

CHAPTER 10

AKHENATON AND THE TEMPLE OF AMUN⁴¹⁰

The Amarna Revolution of Akhenaten is generally portrayed as having been difficult for the majority of Egyptians to accept because it was too abstract, too impractical, too idealistic, or too opposed to the culture of the Egyptians to take root.⁴¹¹ This explanation is nonsense – ideas that are abstract, impractical, idealistic and opposed to deeply ingrained cultures have been imposed brutally and successfully repeatedly throughout history, as the entire history of communism and democracy in recent times shows.⁴¹² The real roots of the failure of the Amarna Revolution are much more practical and complex: They involve the foreign ethnic nature of the Eighteenth Dynasty near its close;⁴¹³ the power of the Temple of Amun; the poor judgment of Akhenaton in handling the Habiru crisis and the politicking of Aziru during the advance of the Hittite empire; and the ill-advised general persecution of the religious practices of the common people of Egypt at a time of failing political capital.⁴¹⁴ These factors combined to allow Akhenaton to be made into a hated

⁴¹⁰This chapter was originally an academic paper; thus, the method of citation is somewhat different than elsewhere.

⁴¹¹Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhnaton*, eg p 200-203; Devi, *The Lightning and the Sun*, eg p 196-210, unabridged Samisdat edition.

⁴¹²For some relatively modern examples, see Laffont, *Black Book of Communism*; Solzhentisyn, *Gulag Archipelago*; Burke, *Reflection on the Revolution in France*; and the conduct of our own government ongoing in the name of democracy the Middle East, north Africa and central Asia; among many, many other examples.

⁴¹³Three of Akhenaton's four grandparents were Mitanni.

⁴¹⁴Generally outlined in sources such as Weigall *Life and Times of Akhenaton*; and Devi, *The Lightning and the Sun*, 129-210, Samisdat edition.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

king whose religious ideology was repudiated.

THE CONTROVERSY OF AMUN

The Amarna revolution was the first overt episode in a religious conflict that had its roots in the rise of the Eleventh Dynasty and the unification of Egypt in the Twelfth Dynasty some six centuries before Akhenaton's reign—a conflict which ended in the destruction of Egypt and its conquest by the Nubians six centuries afterward.⁴¹⁵ It has been described as an archaizing movement, as it aimed to restore a romanticized view of Old Kingdom power that no longer accorded with the political realities of Akhenaton's reign.⁴¹⁶ But it was in the most part a reaction against the power of the Temple of Amun, and thus an examination of that form of worship in Egypt is demanded.⁴¹⁷

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EGYPTIAN RELIGION

The predominant religious form during the Fourth through Sixth Dynasties had been the worship of Re and the Ennead around Osiris, and it was well known in Egypt that this form of worship had been responsible for the greatness of the Old Kingdom, manifest to every Egyptian in the monuments of the Sphinx and the pyramids.⁴¹⁸ This religion was not, though, the religion of the Middle and New Kingdoms, and the old religion appears to have become eclipsed

⁴¹⁵On the conflict between Akhenaton and Amun in general, Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, in passim. Most writers begin this history with the fall of the Hyksos; I believe this is an incorrect approach and make the case for examining the history back to the founding of the Temple of Amun below.

⁴¹⁶Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 63; a Jewish Egyptology professor has objected that the Egyptians were incapable of romanticizing their past, because Romanticism was a unique product of the white culture of Europe in the later part of the second millennium A.D. I ignore obviously stupid objections like these.

⁴¹⁷Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, in passim.

⁴¹⁸On Middle Kingdom attitudes, see the Introduction to the Tale of King Cheops' Court, *The Tale of Sinuhe*, 102-105. On worship of the Ennead in the Old Kingdom, see Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, 85-87.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

with the collapse of the Sixth Dynasty and the failure of their successors in the Seventh and Eighth Dynasties to maintain power against both a general revolt and massive climatic change.⁴¹⁹ When the Eleventh Dynasty arose at Thebes, it no longer practiced the old form of worship. When it took power, the temple that rose to power with it – that of Amun – was not that of the Re that Egypt had once known.⁴²⁰

AMUN'S EMERGENCE FROM THEBES

Prior to the Twelfth Dynasty, Amun appears to have been an epithet of another deity.⁴²¹ The later Memphite theology has him participate in the dyads of the Ogdoad as one of the negative elements of chaos which is banished to the underworld by the rising of Re, and, in this aspect, he also appears in the *Pyramid Texts*.⁴²² Thus it was a revolution of its own when the Twelfth Dynasty took this minor underworld power and made him the governing deity of Egypt

⁴¹⁹The use of the name Neferkare for five kings of the Seventh dynasty indicate an effort to continue succession from Pepi II. Grimal, Nicolas. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. p.140. The Sahara Desert vastly expanded in the 23rd century B.C., concurrent with a general drying up the world's climate, and this is believed to have undermined the legitimacy of the kings, one of whose prime duties was to maintain fertility.

⁴²⁰Amun's syncretization with Re is first known in the reign of Intef II, Sullivan, Digital Karnak, <http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Karnak/assets/media/resources/IntroductionToTheTempleOfKarnak/guide.pdf>

⁴²¹He appears in the pyramid text as 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏. The determinative 𓏏 seems to indicate this is not a deity per se, but part of an epithet of another figure. From the attributes of judgment and possession of the house of the dead, it may be intended in the *Pyramid Texts* as an epithet of Osiris. *Pyramid Text Utterances* 254, 273-274, 627. However, as discussed below, this same descriptor, “hidden” (𓏏), appears to apply to another deity.

