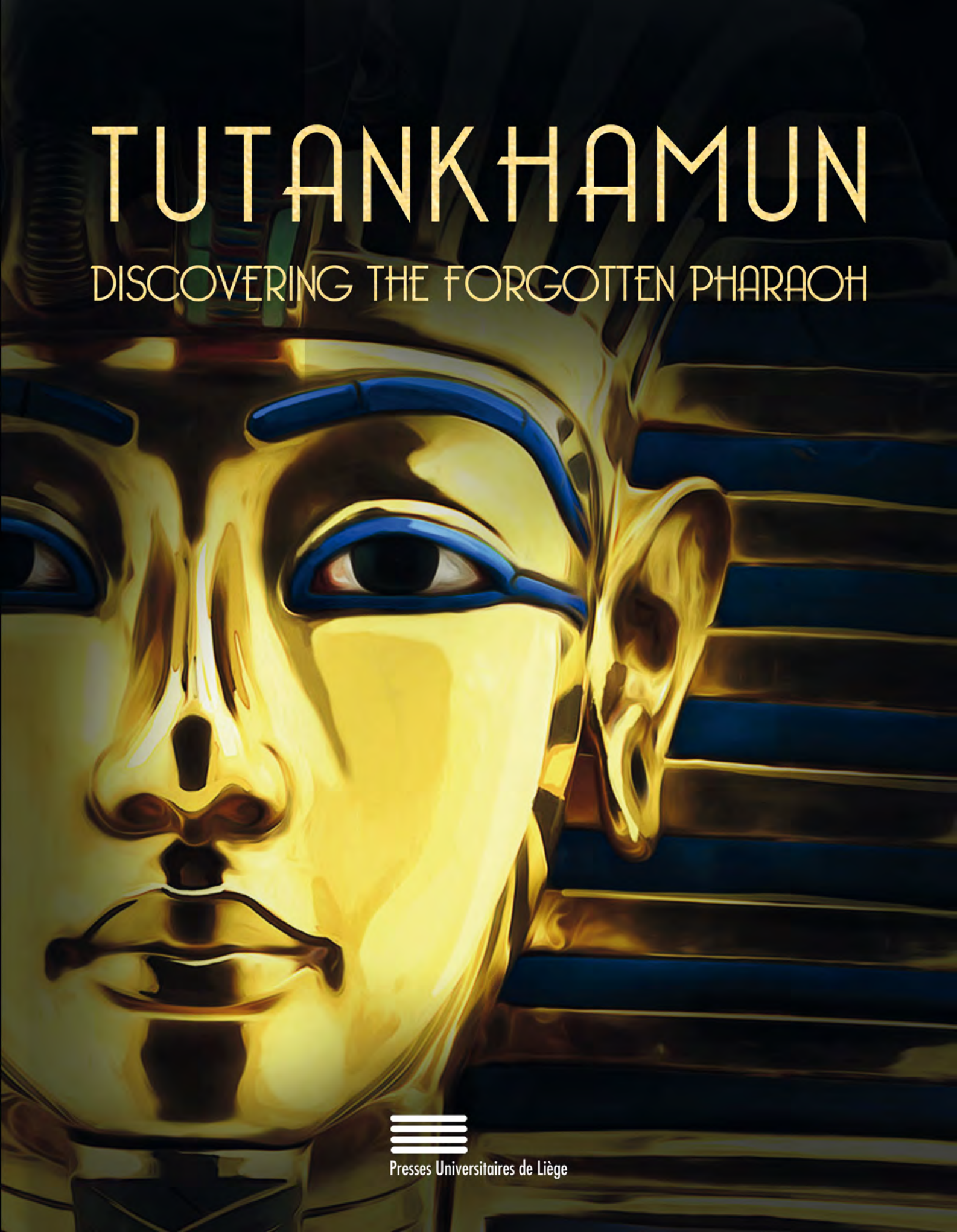


TUTANKHAMUN

DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH



Presses Universitaires de Liège

Collection *Aegyptiaca Leodiensia* 12

TUTANKHAMUN
DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH

Catalogue edited by

Simon CONNOR and Dimitri LABOURY

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Agostinho da Cunha, untimely seized by the Abductor, as ancient Egyptians called it.

