

THE LIFE
AND TIMES
OF
AKHNATON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

**A Report on the Antiquities of
Lower Nubia.**

**A Catalogue of the Weights
and Balances in the Cairo
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**A History of Egypt from 1798
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Madeline of the Desert.

The Dweller in the Desert.

Bedouin Love.

etc.



Akhnaton
From a statuette in the Louvre

(See page 179)

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AKHNATON

Pharaoh of Egypt

BY

ARTHUR WEIGALL

*Late Inspector General of Antiquities, Egyptian Government,
and Member of the Catalogue Staff of the Cairo Museum ;
Officer of the Order of the Medjidieh.*

"Ye ask who are those that draw us to the Kingdom if the Kingdom is in Heaven? The fowls of the air, and all the beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea, these are they which draw you, and the Kingdom of Heaven is within you."

—GRENFELL AND HUNT: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, iv. 6.

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PREFACE

“The Life and Times of Akhnaton” was first published in 1910, and went through two or three editions; but at length it passed out of print, and the few copies which remained in the market were sold at five and six times the book’s original price. This continued demand has led to the present re-issue, in which the material has been brought up-to-date and considerable additions have been made, though it has been thought best to leave the text on the whole in its original form.

Great excavations are now being conducted by the Egypt Exploration Society upon the site of Akhnaton’s sacred city; and so important is this work, and so widely should its aims be known, that on this account also the re-publication of this volume may serve a useful purpose. Those who chance to have their interest aroused by it should communicate with the Secretary of the Society, 13, Tavistock Square, London, W.C. 1, who will be glad to supply information as to these excavations. Funds are urgently needed for the extension of the work; and, as the reader will realise from the following pages, there is probably no period in ancient history which so merits elucidation, and no site which will so well repay excavation.

When this book was first prepared for the press I was alone in my belief that Akhnaton was only thirty years of age at his death, and my contention that the then recently discovered mummy of a young man of that age was this Pharaoh himself was greatly ridiculed. Time, however, has shown the correctness of my assertion, and the identification, as well as the course and duration of the king's life as given in the present volume, are now generally admitted, except by the well-known German scholar, Professor Kurt Sethe of Göttingen, who, at the time of writing (1922) still finds himself in doubt.

Although the lay reader will not, perhaps, be interested, I think it will be as well to state here in brief outline my general argument for the identification of the mummy and the age of Akhnaton at his death; and I may be permitted to preface my statement by a few words in regard to the excavations which led, in 1907, to the discovery.

The Tomb of Queen Tiy, in which lay the mummy believed to be that of Akhnaton, was discovered in January, 1907, during the excavations which were being conducted by Mr. Theodore M. Davis in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes. Mr. Davis was a very charming American gentleman, who, in his old age, used to spend his winters on a dahabiyeh

at Luxor, and there became interested in Egyptology. In 1902 he gave a small sum of money to Mr. Howard Carter, then Inspector-General of the Antiquities of Upper Egypt, in order to enable him to conduct some excavations in the royal necropolis, and in 1903 the Tomb of Thutmose IV was discovered during the work carried out with this money. In the same year the Tomb of Queen Hatshepsut was cleared out by Mr. Carter, again at Mr. Davis's expense; and thus the latter became established, so to speak, as the banker behind the Egyptian Government's excavations in the Famous Valley.

In 1904 Mr. Quibell took Mr. Carter's place at Luxor, and continued these excavations; and in 1905 I was appointed Inspector-General, Mr. Quibell and I jointly working the famous Tomb of Yuaa and Tuau early in that year. At that time Mr. Davis was paying for the actual excavations, but we, the Egyptian Government Department of Antiquities, bore all the other expenses, such as those of packing the antiquities, safeguarding the finds, and so forth. It is interesting to note that the total cost to Mr. Davis of the season's work which thus produced one of the greatest finds ever made in Egypt was about £80.

