaoh who was left behind. The one point the experts agreed on was that he was a pharaoh. They could hardly do anything else. His sarcophagus and body showed him bearing all the accoutrements of a traditional royal burial; the false beard

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220 Aldred, Chapter 9 ‘The Occupants of Valley Tomb No.55’. pp. 106-122; Fletcher, pp. 174-177.

221 Fletcher, p. 175. Harold Jones, the team’s artist quoting Davis, the team’s financier.

braided with gold, the golden vulture collar, the crossed hands ready to bear flail and crook, the magic bricks on each corner and the canopic jars with the golden uraeus showing it was meant for royalty was broken off. Even the cartouches with the name scratched out was still a cartouche, also reserved for royalty.

As he was buried as an Atenist Pharaoh, who else could he be but either Akhenaten or Smenkhkare? For exactly a hundred years one of the major reasons that only a few ever asserted that this Akhenaten was because this mummy was a small framed man of around five foot five without any of the depicted extreme deformities, although his hips were wider than usual, his eyes were deep set, his jaw slightly prognathous and his skull was somewhat elongated. \(^{223}\) Statues and reliefs, by emphasising his thinness, and following the traditional convention of making the Pharaoh the largest person in the picture, created an image of tallness. The skeleton’s measurement reveals a man within the average height range for the ancient world.

Unfortunately this mummy had suffered water damage over the centuries as the tomb roof had a hole. Being mostly bones to start with and in a fragile condition, it should have been left alone. Instead it was lifted out of the coffin to be examined and when a tooth was touched in disintegrated to powder. By the time it was moved to Cairo nothing was left but bones and soot. With only the bones left finding the cause of death becomes extremely difficult. Bubonic plague and smallpox leave traces on bones, but no mention of these emerges.

Even before DNA and CT scan tests ample evidence pointed to this mummy being Akhenaten. One of his alternate royal names WA ANRA was found inscribed on the gold leaf on his sarcophagus. \(^{224}\) This is the equivalent to an inscribed name on a modern coffin plaque and the name on the magic bricks is equivalent to a name on a tombstone. A canopic jar near the sarcophagus had Kiya’s name inscribed. \(^{225}\) As she was one of Akhenaten’s wives this only makes sense if the body in the sarcophagus was Akhenaten. To continue with the modern comparisons, how often are mistakes made on modern tombstones or commemorative messages left for somebody else’s wife? Especially for royalty? Several other mentions of his name survived the widespread attempts to obliterate it within the tomb. \(^{226}\)

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\(^{223}\) See for example Redford, p. 190.

\(^{224}\) Quillici, Zawass explains this point, showing the evidence.

\(^{225}\) Quillici.

\(^{226}\) Aldred, p. 109; Tyldesley, p. 156.
sarcophagus’s lid was a pharaoh as only a pharaoh wore the artificial beard. He was an Atenist as he had their symbols. If as many state Smenkhkare and Nefertiti were rivals, why was she carved in on the sarcophagus’s cornerstones with wings outstretched? This was traditionally the important protective role for the goddess Osiris and no Amenist believer would have committed this heresy. This Atenist pharaoh could only be Smenkhkare or Akhenaten. The badly preserved royal male mummy was rejected as Akhenaten’s and credited to being the remains of a prince and subsequent Pharaoh Smenkhkare on the basis of several examinations before DNA testing. The main pre DNA tests were performed in 1907, 1931, 1963, 1988 and the dental tests of 1999. 227 The accreditation for this evidence going to Smenkhkare consisted of the resemblance of the skull to that of Tutankhamen and blood tests that linked them as related. Smenkhkare was then widely believed to be Tutankhamen’s brother and few believed Akhenaten was Tutankhamen’s father. There was also the way the KV.55 mummy’s bones had not yet formed together as they did around the age of twenty-five, and in the early tests the teeth were considered those of someone around twenty with the 1999 dental examination supporting this age. The skull was of a normal shape with a slight elongation, while art showed that Akhenaten had a distorted skull shape and body. Actually some art showed Akhenaten that way: some art which had gained less publicity did not. Tests on the mummy support what the more ordinary looking sculptures in this work indicate.

Examples reproduced here show a fairly normal looking man with a reasonably strong chin, but without the height, elongated body and face and exaggerated prognathous chin and jaws emphasised in so much Atenist art. Other examples in Aldred’s Akhenaten: Pharaoh of Egypt show the same. 228 As for the age, this skeleton initially seems a strong point for identification for Smenkhkare. He was a young man when he died and the early datings giving a young age to the skeleton. As Akhenaten ruled for seventeen years and there is no mention of his rule starting at the age of eight or younger, this seemed to settle the argument. Many writers quote part of an early medical report by Doctor Elliot Smith that the mummy was that of a man of twenty-five or twenty-six, so therefore they then dismiss the possibility that this was Akhenaten. They should have given the full quote which A.W. Budge did in 1923. After indeed giving the believed age of twenty-five or twenty-six, as is often quoted, Doctor Smith stated that his estimate was “without excluding the

228 Aldred, Plate 1 and the unnumbered plate opposite page 112.
possibility that he may have been several years older.” 229 1992 tests put the mummy’s age at thirty to thirty-five years. 230 The 2005 tests indicate around forty. 231 The later tests go as high as fifty-five. With Cairo Museum having its own CT scanner for use on mummies much more detailed information can be gained than from the old method of x rays. 232 DNA testing is universally considered infallible evidence and DNA combined with CT scans, radiology and bone comparisons has proved that this mummy is indeed Akhenaten. 233 The scanners failed to pick up any outstanding abnormalities or evidence of Marfan’s syndrome, suspected by so many writers. 234

The 2010 DNA testing which proved that the mummy was Akhenaten also proved that he was the father of Tutankhamen. 235 The CT scans and other tests done by the Family of Tutankhamun Project team place the body as much older than any previous estimation, being between forty-five and fifty-five. The same tests prove that he is the son of Amenhotep and Tye and the grandson of Anmenhotep’s parents. 236 The scientifically proven, now much older age becomes the clincher: this can only be Akhenaten. Some question the accuracy of the Family of Tutankhamun Project team’s tests, but Brando Quillici’s documentary King Tut’s Final Secrets shows the tests being explained in detail and are then filmed. The filming shows that they are carefully done and with their results matching other tests as they come up on the computer’s screens. Joann Fletcher also had a point when she quoted three twenty-first century experts who coming from different angles, raised doubts about the reliability of deducing ages from the bones of adults. 237

Despite what was lost during the Edwardian era excavations much about Akhenaten and his appearance and incestuous proclivities has become recently

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229 Budge, p. 75
230 Tyldesley, p. 160.
231 Quillici.
233 Than; Shubberfield.
234 Than; Manniche
235 Ker Than, ‘King Tut’s mysteries Solved: Was disabled Malarial and Inbred’ (sic) National Geographic News 16th February 2014.
236 Hawass; Jama.
237 Fletcher, pp.181-182. Although Fletcher gives their quotes and in two cases the dates and locales of their talks, she does not name the experts.
known because of this mummy’s identification and modern tests conducted on it. Despite Reverend Baikie’s accurate 1926 comments that this was Akhenaten, for many years majority opinion was that this was Smenkhkare, but since the 2010 reports that identification has become recognised as untenable.

In 2012 Zawi Hawass stated his conclusions, which matched virtually everything said a few years earlier and he added more. Given the confusion and disparities in scientific reports Hawass’s findings are worth mentioning as they back twenty-first century conclusions which go against so many earlier conclusions and theories. His results also showed that the result of recent DNA and CT scans revealed that Akhenaten’s mummy and another royal female found in KV were the children of Tye and Amenophis III and that he had found both parents of Tutankhamen. The female was a full sister to Akhenaten. They also revealed that Akhenaten was aged closer to forty than twenty-five and showed signs of aging through age related spinal degeneration and osteoarthritis in the knee joints and legs. 238 Others using x-rays gave ages of the middle thirties or over thirty-five and noted a height of around 170 centimetres (five and a half feet) and that there were slight signs of being effete. 239 The skeleton was wide-hipped. 240 This gives a creditable age range for Akhenaten’s lifespan rule and fathering six daughters by one wife. Given Akhenaten’s odd physique he may have possibly suffered from both (or either) premature aging illnesses or physically arrested development.

Support for these conclusions comes from his portraits as shown below in plates 27, 28, 29 and 31. These are not the only examples, others have copyright problems. Several of these sculptor’s portraits were amongst the eighty objects found at the Amarna sculptor’s workshop. 241 These portraits depict the face of an undeformed man. In the 1950s Professor Samuel Terien, a biblical scholar, conducted an interesting experiment. He photographed a modern Egyptian in profile, twice. The first photograph was plain, in the second he had the headgear and accoutrements evident in the bust of Akhenaten shown in Plate 20. The third photograph, which is the same size and profiled position of the first two, was of that bust in profile. It was an almost perfect match. 242 Even one of the more extreme depictions shows that Akhenaten could have passed unnoticed in

238 Zahi Hawass, ‘King Tut’s family Secrets’ National Geographic December 12th 2012 p. 6.
239 Reeves, pp. 83-84.
240 Quillici.
241 Kew.
modern Cairo. However, unlike the grotesques, they were not for public show. At least two were taken from the sculptor’s studio in Amarna, where they were probably used as models, but apparently with some facial features such as the lips and chin meant to be distorted for the public images. The elephant in the room is why would a handsome looking man choose to be represented like this? Why would he depict his children this way?

Some well documented groups find bodily distortion and scaring attractive: no need to rely on nineteenth century ethnographic studies emerges to prove that. Twenty-first century European streets provide ample evidence with bull rings through noses, razors worn around the necks, and bizarre hairstyles and facial tattoos. Reader, get used to living with that elephant if you study Akhenaten, for his public depictions cannot be easily explained away, at least in sane terms. Some writers use the weirder images to prove that the royal family were aliens. 243 With the “egghead” depiction of his daughters, we can wonder if it is Hollywood induced forgery, or the inspiration behind many Hollywood depictions of aliens.

Plate 27. Akhenaten depicted with a believable facial expression and an elongated skull. Both eyes have been scratched to ensure he will be blind in the afterlife. Wikipedia/Commons

Plate 28. Ahkenaten at Amarna. Wikia. Share Attribution

Plate 29 Some is believe to be a portrait of Akhenaten, but it may be a relative, possibly Smenkhkare. The family resemblance is so strong that it might be a younger depiction of the face above. Both were found in Thutmose’s workshop. Wiwi/Fandom Creative Commons.
Plate 30. Tutankhamen. A timber portrait taken from his tomb. This is a portrait of a living person. The much more famous gold mask is a royal icon. Wikipedia
Plate 31. Akhenaten wearing the blue war crown. Once again he displays strong but normal features. Wikipedia
Plate 32. Akhenaten is clearly a younger man than the older more pensive portraits depicted below. Why would someone who looks so ordinary wish to be depicted as grotesque as below?  Courtesy Wiki/Creative Commons

Plate 33. The interior of Horemhab’s tomb showing traditional gods and the welcoming of the dead pharaoh. Wikipedia.
Plate 34. Two of the royal daughters. A part of a damaged Amarna wall relief. Both images are from Wikipedia.

Plate 35. Meritaten a more realistically depicted princess of Akhenaten’s royal family.
Plate 36. An Amarna princess. As in Plates 35 and 37 if these are accurate depictions they could not be the same person and are unlikely to be siblings. Photographer: Miguel Hermoso. Creative Commons/Wikipedia.

