

Concerning the Offerings of Akhenaten's Royal family

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Abstract:

The reign of the king Akhenaten (Amenophis IV) is known to every one; it was revolutionary in Egyptian art, revolutionary in the world of ideas. The religious changes were associated with him, the older gods and deities were denied, Amun "the hidden one" enclosed in his dark and secret sanctuary was replaced by Aten, the glorious disk of the sun whose life-giving rays descended equally upon all mankind and all nature rejoiced in his blessing, its vision of the deity as a god lovingly concerned with all creation speaks for itself.

Akhenaten famous hymn to the sun (Aten) was written in every where at the site of Amarna city but the complete one was engraved in Ay tomb at Amarna (N^o.22). It highlights the manner of worshipping and offerings which were introduced to the living disk Aten.

This paper aims to study the offering scenes of Akhenaten and his royal family to Aten and to show the different aspects of the royal family concerning the representation of offerings, such as the special scene of Ipy. It also presents an analysis of the iconography of the offering of Akhenaten's divine positions and his god Aten.

It shows the different aspects concerning the representation of offerings to the sun-god in Heliopolis, Memphis and Re-Harakhty in Thebes, and presents an analysis of the iconography of the offering of Akhenaten's divine positions and his god Aten.

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Introduction:

Amenophis IV (1353-1335 B.C) became crown prince after the death of a prince called Thumose. He started his reign by giving himself the title of high priest of the sun god.

He then formulated a new dogmatic name for the sun god Aten, "Re-Harakhty who rejoices on the horizon in his name of *Shu* (or light) which is the sun disk (Aten)"¹.

The development of this cult, which left almost no place for any of the traditional deities except the sun god, became, with self-glorification. The king's main purpose in life. His chief wife, Nefertity, played almost equally prominent role in the changes.

Probably in his fifth year of reign Amenophis IV changed his name to Akhenaten (beneficial to the disk) and began a new capital on a virgin site at el-Amarna².

Akhenaten's great sun hymn was inscribed in the tomb of his chief official, Ay, and other reliefs and small objects demonstrate the development of his religion. Around year 9 the king changed the Aten's name to the god's Re, "horizon ruler, who rejoices on the horizon in his name of Re the father, who has returned as the sun disk"³, but after that there was little further development and the number of monuments from the latest years of reign is small.

¹ W b, I, 145 (1/8), itn, p3 itn, itn 'nh; J.Assman, "Aton", LÄ, I (1975), p. 526,529; S. Tawfik, "Aton Studies", MDIAK 29/1 (1973); C.Aldred, Akhenaten, fig.45; H.A.Schlögl, "Aten", The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt I (2001), p. 156-158.

² M.Eaton-Krauss, "Akhnaten", The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt I (2001), p. 48-51.

³ J.Assman, "Aton", LÄ I (1975), p. 529 ;St.Weing, "Amenophis IV " , LÄ I (1975), p. 210, 217; J.Vandier,E.Drioton,L'Egypte des origines á la conquête d'Alexander, Paris (1938),p. 346.

I: Talatat

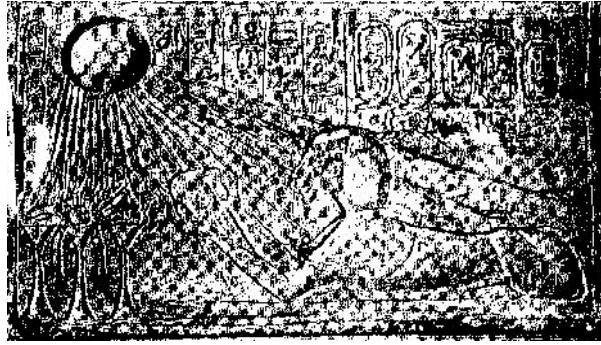


fig.1: Akhenaten as a sphinx

I.1- A sphinx with the features of Akhenaten is carved in sunk relief on this nearly complete sandstone slab. The king wears the "xAt" headdress. The sphinx's forelegs are in the shape of arms holding between their long fingered hands a libation vessel "nmst" which asperges a floral offering at the left. In front of the sphinx are three supports of the offering tables which have flowers, burning immolation coloring and a water pot in the middle. From the upper left hand corner, the disk of Aten sends its rays to accept the offering and bring life to the donor. Across the upper part of the panel, beneath a "pt" sign denoting "heaven", runs an inscription giving the names and the titular of Aten, Akhenaten and Nefertity (fig.1)⁴.



fig.2: Akhenaten as a sphinx worshipping to Aten

I.2- A sandstone slab from the talatat of Karnak. On this slab, king Akhenaten is represented as a sphinx wearing the " xAt " headdress. He offers a tray with his left hand, on which are the cartouches of

⁴ www.crysalinks.com, 25/09/2008.

