



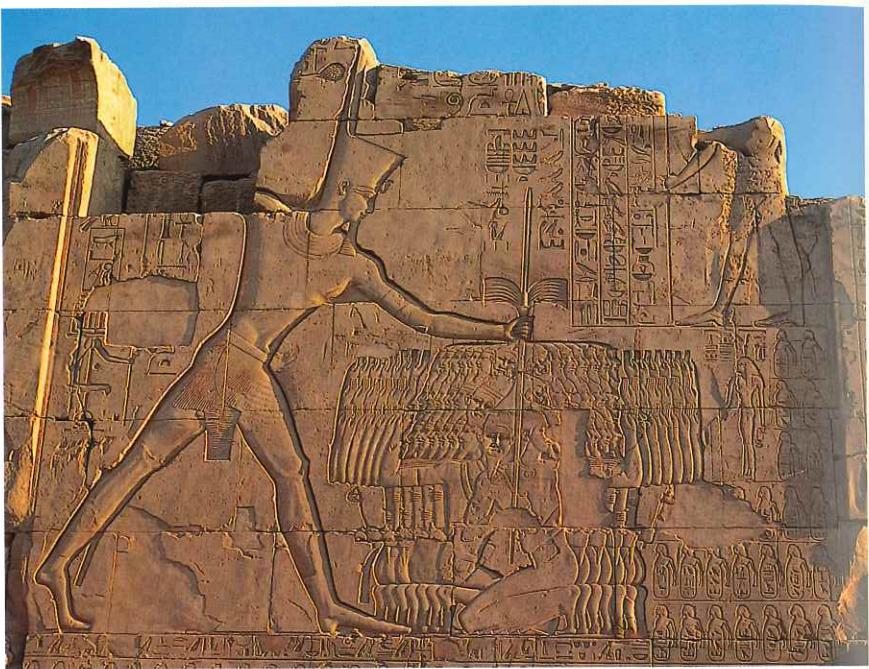
122
Colossal
head of
Amenhotep III,
from his
funerary
temple at
Western
Thebes,
c.1360 BC.
Quartzite;
h.117cm, 46in.
British
Museum,
London

Under the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Egypt experienced a new period of artistic excellence, although the age began in war. King Ahmose (1550–1525 BC) spent at least his first decade on the throne fighting the Hyksos. Despite this militaristic beginning, however, his reign inaugurated a long period of increasing economic prosperity in Egypt and of far-reaching influence abroad, now known as the New Kingdom (1540–1069 BC). This chapter looks at the art and architecture of the New Kingdom through to the reign of Amenhotep III (1391–1353 BC). Chapter 6 takes up with the changes that occurred in the New Kingdom during the reign of Akhenaten (1353–1337 BC) with the introduction of new religious ideas and the building of a new capital at el-Amarna.

Ahmose's vision of Egypt was quite different from that of his Hyksos predecessors. He quickly reintroduced the traditional model of Egyptian monarchy, especially the centralized administration. His task was much easier than it had been for the rulers of the Middle Kingdom, since no resistance was offered by the local princes. At some stage, the administrative capital of the country was also re-established at Memphis. Ahmose's decisive restoration of the old order put Egypt on course for some two hundred years of internal stability – only once did potential disruption threaten, when Queen Hatshepsut (1479–1457 BC) reigned on behalf of her young nephew Thutmose III (1479–1425 BC) and a struggle for the right to succeed loomed. A crisis, however, was successfully averted.

After defeating the Hyksos, Ahmose was immediately forced to intervene militarily in the Syro-Palestinian region, probably in order to eliminate the residual threat from former Hyksos allies. He secured the northeastern border, and the power vacuum created by the defeat of local rulers there who had come under Hyksos influence quickly led to Egypt's emergence as a dominant

regional force. Soon, however, opposition emerged in the state of Mitanni, centred on the upper reaches of the Euphrates river. For the first time in its history, Egypt entered the international superpower arena by becoming embroiled in a struggle for control of Syria and Palestine. Egypt fought to retain its influence in this region for much of the fifteenth century BC. Some of these encounters, such as Thutmose III's battle against the coalition led by the princes of the cities of Qadesh and Megiddo in his twenty-third regnal year, were recorded in detail in Egyptian texts and also



represented in reliefs. The image of the pharaoh as a mighty warrior who carries out the wishes of the god Amun by destroying Egypt's enemies dominates temple reliefs of this period (123). The traditional depiction of the pharaoh smiting enemies remained the most common, but occurred in a number of variations. Indeed, the military prowess and the heroic exploits of the pharaoh form a constant theme until the Amarna Period, when the qualities desired and celebrated in a monarch underwent a dramatic change.

Military campaigns were also undertaken in Nubia. The Kushite rulers at Kerma, south of the third Nile cataract, had been on friendly terms with the Hyksos and paid for this alliance by the loss of their kingdom to the victorious Egyptians. Egypt's territory was thus further enlarged, and its southern boundary remained in the area of the fourth or fifth Nile cataracts throughout the rest of the New Kingdom. Concerns for Egyptian security, which motivated incursions into the Syro-Palestinian region and Nubia, were coupled with a desire to control trade routes in both directions. Further, tributes were extracted from Syro-Palestinian chiefs, mainly luxury goods and products of advanced technology, such as chariots and weapons. Control of Nubia secured traditional economic interests such as access to gold, copper, mineral deposits, wood and manpower. Trade and tributes seem to have introduced subtle but significant foreign influences in many aspects of domestic life, including the arts.

Memphis was a thriving city with palaces, administrative buildings, workshops, harbours and arsenals. It was the centre of lively commerce with the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations of the Aegean and with the Levant (the countries along the eastern Mediterranean shore), and was also a departure point of military expeditions sent to Palestine and Syria. Thebes, 485 km (301 miles) to the south, was Egypt's religious capital: it contained the temple of the main state god Amun, now linked to the sun god and described as Amun-Re. The remains of this temple are at Karnak in the northern part of the modern city of Luxor.

The recovery of the Egyptian economy from the stagnation of the late Middle Kingdom and the neglect under Hyksos rule was swift and far-reaching. Temples, especially those connected with Amun-Re, were the largest landowners after the king and their estates were found in all parts of Egypt. Amun-Re, now a true state god, was believed to guide the king in his military planning and victories were attributed to him. His temples benefited most from the spoils reaped by military expeditions abroad and the tribute exacted from the foreign territories which fell under Egyptian

control. The peak of this new prosperity came during the long and peaceful reign of Amenhotep III, although in retrospect this period now seems like the lull before a spectacular storm.

New Kingdom temple building began in earnest during the reigns of Amenhotep I (1525–1504 BC) and Thutmose I (1504–1492 BC).

Three main types of temples were constructed during the Eighteenth Dynasty. First, there were temples of local deities, such as had already existed in the Middle Kingdom, in all the important towns of Egypt. Second were funerary temples, which were associated with royal tombs and built on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes. They combined the maintenance of the deceased kings' posthumous cult with the worship of Amun. Third were memorial temples, built outside Thebes at important religious centres. For example a memorial temple might be built within the temple precinct of the god Ptah at Memphis where the maintenance of the cult of the deceased king would be combined with worship of Ptah. Because of later rebuilding no memorial temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty have survived in their original state. The following discussion looks first at general principles that applied to most temples and then at several specific examples.

Although every temple had its own individual characteristics, most shared a recognizable overall pattern (124). The tendency was towards large-scale structures fronted by massive pylons. The many festivals in the Egyptian religious calendar made ease of access an important consideration, and the entrance of a New Kingdom temple usually faced the river so that it could be approached by boat (temples of the Amarna period are an exception). This facilitated processions in which the image of the deity travelled to visit other temples, such as the annual 'Beautiful Festival of the Valley' when the image of the god Amun was taken from Karnak to visit funerary temples on the west bank at Thebes. The temple usually consisted of a series of open courts in its outer part and roofed halls in the inner part placed on the same axis. The room containing the barque in which the cult statue was carried during processions preceded the shrine with the cult

statue of the deity, or a stela (false door), which provided the focus for religious ritual. This scheme developed the principles already established in Middle Kingdom temples.

The plan of most Egyptian temples was based on the dimensions of its main element, the sanctuary or room in which the main cult image was kept. Measurements of other parts of the temple were usually established during the surveying of the site by a geometrical procedure. The method of surveying gave rise to interesting proportional relationships within a structure, which when discovered by later enthusiasts, unaware of the methodology, have given rise to bizarre theories. It gave the whole structure the homogeneity

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Aerial view
of the temple
complex at
Luxor,
c.1360–330 BC



that was so characteristic of Egyptian architecture. The process of establishing dimensions was given religious interpretations that became part of foundation ceremonies, but there is little doubt that this was initially a purely practical method for achieving a degree of uniformity in all buildings. The main building material was stone (limestone, but sandstone in Upper Egypt), with only occasional use of mud bricks. Smaller structures, for example shrines for the divine barque on its temporary stops during religious processions, may have been made of hard stone such as quartzite.

The pylon that stood in front of large temples provided a monumental gateway consisting of two wings with a central doorway,



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and also served as the façade. A temple might be enlarged simply by building a new pylon which could be linked by walls to the earlier pylon. The enclosed area formed in this way might be left open to the sky, or lined with columns to form covered walks around its perimeter (a peristyle court), or filled with columns and roofed over (a hypostyle hall).

Architecturally, the Egyptian temple grew out of the simple sanctuary which housed the cult image, usually a statue, believed to be the deity's manifestation. This original concept of the house of the god was always present. During the New Kingdom, and possibly even earlier, the temple was endowed with an important additional cosmic symbolism, in which it represented the ordered world and the very site of its creation (several gods were now regarded as creators). The pylon was a barrier separating the chaotic conditions outside the temple from the order prevailing inside. Large-scale figures of the king triumphing over his enemies were carved on the pylon as a visual expression of this idea. They protected the act of creation symbolically re-enacted in the temple ritual. The open, brightly sunlit court between the pylon and the columned hypostyle hall was a middle ground between the inner part of the temple which the pharaoh had to protect, and the world outside. Its walls were often decorated with representations of religious festivals and processions during which the god's image left the safety of the temple. The hypostyle hall and its rows of tall, upright, brightly painted columns with vegetal-type capitals recalled the primordial marsh. Some light could penetrate through windows near the ceiling, but the hall was shrouded in semidarkness. The shrine containing the cult image in the innermost and narrowest part of the temple was its most elevated and darkest point, suggesting the mythical mound on which life appeared out of the watery chaos at the moment of creation.

The daily temple ritual carried out by priests consisted of caring for the cult statue, by clothing, washing and anointing it, and purifying it by burning incense, as well as presenting food and drink offerings. The only time that ordinary people were able to see the cult statue was during the festivals when it was carried by boat or overland in its ceremonial barque to 'visit' deities in other temples. Access to the inner part of the temple itself remained as tightly restricted as ever.

Statues in various parts of the temple formed an integral part of its religious and decorative programme. Royal statues were often made on a colossal scale, especially those set up outside the pylons and gates. These places were publicly accessible, and the statues clearly identified the builder of the temple in a most impressive way. This, however, was not the sculptor's main aim. The size of the sculptures was related to the scale of the buildings and the places where they stood. Similarly colossal statues showing the king in the traditional jubilee festival image were often addorsed against the walls or pillars inside the temple.

125
Headless
statue of
Amenhotep III
as an old man,
c.1360 BC.
Serpentine;
h.22.5cm, 8½ in.
Metropolitan
Museum of
Art, New York

Royal sculpture workshops must have been at their busiest during the reign of Amenhotep III, which was perhaps the greatest period for experimentation in the forms of royal statues. The king was represented in all stages of life, from youthful images to those showing him as a mature man in the prime of his life (see 122) and others where he is distinctly rotund and well into middle age (125). In his colossal statues, particularly those dating from his later years, the face of the king was carved with stylized simplicity, becoming a composition of beautifully shaped planes which nevertheless retains its individuality. The resulting image of the king is handsome but rather coldly impersonal and artificial.

Some temples received literally hundreds of statues representing the king, deities, or the two combined, especially on the occasion of religious feasts and jubilee festivals. The temple of the goddess Mut, in the southern part of Karnak, received statues representing 365 different aspects of the lioness goddess Sakhmet (126), one for each day of the year, though this is an extreme example. Statues of

126

The lioness-headed goddess Sakhmet, from the temple of the goddess Mut at Karnak, Thebes, c.1360 BC. Diorite; h.210cm, 82½in. Museo Egizio, Turin

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Statue of the scribe Nebmertef and the baboon god Thoth, c.1360 BC. Schist; h.19.5cm, 7½in. Musée du Louvre, Paris

private individuals were also eventually permitted in certain parts of temples. Some show the person in the presence of a deity, for example the statue of Nebmertef shown as a scribe before the baboon god Thoth, the patron of scribes (127). Others combine images of two or more persons, such as the family group of Sennufer, his wife and small daughter (128), dating to the reign of Amenhotep II (1427–1401 BC) and the statue of Senenmut, the architect of Queen Hatshepsut, holding the small princess Neferure (129), both from Karnak. Block statues showing a man whose body is almost completely concealed by his cloak became even more popular than during the Middle Kingdom, and several new statue types appeared, among them one of a kneeling man holding a large sistrum, a rattle used by priestesses, decorated with the head of the goddess Hathor.

The king's relationship to the deities was underlined by reliefs showing the king and the gods together in scenes that express both affection and the mutual benefits each derived. In many



scenes, for example, the king presents the gods with material offerings such as food (bread, cakes, etc.), drink (water, milk, wine, beer, etc.), and various types of cloth, as well as items required in purification, such as natron (a naturally occurring mixture of sodium salts) and incense, and abstract gifts such as an image of the goddess Maet symbolizing truth or established order. The king is shown performing acts which please the god, for example consecrating offerings or taking part in temple ceremonies.

In return, he is seen receiving such things as the symbol of the jubilee festival that guaranteed him continued celebration and a long reign (the festival was symbolized by the hieroglyphic sign for the double kiosk in which the king was enthroned during part of the ceremony), or symbols of life, dominion and stability.

The orientation of Egyptian temples (and tombs) governed the placement of many scenes. So, for example, those related to Upper Egypt (ie the southern part of the country) would be on the southern wall,

128
Seated statue of Sennufer and his wife Senay from Karnak, Thebes, c.1410 BC. Granite; h.120cm, 47¼in. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

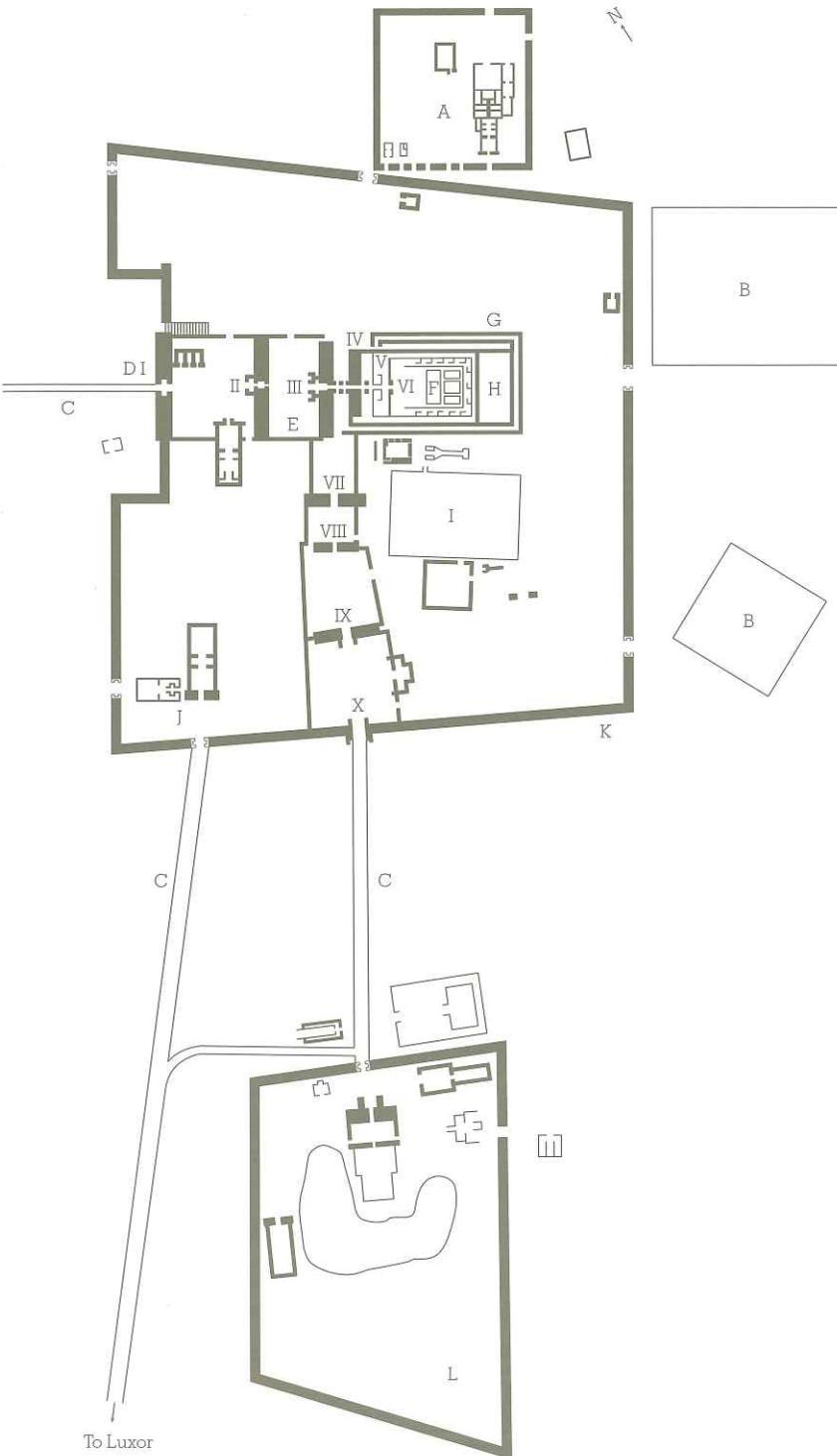
129
Statue of Senenmut holding princess Neferure (daughter of Hatshepsut), from Karnak, c.1460 BC. Granite; h.52.7cm, 20¾in. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago



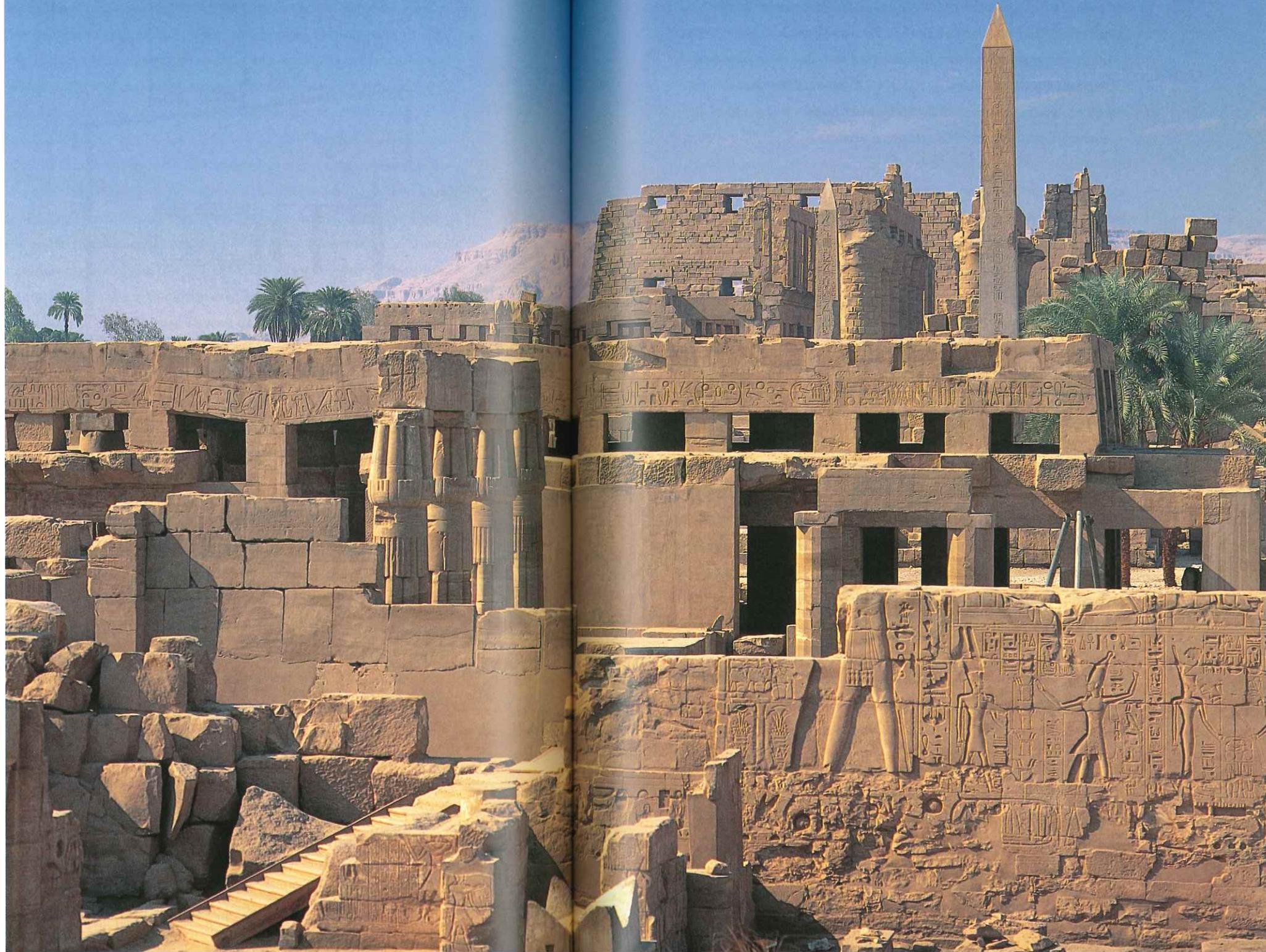
while those connected with Lower Egypt would be on the northern wall. The temple's orientation, usually determined by the cardinal points, sometimes deviated as a result of the setting, which depended on the course of the Nile. In such cases the location of scenes followed a symbolic orientation, defined in terms of the temple's structure but with little relationship to reality outside. In temples (and tombs) the direction in which gods or people faced in individual scenes was also subject to clearly defined rules; the 'owner' of a building – eg the deity of the temple (or the person buried in the tomb) faces out, as if meeting the visitors. Correspondingly, the visitors face towards the inside of the structure; they may include the king approaching the god with offerings (or offering-bearers in a tomb). Often, the orientation of reliefs virtually signposts the route of visitors or processions. As well as the temples of major deities, almost all the temples of local gods benefited from royal patronage during the early New Kingdom. These were the first non-funerary structures in Egyptian history to be copiously decorated with reliefs and so began a trend which culminated spectacularly in the temples of the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods.

The temple of the god Amun (or Amun-Re) at Karnak in Thebes (modern Luxor) was the largest temple in Egypt (130, 131). Called Ipet-isut (possibly translatable as 'The Reckoner of the Places of Worship'), it gradually developed into a true national shrine: all kings strove to contribute to it by adding new buildings or rebuilding and restoring the old ones. Thus, architecturally the Karnak temple is a complex of temples rather than a single structure. By the end of the reign of Amenhotep III around 1353 BC, the temple had four pylons (numbered III–VI by Egyptologists because another two were added by later kings) along its main approach from the west to the east, and another two pylons (VII and VIII) along a subsidiary north to south axis. Obelisks, tall monolithic pillars with a pyramid-shaped summit associated with the sun god Re, marked the entrances to the temple during the reigns of Thutmose I, Queen Hatshepsut and her successor Thutmose III. The last king also built a shrine at the east end of the temple for the barque and the cult image of Amun.

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Plan of the temple of Amun-Re, Karnak, Thebes, c.1930–150 BC.
(A) Precinct of Montu,
(B) Temples of the Aten,
(C) Avenue of Sphinxes,
(D) Pylon,
(E) Hypostyle hall,
(F) Sanctuary,
(G) Great Temple of Amun,
(H) Temple of Thutmose III,
(I) Sacred Lake,
(J) Temple of Khons,
(K) Precinct of Amun,
(L) Precinct of Mut



131
The temple
of Amun-Re,
Karnak,
Thebes,
standing and
restored
structures
c.1930–150 BC



By the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty (after 1540 BC) many local gods were grouped into neat 'holy families'. The senior deity, usually male (eg Amun at Thebes or Ptah at Memphis), was given a female companion (eg the goddess Mut was linked to Amun, and Sekhmet to Ptah), and they were joined by a junior member of the group, a youthful god or a child (Khons at Thebes, Nefertum at Memphis). Egyptian religious architecture of the Eighteenth Dynasty expressed these group relationships by building a temple of the female member of the triad to the south of the main temple and that of the third member to the north. The arrangement was followed subsequently whenever large religious complexes were planned, for example at Memphis during the reign of Ramses II (1279–1213 BC) and at San el-Hagar (Tanis) during the Twenty-first Dynasty (1069–945 BC). At Karnak while the southern part of the complex was dedicated to the goddess Mut, the northern part belonged to the traditional Theban god Montu. Later, Khons had a temple within the precinct of Amun.

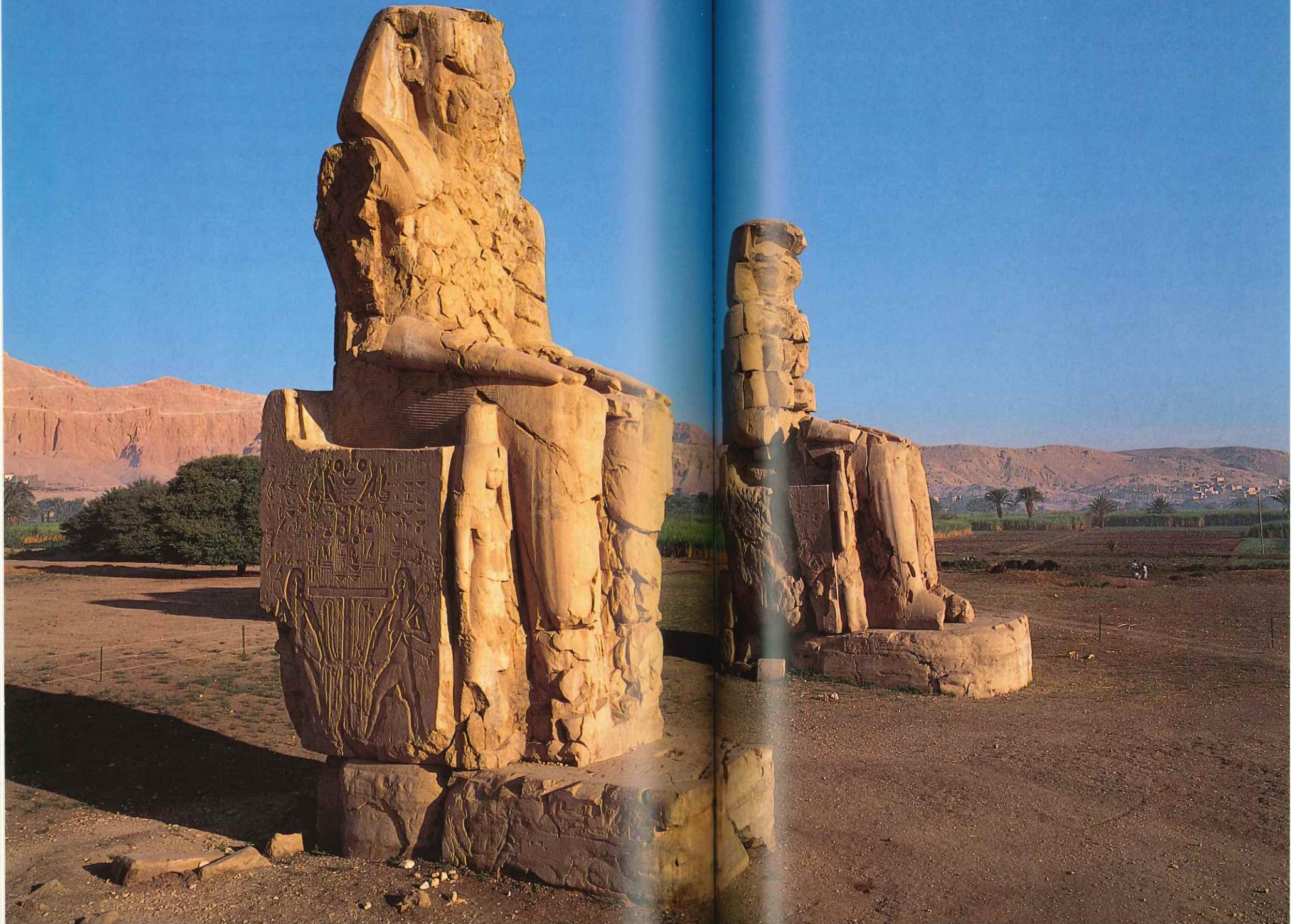
The relationship between the king and Amun-Re was so close that the Karnak temple was considered the appropriate place to record in writing and pictures some of the king's achievements, especially his military victories. The most interesting such record is the copy of the war daybooks (also called annals) of the campaigns of Thutmose III in Western Asia. Unlike almost anything else found in Egyptian temples, these texts are true historical records. (Copies of the real annals, or yearly records, were probably held in the temple of the god Ptah in Memphis.) The great warrior Thutmose III also built a temple in the easternmost part of the temple complex of Amun-Re, behind the sanctuary, which contains remarkable representations of foreign plants and animals.

Also dedicated to Amun was the temple called Ipet-resyt ('The Southern Harem'). It is located in the centre of the modern city of Luxor (see 124), just 3 km (nearly 2 miles) south of the Karnak temple. There the god Amun appeared in an ithyphallic form, thus resembling the god Min of Koptos (see 27). The southern part of the temple was built almost entirely by Amenhotep III, while its northern part

was added by Ramses II. Amenhotep III's temple consists of an entrance colonnade with papyrus-capital columns, a large peristyle court and a hypostyle hall with slim and elegant palm-capital columns, and the barque room and shrine surrounded by ancillary rooms. One room contains reliefs showing the 'divine' birth of Amenhotep III, with his mother, Queen Mutemwia, and his 'father', Amun. The main purpose of this temple was probably to serve the cult of the royal *ka*, one of the aspects of the king's being. The *ka* is usually shown as a small human figure, with the open-arms hieroglyph (reading *ka*) on his head, following the king. The close link between the two Amun temples was demonstrated in the spectacular annual Opet festival, when the image of Amun at Karnak made a journey south to visit his southern place of worship.

Shrines of Amun or Amun-Re were also built in other parts of Egypt, and the god appeared as a 'guest deity' in the temples of other local gods where arrangements were made for his worship. To mark the celebration of his jubilee festival after the first thirty years of his reign, Amenhotep III built a large temple for Amun-Re at Soleb, close to the third Nile cataract in Nubia. He was not the first king to build in Nubia, but the large scale of this project shows that, although the territory was administered separately, it was now regarded as permanently annexed to Egypt proper and was fully Egyptianized. This foreshadowed the intensive temple building which later took place there under Ramses II. Interestingly, no comparable temple building activity was ever undertaken in the Palestinian and Syrian territories occupied by the Egyptians, which could, at best, be described as Egyptian colonies.

New Kingdom royal funerary temples effectively replaced the temples attached to royal pyramids (the pyramid was replaced by the rock-cut tomb, discussed below, for royal burials). During the Eighteenth Dynasty (after 1540 BC) the royal tomb became physically separated from the funerary temple. Royal tombs were now made in the desolate valleys on the west bank of the Nile, opposite the city of Thebes. This followed the tradition that regarded the



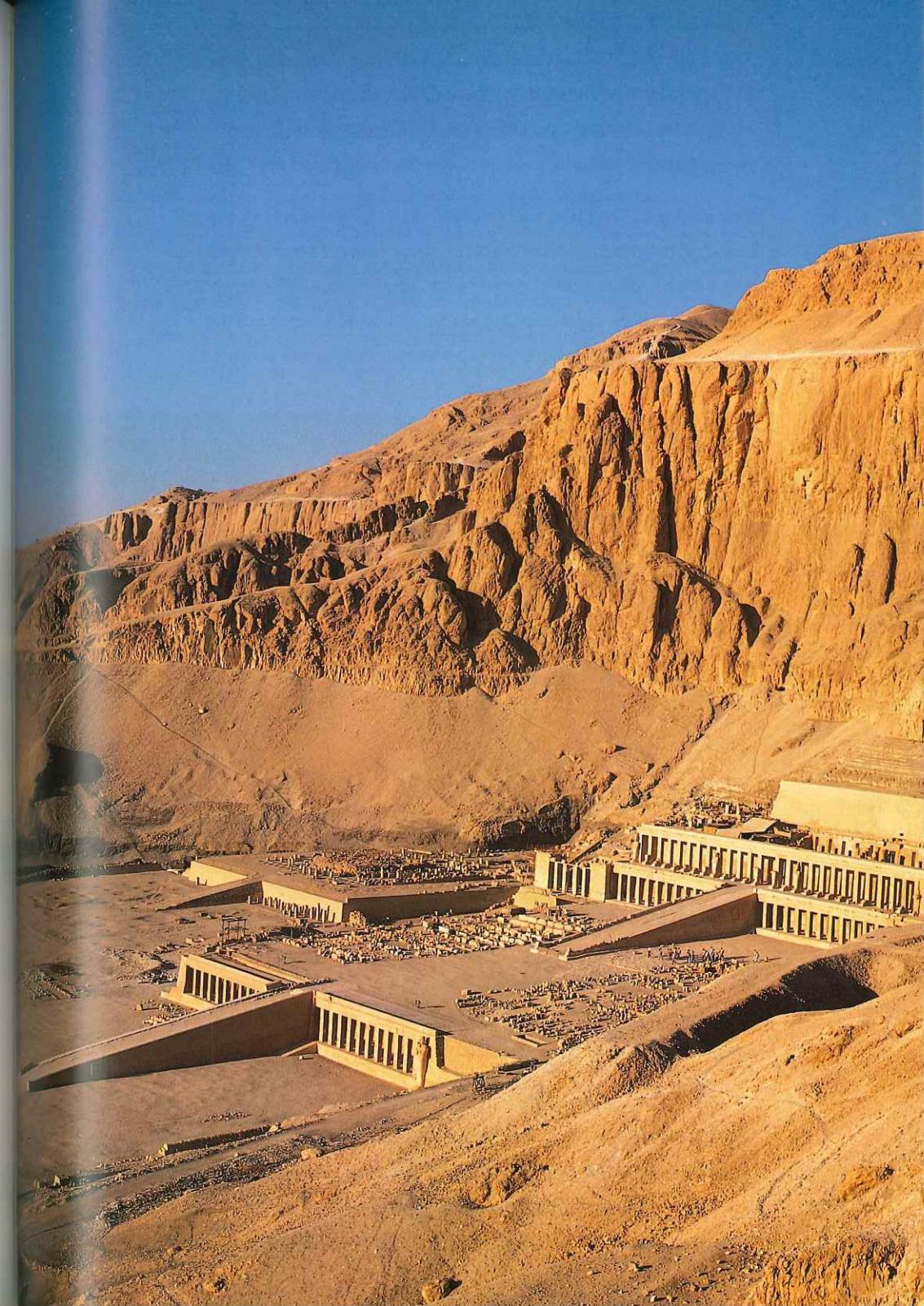
132
Memnon
Colossi' of
Amenhotep III,
at the
entrance to
his funerary
temple in
Western
Thebes,
c.1360 BC.
Quartzite;
original height
c.20m, 66ft

west, the direction in which the sun set, as the abode of the dead. The realm of the god Osiris was also in the west. Funerary temples, also located on the west bank, were lined up close to the river, some 2 km (1½ miles) from the tombs. This is not such a radical departure from earlier practice as it may seem: even in the past the royal pyramid tomb was physically separated from the funerary temple (the upper temple of the pyramid complex). The new form of royal tomb was simply distanced in a more obvious way from the funerary temple.