Plate 38. A view of Akenaten’s skull. Wikipedia/ Creative Commons

Plate 40 Queen Ty. Wikipedia


Plate 42. Believed to be a portrait of Ay taken from the workshop of Thutmose. Creative Commons
Writers describe Akhenaten’s last years as a time of decline and strife, but to what extent was it so? Was the destruction of the Atenist experiment inevitable and was Akhenaten at the end, addressing these problems? The latter question’s answer is yes, he was, but how advanced and strong his efforts were remains uncertain. Sending Khani the emissary to investigate, his strong warning letter to Aziru and the planned northern incursion showed that the decline was being opposed. Akhenaten may even have intended to lead the expedition himself as one bust from Aket-aten depicts him in the blue war helmet, worn by pharaohs as they went to war. Another problem, the succession, had been solved with the birth of a male heir. Although somewhat sickly, Tutankhamen must have been around eight or nine when his father died and so had lived beyond the dangerous infant years. When he caught the malaria that made him lethargic remains unknown. Long before Akhenaten’s last years the battle with the Amenists had resulted in a stalemate and would stay as such until years after his death. The description from Tutankhamen’s reign of deserted, overgrown temples and their prayers of thanks, brimming with relief at Aten’s overthrow, shows that in the last Atenist years the Amenists were not doing very well with keeping adherents, but neither were the Atenists. All available evidence that exists so far suggests that outside Amarna Atenists had made few if any converts.

Many write of the snowballing problems and conflicts both within the Atenist court and the world outside. This supposedly made for a doom-laden atmosphere of approaching tragedy within Akhenaten’s life and his capitol’s last years. This makes for good fiction, but is it what happened? Some historic evidence can easily be used to create such a reality. When the plague hit Amarna was it merely a minor inconvenience that quickly passed, leaving few casualties? Was it the last straw, the killer blow to a dying, failed dystopia? Or was it a catastrophe which wiped out a system which while it had problems, was recovering?

These last Amarna years raise many questions on evidence that is thin, very incomplete, ambiguous and contradictory. New evidence often can be used to demolish old and sometimes even recent evidence. The roles of the Pharaoh and his queens, the succession and even the existence of the elusive Smenkhkenra are all common controversies amongst scholars concerned with the era. The fates of Ay, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen and his sisters and even
Atenism, rarely gain agreement. The questions of how did Akhenaten and Nefertiti die and what became of their bodies, still await conclusive answers, despite new evidence. The theories that Nefertiti died young before Akhenaten, that she was involved in some type of ongoing palace war for power or that she was out of favour and exiled are now disproved.

An undated dual portrait (Plate 46) which shows them together, in what must be late in their reign as they look middle aged. They also look pensive, in contrast to the exuberance of earlier portrayals. The naked portrait also clearly shows that she lived into middle age and the crown shows that she was either still in favour, was a co-ruler or had taken power. As with Plate 46 the facial expression is pensive and even more than that, tired and sullen. The Nefertiti bust and the limestone portrait beneath it showing the older face also support this idea. The broken off cobra on the crown shows the sign of a ruler. 244 This find shows that she was still in royal favour in middle age, perhaps even as a Pharaoh. Unfortunately like the other evidence showing Nefertiti as middle aged, it is also undated.

Several writers assumed that because dated, addressed wine jars were taken from an unnamed ‘King’s Wife’ at Nefertiti’s palace as late as Year 17 that she resided there as an exile or lived under house arrest. 245 Other see the title without a name as being because someone who had taken or inherited her title also took the palace. Vandenberg states that the wine jars there had her name on them while Akhenaten was still alive and as the name should always have been that of the ruling pharaoh, she was usurping his prerogative and so she was in rebellion. 246 These dates may however date from her reign or co-reign and be different jars to those referred to separately by Redford and Tyldesley.

Although she may have had them carved them several years before and then died before his funeral, the way Nefertiti replaced the protective goddess on the four corners of the sarcophagus of Akhenaten strongly suggests that she outlived him. Another piece of evidence suggesting this when examined in full is often used selectively to prove the reverse. This is a broken shabati found in Nefertiti’s vandalised Amarna tomb. It was a gift from someone with the title of King of Upper and Lower Egypt and lord of the two lands. The shabati is presented to the great royal wife, who is praised. As Marianne Luban points out,

244 Kew.
245 Redford gives the wine jar dates on p. 186 but not the conclusions; Tyldesley, p. 176
246 Vanenberg, p. 126 p. 128
many wrongfully assume the shabati was presented by Akhenaten, who therefore outlived Nefertiti, but as the king is unnamed different possibilities emerge; so which king made the gift? It could easily be not from Akhenaten, but from Smenkhkara or Tutankhamen. Although Luban does not present the idea, another accolade to Nefertiti is that she was “heiress” of the great royal palace. Heiresses usually gain things left by the dead; few inherit bequests from the living. Akhenaten had built the palace at Akenaten and owned it. It is extremely unlikely that he would have given it away in his lifetime; this would have lost him kingly authority and prestige and comes close to abdication. The very title pharaoh originally meant great house. Leaving such important property to a person is a sign of goodwill, not being out of favour, exiled or dead. A bequest coming into effect also clearly indicates that she outlived him. Oddly the shabati does not praise Nefertiti as a ruler amongst her accolades and so is evidence that she did not rule. Had she been deposed by the time of her death?

Other inconclusive evidence that also suggests that Nefertiti outlived Akhenaten, but died suddenly, comes from the Akenaten workshop of the sculptor Thutmose. This seems to have been suddenly abandoned and then preserved from Amenist vandals by sandstorms burying it. This was a merciful miracle for archaeologists and scholars, however it created as many questions as it answered. The workshop contained several busts of Nefertiti, including the most famous one found upside down in the sand in 1912. Why make and keep so many busts of someone out of favour? Did Thutmose keep them in storage because he considered that she might return to favour? Or were they kept because they were his artwork and he did not wish to destroy them? The way four busts were designed to take crowns but were not used that way opens opposing interpretations. Was she suddenly out of favour and therefore the busts were unused? Or did he keep so many because Nefertiti was then Pharaoh and they were in demand, but she died suddenly? Were the busts left unfinished for that reason? If not why were they left unfinished? The way the unfinished busts show an older woman does suggest this.

There is also the abundant evidence for Nefertiti being Akhenaten’s successor which Joann Fletcher frequently presents in *The Search for Nefertiti* (2004). Throughout this work she assesses varied evidence; Nefertiti’s cartouches being placed where the Pharaoh would place theirs, statuettes and reliefs showing Nefertiti wearing a pharaoh’s crown and being depicted in traditional pharaoh’s roles such as hunting whilst riding in a chariot, killing

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247 Luban reproduces the passage in full.
captives and bestowing gold collars from the throne. All this is without the strongly suggestive forensic evidence from the “younger woman.” Much of this evidence shows an older, sadder pensive queen, frequently alone when Akhenaten should be with her – if he was still alive. Fletcher’s evidence would be conclusive except for one thing – Nefertiti also did almost all of these things Fletcher mentions at Karnak, when the royal couple where in the first five or six years of their rule and Akhenaten was very much alive and apparently tolerating her usurping traditional pharaonic customs.

Apart from the Amarna’s archaeological and artistic evidence ancient and classical scholars believed a queen ruled after Akhenaten. Unfortunately it remains unknown what was the basis for these opinions. Therefore like so much of the other evidence concerning Nefertiti, what Fletcher presents could only be strongly suggestive.

Conclusive proof for both Nefertiti’s continuing existence and her occupying her usual role was found in December 2012, with the finding of an inscription in a limestone quarry twenty kilometres away from Amarna. This inscription bears the date Year 16 Month One of Akhenaten’s reign and refers to him and then to her, both by name and she is described respectfully as the great chief wife. This inscription although worn, is just legible and has been authenticated. They are clearly still a couple and the use of the same title as appeared on the wine jars shows that Nefertiti still lived in the palace.

This find disproves three common theories previously put forward about Atenist Egypt. The first concerns a supposed palace war between the royal couple, Nefertiti being a loser out of favour is another and Smenkhkara replacing her as co-regent is the third. This find backs the evidence of the two statuettes, the limestone portrait in the famous bust, the more elderly depictions, and the Amenist temple records and inscriptions about Nefertiti’s continuing existence late in Akhenaten’s reign. These pieces of primary evidence support the earlier conclusions of Redford and Tyldesley about what the wine jar dates meant.

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248 Fletcher. p.46.

249 Wikipedia source note 141; Kew, His documentary shows the quarry and the inscription which is made clearer by computerised colour coding and Jacelyn Williamson interpreting and explaining the inscription and the double cartouche.

250 ‘Akenaten’ Wikipedia This entry refers to an article by the finder Athena Van der Perre. The inscription was displayed in Berlin at the Agyptisches Museum on December 6th 2012. It was authenticated within two years; ‘Neferneferuaten’ Wikipedia.
This inscription is one year before Akhenaten’s death and as one of the Year 17 jars has been crossed over and replaced with a Year 1 to show a new reign has begun. Was the new reign hers or Smenkhkara’s? The quarry inscription strongly indicates that with the role of co-regent was still hers to within less than two years of her husband’s death, so she was almost certainly his successor.

This good and unambiguous evidence now strongly indicates that she became the female Pharaoh Neferneferuaten Nefertiti. Smenkhkara probably succeeded her, as he definitely ruled for at least one year and into a second year, being followed by Tutankhamen. Her name as Pharaoh appears in two Amenist temples, one explicitly names her as the wife of Akhenaten by an alternative title, Uaenre. Both would date from Year 3 of her reign. Who else could this pharaoh be? One of her daughters had the same name but with a suffix meaning the younger. As she was aged ten or less at the time of her father’s death and her brother Tutankhamen had primogeniture, she was unlikely to be made pharaoh.

A possibility is a male prince Smenkhkara – if he existed. At least one piece of evidence which have been linked to him can now be discounted. They shared the same epithet Neferneferuaten. Apart from him nobody else with this name seems to have had the power, connections or credibility to become Pharaoh. As mentioned she had changed her name form Nefertiti to Neferneferuaten in Year 5 of Akhenaten’s reign. Did she change it again to Smenkhkare?

Historians investigating the topic who come to firm conclusions disagree on the succession to Akhenaten, apart from the fact that whoever it was ruled briefly and before Tutankhamen. Some speculate that Smenkhkara died before Akhenaten or just after and either never ruled as pharaoh or only ruled for a very brief time. The later is more likely as two labelled wine jars have inscribed that the wine comes from the ‘House of Smenkhkare,’ and have a dating of Year One, with one of these docket with ‘deceased’ crossed over the date. These dates suggest he died nearing a second year after coming to the throne. Others claim that Smenkhkara was really Nefertiti in disguise as a male prince so that she could be co-regent and eventual pharaoh after Akhenaten’s death. Why the woman with the most famous face in Egypt, a woman who had no hesitancy in repeatedly depicting herself as a female pharaoh in a whole Karnak temple about herself, would continuously go into a masquerade as a male cannot be explained. After seeing the depictions at the humongous Karnak, the

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famous bust, the near naked reliefs, her massacre of prisoners and the full frontal naked Amarna statue (Plate 47) we can discount modesty, a lack of confidence or public acceptance. Ancient Egypt would have five other female pharaohs, none of whom posed as males and three of these ruled before Nefertiti. While Hatshepsut did take on aspects of male appearance on occasion, such as wearing the male beard, she ruled as a woman.

While all this is strong evidence against Nefertiti being Smenkhkare, the clinching evidence that disproves this theory is on the wine jars and the inscriptions. Smenkhkare did not live to celebrate the marking of his second year as Pharaoh, Nefertiti lived beyond marking her third year.

Another old theory is that Nefertiti and Smenkhkara ruled as co-regents, but their separate nomenclature on the jar docket and inscriptions disprove this. Some of the confusion is caused by the fact that they both used the epithet Neferneferuaten, but they used it in different ways and in different cartouches.

