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**The
enigmatic
Pharaoh
of
Akhet-Aton**



Michael E. Habicht

Smenkhkare

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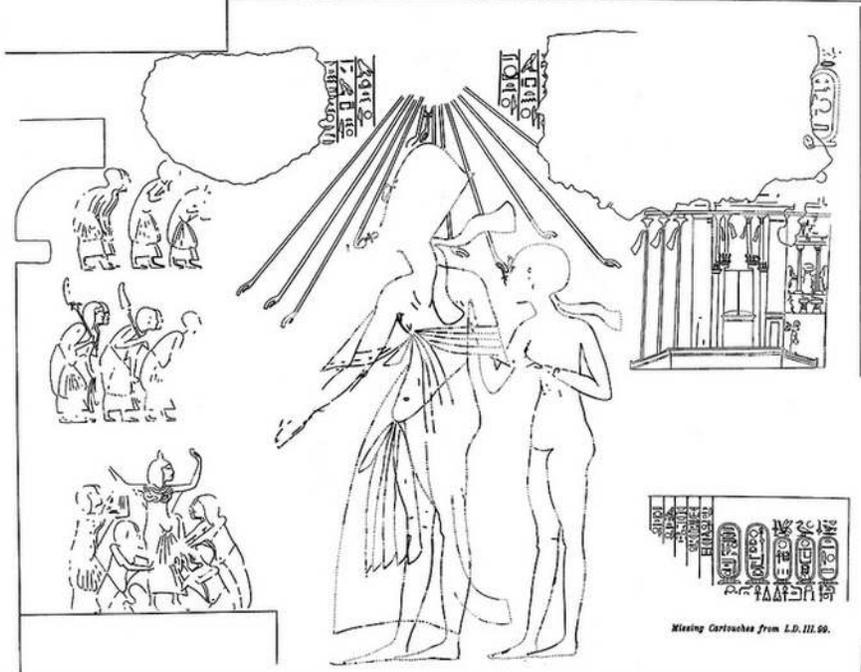
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Smenkhkare

The enigmatic Pharaoh of Akhet-Aton



Some information on the author

The author is a Senior Research Fellow at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia and works as an archaeologist. His numerous publications cover a wide variety of topics ranging from palaeopathological studies, mummy studies and works on medieval topics. In the field of mummy studies, he has published several papers, especially on the topic of the identification of royal mummies [1-3]. The methods and research strategies gained there were also adapted for use in the research on Pope Joan.

The author has also worked on other research projects on scientific forgeries [4], war-time and crisis cross-dressing in other cultures and time periods [5,6] and monographs on mummies around the world [7,8].

Preface

The first two editions of this book, published in 2014 [9] and 2015 [10] met with considerable success for such a specialist subject, mainly pertaining to professional Egyptologists. The question, who was the enigmatic ruler at the end of the Amarna Age was and the possibility that behind this elusive figure one may identify Queen Nefertiti, seems to be of interest to a wider audience.

New discoveries showing that the wall painting in tomb KV 62 was made in two stages [11] lead to a revolutionary new theory, presented by C. Nicholas Reeves on July 23rd 2015 [12], shortly followed by an addendum [13]. The claims by Reeves triggered a media hype and endless press and television coverage [14-18] as well as the first reactions from the scientific world [19-23].

Since the first edition, important advances in research have been made, resulting in further updated editions in German and English, which are now out of print.

First edition (German) [9]

Second edition (German) [10]

Third edition (English) [24]

Fourth edition (German) [6]

Fifth edition (English) [5]

In view of the centenary of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb and the possibility that the burial of Smenkhkare could be in the immediate vicinity of Tutankhamun's tomb KV 62, the subject has been reworked and republished as an expanded edition [25].

Acknowledgments

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book (the 5th edition, in print).

Introduction

The Amarna Age, definable as the 17-year-long reign of Akhenaton and a short rule of some ephemeral successors is but a brief episode in the history of Egyptian civilisation. However, this time marks a huge turning point in human history: The first monotheistic religion was introduced, yet it was subsequently rejected by the population and abandoned shortly thereafter. This episode was a trauma for Egyptian culture and later denied, destroyed and forgotten. Later rulers simply cut the rulers out of the Kings list - for ancient Egypt they simply never existed. In fact, the Amarna Age lived on in art proportion and style. The new art of the Ramesside dynasties was essentially the same, merely more authentic Egyptian and above all polytheistic. Science can easily follow the development of Amarna art since many objects were left in the city or the Talatat-stones were used to fill later temple walls. In spite of this, the history of the Amarna Age, especially for the latest years, is basically unknown; the sources being scant and often confusing.