Aten, while his right arm is raised in a worshipping pose under the rays of Aten's disk. These rays descending on three supports of the offering tables with flowers on them. The subject in this scene is about "Ra m Axt " and "Ra Hr Axt ", it refers to the cult of the sun in Memphis, where king Akhenaten has been raised and learned the belief of the sun, in which god Aten himself was equaled to Re-Horakhty.

This scene also refers to the idea of protection. The protection of the king and the god Aten by the king himself, who is represented as sphinx (fig.2)⁵.

C.Aldred thinks that Akhenaten wanted to transport the rite of worshipping "sanctification" of the sun from Heliopolis to Tell-Amarna.

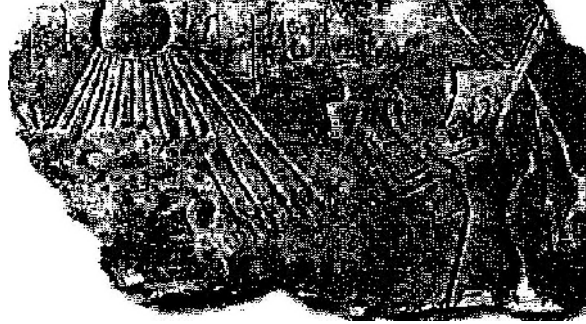


fig.3: Akhenaten offering incense, private collection

I.3- A sandstone building slab (talatat) from the temple of Akhenaten in Karnak. Akhenaten here is represented in his usual features, wearing the red crown (dSrt) of Lower Egypt. The king is standing in a worshipping pose under Aten's disk whose descending rays extend the sign of life (anx) to him. He offers the incense with his right hand while his left hand is in a pious pose. On the upper part of the scene, are fragments of the royal cartouches and the cartouches of Aten (fig.3)⁶.

⁵ www.crystalinks.com, 25/09/2008.

⁶ www.touregypt.net , 25/09/2008

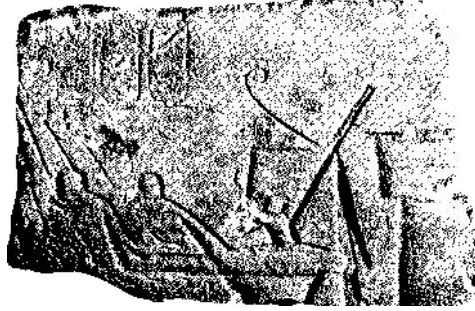


fig.4: Akhenaten offering the nmst vase

I.4- A sandstone slab from the talatat from the second pylon of Karnak. The king represented standing, wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt. He is doing the purification ritual in which he offers the purification vase (nmst) (fig.4)⁷

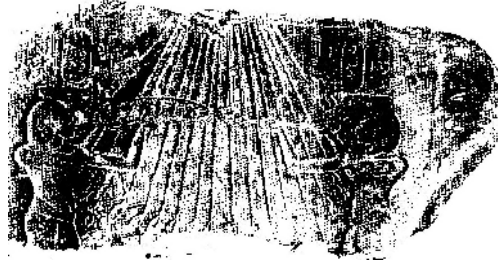


fig.5: Akhenaten prier in front of Aten, present incense

I.5- A sandstone relief from the talatat of Karnak Akhenaten is represented on both sides with the sun disk in the middle. Its descending rays end with human hands except for two of them, one on each side ends with the life sign (ankh). The king is burning the incense and wearing the "xAt" headdress (fig.5)⁸.

⁷ D.B.Redford, Akhenaten the Heretic king, New Jersey (1984), pl. 7.17.