The often quoted evidence for his position as Akhenaten’s co-ruler and also for a homosexual relationship between them appears weak upon examining the primary source material. Phillip Vandenberg, who tends to follow the idea of a homosexual relationship, notes that Smenkhkara was given the title of ‘Beloved of Uaenre.’ This is indeed his other royal name and how Nefertiti was identified as the wife of Akhenaten. There was also the way the male corpse in KV.55 was given the wig of a royal wife, and had his right arm straight by his side and the left across the breast, which was the traditional placements of the arms of a woman. While these are apparently done in mockery, what is being mocked? His sexuality? His effete appearance? His uxorious ways combined with Nefertiti’s dominance? Many make much of Stella 17B, which supposedly shows Akhenaten and Smenkhkara, two kings in a supposedly homosexual relationship because one has his arm around another while the embraced one strokes the other’s chin. Actually while crowns do denote kingship, developed breasts denote womanhood and this supposed king has breasts. To quote an ancient history teacher “she looks like she needs a size 32b bra.” So does Akhenaten here – and elsewhere as several illustrations in this work show.

Fletcher states that this stela represents Akhenaten and Nefertiti, not the pharaoh

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252 Fletcher, p. 186.
253 ‘Neferneferuaten’ Wikipedia.
254 Vandenberg, p. 125; Hawass mentions this title as being Akhenaten’s in King Tut’s Final Secrets.
255 Fletcher, p. 176.
and the prince. Here they do match other representations of the royal couple. As all of the cartouches are left blank this could be any royalty. Why the cartouches were left that way? Did Akhenaten die while this was being carved and did Smenkhkara then assume power, or out manoeuvre the dowager queen to briefly become the next pharaoh? The blank cartouches are odd. Did Smenkhkare marry the royal daughter Meritaten and gain an appointment as co-regent sometime during Akhenaten’s last year? The reasons for this need no great speculative leap and while not proven, are quite plausible. Nefertiti had given Akhenaten only daughters.

Plate 43. The famous bust of Nefertiti found in Amarna in 1912. Frequently profile shots or those slightly angled from above with lighting emphasise her beauty, but this shows a woman

256 Fletcher, An unnumbered reproduction of the stella and a caption are opposite page 149.
capable of starting her own cult, going to war and ruling. A more traditional Nefertiti is depicted in the enlarged segment below. Photographer: Phillip Pikart. 2009. Wikipedia.

Two portraits of Nefertiti from the workshop of Thutmose in Aketaten. In both the head is designed to take a royal crown. Plate 44 (above). Photographer Miguel Hermoso Cuesta. Creative Commons/Wikimedia.
Plate 45. Photographer Keith Schegili-Roberts. Commons/Wikimedia.

Plate 46. Nefertiti and Akhenaten approaching middle age and looking paunchy, pensive and very human. Photographer: Rama. Creative Commons by S. A. /Wikimedia
Plate 47. Nefertiti in middle age. She still wears a crown, if nothing else. Wearing a pharaoh’s crown also suggests that this statue either dates from her reign or that she was a co-ruler. How many other Pharaohs depict themselves naked? This leads to the question of why? Wikipedia

Plate 50. This coffin is decorated with gold, blue glass and carnelian. The beard here is the ceremonial sign of a pharaoh. The wig is that worn by women. Was this a gesture of contempt? The royal symbols of rule have either been removed from his hands or were not placed there. The face has been deliberately chiselled away. A sure and still vivid sign of extreme hatred as Egyptians believed that such defacements would leave the victim blind, starving and unable to smell or breathe in the afterlife. Cairo Museum. Wikipedia/Creative Commons. Universal Public Domain.
Plate 51. Ankhesenamun and Tutankhamun. Wikipedia/Creative Commons
Plate 52. A late example of Atenist art depicting a royal couple. According to Wikipedia in their entry on Smenkhkara most scholars credit this to being a portrait of Smenkhkara and his wife. Others claim it shows Akhenaten and Nefertiti, but note the walking stick and the left leg bent back and resting on toes. Tutankhamen had a left club foot. Many of the walking sticks in his tomb showed signs of use. The queen paying attention to the Pharaoh also recalls the depiction of them on the throne Carter found in 1922. An almost identical depiction of Tutankhamen and his queen is given in the previous plate. Note that now there is no Aten in either depiction, although the style is in the free form of Atenist art. Wikipedia
Tutankhamen had a club foot and a sickly appearance. What becomes closer to a certainty (as much as anything from this period after Akhenaten does) is that the royal succession had to be assured through the birth of a healthy son - and grandchildren would assure that. Nefertiti may have either voluntarily taken or been forcibly given a retiring role in the northern palace. Younger royalty gained prominence while she still occasionally appeared in royal reliefs and commemorations. Akhenaten may have been ill and he must have known that his Atenist revolution was a heartbeat away from failure. In the perennial ways of royalists, a handsome, healthy young prince could secure his dynasty both through being a heir and by procreation, rejuvenate it and make it popular among the masses the way young princes always do for a time.

Other evidence concerning this elusive individual has been disproved or has become dubious. The individual in Plate 52 has mistakenly been identified as Smenkhkara, but with his walking stick on the same side and the strong similarities to the depictions of Tutankhamen and Ankhesenamun in Plates 14 and 51, this cannot be so. Other evidence appears dubious. The bust once stated to be Smenkhkara (Plate 29) now lists him as being a possibility. The strong
physical resemblance to other busts shows that it could also be a young Akhenaten. Fletcher has noted that many of the depictions that are interpreted as being of an effete young prince portrayed with Akhenaten are really of Nefertiti. The way both the prince and the queen used the royal title Neferneferuaten adds to the confusion. The little conclusive clear evidence of his existence, his reign and an indication of his length rests not on grand monuments, dubious depictions or great architecture, but on the Egyptian habit of dating wine jars by the year they were sealed in the ruler’s reign.

Nefertiti-Neferneferuaten ruled for perhaps two years and one month by wine jar dates which are known; who can say if this is the complete collection? Going by a dated inscription in a Theban tomb she ruled at least a little longer, into Year 3 at least. Although this evidence is thin, it is also free of the systematic destruction that came to written and carved records of the Atenist era. There is also the fact that nobody had a reason to lie, aggrandise or distort on wine dockets. These dockets show that several twentieth century theories concerning Smenkhkara and his relationship to Nefertiti are now disproved.

Smenkhkara could not have been the ruler Neferneferuaten. Apart from the way there cartouches recorded their names differently she had these two unambiguous inscriptions which escaped the attempted obliteration of all things Atenist, almost certainly because they were in Amenist sites. As both date to Year 3 of her reign, Smenkhkara’s wine dockets show that length of time could not have happened for him. Around this time an Amenist scribe showed a longing for Amen, who protects the humble man to return to them as his name or uttering it revives life’s vitality while existence now is miserable. His wishes were soon granted and from the least likely source. An incomplete temple inscription in Thebes lists Neferneferuaten in Year 3 of her reign as ‘the beloved of Aten’ and the ‘Beloved of Uaenre.’ As previously mentioned, those last three words were often used to refer to the wife of Akhenaten. Here she is “living worship to Amen” and making “divine offerings to Amen.” This woman who once worshipped herself as a goddess in this same city even sinks to “kissing the ground to Wenennefer the lay priest.” This is someone so extraordinarily desperate and disillusioned that she at the least compromises as the supplicant with her enemies. She may even be reneging on the cult she once co-founded, although identifying herself with the Aten and Akhenaten in the

257 Fletcher, p. 286.
259 ‘Akhenaten’ Wikipedia. The given source is Munane, Texts from the Amarna Period. L (1995) This passage has been used by several others.
address suggests surrender was not total, at least at this stage. For any royalty to grovel in submission before any priest was an unimagined humiliation and loss of power, but for a pharaoh to do this before a mere lay priest? Was this a calculated insult? Or was there some rule that Amen’s ordained priests could not confer with heretics?

Was she trying to avert a religious civil war that would have torn Egypt apart? Or what was more likely was she trying to forestall a bloody religious purge of the Atenists by the Amenists? Was the eradication of Atenism more than dealing with carvings and statues? Was it an early version of later religious purges? Considering Nero’s attempted extermination of the Christians, the slaughter of all non-Catholics in Jerusalem in 1099, the carefully calculated, well documented and intensely dramatic 1573 Catholic purge of the French Huguenots, the Spanish Nationalist Catholics sudden and surprising purges of atheistic Republicans and anarchists in 1936, the Nazi holocaust, the Hindu-Moslem purges of 1947, the Yugoslavian mass killings of Moslems and the murderous purges by Isis of all those outside their interpretation of Islam in the Middle East, it is not only very possible, but likely. As the given examples show, humanity has a way of exterminating whole groups of those of different religious beliefs when it can.

Something very similar may have unfolded in ancient Egypt or been averted by her surrender. This is speculative, but what can only be certain is that something extraordinary must have happened to reduce this once extraordinarily proud, self-confident and powerful woman to this state. As her coffin with its decorations from Osirian beliefs evidently suggests, she may have totally renounced Atenist views and returned to orthodoxy. 260 On the other hand, this may have been made without her permission. Why did it end up being used by Tutankhamen? Was this because she had rejected it earlier or was she still alive when he died? If so, she must have ruled as regent and then withdrew from politics and religion. Like her protecting wings on the corners of Akhenaten’s sarcophagus, this coffin works as another piece of evidence showing that she was still alive for some time after Akhenaten’s death.

Unless new discoveries are made very little can be known of or the rule of either Smenkhkara or Neferneferuaten, although her name appears on some objects from Amarna. A statue of Nefertiti shows her middle aged, naked except for a royal crown, careworn and expressing something less than being victorious. Grovelling before a minor priest of those considered enemies is

260 Reeves, p. 179.
definitely not a good indicator of a happy or even a long future. As the Aten cult continued, she may not have organised a surrender as a leader, but changed sides. While Akhenaten died as Pharaoh and we have an idea of his age and a possible cause, her fate remains not conclusively known, but since the 2003 investigations into the three mummies in tomb KV.39 we have some very strong indications of what was Nefertiti’s fate.

The eradication of Atenist records and culture was not immediate. If there was a purge no records of that have been found. Redford estimates that the Aten cult lasted in a reduced form for about ten years after Akhenaten and faded away. This matches the reigns of two former Atenists who followed Neferneferuaten. Within three years of Tutankhamen coming to the throne he left Amarna for Thebes and reverted back to the worship of Amen. Aged Ay followed Tutankhamen as Pharaoh and modern writers using the wine jar docket system, generally accord him a rule of three or four years. The Atenist repression really developed under the next pharaoh, Horemhab. His rule began about thirteen years after Tutankhamen’s started. He defaced or destroyed Atenist objects, depictions and inscriptions and destroyed the records of Atenist rulers in the King lists. Things connected to the renegade Atenists Ay and Tutankhamen got the same treatment. Even paintings in Ay’s tomb were defaced. Every major writer on the topic mentions how almost anything found concerning the Aten or Akhenaten and his depictions were also purged by later pharaohs. Karnak’s statues were a rare exception. His monuments were often demolished to be turned into quarries. They leave little that is clear about the last years of the Atenist era.

The Aten cult may have also failed to supplant the old religions for other reasons than the death of its leader or the royal family’s behaviour. Nefertiti would not have caved in to the Amenists without very good reasons. Despite the Year 9 purges, despite the wealth and power of Akhenaten, the Atenists had probably always been fighting a losing battle. Akhenaten’s Year 9 purge resembles more modern examples in that the vandalism by foreign troops and the systematic destruction of signs of worship never wins hearts and minds.

261 Redford, p. 207.
262 Ibid, p. 205.
263 Silverman, p. 1 p. 6 p. 177 Figure 159 depicts the altered king lists from Abydos. See also the explanatory caption on that page. pp. 182-183; Booth p. 97.
264 Booth, p. 97. See citation 3.
265 Pemberton, text p. 120 and a photograph of the interior of Ay’s tomb shows the defacing. p.121.
From the pharaohs to fascism, from European imperialism, to Bush’s New World Order, most people have preferred to avoid abstracted monotheistic ideas, especially when enforced with violence and persecution. They prefer beliefs with clear heroes and villains, striking symbols, easily understood language and visual images, tangible rewards and pithy little proverbs with wisdom that is easily understood.