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The Protagonists

The Protagonists

AMENHOTEP III

Amenhotep III, Tutankhamun's grandfather, was one of the most brilliant pharaohs in Egyptian history. Like his grandson, he was still a child when he ascended the throne on the death of his predecessor Thutmose IV. His mother, Mutemwiya, then ruled the country in the name of the young king, according to a practice well established in the Eighteenth Dynasty. Shortly before the age of puberty, Amenhotep married Tiye, who must have been about the same age as him. According to a series of famous "commemorative scarabs" distributed for this occasion, the young Amenhotep hunted wild bulls and killed more than a hundred lions "with his own hands." The theme of hunting wild bulls and lions, specific to royal ideology, is intended to glorify the king's physical strength, while associating him with these powerful and dangerous creatures. Lions and bulls are also known for their aggression and sexual appetite, as the male mates with many females within the herd. The pharaoh, who had the title of "strong bull" through the New Kingdom, was, in fact, endowed with a harem consisting of a principal queen and many secondary wives. Amenhotep III did not escape this rule: although Tiye was his "great royal wife," he married a foreign princess named Kiluhepa, daughter of the king of Mitanni Shutarna II, who landed in Egypt accompanied by an entourage of 317 women. Later in his reign, Amenhotep also married two of his daughters, a practice followed by several other Egyptian rulers. Inscriptions mentioning royal children were recently discovered in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings, indicating that Amenhotep III would have had more offspring than previously thought. During the thirtieth year of his reign, Amenhotep III celebrated a great "sed

festival" ceremony at Malqata, on the west bank of Thebes, which allowed him to strengthen his royal power and redefine his semi-divine status. The king repeated this jubilee on two other occasions before his death, emphasizing the solar component of royalty and its relationship with the sun god Re. Under Amenhotep III, the solarization of the god Amun in his aspect of Amun-Re reached its climax. Outside Egypt, the king became a god in his own right, notably at the temple of Soleb in present-day Sudan, where he was worshipped as "Nebmaatre, Lord of Nubia." The sovereign's legacy is not only his impressive construction activity — his Temple of Millions of Years at Kom el-Hettan on the west bank of Thebes, whose entrance the "Colossi of Memnon" guarded, even surpassed Karnak Temple in size — but also a profound development of royal ideology, which foreshadowed the Amarna era.

[Chr. B.]

TIYE

Queen Tiye, the "great royal wife" of Amenhotep III, is one of the most famous queens in Egypt's history. No other, with the exception of Nefertiti, has figured so prominently alongside her husband. The images we have preserved of her belong to all categories, from figurines to monumental statues, from temple reliefs to tomb paintings, from scarabs to seals, from stelae to furniture ornaments and cosmetic objects. Tiye was the daughter of a certain Yuya, a senior official from Akhmim in Middle Egypt, and his wife Tuya. The Queen's roots, belonging to a so-called "middle class," which would make her ascent even more extraordinary, are often emphasized, but in reality very little is known about the origins and family ties of other royal wives in the New Kingdom.

Tiye must have only barely begun her adolescence when she was married to Amenhotep III, indicating that it could only have been an arranged marriage, perhaps planned at the time of the coronation of her young spouse. Tiye was the main wife of the king until his death in year 38 or 39 of his reign; she gave him at least four daughters and a son, the heir to the throne Amenhotep IV, the future Akhenaten. It is not known whether she was also the mother of Prince Thutmose, who died prematurely. Her husband's sed festivals not only provided an opportunity to change the royal ideology attached to the role of the pharaoh, but also to develop that of the queen. Amenhotep III was increasingly assimilated to the sun god Re. Tiye, in turn, was considered a manifestation of the goddess Hathor. At the temple of Sedeinga in Nubia, she was even worshipped

as "the great one who inspires fear, mistress of all countries." Tiye held a prominent position at the court and her influence was manifested in particular in the wall decoration of the funerary chapels of the stewards Kheruef and Huya. From the tomb of the latter in Amarna, we know that Akhenaten erected a "sunshade of Re" temple for his mother. Upon her death, she was first interred in the royal burial at Amarna, where her son joined her a few years later. It was probably Tutankhamun who ordered the movement of the remains of his parents and grandmother to Thebes, after the desecration of the royal tomb of Amarna. A hair curl of Queen Tiye's was found placed in a miniature coffin inside Tutankhamun's tomb.

[Chr. B.]



AKHENATEN

Born shortly before the middle of the 14th century BC, Amenhotep IV, better known as Akhenaten (a name he adopted only around year 5 of his reign, around 1341 BC), is the tenth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty. He is the son of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye. Like his father before him, he ascended the throne at a young age, probably still an adolescent, and certainly without having taken a royal wife, his mother then fulfilling this function. It was not until year 4 of his reign that he married Nefertiti, with whom he was apparently very closely related and whom he probably knew since childhood. From their very fertile union were born six daughters and a son, Prince Tutankhaten, the future Tutankhamun.