Most royal funerary temples of the early New Kingdom are now very poorly preserved, but it is clear that in plan they generally followed the established temple concept. The site of the largest of them, the temple of Amenhotep III, is still marked by the huge (c.20 m or 66 ft high) seated statues of the king, made of quartzite, known as the Memnon Colossi (132). These once stood in front of the temple's pylon, and fragments of other colossal statues of Amenhotep III were found nearby (see 122). Although, as in other similar cases, it has been possible to reconstruct the plan of the temple on paper, the structure itself is almost completely lost.

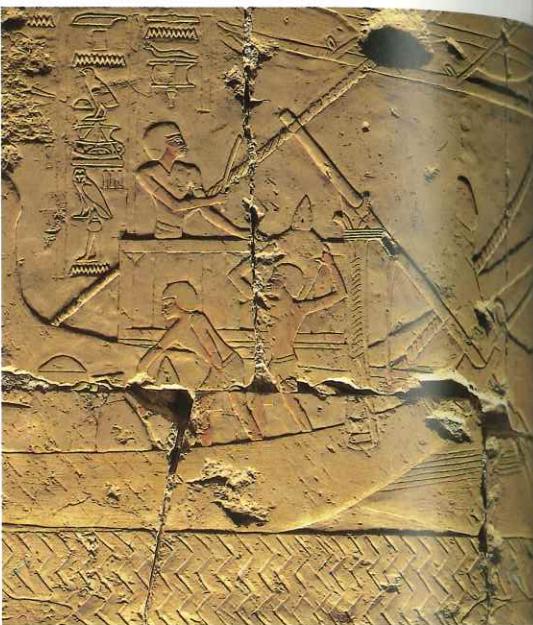
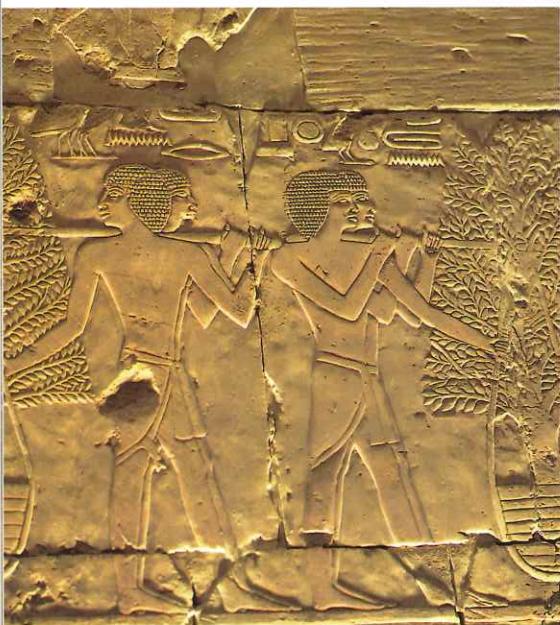
The funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut at the foot of the steep cliffs at Deir el-Bahri (133), directly opposite the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, is better preserved than most, and also architecturally distinctive. It was built for the queen's funerary cult, and for the god Amun-Re, the necropolis god Anubis and the goddess Hathor. Its design imitates and develops that of the nearby Middle Kingdom temple of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II (2050–1999 BC) of the Eleventh Dynasty (see 91, 92), although it is not clear why this should be so. It may have been the decision of Hatshepsut's architect Senenmut; if so, it is one of the few cases in Egyptian history where an individual profoundly influenced the established architectural form. Such courageous originality would link Senenmut with the handful of Egyptian architects whose work departed radically from tradition – Imhotep, responsible for the construction of the Step Pyramid of Djoser (see 43); the anonymous designer of the first true pyramid of Snofru; and the architect of Nebhepetre's funerary monument. Less than a

133
View of the
funerary
temples of
Hatshepsut,
c.1460 BC,
and
Nebhepetre
Mentuhotep II,
c.2000 BC,
at Deir
el-Bahri,
Western
Thebes



hundred years after the temple of Hatshepsut, in the reign of Amenhotep III, another remarkable architect. Amenhotep, son of Hepu, was responsible for some of the largest architectural projects ever undertaken, including the funerary temple of Amenhotep III (see 132) and possibly the temple at Luxor (see 124).

The names of Egyptian architects such as these survive not from any desire to immortalize creative achievement but because they were high-ranking officials whose tombs contained biographical texts and other evidence. This explains why the names of the artists who carved reliefs, painted wall-paintings or sculpted



134–136
Reliefs from the funerary temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, Western Thebes, c.1460 BC. Limestone, painted raised relief; h. of register 46 cm, 18½ in.
Far left Men carrying baskets with incense trees
Left Expedition to the land of Punt
Right Egyptian troops in the land of Punt

nephew, Thutmose III. The unusual design of her funerary temple may express a conscious effort to distance herself from her predecessors on the Egyptian throne. Deir el-Bahri was traditionally associated with the goddess Hathor, and this may have also played a part, as the female pharaoh may have wanted to associate herself as closely as possible with one of the area's main female deities. Statues of Hatshepsut interestingly reflect the re-evaluation of her position that took place during her reign: they progressively lost many of their female characteristics – indeed, shared family characteristics make late statues of Hatshepsut little different from those of her successor, Thutmose III.



statues are hardly ever known. They would not be wealthy enough to be buried in elaborate tombs containing records of their life and status. By contrast, the official in charge of a building project was a member of the governing élite.

The originality of Senenmut's work on the temple at Deir el-Bahri may also reflect the fact that Queen Hatshepsut was herself no ordinary ruler. She was the queen of Thutmose II (1492–1479 BC) who, after the death of her husband, ruled on behalf of her young

Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri is partly freestanding and partly rock-cut, and is built on several levels. Three of these are fronted by pillared porticos, and the walls behind them contain some of the most remarkable reliefs known from Egypt (134–136). They were carved in very low relief, perhaps in a further reference to the decoration of the neighbouring temple of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II, and include a detailed pictorial record of a naval expedition sent to the African land of Punt, and of the transport of

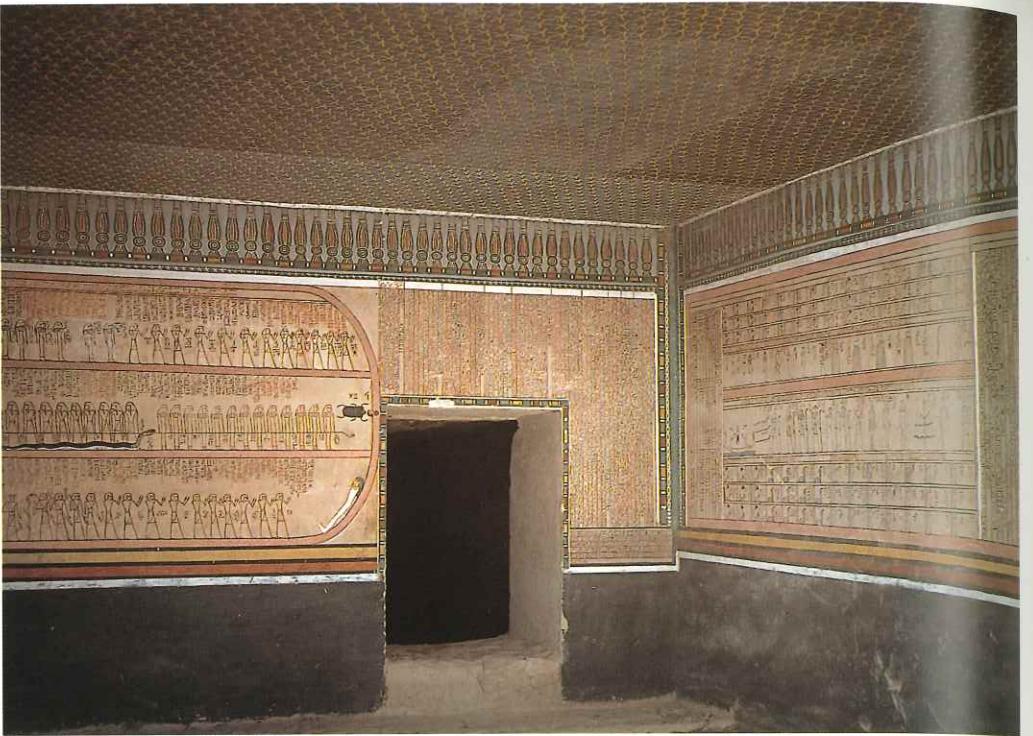


137
Statue of
Hatshepsut
from her
funerary
temple at
Deir el-Bahri,
Western
Thebes,
c.1460 BC.
Limestone;
h.196cm, 77in.
Metropolitan
Museum of
Art, New York

obelisks from the granite quarries at Aswan to the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak. These representations of landmark events in Hatshepsut's reign recall similar features in some Old Kingdom pyramid complexes, especially the transport of columns and other architectural elements for the pyramids of Sahure (2447–2435 BC) and Unas (2341–2311 BC). The temple also contains scenes depicting Hatshepsut's divine birth as the result of a union between her mother and the god Amun, who had appeared in the form of Hatshepsut's father, Thutmose I. This is a clear attempt to legitimize her right to the Egyptian throne by showing that, like other kings, she had been chosen by the state god Amun. A chapel devoted to the funerary cult of Hatshepsut's father was also located in the temple.

Almost all the sculptures in funerary temples represented the pharaohs for whose funerary cult a temple was built. At Deir el-Bahri there were some two hundred or more statues of Hatshepsut. Many of these were sphinxes, some of them curiously reminiscent of the lions with human faces of Amenemhet III (1859–1814 BC; see 85, 104), and there were large 'Osiride' statues, or perhaps better 'jubilee statues', addorsed to the pillars of the colonnades and elsewhere. These show the queen draped in a close-fitting cloak with her arms crossed on her breast, a posture usually adopted by the god Osiris but also one associated with the pharaoh during royal jubilees. Other figures, some of them colossal, showed the queen seated (137), standing or kneeling.

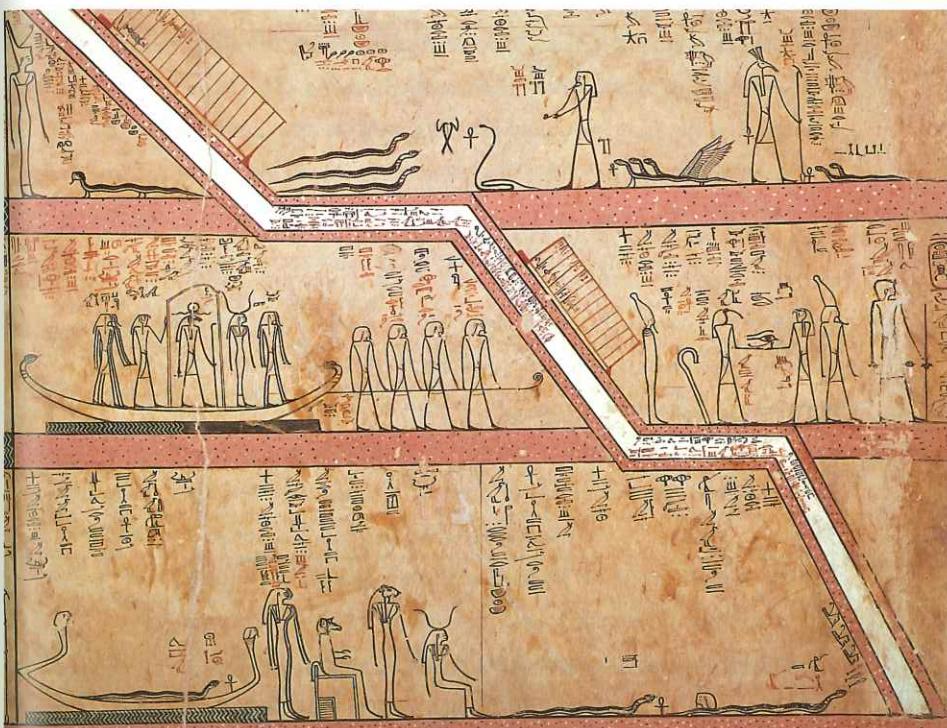
Temples are one main New Kingdom architectural form. Another is the tomb. The royal tombs on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes are entirely rock-cut, with no superstructure above ground and no conspicuous entrance, although originally they were not necessarily meant to be concealed. The royal necropolis, in the inhospitable and desolate wadi now known as the Valley of the Kings, was closed off and guarded, but the locations of the tombs were known to a large number of people. The apparent secrecy surrounding the location of the tomb of Tutankhamun (1336–1327 BC), for example, was not actually deliberate, but due to carelessness on the part of the builders of later tombs and centuries of neglect



descriptions and illustrations of the surroundings and its inhabitants. They are divided into sections according to the nocturnal hours that the sun god must spend there. This is a weird and feverishly unreal world, far removed from the dignified and reassuring representations of gods depicted on temple walls – at times, these images of winged snakes, unusual deities with two human heads or two bird heads, female figures seated on large cobras or with serpents on their shoulders and captives being decapitated can be deeply disturbing (139). The custom of inscribing the Imi-duat texts on tomb walls continued the tradition of the Pyramid Texts, which began nearly a thousand years earlier in the reign of King Unas. It is not known whether the Pyramid Texts, which consisted of religious formulae of various dates, were copied on to the pyramid's interior walls from papyri kept in temple or palace archives, but the manner in which these hieroglyphic texts were inscribed was probably designed especially for the walls of monumental tombs. The Imi-duat texts are shown differently, as if the walls of the royal tomb were covered with huge sheets of papyri: the

which eventually concealed the tomb's entrance. The typical rock-cut royal tomb of the Eighteenth Dynasty consists of a series of rooms, at first along a straight axis and then veering to the left. The overall impression is that of a long and spacious corridor, gently descending towards the burial chamber containing the royal sarcophagus. The decoration is mainly concentrated in the burial chamber (138) and consists of texts and scenes from the large corpus of religious texts called Imi-duat ('That which is in the underworld'). The architecture may to some extent reflect contemporary ideas about the underworld into which the sun god Re, accompanied by his retinue and the deceased king, descended in the evening. There were many dangers to overcome in the underworld, especially the great snake Apophis, before Re was able to emerge triumphantly the following dawn. By sharing this journey, the king ensured his smooth transition from this world to the next one.

The Imi-duat texts inscribed on the walls of royal tombs provided the king with a handbook for use in the underworld, with detailed



inscriptions are in cursive script and the images are loosely sketched, both techniques used on papyri (it is possible that papyri with the same texts and images accompanied the king to the tomb). Further scenes show the dead ruler with such deities as Anubis, Osiris, Hathor, who presided over the Theban necropolis, and the sky goddess Nut, who played an important part in Egyptian funerary beliefs and was often described as 'enfolding' the body of the deceased. The king is also shown suckled by Isis in the form of a tree goddess. At first, most of these additional scenes were not depicted in the burial chamber itself but in the outer parts of the tomb. By the reign of Amenhotep III, they had become more extensive, and this trend continued.

None of the early New Kingdom royal tombs has escaped the attention of tomb robbers, which makes it impossible to know for certain what the deceased king was buried with or the quality of the items. Some sculptures showing the king or deities were certainly included, although these were small and mostly made of wood. They were mainly associated with the religious texts inscribed on tomb walls and their accompanying images and show deities related to those depicted in the *Imi-duat* illustrations, which had never before been seen in three-dimensional sculpture. They provide yet another example of the close connection in Egyptian art between two- and three-dimensional images.

By the Eighteenth Dynasty, wealthy subjects were no longer buried close to the tomb of the reigning king. The majority of the tombs were now built by private enterprise and the ability to raise resources for their construction and maintenance locally became paramount. The two largest cemeteries were located near the two main cities, Thebes in the south and Memphis in the north. The overwhelming religious prestige of Thebes became the main attraction of its necropolis, located on the west bank of the Nile opposite the city. The northern city of Memphis, which was on the west bank, had a large cemetery, Saqqara (few tombs of any artistic importance, however, were made there before the reign of Thutmose III). Private tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty can also be found in

other parts of Egypt where there were people able to command the resources for their construction. In keeping with the idea of the west as the abode of the dead, most Egyptian cemeteries are on the west bank of the Nile, and tombs tend to be oriented westwards, although for practical reasons inhabitants of the east bank often buried their dead in the vicinity of their own towns and villages.

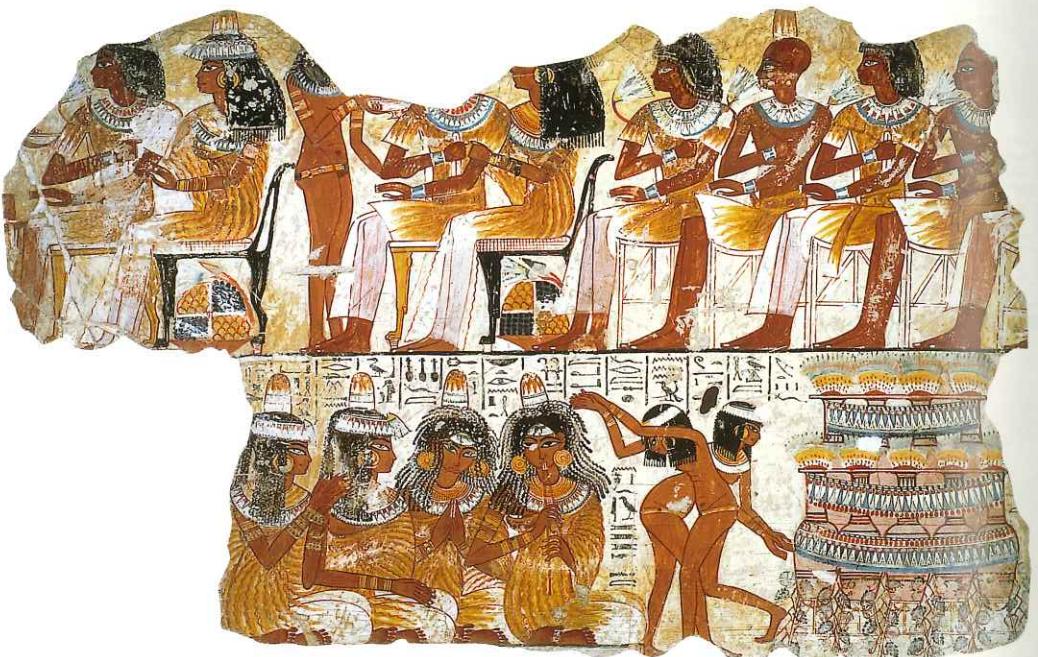
Local geological conditions considerably influenced the development of cemeteries and the forms of tombs. The geology of the Theban west bank allowed the making of rock-cut tombs, the type evidently preferred by the richest customers of local necropolis workshops. The plans of the tomb chapels varied considerably but there was a basic cruciform pattern, a distinct departure from the plans of Middle Kingdom tombs. In the simplest plan, the entrance from an open court brings the visitor into a short corridor. This opens into a broad, short hall. A central doorway at the back then leads into a long, narrow room at the rear of which is a niche with a rock-cut or freestanding statue of the deceased, often accompanied by his wife. The walls of all these rooms are decorated in painted low relief or, more often, simply painted. The ceiling may have a variety of geometric patterns, probably based on contemporary textiles. The opening of the shaft that leads to the burial chamber on a lower level can be in almost any part of the chapel, and the chamber itself was usually left undecorated. Later tomb chapels, especially those dating to the reign of Amenhotep III, may have much more elaborate versions of the basic scheme, containing more rooms, some of them with ceilings supported by columns. There are some parallels between New Kingdom royal and private tombs. The underground burial chambers of large private tombs were inaccessible (back-filled and sealed), as were the royal tombs themselves. The chapels of private tombs were the counterparts of royal funerary temples. Funerary cults were kept up in both, but access to the temples would have been restricted to priests while the chapels of private tombs were open to relatives.