Akhenaten did seem to grasp brilliantly only two of these aspects, the use of symbols and the need to simplify language, which he did by making the common language the one used in inscriptions, but he seemed less than brilliant, even sometimes blind to the other points.

In Atenist Egypt the personal failures, exploitative, strange and hypocritical ways of the pharaoh and his queen and gross misjudgements may have been more decisive factors than the strength of tradition and the economic power of the priesthood in stopping Atenist monotheism taking hold. These factors may have combined with the unfamiliarity of the monotheistic ideal to ensure that Atenism never took over the way Islam rapidly would two thousand years later in the Middle East, when Christianity had made the idea of one God familiar. Like Akhenaten, Mohammed died in power without living into old age, but unlike Akhenaten he did live to see his invented religion grow from an idea in one man’s mind to the conquest of the Arabian Peninsula and to see it as an expanding, popular and thriving religion. Akhenaten must have known how brittle his religion was. His personality and actions apparently alienated. The loss of some northern provinces and successful rebellions combined with the very probable arrival of plague during the Atenist period could easily have been interpreted by Egyptians as a curse from the Gods for heresy. These were all important factors which architecture and inscriptions did not depict.

The decisive factor may have been bubonic plague. An anonymous Egyptian account known as the Ebers Papyrus, from around 1500 B.C. describes a spreading plague leaving buboes excreting pus. This reads exactly as a bubonic plague symptom. Towards the end of Akhenaten’s reign, around 1335 B.C. some form of plague hit his capital of Amarna. Archaeologist Eva Panagiotakopulu, who excavated at Amarna, found evidence there of the Nile rat species and cats, both known carriers of parasitic plague carrying fleas. Her mention of the black rat species which originated in India and apparently

was carried on trading ships to Egypt is of interest: this species and the role of shipping frequently gains mention when blame is apportioned for spreading bubonic plague. Panagiotakopulu also found evidence of floods, which would have brought humans and carriers into close proximity. Rats escaping flooding was often how plague spread. Plague must have hit Aket-ten, as a jumble of hundreds of skeletons, clearly hastily buried, were found by archaeologists. Even poor Egyptians were usually buried with some ceremony. In a ‘Plague Prayers’ a document written by a Hittite prince, the plague which ravaged the Hittite empire and killed its king was blamed on Egyptian prisoners brought back from a successful campaign in northern Syria. The plague may have started in the area of Cyprus and spread to Lebanon and could easily have reached Amarna through visiting courtiers, unloaded goods and foreign tradespeople. The King of Alisha delivered by ship five hundred talents of copper with an apology for the small amount due to the effects of plague. Did he also unintentionally send the plague? Alisha included modern day Cyprus and perhaps parts of the adjacent Levantine coast. Wherever it originated, fossilised insect remains found by archaeologists show that rats and their fleas, the carriers of plague, were in the Amarna hovels. There were also the proportionally large numbers of deaths and people vanishing from amongst the royal family in the last four years of Akhenaten’s reign or just after, excepting Tutankhamen they were young and healthy. Four out of six of the royal daughters either died or inexplicably vanished from the records. Meketaten, Kiya, Smenkhkara, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen and Akhenaten himself all died young. At the time of his death he was aged from his late twenties into his middle fifties. While strong evidence emerges for one murder amongst these people dying prematurely and others also died conveniently, plague may have been the cause of these deaths and if it devastated the Aten

267 Garry Victor Hill, *The Black Death in England 1346-1918*. Armidale 2019. The role of these two factors in the spread of plague is dealt with in several different outbreaks mentioned in this work.

268 Walker, Panagiotakopulu, quoted.

269 Quillici; Pringle, p. 29; Other writers mention the plague, Redford, pp. 205-206; Booth, p. 30; Aldred, 1996. p. 289.

270 Cline, p. 66 p. 68.


272 Baikie, He quotes the king’s apology, which is stored in the Amarna archives. p. 114.

cult’s centre, this could have given the cult a blow that left a never robust movement on the wane, even if Akhenaten survived the plague and lived a little longer. Being either the origin of plague within Egypt or a major vector would also explain why the city was abandoned and why Atenism never became a major Egyptian religion under a more politically astute leader than Akhenaten. The Cypriot ship which bore apology about the plague in his land may have infected only isolated Armana alone if it did not stop anywhere before reaching that city. Other vessels also may have followed this pattern. No evidence seems to have emerged that the plague devastated anywhere else in Egypt at this time. Any Amenist leader with the slightest sense of an opportunity would have blamed the plague on Atenism at Amarna and from the evidence available Egyptians would have then had good reason to accept the Amenist accusation.

Pharaoh’s widow and successor may have initially tried to keep the cult going. The Theban tomb inscription does show her being identified with the Aten and her husband. Assuming that she did want Atenism to flourish, in better circumstances she may have succeeded. She would have had to make wiser choices than her husband, but if her religious leadership did come with her succession, her Atenist leadership came too late. It may have not been leadership at all, more custodianship of a belief and an organisation she had wearied of and wanted to dismantle. Jacelyn Williamson stated that Nefertiti may have lived long enough to see the systematic destruction of Atenist art by gangs organised for that purpose.\textsuperscript{274}

Akhenaten’s frequent political ineptitude, indolence, sex life, obsessive behaviour and frequently apathy about the world after leaving Thebes must also have been a major cause for the cult’s failure. Even in Thebes he probably alienated many with these characteristics and strange behaviour, including perhaps ultimately even Nefertiti. The reduction or fading out of Nefertiti’s crucial role and her eventual surrender may have been caused by being alienated by him. This could also have been caused by his involvement with their daughters. It is also possible that she just woke up to his megalomania, the consequences of misrule or the reasons for Atenism’s failure to spread. Teenage fanatics or obsessives frequently burn out their energy and life in a cause and suddenly disillusioned, wearily and bitterly turn against it. As most place her birthdate as about 1370 BC and her ascension to the throne as queen as happening in about 1353 or 1351 BC she was probably between seventeen to nineteen when she became queen and only a year or two older when she started on her own temple at Karnak – and the idealistic and adolescent dreams that are

\textsuperscript{274} Kew.
expressed there. Adolescent radicalism and utopian dreams seldom last beyond the twenties and Nefertiti was aging for beyond that. She was probably around thirty-five or thirty-six when she ascended the throne and therefore almost forty when she probably died after a rule of at least three years, perhaps a little longer.

The deaths of four daughters would have demoralised and drained away the optimism she initially expressed. If Akhenaten capriciously promoted Smenkhkara to do her duties rather than her, this would have also alienated her, even without the possible if unlikely homosexual angle. This assumes that she was the sincere and enthused Atenist depicted in art, architecture and inscriptions. She was not the last wife to go along with her husband’s politics and abandon it when the marriage ended or became troubled.

The answer to Atenim’s failure may have been much simpler and involved a factor few writers consider, but has much to do with human havoc and change: sheer bloody boredom. Examining Atenism beyond a few remarkable hymns reveals it to be tedious, never developing, never varying and never allowing for contrast or complexity. Staring at the sun quickly becomes wearying in minutes or less. Doing that for hours in the same rituals day after day, year after year… If she was not an obsessive was she bored with it all? Or did all these factors entwine?

While ultimately her fate remains inconclusive, recent investigations into a mummy containing strong evidence for being hers reveals her likely fate. Three unwrapped female mummies were found together with others in the Valley of the Kings in one royal tomb in 1898 by French Egyptologist Victor Loret. This tomb, labelled KV. 39 was originally the tomb of Akhenaten’s great-grandfather Amenophis II. This contained several other royal mummies from the eighteenth to the twentieth dynasties, and both the number of contained mummies, their haphazard placement, the unwrapped women, the miscellaneous grave goods from several different rulers and the lack of the usual wall decorations and illustrations indicated that this was a storage area while reburial in proper entombments for all those contained there was carried out. For unknown reasons this did not happen. This act of protective storage was probably to prevent robbery. In Ay’s reign tomb robbing was common and his successor Horemhab had Thutmose IV’s tomb resealed. The presence

275 Baikie, p. 79.

276 “Nefertiti” James M. Deem’s Mummy Tombs; Quillici.

277 Baikie, p. 412. Horemhab’s instructions are quoted.
of three Ramesside era pharaohs in KV 39 shows that the tomb was reopened centuries later and probably for the same reasons. The oddest thing in this odd entombment is the way in a small undecorated side room three nearly naked royal corpses lay on their backs side by side. What was more puzzling than what was there was what was missing. The corpses were not only without the usual sarcophagi, coffins and magic bricks, but were without proper wrapping linen, amulets, shabty, other funerary statuettes, canopic jars or even a thick coating of resin. The oldest was officially described as ‘The Older Lady’ and she was Queen Tye, Akhenaten’s mother. Her identity was eventually confirmed by DNA. Investigators used both hair from a hair lock in Tutankhamun’s tomb and samples from this mummy. 278 The other two mummies were of an unidentified boy in his early teens and another who became entitled ‘The Younger Lady’. While Tye’s body was unmarked, the other two had suffered deliberate damage. The Younger Lady, who may well have been Nefertiti, had her mouth and chest smashed in. This initially looked like the work of grave robbers or those desecrators who hated Atenists and was usually described that way from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning years of the twenty-first. These three were taken from their Amarna tombs by order of Tutankhamen. They were his mother and grandmother. The boy who Luban and Fletcher believed was Akhenaten’s elder brother may have been a son of Amenhotep II, who ruled several decades before – so why was his body placed between two women who lived over two centuries later? 279

In 1999 writer Marianne Luban’s ‘Do We Have the Mummy of Nefertiti?’ was published and she noted many strong physical similarities between depictions of the Queen and ‘The Younger Lady.’ These included not just a facial resemblance, but the long slender neck, long eyelashes, the strong jaw and the shape of the nose. 280 Luban went further and matched Elliot G. Smith’s 1912 measurements of this mummy with an exact blown up to life size photograph of the Berlin bust, getting perfect matches to Smith’s with the nose, forehead and minimal frontal breadth, all three matched to the millimetre. 281


279 Fletcher; Luban; ; Wikipedia; Baines and Mâlek, p. 36.

280 Luban,

281 Ibid.,
Egyptologist Joan Fletcher also noticed a similarity between one of the mummy’s facial features and that of Nefertiti in the famous Berlin bust. Fletcher began investigating in 2003 and found several other similarities. The mummy had scoliosis, before her sculptor built up one shoulder higher than another in the Berlin bust, Nefertiti showed this scoliotic symptom in that depiction. 282 She also had a Nubian wig, jewellery, double pierced ears, a shaven skull, embedded nefer beads which show that she once had a royal pectoral collar, and skull marks caused by wearing a crown. These are all unmistakable marks and accoutrements of royalty and all seven of these factors were consistent with what is known about Nefertiti’s tastes and appearance. These are added to the eight matches and similarities Luban found four years before. All her finds are difficult to explain away as coincidence. Three facial measurements, each matching to the millimetre? Other favourable evidence came in from two university efforts. The Nottingham University Facial Reconstruction unit had in the past reconstructed faces from skulls, sometimes for the famous, more often in police forensics. 283 One of their most important working rules was that the reconstruction team did not know who they were working on and this was applied to The Younger Lady. The resulting reconstruction bore a startling resemblance to the busts of Nefertiti, particularly to that in Plate 43. 284 A separate facial reconstruction in 2018 by the University of Bristol, while slightly different in expression and just a little fuller in the flesh, also brought out the striking facial symmetry, regal appearance and age. 285 The only major difference was a lighter skin colour. This team backed the idea that Nefertiti had been found. Two profile photographs, one of the Plate 43 bust and one of the mummy’s head, when put beside each other, show an extraordinary similarity in size and shape as this mummy also has the elongated

282 Fletcher, p. 369.

283 Ibid., pp. 377-378.

284 Fletcher, p. 378. The artistic representation which appears in the Google entry ‘Nefertiti’ under images bears this out. Unfortunately this image is not in the public domain; Tim Friend, ‘Could This be the Profile of a Queen?’ USA Today 15th August 2003. http://www.usatoday.com/news/science/2003-08-12-ne, accessed March 16th 2019. This article which is reproduced on the website Race and History also reproduces the facial reconstruction. Unfortunately this image is also not in the public domain.