⁴²²Whether this figure who is hidden is the same as “he whose name is hidden” cited above, n. 10, is questionable. Amun as part of the Ogdoad dyad Amun-Amaunet appears in *Pyramid Text Utterance* 301, as “you two sources of the gods, protecting the gods with your shade”. In Coffin Text 76, Amun is specifically named as one of “eight chaos gods, keepers of the chambers of the sky, whom Shu made from the efflux of his limbs.” As a “chaos god”, he may be part of the “Third Ennead” which was rarely discussed directly by the priests of the Old Kingdom, presumably because of the evil nature of the gods therein. Budge *Gods of the Egyptians*, i.86 et seq. While attributed to the Underworld, a common trait with Osiris, this opposition to Re seems to counterindicate an identity with Osiris.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

– a revolution only a coup could have effected.⁴²³

Amun's ascension also reflected a change in the mode of worship that had been common in his power base of Thebes. The chief deity of Thebes had, historically, been Montu, the bull-headed war god, whose worship is syncretized with that of Horus.⁴²⁴ Montu's worship dominated the Eleventh Dynasty, but was challenged in the reign of Intef II, who united all of Upper Egypt and laid the foundation for the reunification of Egypt under Intef III. Intef II founded the Temple of Amun, constructing the first temple at the Karnak site.⁴²⁵

Within a century of this event, the priests of Amun first usurped power by arranging the promotion of Amenemhat I, a vizier or advisor to the last Eleventh Dynasty King Montuhotep IV, who seized the kingship.⁴²⁶ Like Akhenaton, Montuhotep IV was eliminated from the king-lists and official histories, and little is known of his reign, except that he sent mining expeditions to Wadi Hammamat.⁴²⁷ This coup was controversial, though, and Amenemhat I's reign ended with his assassination.⁴²⁸

⁴²³Amenemhat I's coup is discussed below.

⁴²⁴On the basis of both being gods of storm and war. Montu may, however, be a negative aspect of Horus. "Menthu-Ra, lord of Thebes", , cited in Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians* ii, 25. As to syncretization with Horus, the depiction of Montu included with the text should be sufficient.

⁴²⁵The first temple of Amun-Re at Karnak was an eight sided mud-brick building constructed during the reign of Intef II. Sullivan, *Digital Karnak*.

⁴²⁶A citation for scholarly assumptions that Amenemhat I assassinated Montuhotep IV is Clayton, Peter A. *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt*. The sudden change in religion and the obliteration of the memory of Montuhotep IV is good evidence of a usurpation.

⁴²⁷He does not appear on the *Turin Canon* or the *Abydos Kings Lists*. We know of him primarily through graffiti found in Wadi Hammamat. It was a common Egyptian practice to eliminate from their histories facts they did not like – including entire kingships and dynasties. In this, they anticipated the modern practice of media journalism, in which uncomfortable facts are not reported or actively banned by the law.

⁴²⁸Implied in the Tale of Sinuhe, *Sinuhe* 27-28 and the Teaching of King Amenemhat, *Sinuhe* 206-208.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

DIODORUS AND APOLLODORUS

Amenemhat I appears to be the Uchoreus of Diodorus Siculus, who is said to have founded the city of Memphis – a likely reference to Amenemhat's founding of the city of Ity-Tawy.⁴²⁹ Diodorus' text is unclear, but the story of the founding of Memphis is very similar to the story Diodorus gives of the founding of Thebes, and it may be that Montuhotep I is the figure the Greeks knew as Busiris.⁴³⁰

The system of worship practiced by the Temple of Amun was distinct from that of the Re and Osiris worship of the Old Kingdom, and appears to be related to the worship of figures such as Min and Baal.⁴³¹ Though this worship was opposed to that of Seth and Apep as the gods of the Hyksos during the Second Intermediate Period, there is indication of a later syncretism.⁴³²

If the founding of Memphis can be equated with the founding of Ity-Tawy, then Amenemhat I roughly corresponds to Apollodorus' Epaphus, son

⁴²⁹Among other indications that support this thesis is that Amenemhat was the eighth in succession from Montuhotep I, the founder of the Theban dynasties, and that his descendent, through six, rather than twelve, generations was Amenemhat III, the figure Diodorus identifies as Moeris. Diodorus Siculus, *Histories*, 1.50.3-1.51.5, and related note 30 to the Loeb Classics Edition, identifying Moeris with Amenemhat II. He is the only contemporary ruler to found a major capital, and a general description of its location to a foreigner would be similar to a description of the location of Memphis. Ούχορεύς, “not the mule,” perhaps “not the mountain,” the interpretation of which is very obscure – perhaps, in the context below, a reference to the ass on which Dionysius rode?

⁴³⁰Diodorus' text reads “Of the descendents of this king” (“τῶν δὲ τούτου τοῦ βασιλέως”). Which king is unclear. Diodorus has just digressed into the story of Osymandus' (Ramesses I confused with Ramesses II) temple, from his story of the eighth descendent of Busiris, who is unnamed. As both the story of the founding of Thebes and the founding of Memphis involve the Theban dynasty, and Amenemhat I actually did found a city near Memphis, it is likely Diodorus is here introducing two related traditions from separate sources, both of which incorrectly identified the city on different grounds. Diodorus Siculus, *Histories*, 1.45.4-1.51.5.