At first, the decoration of Theban rock-cut tombs shows close links with Middle Kingdom style and iconography, but it soon begins to

140
Scenes in
the tomb of
Sennufer at
Sheikh Abd
el-Qurna,
Western
Thebes,
c.1410 BC.
Painting on
plaster



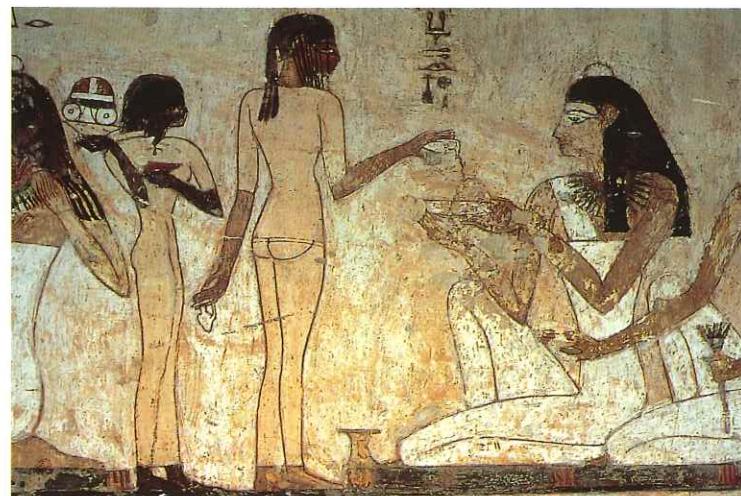
develop its own unmistakable style (140), which reaches a high point under Thutmose IV (1401–1391 BC) and Amenhotep III. Domestic family scenes are frequent. Sumptuous parties, sometimes interpreted as funerary repasts (although this is far from certain), are shown, with musicians, singers, dancers and gymnasts (141). The atmosphere is one of luxury and opulence: elaborate wigs, long flowing robes and jewellery are worn by men as well as women. Some guests are shown being spectacularly sick as the result of overeating or intoxication, perhaps in order to convey



the richness and quantities of food available. It has been suggested that intoxication was associated with the goddess Hathor and was seen as a way of breaking down barriers between the living and the dead, but this explanation seems unlikely.

The way in which people are depicted shows subtle but significant modifications. Earlier the approach to the human figure was to build it up from its constituent parts, creating an attractive completeness but also a rather cold and impersonal impression. It seems that now Egyptian artists could at last view the figure as a

whole, a skill gained at least partly by sketching freely without the laborious adding on of individual elements. An interesting example of this new approach can be seen in the tomb of Rekhmire, the vizier of Thutmose III, where one of the serving girls is shown turning away from the spectator and displaying her back (142), instead of the usual front view. Particularly noticeable in female figures is a new sensuality. Some of the changes in details ran counter to this more naturalistic approach, however, particularly during the reign of Amenhotep III (143): the eyes of female figures became conspicuously almond-shaped, unnaturally large and dominant, while the slightly pouting lips gave the face a youthful idealized



expression. In representations of men, the earlier rather solemn gaze was replaced by a more open and optimistic expression.

The subject matter of New Kingdom tomb decoration is far more varied than in the mastabas of the Old Kingdom. The overall impression is that New Kingdom artists were less inclined to follow and elaborate on well-established themes, but instead produced variations on old subjects in which the whole design, and not just details, was new. A freer and more impressionistic style of painting appeared, which departed from the earlier, more painstaking drawings. The individuality of these anonymous artists is now quite clearly reflected in their work.



143
A brother and sister-in-law of the vizier Ramose, in his tomb at Sheikh Abd al-Qurna, Western Thebes, c.1355 BC. Limestone; painted raised relief

In private tombs, images of the king and queen often appear, as do royal children, especially where the dead person had been involved in their education and upbringing. The tomb of Hekerneheh shows the small prince Amenhotep (later King Amenhotep III) on the knee of his male nurse, who was either Hekerneheh or perhaps his father. Scenes showing foreigners bringing tribute are frequent at this period of Egypt's dominance abroad, for example the inhabitants of the Aegean shown in the tomb of Rekhmire, while the gods make their appearance for the first time, usually receiving homage or offerings from the deceased. Long religious texts and small vignettes illustrating them were commonly included, especially from the so-called Book of the Dead. This was a large corpus of texts which the deceased person was thought to need in the afterlife. It is related to two earlier compositions that served a similar purpose, the Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts. Selected spells from the Book of the

Dead could be inscribed in the tomb or on various funerary objects, but the most extensive versions of the Book of the Dead were inscribed on papyri that accompanied the deceased person into the tomb (144).

The traditional representations of offerings still appeared. These scenes may be less prominent than previously, but they maintained the original purpose of tomb decoration, as a guarantee that the deceased's needs in the afterlife would be satisfied. Mourners were often shown (145), as were aspects of the funeral, in particular the Opening the Mouth ceremony performed on the mummified body of the dead person. The purpose of this rite was to enable the mummified body to act as the deceased person's manifestation in the afterlife. (It is significant that statues also underwent the Opening the Mouth ceremony.) The career of the deceased might also be illustrated, with scenes showing the inspection of foreign tribute, palace workshops and storerooms, or soldiers. It is questionable, though, whether these reflect the reality of any particular occasion. It is much more likely that they present a stylized image, although this was modified by the artist for each individual burial by the addition of realistic contemporary detail.

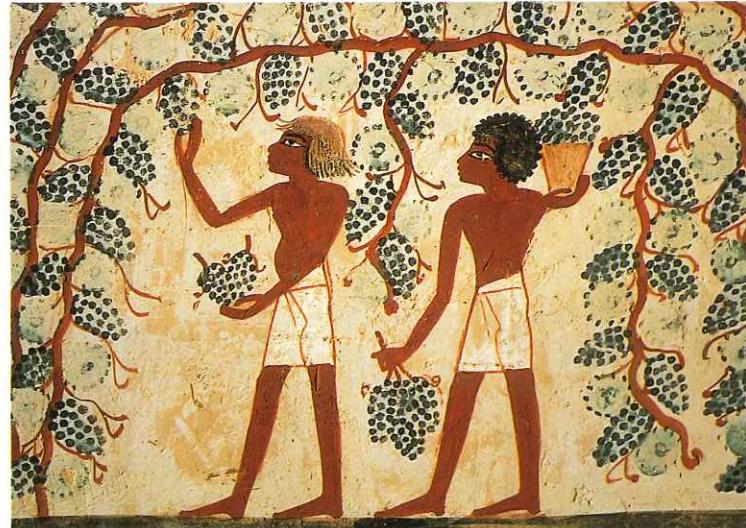
A particularly notable feature of New Kingdom tomb decoration is the astonishingly large number of subjects apparently taken from everyday life. These include scenes of craftsmen and tradesmen such as sculptors, vase-makers, metalworkers, jewellers, carpenters, leather-workers, brick-makers, men making boats and chariots, net and rope-makers, weavers, dyers and laundry-workers, butchers, bakers and brewers. Agriculture, cattle-breeding and horticulture are represented, as well as viticulture (146) and various activities in the marshes, including the netting of fish and wildfowl. While all this gives the impression of spontaneity and realism, it should be recalled that Egyptian art always needs to be interpreted and not accepted at face value. A good example of this is provided by one of the best-loved Egyptian tomb paintings, which shows the Theban official Nebamun hunting wildfowl in the marshes and dates to about 1360 BC (147).



144
The overseer of works, Kha, and his wife Meryt before the god Osiris, in a vignette in his Book of the Dead papyrus from his tomb at Deir el-Medina, Western Thebes, c.1400 BC.
h.35cm, l.3' in.
l. of the whole papyrus,
14m, 45ft 11in,
Museo Egizio,
Turin



145
Mourners in the tomb of the vizier Ramose, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Western Thebes, c.1355 BC. Painting on plaster



146
Men picking grapes in the tomb of Nakht, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, Western Thebes, c.1390 BC. Painting on plaster

In his tomb Nebamun is represented standing in a small skiff gliding through the marshes with no obvious means of propulsion. He is holding several birds in his left hand (the arm is attached to the right shoulder – a convention discussed in Chapter 3), while in his raised right hand he holds a snake-shaped throw-stick which he is about to hurl among the multitude of birds rising from a papyrus thicket. A small daughter is kneeling by Nebamun's feet, and his wife, holding a large bouquet, is standing in the skiff behind him. A cat is shown wreaking havoc among the agitated birds; it has sunk its teeth into the wings of one and grasps another two with its claws. The depiction of wildlife is very convincing, and so are the fish in the water under the skiff. The scene seems to show a favourite pastime of Egyptian officials, and the cat appears to be used in such a fowling expedition to retrieve the birds brought down by the hunter's boomerang.

This would be a completely wrong interpretation, however. First of all, even a thousand years earlier in Old Kingdom mastabas, marsh scenes depicting the deceased spearing fish or fowling with a throw-stick were no longer reflections of contemporary life. In the tomb of Nebamun, the artist attempted to update a traditional scene by giving the man a contemporary wig, throwing a

long-stalked lotus flower and a couple of lotus buds over his right shoulder, and changing the form of his throw-stick from a functional weapon to a decorative snake-shaped object. This does not seem very plausible attire and equipment for an arduous trip into the marshes, and the figure of Nebamun's wife dressed up in all her finery, which is typically mid-fourteenth century BC in style, only enhances the feeling of unreality. She is wearing a cone of scented fatty substance on her head, such as can be seen on the heads of revellers in banquet scenes (see 141), and is ready for a party rather than a hunting expedition.

Second, how can the 'retrieving' cat be explained? Family scenes became very common in Theban tombs, and by the mid-fourteenth century BC a cat was a frequent participant in scenes of domestic happiness. When the family group consisting of husband, his wife and their daughter was transposed into the fictional marsh surroundings, it seemed natural to bring the cat with them. But here tradition and reality merged. The artist knew only too well how the cat would react to the presence of birds, and he showed it behaving naturally. This fusion of a fictitious scene brought up to date by contemporary detail and containing real-life observation is typical of New Kingdom Egyptian tomb decoration.

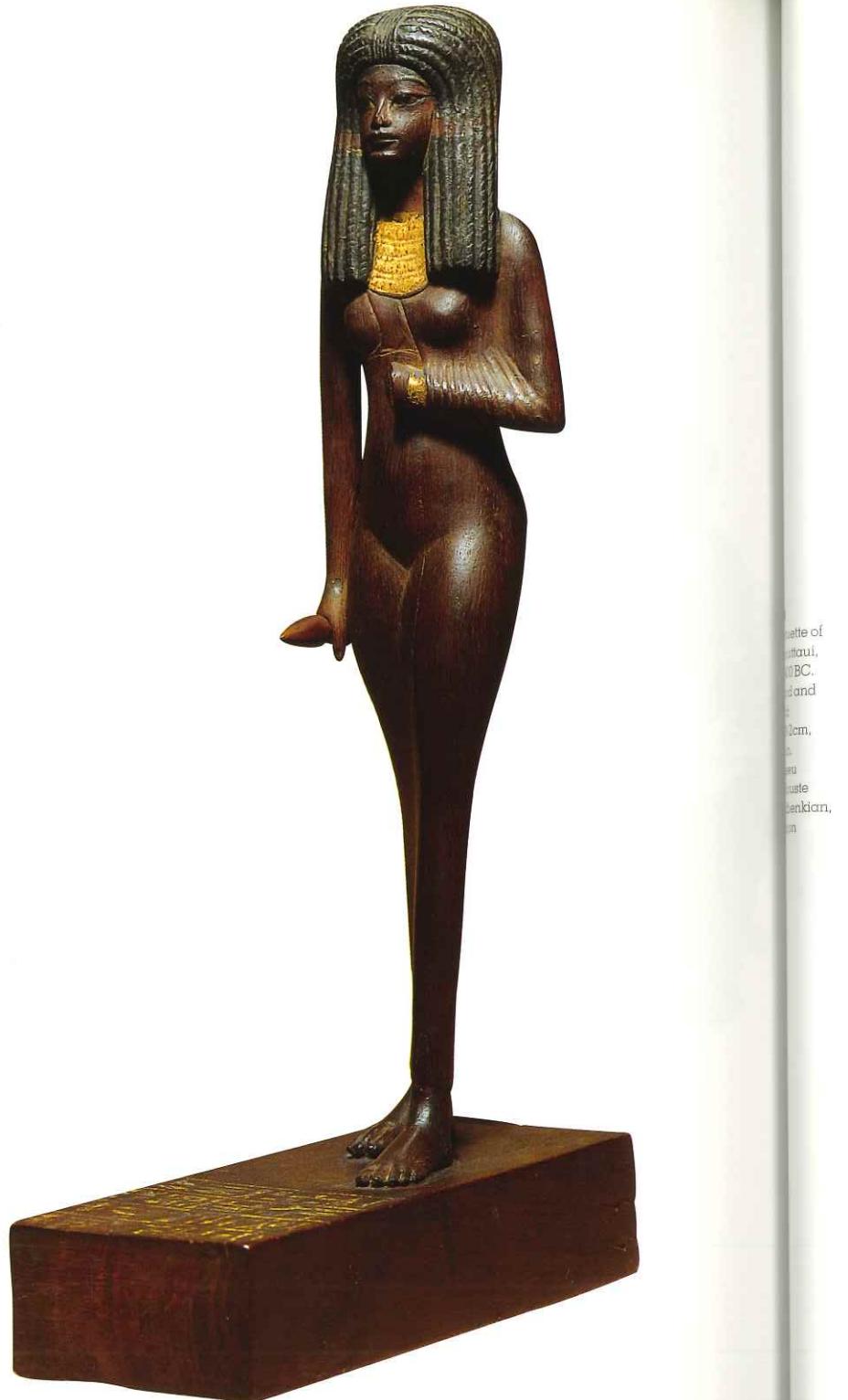


147
Nebamun and his cat hunting birds in the marshes, from his tomb in Western Thebes, c.1390 BC. Painting on plaster; 81 cm, 31½ in. British Museum, London

At Saqqara, the main cemetery of the Memphite area, private tombs developed somewhat differently. The Theban cemetery and Theban artists dominated the Egyptian funerary scene to such an extent that despite the economic importance of Memphis, Memphite tombs of the second half of the sixteenth and the fifteenth centuries BC were always overshadowed by them. The rock at Saqqara is of very poor quality, though a few large rock-cut tombs were made there from the reign of Thutmose III onwards. Some of these are decorated in relief with scenes that, in both their technique and subject matter, display marked differences when compared with their Theban counterparts. Other Saqqara tombs were painted and their subject matter is not substantially different from Theban tombs. This picture of an unexpectedly eclectic and heterogeneous approach to tomb decoration may soon be better understood as a result of recent discoveries at Saqqara, including a number of previously unknown tombs dating to the first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty. One of the most interesting is that of Aperel, a vizier of Amenhotep III and possibly also Amenhotep IV. The burial chamber contained the remains of exquisite wooden coffins. These are poorly preserved but there is a good chance that it will be possible to reconstruct them.

New Kingdom tomb statues show a range of interesting types. One that occurs frequently in all parts of Egypt shows husband and wife seated side by side, with their arms round each other's waists or hands resting on one another's shoulders. Single individuals were portrayed in a new type of statue, kneeling and holding a stela which is usually inscribed with the text of a hymn to the sun, or a shrine with the statue of a deity. Many tomb statuettes were made of wood (148); they tend to be restricted to simple, small standing figures, but some, especially those made during the reign of Amenhotep III, display all the qualities associated with his reign – technical accomplishment, elegance and sensuality.

From the Eighteenth Dynasty also comes the first detailed information on royal palaces. Because the king had to travel and visit local temples, and because Egypt now had two capitals at



Memphis and Thebes, he was obliged to stay in different places as state or religious affairs demanded, with the result that there were several royal residencies in various parts of the country. Amenhotep III built a new palace complex at el-Malqata, on the west bank of the Nile opposite Thebes. This is not the earliest known palace, although it is the first that has been preserved in some detail. It contained living and ceremonial quarters for the king and his family, buildings housing the palace personnel as well as some of the highest state officials, and there was also a temple dedicated to Amun. When the king was in residence, this was the hub of the kingdom, where all the major decisions were taken. When the king's presence was required elsewhere, some of his officials and staff probably accompanied him – thus the royal residence moved with the king.