⁸ C.Aldred, Akhenaton, fig. 46.



fig.6: Akhenaten celebrating the sed-festival

I.6- A sandstone stela from the talatat of Karnak. King Amenophis IV is represented celebrating the sed-festival. He is presenting the offerings and wearing a short mantle. He worships god Aten who sends its rays which ending with the life sign (anx)) to the altar. Akhenaten walks in a procession between two priests, one of them bears his sandals. The inscription refers to this priest as the high priest of the king. On The other side of the relief the king is represented making the ritual of opening the food table, and holding the scepter "xrp" in his hand (fig.6)⁹.

C.Aldred thinks that the king might have his own cult and it seems that this relief dates back to the first Jubilee of Aten.



fig.7: Limestone relief fragment of a hand offering an olive branch to Aten

I.7- Limestone relief fragment, originally from Amarna, found at Hermopolis. The left hand of king Akhenaten appears, offering an olive branch to Aten. A part of Aten's rays, which ending with human hands, can be seen (fig.7)¹⁰.

⁹ M. A.Murray, The splendour that was Egypt, London (1969), pl. LXX; C.Aldred, Akhenaton, fig. 49.

¹⁰ C.Aldred, J. Baines & J.Malek, Atlas of Ancient Egypt, Paris (1992).



fig.8: Akhenaten offering flowers

I.8- Another shape of talatat, in which king Akhenaten is making the ritual of opening the offering table or the four divine bulls, and offering some flowers in front of the god Re-Horakhty (fig.8)¹¹.

II: Tombs

II.1- The royal tombs



fig.9: Akhenaten offering flowers

This limestone relief found in the royal tomb at Tell el- Amarna depicts Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and two of their daughters offering flowers to the sun-disk Aten with the Ureus.

This rectangular slab decorated with an offering scene, the king and queen offer lotus bouquets to the Aten, while still more flowers are

¹¹ D.Redford, "Studies on Akhenaten at Thebes", JEA 12, London (1975), p.51 (fig.b).

piled into tall stands. Aten sends his rays provided with human hands to present them with the signs for life (anx) and prosperity (wAs). One hand even embraces the king below his right arm. Behind the couple, the eldest daughter Merytaten rattles a sistrum (sSst), followed by her little sister Mekytaten.

Akhenaten wears the blue crown (xprS). Nefertity wears a long wig tied with a diadem of uraei surmounted by the disk headdress with two feathers inserted between two horns. Her daughters are dressed similarly in long transparent robes which expose the body, and they wear wigs with side locks (fig.9)¹².

II.2- Privates tombs:

The tomb of May (14)

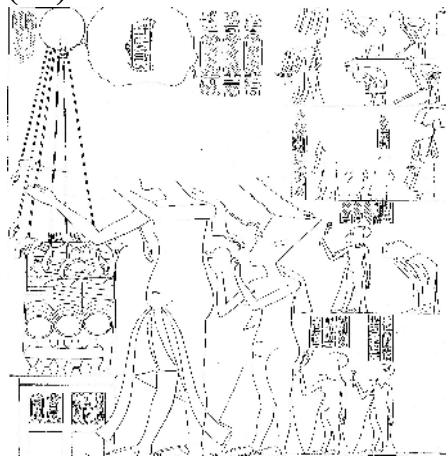


fig.10: Akhenaten offering incense

The king stands before the offering table where a lot of presented and popular types in Ancient Egypt at the dawn of historical ages are found, such as: breads, beer pots, drink pots, two bouquets of flowers, two geese and a mirror ornamented by lotus which represents a lot of great meanings in the Egyptian culture and religion¹³. Lotus is the first flower sprang from water and from

¹² M.Saleh & H.Sourouzian , Catalogue Officiel Musée Egyptien du Caire, Mainz (1987), fig 166; P.Clayton ,Chronicle of The Pharaohs, London (1994),p.123; C.Aldred, Akhenaton,fig. 5.

¹³ R.J.Leprohon, "offerings", The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt II (2001), p. 564-572.

which sprang the first child of sun, which indicates the importance of linking the sun and Aten with the old religion.

The offerings are surmounted by two censers. Aten send his rays to the foods to bless them and give them life and immortality. The rays ended with human hands representing the arm "aA" meaning to give "dj".¹⁴

Disregarding all details of the king, he presents the censer before the table to purify it by fumigation. Behind the king, queen Nefertity presents purification pot (nmst).

As for their daughters, three of them, Merytaten, Ankhsenpaten and Mekttaten rattle a sistrum "sSst". It is clear that such sistrum isn't surmounted by the god Hathor or even the cow's ears, although that the sistrum is the god Hathor herself and his distinguished pillar (fig.10)¹⁵.