⁴³¹On the confusion of Montu and Amun, see Petrie *Religion of Ancient Egypt* 33-34; Montu and Baal, Petrie *Religion of Ancient Egypt* 64; Amun and Min Weigall *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 10.

⁴³²On the basis that all these forms of worship were opposed to the dominant Indo-European form, which was resurrected by the Greeks and the Romans. The syncretization appears to have occurred in the form of the Hebrew divinity Yahweh. See Chapters 8 and 9 of this book, in particular, as well as my book *The Centuries of Revolution*.



THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

of Io.⁴³³ An interesting thing Apollodorus tells us about Io is that she was held captive by Argus, who was given the surname “the all-seeing one.”⁴³⁴ What Diodorus tells us about Osiris is that his name means “many eyed.”⁴³⁵ Io is equated with Isis by the Greeks, and Argus’ imprisonment of her may be a reference to her marriage to Osiris.⁴³⁶ After Hermes, who has been associated with Amun,⁴³⁷ slays Argus, Io escapes to Egypt, where her son, Epaphus, is taken into captivity into Byblos by the curetes, who, in Apollodorus, are at the command of Hera.⁴³⁸ Once Epaphus is recovered, he weds Memphis, daughter of the Nile, founds a city named after her, then fathers Libya, who with Poseidon, gives birth to Agenor, founder of Phoenicia, and Belus, the Syriac deity Baal.⁴³⁹

In the context of the myth of Belus, the myth of Danaus must be

⁴³³Apollodorus *Library* 2.3

⁴³⁴“πανόπτην”. Apollodorus *Library* 2.3, citing Pherecydes and Asclepiades, both works being lost. In *Library* 2.1, Apollodorus describes a second Argus, son of Zeus and Niobe, who is the founder of the city of Argos. The two are likely identical mythical figures with minor variations in their story that made them incompatible for “historical” purposes.

⁴³⁵“For when the names are translated into the Greek Osiris means ‘many-eyed.’” “μεθερμηνευομένων γὰρ τούτων εἰς τὸν Ἑλληνικὸν τῆς διαλέκτου τρόπον εἶναι τὸν μὲν Ὅσιριν πολυόφθαλμον” Diodorus *Histories* 1.11.2. Possibly a “concrete metaphor” from  to the Egyptian , “wealth of eyes”.

⁴³⁶For Io and Isis, Diodorus, *Histories* 25.1. For the second, note the fact that this story is told and retold in several mangled forms throughout Diodorus’ mythic books (eg, *Histories*, 1.13, 1.21-1.22, 3.57, 3.68-74, read in parallel with 1.17-1.20). Hopefully, the reading of the argument below regarding Dionysius makes the second assertion more clear.

⁴³⁷This syncretism has been described as incomprehensible by many modern scholars, though it is definitely recorded in Classic texts.

⁴³⁸Apollodorus *Library* 2.3-2.4. Here, Hera is confused with Cybele-Rhea, the Great Mother.

⁴³⁹Apollodorus *Library* 2.4. To paraphrase the remainder: Belus weds the sister of Memphis, Anchinoe, also a daughter of the Nile, and they have four children, including Aegyptus and Danaus. Danaus flees Egypt, again to Argos, but pretends reconciliation with Aegyptus, agreeing to marry his fifty daughters to Aegyptus’ fifty sons, but instructing the daughters to kill their husbands on their wedding nights. The children have a variety of names, some of them linked to Greek figures associated with Egypt, and include Busiris. Later in the myth, a fellow named Bellerophon, whose name is apparently a parallel to the earlier Argiphontes, and thus means “slayer of Baal,” marries into the Egyptian line and slays the Chimera.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

considered. The Goths, as late as the 5th century A.D., retained a memory of the battle of their king Tanausis with Vesosis, pharaoh of Egypt, in which Tanausis drove Vesosis, the world-conqueror, back to the limits of Egypt. This myth has been interpreted as part of the cycle surrounding the conquests of Ramesses II, and in this context the battle with an Indo-European tribe could be understood as Ramesses' conflict with the Hittites. However, this is dependent on an equation of Vesosis with Ramesses II. His name, and his legend, could also be that of Senwoseret III, which would place his conflicts at the time of invasion of the Near and Middle East by the Hittites and the Hurrians. The notations that Tanausis was friends with the king of the Medes – Aryan Indo-Iranians who later conquered Persia and established the dynasty that preceded that of the Persian empire – fits better into this second schema. If one accepts a larger relationship between ancient Gothic myth and the cult of the Great Mother, and the relationship, posited here, between the cult of Amun and that of the Great Mother, then an association of Tanausis and Danaus becomes likely.

This myth appears to describe the spread of the worship of Amun, after Amun suppresses Osiris, takes his consort, and raises her to oneness with the Great Mother goddess. Given what is known of the Middle Kingdom – in which the worship of Osiris was actively suppressed, and the worship of Amun associated with a female divinity known only as Mut, “the mother,” this tale fits well with the historical record.

These stories should be compared to Diodorus' account of Ammon.⁴⁴⁰ Having just given an account of Uranus, Ge and the Titans which is clearly derived from the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, Diodorus informs us that Ammon was a king of Libya who married Uranus' daughter Rhea, traditional mistress of the curetes.⁴⁴¹ But Amun is seduced away from her by Amaltheia,⁴⁴² with whom he had a son, Dionysius, who is raised at Nysa and protected by

⁴⁴⁰Diodorus *Histories* 3.68-74.

⁴⁴¹This definitively links Amun with the religion of the Great Mother.

