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## Political Landscapes of Capital Cities

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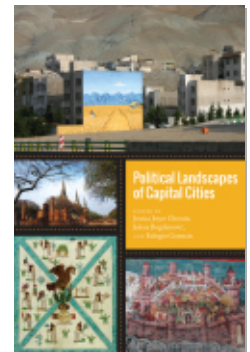
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A few years after Pharaoh Amenophis IV (ruled ca. 1353–1337 in the Eighteenth Dynasty during New Kingdom Egypt) had assumed the highest office in Thebes, he decided to radically reorganize and redirect the Egyptian political and religious system: he left the New Kingdom capital of Thebes and demoted the traditional Theban triad of gods—Amun, Mut, and Khonsu—and their powerful attending priestly classes. Out of this *tabula rasa*<sup>1</sup> he created Amarna as the new capital of his reign, dedicated to the sun disk—the Aten—which he raised to the lone supreme god of Egypt, and to himself as this god’s only messenger and earthly incarnation. The new era was initiated by an important act of name changing: Amenophis IV meaning “Amun is content” officially changed his name to *Akhenaten*, or “Beneficial to Aten”; the new capital, the remains of which are known today as Amarna (or el-Amarna or Tell el-Amarna) became *Akhetaten*, or “Horizon of the Aten.”

Using the model of “political landscapes of relations” developed by Adam T. Smith,<sup>2</sup> I analyze here the urban design of el-Amarna in the specific landscape setting selected by Akhenaten to discuss the ideological claims that surely underlay his decisions. Following Smith, the methodology reconstructs categories such as experience, perception, and imagination,<sup>3</sup> as well as memorialization, emulation, and authorization, to explore the dynamic relations of dominance and submission that would have been shaped between Akhenaten and

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*Akhenaten's Amarna in  
New Kingdom Egypt*

*Relations of Landscape  
and Ideology*

JESSICA JOYCE CHRISTIE

Aten, Akhenaten and his court, Akhenaten and the citizens of el-Amarna, and Akhenaten and official visitors.<sup>4</sup> The methodology focuses on internal relations as they were masterminded by the ruler and choreographed in the natural site setting of his capital, since el-Amarna had few outside referents but was the brainchild of Akhenaten and reflected his vision of an ordered cosmos.<sup>5</sup> Of course el-Amarna/Akhetaten has an extensive body of literature:<sup>6</sup> most of the articles by members of the Amarna project are narrow case studies of particular excavations while the exhibition catalogues aim to discuss Akhenaten and his capital broadly. The new contribution to el-Amarna studies that the application of Smith's model makes is to bring the multivalent information sources together to reconstruct relations among space, time, and human agents, or simply put: to reconstruct life as it was likely lived rather than a slice of life frozen in time.<sup>7</sup>

I begin with some general comments about sacred geography in Egypt and then revive the multiple discourses Akhenaten engineered between the built and ideological landscapes of his capital, Amarna.<sup>8</sup> The visual arts, and in particular rock art embedded in a sacred geography, became an extraordinary tool to dramatize Akhenaten's authority.

## SACRED GEOGRAPHY IN EGYPT

In ancient times as well as today, the Nile River has been the central axis and pulsating artery of life for the Egyptian people. It is the primary source of water on which all life forms depend. The Nile originates in the higher regions of Upper Egypt and empties into the Mediterranean in a vast delta, which formed the core of ancient Lower Egypt. Water levels rose and fell in a yearly cycle and at times of inundation, Nile waters deposited thick fertile silt soils in the valley and delta. This cyclical regime was permanently altered with the construction of the High Dam at Aswan in the 1960s. Ancient Egyptians learnt early how to channel water away from the river and irrigate and cultivate large portions of the valley. The Nile River Valley has been a green oasis teeming with life in a dry and stark desert setting since ancient times. The valley is bordered by cliffs on the east and west sides, which rise to varying heights and extend into desert landscapes. The Egyptians called the valley plain with its fertile soils *Kmt*, the Black Land.<sup>9</sup> It was the landscape of the living where people settled and built their villages and towns. The desert was *Dsrt*, or Red Land, and signaled chaos and death. In the western desert, the sun sank each night below the horizon and metaphorically "died"; as a logical deduction, it was thought of as the realm of the dead. In the morning, the

sun rose again from the eastern desert and was thus reborn. In similar fashion, human beings, including their rulers, lived out their lives in the Black Land of the Nile Valley and at death they entered the Red Land to the west. Therefore the valley plain and the desert, the Black Land and the Red Land, east and west, represented dichotomies that were dynamically interconnected. Both poles of the opposites functioned as vital elements in the Egyptian world and were accessed by human beings and gods. It was the sublime task of the Egyptian state personified by the pharaoh to maintain cosmological order (*ma'at*) and to keep all elements in their assigned places. The rationale of state ideology was to set rules and establish rituals that would defend the value of order and balance against the forces of disorder and chaos that continually threatened the Egyptian world in the guise of invaders from the outside, natural disasters, and internal rebellions.

The burden to keep *ma'at* was passed on from pharaoh to pharaoh. What is of interest here is how Akhenaten performed this task by commissioning a cultural landscape, which he could model to a still-unoccupied natural landscape setting. Which institutions and strategies used by his predecessors did he emulate and which did he completely revise? The case of Akhenaten and Akhetaten is unique in that we still find the direct materialization of what a sovereign thought his capital city ought to be more than 3,000 years ago. Although we will see that the reconstruction of his political landscape leaves many questions unanswered, the case study of el-Amarna serves as a compelling opening chapter in temporal as well as situational terms.

## EL-AMARNA

The political and religious reorganization initiated by Akhenaten had a spatial and geographical correlate: he wished to found his own city, a new capital for Aten, which he named *Akhetaten* or “Horizon of the Aten,” the remains of which are known today as el-Amarna. Notwithstanding its remoteness and the limited conservation on site, a massive amount of data has been collected at this great city from surveys, archaeological excavations, and analyses of artifacts conducted by the British Amarna Project under the direction of Barry Kemp.<sup>10</sup> Since the 1980s, a large number of articles, book chapters, and books have been published by project members and continue to be forthcoming.

El-Amarna is situated in a broad valley basin on the east bank of the Nile, approximately 9 miles south of the present town of Mellawi (figure 1.1). The course of the Nile River makes a slight bend and, as if they responded in a ripple effect, the cliffs arch back, forming a semicircle that was intended to

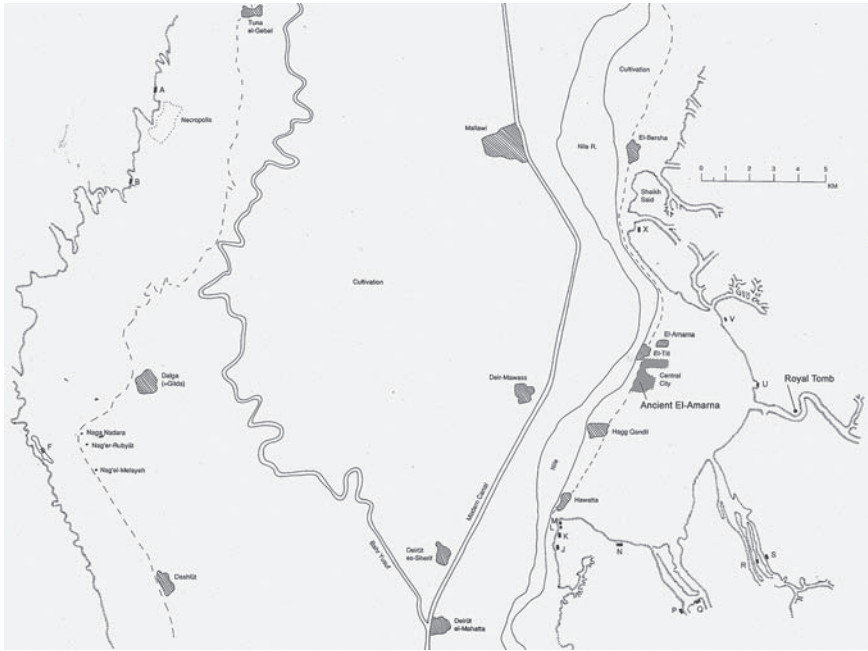


FIGURE I.1. Map of the contemporary setting of the site of el-Amarna. (Adapted from Murnane and van Sickle 1993)

enclose the city and is referred to today as the Bay of Amarna. Somewhat to the north of the semicircle center, yet still close to its central axis, the cliffs are broken up by a wadi, or desert valley, today called the Wadi Abu Hasah el-Bahri, which leads out into the desert. In 1891, one high-status tomb was discovered some 7.5 miles up this wadi. The tomb had been vandalized but has been attributed to Akhenaten. Although his body was not located, the iconography of the reliefs remaining on the tomb walls and its isolated and calculated location add strong support to the tomb's identification as Akhenaten's.