285 Dana Dovey, ‘Ancient Egypt: Mummy of Queen Nefertiti Brought to Life with controversial Fair Skin in 3D Scan.’ Newsweek 2/7/18. No pagination.
head typical of Akhenaten’s family. Not all the evidence for this mummy being Nefertiti was so good; other possibilities cannot be discounted. While this mummy was highly placed adult royalty, so were Nefertiti’s sister, one of the Pharaoh’s five sisters or a daughter of Nefertiti who managed to survive well into adulthood. Other problems that block verification of this being Nefertiti soon emerge. Age at death became one puzzling factor and DNA causes a puzzle.

Four different assessments of the mummy’s age give a range of ages from nineteen to forty-five, with one giving a maximum age of thirty, Wikipedia giving twenty-five to thirty-five and two give the older levels. 287 Bubonic plague and smallpox leave traces on bones, but no mention of these emerges. Only one cause of death has conclusive evidence for it – murder. Fletcher comes close to saying this and others do. These include the Egyptian Mummy Project team using evidence from CT scans, and three writers working separately, Julian Heath, Ashraf Saleem and Doctor Zahi Hawass. In an assessment given years after Fletcher’s 2004 publication Hawass said the cause of death was most likely to be murder as shattered bone had been found in the sinus and there were also blood clots. 288 While the shattered bone could obviously be an effect from either bad mummification or hostile blows given after death, blood clots could not. They could only be developed while alive or very soon after death. Since that statement, more tests and evidence has emerged which bears out his opinion. The Wikipedia entry ‘The Younger Lady’ quotes extensively from ct scans, DNA tests and various experts’ reports. Unless stated otherwise facts and findings mentioned here are from this entry.

For years many assumed that hostile Amenists or tomb robbers smashed in the mummified face of the Young Lady to deny her existence in the afterlife. CT scans and scientific examinations now reveal that this was a lethal blow. Julian Heath was of the opinion she was hit with an axe. Ashraf Saleem opined that she had been kicked by a horse and others mention an accident in a chariot. All three beliefs give some idea of the force of the blow. It was strong enough to break her jaw and knock out several teeth. Another sign that this was murder, not the desecration of a mummy decades later was that very few bone splinters or flesh parts were found in the cavity, someone had cleaned the wound before

286 This double image is unfortunately in copyright, but appears in the Google entry ‘Nefertiti’ under ‘Images.’

287 Deems; ‘Nefertiti’ Wikipedia; Fletcher, p.

288 ‘Nefertiti’ Wikipedia.
burial. They also used subcutaneous filling and resin coated packing to conceal the wounds’ effects. This was more likely to be a response to the murder of royalty than to an accident. Oddly the undertakers did not remove the brain as was standard practice. Retaining the heart within the body was standard practice as it was part of the moment of truth in the afterlife when the sins of the heart were weighed against the goddess Maat’s feather of truth. For this reason the heart was preserved in the body. This was a traditional polytheistic rite, but then so was preserving the body. To destroy the corpse by cremation or destructive hacking was to condemn its soul to destruction. By preserving the three bodies in the storage tomb, but by not removing the brains or having the full mummification process it seems the Atenists retained some traditional burial practices, but not others – or was their work interrupted?

Other evidence for murder is that one arm had suffered fractures from a sharp object and the left hip had been struck by a blade. An angled knife or sword had glanced off her ribs. When Fletcher asked could the blow to the ribs have killed the victim she was told the individual could have bled to death. To this writer it seems that the arm injuries could have been defensive as she attempted to ward off an attack. A large part of the chest had been removed, perhaps because resin stuck it to the royal collar; beads were still held in the body. This missing chest section may also have borne other stab or axe wounds. One hand was cut off at the wrist. Was this an assassin or the work of thieves unable to immediately remove rings? A hole was in the top of the skull would be odd for thieves to inflict. While it could be argued that these blows were left by thieves trying to get amulets as these were always wrapped in the mummy’s linen wrappings, no traces of linen were found within any of the wounds.

While a lone attacker could have at first used a knife and then used an axe or a mace, the use of two weapons, one with a blade and the other capable of smashing a face in, suggests two attackers as being more likely. The victim may have been stabbed after taking defensive blows to the arms and then taken the axe blow to the face either while standing or lying down dying. It was probably meant to deny her the afterlife, suggesting Amenists. Another possibility that could merge with this afterlife denial works as a second royal denial. As a dead pharaoh’s successor succeeded by the ceremony of opening the mouth of his predecessor, this blow could have been a way of denying the succession,

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290 Ibid., p. 374.
291 Ibid.,
Plate 54. Elliot Grafton Smith’s drawing of ‘The Younger Lady.’ Wikipedia
probably to Atenists, although Nefertiti’s deal with the Amenists could have led Atenists to block an Amenist successor. This assumes that the mummy was that of a female pharaoh. If it was not, an unknown royal woman inspired an extraordinary ferocity for unknown reasons.

The lack of linen also applies to the wounds on the unidentified royal boy in his early teens who was placed between Queen Tye and The Younger Lady. He had a cavity made in the chest made either by a robber’s blow. He had been hit with strength five times in the left side with an axe. Why? The thin residue of resin which had been placed on all three bodies and linen would not have made any valuable encrusted enough to warrant several crushing axe blows. The left side was used to remove internal organs through a careful surgical operation using a blade, not wrecked by hacking with an axe. It is possible that this was done to remove a gold covering over the incision and the blows to the chest were to remove jewellery. Ancient Egyptian funeral valuables were not placed on the left side. Valuables were usually placed on the chest, hung around the neck or worn as anklets or bracelets.

With both victims the wounds were not of the type inflicted by robbers generations later and were much closer to the time of death. Fletcher points out that the weapons used on the two mummies were rare and expensive in ancient Egypt and so unlikely to be used by tomb robbers. Soldiers, palace guards and executioners used such weapons. One Amarna relief does show a bodyguard with an axe. History records several cases of groups of supposed underlings or bodyguards killing their superior, particularly in the ancient world. Phillip of Macedon, Darius, Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Domitian, Commodus, Caracalla, Shaka and Indira Gandhi suffered such a fate.

The obvious murder of royalty was an extraordinary event, as was the absence of sarcophagi for royalty. Both could be explained if the mummies were Atenists. Royalty could not be left unburied, but heretic Atenist sarcophagi could hardly be tolerated in an Amenist tomb. The Younger Lady’s face does have the elegance of the Nefertiti bust, but while Fletcher has claimed strong evidence for this being Nefertiti, she has never claimed absolute certainty on the identification, despite media reports that she did. This was wise as Hawass, Luban and others separately rejected such a positive identification, and for good reasons as whoever this woman was, DNA showed she was the mother of

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292 Fletcher, p. 373.
293 Ibid., 376-377
294 Fletcher, pp.378-379; Friend.
As DNA also showed that Akhenaten was Tutankhamen’s father ‘the younger lady’ was a royal wife to him. DNA tests also revealed that she was the daughter of Tye and Amenophis III. If this was Nefertiti this would make Akhenaten and Nefertiti full brother and sister and so explain their facial similarity and many of the odd things about the physical depictions of their inbred children. However, if accepted this identification hits another problem. Akhenaten had five sisters listed, so why doesn’t the name of Nefertiti appear amongst them? Why is her sister Mutbenret also unlisted amongst these five daughters of Amenophis III and Queen Tye? Only Mutbenret is mentioned as her sister. Critics also have a point when stating that the royal harems had hundreds of women who could also fit the identifying points Fletcher noted. The placing of the arms in the regal position was not restricted to pharaohs. Doubly pierces ears and Nubian wigs were a common 18th Dynasty fashion.

However how many women would have skull indentations from wearing a crown or be permitted to wear a pectoral necklace? How many had the elongated skull or Luban’s exactly matching measurements? The identity of the younger lady and her age at death are all ultimately inconclusive, but the best evidence from this mummification points to this being Nefertiti.

If this mummy is a great maybe in Ancient history, new work has made one of its great certainties a probability. Nefertiti’s bust is one of the world’s most famous images. Until recently it was one of the very few certainties about her. Now in the television documentary The Nefertiti Bust raises doubts.

The first doubt the documentary raises concerns the authenticity of the bust. The evidence here against authentication appears mostly weak and can be easily disproven. Their main witness in the documentary, Shaun Greenhalgh, a convicted forger, expresses his opinions and revealing his expertise. He lists the following reasons:

The face looks like a modern depiction.

The bust does not look thousands of years old. The paint looks bright.

The broken bits are on the edges and not on the nose and chin. Breaks in those last-mentioned places are common and lower the value considerably.

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296 Ibid.,

297 Deems; ‘Nefertiti’ Wikipedia.
Plate 56. An unfinished sculpted head of Nefertiti. Although she looks slightly older than in the famous bust, in this portrait she has the same regal refined expression. Photograph: Sat Ra - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0. - https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9870911
Plate 57. Another bust of Nefertiti, showing the same refined regular features as in the famous complete bust. Egyptian Museum Cairo. Photographer Keith Schegili-Roberts. CC BY-SA 3-. Creative Commons/Wikipedia.
Forgers put breaks in the edges to make fakes look authentic. He identifies these as hallmarks of fakery.

The face had one eye which was authentically ancient. The forger supposedly could not find another because finding such pairs are rare now.

In response:

Most Amarna art looks modern. Peruse the examples here.

The same comment applies to the bright colours. The bright paint was shown being tested in the documentary. No evidence of modern chemical usage was found.

The breaks were in the ears, and the cobra, the most delicate sections.

Nefertiti may have been blind in one eye, or perhaps the ancient sculptor also had trouble making or finding an absolutely perfect pair for such a perfectly symmetrical face.

The more recently revealed portraits of Nefertiti shown here in plates 44 and 45 and in plates 56 and 57 bear strong resemblances to the more famous supposedly forged bust. Plate 57 has the strongest resemblance, not just in the regularity and strength of the features, but in revealing the same sense of regality, self-confidence and winesomeness. Are these strikingly similar portraits also forgeries and if they are, why were they kept out of sight for decades? It is much more creditable to believe that they are all genuine portraits of the same person.

Other evidence presented in the documentary for some form of fraud was more creditable. The bust just happened to be found on the day German royalty visited. Coincidence? Replanting? Presenting a prepared forgery? It would be worthwhile to see how many dignitaries visited over the period of the dig and how the prince who was there on the day responded. Was he pleased, bored, or inspired to make a donation or hopefully to purchase? Did he have anything to do with financing, encouraging or authorising the dig? The documentary does not explain the motive for setting up the find to his visit. At present it seems just coincidence. More unsettling was the revelation that in 1926 Borchardt, the man in charge of the 1912 Amarna excavation, was involved in personally selling a well-made forged bust of an ancient Egyptian. It is unclear if he knew it was forged or not, but the document of sale shown on television was a clear, dated, account with his clear signature.

On the evidence available the bust remains genuine.