⁴⁴²If read as Amathos-theia, “goddess of the sea sand,” this name is identical in meaning to the Nordic “Audhumla,” the Indo-European Great Mother. See Chapter 9.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

Athena. Athena defends the boy by slaying the Aegis, a monster – identical to Typhon – that was serpentine in nature and born of the Earth.⁴⁴³ Ammon later leaves both of them and weds Crete, the eponymous goddess of that island, and names Crete after her.⁴⁴⁴ This Athena is the Egyptian Neith or Mut, consort of Ammon, and of the serpent, as we shall discuss below.⁴⁴⁵

Earlier in his *Histories*, Diodorus Siculus has discoursed at length on the gods of Egypt, and makes several references, some explicit, to Amun, and whose story he likely adopted from one he received in Egypt from the priests of Temple of Amun.⁴⁴⁶ This Osiris is also Dionysius, Diodorus tells us, and many of his stories of Osiris are Greek myths of Dionysius attributed to the Egyptian god.⁴⁴⁷ What is most important for our purposes here, though, is Diodorus'

⁴⁴³Diodorus, *Histories*, 3.68-70. That a female would slay the earth-serpent is peculiar. One wonders if this Aegis is associated with the Aegeis after whom the Aegean Sea is named.

⁴⁴⁴Diodorus, *Histories*, 71.2.

⁴⁴⁵Athena as Neith see Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, i.461, citing Horapollon, *Hieroglyphics*. For Neith as Mut see Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, 451, particularly the statement, "Net or Neith was regarded as ... a personification of a form of the great, inert, primeval watery mass out of which sprung the sun-god Ra".

⁴⁴⁶"Now the spirit they called, as we translate their expression, Zeus, and since he was the source of the spirit of life in animals they considered him to be in a sense the father of all things." Diodorus *Histories* 1.12.2, which follows a discourse on the nature of "the spirit, the fire, the dry, as well as the wet, and, lastly, the air-like", which appears derived from the doctrine of the Ogdoad. Diodorus *Histories* 1.11.5 "Egypt is the only country in the whole inhabited world where they are many cities which were founded by the first gods, such as Zeus, Helios, Hermes, Apollo, Pan, Eileithyia and many more", a reference to the deities Amon, Re, Thoth, Horus, Min and Neith. Diodorus *Histories* 1.12.6 "Their names ... are ... Helios, Cronus, Thea and also the Zeus which is called Ammon by some", as a reference to Re, Geb, Nut and Amun, "Then Cronus ... upon marrying his sister Rhea begat Osiris and Isis, according to some writers of the mythology, but according to the majority, Zeus and Hera. ... From these last were sprung gods ... the names of these children were Osiris and Isis, and also Typhon, Apollo and Aphrodite", that last being a reference to Osiris and Isis, Seth, Horus the Elder and Nephthys. Diodorus *Histories* 1.13 In addition to proving Diodorus has gotten his account somewhat confused, those with broader access to Egyptian religious materials can discern that Diodorus here cannot decide whether he equates Ammon with Osiris, or Osiris with the son of Ammon. What is important for this discussion is that the deeds of Osiris as Dionysius are brought into the general sphere of the gods of Thebes. Diodorus is known to have learned the religious doctrines of Egypt from the priests of the Temple of Amon, as it existed in the very late Greco-Roman period.

⁴⁴⁷Diodorus *Histories* 1.11.3.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

account of Dionysius as meaning “the god of Nysa” and Osiris as being “raised in Nysa.”⁴⁴⁸ In these disparate accounts,⁴⁴⁹ Diodorus equates Ammon with the father of Dionysius, Zeus, and gives an account of Osiris that indicates he also, at times, equated Osiris with the son of Zeus, Dionysius.⁴⁵⁰ Confusions of this kind are not uncommon in efforts to rationalize mythological material into history.⁴⁵¹

What is interesting there is that Apollodorus, likely drawing from the Sixth Century B.C. mythography of Philacrus,⁴⁵² tells us in an earlier book that when Zeus defeated Typhon he hurled Typhon into Egypt to the mountain of Nysa.⁴⁵³ Typhon was the god with legs made of serpents that wound around his body, and who is bound under the earth after his destruction by Zeus.⁴⁵⁴ This description of Typhon is in conformity with Egyptian notions of the serpent Apep.⁴⁵⁵ Further, from Diodorus, we know that Typhon was, in the late period in which Diodorus was writing, equated with Seth, who had secured his place as a demonic opponent of Osiris / Serapis – Isis – Horus.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁸Diodorus *Histories* 1.11.6, 3.64.5-6.

⁴⁴⁹i.e., they occur in different parts of the text.

⁴⁵⁰See n.33, above, and also Diodorus, *Histories* 3.68-70.

⁴⁵¹See, for instance, the portrayals in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* of Lodur, Skiold and Gram. Though that is a Nordic source, Saxo's methodology is incredibly similar to Diodorus', likely as both were influenced by the school of Euhemer.

⁴⁵²Now lost, but a standard text of the Classical Period.

⁴⁵³Apollodorus, *Library*, 1.6.3.

⁴⁵⁴Apollodorus, *Library*, 1.5.3 “From his shoulders extended a hundred snake heads. From his thighs down he had huge coils of vipers which, when stretched out, reached all the way to his head and hissed loudly.”