The tomb of Rames (11)

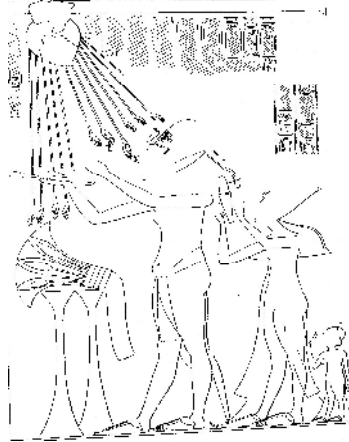


fig.11: The royal family offering to Aten

A scene from Rames tomb depicts the royal family presents the offerings related to purification. The king stands in front of two offering tables where there is a bouquet of budded lotus as a sign of sun rise. The king presents the censer, behind him queen Nerty offers the volatile funnel and oil (purification by perfuming). Her

¹⁴ Wb, V, 419, 7, 8.

¹⁵ N. de G.Davies, The Rock Tombs of El-Amarna,V, London (1907), tomb of May, pl.III.

daughter Mereytaten holds her left leg. There are rays besides the king's nose ending with life sign "anx", offer life to the king (fig.11)¹⁶.

The tomb of Ipy (10)



fig.12: Akhenaten makes votive offerings to the sun

One of the most important issues in ancient Egypt religion is the offering scenes. There are some fragments represented the king and the queen offered Aten's name¹⁷.

The tomb of Ipy dates back to the Amarna period as it is often called which saw the removal of seat government to a new capital city Akhetaten, the introduction of a new style art and elevation of the cult of the sun disc Aten.

The entrance scene of the tomb of Ipy shows a very different aspect of the royal family. Indeed there are several unusual aspects of their representation but this special scene represents the royal family serving, worshiping and offering votive statuettes of the king, the queen and the full name of Aten into two cartouches as a true royal name¹⁸. All these elements of offering is old but it decades to a new conception of the sun-god (Aten) and the beginning to represent himself as the celestial body of Aten as well as his wife who

¹⁶N.de G.Davies,Ibid,IV,London (1906),tomb of Rames,pl.XXXV C.Aldred,Akhenaton,fig.105

¹⁷ A.Radwan, "Einige Aspekte der Vergöthichung des Ägyptischen Königs", MDIAK 18, 1985, Abb.12, 13; M.Lurker, Götter und Symbole der Alten Ägypten, (1991), p.55; B.Sharkawy, "Aten in Memphis", ASAE,cahier

34 (2005), p, 51; Löhr, SAK II (doc.II 4, 7).

¹⁸ J.Assman, "Aton",LÄ I(1975), p.529; St.Weing, "Amenophis IV", LÄ I (1975), p. 213,214.

appears to take the role of the goddess Maat in the Egyptian religion.

The scene represented the King Akhenaten, his queen and three of his daughter makes offerings to Aten in the form of the sun disk from which rays come down ending in hands. One hand only holds the hieroglyphic sign for life (fig.12)¹⁹.

As Davies said it is an offering scene, and Aldred said it is a scene of offering perfumes to the god Aten with his name in the 2nd style. The most important among all the personification however is Maat personifying both "right" and "truth" which is associated with Nefertity.

Maat is a goddess whose name appears as early as the 2nd dynasty, very early too she is represented bearing on her head an ostrich feather which for some unknown reason had become her symbol²⁰. She is daughter of Re, for Re, the sun god rules the universe according to the principals of "right" and "justice".

Maat is therefore, regularly seen standing on the prow of the sun barque accompanying the sun god on his course across the sky²¹

The tomb of Swtw (19)

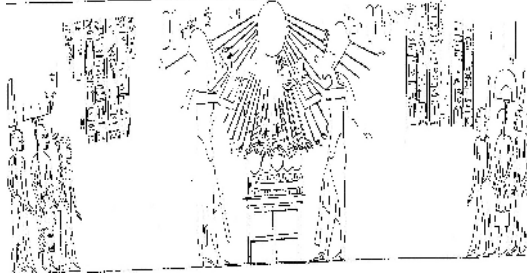


fig.13: Akhenaten offering the (nmst)

On the lintel of this tomb, it can be seen the solar disk spreads its rays on an offering table, with different types of offerings. The king

¹⁹ N. de G.Davies, The Rock Tombs of El-Amarna,IV, London (1906), tomb of Apy, pl.XXXI.