These landscape features are closely related to the hieroglyph *Akhet*, signifying the eastern horizon, and to a text passage repeated on the two earliest boundary stelae (see below) in which Akhenaten reports on his "discovery" of the building site. *Akhet* is the principal glyph in the toponym *Akhetaten* and it strongly resembles a graphic sectional view of two cliffs connected by a depression, upon which rests the Aten sun disk. Cyril Aldred first observed that when viewed from the area of the Great and Small Aten Temples, sunrise over the wadi takes on this very form in the physical landscape (figure I.2).<sup>11</sup>

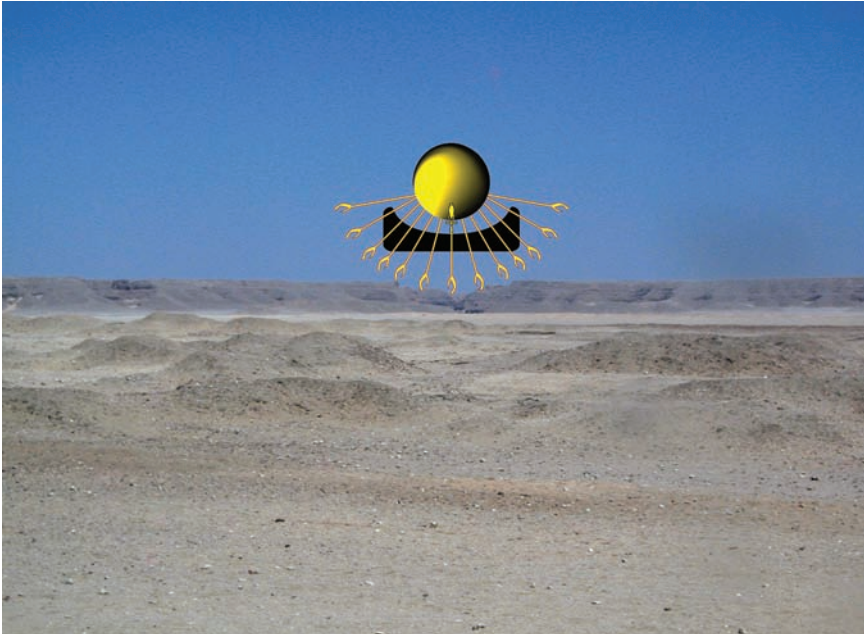


FIGURE 1.2. *View from the Aten Temples to the eastern cliffs with the wadi resembling the Akhet glyph at sunrise. (Adapted photograph by Brian Garrett)*

Thus the rebirth of Aten, the Sun, is performed daily and in perpetuity along the east-west axis of el-Amarna. It now becomes evident why Akhenaten would have chosen the wadi as his ideal tomb location. In death, he permanently united with and became Aten and therefore daily sunrise repeats his rebirth and stages his immortality.

A text passage from the two earliest boundary stela sketches out an event possibly related to the founding of the capital:

Regnal Year 5, fourth month of the growing season, day 13.

On this day, one was in Akhetaten, when his majesty appeared on the great chariot of electrum, just like the Aten when he rises on the horizon and fills the land with his love, he having made a good journey to Akhetaten, his place of the primeval event . . . which he made for himself, his horizon in which his circuit comes into being, where he is beheld with joy while the land rejoices and all hearts exult when they see him.<sup>12</sup>

This text passage clearly links the city of Akhetaten to the rise of the Aten and the “primeval event” of his cycle, which implies the location of the initial

rise of the Sun and the initiation of his rebirth. Silverman et al. further discuss the “great offering” of food items, animals, and agricultural products “in front of the mountain of Akhetaten.”<sup>13</sup> They interpret the texts that Akhenaten performed a ritual chariot ride from the central city to the wadi and upon his return made the lavish offering to Aten in the fifth year of his reign. He may have entered the sacred wadi for the first time and experienced a symbolic communion with his god, which convinced him to build his capital in the Bay of Amarna and his tomb further up the wadi. This chariot ride was repeated one year later on its anniversary day as well as in subsequent years. Alternatively Akhenaten may have made his offering at the foot of the cliffs, which is the only location in the Bay of Amarna that matches the descriptive term “in front of the mountain of Akhetaten.” I will argue below that this primeval founding offering became the core event depicted on the boundary stelae and in numerous relief scenes gracing public buildings in the Main City.

Site selection may further have been influenced by seeking a compromise between the desire for a new and unused space unspoiled by an earlier history and the political need to link Akhenaten in some form to royal ancestors. Janet Richards discusses physical markers of the Egyptian landscape that the first dynastic rulers selected and contextualized in their funerary setting.<sup>14</sup> Richards argues that similar landscape features were sought by later rulers, including Akhenaten, and were set into an ideational landscape layered with political and religious metaphors. She describes North Abydos, which contains several cemeteries with tombs dating to the beginnings of the dynastic era at approximately 3100 BC. These cemeteries are situated on the west side of the Nile at a location where the cliffs sweep back in the form of a crescent enclosing low desert. The low desert rises to the cliffs in horizontal layers of plateaus and escarpments and is split by a broad and shallow wadi leading to the cliffs of the high desert. Richards argues that the ancient Egyptians would have viewed the opening of the wadi in the cliffs on the western horizon as the gate to the underworld and would have used the plateaus and escarpments as theatrical stages for the display and enactment of rituals.<sup>15</sup> By permanently residing in this topographic setting, these early dynastic rulers laid claim to this land and converted neutral and atemporal space into an empowered human place, using Christopher Tilley’s terms of phenomenological landscape study.<sup>16</sup> Over the next two millennia, Abydos obtained national renown for housing the tomb of Osiris, the god of the death and vegetation. The sloping sides of the wadi frame his tomb when viewed from a distance.

As noted, these same landscape features are found at el-Amarna, albeit on the east side of the Nile, and are dedicated to Aten, the god of the living and

of rebirth. The reverse definition of the sacred geography must be emphasized if Akhenaten was indeed aware of the Abydos model. A similar topography further exists at other Egyptian sites, such as Deir el Ballas and Thebes,<sup>17</sup> between the Archaic mastabas of North Saqqara and Abusir,<sup>18</sup> and probably others.

Richards argues that the topographical setting at el-Amarna may have been the chief factor motivating Akhenaten to construct his capital at that particular location.<sup>19</sup> Although the components of the natural landscape can be experienced even by the contemporary visitor, the written information Akhenaten has left us about himself in the long texts he commissioned emphasize that his primary perception was oriented toward his personal god, the Aten, and that the bay topography itself most likely came second. Upon first entering the Bay of Amarna and looking east, he perceived a connection between the landscape features and the rise of Aten. The ritual chariot ride and the initial offering cemented his perception into the imagination that the wadi constituted the sacred geography in which Aten, the Sun, first rose and where he would unite with Aten in life, death, and perpetual rebirth. This condenses the essence of Akhenaten's ideology and his capital was constructed around this experienced, perceived, and imagined landscape.

El-Amarna was not confined to the east side. It extended west to Tuna el-Gebel on the western bank of the Nile, which encompassed most of the agricultural land required to feed the city population. The complete terrain of the city was marked by sixteen rock stelae carved into the high cliffs that encircled the capital and on one level functioned as its boundary stones. The stelae rise to a height of about 29.5 feet (9 m) in the form of flat, elongated rectangles with rounded tops, which project out from the cliff surfaces (figure 1.3). The lower two-thirds of each stela are covered with a long hieroglyphic inscription. The upper third displays a central image of the sun disk Aten with his personified rays. Under the rays, Akhenaten, his wife Nefertiti, and their daughters are assembled in varied groupings bringing offerings to Aten. Their figures are carved in a sunken low-relief style characteristic of the Amarna Period: the body outlines curve and are sunk into the rock while the body volumes swell out in convex masses. Many stelae are accompanied by high-relief statues of Akhenaten and his family arranged on both sides of the stelae bottoms. The stelae were first professionally documented by W. Flinders Petrie in the 1890s. He named each one with an English capital letter, leaving gaps in the sequence to allow for future discoveries. Petrie's list included A, B, and F on the west bank at Tuna el-Gebel and J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, U, and V for the east bank.<sup>20</sup> Shortly after Petrie, the boundary stelae were independently