Since his rediscovery in the 19th century, Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, has often been presented as a forerunner or even the inventor of

monotheism because of the monolatry he imposed during his reign for the benefit of the god Aten, the deity who protected and guaranteed his monarchical authority. His increasingly exclusive predilection for this particular form of the sun god in its tangible aspect of the solar star led him to a vast religious reform and at the beginning of the 5th year of his reign, to the creation of a new royal residence in Middle Egypt on the present site of Amarna where he relocated his court of about forty to fifty thousand people for only fifteen years.

The latest date known to us for his reign is that of year 17, during which he apparently died rather unexpectedly when Egypt had just suffered a major military defeat in the Near East and was also struck by a plague. These two combined events led his successors to toss him in the dustbin of history, like a pharaoh who failed in his duty to maintain cosmic order and the supremacy of Egypt, annihilating all traces of his reign and disassembling all his buildings, until he was rediscovered by the nascent discipline of Egyptology in the 19th century, making him one of the most famous pharaohs in Egyptian history.

[D. L.]

NEFERTITI

Although her role as queen alongside Amenhotep IV – Akhenaten is particularly well represented, both in images and in texts, little is known in the end about Nefertiti as an individual. She is certainly closely linked to a powerful family from the region of Akhmim (in Upper Egypt), from which the two previous queens, Mutemwiya, mother of Amenhotep III, and Tiye, wife of the latter, also seem to originate. Recent genetic analyses of mummies related to Tutankhamun's suggest that, in this context, she would have been the first cousin of her future spouse, by her mother and by her father, who might have been Ay, trusted advisor of Akhenaten, and whose wife, also called Tiye, presents herself as the “wet-nurse” of Nefertiti.

Undoubtedly married at a very young age, she gave birth during the first 9 years of her union with





MERITATEN

The eldest of the children of Amenhotep IV – Akhenaten and Nefertiti, Meritaten was born in year 4 of her father’s reign, around 1342 BC, when the sovereign initiated his Atenist reforms. She was barely four years old when her family, already rapidly expanding, and the whole court moved to the new royal residence that her parents had had constructed on the site of Amarna. She grew up there in a large family, but this idyllic time of childhood was quickly overshadowed by a series of repeated deaths that began to decimate the royal family when Meritaten was barely more than 8 years old. When her mother also died, she took over official duties alongside her father, who clearly associated her with power, before quickly succumbing to death. Meritaten was only thirteen or fourteen years old and her family

Amenhotep IV – Akhenaten to six daughters (respectively called Meritaten, Meketaten, Ankhesenpaaten, Neferneferuaten-tasheryt, Neferure and Setepenre), then an heir, Prince Tutankhaten. Her life as a mother seems to have quickly taken a dramatic turn since she had to successively bury four of her daughters (first, the two youngest, then the second, who certainly did not live longer than 8 years, and the fourth), before succumbing herself, perhaps suffering from plague or malaria, which then struck Amarna. The last dated mention of her that is preserved goes back to year 16 of the reign, around 1330 BC, and she died when she was probably not much more than 30 years old.

[D. L.]



had shrunk to only her sister Ankhesenpaaten, four years her junior, and their younger brother, the young Tutankhaten, who was no more than six years old.

A recent military defeat on the northern border of the Levantine territories under Egypt's control required the political and diplomatic intervention of a strong power, which the young crown prince did not seem able to exercise. Undoubtedly supported by the palace's elite, Meritaten seems to have strategized to prevent the situation from going awry for the kingdom of Egypt and, like her ancestor Hatshepsut almost a century and a half earlier, she quite quickly crowned herself pharaoh, presumably with the help and complicity of Ankhesenpaaten, thus removing their younger brother away from the throne. Her reign was short-lived, no more than three years. But

this did not prevent her from initiating a movement to return to the polytheistic tradition that her father had undermined, even if this initiative was taken up and implemented by the young rejected prince, who succeeded her. She died without reaching sixteen, and neither her tomb nor her mummy seem to have been discovered to date. Since some of her personal royal funerary equipment was salvaged for Tutankhamun's burial, he most likely ensured that her burial demoted her rank to what was hers in his eyes, that of queen or princess, but certainly not of pharaoh. Although a trace of her reign seems to have survived in the archives used by the Egyptian priest Manetho when he wrote a history of Egypt for the descendants of the great general, Ptolemy, son of Lagos, who ruled the Nile Valley from the end of the 4th century BC, the sovereign Meritaten was, like all members of her nuclear family, condemned to official oblivion in pharaonic sources.