In 1906 I insisted that Mr. Davis should employ a proper archæologist to conduct the work

under my supervision, and Mr. Edward R. Ayrton was nominated. From that time onwards for the next few years these excavations were carried on in the following manner:— Mr. Davis paid for the actual excavations and was regarded as their nominal director; an archæologist, paid by him, lived on the spot, and conducted the work; I supervised it on behalf of the Government and officially took charge whenever any discovery was made; the antiquities found all went to the Cairo Museum, with the exception of a few objects given as souvenirs to Mr. Davis and now in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, U.S.A.; the Government bore all working costs other than those of the excavations themselves; Mr. Davis paid for the publication of the annual volume; and we all united to give him the credit of the discoveries, the work being deemed worthy of every encouragement, in spite of the fact that its promoter was himself an amateur, and that the greatest tact had to be used in order to impose proper supervision on his work.

The work was being conducted in this manner when the Tomb of Queen Tiy was found. Mr. Ayrton was in charge, and officially handed over to me as soon as the discovery was made; but, for diplomatic reasons, I kept in the background, and to a great extent left the clearing

of the tomb in his efficient hands, only keeping an eye on the work. When Mr. Davis published the results, he incorporated a short note by Mr. Ayrton, but preserved a strict silence in regard to my own part in the work; and I should like to explain that this was not in any way an ungenerous or unfriendly act, but was due to his very understandable objection to the restrictions which my Department rightly obliged me to impose upon him.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Ayrton are now dead, and Mr. Harold Jones, who helped in the work, has also passed away. I am, therefore, the only surviving member of this little company of excavators, and the above explanation is necessary in order to make clear my own standing in regard to these excavations, and to give authority to the statements which I shall make.

In this preface I want to show that there can be no doubt that the mummy found in the Tomb of Queen Tiy was that of Akhnaton; and it will therefore be best to begin by deciding, from the monuments and other historical evidence, the age at which this king died. The following arguments may be adduced:—

1. Akhnaton was married to Nefertiti either before or soon after his accession to the throne. On the boundary stelae at El Amarna, dated in the sixth year of his reign he was already

the father of two daughters by her. What, then, is the likely age at which he would have become a father? The mummy of Thutmose IV, his grandfather, has been shown by Professor Elliot Smith to be that of a man of not more than twenty-six years of age. That king was succeeded by his son, Amenophis III, who is known to have been married to Queen Tiy before the second year of his reign. Thus both Thutmose IV and Amenophis III must have been married by twelve or thirteen years of age. Amenophis III was, according to the examination of his mummy by Elliot Smith, about forty-five or fifty at his death; and, as he reigned thirty-six years, he could have been at most fourteen at his marriage. Akhnaton's daughter, Merytaton, born in the third or fourth year of his reign was married to Smenkhkara before the seventeenth year of the reign, *i.e.*, at thirteen or fourteen. The Princess Ankhsenpaaton, born about the eighth year of the reign was married at latest two years after Akhnaton's death, *i.e.*, when she was eleven; and the younger princess, Neferneferuaton, was married to the King of Babylon's son when she was probably not more than five or six.

Child-marriages such as these are common in Egypt even at the present day; and if Akhnaton was, in this regard, like his father and

grandfather it may be assumed that he was certainly not older than fourteen when his first child was born. This would makē him somewhere round about thirty at his death.

2. In the biography of Bakenkhonsu, High Priest of Amen under Rameses II, we are told that he came of age at sixteen. Now Akhnaton was under the regency of his mother during the first years of his reign, as the Tell El Amarna letters and the Wady Hammamât inscription prove; and one may thus assume that he was then under age. If, as seems probable, the great changes in art and religion began when he came of age, say in the third or fourth year of his reign (and the King speaks of the fourth year in this connection in the foundation inscription) he would be just about thirty at his death. In this regard it is worthy of note that the Caliph El Hakkim was sixteen when he issued his first religious decrees.

3. When Yuua and Tuau were buried, probably quite late in the reign of Amenophis III, since both were of an advanced age according to Professor Elliot Smith, that King, and Queen Tiy, and two of their daughters gave presents of funeral furniture, but there is no mention yet of a son. Nor have we any evidence of Akhnaton's existence until late in the reign when his marriage to Tadukhipa of Mitanni

was arranged. On the Medinet Habu colossus three of Tiy's daughters are shown, but there is no reference yet to a son. We should surely have some mention of him had he been living during the main years of his father's reign; and the inference thus is that he was still very young at his father's death.