Akhenaton's accession to the throne was purely by sheer historical coincidence, since his elder brother Thutmosis was the designated one as crown prince. However, Thutmosis died as a teenager during the reign of their father Amenhotep III. If history had unfolded as planned, the Amarna Era would have never happened. We do not know the birth year of Akhenaton; thus he might well have been a teenager or a young adult when he succeeded his father [26]. A longer co-regency with his father is still being debated again after new discovered evidence [27-31]. Akhenaton was married to Nefertiti from the beginning of his reign and their eldest daughter Meritaton was born during the first year. Nefertiti made her first appearances

in the third year on walls of the new Aton temple in Karnak, at a moment when the new cult was already established in his early form. Nefertiti already played a prominent role in the new cult, which extolled her far above most Egyptian Queens.

From year 9 onwards, the new religion of Aton became more intolerant towards other religious concepts and Akhenaton unleashed iconoclasm especially against the former King of the Gods, Amun. Historical sources of the Amarna age become scarcer: A Nubian uprising is testified in the 12th year, which was quickly put down. In the same year, the reception of foreign diplomats took place (the 'Durbar' scene). For a long time, it was thought, that Nefertiti disappeared in the 14th year of Akhenaton, leading to various theories (death, banishment, and return to her foreign homeland or the adaptation of a new role as co-ruler). However, a newly discovered inscription now proves that Nefertiti was still alive and Queen in the year 16 [32].

The years 14 and 15 of Akhenaton saw a series of death of members of the royal family: several daughters of Akhenaton and Nefertiti died as well as the queen-mother Tjye [26,33,34]. The reign of Akhenaton was thrown into a deep crisis. At this pivotal moment, a mysterious, phantom-like figure appears at the side of Akhenaton, apparently without known background. His name is Smenkhkare and he carried the throne name Ankh-Khepru-Ra. The name is already known from Queen Nefertiti's titles, which might have used it as co-regent at the side of her husband. Thus, the differentiation between Nefertiti and Smenkhkare is rather difficult; perhaps they are one and the same individual. Only one undeniable picture of Smenkhkare is known in the tomb of Merire II, accompanied by Queen Meritaton. Several questions can be posed:

- His identity and sex. Is he a man or a woman, adopting the social status a man?
- The differentiation between Smenkhkare Ankh-Khepru-Ra and Neferneferuaton Ankh-Khepru-Ra.
- A female Ankhet-Khepru-Re is also known.
- The possible duration of the reign (co-regency or individual rule).
- The political significance of Smenkhkare's reign.

Four basic forms of names are known which can be connected with the succession of Akhenaton. They can stand alone or be connected by means of epithets (additional titles) [35,36]:

Ankh-Khepru-Re

Alone

& Mery Nefer-Kheperu-Re (beloved of)

& Mery.t Nefer-Kheperu.Re (beloved of female form)

& Mery Aton (beloved of Aton)

& pA hem Akhet-Aton (servant of Akhenaton or Incarnation of Akhet-Aton) using the male article pA.

& Meryt wa-en-Ra (beloved of Wa-en-Ra)

Nefer-Neferu-Aton

Combined with Nefertiti in one cartouche

& Mery Akhenaton (beloved of Akhenaton)

& Mery wa-en-Ra (beloved of Wa-en-Ra)

& heqa (Ruler)

& Akhet en hez (she who is beneficiary for her husband).

Clearly feminine and only connectable to Nefertiti

Smenkhkare and Ankh-Khepru-Ra Ankh-Khepru-Re and Meritaton

The known names present a confusing image, some forms may be easily attributed to a female ruler, while others to a

male. It is unclear how many individuals are involved. Depictions in the late Amarna age show two Kings in very intimate scenes, otherwise known between Akhenaton and his wife Nefertiti. At the beginning of the 20th century, those pictures were regarded as Akhenaton and Nefertiti until Percy Newbery (1868-1949) offered a new interpretation of one King as the (male) co-ruler Smenkhkare [37]. On the one hand, one can observe Smenkhkare as the husband next to Queen Meritaton and on the other hand, he/she is exchanging intimacy with Akhenaton. This raised the question, whether Akhenaton suddenly developed any homosexual tendencies. In 1928, homosexuality was still a punishable crime in the British Empire and a veritable scandal. Later other researchers reinterpreted the mysterious figure Smenkhkare as someone different; Queen Nefertari in her new gender role as 'male' co-regent [38]. Nevertheless, the controversy of the true nature and family background of Smenkhkare are still ongoing, e.g. [39-45]. Let us now start with the known names of Smenkhkare, later to focus on important monuments of this somewhat elusive late Amarna ruler. They are quite scarce.