The second reassessment was caused by a 2009 cat scan. This revealed that beneath the beautiful stucco exterior was a limestone carving that showed
the same woman, but somewhat older. 298 This revelation also suggests that the bust is genuine, for why would a forger go to the long, laborious process of creating a portrait in limestone and then hide it by doing another over it? A displeased queen or a sculptor fearful of displeasing a queen would hide such a portrait under a more flattering stucco image. If the stucco face was that of a woman aged around thirty, to this writer the limestone image was of a woman in her late thirties at least, more likely to be about forty-five. This is another piece of evidence to suggest that Nefertiti outlived Akhenaten by years. Several other busts reproduced here are were not available to earlier writers. They show strong similarities to the Borchardt bust and others show that she aged and was pensive in her last years.

Her murder plausibly fits into the unfolding events after Akhenaten’s death and the hatred the Aten cult engendered. It may have been that she was surrendering to the Amenists in a futile attempt to save her own life. Atenist fanatics could have killed her for being a traitor. Others could have wanted Smenkhkara on the throne, because he was a male, more malleable or more of an Amenist than an Atenist. Tying in with this Nefertiti was too assertive, provocative and had followed or acquiesced to Akhenaten’s disastrous policies. Was Smenkhkara also murdered because he was not as malleable as people initially thought? Or did he die of plague? Whatever the reason the wine jars show that he died young. Tutankhamen probably succeeded him, not Nefertiti and that very young prince was definitely more pliable.

From Hittite archives and a document Deeds of Suppiluliuma written by the same prince who wrote the plague prayers we have a vivid glimpse into the intrigues of the Egyptian court after Akhenaten. Baikie reproduces the full document, which is unfortunately not dated. 299 An unnamed widowed Egyptian queen without a son to become king wrote to the Hittite king saying that she wanted to marry one of his sons rather than one of her courtiers. His son, a prince would rule with her over Egypt. After an envoy was sent to verify the astounding and unprecedented offer and returned with the queen’s curt affirmation and a request to move fast, the envoy returned repeating the message. Zannanza, a Hittite prince was sent to Egypt. 300 However his party were ambushed on the way and Zannanza was killed; whether by bandits who had no knowledge of who they attacked or by Egyptians under royal orders

298 Kew.


300 Cline; Carter. p. 11.
remains unclear. Although Nefertiti, and Smenkhkara’s perhaps widow Meritaten are suspects, many writers assume that this marriage offer was made by Tutankhamun’s widow, Ankhshenamen. A teenager, she was trying to hold onto power and avoid a repulsive marriage to her aged vizier, the successor to her dead husband and future pharaoh Ay. This now seems likely as a ring with her name and his showing a marriage turned up in Egypt’s antiques market. Unfortunately soon after being sighted it vanished. The offer to the Hittites must have been made in the usual seventy days given between one Pharaoh’s death and the ascension of the next. The seventy days was mandatory for the preparation of the pharaoh’s body. After that time, when the dead pharaoh was entombed by presiding over the ceremony, and especially by personally enacting the freeing of the Ka ceremony by the opening of the mouth, the heir to be became the next Pharaoh, gaining regal power more than by any subsequent coronation. This would explain several pieces of evidence in the intrigue with the Hittites, the short blunt wording of the message, the queen’s abrupt anger at the delay by the sending of Hittite envoys, and much about the odd burial of Tutankhamun. Usually pharaohs began their tombs and the assembling of burial goods early in their reigns, but often this complicated, lengthy process was delayed and sudden deaths usually caused an incomplete tomb. The seventy days preparatory process for the body often doubled as a time to prepare the tomb and assemble goods as has happened here, so with that ample timespan why was so much jumbled, carelessly done, rushed, slovenly or incomplete? Tests show that even the wall painting and the famous gold mask were also rushed. Howard Carter was of the opinion that even in the burial chamber the obsequies had been hurriedly performed. The tomb had been robbed, but much of the jumbling of goods does not look like thieves ransacking the tomb. Why would thieves only overturn a chariot? The tomb was resealed, but not made orderly. The successor was usually the one to oversee the tomb and funeral preparations, but what if this succession was unresolved? Was there a power struggle which Ay eventually won? Much about Tutankhamen’s death was odd,

301 Ibid.,
302 Aldred, p. 184.
304 Carter, previous citation; Nadezna,
305 Carter, p.108.
306 Carter, 193-194. Eyewitness account text and a photograph taken at the time.
even apart from being the fourth young ruler to suddenly die in about thirteen or fourteen years. Many theories about his death have been advanced, including murder. Too much resin coating on his corpse and extremely rough handling of his body in the 1920s have combined to cause damage which makes most conclusions from autopsies turbid. 307 There are some exceptions; Tutankhamen did have malaria which could have killed him and his left lung and their ribs were crushed. 308 Tests showed that this could have been the result of being run over by a chariot and this would explain the absence of his heart. Some artwork does show him riding a chariot while shooting arrows at his enemies and this was assumed to be only a propaganda exercise, designed to reinforce traditional Egyptian expectations. But what if he did try to do this? Six chariots were in his tomb. 309 Carter describes them in detail, but does not describe them as showing signs of frequent usage – or of being brand new. 310 1920s photographs Carter includes do show nicks and shattered sections on some wheels, one of them bad enough to stop further use and to certainly cause an accident. 311 Filmed tests show that riding a replica of an ancient Egyptian chariot was extremely difficult and dangerous for a healthy well-built man. 312 This was even without the dangers coming from riding a chariot into a battle. Did Tutankhamen die because he felt obliged to act as a pharaoh should by riding in a chariot? Or because he wished to? Carter found so many depictions of the boy pharaoh as a hunter, archer, charioteer and a general sportsman that he concluded that this was what he was. 313 What is more likely is that these depictions reflected his wishes or expectations of royalty. How could a club footed malaria victim be an active sportsman? His collection of over a hundred walking sticks found in his tomb, many of them showing usage, the three depictions in this work showing him needing a club to stand up and the depiction of him as an archer needing to fire from a sitting position, all indicate he would have been a hopeless

307 Nadezna,
308 Ibid.,
309 ‘Tut’s Treasures’;
310 Carter, pp. 113-116.
311 Ibid photographic evidence
312 Ibid.,
313 Carter, p.92
charioteer. 314 If he suddenly died on campaign far off from Thebes this would explain his rushed, odd burial. The news of his death and then the body would have taken weeks to reach the capitol and then everything would be rushed to meet the seventy days of death deadline.

After being prepared for burial without the usual preservation of his heart, Tutankhamen was buried in what was a corridor, arranged to be a woman’s tomb. 315 Objects from the reigns of Nefertiti and Smenkhkara may also be included. Since the 1920s the thousands of goods in Tutankhamen’s tomb have led many to believe that if a minor pharaoh who reigned so briefly had so much, and much of that of great value, then surely the long ruling great pharaohs must have had great hoards beyond imagining. A more likely reality merges with the way that the process of obliterating Atenism and the Atenist pharaohs from Egyptian memory was well underway at this time. Burying so many objects from the Atenists’ reigns was part of this process. By keeping possession of them, Ay would add to suspicions that he was still an Atenist. As a former leading member of the discredited, now persecuted cult he had to allay suspicions to stabilise his power. The way funerary goods were jumbled together and included objects from Akhenaten’s rule suggest this as well as the way preparations were rushed. All this makes sense if Ay was rushing the long burial process so as to become Pharaoh before Zannanza arrived; by doing this he would foil the queen’s plot. But which queen? She remains unnamed. As Eric H. Cline has pointed out, this could be Nefertiti. 316 Like Ankhsenamen, she matched the brief description gleaned from the facts, being a pharaoh’s widow without a living son. Most of the evidence does point to Ankhsenamen, but one thing does not. Whichever queen it was, she had betrayed Egypt to its worst enemy and for an Egyptian such as Ay to marry her would obviously seem foolish and be aligning with someone untrustworthy and treasonable. This could taint any husband as being a suspect in her treachery, especially as Zannanza’s father had launched a successful war against Egypt’s northern provinces in revenge for his son’s death. Ay was a trimmer; he must have had strong survival instincts to retain his position through four brief and troubled reigns before becoming Pharaoh himself. It could well be that the intriguer was not Ankhsenamen, but Nefertiti and she paid for her reason with her life. Both

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314 See plates 14 51 and 52. Tutankhaman at archery from a chair is based on the metal screen in the collection of the British Academy. This can be viewed on the internet at Tutankhamun ‘Images.’

315 Nadezma.

316 Cline, pp. 68-70.
women vanish from history after the murder of the Hittite prince. Nefertiti remains an enigma.

Even our image of Nefertiti as a great beauty might be a construction. Although less famous constructions from the studio of Thutmose also show her to be striking and regal, later works show her as aged and not so powerful or regal. She may have been doing the reverse of what Akhenaten did with his image in art. The recent examination in *The Nefertiti Bust* also suggests that Nefertiti was not the classic beauty that the famous image suggested. Recreating a grid that ancient Egyptians used to construct carved portraits and matching it to the bust, Dimitri Labri showed that the facial symmetry was absolutely perfect, he claimed that it was statistically impossible for a human face to be so perfectly symmetrical down to tiny details. While that claim sounds dubious, such symmetry rarely exists and his statement does gain credence when the same perfect symmetry appears on Akhenaten’s face – and Professor Harco Williams shows that these two depictions when merged together, form what would be a perfect match, except for Akhenaten’s chin being slightly longer. How should this be interpreted? As a megalomaniac Pharaoh insisting that his partner be depicted as a reflection of himself? As a megalomaniac and narcissist attracted to someone with a face strongly resembling his? As brother and sister bearing the same facial resemblance? As Akhenaten and Nefertiti emphasising equality? As the pair of them emphasising male-female duality in the new religion where they replaced the old gods? As usual with Atenist primary source material, speculation grows on thin evidence.

Akhenaten was definitely not a shrewd man when it came to dealing with people and for establishing a religion: especially for a radical one facing powerful opposition, that must become an essential skill. In assessing him E.A.W. Budge praised his virtues of swiftness in decisions, cleverness, and courage. He could have added originality, benevolence and an optimistic breadth of vision, “but with all these gifts he lacked a practical knowledge of men and things.” ③¹⁷ Whatever Nefertiti did, the responsibility for the unfolding disaster apparently rests with Akhenaten, as he apparently made the crucial decisions and mistakes during the early years when Atenist power looked secure, if not popular and thriving.

The truth of Budge’s succinct assessment gains proof from the Amarna archives. A complaint from the Assyrian king there reveals much that architecture, art and beautiful hymns does not reveal. His emissaries complained

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③¹⁷ Budge, p. 77.
that while Akhenaten did everything in the sunlight, they were forced to stand in
the hot sun until they were nearly dead. The king wrote back, recounting this
in vexed and contemptuous tones, suggesting that if Akhenaten wanted to kill
himself by doing what his emissaries endured this would be good. For one
king to write to another like this suggests that Akhenaten was held in contempt,
seen as mad and was not considered a danger. This also reads as coming from a
mentality modern readers understand.

The idea that Egyptians worked by different values and beliefs we cannot
comprehend or make value judgements on does not work in this example.
Nobody likes being forced to stand in the sun until they are near collapse from
heat exhaustion, not over three thousand years ago, not now. This response also
shows a megalomaniac detachment from the consideration of what others might
be experiencing because they had been put in a real situation because of
impractical dreams. Atenist architecture shows one reality: enjoyable moments
celebrated in the sun. The emissaries’ complaints captures another: that same
worship, if prolonged, could be what only an obsessive, a megalomaniac, or a
lunatic would enjoy.