⁴⁵⁵Budge, quoting the *Book of That Which Is in the Underworld* states that one finds “the serpent Apep, chained to the earth by five chains which are called the ‘gods who produce winds’”, among many similar descriptions of the bound serpent in Egyptian literature. Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*. 202. Budge, it should be noted, believes that Osiris' place in the underworld was part of an elevation of him as a deity by the Temple of Amun, who largely revised the Old Kingdom beliefs. Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, 175.

⁴⁵⁶Particularly Diodorus *Histories* 1.13. Another confusion of Osiris and Seth occurs in Diodorus *Histories* 1.18.1, where Anubis is identified as a son of Osiris. Seth's role in Egyptian religion

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

What results from all of these stories is a convergence of ideas on several themes which gives us an idea of the nature of the worship of Amun. First, there are the geographical references to Libya, Phoenicia, and Crete, all locations associated with the worship of the religion of the Great Mother and the religion of Baal.⁴⁵⁷ Second, there is the tradition of Egypt having sent colonies to Greece to establish cities there.⁴⁵⁸ Third, there is the association with the mountain of Nysa, the god Dionysius, the Egyptian deity Neith-Mut, the gods Seth-Typhon and Apep, and, had we taken this a few steps further, with Min and Pan and the satyrs.⁴⁵⁹ From this, we can conclude that Amun was associated with the religion of the Great Mother.⁴⁶⁰ We also know, from

vacillates – at times he is the enemy of Re and Horus, at times he is their companion. This likely reflected changing political and cultural alliances. As a villain, see *The Book of Victory Over Seth*. As a friend of the gods, see 117 Faulkner, *BD*, spell 108. As a final note on Diodorus' tale, a being similar to Typhon, Cecrops, goes on from Egypt to found the City of Athens. Diodorus, *Histories* 1.28.6 and n. 68 to the Loeb Edition. Erechtheus flows him. Diodorus, *Histories*, 1.29.

⁴⁵⁷Rawlinson, *History of Phoenicia*, 194, though Rawlinson believes the gods identified by the epithets "El," "Ram," "Baal," "Molech," "Elium," "Adonai," "Bel-samin" and others were identical. The presence of names like Abd-Osiris should have hinted at the error in this approach. Carthage, as a colony of Phoenicia, also worshipped Baal. Rawlinson, *A Manual of Ancient History From the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Sassanian Empire*, 76, with Rawlinson, *History of Phoenicia* 194 "Wherever the Phoenicians went, they bore with them their religion and their worship." Though Belus and company were associated with Libya, the actual form of worship in Libya prior to Carthaginians is not clear, and most records of such worship are from the late Greco-Roman period in Egypt, or just prior. Thus, it cannot be said with certainty whether Greek associations of Libya and Belus are the result of the Cathaginian presence there, or of some tradition pre-dating Carthage, though Homer, who would have been writing within a century and a half of Cathage's founding, seems aware of the Belus myth. If Baal was not the deity of Minoan Crete, and the account of Teucer of Crete's cooperation with Belus in the *Aeneid* and similarities in the story of Zeus' birth on Crete and that of Amun and Dionysius in Diodorus suggest he may have been, there is at least a late association of him with Minos. See, eg, the discussion in Rydberg, *Teutonic Mythology*, i. 37-38, et al, paraphrasing the introduction to the *Prose Edda*.

⁴⁵⁸See n. 26 and 42, above.

⁴⁵⁹The association with Min, Pan, and the satyrs is not explored here, because we have diverged enough and engaged in enough complication. However, the Greeks associated Min with Pan (Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, p 10) and stories of the satyrs are mentioned in Diodorus *Histories* 1.18.4, 1.88.3.

⁴⁶⁰Which one needs not be determined here. The point is that the Amun-ite form of worship may be reasonably believed to be originally alien to Egypt, and, particularly, to the religious

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

accounts such as the sacrifice of the kings of Syria to Ammon that were recorded of King Amenhotep II, and which are directly paralleled in the sacrifice at Athens of the captured leaders of the Persians to Dionysius, that these forms of worship involved human sacrifice, hostility to foreigners, and perhaps general cruelty or torture of prisoners and the helpless.⁴⁶¹ They may have involved cannibalism.⁴⁶²

AKHENATON'S REFORMATION

Such was the religion that Akhenaton revolted against. This religion was essentially foreign to the Old Kingdom form of worship, though it had been institutionalized in Akhenaton's time by the practice of many centuries. The cruelty of this religion may have motivated Akhenaton's extreme adherence to the doctrines of love of all living things.⁴⁶³

Weigall, one of the discoverers of Akhenaton's mummy, believed that Akhenaton, as part of an archaizing movement, introduced the worship of

system of the Fourth through Sixth Dynasties of the Old Kingdom.

⁴⁶¹Amenophis II "led his armies into his restless Asiatic dominions, and having captured seven rebellious Syrian kings, he hung them head downward from the prow of his galley as he approached Thebes, and later sacrificed six of them to Amun with his own hand." Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 8. "There three prisoners of war were brought to him, of visage most beautiful to behold, conspicuously adorned with raiment and with gold. They were said to be the sons of Sandauce, the king's sister, and Artayctus. When Euphrantides the seer caught sight of them, since at one and that same moment a great and glaring flame shot up from the sacrificial victim and a sneeze gave forth its good omen on the right, he clasped Themistocles by the hand and bade him consecrate the youths, and sacrifice them all to Dionysus Carnivorous, with prayers of supplication; for on this wise would the Hellenes have a saving victory." Plutarch; *Life of Themistocles* 13.