4. Amenophis III seems to have been in ill-health during the last years of his reign, for on two occasions the King of Mitanni sent a miracle-working statuette of the goddess Ishtar to him in the hope that it might cure him. And there is the curious fact that Manetho gives only thirty years for his reign, whereas there is contemporary evidence that he reigned for thirty-six, the explanation being, probably, that he was unfit to govern during the last six years of his reign. Yet his son did not assume office, and the power evidently remained in the hands of Queen Tiy. Akhnaton, therefore, must have still been very young; and even when he came to the throne the Tell El Amarna letters show that his mother had still to be consulted in affairs of state. On the other hand a letter from Dushratta, docketed in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Amenophis III, refers to Tadukhipa as being already married to Aknaton, which indicates that the boy was twelve or thirteen by then. This would make his age

at his death, seventeen years later, just about thirty.

In view of the above arguments I do not see that it is possible to suppose that Akhnaton was more than thirty years of age at his death. On the other hand, there is at Oxford a fragment which shows the King celebrating his *heb-sed*, or Jubilee, and which, therefore, at first sight indicates that he was much older. I do not think, however, that anything definite can be deduced from the occurrence of this festival. The *heb-sed* festival was generally thought to have been held after a king had reigned thirty years; but Professor Sethe has shown that it was more probably a festival held thirty years after a king had become heir to the throne. Now Akhnaton was heir immediately on his birth, and, if Sethe is right, the celebration of the jubilee would thus only indicate that he was at least thirty years of age at his death, a fact which is in accord with the above arguments. There is nothing on the Oxford fragment¹ to indicate the date at which this jubilee occurred, but the fact that a "High Priest of Akhnaton" is mentioned thereon suggests that it belongs to the last years of the reign, since this looks like a late and advanced development of the Aton religion. Edward

¹ Prof. Sethe is wrong in thinking that the cartouches on this fragment show signs of the earlier spelling.

Meyer, however, has pointed out that Thutmose II, whose mummy shows him to have died before he was thirty, seems to have celebrated his jubilee twice. Akhnaton may thus have held this festival at an equally early date.

The mummy which we found in the tomb of Queen Tiy, and which rested in a coffin undoubtedly belonging to Akhnaton, was sent by me to Professor Elliot Smith in Cairo for examination. I may mention, in order to debar any possible suggestion of confusion or mistake in regard to the body, that I soaked the bones in paraffin wax so as to preserve them, and that the bones examined by Elliot Smith were thus distinguished. His report on them was published in his catalogue of the royal mummies in the Cairo Museum.

In regard to the age, after an exhaustive examination of the condition of the skeleton, he comes to the conclusion that although many of the data suggest an age of about twenty-six years, "no anatomist would be justified in refusing to admit that this individual may have been several years younger or older than this estimate"; and he goes on to say that if the historian can produce proofs to show that Akhnaton was as old as thirty at his death, the anatomical evidence which suggests an earlier age would have to be considered too

slight to weigh against that conclusion. Thus, so far as the age of the body is concerned, the mummy may be regarded as fulfilling the conditions necessary for its identification with Akhnaton.

As to the physical features, the following facts from the report are important. (1) The configuration of the upper part of the face, including the forehead, is identical with that of Akhnaton's maternal grandfather, Yuaa. (2) The jaw is typically Armenoid, as might be expected in view of the fact that Akhnaton's paternal grandmother was Mutemua, a princess of Mitanni. (3) The projection of the upper incisors is similar to that found in many members of the royal family of the Eighteenth Dynasty. (4) A curious and unusual bony ridge passing from the nasal spine to the alveolar point in this skull occurs also as a peculiarity of the skull of Amenophis III. (5) There are points of resemblance to Amenophis III, also, in the molar teeth. (6) The general structure of the face, and especially the jaw, is exactly that portrayed in the statues of Akhnaton.