The name Smenkhkare

A close examination of the alleged 'birth name' Smenkhkare by Marc Gabolde shows that this obscure coregent of Akhenaton in reality **carried two throne names, but no birth name at all** [46]: Thus, one can assume, that **in fact Smenkhkare was a theologically motivated construction**. Smenkhkare Djoser-Kheperu (with efficient Ka, a Ra, living in appearances) certainly is the theological name of a ruler. This makes Smenkhkare a unique ruler with two throne names (combined with Ankh-Khepru-Ra). In 2001, Marc Gabolde identified Smenkhkare as a man: *„Die Person mit Namen Anchcheprure Semenckare-Djosercheperu stellt uns vor andersartige Probleme. Im Grab des Merire II. in Amarna ist sie neben der Königsgemahlin Meritaton dargestellt; ihre Beischriften in diesem Grab und auf einem heute verschollenen Reliefblock aus Memphis sind ausschließlich männlich und lassen keine Zweifel, daß es sich um einen Mann handelt... [...]. Entgegen der Tradition trägt Semenckare in seinen zwei Kartuschen nicht einen Thronnamen und einen Geburtsnamen, sondern zwei Thronnamen. Die Zeitgenossen des Königs waren sich übrigens dieser Besonderheit durchaus bewußt, denn in zwei Texten ist der Kartuschenname Anchcheprure an die zweite, nicht an die erste Stelle gesetzt.“* [46]

[Translation: The person with the name Ankh-Khepru-Ra Smenkhkare Djoser Kheperua confronts us with different problems. In the tomb of Merire II in Amarna he/she is depicted aside the Kings wife Meritaton. His inscription in the tomb and in a now lost relief block from Memphis are exclusively masculine, leaving no doubt that he was a man [...] Contrary to tradition, Smenkhkare has not one throne name in his two cartouches but two. His subjects were fully

aware of this odd combination, in historic records the throne name Ankh-Khepru-Ra is not in the first place but in the second one.]

The model case of such a role change is Queen Hatshepsut, ruling as male King Maat-Ka-Ra and this example clearly shows that the masculine grammatical form or male appearance on state monuments is not compelling evidence for a male Smenkhkare. It seems that Smenkhkare had another name, but who is behind this spectre King is still highly controversial:

- Marc Gabolde presented him as **Hittite prince Zananza**, who - in opposition to the Hittite reports - shall have reached Egypt and ruled as King together with Queen Meritaton [46]. Therefore, it would have been Meritaton, who wrote the famous widow letter. This interpretation violates the historic sources of the Hittites and the whole Dahamunzu affair would have happened a decade earlier, which is truly problematic.
- C. Nicholas Reeves presented a theory according to which **Smenkhkare is identical with Nefertiti** [12,38]. In 2002, it was unknown, if Nefertiti had a son (Tutankhamun), thus it was possible to present her as the author of the widow-letter. But since the mother of Tutankhamun is known [47] and frequently identified as Nefertiti [26,48,49] it becomes unlikely that she was the unidentified Queen Dahamunzu [50-53]. However, it is possible that Nefertiti was Smenkhkare.
- An older theory by Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt (1913 - 2011) suggests that **Smenkhkare was a younger son of King Amenhotep III** and his daughter-wife Satamun or another secondary wife [54]. However, there are no inscriptions or facts that can testify to the existence of a younger brother of Akhenaton.

- Hermann A. Schlögl presented **Smenkhkare in 2008 as a young man of unknown background**, perhaps from a royal side line [55]. He completely excluded the possibility, that Smenkhkare was a younger brother of Akhenaton, quote: “*Völlig ausschliessen darf man heute die Hypothese, dass Tutanchamun und Semenckare Brüder gewesen seien*“ [55]. Nevertheless, he identified the mummy found in KV 55 as the body of Smenkhkare. Based on the inscription it was clear that Tutankhamun was the son of Akhenaton [55]. Schlögl adhered to this theory in 2012, after the genetics of Tutankhamuns’ ancestry were published, still presenting the KV 55 male as Smenkhkare [48]. This is problematic, as we shall see, because one would have to accept Smenkhkare as genetic father of Tutankhamun. This contradicts historical inscriptions, identifying Akhenaton as father of Tutankhamun [48].