²⁰ E.Teeter, "Maat", The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt II (2001), p. 319-321; J.Assman, Maat, p. 137; J.Leibovitch, "Gods of Agriculture and Welfare in Ancient Egypt", JNES 12 (1953), p. 100-112.

²¹ M.Lurker, Götter und Symbole der Alten Ägypten, (1991), p.164.

on each side, behind him, the queen, but she is damaged and only parts of her name appears.

The king is burning incense and offering a libation from the vase of purification (nmst) (fig.13)²².

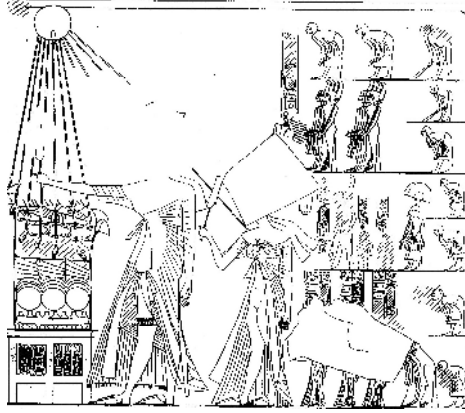


fig.14: The royal family offering the (xrp)

It can be seen the king and the queen making an offering with the (xrp) scepter, it's the ceremony of opening the offering table, which known from the ancient times (fig.14)²³.

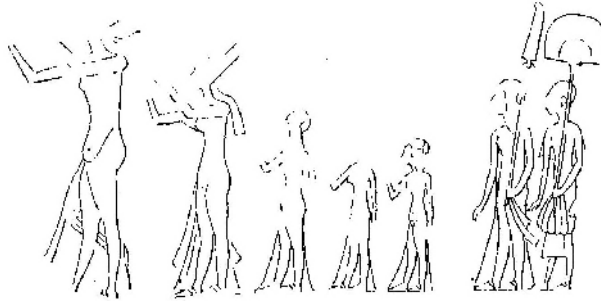


fig.15: The royal family offering to Aten

This usual scene represented the royal family making offering to Aten (fig.15)²⁴.

²² N. de G.Davies, The Rock Tombs of El-Amarna, V, London (1907), tomb of Sutaui, pl.XV.

²³ N. de G.Davies, Ibid, VI, London (1908), pl.XXVI.

²⁴ N. de G.Davies, Ibid, V, London (1907), tomb 22, pl.XVI.

The Tomb of Mahou

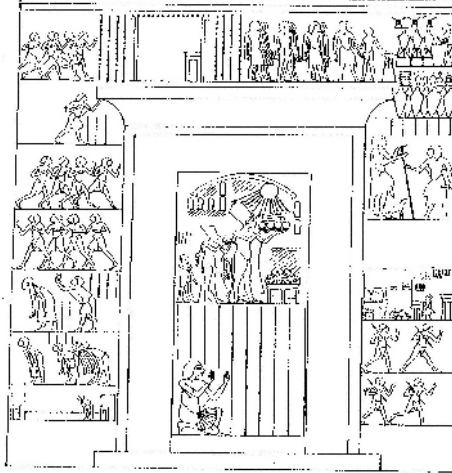


fig.16: The royal family offering to Aten

The royal family and Akhenaten were offering bread on a tray, in front of him an offering table, behind him Nefertiti also presenting a tray with bread, behind them their daughter holding a sistrum (fig.16)²⁵.

The Tomb of Mry-Ra I

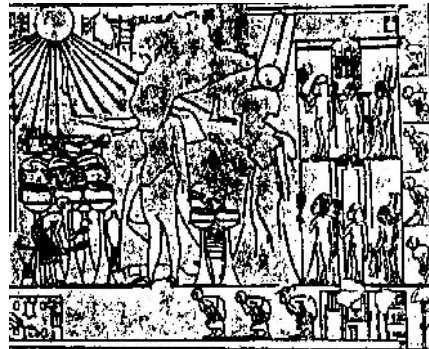


fig.17: The royal family offering to Aten

The scene of the tomb of Mry-Ra I, represented the king and his royal family (the queen and six of his daughters) offering to the god Aten in front of Aten temple (pr-itn) (fig.17)²⁶.