These physical features prove pretty conclusively that the mummy is that of a male member of the royal family, who had in his veins the blood both of Yuaa and Amenophis III, and the objects found with it prove that

it is to be dated to the period of Akhnaton. Thus the body, so far as the known historical facts go, could only be that of Akhnaton. There is nobody else whom it could be, and this is a negative argument which must be given prominence throughout.

As to the evidence of the coffin and other objects found with the body. The coffin, now exhibited in the Cairo Museum, is that of Akhnaton without any question, for it is inscribed with his name and titles, on the top of the lid, inside the lid, and inside the shell. But there is one fact which, by some most mysterious circumstance, has been obscured. A great deal of rain-water had dripped into the tomb through a fissure in the rock, and the mummy—flesh and bandages—had rotted away. But when we removed the lid of the coffin, we found a band or ribbon of thin gold foil which had evidently passed down the front of the mummy, outside the wrappings, and, at right angles to this, other bands which had passed round the body. When we had gathered up the bones and fragments and dust we found another similar band which had evidently passed down the back of the mummy. These bands were about two inches wide and were inscribed with the titles of Akhnaton, but the cartouche was in each case cut out, so that there was simply an oval hole in

the band wherever it occurred. The cartouches of Akhnaton, it is to be noted in this connection, were likewise erased in the coffin-inscription.

I must now give a brief description of the tomb and such of its contents as are pertinent, which should be read in connection with Mr. Davis's and Mr. Ayrton's account of the discovery published in the former's big volume.

The tomb was a rock-cut chamber approached by a sloping passage. It was similar to the tomb of Yuua and Tuau, and was thus the sort of sepulchre one might expect to be made for a queen or other royal personage who was not actually a reigning sovereign. In it were the remains of a large box-like wooden shrine or canopy which had evidently contained a coffin and mummy. The inscriptions leave no doubt that this was made for Queen Tiy's burial by Akhnaton, and four foundation bricks are also inscribed with Akhnaton's name. A number of small objects inscribed with the Queen's name also belonged to this the original burial in the tomb. The sides of the shrine or canopy had been taken to pieces, and one side lay in the passage, as though an attempt had been made to remove it at the same time that the mummy of the queen was removed, but that the work had been abandoned owing to the narrowness of the passage.

Thus there can be no reasonable doubt that the tomb was made for Queen Tiy, and that her body was removed at a later date, the large shrine or canopy being left behind because of the difficulty of taking it out, and some of the small objects being overlooked.

But in another part of the chamber we found the coffin of Akhnaton. Originally it had lain upon a bier, but this had rotted away and collapsed, and in the fall the mummy had been jerked partly out of the coffin, so that the head of the body projected somewhat from under the lid. Photographs of it as we found it are published in Mr. Davis's volume. Near the coffin were four canopic vases which will be discussed later.

Scattered about in the rubbish were fragments of small clay sealings inscribed with the name of King Tutankhamen. The entrance of the tomb showed the remains of at least two closings up. There was part of an original wall of rough limestone blocks cemented on the outside, and above the ruins of this there was a second and more loosely constructed wall. On fragments of the cement were impressions of a seal representing a jackal crouching over nine captives—the usual seal of the necropolis. The second wall had been partly pulled down and had not been built up again.

I interpret the above facts in the following manner:—Firstly, Queen Tiy was buried in this tomb, but it was entered later by the agents of Akhnaton whose orders were to erase the name of Amen wheresoever it was to be found. After Akhnaton had died and had been buried at El Amarna, the court returned to Thebes under King Tutankhamen. The body of Akhnaton was then brought to the old necropolis of his fathers and was placed in this tomb of his mother. A few years later when his memory came to be hated, the priests removed the mummy of Tiy from the tomb which had been polluted by the presence of “that criminal,” as Akhnaton was now called, erased the king’s name, and left him the solitary and nameless occupant of the sepulchre.

Mention has been made of the four canopic jars. These obviously do not belong to Queen Tiy; for the men who removed the queen’s mummy from the tomb would not have left her heart, viscera, etc. behind. By the same token the jars belong to the mummy which we found in the tomb. The contents of the jars have rotted away, as had the flesh on the mummy, owing to the damp. Only such fragments of their wrappings as were well covered with bitumen are now to be found in the jars. (See Daressy on p. 24 of Mr. Davis’s volume).