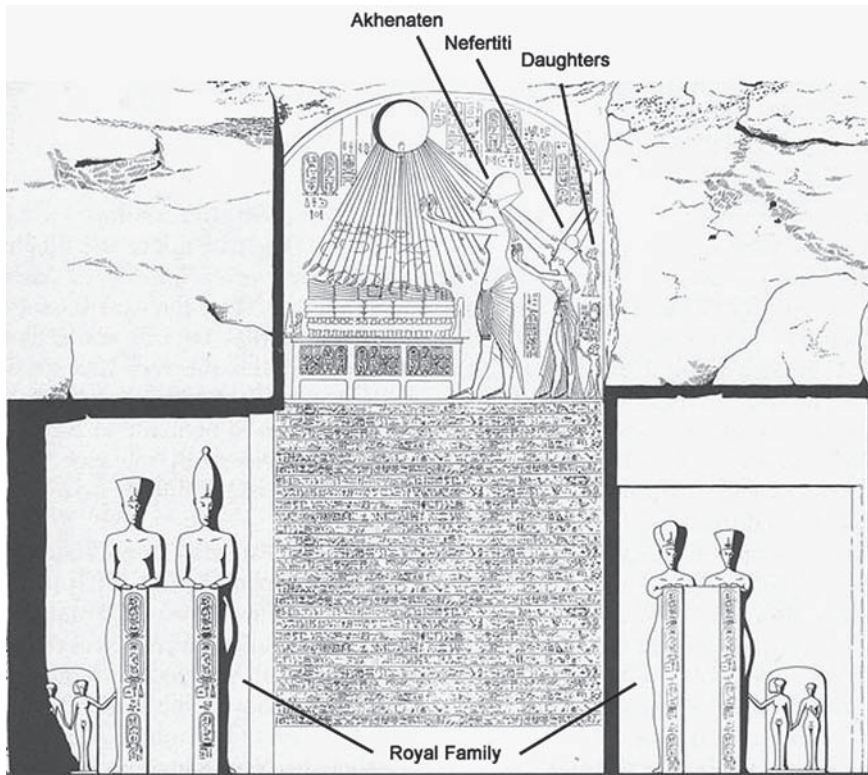


FIGURE 1.3. *Boundary Stela N, drawing. (Adapted from [www.amarnaproject.com](http://www.amarnaproject.com))*

investigated by the French Egyptologist Jean Daressy and a German expedition led by Georg Steindorff. Since then, Stela X has been added by Norman de Garis Davies in 1901 and Stela H by H. Fenwick in 2006.<sup>21</sup> Davies's publication counts as the most thorough and authoritative documentation of the stelae in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> The most recent academic full documentation and translation of Akhenaten's boundary monuments was published by William J. Murnane and Charles C. van Sicklen.<sup>23</sup> My discussion below builds on their work and my own field observations.

The boundary stelae are chronologically ordered according to their texts, which contain two main proclamations made by Akhenaten: the first was given in the fifth year of his reign and the second was made in the sixth year and repeated in his eighth year of office. The first or Earlier Proclamation<sup>24</sup> was written on Stelae K, M, and X and was partially quoted in conjunction with Akhenaten's hypothetical chariot ride above. Since this text contains vital

information about the founding of Akhetaten, I cite all its understood passages in an endnote to this chapter.<sup>25</sup> The text has the nature of a formula because it uses repetitive sentence structure and was repeated three times in similar variants. It begins with the appearance of Akhenaten on his chariot and the offering event (see above) without explicitly describing a ritual chariot ride within the territory of Akhetaten. He then addresses his court and explains that no human but solely Aten had advised him to build Akhetaten in the Bay of Amarna. He mentions the opening in the eastern cliffs caused by the wadi as the special place Aten had made for himself. Akhenaten continues to describe major buildings in the capital: houses and temples for Aten and palaces for himself and his wife Nefertiti. He speaks of a royal tomb to be made in the eastern mountain designated as the eternal resting place for himself, Nefertiti, and their daughter Meritaten, and of tombs prepared for some of the priests. The style of the written and perhaps spoken words reflects that Akhenaten conceptualized his land and by extension the world as centered in Akhetaten from which the cardinal directions were defined. The second or Later Proclamation from year 6 recorded on Stelae A, B, F, J, N, P, Q, R, S, U, and V extends the limits of Akhetaten and reemphasizes the dedication of all the enclosed land to Aten. It was repeated in regnal year 8. This text constitutes the key document that offers clear structural concepts about the design of el-Amarna in its natural setting. It is indeed a unique case in architectural history that researchers have access to textual sources over 3,000 years old that closely reflect the vision of a patron, that have partly survived the ravages of time, and that can be translated by epigraphers. I reference each section and cite the essential passages explaining the layout of el-Amarna in full below (see appendix 1.A).

Of the sixteen boundary stelae total, I have documented seven that I briefly discuss here. Stela X designates the northern limit of el-Amarna and marks the point where the cliffs close back in on the Nile River, leaving only a narrow desert strip. It is squarely aligned with Stela A on the west bank (figure 1.4). On the map, the connecting line slopes down from Stela A, which sits further north and defines the northern boundary of the capital.<sup>26</sup> Stela X and Stelae M and K, which mark the southern limit, were the original Year 5 boundary stelae, probably set up first by order of Akhenaten. They contain the text passages of the Earlier Proclamation. Stela X sits up in the cliffs overlooking the Nile Valley. In comparison to other boundary stelae, the monument is in a medium state of preservation (figure 1.5). The lower rectangular area has partly disappeared and the text is terribly eroded. In the top figurative panel, the Aten disk is clearly recognizable and the outlines of the heads of Akhenaten

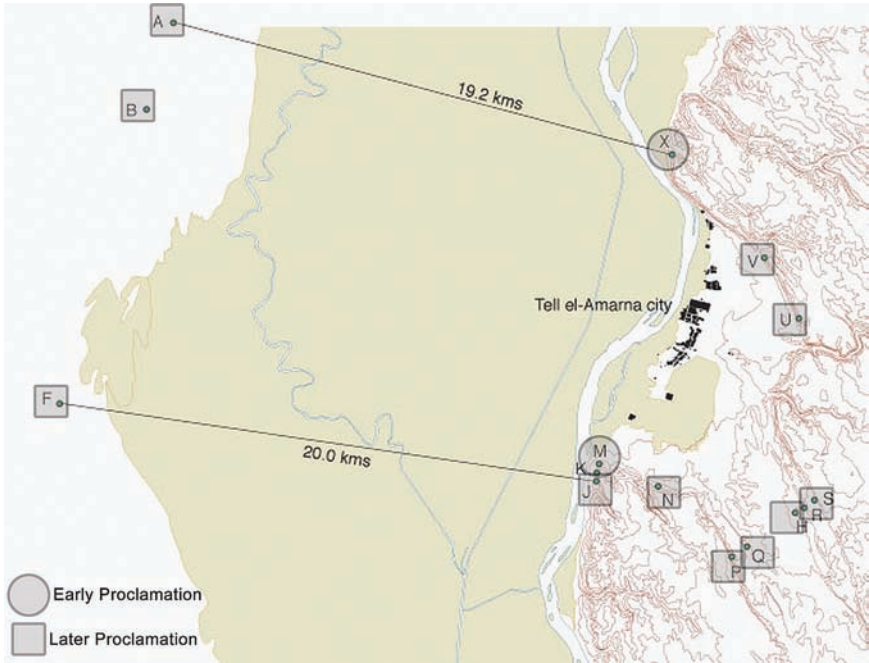


FIGURE 1.4. Map of boundary stelae marking the territory of el-Amarna. (Adapted from [www.amarnaproject.com](http://www.amarnaproject.com))

and Nefertiti appear to the left, bathed in the rays of Aten. There is no evidence of statues accompanying this monument.

Stela M is situated in the south where the cliffs close the Bay of Amarna more tightly than in the north. This stela constitutes the second in the set of the original Year 5 boundary markers. The form of Stela M is well visible but its details are badly eroded except for the Aten disk and its handed rays at the very top. There are no traces of statues. Stela M is immediately followed by boundary stelae L, K, and J, all of which are accessed on a continuous ledge in the cliffs. Stela L constitutes an abbreviated version of a boundary stela. It is a rectangular tablet with text, lacking sunken relief and three-dimensional imagery. Stela K is in a better state of preservation. The rays of the Aten growing fingers, an offering table, and the body outlines of two or three figures are easily identified. The weathering pattern on the surface appears to be different from that seen on Stelae M and J. The picture plane of Stela K retains a smooth layer whereas the other stelae show deep erosion pockets. This could imply that the carvers treated the surface of Stela K in some form. Stela K was



FIGURE 1.5. *Boundary Stela X in situ. (Photograph by Brian Garrett)*

accompanied by statues. Stela J is poorly preserved today. Only fragments of the body outlines of some of the main figures, part of the sun disk, and sections of hieroglyphs remain recognizable. No three-dimensional statues stood

by its sides. Stela J roughly aligns with Stela F on the west bank to define the southern limit of the capital (figure 1.4).