⁴⁶²The Egyptians were famed for cannibalism. Though rejected by modern "scholars", no effort has been to explain this error by modern scholars. Diodorus notes that Osiris put a stop to this practice. *Histories* 1.14.1. As Dionysius-Amun, this would likely be incorrect. Dionysius was noted for the *ομοφαγία*, the ritual consumption of raw flesh and blood.

⁴⁶³Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 200-203, and says he anticipated Christ, 250-252. Devi makes a similar observation on his doctrine and says he anticipated Adolf Hitler, *The Lightning and the Sun* 196-210, meaning the same as Weigall.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

the Syriac deity Adon under the name of Aten.⁴⁶⁴ As an Egyptian of largely foreign blood, it is argued Akhenaton likely became aware of Adon through his Mitanni mother, grandmother and wife.⁴⁶⁵ Adon was the Syriac deity whose name meant “master of the person,”⁴⁶⁶ and whose name appears to be an epithet of the Semitic Tammuz. Tammuz is a Mesopotamian-Semitic borrowing of the Sumerian deity Dummuuzi, whom the Egyptians knew as Osiris.⁴⁶⁷ As such, Aten had a good claim to being the “original” faith of the Old Kingdom. Just as Akhenaton’s revolution in art appears to have been a revival of Second Dynasty statuary forms, the Amarna Revolution was likely an effort to return Egypt to the form of worship that existed prior to the ascension of the Temple of Amun.⁴⁶⁸

Akhenaton has been portrayed as a racial alien imposing the worship of a foreign god, but if Aten-Adon provided a closer and truer link to Osiris than the equation of Osiris and Amun, this is likely incorrect.⁴⁶⁹ The linkage of Aten and Osiris appears to have won at least the early approval of the Heliopolitan temples, who seemed anxious to usurp the power of their rivals in the Temple of Amun. Thus the elevation of Aten alone could not have been the basis of the failure of the Amarna Revolution.⁴⁷⁰ While the worship of Amun was several centuries old in Egypt at the time of Akhenaton’s ascension, there is no evidence that it had any particular popular base. The failure of the Aten

⁴⁶⁴Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 32.

⁴⁶⁵Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 50-51, 68-69, et al.

⁴⁶⁶As opposed to Baal, “master of the place.”

⁴⁶⁷*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol 18, “Phoenicians” – “Adonis” p 891 of the 1932 edition.

⁴⁶⁸Weigall notes the archaizing art forms in *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 63-65. His statute number 2, p 64, appears to be that of Khasekhemwy *Ancient Egypt* 214.

⁴⁶⁹“The Religion of Aton – the Sun-disk ... is the one glaring instance of Aryan creativeness within an ancient Egyptian setting.” Devi, *The Lightning and the Sun*, 133. She is simply the bluntest of many writers in the same vein. Eg. Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 19 “It was the Asiatic tendency to speculate in religious questions ... the foreign thought which had now been introduced into Egypt [that] contributed to dissatisfaction with the state religion ...”

⁴⁷⁰Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 17-20, 67-68, et al.


THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

revolution appears linked to the defeat of Akhenaton in Syria and Akhenaton's expansion of religious persecution beyond the suppression of the Temple of Amun.

HOW AKHENATON LOST PALESTINE



Akhenaton

Akhenaton's loss of the kingdoms of the , Aam (Syria and Palestine) to the petty king Aziru and his Apiru allies has been attributed to his excessive pacifism and his hatred of war. These virtues have been used to illustrate the purity of Akhenaton's moral principles.⁴⁷¹ Nothing in the record of the stelae found at Amarna really supports this idea, though; rather, simple deception by a talented political operative and the nature of Egyptian rule in Aam appears the more likely reason Akhenaton

did not intervene against Aziru.⁴⁷²

Akhenaton came to power as the Hittite empire was expanding and the Hittites were settling scores with their traditional enemies in northern Syria, the Mitanni.⁴⁷³ The Mitanni, a kingdom of Hurrian origin, had been at war with the Hittites for approximately two and half centuries. The Hittite King Suppiluliumas, having just spent 20 years reconquering traditional Hittite lands in Asia Minor from other Hurrian princes, determined to destroy the kingdom of Mittani in revenge for Hurrian rule.⁴⁷⁴ His alliance with Aziru, known in Hittite texts as Azzi or Hayasa, was part of a tactical maneuver to flank the Hittites by crossing the Euphrates at Malatya.⁴⁷⁵ The maneuver succeeded, and

⁴⁷¹Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 200-203; Devi *The Lightning and the Sun* 184-191.

⁴⁷²Weigal, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 199-217.

⁴⁷³Gurney, *The Hittites*, Folio Society edition 26-27.

⁴⁷⁴Gurney, *The Hittites*, 24-27.

⁴⁷⁵Gurney, *The Hittites*, 27-28.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

the Mitanni were reduced to the city of Carchemish, while the chieftains of the Aam were brought into sole vassalage to the Hittites.⁴⁷⁶ Carchemish was later reduced in a second campaign.⁴⁷⁷ Even later, the Hittites would, at the request of an Egyptian queen of the Aten faction, possibly Nefertiti or her daughter Ankhsenamun, dispatch a prince of their empire to take the Egyptian throne. He arrived too late, though, and was assassinated by the Amun faction.⁴⁷⁸

Egyptian rule among the Aam was through a form of vassalage where local Aamitic kings governed day to day affairs and showed their allegiance to Egypt through the payment of tribute. As long as the tribute continued, the rulers of Egypt seemed largely indifferent to who paid it.