Unlike funerary architecture, domestic buildings were mostly built of mud bricks and wood, although stone elements were introduced when necessary. The plan of the part of the palace where the king probably spent most of his time was not unlike that of a temple, with a columned hall preceding the throne room. The dais of the throne replaced the shrine with the god's cult statue as the focus of the building and was decorated with images of subjugated foes. The king's bedroom and bathroom were situated behind the throne room, and the harem (ie domestic quarters for the king's family) flanked the columned hall. The decoration on plastered and painted walls, floors and ceilings of the living quarters was dominated by representations of aquatic plants, birds and animals; human figures were absent. This was strikingly different from the religious and political formalities of the art of the throne dais. These natural themes may have been religiously inspired, but this interpretation seems strained – it is much more likely that this was the traditional decoration of Egyptian palaces and, possibly, even less exalted domestic dwellings.

Fragments of wall-paintings found in palace gardens at Avaris (modern Tell el-Daba), the former capital of the Hyksos, clearly derive their style and subject matter from Minoan Crete rather

than Egypt, although the transmission may have been indirect, via the Levant (149). They depict bulls and bull-leapers, lions, leopards and other animals, and floral motifs. Although difficult to date, these paintings were probably made during the first half of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Subtle artistic influences deriving from the Aegean civilization, especially imitations of the spiral designs and geometric patterns of its pottery, are noticeable in Egyptian art as early as the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (1980–1801 BC). It was during the reigns of Queen Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, however, that representations of people from the Aegean islands and their products appeared most frequently in Theban tombs; after these reigns such scenes disappeared.



The paintings found at Tell el-Daba, however, represent much more than artistic influences: it seems that they actually were made by foreign artists working in their own style on Egyptian soil. Further work on these fascinating paintings may change current ideas about how foreign influences were received in Egyptian art.

There are many surviving works which testify to the fact that the ancient Egyptians liked having attractively designed and decorated objects of daily use in their houses. Such items include jewellery, dyed textiles, elaborate basketry and decorated musical instruments, game boxes, scribe's palettes, medicinal

containers and animal-shaped weights. Many were found in tombs where they had been deposited as goods that the deceased person might like to have in the afterlife. Some of these were, indeed, specially created for tombs and are made of particularly expensive and long-lasting materials such as precious metals. Because so much tomb material from the New Kingdom has survived compared with other eras, these objects provide more information about the New Kingdom than is available for any other period.

Many pieces of furniture have been preserved: mainly beds, chairs, stools, small low tables, chests and boxes. Some are fairly utilitarian, for example those recovered from burials associated with the workmen at Deir el-Medina, on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, but many are elegant items designed for the sophisticated tastes of the rich. Native as well as imported hardwoods were used, and the standard of the best Egyptian cabinet-making was very high: the furniture could be painted, varnished, gilded, inlaid in ivory, glass, faience or other materials, veneered, or its decoration might be carved. Latticework was common, and a wooden frame was often combined with rush or palm fibre matting woven in geometric patterns or with leather, giving complex and interesting surface textures. The decorative legs are sometimes carved as lion's paws, and some folding stools terminate entertainingly in duck-head carvings (150).

The technology for making small objects of faience, such as amulets and small figurines, was known already in the Predynastic Period (before 2972 BC). Egyptian faience was manufactured by grinding materials such as quartz and calcite, mixing them with natron (a naturally occurring mixture of sodium salts) and copper or iron oxides. The mixture was then moulded by hand or cast into the required shape and heated to high temperatures, when it hardened and acquired a surface glaze of a characteristic bright and resonant turquoise shade. By the time of the New Kingdom (after 1540 BC) faience vessels, especially bowls and chalices, were common. The typical bowl of this period is decorated

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with drawings applied before firing (151). These usually consist of freely-drawn and sinuous fish, lotuses and other marsh motifs, probably in reference to rebirth and the afterlife (the lotus flower opens at sunrise, and the Egyptians were much intrigued by the spawning habits of some fish, which they saw as self-propagation). These bowls may have been specially manufactured for tombs.

Most vessels used for everyday purposes were of wheel-made pottery, often undecorated. The variety of forms and materials



255 The New Kingdom, Early Stages

increased during the reign of Amenhotep III, and polychrome and applied relief decoration became widely used. Animals were the favourite subject, and Bes (the dwarf demi-god with a leonine face who was linked to family happiness) occurs often. Painted floral decoration imitates the real flowers that were draped over vessels during banquets and on festive occasions. The shapes of some pottery vessels imitate bottles and flasks made of such materials as leather. Others are as much



sculptures as containers and probably had a special purpose. Those made in the form of a woman suckling a child are quite plausibly thought to have been used for human milk, but it is less evident what may have been kept in vases in the shape of female musicians. Precious containers were also made of copper, bronze, gold and silver using various techniques employed in the manufacture and decoration, but stone never went completely out of use.

Multicoloured glass dishes, flasks and goblets, with horizontal wavy garlands in contrasting shades, probably developed under Western Asiatic influence during the fifteenth century BC (152).

Possibly craftsmen visited Egypt or techniques were learned through trade contacts. The contemporary civilizations of Minoan Crete and Mycenae also provided some models for Egyptian imitation. The manufacturers of the Eighteenth Dynasty knew how to make enamelled glass by applying crushed glass to the surface of an object which was then fired. This was one of the methods used to provide vessels with inscriptions. Some cosmetic items, such as various boxes and containers and tubes for kohl (black eye paint), spoons (153), ladles and kohl sticks, were highly decorative.



152
Vases from
a tomb at
Saqqara,
c.1450 BC.
Polychrome
glass;
handled vase:
h.9.5cm, 3½in.
unhandled
vase:
h.8cm, 3¼in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo

153
Cosmetic
spoon from
Thebes,
c.1400 BC.
Wood;
h.31.5cm,
12½in.
Musée du
Louvre, Paris

They were often made in the form of a servant girl or a gentle and attractive animal or a bird. Mirrors were in the shape of a metal disc with an ornamental handle, sometimes in the form of a girl (154) or the composite demi-god Bes. Manicure implements were made to resemble an animal such as a horse, leopard or cheetah. Combs and hairpins often had animal-form handles or finials.

To the Egyptians who lived through almost forty years of peace and prosperity under Amenhotep III, it must have seemed that good times were there to stay. But a rude awakening was soon to come, in the form of a brief but very significant interlude, the Amarna Period.



154
Mirror,
c. 1400 BC.
Bronze;
h. 21 cm, 8 1/8 in.
Musée du
Louvre, Paris



155
Colossal
statue of
Akhenaten
from Karnak,
Thebes,
c.1350 BC.
Painted
sandstone;
original
h.c.4m, 13ft.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo

The Egypt of King Amenhotep III was sophisticated and cosmopolitan. The economy prospered: farms, workshops, gold mines and quarries were efficient and dependable providers of the nation's wealth, which was the envy of the whole Ancient Near East. The influence of religion was felt in all spheres of life and united the land; the king's colossal statues at temple gates commanded respect and inspired awe. Egypt's international standing, relying as much on its overflowing coffers and diplomatic marriages as on its mighty army, was unchallenged, and its external relations were conducted with consummate dexterity and shrewdness. Foreign trade supplied abundant quantities of luxury goods for the privileged, while the royal family led a charmed life of opulence at el-Malqata and in other seasonally inhabited palaces along the Nile. The country's administration boasted individuals of outstanding intellect, abilities and prowess. Arts and architecture flourished in an unprecedented way.

Yet towards the end of Amenhotep's reign, or immediately after, the country was plunged into one of the most traumatic periods in its history, made worse by the fact that the crisis was entirely home-grown. It is only with hindsight that any signs of the impending upheaval can be detected in the surviving sources. Art of the reign of Amenhotep III betrays no self-consciousness, doubt or hesitation. On the contrary, it is full of vigour, confidence and a willingness to experiment and search for new forms of expression within the allowed artistic limits, and represents the true peak of the development which had taken place over the preceding two centuries. A profound break in all aspects of artistic creativity was, however, about to emerge with startling rapidity. New monumental temples would appear, revolutionary in their architecture, building techniques and decoration. Traditional subjects would vanish from the walls of temples and tombs, to

be replaced by topics which would draw their inspiration from a contemporary rather than imaginary world. New ways of portraying reality would be introduced, sometimes so strange that even now, more than three millennia later, they can seem perturbing and difficult to accept. The reasons behind such dramatic developments can be understood only in their historical and religious context.

Amenhotep III was succeeded by his son of the same name. The mother of the new Amenhotep was the 'great royal wife' Teye. Amenhotep IV (1353–1337 BC) was a young man when he ascended the throne in 1353 BC (his exact age is unknown), but he had probably married Nefertiti, his chief wife and the most ardent supporter of his religious reforms, well before this. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the new king reigned at first jointly with his elderly father or succeeded him only at his death. The solution to this historical problem is of profound importance for the understanding of the arts of the period. Some historians believe that a joint rule of these two kings may have lasted merely a few months, others claim that it was as long as eleven years. If the latter is correct, then two entirely different and often diametrically opposed artistic styles – the 'orthodox' Egyptian art of Amenhotep III and the new 'Amarna' style (named after the new capital of the country at el-Amarna) – must have coexisted side by side, sometimes even on adjoining walls of the same building. With the exception of the Ptolemaic period, during which traditional Egyptian art had to come to terms with the art of the country's new Greek rulers, such a dichotomy is unknown in Egypt. On the whole, the evidence suggests that there was no co-regency between Amenhotep III and his son, or that it was so short as to be of little practical consequence.

The term 'revolution', which some apply to the period beginning shortly after the accession of Amenhotep IV, needs to be qualified. Amenhotep IV did introduce truly revolutionary ideas into the intellectual foundation of ancient Egypt – its religion – and these concepts were reflected in the arts, language and literature. Some

of them had a significant effect on Egyptian economy and the upper strata of Egyptian society, but they did not result in a true social revolution. In fact, the further an individual lived from the new capital at el-Amarna, and the lower down he or she was on the social scale, the less direct the impact of the 'revolution'. Moreover, Amenhotep IV's objectives appear to have been far from idealistic. His reforms focused mainly on his own relationship with the divinity. By monopolizing it completely he removed any doubts about his role as the sole intermediary between the god and the people, and in this way he corrected in one sweep any erosion of the royal status and removed the religious justification for the power wielded by the priesthood of the traditional gods.

The religious reforms of Amenhotep IV were, in fact, an attempt to introduce a form of monotheism (a belief in one god) into polytheistic Egypt. The seeds of these new religious teachings are evident in textual as well as iconographic sources of earlier periods, especially from the reign of Amenhotep III. Now they were developed further, moulded into a coherent system, and put into practice with logic and determination. The new king must have arrived at an intellectual justification of these ideas before his accession to the throne. From the beginning, he was an ardent follower of Re-Harakhty, a deity combining the characteristics of the sun god Re and the hawk-headed Horus, as Harakhty, literally Horus on the horizon.

The link between the sun god Re and the pharaoh ('the son of Re') was very old. The influence of beliefs which centred on the sun god increased steadily during the Eighteenth Dynasty, particularly in connection with the king's afterlife. Amenhotep IV followed a still more recent and radical trend towards elevating the sun god to the position of supreme deity. Re now embodied the qualities of all the other gods and, in this way, rendered them superfluous (this was different from the process known as syncretization in which two or more deities combined without fully losing their own identities). Signs of this had been noticeable during the previous two or three reigns, but the speed with which the

changes in religious thought gathered pace under Amenhotep IV was astonishing.

The cornerstone of the new religious doctrine, and quite likely the king's personal contribution to it, was the preference for the sun god's special manifestation, the impersonal radiant sun-disc (the Aten). The so-called 'Hymn to the Aten' inscribed on the walls of several private tombs at el-Amarna, and which may have been composed by Amenhotep IV himself, contains the main tenets of the new credo. The sun god is the creator addressed as the 'unique god, without another beside you; you created the earth as you desired, alone, [before] mankind, all cattle, all beings on land who walk on their feet, and all beings in the air who fly with their wings.' The 'Hymn to the Aten' has a spiritual predecessor – a similar concept was conveyed around a thousand years earlier by the reliefs on the walls of the so-called Room of the Seasons in the sun temple of King Neuserre (2408–2377 BC) at Abu Ghurab in the northern part of the Memphite necropolis. There, before the watchful gaze of Re-Harakhty and through his life-giving powers, the Egyptian countryside and every living thing in it change as one season succeeds another. Amenhotep IV, however, added a universal character to the sun god, who was now regarded as creator of all life, not only in Egypt, but in all countries 'encircled by the Aten', that is, all countries on which the sun shone.

The monotheism of the 'Hymn to the Aten' and its praise of god as creator have been compared to Psalm 104 of the Old Testament of the Bible. From the 'Hymn to the Aten':

The earth brightens when you rise on the horizon, when you shine as the Aten by day; as you dispel darkness and give forth your rays, the Two Lands are in festival ... The whole of the country goes about its business: all beasts browse on their pasturage; trees and plants sprout; birds fly from their nests, their wings stretched in praise of your *ka*; all flocks prance on their feet; all that fly and alight come to life when you have risen; ships sail north and south and roads are open when you appear; the fish in the river leap before you when your rays are in the depths of the waters.

From Psalm 104:

He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills ...
He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth ...
He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down ...
O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Eventually, the Aten was worshipped exclusively, at least on the official level, while the old gods were consigned to the religious wilderness. With the disappearance of royal patronage, which was now diverted to the new deity, their temples lost much of their former wealth and influence. The new religious thinking also altered traditional funerary customs; even there the Aten now reigned supreme. The earlier aspirations to life after death in the kingdom of Osiris were transformed to a desire for perpetual existence under the rays of the Aten, although the material needs of the person's *ka* in the afterlife did not change. Considering the enormous importance of the old concept of the afterlife for all Egyptians, this change may have been the new religion's Achilles heel and the most difficult idea to accept. Moreover, Egyptian religion was always multi-faceted, and different social groups worshipped in various ways; among the poorest the pre-Amarna beliefs continued unaffected.

The names of Egyptian kings, especially those received at coronation, expressed ideas about kingship and the relationship of the king to gods, and some of them were written in cartouches, ornamental oval frames. In order to stress the Aten's unique position in Egyptian religion and to make a direct comparison with the similarly exclusive role of the king in Egyptian society, the Aten was given two 'programmatic' names which, in a similar fashion, defined the deity's character and were written in cartouches, like royal names. The royal family were close to the Aten to the point of monopolization. For the pharaoh such a role was not new, but it was expressed in an extreme form, as if the time-honoured ability

to delegate did not exist; the king and the queen were the new deity's main officiants, and it was only to them, as representatives of mankind, that the sun-disc extended its arm-like rays in the new religion's principal icon (156). This relationship was recorded in the change of the king's name from Amenhotep ('The God Amun is Satisfied') to Akhenaten, a name which lends itself to several interpretations: 'One who is Beneficial to the Aten', 'The Radiance of the Aten' or 'The Shining Spirit of the Aten'.

Changes of this magnitude profoundly affected all the arts associated with Egyptian temples and tombs, and Akhenaten and Nefertiti themselves may have inspired some of the artistic innovations of the period. Akhenaten's chief sculptor Bak (see 160), in an inscription carved on the rocks at Aswan, boasts proudly that it was the king himself who taught artists the rudiments of their arts. Bak's father Men probably directed the carving of the famous 'Memnon Colossi' (see 132) at the entrance to the funerary temple of Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III, so the sculptor's pedigree was impeccable. It remains unclear whether this was the flattery of an obsequious court artist anxious to please his master and to preserve his status in the maelstrom of change and uncertainty engulfing his profession, or whether the king did indeed take a close interest in the arts. The fact that it was deemed useful and desirable to make such a statement illustrates the enormous gulf which separated the new Amarna art from that of earlier periods. The basic principles of Egyptian art had previously been regarded as given by the gods, thus perfect and impervious to change, a no-go area even for the pharaoh.

In order to observe the first flourishing of what is known as Amarna art we have to go to Thebes, and the heart of Egypt's religious capital, the great temple of the god Amun-Re at Karnak. The earliest traces of activities of Amenhotep IV in the temple are the reliefs on the walls of the third pylon, later disguised by the decoration of Sety I (1294–1279 BC) which was superimposed over them. These date from the very beginning of the reign and were probably begun by his father, but it was not much later that the king forsook

156
Stela from a house shrine showing Akhenaten and Nefertiti with three of their daughters beneath the rays of the Aten, from el-Amarna, c.1345 BC. Limestone; h.32.5cm, 12½in.
Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin



continuity and embarked on an ambitious project of his own – the building of several completely new sanctuaries for the sun god.

Already at this early stage the reluctance to come to any arrangement with the traditional gods demanded a site untarnished by their presence. The place chosen for the largest of them, called Gem-paaten ('The Discovery of the Aten'), was several hundred metres to the east of Amun's sacred precinct. There may have been as many as eight of these new temples at Karnak. In the earliest structure, probably dating from Amenhotep IV's first year, if not the first few months of his reign, the god was still described as Re-Harakhty and represented as a hawk-headed figure with a large sun-disc on his head. In the others, he was shown in the form of a sun-disc, the relief technique employed to depict it giving it an almost the appearance of a globe. This was the only way the Aten was ever portrayed; during the whole of the period when the new religion held sway there were no iconographic variations in its depiction.



157
Reconstructed *talatat* wall from the temple of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), at Karnak, Thebes, c.1350 BC. Sandstone, painted sunk relief; 1.17.2m, 56 ft 5in, h.3m, 9ft 9in. Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art

The forms of the worship of the Aten differed from those of the old gods and required new architectural forms. None of the Karnak sanctuaries remain; they were dismantled shortly after the end of the Amarna Period by King Haremhab (1323–1295 BC), and their blocks were reused as cheap building material in new structures. The reconstruction of the plans of these temples is a matter of careful analysis of the preserved blocks, the study of the surviving traces on the ground, and comparison with representations of such structures in the scenes on the blocks themselves. The major features of the temples were large courts open to the sun, surrounded by rows of rectangular pillars and fronted by pylons.

The pace at which events were unfolding suggests that Akhenaten was a man possessed, consumed with impatience, as if he felt that the time for accomplishing all his reforms was limited. The builders of the temples which were now being hastily put up at Karnak employed stone blocks of unusual dimensions, much smaller than anything that had been used in Egypt before.