Stelae V and U occupy the cliffs north of the Royal Wadi. Stela V has almost completely crumbled away and only disjointed hieroglyphs are recognizable. Stela U, on the other hand, is one of the best-preserved boundary stelae. It sits just north of the entrance to the Royal Wadi and can be easily reached by road. This location could suggest that it marked the destination of Akhenaten's first west-east chariot ride and the site of his grand offering to Aten during the founding events of the city. The text, however, renders the Later Proclamation from Year 6 and therefore it is more likely that Stela U constructed a place where the founding rituals were reenacted. The monument measures 7.6 m from top to bottom. The top panel displays the expected sun disk with its anthropomorphized rays extending to Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and daughters and to the numerous stacked offerings they brought. The main rectangular portion of the stela is taken up by the long inscription. Statues of royal family members framed the sides of Stela U. Today a level space has been created in front of the monument and it is likely that a stage-like area existed during Akhenaten's time where offerings to Aten were repeated. Looking west from the elevated point of Stela U, the vast spatial extent of the Bay of Amarna can be experienced, reflecting Akhenaten's ambitions, if a full build-out had been achieved.<sup>27</sup>

Another group of stelae was carved at a distance of several kilometers from the southern cliffs into the desert. This group is composed of Stelae S, R, H, Q, and P. The locations of these monuments define a tract of land behind the arc of the cliffs. So far, no evidence has been found of what Akhenaten envisioned there. Stela N was encountered isolated at a shorter distance from the edge of the southern cliffs and behind the south stela group M, L, K, and J. I have investigated Stela R. The monument has been badly damaged by attempts of looters to cut out rectangular sections. In the top panel, part of the offerings and the profile legs of the royal figures remain visible; below, disjointed text segments are clearly recognizable. Stela R was accompanied by statues.

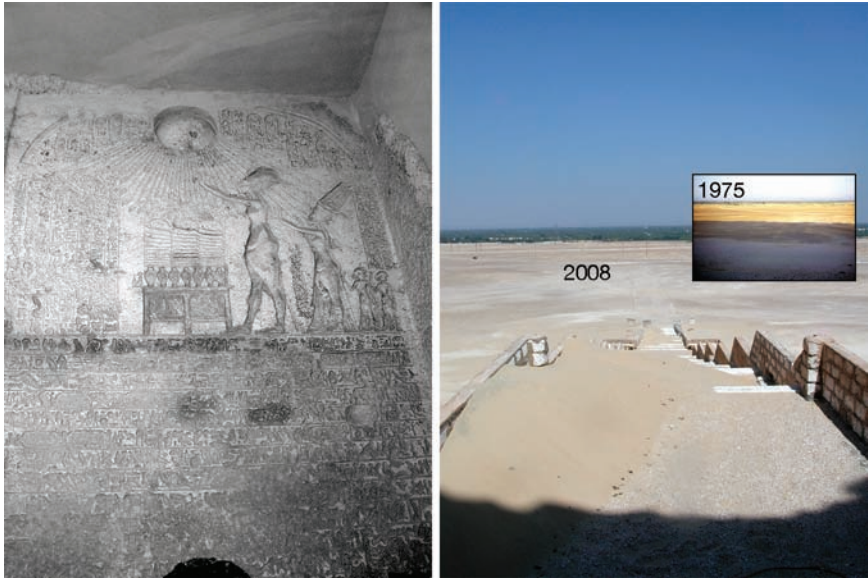
Three boundary stelae A, B, and F were set up at the cliffs on the west bank of the Nile, overlooking the floodplain that provided the agricultural zone of el-Amarna. Stela A is very well preserved and can easily be visited from the existing road. The top panel still displays the complete iconographic formula of the offering scene in Akhenaten's characteristic style (figure 1.6, left): the deeply sunken relief of the Aten sun disk hovers above with his shallow-fingered rays extending below. The figures of Akhenaten and Nefertiti stand on the right side in profile view, reaching their arms toward the Aten. Behind

them appear two of their daughters. The royal family members are represented in strict traditional hierarchical scale. The carving style, on the other hand, is characteristic of the Amarna Period: this means it prefers (1) curving lines over vertical and horizontal lines and (2) sunken relief on outside monuments to produce an animated play of sunlight and shadow.

A table overloaded with rich offerings stands in the central axis below the Aten disk. The left side of the top panel, both sides of the sun disk, and the long rectangular register below are filled with lengthy inscriptions recording the Later Proclamation. Stela A was joined by sculpted figure groups. The Amarna Project recorded parallel lines of stones delimiting an ancient road leading up to the monument in 1975 (figure 1.6, right). These lines have been destroyed by the masonry balustrades and stairway constructed for tourists. Nevertheless their documentation provides invaluable evidence for the ritual use of the boundary stela. An ancient access road or ramp confirms that the monument did not lie isolated and forgotten but was periodically visited. Stela A functioned as the northwestern boundary marker in the Later Proclamation.

Stela B is situated a short distance south of Stela A in the western cliffs. The right side of the rounded top panel is well preserved, whereas its left side has been destroyed by natural weathering processes (figure 1.7). The sun disk and Akhenaten and Nefertiti are sunk into the rock surface whereas the anthropomorphized rays of the Aten and the figures of the daughters are less deeply carved. The lengthy hieroglyphic text of the Later Proclamation fills the middle section and the lower rectangular register. Stela B is still framed by multiple statues. On the left side (from the viewer's perspective), the remnants of two tall and two small standing figures are clearly defined and on the right side, another pair of tall standing figures is visible. They surely represent the royal family. Stela F was placed further south and roughly aligns with Stela J on the east bank, together forming the southern boundary of el-Amarna.

These stelae framed and outlined the space of the capital (figure 1.4). Although lines drawn between Stelae X and A in the north and Stelae J and F in the south do not run precisely east-west, the aerial distance is almost equivalent: 19.2 km in the north and 20.0 km in the south.<sup>28</sup> Other scholars have mapped out that the boundary stelae, the temples, and the royal tomb formed a series of rectangles that are multiples or fragments of the proportions of the Great Temple of Aten in the city center.<sup>29</sup> In this manner, el-Amarna was defined as a temple to the Aten on various scales rather than as a city.<sup>30</sup> Further measurements have indicated that the distance between Boundary Stelae X and M equaled four times the distance between the temples of Karnak and Luxor at Thebes, the processional route established by Amenhotep III for the Opet festival, and that



**FIGURE 1.6.** *Boundary Stela A, Tuna el-Gebel.* Left: *Boundary Stela A.* (Photograph by Brian Garrett) Right center: *Modern stair access to Boundary Stela A, 2008.* (Photograph by Brian Garrett) Right: *Ancient lines of stones marking access path to Boundary Stela A.* (Adapted from [www.amarnaproject.com](http://www.amarnaproject.com))

distances between some of the buildings in the Central City were also based upon the processional routes from Karnak.<sup>31</sup> It would appear that conceptualizing the built landscape as a proportional unit may have constituted one of Akhenaten's important design elements. However, proportions, measurements, and alignments in ancient Egypt should not be approached through the lens of accuracy practiced in Western science. In the eyes of ancient Egyptians, such spatial relations were primarily visual: it was most important that they could be experienced and perceived rather than quantified.<sup>32</sup>

It remains unclear whether it was Akhenaten's original vision to build out the entire Bay of Amarna. As indicated earlier, this turned out to be impractical since wells had to be cut too deep more than about one mile inland from the river. Water had to be carried to any settlement situated closer to the cliffs, such as the Workmen's Village. Therefore el-Amarna was organized along a wide north-south avenue placed close to the transition point between the fertile valley and the desert. It extended from the northern to the southern ends of the bay (figure 1.8).<sup>33</sup> All the major government buildings commissioned



FIGURE 1.7. *Boundary Stela B. (Photograph by Brian Garrett)*

by Akhenaten, such as the Aten temples, palaces, administrative facilities, and storehouses, stood fronting this road. It was the main route the court would have used when attending functions in various sectors of the capital and it is therefore called the Royal Road. The land east of the Royal Road was not uniformly flat but was divided into a series of plateaus by dry but deep gullies. The main sectors of the capital occupy these extensive plateau formations.