During Akhenaton's reign, the aforementioned Aziru began to unite the local kings of the Aam by conquering them, but, while doing so, paid tribute to both Egypt and the Hittite empire, telling each that he was consolidating his rule in the area for protection against the other.⁴⁷⁹ As part of his conquest, he incited a tribe called the Apiru to conquer and raid cities in southern Palestine.⁴⁸⁰ These appear to have been the early Hebrews, though there has been a tendency among at least some Jewish scholars to disassociate themselves with this people, referring to them as a "social class of mafia-like brigands."⁴⁸¹ The name is an Egyptian word meaning "the equipped," as in the possessors of an ability or teaching, and appears to refer to the initiation-rites involved in

⁴⁷⁶Gurney, *The Hittites*, 27.

⁴⁷⁷Gurney, *The Hittites*, 28-29.

⁴⁷⁸Gurney, *The Hittites*, 29-31.

⁴⁷⁹Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 204.

⁴⁸⁰As the "Khabiri", Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 208-209; Weigall believes they are the "Beduin from behind Palestine".

⁴⁸¹Silverman, *Ancient Egypt*, 53. However, the name אֲפִירִים seems to relate to the Hebrew figures of Abraham and Eber. Apiru appears to be a plural for "Apir", which is essentially the same word as Eber, and, presuming that "-him" or some variant creates the Hebrew plural, Abraham is Eber-him, the exact same word as Apir-u in Egyptian. The path of entry into the Canaanite lands matches that of Abraham and the timing is precisely correct if one discounts the fanciful and impossible statement of Exodus 12:40 that the Hebrews remained in Egypt 430 years before Ramesses (while only passing perhaps four generations from the children of Israel).

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

being part of the Apiru.⁴⁸²

Though several appeals were sent to Akhenaton for assistance, particularly from the kings of Byblos and Jerusalem, they were ignored.⁴⁸³ Aziru was summoned to Egypt to explain himself and acquitted himself well.⁴⁸⁴ The tributes he sent were recorded as massive and worthy of celebration, and continued over a six to ten year period.⁴⁸⁵ Busy with internal affairs, Akhenaton appears more than satisfied with the conduct of Aziru, and seems to have not cared too much about who ruled the Aam, as long as tribute continued to be paid.⁴⁸⁶ This, and not excessive pacifism, is likely why Akhenaton did not order military intervention.⁴⁸⁷ Ultimately, this was a mistake, as Aziru turned against Egypt and allied himself firmly with the Hittites, maintaining himself as a vassal of the Hittite empire until the conquest and destruction of his petty kingdom by Horemheb.⁴⁸⁸ This betrayal occurred in the last one to two years of Akhenaton's reign, and became a crisis that emerged at the same time that Akhenaton turned his efforts against the Temple of Amun against the

⁴⁸²Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 557. I have guessed at the spelling above; I believe the tablets from which we know the name of the Apiru in Egyptian are written in Akkadian cuneiform. If these are the Hebrews, then this is almost certainly a reference to circumcision, as in the modern society of B'nai B'rith. I do not see any reason to go outside the bounds of the standard Middle Kingdom *ꜥꜣꜣꜣ* in deriving the word's origins. The Apiru are discussed extensively in Chapter 4 of this book.

⁴⁸³Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 203-216.

⁴⁸⁴Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 211-214.

⁴⁸⁵"In the twelfth year of his reign, the tributes of the vassal kingdoms reached such a high value that a particular record was made of it." Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 148-152. "The tribute appears to have reached the City of the Horizon in the correct manner until the last years of the reign," Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 212.

⁴⁸⁶Further, the intent of the Hittite aggression in the region was clearly to break the power of the Mitanni, which, had, within the past half a century, penetrated almost to the Hittite capital. The collapse of Egyptian power was incidental, though the Mitanni were a key ally. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 24-29.

⁴⁸⁷Busy with domestic concerns, and not perceiving a direct challenge to Egypt, Akhenaton may not have perceived a threat, or may have chosen not to perceive the threat, until it was too late.

⁴⁸⁸Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 217; Gurney, *The Hittites* 32-33.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

Egyptian forms of worship in general.⁴⁸⁹ The combination of the two brought Akhenaton down.⁴⁹⁰

AKHENATON'S PERSECUTION OF OTHER GODS

The ascension of Akhenaton's religious ideology began, not with a general suppression of other deities, but with "great leniency toward the worshippers of the old gods" that rejected only Amun and his temple.⁴⁹¹ Amun was suppressed, his name was struck from inscriptions, and the lands of his temple were confiscated in favor of the state.⁴⁹² These measures were successful, and broke the power of Amun sufficiently that Akhenaton appeared emboldened to strike against other gods.⁴⁹³

Where Akhenaton erred was in expanding this persecution from merely one questionably popular section of the population to the Egyptian forms of

⁴⁸⁹Persecution was extended generally in perhaps the 16th year of the reign, contemporary with the event in Syria. Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 219-220. He died in the 17th year. In addition to creating religious instability, he also appears to have elevated men "of low origin" to senior positions in the government during this period, further disenfranchising the traditional elite, Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 189.

⁴⁹⁰Definitely implied in Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 197-227.

⁴⁹¹The adoption of Aton worship occurred near the fourth year of Akhenaton's reign, perhaps as he emerged from the regency of his mother. Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 67-68. The persecution of Amun and the suppression of its inscriptions occurred near the 13th year of his reign, and coincided with his mother's death. Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 168.

⁴⁹²Similar to the confiscation of Catholic lands by Henry VIII, and other measures which occurred during the European Reformation. Described in Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 168-172. The persecution went so far that tombs were opened and even his own father's name was struck.