This may have been partly due to the relatively thin layers of sandstone in the quarries at Gebel el-Silsila, near Kom Ombo, some 150 km (93 miles) south of Thebes, where the building material was quarried, but the main reason was probably the ease with which smaller blocks could be handled. Of a fairly uniform size (about $52 \times 26 \times 24$ cm or $20\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in, weighing about 50 kg or 110 lb), these are usually called *talatat*, a term borrowed from medieval Islamic architecture where stone blocks of similar size were commonly used (*talata* means 'three' in Arabic, ie three hand-spans long). Some forty thousand *talatat*, most of them with at least one side decorated, have been recovered from structures of later kings at Karnak and Luxor, and they present archaeologists with the equivalent of a huge jigsaw puzzle (157).

Except for the earliest building, the walls of the new Karnak temples were decorated in sunk relief, a technique that relies for its effect on the contrast created by the dark shadows cast by the sharp edges of the higher planes on to the incised lines or lower surfaces. This was quite logical since large areas of the temples of the Aten were open to daylight. Sunk relief has, however, another advantage over raised relief – it is less laborious to carve because the amount of material that has to be removed is smaller. This was almost certainly an important incentive for its use in the new structures of Amenhotep IV, and it was probably the reason why the builders of the Amarna Period preferred it even where the absence of appropriate illumination made the technique less suitable. The sunk relief of the Amarna Period is characterized by the careful modelling of details which makes it appear more three-dimensional. All representations carved in relief were painted in bright colours, and selected details may have been accentuated by inlays in faience, glass or other materials.

The new focus on a single deity did away with almost all traditional themes of temple reliefs, in particular those showing the king in the presence of various gods. This was of profound importance; the complex, varied and immensely elaborate repertory, full of symbolism and allusions, which had evolved over the preceding

fifteen hundred years, had to be replaced by new subjects. Realistic images were now introduced into temple scenes and at once became predominant. A few of the scenes on the walls of the new temples at Karnak represented variations on well-tried topics, such as the king with his family presenting offerings, or the king's jubilee festival, but most of the others were completely new: the preparation of offerings in the Aten's temples, activities taking place in and around royal palaces, ceremonial processions involving the king and his queen, and depictions of palaces and temples detailed enough to be architectural drawings. All these themes were inspired by aspects of everyday life which they probably depicted quite faithfully. Only the arms of the sun-disc, sometimes clutching little symbols of life and dominion in their hands and proffering them to Akhenaten and his family, and the symbol for 'life' suspended from the disc, were concessions to metaphysical ideas and the imagination. The new art rejected tradition in favour of realism, and replaced timelessness with immediacy.

Another innovation is that Queen Nefertiti features as prominently in the decoration of the Karnak temples as the king. Some of the roles in which she appears – for example massacring prisoners (no doubt a fictitious, symbolic image) – were traditionally a prerogative of the king alone. It would be difficult to explain Nefertiti's pre-eminence except by her personal influence over the king and possibly also over the religious changes then under way.

The introduction of a completely new repertory of temple scenes led almost inevitably to changes in the way the subjects were depicted. A tendency towards greater realism was reflected in the decline of standard idealized portrayals of human figures in favour of recording individual characteristics, such as signs of age, or momentary feelings such as triumph, elation or grief. Artists now positively delighted in the attention they paid to some details of the human body – hands, fingers, feet and toes – while the accentuation, almost exaggeration, of others, such as the well-fed rounded stomach above a precariously sagging kilt, became a cliché and the stylized hallmark of the Amarna Period, suggesting

that even here appearances should not be taken too literally. There was a greater willingness to show transient states – the movement of a reckless chariot dash, the fluttering of a garment or the ribbons attached to the royal crown ruffled by the breeze. Almost as a consequence of this freedom, a loosening of the typically Egyptian axial symmetry can be observed. The traditional standardized proportions of the human body were slightly modified and a twenty-square grid from base to hairline was now used for the depiction of a standing figure. Attempts to indicate depth and three-dimensionality by showing figures and objects overlapping and partly obscuring each other, in order to achieve a near-perspectival representation, were frequent. The artists of Amenhotep IV came quite close to the concept of a single unified space, as compared with the earlier (and later) understanding of it as a series of stacked-up two-dimensional planes.

If it is accepted that the artists now tried to come to terms with reality in a way not seen before, it comes as a complete shock to be confronted with the seemingly distorted and exaggerated features of the king – the long narrow face with hollow eyes, prominent jutting nose, large sensuous lips, high cheekbones, projecting lower jaw and strikingly narrow chin, long neck, conspicuous breasts, almost swollen stomach, feminine buttocks, heavy thighs and thin, spindly calves. These features can be seen in reliefs as well as in statues, and are clearly not just undisciplined experiments or the aberrations of one artist. Perhaps the most striking examples are the colossal statues of the king that adorned pillars around the courts of his temples at Karnak (155, 158). The greatest degree of this near-caricature grotesqueness dates from the early part of the reign of Amenhotep IV; in later years the tendency was less pronounced.

There is no agreement on the reasons for the distorted portrayal of the king in the early years. It can hardly be explained by a desire to imitate a divinity – the only deity whose features the king might have wished to make his own actually had no human form. It is equally difficult to regard it as a special 'Amarna' way of seeing



There is something similarly strange in the early representations of Nefertiti: her profile resembles her husband's and sometimes

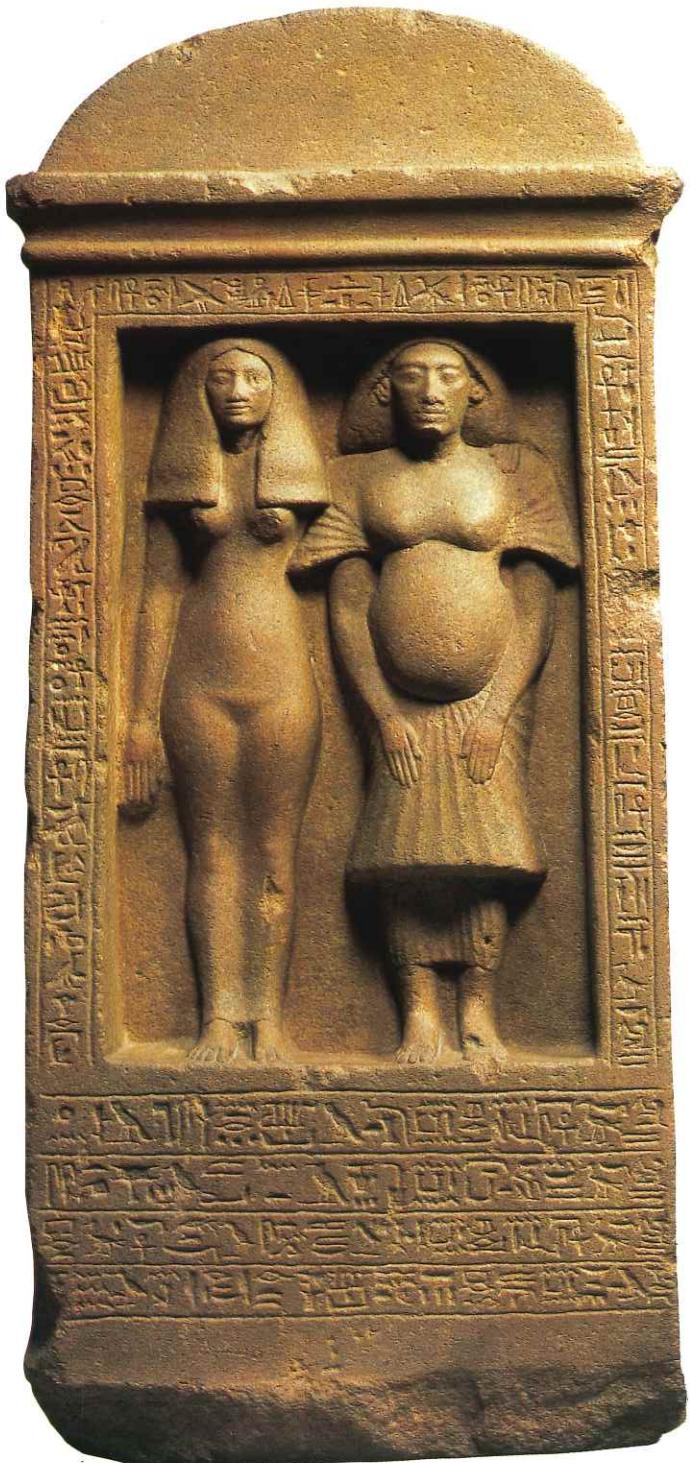
the human figure; in spite of all the changes in the visual arts which took place during the Amarna Period, their main *raison d'être*, as an expression of religious ideas, remained intact. The simplest explanation is that the physical appearance of the king was indeed unusual (possibly as the result of a medical condition) and that his features were consistently, faithfully and, from our point of view, completely mercilessly recorded because of the striving for realism which he personally endorsed.

158
Head of a
colossal statue
of Akhenaten
from Karnak,
c.1350 BC.
Sandstone;
h.141 cm,
55½ in.
Luxor Museum
of Ancient
Egyptian Art

159
Female torso,
probably
Nefertiti,
c.1345 BC.
Quartzite;
h.29 cm, 11⅓ in.
Musée du
Louvre, Paris

acquires an almost apelike appearance. Yet in the quartzite torso from the early part of the Amarna Period (159) and the bust found at el-Amarna (see 161, 162) from the latter part of the period, Nefertiti is shown as a beautiful and sensuous woman. The 'reality' that the artists of the early years of Amenhotep IV portrayed was probably 'the king's reality', dominated by his unusual physiognomy. He was the prototype that the court artists imitated and which influenced the early representations of Nefertiti and, to a lesser degree, those of the royal princesses. Perhaps as a proof of





160
Niche-shaped
stela of the
sculptor Bak
and his wife,
c.1345 BC.
Quartzite;
h.67 cm, 26 in.
Ägyptisches
Museum,
Berlin

his proficiency in the new artistic style, the king's chief sculptor, Bak, adopted it for his own three-dimensional self-portrait (160), carved in a niche-shaped stela, which showed him with fat pendant breasts and a large stomach, and so related him closely, at least in physical terms, to his royal master. Even so, it was unusual for people outside the royal family to be represented in a similarly grotesque fashion.

The chasm separating the Egyptian visual arts before and after Amenhotep IV's accession is vividly demonstrated in the tomb of Ramose (see 143). He was a vizier of Amenhotep III whose rock-cut tomb in the Theban necropolis was still being completed under Amenhotep IV. On the west wall of the first columned hall, to the left of the doorway leading into the inner room, Amenhotep IV and the goddess Maet are shown seated in a kiosk, in a style typical of the reign of his predecessor. On the same wall, to the right of the doorway, the king and his queen Nefertiti appear in a palace window, this time shown in the style of the early years of his reign. The Aten's rays are extended towards them with the signs of life and dominion. It is extraordinary that only a few months or weeks may have separated the two scenes.

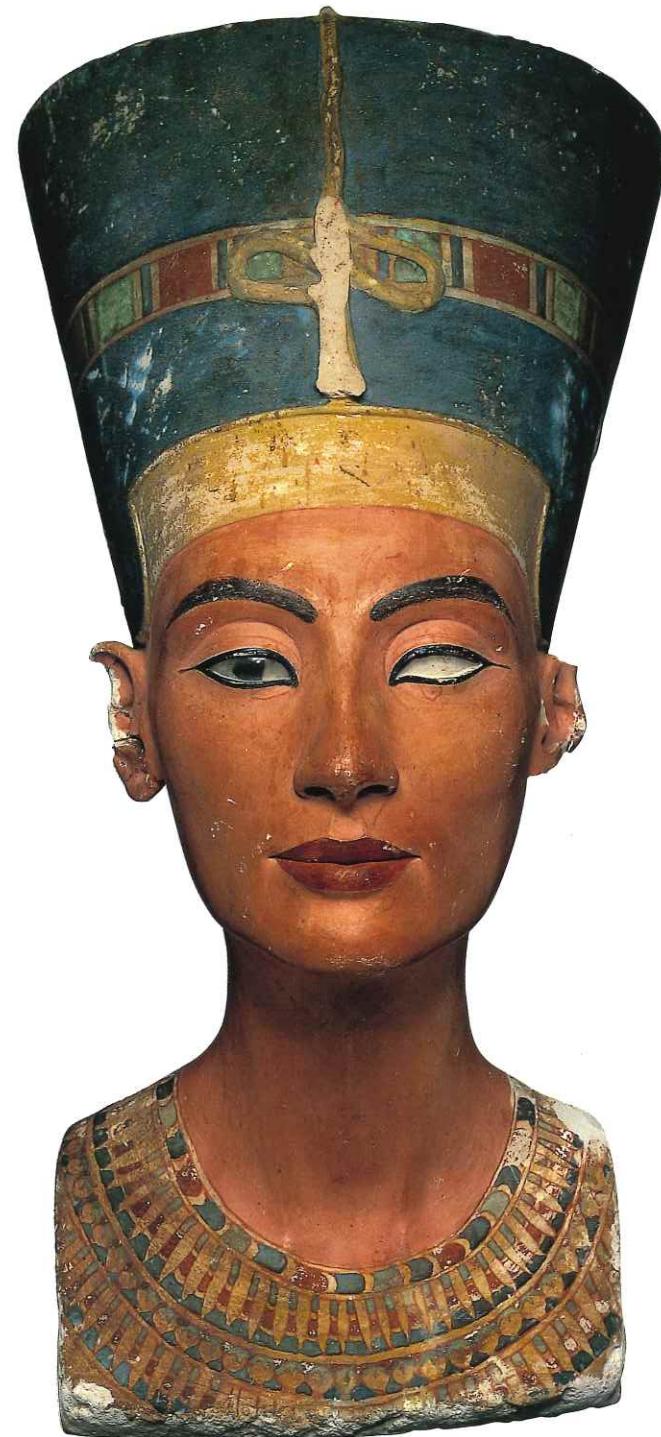
It was around his fifth regnal year, well before the massive building programme at Karnak could be completed, that Amenhotep IV made a clean break with the traditional religious centre of Egypt and, now as Akhenaten, moved to a sparsely inhabited area of Middle Egypt, some 260 km (162 miles) north of Thebes. There, at a place now known as el-Amarna, in a deep bay on the eastern bank of the Nile, whose shape, and that of the surrounding cliffs, recalled the hieroglyphic sign for 'horizon' (*akhet*), he founded a new royal residence and state capital called Akhetaten, 'The Horizon of the Aten'. It was as if he had decided to reject and abandon everything linked to the time before the Aten was promoted to the supreme deity, and had sought refuge in a new city totally unconnected with the past. There he could create an ideal world for himself and the Aten, a truly 'heretic city' in the eyes of his successors. It was to serve as the king's residence, the administrative centre of

161–162
Overleaf
Bust of
Nefertiti from
a sculptor's
studio at
el-Amarna,
c.1340 BC.
Painted
limestone;
h.50 cm, 19½ in.
Ägyptisches
Museum,
Berlin

276 Egyptian Art



277 The Amarna Period and its Aftermath

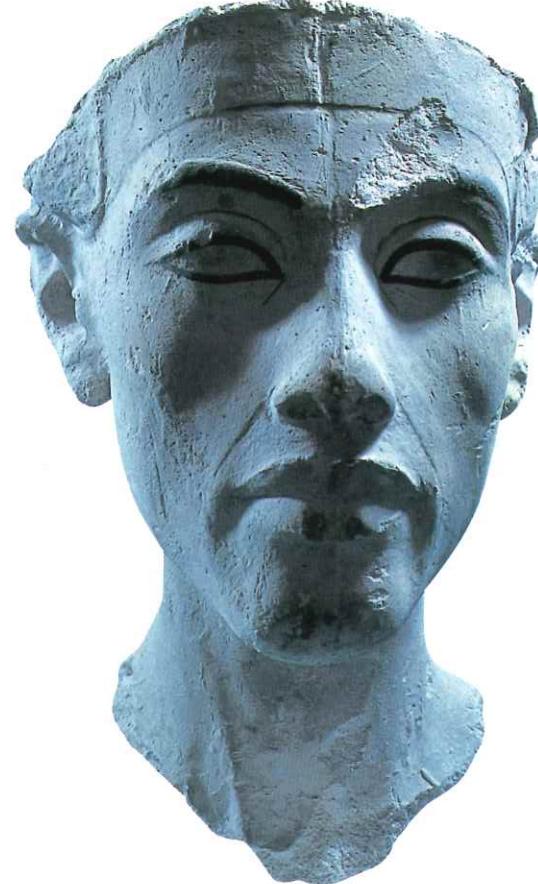


the country, the main place of worship of the Aten, and the burial place for the king, his family and his officials. It was one of the few occasions in ancient Egyptian history when a whole town was purposefully planned and built, thus providing a contemporary idea of the 'ideal' city, although it was Akhenaten's special personal vision. Memphis, some sixteen hundred years earlier, and Alexandria, a thousand years after el-Amarna had been abandoned, were created in a similar way.

The city extended over an area measuring about 7 km (4 miles) north to south, 1 km ($\frac{5}{8}$ mile) east to west. It was bisected by a broad road, and its ceremonial and administrative centre contained a huge jubilee-festival palace and the king's house, linked by a bridge over the street which separated them. There were also two large temples of the Aten, offices, archives and other administrative buildings, as well as kitchens and stables. To the north and south of the central city were densely populated residential areas. Dwellings of rich officials at el-Amarna were more like country villas, with spacious courtyards and gardens; others belonged to master craftsmen and artists. There were further palaces, temples and administrative buildings on the outskirts of Akhetaten, particularly in the north. Here, in an area unpolluted by the noises and smells of the metropolis (the prevailing north winds carried them in a different direction), may have been Akhenaten's main palace. Additional places for the worship of the Aten were situated in the desert near to the city.

