



Stele from a house shrine depicting Akhenaten and Nefertiti with three of their daughters beneath the sun of Aten (Tell el-Amarna), c. 1345 BCE, limestone

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1) <http://www.egyptian-museum-berlin.com/c52.php>

This small stele, probably used as a home altar, gives a seldom opportunity to view a scene from the private lives of the king and queen. Akhenaten and Nefertiti are shown with the three oldest of their five daughters. While the daughters are being held and caressed by their parents, the placement of the god Aten in the center of the scene reminds of the official monotheistic religion in the Amarna period.

2) Kleiner, Fred S. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Cengage Wadsworth, 2013. p. 78

A sunken relief stele, perhaps from a private shrine, provides a rare look at this royal family. The style is familiar from the colossus of Akhenaten and the portrait head of Nefertiti. Undulating curves have replaced rigid lines, and the figures possess the prominent bellies that characterize figures of the Amarna period. The pharaoh, his wife, and three of their daughters bask in the life-giving rays of Aton, the sun disk. The mood is informal and anecdotal. Akhenaten lifts one of this daughters in order to kiss her. Another daughter sits on Nefertiti's lap and gestures toward her father, while the youngest daughter reaches out to touch a pendant on her mother's crown. This kind of intimate portrayal of the pharaoh and his family is unprecedented in Egyptian art. Matching the political and religious revolution under Akhenaten was an equally radical upheaval in art.

3) <http://historyreligionandtruth.com/node/157>

The idea of Akhenaten as the pioneer of a monotheistic religion that later became Judaism has been considered by various scholars. One of the first to mention this was Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, in his book *Moses and Monotheism*. Freud argued that Moses had been an Atenist priest forced to leave Egypt with his followers after Akhenaten's death. Freud

argued that Akhenaten was striving to promote monotheism, something that the biblical Moses was able to achieve.

Following his book, the concept entered popular consciousness and serious research. Akhenaten appears in history almost two centuries prior to the first archaeological and written evidence for Judaism and Israelite culture is found in the Levant.

4) [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/akhenaten\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/akhenaten_01.shtml)

Akhenaten's religion is probably not strictly speaking monotheistic, although only the Aten is actually worshipped and provided with temples. Other gods still existed and are mentioned in inscriptions although these tend to be other solar gods or personifications of abstract concepts; even the names of the Aten, which are written in cartouches like king's names, consist of a theological statement describing the Aten in terms of other gods.

The majority of traditional gods were not tolerated, however, and teams of workmen were sent around the temples of Egypt where they chiseled out the names and images of these gods wherever they occurred.

5) Stokstad, Marilyn and Michael W. Cothren. *Art History*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Pearson, 2014. pp. 71-2

Egyptian relief sculptors often employed the sunken relief technique seen here. In ordinary reliefs, the background is carved back so that the figures project out from the finished surface. In sunken relief, the original flat surface of the stone is reserved as background, and the outlines of the figures are deeply incised, permitting the development of three-dimensional forms within them.

The royal couple receives the blessings of the Aten, whose rays end in hands that penetrate the open pavilion to offer ankhs before their nostrils, giving them the “breath of life.” The king holds one child and lovingly pats her head, while she pulls herself forward to kiss him.