Moving from south to north along the Royal Road, we briefly discuss these sectors.<sup>34</sup> The South Suburb and the Main City constituted primary residential zones, where most of the commoner population lived. The Central City contained the Aten temples, the main palace, and all official state buildings and formed the core of Akhenaten's capital (figure 1.9). All of its buildings stand in a general alignment with the Royal Wadi in the east. The Central City constructs the space where the Royal Road intersects the east-west solar axis and thus provides the stage where the ruler and the god symbolically interacted in worldly matters.

Most of the central buildings were deliberately destroyed by King Horemheb at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty in a reaction against Akhenaten and his



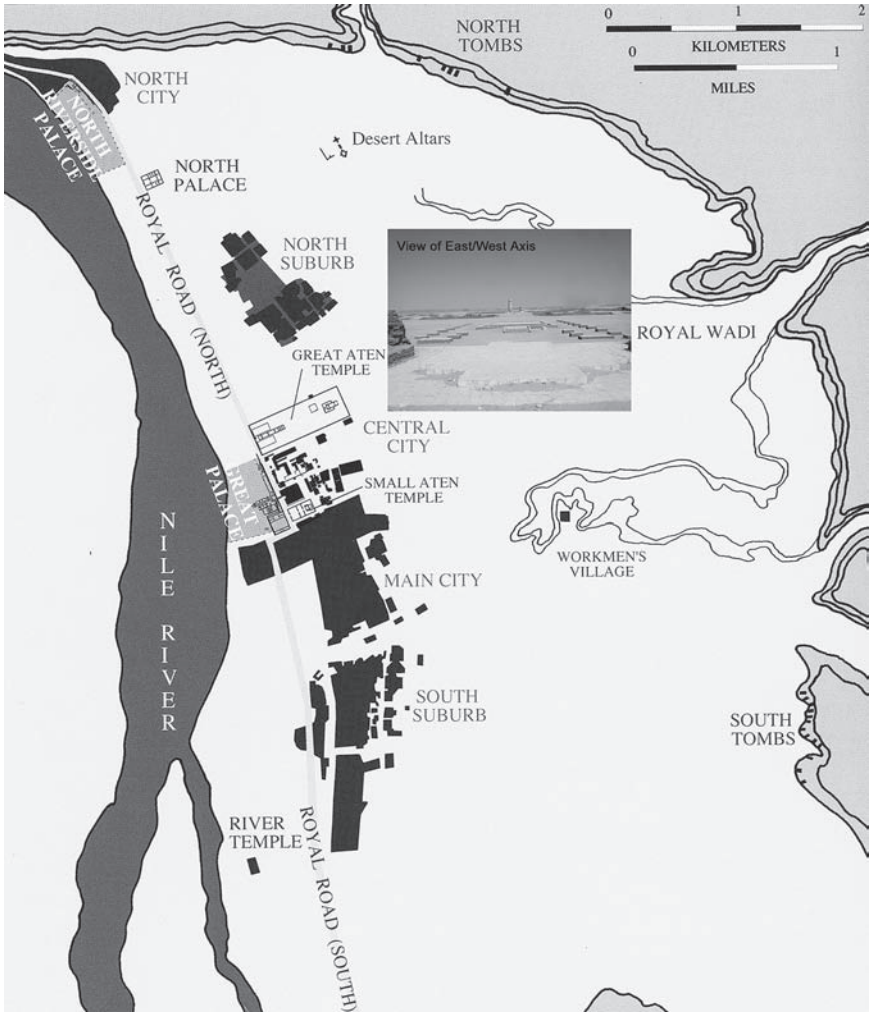


FIGURE 1.8. Map of the ancient capital el-Amarna. (Adapted from Silverman et al. 2006)

policies. Nevertheless, decades-long and painstaking fieldwork by Egyptian and British archaeologists has recovered many fragments, restored certain sectors, drawn up detailed plans, and created a digital model of Akhenaten's Amarna ([www.amarnaproject.com](http://www.amarnaproject.com)). The structures of primary importance were the Great Aten Temple and the Small Aten Temple, separated by the King's House and the Great Palace. The Great Aten Temple is a massive, rectangular, walled enclosure measuring 900 feet wide and 2,500 feet long, with

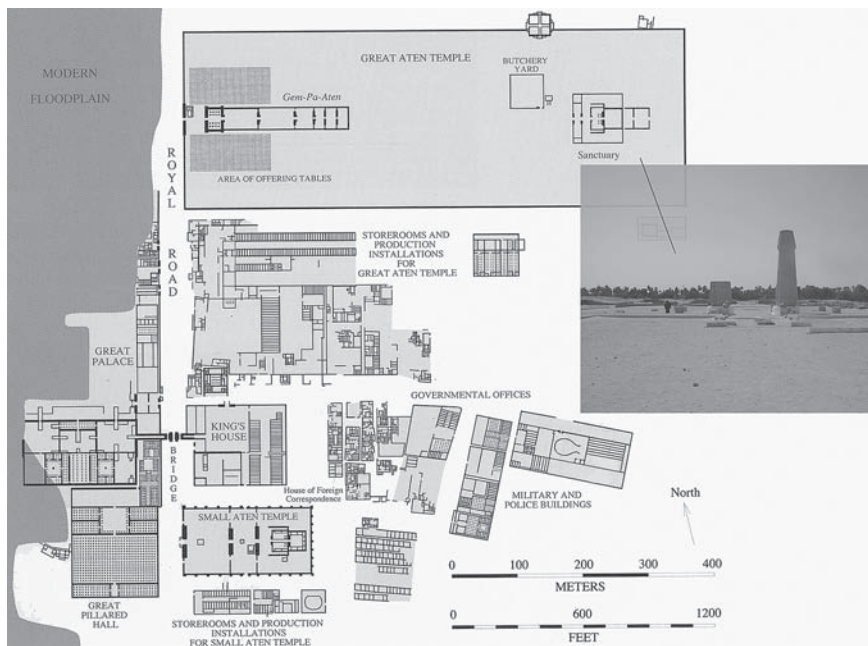


FIGURE 1.9. Plan of the Central City of el-Amarna. (Adapted from Silverman et al. 2006)

one entrance from the Royal Road on the western short side (figure 1.9). Upon entering, the visitor passes through a series of courtyards of diminishing sizes and accessed through pylons. Although pylon façades are a traditional element of New Kingdom temple architecture, the row of freestanding courtyards defining the east-west axis, which the pylons introduce here, is entirely unroofed and known as the Gem-Pa-Aten (the Aten-Is-Found). It was one of Akhenaten's grand innovations to omit roofs so that the interaction with the Sun deity could be more direct and personal. In conventional New Kingdom temples, on the other hand, architectural spaces became more enclosed and darker as the visitor advanced toward the sanctuary, which housed a statue the god inhabited. This kind of spatial experience can still be felt at the temple reconstructions at Karnak, Edfu, or Philae. Aten, on the other hand, was present in the direct rays of the sun.<sup>35</sup> The Gem-Pa-Aten was filled with altars and flanked by grids of hundreds of open-air offering tables. Outside the southern perimeter wall, extensive production facilities, such as bakeries, and storerooms were located to provide the massive quantities of gifts to Aten. In the eastern part of the enclosure stood a butchers' yard and a T-shaped

sanctuary housing statues of the royal family. The Great Aten Temple probably remained unfinished because the large middle section of the enclosure was never built out.

The Small Aten Temple constitutes a much smaller rectangular enclosure that, like the Great Aten Temple, opens toward the Royal Road through pylons. It houses a total of three pylon façades, and a T-shaped sanctuary with statues of royal family members. Storerooms and manufacturing facilities to produce the large-scale offerings for Aten were situated south of the enclosed compound. It is noteworthy that neither Aten temple contained an actual shrine to house a cult image of the god, as one would expect to find in traditional New Kingdom temples. As Silverman et al. reason, “the object of worship was not a statue but the visible sun in the sky.”<sup>36</sup> Akhenaten had three-dimensional portrait statues made of himself but his god was only depicted as the sun disk with fingered rays in sunken relief as seen on the boundary stelae. Thus the primary presence of Aten was in the form of the sun as he rose and set daily on the eastern and western horizons of Akhetaten. This vision fundamentally guided the practices that constructed el-Amarna as an ideological performance stage.