[D. L.]

ANKHESENAMUN

The third princess born to the royal couple Akhenaten and Nefertiti, Ankhesenamun came into the world around year 8 of her father's reign, around 1339 BC, under the name Ankhesenpaaten, "She lives for Aten" in the ancient Egyptian. She spent her early childhood in the sumptuous palaces of Akhetaten's royal residence in Amarna, and, like all the royal children of her time, was entrusted to a nanny, whose name, Tia (very common at the time), was miraculously preserved.

She was only four years old when death came to take away, one by one, her family members, perhaps because of plague and malaria that infiltrated the radiant city of the sun. After losing four of her sisters and her paternal grandmother, Queen Mother Tiye, she still had to resign herself to losing her own parents, Nefertiti, and then, shortly after, Akhenaten, when she had not reached her tenth year. The political circumstances seem also to have led her to associate herself with her older sister Meritaten's seizure of power to the detriment of their younger brother, the rightful heir, Tutankhaten, approxi-



mately four years her junior. Misfortune soon struck again, since after fewer than three years of reign, her older sister died and it was decided that she must marry the younger brother whom she had helped dismiss and who was finally crowned. Like the latter, she changed her birth name to a less Atenist version, becoming Ankhesenamun at the occasion of the return to the pre-Amarna tradition. The calculated union with this younger brother, whose side she had not initially chosen, remained sterile and perhaps was simply never effective despite the imagery of the time.

When the adolescent king died, when she was only in her twenties, she seems to disappear from the Egyptological documentation that has reached us, her name appearing only once on the bezel of a ring that associates her with Ay, perhaps her maternal grandfather, who succeeded Tutankhamun. Neither her tomb nor her mummy have been identified to date.

[D. L.]

TUTANKHAMUN

The twelfth king of the Eighteenth pharaonic Dynasty and the last biological descendant of it on the throne of Egypt, Tutankhamun was the son of Akhenaten and his great royal wife, Nefertiti. He was born around year 12 of his father's reign, around 1335 BC, probably in Amarna, where he spent some of the first years of his short life. Given the Atenist reform introduced by his progenitor, he was given the name Tutankhaten, or, in ancient Egyptian, "Complete (or pleasing) of life is the Aten". His early childhood was immediately disturbed by the successive deaths of four of his six sisters, his paternal grandmother, Tiye, whom he probably barely knew, and then his two parents, his mother, and shortly after his father, around 1329 BC. The orphaned crown prince, then just 6 years old, was then removed from the throne by his two surviving sisters, Meritaten, who was crowned pharaoh, and Ankhesenpaaten. Perhaps he still had at his side his faithful nanny, Maya, and probably grew up with his tutor, Senqed, in the region of Akhmim, from which

Senqed seems to have come, along with the entire maternal branch of the young prince's family for at least three generations.

The exile lasted no more than three years and at the untimely death of Meritaten, Tutankhaten, who had not yet reached his tenth year, was finally crowned, in the late autumn of 1327 BC, but also married to the last of his sisters, Ankhesenpaaten, who had participated in his ouster. The major action of his reign would be the restoration of the polytheistic tradition that predated the theocratic reform that his father, Akhenaten, had imposed, even though it is now certain that the initiative of this return to tradition actually belonged to Meritaten, on whom the young king seems to take revenge by usurping her political gesture. Tutankhaten thus



becomes Tutankhamun. The edict reproduced on his so-called “restoration” stela evokes a catastrophic situation for Egypt, “riddled with disease,” and specifies that the re-establishment of the ancient cult is financed by the royal treasury, as if it were appropriate to pay for the errors of his predecessors, now condemned to oblivion. The child king then claimed to be descended from his paternal grandfather, Amenhotep III, whom he never knew. He certainly did not act alone and was advised, even probably guided, by a circle of more seasoned courtiers, headed by the ubiquitous former adviser of Akhenaten and potential maternal grandfather of the young ruler, Ay, and the commander-in-chief Horemheb, who was empowered to negotiate with foreign powers.

Undoubtedly frail and suffering from malaria, Tutankhamun fulfilled his dramatic destiny with an untimely death, without having reached his twentieth year and after only nine years of rule, during the winter of 1318–1317 BC. He was buried in a tomb clearly prepared in a hurry and quickly

joined the other members of his family in the oblivion orchestrated by his successors until the rediscovery of his almost intact tomb by Howard Carter in 1922, making him today the most famous pharaoh in Egyptian history.

[D. L.]