As the first books of the Old Testament left no known evidence for their
original dating Atenism must be considered the world’s first known religion to
be monotheistic. Its importance goes beyond the muddled origins of
monotheism. It was also the world’s first documentable major attempt at a
utopia and its dismal failure in reality repeatedly emerges over the millennia
since then, often with startling similarities. Atenism gave us the template for
idealistic visions in writing which became impractical tyrannies in practice. The
way this has happened over a timespan of nearly three and a half thousand years
and in myriad locales, in both religious and secular cultures is telling us
something about the human personality. It also raises other questions. If humans
can envision such things, can they ever make them a reality? Why does the
nightmare so frequently emerge? This happens in both deprived societies and
those with abundant resources, such as Atenist Egypt, Europe and the United
States.

Despite this dismal record, no revolution is a total failure; Akhenaten left a dual legacy. The negative aspect alienates and with reason: one
of the world’s first detailed records of a tyrant emerges. The megalomania,
inflicted suffering,

318 Redford, pp. 232-235.
319 Ibid,
Plate 58. A wall decoration from Akhenaten’s tomb showing the royal family and others mourning for their eldest daughter. Wikipedia

incest, negligent misrule and massive and blatant hypocrisy are all clearly evident. Even so, even despite his failure in his time and the massive conceit within his religion, he represented a great moment in human progress.

To see this point compare the Hymn to the Aten with the religions that were there in his time. Children were sacrificed by being burned alive on the altars of Moloch. Human sacrifice and being buried alive to serve kings in the afterlife were not extremely rare events. Enforced religious donations and mulcted taxes kept people in grinding poverty. In Egypt people grovelled, praised and pleaded before statues of sheep. Other kingdoms could show similar scenes. Superstition left people living lives in fear. Priests made sure that merciless, erratic and capricious gods ruled their minds: fear of both gods and priests controlled their lives for the benefit of the priesthood. Their gods put all others who worshipped similar, but not identical gods into a contemptuous category. This meant that they were lesser beings. Lesser beings are always fit for conquest, sacrifice, slavery or destruction.

Despite their many failings and hypocrisies and whatever the reality of Atenist tolerance and methods of enforcement, Akhenaten and Nefertiti was the first historic figures to offer all of the world’s people an optimistic, merciful, stable and benevolent religious worldview. While other religions divided people into the good and the evil based on skin colour, customs, language or their locale the atenists told them that they could all live in the light of one benevolent God. This benevolence was not a reward for donations or obedience or good deeds, it was for existing. At least in its theoretical concept of God Atenism was free of the superstition, capriciousness, degradation, emotional blackmail, fear, cruelty and mercilessness that had dominated both the world’s religions and the lives of all humans: such religions would do so again unopposed soon after Akhenaten’s death. They would continue to do so until Moses gave the laws of Jehovah, King David composed his psalms. Buddha explained and Jesus preached.

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Appendices

Appendice 1

The Co-Regency?

Cyril Aldred in his 1972 biography Akhenaten: Pharaoh of Egypt presents the theory that for the first twelve years of his seventeen year long reign Akhenaten was not sole ruler, but was co-ruler with his father. This has massive implications. It means that Akhenaten was not the solitary religious genius suddenly producing and enforcing his monotheistic religion; his father was his partner in what was a development from early in his reign. It also means that Akhenaten and Nefertiti were not the unmitigated political disaster as their critics declare: the last twelve years of the reign of Amenophis III continued his earlier successes, but with the theory of co-regency would take some blame for the beginnings of the unfolding disaster.

This dual rule sometimes happened in the New Kingdom’s XVIII Dynasty. Called a co-regency, the heir to the throne shared rule as a junior partner, gaining experience, connections and putting his own people into positions. This co-regency and the policies that came with it also obviously ensured an orderly succession and a continuation of established policies.

The evidence that Aldred presents for Amenophis III ruling with his son for just over two thirds of his son’s disastrous reign is tantalising, complex, sometimes weak on closer examination and sometimes the most likely explanation. It is also frequently open to other explanations. Egyptologists divide on the issue. Before assessing the evidence for co-regency presented by Aldred and others it is important to stress that to the best of this writer’s knowledge in a period of twelve years no decree, inscription, communication or

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eyewitness account bears their two names or their name with the title co-regent, has been revealed. This would be the clearest proof for this dual reign.

The evidence which comes close to this is that an inscription in a vizier’s tomb bearing cartouches of both pharaohs together. These were not inscribed lightly anywhere, let alone in an important tomb. The vizier served both men, late in Amenophis’s reign and before Akhenaten’s move to Amarna.

Four papyri records of a trader’s dealings are stronger evidence for Aldred’s argument. A trader dates transactions in Years 27 and 28 and then in Year 2 of Akhenaten’s reign without other dealings between them, with the same people involved and with promises of rewards in future for services given – at least thirteen years later as Amenophis ruled for thirty-eight years? Over a gap of two years this is plausible. Over a gap of thirteen years of more several aspects of this trader’s record becomes extremely unlikely.

An Amarna stela from Year 9 of Akhenaten’s reign shows a tired Amenophis with Queen Tye, both under the Aten’s rays, as those rays appear in later Atenist art. If this is a later depiction of a dead Pharaoh, why make this years later, especially as it does not flatter the dead?

Why should Amenophis’s name appear several times on Amarna buildings and Aldred refer to the supposedly dead king owning property there? Consider that Amarna was started five years after Akhenaten and Nefertiti ascended the throne. Akhenaten did praise earlier pharaohs in Aketaten, building shrines to them and one each to his mother, grandfather, sister and deceased daughter, but without references to Amen or other gods. 321 Was his father then praised after being erased at Karnak?

Despite the strength of this evidence the other evidence for a co-regency is circumstantial, very open to interpretation and inconclusive. 322 The other side also has a strong case.

Aldred mentions decorations and illustrations where the two men appear. In one of these Akhenaten offers tribute to a living Amenophis III garbed in jubilee robes; which he celebrated in Year Thirty of his reign and again in Year 37. This is what a prince would do, not necessarily a co-regent.

Aldred mentions a wine jar at Aketaten with the dates Year 27/Year 28 of a pharaonic reign on the lid. Dating royal jars has become an acceptable way of

321 Baikie, p. 278.

322 Aldred, pp. 90-99.
establishing the start, length and the endings of pharaonic rule as the jars stored the Pharaoh’s collected property, whether it was wine, grains or other perishable goods. Aldred’s logic is that as wine is a perishable good and Amenophis ruled for another eleven years, the contained wine could not have lasted that long in utopia’s searing heat, therefore Amarna and Akhenaten’s co-reign must have begun soon after Amenophis III year dates of 27/28. On examination this becomes one of the weakest arguments for a co-regency. Aldred states that Amenophis III’s name was not on the jar. As the ancient world’s large thick, stone wine jars were built for long transportation distances and were made to be durable, they have a very long life. This jar could have easily come from some other pharaoh from even centuries before. Aldred’s argument that jars are seldom sent empty also fails. Amarna was a new city built in a rush, with many river borne goods being unloaded and needing storage before spoilage or heat wrecked them. Why not send for needed jars and being in a rush, not redate them? No evidence that the jar did contain wine or anything else is presented.

Aldred argues that Akhenaten’s supposed celebratory jubilee at Amarna in his Year 12 was really a coronation after the death of his father. If this is so why was it called a jubilee and not a coronation? Unspecified condolences sent by the King of Mitanni do sound like the type of thing said if his father had just died, but this is vague and hardly even evidence, let alone proof. Similarly amongst gifts sent by the king of Cyprus was a jar of perfume which he advises Akhenaten to pour on his head now that “he can sit down on his royal throne.” Apart from the obvious implication about thrones, royalty having oil or perfume poured on their head is anointing them into monarchy, a part of the coronation process. As Aldred mentions that Queen Tye died around this time the condolences may have been for her. The other presented evidence for this being really a coronation is that Pharaohs celebrated their first jubilee after thirty years; they did not celebrate jubilees so early.

Against the argument for co-regency are several strong points and others that strongly infer sole rule. As Aldred states, early Amarna letters are addressed to Akhenaten and they are from early in his reign, no mention of Amenophis III as joint ruler appears. Some letters from Year 30 of Amenophis’s reign are in the collection, but where is Akhenaten mentioned as co-ruler? For foreign rulers to continually ignore either the junior Pharaoh in the Letters from Year 30 onwards or the senior pharaoh in later official

323 Fletcher, p. 314.

324 Aldred, p. 88.
correspondence goes beyond being odd, it would have been an insult and an insult to the strongest power in their world, one they begged gold from.

Reverend Baikie does not indulge on either side in the co-regency debate, but he does supply interesting information which is useful on the topic. He reproduces passages from foreign office communiques sent by King Tushratta of Mitanni and Egypt’s vassals and allies which are appeals for help. They describe the dangers in the north-east where Hittites advance on Egypt’s allies, bandits attack merchants and the kings’ messengers and disloyal intriguers emerge. In this continuing situation undated appeals are made, first to Amenophis and then to Akhenaten, never to them together or even to both in separate communications in the same time frame, but they appear in a sequence. It is as if Akenhaten has succeeded to the throne and then like his father, does nothing with the problem he has inherited. Aldred refers to one of these early letters from Tushratta, pointing out that he advises Akhenaten to listen to his mother. Reverend Baikie reproduces the letter more fully and it becomes clear why King Tushratta gives this advice; Tushratta and Amenophis discussed many things together and now only Ty now knows them. This comment clearly only makes sense only if Amenophis III has died or gone into a coma or a vegetative state without updating Akhenaten on relations with Tushrutta, one of the most important rulers in the Middle East. If they were co-regents would Amenophis have kept Akhenaten out of foreign affairs? This is unlikely. Tushratta’s letter reads as if he is welcoming a young Akhenaten to his new world of kingship. Unfortunately this letter, which could have settled the issue if dated, bears no date.

The way Amenophis III continued to build temples to the traditional gods during this hypothetical co-regency would also be extremely unlikely, for soon after his father’s death Akhenaten was defacing those same Amenist monuments, removing his father’s name from them and persecuting Amenist priests. He even defaced the plural word “gods” and changed his name from Amenophis IV to Akhenaten. His cartouche (without his father’s) was inscribed in the new religion during his early ruling years in Thebes. Unlikely as it already sounds this point becomes even more obvious when considering that

326 Aldred., p. 88
327 Baikie, p. 241 quoting from the letter.
328 Baikie, p. 258; Wilkinson, p. 292; Fletcher p. 20.
329 Baikie, pp. 256-259.
Amenophis III owed his position to the accredited belief that he was directly descended from Amen, as his father was the god incarnate. In annual Amenist ceremonies Pharaohs would perform sacred secret rites in Amenist temples where their souls would become one with the God and then they would emerge to be worshipped as their power was enhanced. Throwing this away would have made him a partner to his own discrediting. He had linked himself to the solar cults, but this was to make his kingship stronger than ever, not to make himself the obliterator of the polytheistic religion. The defacement of his name from memorials and cartouches meant obliteration in the afterlife. Would Amenophis III have consigned himself to hell? Such an act only makes sense if like his son he had renounced Amen and become a monotheistic Atenist, but where is there a joint declaration to this effect? Atenist declarations are in the name of Akhenaten or Nefertiti or refer to them. Akhenaten’s defilements and insistence on being the only prophet, interpreter and way to the new god are not sharing power in a co-regency, but replacing it: if his father was still alive Akhenaten would be a usurper. Would he have done all this and the defilements in Karnak while his father was not only alive, but senior pharaoh and therefore able to use Egypt’s forces to oust him? Surely if Amenophis III was still alive the priesthood and the many traditionalists would have appealed to him to restore traditional order, but no such appeal seems to exist. Would Amenophis III, after spending so much time, enthusiasm energy and wealth on building temples, suddenly go on a destructive rampage to destroy them?

It is possible that Amenophis III, with his health, energy and perhaps mental powers failing, virtually abdicated and being isolated, let his son do as he wished or was unable to stop him. This would explain the possible traces of what is interpreted as a co-regency. It would also disprove the idea some Egyptologists have that he was the co-founder with his son and Nefertiti of Atenism. The co-regency debate remains almost stalemated, with those opposing it winning on points.