A house in the southern suburb belonging to the sculptor Thutmose was found to contain a remarkable collection of sculptures of the royal family, among them the famous bust of Nefertiti (161, 162). This probably served as a prototype for her statues, which perhaps explains her 'blind' eye – there was no need to complete both eyes on a mere model. A group of remarkably realistic faces in plaster from the same sculptor's workshop (163) should probably be seen in the same way. Although the names of a few Amarna artists, such as Bak and Thutmose, are known from inscriptions, most art remained anonymous.

163
Head of
Akhenaten
from a
sculptor's
studio at
el-Amarna,
c.1340 BC.
Painted
plaster;
h.25cm, 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.
Ägyptisches
Museum,
Berlin



Images of the 'holy family' were everywhere; some private houses contained shrines with representations of the Aten, Akhenaten and Nefertiti, often accompanied by their daughters (see 156). These shrines were reserved for private worship and thus replaced the veneration of house-gods and household spirits in the semi-official religion of old. The two- and three-dimensional representations of the 'holy family' are remarkable for their sympathetic and almost sentimental portrayal – at which other time during Egyptian history could the 'great royal wife' be depicted seated on her husband's knee, or the king joyously kissing his little daughters? Although the temples at el-Amarna were no longer built of sandstone but of locally quarried limestone, the builders retained the

talatāt dimensions of the building blocks. The plans of these temples confirm the evidence provided by remains of the early temples of the Aten at Karnak. They consisted of several large courts separated by pylons. Altars, sometimes surrounded by a large number of smaller offering tables, were placed in these courts and in the sanctuary at the far end of the structure. The courts as well as the central part of the sanctuary were open to the sun. The walls of the temples were decorated with scenes in sunk relief, with subjects similar to those found in the temples of the Aten at Karnak. A block with three antelopes may have been part of a scene showing animal pens belonging to the palace (164). Limestone was better suited to the carving of fine details than the rather coarse sandstone of the Karnak *talatāt*, and this



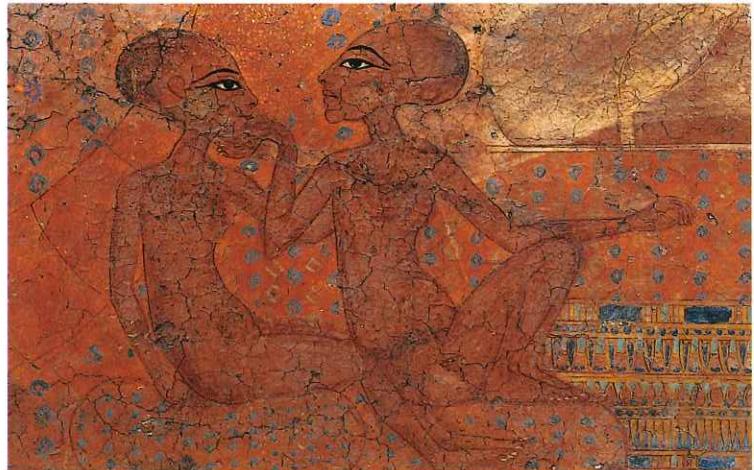
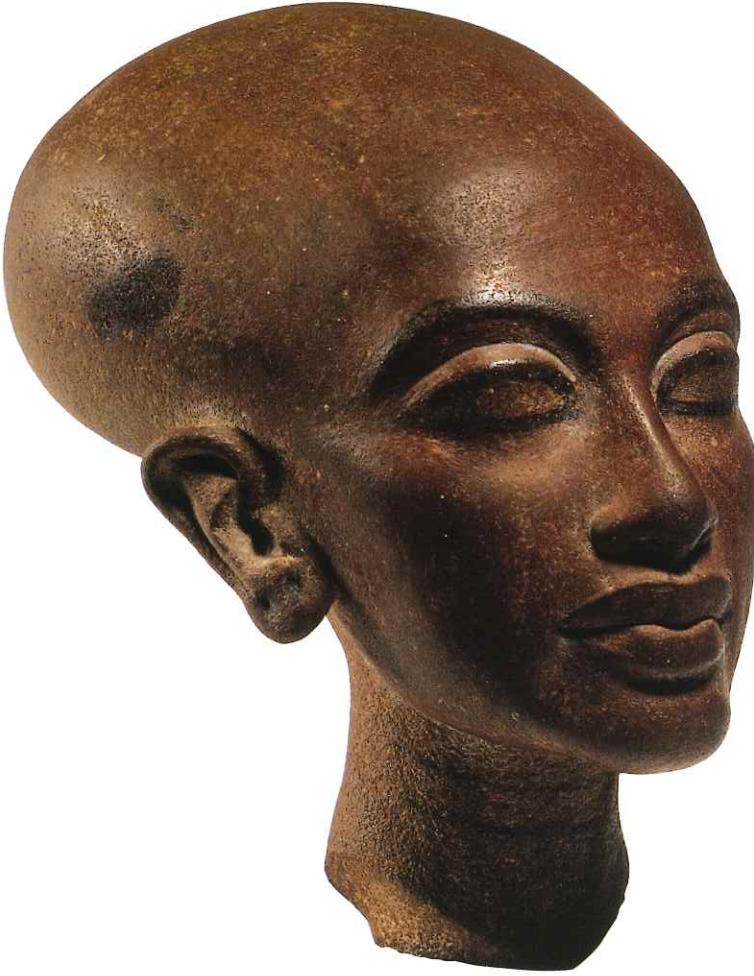
may have contributed to the softening of the line of the reliefs in the later phase of Amarna art.

Large numbers of statues, almost all showing the king and the royal family, and mostly executed in the style which abandoned the extreme caricature of the early years, were placed in the temples at el-Amarna. Images of the king are characterized by the conspicuously long skull, also recorded in reliefs. Statues of Nefertiti and the princesses (165), similarly rendered, were nearly as frequent as those of the king. Sometimes figures were composite, with different parts made of different materials, and inlays were frequently used for eyes and eyebrows. Few statues of private individuals are known, since the royal monopoly on communion with the Aten did not encourage their presence in temples.

164
Talatāt block with two antelopes, from el-Amarna, reused at Ashmunein, c.1340 BC. Limestone, painted sunk relief; h.23.1cm, 9in. Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York

165
Head of a daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, c.1340 BC. Quartzite; h.21cm, 8½in. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

166
Two daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, from a palace at el-Amarna, c.1345 BC. Painting on plaster; whole painting 40×165cm, 15½×65in. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



Amarna palaces and houses were mostly built of mud brick, although relief decoration carved in stone is also found in the palaces and represents a new departure in their architecture. Practically all the interior walls, ceilings and floors of civil dwellings were whitewashed or plastered, and the decoration was painted on this white background. In private houses, it often consisted of simple geometric patterns, such as alternating rectangles of different colours, floral friezes and complex garlands – lotus flowers, bunches of grapes, cornflowers and the fruits of the mandrake. Palaces contained elaborate mural paintings of daily life, similar to the scenes that occur in Amarna Period temples and tombs. Sometimes these included representations of the royal family (166). Polychrome faience inlays and tiles with repeated vegetal motifs, such as lotus flowers, marguerites and mandrake fruits, were frequently used, but more complex compositions, for example cattle amid tall rushes, are also found.

Gardens and ponds teeming with aquatic life and birds – a subject known in Egyptian paintings from as early as the Old Kingdom – occur only on palace walls and floors.

The Amarna Period was in no way a retreat into austerity and contemplation of divinity, and many small objects, especially those made of glass and faience, show that the religious zeal that pervaded contemporary thinking did not diminish the desire for luxury and the enjoyment of beautiful things which characterized the preceding period. Extremely beautiful jars and flasks, sometimes in the shape of fish (167), were made of multicoloured glass. Indeed, Egyptian glass manufacture reached its peak during the Amarna Period.

As the final resting place for himself and his family, Akhenaten chose a remote and desolate spot in a desert valley some 10 km (6 miles) east of the central part of the city. There a tomb was cut into the rock, but its decoration, executed in sunk relief, is quite unlike that of the earlier royal tombs. There are no representations showing the pharaoh in the company of gods and no scenes or texts from the *Imi-duat*, the Book of the Dead or other

167
Vessel in
the form of
a fish, from
el-Amarna,
c.1340.
Polychrome
glass;
l.14.5cm, 5½in.
British
Museum,
London

similar compositions. Instead, the subject matter echoes that of the temples of the Aten: the royal family, accompanied by courtiers and attendants, worship the Aten; the Aten appears over the horizon (perhaps in a visual pun on the name of Akhenaten's city) and is greeted by gazelle and ostriches 'dancing' in the desert as the sacred disc sends its life-giving rays over the bustling city of Akhetaten, where it is hailed by the king and his family. Representatives of foreign lands pay their respects, as do courtiers and soldiers; rows of their chariots wait nearby. Quite unexpected are two scenes which show the royal family in grief, probably mourning the deaths in childbirth of two of Akhenaten's



daughters. The tomb would have been made inaccessible once the burials were deposited there, so this was not a public display of emotions. Such a record of tragic events in the life of the royal family is unparalleled in Egyptian art.

Although two groups of officials' and priests' tombs were begun in the cliffs to the northeast and southeast of the central city, most were left unfinished and were probably never used. Tomb architecture was the weakest aspect of Amarna art, not surprisingly in a society in which the brightly shining disc of the sun was the supreme deity. As in the rock-cut tombs at Thebes, these tombs

comprised an entrance corridor leading to one or two halls where the ceiling was often supported by two or four columns, and a centrally situated shrine with a statue of the tomb-owner. Their decoration was executed in sunk relief. The poor quality of the rock forced the artists to resort to an extensive use of plaster in order to make the surface suitable for receiving the reliefs. As in temples, the subject matter drew on scenes of everyday life. Some of these are connected with the tomb-owner, such as scenes in which he is rewarded for his exemplary service by the king before the other members of the royal family and courtiers. The majority of them are, however, similar to those found in temples, and here again are the ubiquitous set scenes with the king and royal family resplendent under the rays of the Aten.

Akhenaten's religious reform, which for the only time in Egyptian history reversed many of the basic and time-honoured conventions of Egyptian art, did not see out two decades, and the 'Amarna revolution' came to an end with the death of its main protagonists. Akhenaten died in his seventeenth regnal year, in 1337 BC. The exact circumstances of the closing chapters of the Amarna Period are not yet fully known. Many modern accounts seem to delight in lurid stories of revenge exacted on the representatives of the Amarna regime and its deity. They tell of Akhenaten's body 'torn to pieces and thrown to the dogs', and of destruction wrought upon Amarna works of art by fanatical supporters of the old gods. These tales are certainly fictions, however, inspired largely by unwarranted comparisons with revolutionary events in modern history.

More often than not, the reign of Akhenaten is portrayed in negative terms. His successors had good reasons for vilifying him because his reforms represented a challenge to their own right to rule, in that they rejected the religious foundations on which the pharaoh's powers and his relationship to Egyptian society were based. Egyptian priesthood had a similarly vested interest in removing all traces of the Amarna Period. In modern times, Akhenaten is often regarded as an anomaly, a freak who dared to challenge the religious and artistic values that, even in modern

Western eyes, embody the spirit of ancient Egypt. He is held up to criticism not least because his mission ultimately failed. There is, however, another less popular but more plausible interpretation, namely that this was the period during which Egypt made a brave attempt to anticipate difficulties ahead and to come to terms with the rapidly changing world by reforming its ideological foundations from within.

The reality of the Amarna aftermath was, remarkably, fairly benign and tolerant, perhaps because the changes were not brought about by an opposing faction that wrested power from the old regime by force. An era of reconciliation and restoration was inaugurated under King Tutankhaten (better known as Tutankhamun, 1336–1327 BC), probably a son of Akhenaten and only a child of about ten or, at most, in his early teens, at the beginning of his reign. The ideas of Akhenaten's 'revolution from above' were gradually abandoned and a return to orthodoxy in all respects was under way. Official Egyptian art followed the same course. Temples and shrines of the traditional deities that had been seriously affected by neglect and sometimes open hostility during the preceding years regained their previous religious and economic status. Their buildings, decoration, statues and other furnishings were restored or replaced, and in this a conscious effort was made to return to the earlier artistic conventions. The god Amun, the chief loser during the Amarna years, was the main beneficiary. Tutankhamun's restoration efforts focused mainly on the temples of Amun at Karnak and Luxor; completely new building projects were few.

In the third year of his reign, in an act which was a reversal of that performed by his father fifteen years earlier, Tutankhaten formally proclaimed his renunciation of the sun-disc doctrine by replacing the 'Aten' in his name with 'Amun', thus becoming Tutankhamun. The role of the king's advisers in these moves is difficult to assess, but in view of Tutankhamun's youth it probably was considerable. The city of el-Amarna was abandoned and the king with his court and officials moved to the old Egyptian capital of Memphis in the

north. Many of the craftsmen and artists who had previously worked under Akhenaten migrated with the court. But, just as a complete eradication of the ideas which the Amarna interlude produced was not possible, so the artistic innovations of the period were not lost altogether. It was here, in the Memphite area, that a very remarkable artistic development was taking place.

Tutankhamun's Memphis has not yet been rediscovered, but there is plenty of evidence that the necropolis at Saqqara, to the west of the city, was now the focus of activities on a scale not witnessed since the end of the Old Kingdom a millennium earlier. Three things fortuitously combined: firstly, the presence of the court at Memphis and its demand for richly decorated tombs, and secondly, the availability of a large number of immensely skilled tomb-builders and artists who had become redundant as the result of the abandonment of the Amarna projects. Thirdly, the geological conditions at Saqqara rendered the site unsuitable for rock-cut tombs. The form which finally resulted was a masterpiece of Egyptian private tomb architecture, the Memphite freestanding chapel of the post-Amarna Period.

The plan of these Memphite tomb chapels had all the features of the earlier, pre-Amarna, Theban rock-cut tombs, but reinterpreted to suit a freestanding structure as demanded by the local setting. In its simplest form, the chapel consisted of a single room with a stela in its western wall, and in its most elaborate version, the tripartite complex of rooms with a stela at the western end was approached through a pylon and a series of peristyle courts and rooms with stelae and statues. If the visitors lifted their gaze, they could just see the tomb's small pyramid looming above the western end of the chapel. The mummified body of the tomb-owner was placed in underground rock-cut rooms. The walls of these tomb-chapels were adorned with exquisite reliefs that subtly combined the Amarna innovations with traditional pre-Amarna representations.

Perhaps the earliest large tomb to be built at Saqqara under Tutankhamun belonged to General Haremhab, whose support for the young ruler was essential. He himself, as an old man,

was destined to ascend the Egyptian throne when the Thutmoside line came to an end. He was buried in a tomb on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes in 1295 BC. The reliefs in his Saqqara tomb are a heady and confusing mixture of styles and techniques. The badly damaged and incomplete figures of his royal masters, originally on the western wall of the second court, can only represent Tutankhamun and his queen Ankhesenamun (168). The sensuous but cruelly unflattering portrayal of their young bodies running to fat, clad in diaphanous garments that conceal little, are unmistakably Amarna in style. Elsewhere, the irregularly uneven baseline in the military encampment scenes (169) also betrays the hand of an Amarna-trained artist, but all is executed in raised relief, a technique which was almost unknown under Akhenaten. Sunk relief was, however, used for a scene showing a group of African captives (170). As is to be expected, the figures quite unaffected by the Amarna Period are the representations of deities.

While the king and the court now resided at Memphis, Thebes was once again acknowledged as the country's religious capital. The most important tomb created there during this period belonged to the viceroy Amenhotep Huy who was governor of gold-bearing Nubia (see 6). Some influence of the preceding Amarna Period is still felt in the tomb's painted decoration, particularly in the interest in scenes of everyday life and the depiction of the well-fed minor figures, but in the more formal representations of the king the link with the art of Amenhotep III seems closer. It is difficult to escape the impression that in the immediately post-Amarna Period artists at Memphis worked in much more relaxed conditions than their colleagues at Thebes.