²⁵ N. de G.Davies, Ibid, IV, London (1906), pl.XXVIII.

²⁶ J.Assman, "Aton", LÄ I (1975), p. 542, 544 (Abb.2) = COA, taf.V.1.

III: Objects



fig.18: Akhenaten offering libation

III.1- The sun god appears solely in the form of the sun's disk, whose rays terminate in human hands, two of them have the life sign (ankh), and the sun-god presents life to Akhenaten's nose and his wife. These rays brought life, joy, and prosperity, revealing beauty and reaching to the very depths of the oceans.

On this carved slab, Akhenaten and his family officiating personally and directly under the rays of Aten. The royal couple offers a libation to the god, while the eldest daughter Meritaten plays a sistrum with her right hand.

The king stands beside two low altars with lotus flowers on them, and he proffers two vases (nw) to the god he believes unique and benevolent.

This alabaster slab is a fragment of the parapet of the ramp which led to the central chamber of the palace of Akhenaten (fig.18)²⁷.

²⁷ M.Saleh & H.Sourouzian, Catalogue Officiel Musée Egyptien du Caire (Mainz, 1987), fig 164; C.Aldred, Akhenaton, fig. 47.

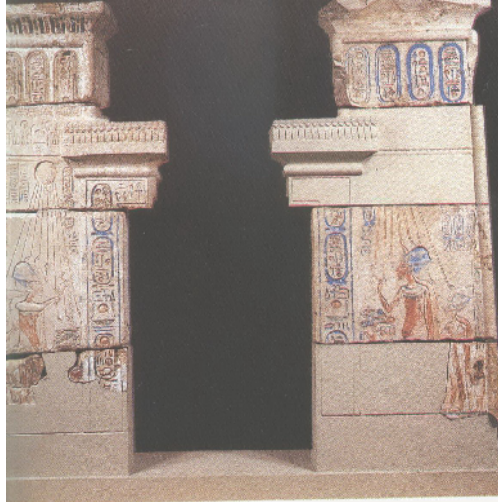


fig.19: Autel of Panehsy

III.2- Painted limestone, autel discovered in the house of Panehsy. The Amarna period introduces the practice of placing shrines in the form of the temple facades (pylons) in private houses to serve as altars for the cult of the royal family and, through the latter, to the Aten. The most of these shrines are often found in the reception hall. The two symmetrical scenes executed in sunk relief of the two wings of the pylon show the royal family presenting offerings under the Aten's disk.

Akhenaten wears the typical blue crown with streamer floating at the back, and a pleated kilt. To the left he offers a libation; to the right he consecrates offerings. Nefertiti wears her characteristic high blue crown and a long transparent robe open in the front. She presents a libation vase at the left, and the kherp scepter at the right. She holds hands with the princess Meritaten, provided with the princely side-lock and holding a sistrum. Above, the Aten projects his rays with human hands to dispense life to the nostrils of the couple (fig.19)²⁸.

²⁸ M.Saleh & H.Sourouzian, Ibid, fig 165.

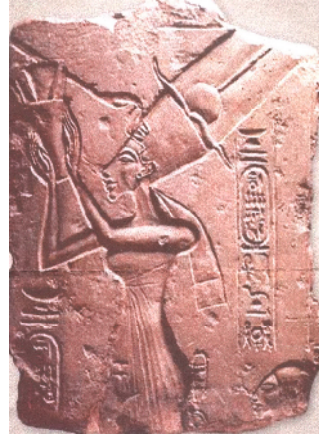


fig.20: Nefertiti offering bouquet of flowers

III.3- This fragment represented the queen Nefertiti wearing her specially headdress, offering a bouquet of lotus and behind her her eldest daughter Meritaten playing a sistrum (sSst). Both the queen and her daughter were titled the lady of the two lands (nb-tAwy) (fig.20)²⁹.



fig.21: Limestone boundary stela

III.4- There are fourteen stela, eleven of which were cut in Tell el Amarna on the east side, and the other on the west side. They were erected in order to demarcate the city of Tell el Amarna. They

²⁹ www.touregypt.net , 25/09/2008.

carried inscriptions illustrating both Akhenaten and Nefertity with their children while serving the sun-god Aten³⁰.