Ay

Before becoming the eleventh and penultimate ruler of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty, Ay had a long career at the pharaonic court. First courtier and trusted advisor of the king under Akhenaten, he was the spouse of Lady Tiye, the “wet nurse” of Nefertiti, and may even have been the biological father of the latter, according to the striking resemblance between the titles he bore and those of Yuya, the father of Queen Tiye, mother of Akhenaten and possible sister of Ay. Like Yuya, Ay was closely linked to a elite family from the region of Akhmim, from which three generations of queens seem to



have come, from the mother of Amenhotep III to that of Tutankhamun. Two generations certainly separated Ay from the child king, whom he succeeded at an obviously advanced age (probably at least sixty) towards the end of 1318 BC. His reign was, unsurprisingly, quite brief as no date is attested beyond year 4.

During Tutankhamun's reign, Ay was regularly represented in the king's company and seems to have served as a mentor to the king, who may also have been his grandson. As the paintings of Tutankhamun's tomb show, it was Ay who ensured the burial of the child king, as well as his funerary cult and commemorations, which strengthened his legitimacy to occupy the throne. The documentation of the time suggests a rivalry with the commander-in-chief under Tutankhamun, Horemheb, who eventually succeeded Ay and condemned him to the same oblivion as the other Amarna-era kings.

[D. L.]

HOREMHEB

The last pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Horemheb, was for most of his life a soldier. Commander-in-chief under Tutankhamun, attested as a negotiator on behalf of the kingdom of Egypt in Hittite cuneiform tablets, he probably had a long history in the army and it was suggested that he might have been General Paatenemheb attested under Akhenaten, who would have decided to revert to his original name in the wake of the abandonment of the Atenist regime. In any case, he must have been born before the middle of the 14th century BC, during the reign of Amenhotep III.

Given the extinction of the family that constituted the Eighteenth Dynasty, he ascended the throne on the death of Ay, around 1314 BC. If at first he seemed to try to form some type of continuity with his predecessors of the prestigious



Eighteenth Dynasty — perhaps marrying Nefertiti's little sister, Mutnedjemet in his second marriage — he very quickly became the gravedigger of Akhenaten and his relatives, disassembling their monuments and systematically usurping those of Tutankhamun, as well as his role in restoring the polytheistic tradition and revitalizing the country after the Amarna episode. He died around 1301 BC, without descendants, but having prepared for the throne his vizier, Paramessu, who succeeded him under the more archaic name of Ramesses, the first of the name, initiator of the Nineteenth Dynasty and grandfather of the famous Ramesses II.

[D. L.]



Horemheb, the last ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty.
Relief in his royal tomb (KV 57).
Photograph D. Laboury.



Plaquette featuring Akhenaten, Nefertiti and two of their daughters embracing.

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, inv. E.GA.4606.1943.
Carnelian. H. 5.7; W. 3.8; D. 0.6 cm.

Reign of Akhenaten, between years 5 and 17 (ca. 1341–1329 BC).

Gift of Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson, 1943.
Photograph © Fitzwilliam Museum.

This delicate but unfinished translucent plaquette depicts a charming scene of intimacy among the Amarna royal family: Akhenaten and Nefertiti, the fabric of their clothes and crowns twirling in the wind, kiss, while embracing two of their daughters, probably the elder ones, Meritaten and Meketaten. However, we must be careful not to read the scene too romantically. In the religious ideology of Atenism, the god Aten fills his creation with his beauty, his light and his love, the three being interchangeable, understood as manifestations of each other and, above all, of the divine presence and benevolence here on earth. From this perspective, the royal couple represents the ideal of beauty of the era. They are constantly depicted in sunlight and continually show their love in the official imagery of the regime. In other words, Nefertiti, like all “first ladies” from antiquity to the present day, plays a role vis-à-vis the political leader who is her spouse. This, of course, does not mean that they did not love each other; we know nothing about that. But what is certain is that Akhenaten, like his predecessors and successors, had a vast harem of secondary wives, often of foreign origin, among them “the king’s great favorite,” Kiya, who seems to have enjoyed a privileged status. This tender picture is therefore nothing more than an aesthetically very successful demonstration and visualization of the regime’s ideology.

The carnelian it is made of is a variety of micro-crystalline quartz, many pebbles of which are found in the eastern desert of Egypt. Called *hereset* in ancient Egyptian (𓆎𓆏𓆑), it is attested from the end of the prehistoric era (called the Nagada period) and often used for amulets or jewelry, here in a luxurious and loyalist version.

Dimitri LABOURY