All attempts to identify Smenkhkare are vain and lack hard evidence. It remains unclear if the mummy found in KV 55 can be regarded as Smenkhkare. Thus, one should instead focus on the archaeological evidence first, in order to gain a picture of who Smenkhkare might really have been.

Objects carrying the name Smenkhkare

The most important pieces of evidence for Nefertiti as co-ruler and for Smenkhkare come from Akhet-Aton, the new capital of Akhenaton.

Amarna tomb TA 2 of Merire II

The tombs of Merire II (tomb TA 2) and the tomb of Huy (TA 1) both show a dated and historically important representation of the reception of the foreign delegates (the 'Durbar scene') in the year 12 of Akhenaton [34,56]. They depict the royal couple Akhenaton and Nefertiti in a pavilion. The picture shows that all daughters of the couple were still alive, while Tutankhaton is missing (he was probably born shortly afterwards). The inscription tells us the following (names are modified to current spelling):

"Jahr 12, 2. Monat, Peret, Tag 8. Es lebe der Vater Ra, [der Herrscher, der Horizontische, der im Horizont jubelt] in seinem Namen als Ra der Vater, der wiedergekommen ist als Aton, dem Leben in alle Ewigkeit gegeben werde. Es erschien der König von Ober- und Unterägypten Nefer-Chepru-Ra Wa-En-Ra und die große königliche Gemahlin Nefer-Neferu-Aton Nefertiti, sie lebe in alle Ewigkeit, auf dem großen Tragsessel von Gold, um die Abgaben von Syrien und Kusch, von Westen und Osten entgegenzunehmen, indem alle Fremdländer in einem zusammen waren, und die Inseln inmitten des Ozeans Abgaben brachten für den König auf dem großen Thron von Achet-Aton, für das Entgegennehmen der Abgaben aller Fremdländer, damit ihnen der Lebenshauch gegeben werde." [57].

[Translation: Year 12, 2nd month, Peret, day 8. Long live the father Ra, the ruler, the one of the horizons, rejoicing in the horizon, in his name as Ra the father, returned as Aton, whom is given life for eternity. It appeared the King of Upper- and Lower Egypt, Nefer-Kheperu-Ra Wa-en-Ra and the great wife of the King; Neferneferuaton Nefertiti, she may live in eternity, sitting on the great sedan of gold, to receive the tribute from Syria and Kush, from the west and the east, where all the foreign lands were assembled and the islands in the middle of the ocean bringing tribute for the King on the great sedan of Akhet-Aton, as compensation for the tribute of the foreign lands, the breath of life is returned to them.]

The representation of the royal couple is unusual but significant; on the first initial examination it seems that there is only one King. If one looks closer, one can see that the King is holding the hand of another figure, Queen Nefertiti. She appears as an almost identical outline double; with exactly the same size, the same crown. The emancipation of Nefertiti probably indicates her elevation to co-ruler in the year 12. In the tomb of Merire II, this significant picture is on the eastern wall; right at the side on the northern wall is the other important scene, showing King Smenkhkare and Queen Meritaton rewarding the official Merire II. This scene dates from some years later and was only drawn in black ink, never finished as relief. The workers began the scene, stopped and walked away, never to return.

The cartouches give the names of the Great Royal Wife **Meritaton** and the Son of Ra **Smenkhkare**, King of Upper and Lower Egypt **Ankh-Khepru-Ra** and the two dogmatic names of Aton in their later version. Under the rays of Aton, the royal couple gives reward to the loyal official Merire II. Such scenes of a follower being rewarded are part of the standard repertoire in the Amarna propaganda

art and known from many tombs. Smenkhkare wears the Blue Crown and a pleated linen dress and has an overall feminine appearance, specifically her hips - even more than in Queen Meritaton's case. Behind Smenkhkare stands Meritaton in her typical representation: completely naked and bald-headed [255]. We do not have a date for this scene but the rewarding of Merire II certainly happened after the year 12 of Akhenaton. Dodson suggested a dating in the year 13 or 14 [34]. It also testifies a reign of Smenkhkare and Meritaton, but it remains uncertain whether it was a co-rule with Akhenaton or a sole rule.

A lost relief in Memphis

The block is now lost, but it was scientifically recorded [37]. On the fragment the sun arms of Aton are visible and the lower part of several cartouches, from left to right; the two names of Aton in their later form, followed by [Ankh]-Khepru-[Ra], [Smenkh-Djeser]-Khepru and because of the feminine determinative probably Meritaton. The block testifies a temple of Aton in Memphis, but it sadly does not give vital information on the look-alike of Smenkhkare or his/her sex.