These stela give a vivid account of the king's selection and dedication of the site for his capital, following instructions from his father Aten when he illuminated a certain spot on the desert at sunrise.

These monuments of invariable form give an excellent example, they are rounded at the top, and the sky from which (Aten) sends his rays on the alter and the royal pair is arched, the upper part have the scene of the king, the queen and two princesses adoring (Aten), their arms out stretched from the shoulder while the princesses carry sistrums.

In that scene, the titulary of sun, the royal pair and the princesses added in columns, there is generally an altar-table of common form, the table piled with jars, meat, birds and often has a back like that a chair at one end and at the other end kneeling figure holding bread (fig.21)³¹. These limestone slabs are known by Egyptologists as boundary stela.

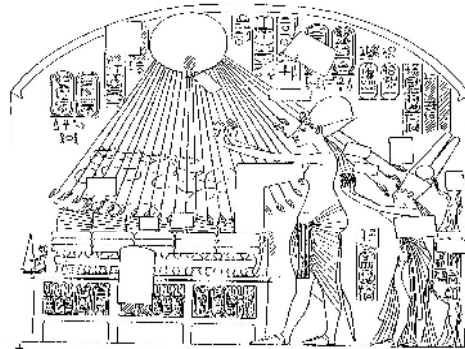


fig.22: The upper part of stela

III.5- The upper part of another stela represented the king, the queen and two of their daughters in front of an offering table with different popular offerings on it, also the solar disk terminating with

³⁰ St.weing, "Amara-kunst ", LÄ I (1975), p. 177-179.

³¹ www.touregypt.net , 25/09/2008.

human hand. The hands are holding the sign (anx) offering it to the king and the queen (fig.22)³².

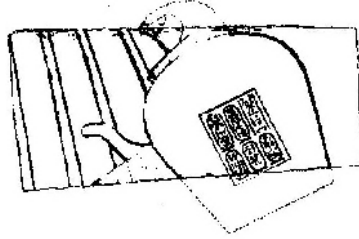


Fig.23: offering of the *nmst* vase

III.6- Apart of limestone Column was found at the temple of Ptah, it inscribed with Aton's name on an *nmst* vase which was covered with falcon-shaped head. It dated to the 5 year of Akhenaten (fig.23)³³.

IV: Statutes



fig.24: Akhenaten offers a stela

IV.1- Akhenaten stands holding a stela as offering for Aten. He is wearing the blue crown (xprS)³⁴.

Concerning presenting statues, dr/Ali Radwan thinks that it is the form of (Htp-di-nsw), which means the grant that the king offers.

³² N. d.e G.Davies, op.cit, VI, London (1908), pl. XXXIII.

³³ Löhr, SAK II, pl. IV.1; Nicholson, Aegyptiaca, London (1891), pl. 1(no.7), pl. 2;

B.Sharkawy, "Aten in Memphis", ASAE, cahier34 (2005), p, 51.

³⁴ H.Altmüller, "Königsplastik", LÄ III (1980), p.572, 599.

It's a prominent style of *Back in carving* as the head is raised; the neck and arms are thin (fig.24)³⁵.

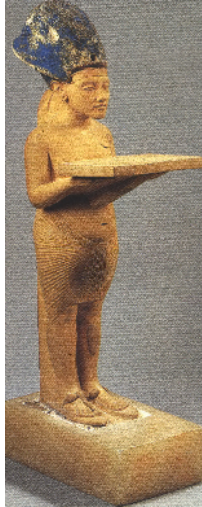


fig.25: Statue of Akhenaten presenting an offering tablet

IV.2- Painted limestone, discovered at Tell el –Amarna.

The statue represented the king as priest of the Nile god and offering to the sun god Aten. The king stands holding a tablet of offering for the sun-god Aten in a pose similar to that the king represented as a Nile-god Hapy as displayed in Aten's hymns:

Hapy (inundation who inundates or over from every day and who gives life to Egypt).

The tablet is carved with representation of food and lotus flowers; one can recognize the characteristic features of this king and unlike his other portraits, his face shows a serene and contented expression.

He wears a special crown might be the blue crown (xprS), a short pleated kilt and sandals. Three other innovations of this period are the both feet together, the pierced ears and the lines on neck (fig.25)³⁶.

³⁵ M. A.Murray, The splendour that was Egypt, London (1969), pl. LXI.