The Great Palace runs along the western side of the Royal Road and was designed in a north-south orientation. This same orientation has been documented in the North Riverside Palace. Silverman et al. view the north-south direction as a symbolic axis of royal authority that parallels the flow of the Nile and intersects with the east-west axis of the rising and setting Aten.<sup>37</sup> The southern end of the Great Palace is marked by a vast pillared hall. To the north extend multiple open courtyards once graced with colossal figures of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. A distinctive architectural feature in the Great Palace as well as in the Aten temples was an extensive use of raised platforms and podia accessed by walled ramps with decorated balustrades.<sup>38</sup> The scenes on the balustrades depicted the royal family worshipping the Aten and bringing offerings similar to those described on the boundary stelae as well as a repetition of cartouches with the names and titles of Aten, Akhenaten, and Nefertiti. These decorated ramps choreographed ritual movements and we will return to them in the discussion of el-Amarna as a performance stage.

Most Egyptologists understand the Great Palace as the main building in which Akhenaten would have conducted the political and administrative functions of his court.<sup>39</sup> The Great Palace was connected with the King’s House situated between the two Aten temples by a bridge spanning the Royal Road. The King’s House lacks public courtyards and is composed of smaller more private spaces. Its eastern section exhibits two long rows of storerooms. It is

generally interpreted as a temporary residence of the ruler where Akhenaten and his family would have been housed while involved in state business in the Central City.

To the east of the King's House and the Small Aten Temple, the foundations and remains of numerous complexes associated with government functions have been mapped. Most outstanding is a compound characterized by small intricate rooms, which can positively be identified as the House of Royal Foreign Correspondence because its stamped bricks show this name in hieroglyphs. The important Amarna letters, a corpus of about 350 documents written on clay tablets and detailing international royal correspondence, were discovered here in the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup>

The primary residential zones of el-Amarna were the Main City, the South Suburb, and the North Suburb (figure 1.8). They were filled with large walled estates and tracts of smaller houses, reflecting social hierarchies. Some of the areas of habitation were never fully completed; in particular, the northeastern edge of the North Suburb.

Egyptologists reason that the actual residence of Akhenaten and the royal family was probably not in the Great Palace but in the North Riverside Palace located in the North City at the far northern end of the Bay of Amarna. This palace and the whole North City lie badly destroyed but archaeologists have identified a large rectangular complex with bastioned enclosure walls and a painted gateway on the west side of the Royal Road. They interpret it as the residential palace of Akhenaten in contrast to the Great Palace, which is seen as the palace of public affairs of the state.<sup>41</sup> Another possibility is that the northern and southern palaces were seen as metaphors for the historical division of Egypt into the north (Lower Egypt) and the south (Upper Egypt), regions unified at the dawn of the dynastic age. The north-south division runs like a trope through Egyptian history and is commonly referenced in royal architecture and iconography, for instance, the North and South Palaces in the funerary complex of Djoser at Saqqara. Akhenaten may have continued this tradition.<sup>42</sup>

South of the North City stands a third palace, known as the North Palace. It is the best preserved and documented of all the royal buildings at el-Amarna and thus presents the unique opportunity to learn details about Egyptian palace design in the New Kingdom. The North Palace stands east of the Royal Road. It was designed as a rectangular walled enclosure. Its short side fronts the Royal Road and provides the only entrance. The visitor enters into a central courtyard, the rear side of which is defined by a massive decorated pylon. The pylon leads to a large pool that reached a depth of 14 feet. The royal residential area extends behind the pool. Many of the courtyards and

structures flanking the central axis on the north and south sides seem to have had administrative and storage functions. Interestingly, in the northern buildings, material evidence was found indicating that they housed domestic animals, such as sheep, goats, gazelles, cattle, and birds. This evidence consists of mangers decorated with animal imagery and tethering stones. The quarters of the royal family along the east side of the palace complex were beautifully decorated with wall murals. A scene displaying birds in marshes in a vibrant blue, green, and red color scheme was found in a small room surrounding a sunken garden that was fed by a water conduit from the central pool. The excavators interpreted the courtyard with the sunken garden as an aviary.<sup>43</sup> A throne on a dais marked the terminus of the central axis of the North Palace. It was approached through a stone portico and two pillared rooms of diminishing sizes. There is evidence that the North Palace belonged to Meritaten, the ruler's oldest daughter, by the end of Akhenaten's reign. Her name glyph appears on a doorjamb, carved over an earlier royal name.

The three palaces discussed raise stimulating questions about similarities and differences with regard to their design, location, and usage. Although our material data are limited, a distinction between the Great Palace as the setting for state business and the North Riverside Palace as Akhenaten's primary residence seems valid. The North Palace stands out because it sits east of the Royal Road, is oriented east, and it mixes design features related to the display of political authority with animal yards and water and garden areas. Perhaps it had a more ceremonial character and constituted a micro-materialization of one of Akhenaten's hymns to Aten.<sup>44</sup> The axial design including the pylon and leading up to the throne dais is shared with New Kingdom temples. As indicated above, in the temple, the central axis terminates in a small and dark sanctuary where the statue of the deity resides. At Akhetaten, the image of the god has been replaced by the living pharaoh. From this perspective, design criteria for temple and palace overlapped and could not be strictly separated: the house of Aten was also the house of Akhenaten and vice versa.<sup>45</sup>

The final royal building to be mentioned as one of the significant building blocks of the urban design of el-Amarna is the so-called Maruaten, marking the southern end of the Royal Road. Its full name was Pa-Maru-en-Pa-Aten, or "The-Viewing-Place-of-the-Aten," and it contained one of the two sunshades belonging to Meritaten. The overall complex consists of two rectangular brick enclosures. The core of the main enclosure is a large artificial lake with a stone causeway leading into the water from the northwest. Similar to the North Palace, planted garden areas surrounded the lake. Excavators identified skeletal remains of greyhounds in a small building abutting the

northwestern enclosure wall. Storerooms in a long structure on the northeast side of the lake contained wine jars with labels naming various institutions at el-Amarna that had supplied the wine.

The best preserved and probably the most potent ritual constructions of the Maruaten occupied the eastern corner of the main enclosure. A small island crowned by what was likely Meritaten's sunshade shrine and a T-shaped altar was created with a surrounding moat. Northeast of the moat extended formal garden plots as well as eleven T-shaped interlocking tanks. Segments of the pavement surrounding these tanks were recovered, showing painted plaster scenes of various water plants and birds. As in the North Palace, the spatial layout of the Maruaten, its furnishings, occupants, and iconography are suggestive of a celebration of the living world dependent on Aten.

### EL-AMARNA AS DYNAMIC, SETTLEMENT-CENTERED, POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Having set the stage of the natural and man-built environment, I now turn to el-Amarna as the performance ground of multiple levels of political relations oscillating between the poles of dominance and submission. First, anybody entering ancient and contemporary el-Amarna is struck by the experience of vastness of space framed by the arc of the cliff and the barren inhospitable desert land. Akhenaten's capital with population estimates ranging from 20,000 to 50,000 claimed more of this plane space than the present-day villages yet much remained to be filled and settled. While the ancient Egyptians might have perceived this opposition between constructed place and unfilled space as a limitation of Akhenaten's means, most contemporary visitors are filled with the sensation that this barren desert still escapes the dominance of civilization.

Imagination was channeled through the more subtle tools of media, iconography, architectural and spatial layout, and analogies.<sup>46</sup> I reason that the boundary stelae constitute key monuments to an understanding of Akhenaten's strategies. They exhibit a standardized format and the top register depicts the described offering scenes. These offering scenes were repeated in many places throughout the Central City. Ian Shaw examined thirty to forty surviving fragments of balustrades and parapets from el-Amarna, which are typically decorated on both sides with sunken reliefs of the royal family making offerings to the Aten.<sup>47</sup> These balustrades framed ramps and steps leading up to altars that were surrounded by parapet walls. This succinct architectural arrangement marked a distinctive feature of Akhenaten's temples to Aten.

Ramps and stairways lined by balustrades in general were not new and had been used in other New Kingdom temples, such as the Mortuary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. The majority of these fragments with known proveniences came from the Great Temple, the Great Palace, and the Maruaten. In the architectural context, the double-sided balustrade was widely employed in el-Amarna, lining processional routes as well as ramps and stairs leading to altars, podia, daises, and thrones. Although their physical settings have not survived, painted renderings have been documented in a number of el-Amarna elite tombs: in a scene from the tomb of Panehsy, the royal couple has ascended balustraded steps and stands on a podium in front of a laden offering table (figure 1.10, top); in the tomb of Meryra I, there is an image of presumably the Great Stele in the Sanctuary of the Great Temple<sup>48</sup> placed on a platform and approached by an access with balustrades; in one scene from the tomb of Meryre II, the royal family is seated on a dais under a lavishly decorated canopy and is receiving foreign tribute. Two ramps provide access to them and the principal one appears to have a low balustrade (figure 1.10, bottom).