On each jar there has been an inscription, presumably giving the owner's name; but in each case this has been entirely erased. The lids of the jars are each carved in the form of a royal head, wearing an ordinary wig which might be either that of a male or female, but having a king's single uræus on the forehead. The queens of this period have a double uræus, as may be seen, for instance, on the Sinai head of Tiy, on the Userhat relief of that queen at Brussels, on her Medinet Habu colossus now at Cairo, on the Fayûm head of this period now in Berlin, on various reliefs of Nefertiti, notably that shown in Petrie's History, ii, p. 230, and so forth. The fact that these canopic heads have no beard does not suggest that they are female, for I do not think Akhnaton is ever shown with a beard. The heads might well be portraits of Akhnaton executed somewhat early in the reign, and the characteristic lower jaw is quite noticeable in at least one of the four, as Daressy also has pointed out.

I think the reasoning should follow these lines:—The canopics are not those of Tiy, for if they were they would have been removed with her mummy, being an essential part of the mummy; and moreover there would have been a double uræus on the forehead. But if they do not belong to a queen they must certainly

belong to a king, and what king other than Akhnaton could they possibly represent? Canopic jars, however, would never be intentionally separated from the mummy whose heart, etc. they contained; and thus, if the jars are those of Akhnaton then the presumption is that the mummy must be that of Akhnaton also.

The fact that these canopic jars seem, by the style of the portraiture, to date from several years before Akhnaton's death is interesting, as suggesting that he had caused his funeral outfit to be made ready for him in anticipation. There are two other facts which lead to the same conclusion. Firstly, in the inlaid inscription which runs down the front of his coffin the word "truth" is written with the sign of the goddess, a sign which was not used in the late years of the reign. On the other hand, the inscriptions on the foot of the coffin, and on the inside of the lid and shell, show this word spelt out in the later manner. Thus, we may suppose that the coffin was begun, though not finished, early in the reign. That it was finished later is also shown by the appearance of the later form of the cartouche of the god Aton on the uræus at the forehead of the effigy on the lid. Secondly, amongst the debris of the mummy a necklace ornament and a piece of gold foil

were found, each inscribed with the earlier form of this Aton cartouche. This shows that some parts, if not all, of the burial equipment were prepared several years before they were actually required. Such a procedure, however, is not surprising. A Pharaoh always caused his tomb to be prepared during his reign, and it is to be presumed, therefore, that the coffin and funeral outfit were also made ready at the same time. And, indeed, it may be argued that these proofs of the early date of the coffin and mummy ornaments explain why the heads of the canopic jars show a rounder, younger, and less peculiar face than is seen in the later portraits of Akhnaton ; and thus the identification is strengthened.

Over the face or head of the mummy we found an object in the form of a vulture, made of gold, and slightly curved so as to fit over the bandages. Mr. Davis and M. Daressy call it a queen's crown, and M. Maspero caused it to be labelled as such in the Cairo Museum. It is, however, no crown ; a conclusion which is apparent from the fact that it was found with the tail and not the head projecting over the forehead. It is simply a sort of pectoral of the usual form seen in the wall-paintings in the Theban tombs (for example, that of Horemheb, No. 78) as part of a mummy's equipment.

To sum up :—The mummy lay in the coffin

of Akhnaton, was enclosed in bands inscribed with Akhnaton's name and was accompanied by the canopic jars of Akhnaton. It was that of a man of Akhnaton's age, the facial structure corresponds to the portraits of Akhnaton, and it has physical characteristics similar to those of Akhnaton's father and grandfather. How, then, can one possibly doubt its identity? Professor, Sethe, however, published in the *Nachrichten der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* in 1921 an article in which he comes to the conclusion that the mummy we found was perhaps not that of Akhnaton; but it is evident that all the facts were not marshalled before him when he set himself to question an identification which surely is not open to doubt.

ARTHUR WEIGALL.

London, June, 1922.

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