³⁶ M.Saleh & H.Sourouzian , op.cit, fig 160; D.Wildung, The Eighteenth Dynasty in the Treasures of the Egyptian Museum, p.188, JE.43580; H.Atenmüller, "Königsplastik", LÄ III (1980), p. 572; JE .43580.

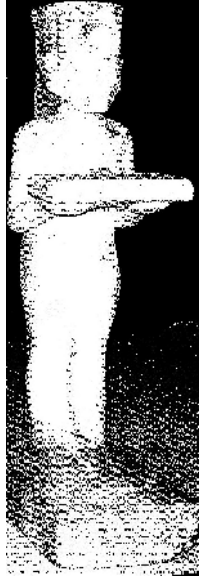


fig.26: Uncompleted statue of Nefertity

IV.3- It is uncompleted statue of Nefertity presenting an offering table.

Nagwa Metwali thinks that this statue is of Nefertity, because the crown is similar to Nefertity's, but I think that is belonging to the queen Nefertity because of its crown and its long fitted dress. The queen is standing presenting an offering table (fig.26)³⁷.

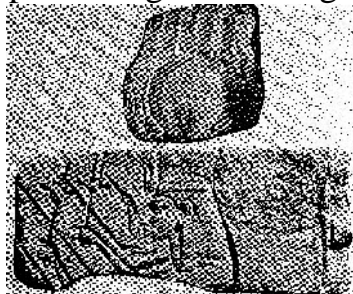


fig.27: Nefertity offering the sistrum of the goddess Hathor

IV.4- This scene represented the queen Nefertity acting the cult of Hathor with holding (sSst) in both hand (fig.27)³⁸.

³⁷ W.Al Sedik, "Nefertity, the royal queen ", ASAE, cahier 34 (2005), JE.44867; Cairo Museum, CG.44876.

³⁸ D.Redford , "Studies on Akhenaten at Thebes", JEA 22, (1975), pl.VIII.

Conclusion:

All the offering scenes and statues of this paper are the most important offerings which were known in Ancient Egypt, from its early pre-Dynastic periods³⁹, not used only for Aten but all the Egyptian gods and goddesses. It represented Akhenaten as the first priest of Aten and as the son of the god Aten. So he performs his ritual cult of offering⁴⁰.

The Amarna royal families were represented in Amarna periods in prayer pose offering to the god Aten. These scenes are examples of the revolutionary aesthetic which dominated the stages of Akhenaten's religious reforms⁴¹. Under the solar disk with its rays that end in hands bringing life to theirs nostrils. Akhenaten and his family make their offering to Aten as scene in the research as follow:

	Kind of offerings	figures	numbers
	Libation (<i>nmst</i>)	1, 4, 10, 13, 18, 19, 23.	7
	cartouches	2, 12.	
	Incense	3, 5, 10, 11, 18, 20.	
	Sistrum	9, 10, 12, 16, 21, 27.	
	Offering food	6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 17, 22.	7
	Offering stela	24	
	Offering table	25,26.	
	Offering flowers	8, 9, 20.	3

Akhenaten himself was associated with the body of a sphinx, the symbol of "i r m Axt" (figs. 1, 2), and the Nile god "i apy" (fig.25)

³⁹ M.Lurker, Götter und Symbole der Alten Ägypten, (1991), p.55, 164, 205, 288, 290.

⁴⁰ St.weing, "Amenophis IV", L I (1975), p. 217.

⁴¹ A.Dodson, D.Hilton, The complete Royal families of Ancient Egypt, Cairo (2004), p. 147,148.

where in the inscriptions of El-Amarna, the king was called the inundations who give life to Egypt⁴². The king also asked the god Aten to grant him happy life while Akhnaten was giving to Aten food and flowers, and all kind of offerings⁴³.

It is clear that the writing of Aten name inside a cartouche is a new fashioned in ancient Egyptian civilization, but this idea was extended during the Late and the Greco-Romaine periods, when the name of god *Osiriswennfr* was written inside a cartouch in Dendara, and also the name of god *Rehorakhty* which was written inside a cartouch in Edfu temple.

⁴² N.de G. Davies, op.cit, VI,London (1908),pl. XXV-9;Leibouvtich, JNES 12,p.112(fig.B-24).

⁴³N.de G. Davies, op.cit, VI, London (1908), p. 32.