Given the pervasiveness of this theme of an elevated place of power approached by lined stairs or ramps, it seems reasonable to include the boundary stelae in this pattern. As noted above, at least Stela A exhibited material evidence of an access road (figure 1.6, right). Most probably all were approached by the king, his family, and his escort at scheduled ritual times and would have had a small gathering area. The offering scenes in the top register of the stela panels repeat the iconography of the balustrades and the ramp and podium is formed by the natural setting in the cliffs. Thus the act of approaching the higher powers of the ruler, Akhenaten and his god, the living Aten, was performed on multiple levels: (1) on the two-dimensional panels, the royal family brings offerings to Aten; (2) in the architectural setting of platform thrones and steps as documented in the Great and Small Aten Temples and in the Great Palace, subjected people approached the ruler with tribute items or the ruler offered to his god; and (3) at the boundary stelae at the periphery of el-Amarna, the king enacted his most personal and intimate offering to the Aten.<sup>49</sup> These performances at the boundary stelae were multilayered, as they repeated the original eastern offering during the foundation of the capital, and due to their liminal locations away from the manmade landscape, interaction with the Aten was most direct. From this perspective, the void open area between the city and the cliffs takes on meaning as boundary space.

The ritual movements to the boundary stelae radiated from the center of el-Amarna to the northeast, east, southeast, southwest, and northwest. The

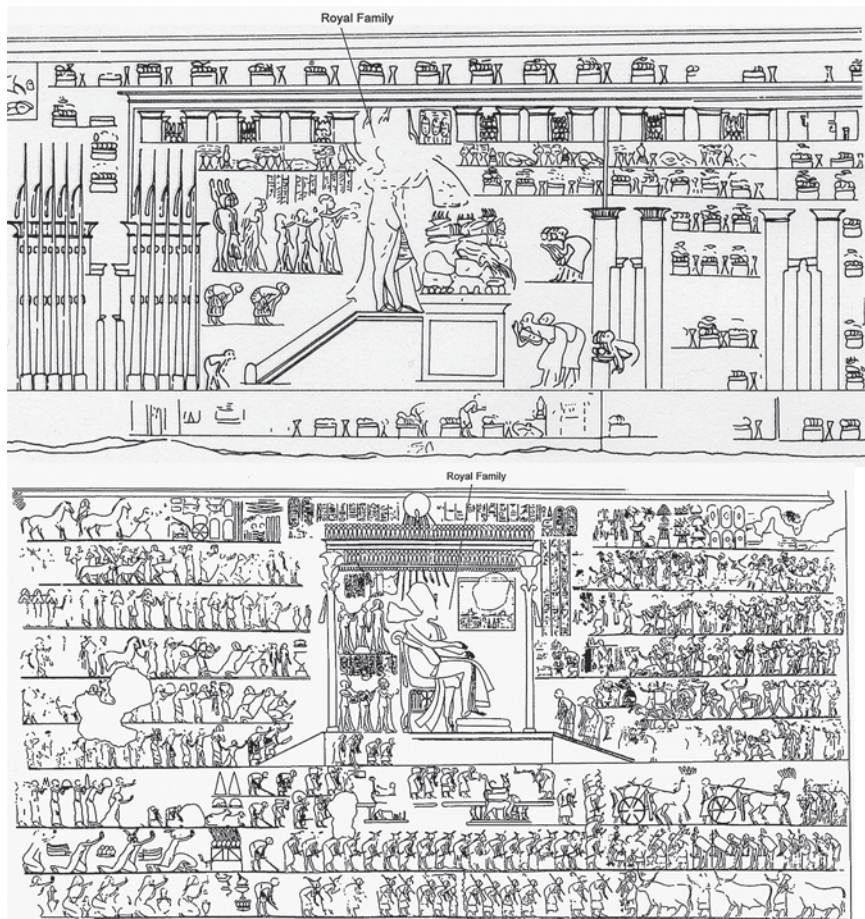


FIGURE 1.10. Ramps and stairs with double-sided balustrades leading to altars, and daises as royal settings for offering and tribute events. Top: Scene from the tomb of Panehsy. (Adapted from Shaw 1994) Bottom: Scene from the tomb of Meryre II. (Adapted from Murnane 1995)

east-west direction was surely the most significant because it connected Akhenaten's tomb, Stela U, the foundation offering highlighted in the Earlier Proclamation, and the Small Aten Temple.<sup>50</sup> This approximate east-west axis was counterbalanced by the north-south Royal Road that, we assume, was primarily used by Akhenaten and his extended family, accompanied by their immediate court officials, to travel from his residences in the North Riverside Palace and North Palace to his place of state and religious business in the



Great Palace and in the Great and Small Aten Temples. Both axes intersected precisely in the Small Aten Temple where Akhenaten's personal discourse with the Aten in the Central City took place.<sup>51</sup> It has been noted that Akhenaten merged with the Aten and became a living god during festival performances.<sup>52</sup> In this manner, he replaced the traditional god statue that was carried in processions through the public audience according to ancient Egyptian religious protocol. This constituted one of the subtle nodes in which Akhenaten built upon traditional ritual practices but channeled the focal point into his own person. It has been reconstructed from texts and certain scenes on the walls of the elite tombs at el-Amarna that the king's progress down the Royal Road, seated upon his chariot and followed by court members, was performed as glamorous noisy pageantry: his avenue was lined by jubilating subjects pushing to see him above the crowd and extending their arms toward him. In a similar fashion, they would greet the rising Sun Disk each morning to receive his light and revitalizing energy.

The core of the city was marked by this intersection of the east-west trajectory of the Aten Disc and the north-south processional route of the king at the Small Aten Temple. Here the king engaged in more private interaction with his god and then proceeded to attend to the secular business of the state in the Great Palace and of public religion in the Great Aten Temple. At the end of the day, the Sun Disk sank into the western horizon and Akhenaten departed back north to his North Riverside Palace.

On a geopolitical level, the Royal Road paralleled the Nile River and thus symbolically extended to north and south Egypt. North and south Egypt, materialized by the vast, low-lying, fertile delta and the barren desert hills, respectively, had a long history in the iconography of pharaonic Egypt since their mythohistorical unification under King Narmer around 3000 BCE.<sup>53</sup> Most pharaohs portrayed themselves as rulers over both—north and south, or Lower and Upper Egypt—as iconographically referenced by wearing two different crowns or by binding the papyrus and lotus plants (symbols of Lower and Upper Egypt, respectively), or by structural allusions within architectural layouts. Akhenaten surely shared these ideas but also redefined them: by counterbalancing his secular north-south axis/Royal Road with the religious east-west axis of Aten, he first of all projected spatial claims to the confines of Egypt and probably to the “Horizon of the Aten”/Akhetaten, which encompasses the world. Second, by intersecting the two axes in the Small Aten Temple, he localized their center, metaphorically claiming universal rule from the heart of his capital. This localization may have had another political component: el-Amarna is situated in Middle Egypt, between Upper and Lower

Egypt, whereas previous capitals had clearly been positioned in the north or south divisions (Old Kingdom Memphis in Lower Egypt and New Kingdom Thebes in Upper Egypt). Akhenaten seems to have reinterpreted the spatial relations between Upper and Lower Egypt, perhaps by laying equal claims on both. He articulated them in the Earlier and Later Proclamations from regnal years 5 and 6 (see above) in which he described Akhetaten as a fixed place, delimited by the boundary stelae, but the bounty of resources and landscape features it purports to harbor encompasses the world.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above reconstruction of el-Amarna presents the extraordinary example of a political landscape that was ordained by a god and executed by a ruler as his earthly agent. The texts of the Earlier and Later Proclamations record the Aten god's instructions and their interpretation and execution by Akhenaten.<sup>54</sup> The surviving remains on the ground make it possible to evaluate what Akhenaten actually built versus what he proclaimed to construct. The architectural, sculptural, and textual evidences provide intriguing mosaic tesserae that allow us to piece together the political landscape of el-Amarna, a direct mirror image of Akhenaten's ideology that fused his personal religion as the main ingredient, with state business as a secondary add-on.

Claiming to follow the commands of the Sun Disk, Akhenaten shaped a cultural landscape devised to cement the following power relations:<sup>55</sup>

## ATEN AND AKHENATEN

The relationship between Aten and Akhenaten may be characterized as an undulating engagement of merging and separating into Father and Son. The natural setting of the capital was supposedly selected by Aten, and his daily rise projected his name along the eastern horizon. Akhenaten devised an urban layout that structured his processional and ritual movements to approach the Aten. Most potent was the east-west axis between the Royal Wadi and the Aten temples, which he activated with public chariot rides and the great eastern offering most likely commemorated on Stela U. The ultimate and permanent union between Aten and Akhenaten was orchestrated to occur at death and with his burial in the Royal Wadi, from where he would rise in Aten in perpetuity.