⁴⁹³Presumably, if they were not successful, he would have stopped. However, his later order to efface the names of all other deities never appears to have been fully implemented, though Karnak and other centers of the Amun worship were defaced. Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 219. The Jews, in their conceit, have attributed this period to that of Joseph of Goshen, and have even claimed that Joseph taught monotheism to Akhenaton. First, the Jews were not monotheistic until perhaps the Fourth Century B.C. Further, though, Joseph was powerless over the Temple of Amun – and thus his story is consistent with the restoration of that temple which followed the Amarna period of Egyptian history.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

worship in general.⁴⁹⁴ What probably differentiated this persecution from that of the Temple of Amun is that it reached into the homes of some who had previously supported Akhenaton at the court, including, very possibly, his religious allies at Heliopolis.⁴⁹⁵ Among other gods Akhenaton suppressed was the goddess Ma'at, whose epithet he forbid to be written except monoliterally.⁴⁹⁶ Thus, when the Aam revolted against him, instead of this being just another revolt to be suppressed, as had occurred under almost every other king of the Eighteenth Dynasty, it became evidence that the king had abandoned Ma'at, and Ma'at had abandoned the king.⁴⁹⁷

THE DEATH AND AFTERMATH OF AKHENATON

Akhenaton appears to have died of a seizure, and, given his young age, this almost certainly means he was poisoned.⁴⁹⁸ Three rulers who followed him – Smenkare, Nefertiti Nefernefruatén, and, after Tutankhamun, Ay – all attempted to maintain his form of worship, but none was able to hold to power long.⁴⁹⁹ The fact that they were able to claim the succession indicates that they were not without their supporters at court, but the fact that none could hold

⁴⁹⁴Clearly he erred, as he was unable to carry this out, and it was at least part of the basis on which the reaction against him organized themselves. Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 219-222.

⁴⁹⁵Weigall theorizes he had them, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 38-41. I am not convinced Akhenaton ever really went as far as to interfere with private worship, or any form of worship that did not involve the temples and the elite class, and am not sure of the evidence for it. All sources say no intervention in the day-to-day form of worship of the people, as opposed to that of the temples, ever occurred, and there is little evidence the people played any relevant role in Egyptian politics.

⁴⁹⁶Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton*, 162-163.

⁴⁹⁷The association of political and social chaos with the loss of Ma'at is evident in Egyptian works such as the Tale of Sinuhe or the Dialogue of Ipuur, *Sinuhe* 27-29, 170-190.

⁴⁹⁸Though this is disputed. It is suggested that Akhenaton's ill-health and genetic defects from in-breeding may have rendered him prone to fatal seizures.

⁴⁹⁹Smenkare and Nefertiti reigned during the period 1336-1332; Ay reigned for three years, 1322-1319.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

power indicates strong internal opposition as well.⁵⁰⁰ The fact that none of them attempted to bridge the gap with the Temple of Amun likely indicates that they were too invested in Akhenaton's religious reform to abandon them.⁵⁰¹ Overall, though, the Temple of Amun was simply too powerful, and was able to remove each in turn until a king willing to work their will, Tutankhamen, was found.

After proving his usefulness and suppressing the Aten faith, Tutankhamen may also have been murdered, and it is suggested that he was led into the repudiation of the faith of his father or father-in-law by Horemheb, who succeeded him after a brief struggle with Ay.⁵⁰² The facts of this matter are unclear. But, what is known is that Horemheb enjoyed a relatively lengthy rule during which he rebuilt the Egyptian military and recovered its dominion in Western Asia – correcting one of the key faults of the Akhenaton reign.⁵⁰³ Part of this seems to be based on a policy of containment of the Hittites in alignment with the state of Arzawa, a traditional enemy and former vassal of the Hittites in Lydia in Asia Minor.⁵⁰⁴ Horemheb also finished the job of obliterating all trace of the Akhenaton reign and that of his Aten worshipping successors, while having the entire group cursed in all future Egyptian histories.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰A female succession, in particular, was extremely rare in Egypt; one other female pharaoh, Hatshepsut, was known prior to Nefertiti. Nefertiti's letters to Suppiluliumas underline her problems: "My husband has died and I have no son ... I am very much afraid." Gurney, *The Hittites* 29

⁵⁰¹Many of the Aton's followers at Court seem to have received their position outside of the usual order of things, which likely made that position even more precarious. For instance, there are the words of May: "I was a man of low origin on my father's and on my mother's side, but the King established me." Weigall *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 189

⁵⁰²*The Complete Tutankhamun* 33. If Ay murdered Tutankhamun, then it was likely a counter-coup.

⁵⁰³Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhenaton* 238-241; Gurney, *The Hittites* 32-33.

⁵⁰⁴Asia, discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁵Gurney, *The Hittites* 31, though Arzawa was completely destroyed by the Hittites for its alliance.

THE TRADITION OF THE MOTHER

CONCLUSIONS

The Amarna Revolution had deep roots in a fundamental conflict within Egyptian culture between proto-Indo-European and non-Indo-European elements. Akhenaten was not rejected because of the ethereal quality of his teachings, which appear to have been popular, but because of his failures in war and politics. The error Akhenaten made in backing the wrong man in Syria and Palestine combined with his heavy-handed and intrusive domestic repression weakened his government to the point that, after his death, his proponents were unable to sustain his faction, and were destroyed by the Temple of Amun and its candidate for control of the Egyptian throne.