If the co-regency did exist it would mean that only five years should be dated as Akhenaten’s reign after Amenophis’s death. That event is given by various modern historians as happening anywhere from 1378 BC to 1351 BC. In chronologies Akhenaten’s longer solo reign of seventeen years is frequently added after his father’s death. If the co-regency was so these chronologies are

330 Baikie, p. 310,
331 Fletcher, p. 19.
332 Wilkinson, pp. 262-263.
twelve years out – and so are events after them. For these reasons no chronology has been included in this work and dates are used sparingly and are only indicative.

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Appendice 2

The Hymn to the Aten taken from Ay’s tomb wall.

A Hymn of praise of Her-aakhuti, the living one exalted in the Eastern Horizon in his name of Shu who is in the Aten, who liveth for ever and ever, the living and great Aten, he who is in the Set-Festival, the lord of the Circle, the Lord of the Disk, the Lord of heaven, the Lord of earth, the lord of the House of the Aten in Aakhut-Aten, [of] the King of the South and the North, who liveth in Truth, lord of the Two Lands (i.e., Egypt), NEFER-KHEPERU-RA UA-EN-RA, the son of Ra, who liveth in Truth, Lord of Crowns, AAKHUN-ATEN, great in the period of his life, [and of] the great royal woman (or wife) whom he loveth, Lady of the Two Lands, NEFER-NEFERU-ATEN NEFERTITI, who liveth in health and youth for ever and ever.

2

He (i.e., Ai, a Fan-bearer and the Master of the King's Horse) saith: Thy rising [is] beautiful in the horizon of heaven, O Aten, ordainer of life. Thou dost shoot up in the horizon of the East, thou fillest every land with thy beneficence. Thou art beautiful and great and sparkling, and exalted above every land. Thy arrows (i.e., rays) envelop (i.e., penetrate) everywhere all the lands which thou hast made.

3

Thou art as Ra. Thou bringest [them] according to their number, thou subduest them for thy beloved son. Thou thyself art afar off, but thy
beams are upon the earth; thou art in their faces, they [admire] thy goings. Thou settest in the horizon of the west, the earth is in darkness, in the form of death. Men lie down in a booth wrapped up in cloths, one eye cannot see its fellow. If all their possessions, which are under their heads, be carried away they perceive it not.

Every lion emergeth from his lair, all the creeping things bite, darkness [is] a warm retreat (?). The land is in silence. He who made them hath set in his horizon. The earth becometh light, thou shootest up in the horizon, shining in the Aten in the day, thou scatterest the darkness. Thou sendest out thine arrows (i.e., rays), the Two Lands make festival, [men] wake up, stand upon their feet, it is thou who raisest them up. [They] wash their members, they take [their apparel]

and array themselves therein, their hands are [stretched out] in praise at thy rising, throughout the land they do their works. Beasts and cattle of all kinds settle down upon the pastures, shrubs and vegetables flourish, the feathered fowl fly about over their marshes, their feathers praising thy Ka (person). All the cattle rise up on their legs, creatures that fly and insects of all kinds

spring into life, when thou risest up on them. The boats drop down and sail up the river, likewise every road openeth (or showeth itself) at thy rising, the fish in the river swim towards thy face, thy beams are in the depths of the Great Green (i.e., the Mediterranean and Red Seas). Thou makest offspring to take form in women, creating seed in men. Thou makest the son to live in the womb of his mother, making him to be quiet that he crieth not; thou art a nurse

in the womb, giving breath to vivify that which he hath made. [When] he droppeth from the womb ... on the day of his birth [he] openeth his mouth in the [ordinary] manner, thou providest his sustenance. The young bird in the egg speaketh in the shell, thou givest breath to him inside it to make him to live. Thou makest for him his mature form so that he can crack the shell [being] inside the egg. He cometh forth from the egg, he chirpeth with all his might, when he hath come forth from it (the egg), he
walketh on his two feet. O how many are the things which thou hast made! They are hidden from the face, O thou

One God, like whom there is no other. Thou didst create the earth by thy heart (or will), thou alone existing, men and women, cattle, beasts of every kind that are upon the earth, and that move upon feet (or legs), all the creatures that are in the sky and that fly with their wings, [and] the deserts of Syria and Kesh (Nubia), and the Land of Egypt. Thou settest every person in his place. Thou providest their daily food, every man having the portion allotted to him, [thou] dost compute the duration of his life. Their tongues are different in speech, their characteristics (or forms), and likewise their skins [in colour], giving distinguishing marks to the dwellers in foreign lands. Thou makest Hapi (the Nile) in the Tuat (Underworld), thou bringest it when thou wishest to make mortals to live, inasmuch as thou hast made them for thyself, their Lord who dost support them to the uttermost, O thou Lord of every land, thou shinest upon them, O ATEN of the day, thou great one of majesty. Thou makest the life of all remote lands. Thou settest a Nile in heaven, which cometh down to them.

It maketh a flood on the mountains like the Great Green Sea, it maketh to be watered their fields in their villages. How beneficent are thy plans, O Lord of Eternity! A Nile in heaven art thou for the dwellers in the foreign lands (or deserts), and for all the beasts of the desert that go upon feet (or legs). Hapi (the Nile) cometh from the Tuat for the land of Egypt. Thy beams nourish every field; thou risest up [and] they live, they germinate for thee. Thou makest the Seasons to develop everything that thou hast made:

The season of Pert (i.e., Nov. 16-March 16) so that they may refresh themselves, and the season Heh (i.e., March 16-Nov. 16) in order to taste thee. 1 Thou hast made the heaven which is remote that thou mayest shine therein and look upon everything that thou hast made. Thy being is one, thou shinest (or, shootest up) among thy creatures as the LIVING ATEN, rising, shining, departing afar off, returning. Thou hast made
millions of creations (or, evolutions) from thy one self (viz.) towns and cities, villages, fields, roads and river. Every eye (i.e., all men) beholdeth thee confronting it. Thou art the Aten of the day at its zenith.

At thy departure thine eye ... thou didst create their faces so that thou mightest not see. ... ONE thou didst make ... Thou art in my heart. There is no other who knoweth thee except thy son Nefer-kheperu-Ra Ua-en-Ra. Thou hast made him wise to understand thy plans [and] thy power. The earth came into being by thy hand, even as thou hast created them (i.e., men). Thou risest, they live; thou settest, they die. As for thee, there is duration of life in thy members, life is in thee. [All] eyes [gaze upon] thy beauties until thou settest, [when] all labours are relinquished. Thou settest in the West, thou risest, making to flourish ... for the King. Every man who [standeth on his] foot, since thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, thou hast raised up for thy son who came forth from thy body, the King of the South and the North, Living in Truth, Lord of Crowns, Aakhun-Aten, great in the duration of his life [and for] the Royal Wife, great of majesty, Lady of the Two Lands, Nefer-neferu-Aten Nefertiti, living [and] young for ever and ever.

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Appendice 3

1 Bless Yahweh, my soul.
Yahweh, my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty.

2 He covers himself with light as with a garment.
He stretches out the heavens like a curtain.

3 He lays the beams of his rooms in the waters.
He makes the clouds his chariot.
He walks on the wings of the wind.

4 He makes his messengers winds,
and his servants flames of fire.

5 He laid the foundations of the earth,
that it should not be moved forever.

6 You covered it with the deep as with a cloak.
The waters stood above the mountains.

7 At your rebuke they fled.
At the voice of your thunder they hurried away.

8 The mountains rose,
the valleys sank down,
to the place which you had assigned to them.

9 You have set a boundary that they may not pass over,
that they don’t turn again to cover the earth.

10 He sends springs into the valleys.
They run among the mountains.

11 They give drink to every animal of the field.
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.

12 The birds of the sky nest by them.
They sing among the branches.

13 He waters the mountains from his rooms.
The earth is filled with the fruit of your works.

14 He causes the grass to grow for the livestock,
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may produce food out of the earth:

15 wine that makes the heart of man glad,
oil to make his face to shine,
and bread that strengthens man’s heart.
16 Yahweh’s trees are well watered,  
the cedars of Lebanon, which he has planted,  
17 where the birds make their nests.  
The stork makes its home in the cypress trees.  
18 The high mountains are for the wild goats.  
The rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.  
19 He appointed the moon for seasons.  
The sun knows when to set.  
20 You make darkness, and it is night,  
in which all the animals of the forest prowl.  
21 The young lions roar after their prey,  
and seek their food from God.  
22 The sun rises, and they steal away,  
and lie down in their dens.  
23 Man goes out to his work,  
to his labor until the evening.  
24 Yahweh, how many are your works!  
In wisdom, you have made them all.  
The earth is full of your riches.  
25 There is the sea, great and wide,  
in which are innumerable living things,  
both small and large animals.  
26 There the ships go,  
and leviathan, whom you formed to play there.  
27 These all wait for you,  
that you may give them their food in due season.  
28 You give to them; they gather.  
You open your hand; they are satisfied with good.
29 You hide your face; they are troubled.
You take away their breath; they die and return to the dust.
30 You send out your Spirit and they are created.
You renew the face of the ground.
31 Let Yahweh’s glory endure forever.
Let Yahweh rejoice in his works.
32 He looks at the earth, and it trembles.
He touches the mountains, and they smoke.
33 I will sing to Yahweh as long as I live.
I will sing praise to my God while I have any being.
34 Let my meditation be sweet to him.
I will rejoice in Yahweh.
35 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth.
Let the wicked be no more.
Bless Yahweh, my soul.
Praise Yah!

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Appendice 4

The Ten Commandments

1 I am the LORD thy God thou shalt have No other gods before me
2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images or any likenesses of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water, under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the lord they god am A jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

3 Thou shalt not take the LORD's name in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain

4 Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

6 Thou shall not kill

7 Thou shall not commit adultery.

8 Thou shalt not steal

9 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour

10 Thou shall not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shall not covet thy neighbour’s wife nor nor his manservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s

The King James Version. 1611

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Appendice 5

The 42 negative declarations of to be made in the feather of truth ceremony
1. I have not committed sin.
2. I have not committed robbery with violence.
3. I have not stolen.
4. I have not slain men and women.
5. I have not stolen grain.
6. I have not purloined offerings.
7. I have not stolen the property of the gods.
8. I have not uttered lies.
9. I have not carried away food.
10. I have not uttered curses.
11. I have not committed adultery.
12. I have made none to weep.
13. I have not eaten the heart [i.e., I have not grieved uselessly, or felt remorse].
14. I have not attacked any man.
15. I am not a man of deceit.
16. I have not stolen cultivated land.
17. I have not been an eavesdropper.
18. I have slandered [no man].
19. I have not been angry without just cause.
20. I have not debauched the wife of any man.
21. I have not debauched the wife of [any] man. (repeats the previous affirmation but addressed to a different god).
22. I have not polluted myself.
23. I have terrorized none.
24. I have not transgressed [the Law].
25. I have not been wroth.
26. I have not shut my ears to the words of truth.
27. I have not blasphemed.
28. I am not a man of violence.
29. I am not a stirrer up of strife (or a disturber of the peace).
30. I have not acted (or judged) with undue haste.
31. I have not pried into matters.
32. I have not multiplied my words in speaking.
33. I have wronged none, I have done no evil.
34. I have not worked witchcraft against the King (or blasphemed against the King).
35. I have never stopped [the flow of] water.
36. I have never raised my voice (spoken arrogantly, or in anger).
37. I have not cursed (or blasphemed) God.
38. I have not acted with evil rage.
39. I have not stolen the bread of the gods.
40. I have not carried away the khenfu cakes from the spirits of the dead.
41. I have not snatched away the bread of the child, nor treated with contempt the god of my city.
42. I have not slain the cattle belonging to the god

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