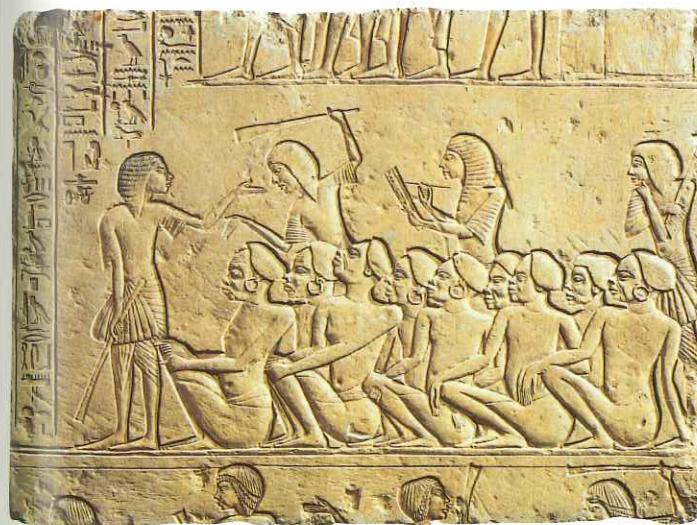
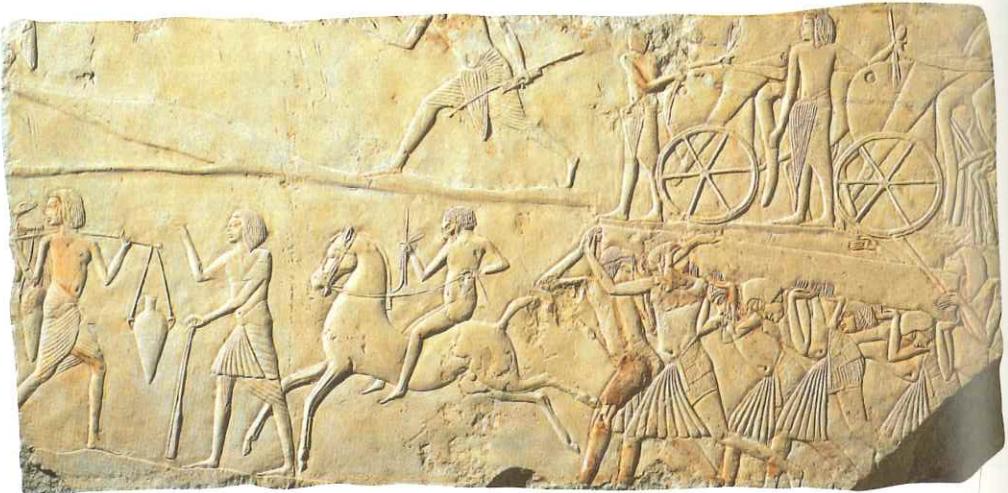
Tutankhamun died during the tenth year of his reign when he was only eighteen or, at most, in his mid-twenties (the results of the examination of his mummy were ambiguous). As an ultimate repudiation of his Amarna origin, a tomb was made for him on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, opposite the Karnak temple of Amun, in the Valley of the Kings. It is the only royal tomb in



168
General
Haremhab
(the future
King
Haremhab)
and Syrian
chiefs being
received by
Tutankhamun
and his queen,
from his tomb
at Saqqara,
c. 1330 BC.
Painted
limestone;
102×350cm,
40¹/₂×137³/₄in.
Rijksmuseum
van
Oudheden,
Leiden

169
Military
camp with
a horseman,
from General
Haremhab's
tomb at
Saqqara,
c. 1330 BC.
Limestone,
painted raised
relief;
60×127cm,
23¹/₂×50in.
Museo Civico
Archeologico,
Bologna

170
African
captives,
from General
Haremhab's
tomb at
Saqqara,
c. 1330 BC.
Limestone,
painted sunk
relief;
68×85cm,
26¹/₂×33¹/₂in.
Museo Civico
Archeologico,
Bologna



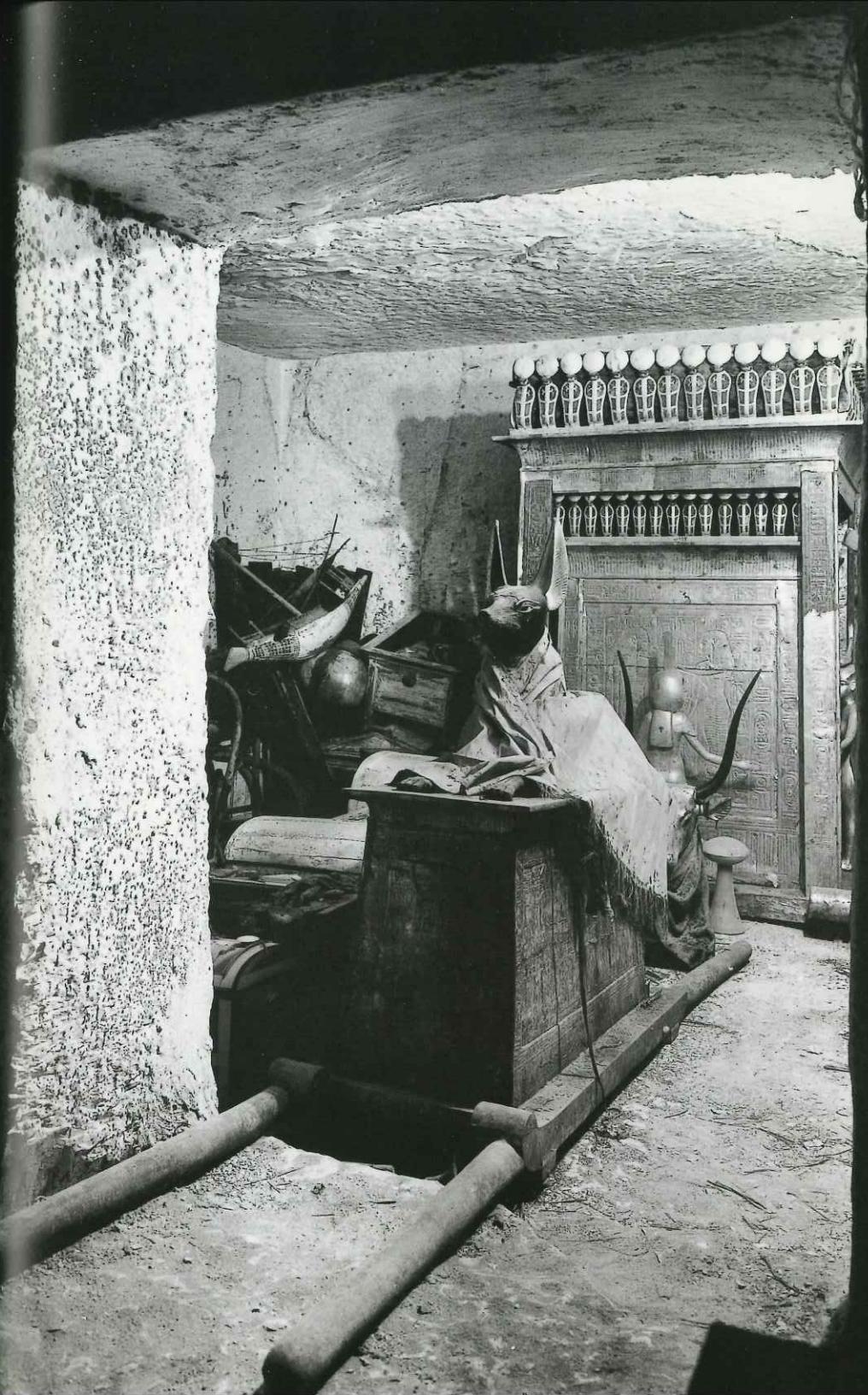
ancient Egypt, before the royal burials at Tanis several hundred years later, which has been found intact (171–173). The fame of its discovery is forever linked with the names of Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon – in a remarkable story of courage, optimism, romance and sheer bloody-mindedness which, for once, had a happy ending. It would have been difficult to foresee in 1891, when Carter was appointed by the Egypt Exploration Fund to assist Percy E Newberry in copying tomb-scenes, that some thirty years



171
Howard Carter
opening
the shrines of
Tutankhamun's
sarcophagus,
1922

172
View of the
'Treasury' of
Tutankhamun's
tomb in the
Valley of
the Kings,
Western
Thebes,
1327 BC.
As found by
Howard Carter
in 1922.
Photograph by
Harry Burton

later he would make the greatest archaeological discovery in Egypt, and possibly in the world. Carter's archaeological career was far from smooth and nearly came to an end in 1905 when, disillusioned, he left his job in the Egyptian Antiquities Service after he had faithfully but vainly tried to defend the actions of his Egyptian site guards in an altercation with a group of disorderly European tourists. His support for his Egyptian employees



173
View of the
antechamber of
Tutankhamun's
tomb,
1327 BC.
As found by
Howard Carter
in 1922.
Photograph by
Harry Burton





astonished his contemporaries and still seems to baffle some of his biographers. He was, thus, available when some three years later Lord Carnarvon was looking for an archaeologist to take charge of excavations financed by him on the Theban west bank (and later in other parts of Egypt). However, it was some fourteen years before he made his great discovery.

It came as Carnarvon's patience was running out and funding was at risk. On 5 November 1922 Carter noted in his diary:

'Discovered tomb under tomb of Ramses VI. Investigated same and found seals intact.' He telegrammed Lord Carnarvon, who immediately set out from England for Luxor. On 26 November Carter, Lord Carnarvon, his daughter Lady Evelyn and Arthur R Callender, Carter's close collaborator, opened a sealed doorway. Carter later wrote:

174–175
Tutankhamun's
'Golden
Throne',
c.1335 BC.
Wood, gold,
silver, glass,
faience and
semiprecious
stones;
h.104cm, 41 in.
Egyptian
Museum, Cairo
Right
Detail showing
Tutankhamun
and Queen
Ankhesenamun



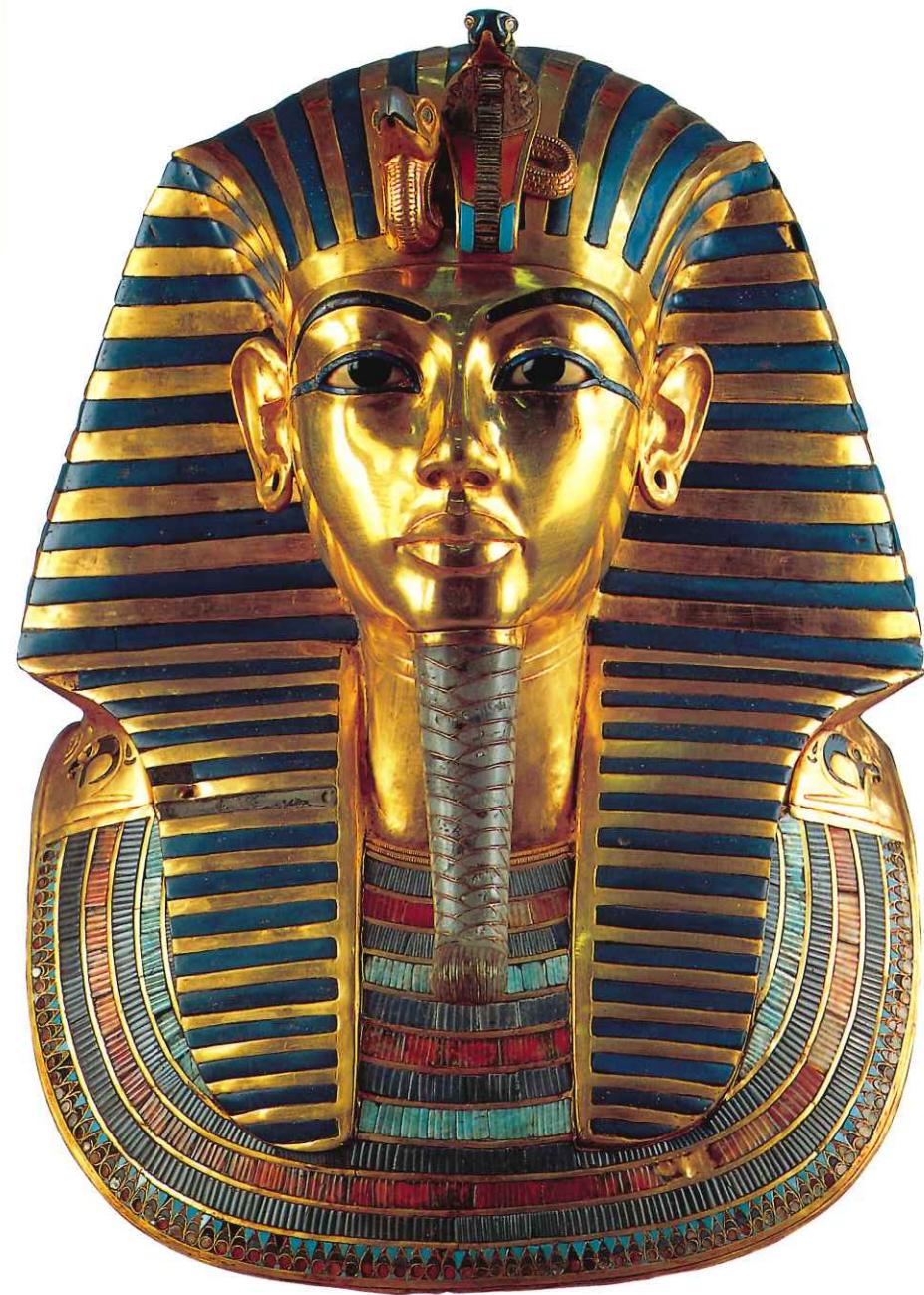
I inserted the candle and peered in. Lord Carnarvon, Lady Evelyn and Callender standing anxiously beside me to hear the verdict. At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold – everywhere the glint of gold. For the moment – an eternity it must have seemed to the others standing by – I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, 'Can you see anything?' it was all I could do to get the words, 'Yes, wonderful things.' Then, widening the hole a little further, so that we both could see, we inserted an electric torch.



176
Upper part of
Tutankhamun's
third
(innermost)
coffin,
c.1330 BC.
Gold;
l.188cm, 74in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo

177
Tutankhamun's
gold funerary
mask,
c.1330 BC.
Gold, lapis
lazuli, glass,
faience,
semiprecious
stones, etc.;
h.54cm, 21½in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo

The tomb of Tutankhamun gives us some idea of the wealth, both artistic and in terms of precious metal, which was deposited in royal tombs of the New Kingdom. There are occasional glimpses of the work of Amarna workshops. On one of the thrones (174, 175), probably dating to the king's early years, the Aten confidently shines over the figures of Tutankhamun and Queen Ankhnesenamun. In other pieces, the return to orthodoxy is complete, and there is little to connect Tutankhamun's coffins (176) and gold mask (177) with the art that flourished under Akhenaten. The tomb's most striking contribution to our knowledge of art lies in items which are not attested elsewhere, such as the gold coffins, gold mask and various other objects found on the mummy, and the gold covered shrines (178). There are some unusual sculptures, including one showing Tutankhamun standing on a black leopard (although there is some question as to whether the piece was originally intended for Tutankhamun). An enigmatic 'mannequin'



appears to be one of the rare examples of sculptures in which the human body is not shown in full, but it may have been used for the display of jewellery or garments. There are also statuettes of some rarely attested deities. The tomb was a treasure trove of elegantly designed furniture: chairs (179), beds, couches with grotesque animal heads, chests (180) and boxes, small tables. These pieces can be studied and information about their manufacture can be gathered which mere representations on tomb or temple walls would never be able to provide. Garments preserved in Tutankhamun's tomb have provided some completely new insights, including the type of underwear worn by the king, but perhaps more importantly they display the variety of decorated textiles used in their manufacture. Some of the alabaster vases have such

unexpectedly complicated whimsical forms that, for a moment, one wonders whether they belong in an Egyptian setting at all.

Many everyday objects are found in the tomb in highly decorative forms: sandals where the soles bear the figures of captives over which Tutankhamun actually physically trampled (181), walking sticks decorated with foreign foes which the king firmly grasped in his fist, torch-holders in the form of ankh (life) symbols provided with arms, a fan with a beautifully engraved chariot scene, ankh-shaped mirror cases, a trumpet with its bell imitating a lotus flower, and many others. But most of all, it is the variety of unexpected forms and the astonishing accomplishment of the jewellery which fires the imagination (182, 183).



298 Egyptian Art

178
Tutankhamun's 'Little Golden Shrine', c.1330 BC. Wood overlaid with gold; h.50.5 cm, 19½ in. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

179
Tutankhamun's 'Ecclesiastical Throne', c.1330 BC. Wood, gold, glass, faience, semiprecious stones, etc.; h.102 cm, 40½ in. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

180
Tutankhamun's
'Painted Box',
showing the
king waging
war on the
Nubians and
hunting in
the desert,
c.1330 BC.
Plastered and
painted wood;
h.44cm, 17½in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo





The wall decoration in the tomb of Tutankhamun (184) is painted, minimal, self-conscious and hesitant, as if the artist responsible was unsure of his task, and it is confined to the four walls of the burial chamber. It contains curious echoes of the royal tomb at el-Amarna, with its scenes of the royal funeral and the Opening the Mouth ceremony performed by Tutankhamun's successor Ay (1327–1323 BC) on the king's mummy. Only one wall displays a scene from the texts of Imi-duat and so rather shyly demonstrates a return to the former funerary beliefs.

Tutankhamun was the last credible representative of the royal family which ruled from the 'heretic city' of Akhetaten. With his death, the curtain finally fell on the drama of the Amarna Period; the Thutmoside line of kings had reached the end of their journey. After the brief reign of the elderly Ay it was Haremhab's task to pick up the pieces of the Egyptian state and continue with the massive task of restoration of the pre-Amarna values. As a sign of his elevation to the royal status, the royal uraeus (cobra) was

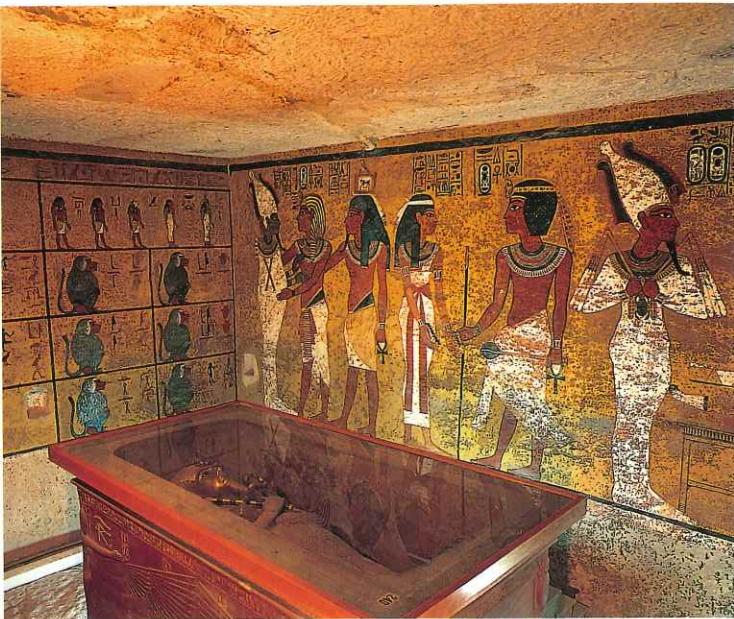
181
Tutankhamun's
sandals,
c.1330 BC.
Wood overlaid
with bark,
leather and
gold;
1.28-4cm, 11½in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo

182
Tutankhamun's
pectoral,
c.1330 BC.
Gold, silver,
polychrome
glass and
semiprecious
stones;
14.9×14.5cm,
5½×5½in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo

183
Tutankhamun's
vulture
collar and
counterpoise,
c.1330 BC.
Gold,
polychrome
glass,
obsidian;
46.4×36.5cm,
18×14½in.
Egyptian
Museum,
Cairo



184
Tutankhamun
in the
company of
gods, in his
tomb in the
Valley of
the Kings,
Western
Thebes,
1327 BC



added to some of the representations in his existing tomb at Saqqara. A new large rock-cut tomb was made for him in the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes and eventually became his final resting place. At Karnak, three pylons were worked on simultaneously during Haremhab's reign, while the structures erected by Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) were dismantled and their relief-decorated blocks reused in the pylons' cores. In Egyptian art, recollections of the excitement and innovation of the Amarna episode could still be felt, but otherwise the way was now clear for a new departure. If it were not for his name, Haremhab could be seen as the first of a new line of kings, the Ramessides.