It seems reasonable to suggest that Akhenaten periodically repeated his ritual approaches and offerings to Aten at all the boundary stelae, away from

the urban core where his communion with the Father was more direct and personal. On a microscale, his interaction with the Aten Disk through bountiful offerings was repeated on altars, shrines, podia, and thrones throughout the city, as evidenced by the offering scenes on the balustrades, parapet walls, and tomb paintings. Most of these offering reliefs known today come from the Great Aten Temple and the Great Palace but some have been recorded in private houses of the citizens of el-Amarna.

The special dynamics between Akhenaten and Aten must still be further explored through linguistic analogies and issues of representation. The word *akh* (“beneficent”) in his name has more complex connotations: it may refer to a spiritual state of luminosity, transfiguration, and personal union with the god and can signify spirit beings.<sup>56</sup> It is derived from the term for “radiant light” written with the crested ibis in hieroglyphic texts.<sup>57</sup> From this perspective, Akh-enaten and his city, Akh-etaten, shared a liminal aspect that positioned them from the material world toward the realm of the divine.

This link between Akh-enaten, Akh-etaten, the Aten god, and shining qualities had a material correlate in the faïence and glass production at el-Amarna. Texts dating to the reign of Amenhotep III describe the Aten as “dazzling” and “gleaming,” using the Egyptian word *tjehen*. A related word *tjehenet* means faïence.<sup>58</sup> El-Amarna became a major center of faïence and glass production as well as for inlays of special stones needed for sculptural works. It is tempting to suggest a correlation between the shimmering, dazzling, visual characteristics of these materials and the radiance of the Aten. Faïence-making had a long history in Egypt but glass working was a new technology during the Eighteenth Dynasty and Egyptian artisans were probably eager to explore it. At the same time, we assume that artistic production was to a large degree state controlled and Akhenaten likely promoted the faïence and glass industries and inlay sculptures to serve his ideological agenda.

Aten, on the other hand, was humanized on many levels in the repertoire of his representation. Traditional Egyptian gods were generally defined as invisible beings represented in the iconography through human and animal symbolism; in contrast, Aten was understood as the visible sun disk. From about year 9 of Akhenaten’s reign on, Aten’s name was written inside two cartouches, a format normally reserved for the royal couple. Further, the Aten-disk received the protective cobra (*uraeus*), the most prestigious emblem of royalty displayed on the king’s headdress. In these ways, Aten was brought to life in the human world and Akhenaten assumed a certain divine status facilitating the union of the god and the king, of sky and earth, which was so succinctly dramatized at the boundary stelae.

## AKHENATEN AND HIS SUBJECTS

As pharaoh, Akhenaten ruled, of course, over all Egyptians and we do not know the mechanisms he used to recruit people to follow him to the new capital.<sup>59</sup> In Smith's terms,<sup>60</sup> a subject always surrenders some portion of will to somebody else, an act that generates authority and ultimately leads to political constellations. Of course we cannot know the precise mechanisms of subjectivity Akhenaten employed to forge various loyal subject groups. In the following, I briefly review the archaeological data from residential sectors that offer insights into links of individuals and social groups to the sovereign political regime.<sup>61</sup>

Archaeological excavations have documented a great number of residences in the Main City, in the North and South Suburbs, as well as in the Workmen's Village (figure 1.8). These sectors grew organically, as opposed to the planned-grid layout of the Central City. Excavations of private houses did not find any consistent correlation between architectural forms and distances to the city core: large houses abut smaller ones and some of Akhenaten's high officials identified in inscriptions and tomb scenes, for example, the vizier Nakht and the High Priest Panehesy, lived in residences far away from the Great Palace and must have commuted to their place of employment in chariots. Not all elites and nobles had big houses, but regardless of size the form of the el-Amarna house is very much consistent: the "standard villa" of el-Amarna was mostly built of mud brick. It featured a central square living room with a bench along one wall and one or more wooden columns on stone bases supporting the ceiling. This central room was surrounded by private living quarters, reception rooms, and storage spaces. The walls were whitewashed with a type of plaster. Many houses were several stories high and were fenced off by a perimeter wall.<sup>62</sup>

Especially interesting has been the discovery of dwellings and workshops belonging to artisans. In 1912, a German archaeological expedition exposed the remains of a large mansion-style home and studio situated near the more modest dwellings and workshops of other craft specialists. Inside this elite residence, investigators retrieved an artifact incised with the name *Tuthmosis*. Based on this evidence, the owner has been identified with the sculptor Tuthmosis. During further excavations, researchers found a storage room containing large numbers of works of art, including the renowned painted limestone bust of Nefertiti. Analysis of these artworks allows insights into artistic processes and royal commissions at el-Amarna.<sup>63</sup>

The architectural layouts and settlement patterns of the North Suburb, Main City, South Suburb, and Workmen's Village do not suggest the firm

hand of the state. It seems that individuals and particularly members of the upper classes enjoyed the liberty to make some choices as to where they wished to reside and which house size would suit them. Analyses of interior furnishings and artifacts recovered from domestic compounds have provided further insights into elite lives and their negotiated power relations with their ruler.

With regard to domestic religion, Anna Stevens has investigated altars, niches, cupboards, lustration slabs, domestic reliefs, and inscriptions, as well as portable objects such as offering tables, basins, shrines, vessels, statues, and stelae in private houses.<sup>64</sup> Approximately forty altars have been identified in Amarna private houses in the Main City, the Central City, the North Suburb, and possibly in the Workmen's Village. Most notable is the elaborate altar encountered in the residence of Panehesy, First Servitor of the Aten, situated in the Central City.<sup>65</sup> This altar represents one case of the altar platform accessed by balustraded ramps discussed earlier, and the front face of this altar displays scenes of the royal family worshipping the Aten. Although this is the only altar of this form so far identified in a private house, it establishes evidence that the theme of Akhenaten's offering to the Sun Disk was transposed from the public ramped and balustraded altar platforms and throne daises to the interior of elite residences. This is clearly one level of state control in which the ruler has inserted himself into the private family setting as the living personification of the state god who must be worshipped. Most of the remaining altars were built of mud brick. Many have the form of a rectangular platform approached by steps or a ramp that may have been framed by balustrades in a few examples.

Further, scenes of worship of the royal family and Aten as well as prayers to the Aten were found in painted reliefs associated with niches and doorways in residential areas. Numerous statues of royal family members and stelae bearing incised images of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, their daughters, and the Aten come from domestic contexts. Interestingly, a small number of painted scenes showing the royal family were discovered in the Workmen's Village, the zone of lower-class Amarna citizens.<sup>66</sup> Thus Akhenaten was present in many households in visual form. His images materialized his essence and functioned as intermediaries his subjects were invited to invoke when they wished to address the Aten Disk.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, archaeologists retrieved numerous non-royal figurines, statuettes, and images: fertility figurines; depictions of such divinities as Thoth, Ptah, and Taweret; sacred animals; private individuals; and vessels with Bes figures, Hathor heads, or modeled cobras.<sup>68</sup> The material evidence suggests that ritual activities on multiple levels were

carried out in many houses and active domestic cults in general. Religious-ritual life on a household level appears to have interwoven state-mandated practices with family and lineage traditions and ancestor worship. From this perspective, I see a negotiated power discourse between Akhenaten and his citizens, which permitted the continuance of some religious family customs side-by-side with the official worship of the royal family and the Aten.<sup>69</sup> This allowance of religious freedom was probably counterbalanced by required attendance at the pageantry of Akhenaten's daily chariot rides along the Royal Road and his communion and identification with the Aten Disk at the Aten Temples. Another valid consideration may be that Akhenaten's understanding of the Aten as the life force of all living things may have projected a sense of egalitarian unity, at least on a conceptual spiritual level.<sup>70</sup>

#### AKHENATEN AND FOREIGNERS

Consensus in the literature is that foreign relations were not Akhenaten's priority business. The main source about international relations during the Amarna Period are the Amarna letters, a series of about 350 documents of international state-level correspondence written on clay tablets in a cuneiform script.<sup>71</sup> The texts span roughly 30 years from the reign of Amenhotep III to the early years of Tutankhamun. These unique records were found by accident in 1887 by a villager digging for mudbrick in the ruins of el-Amarna. The structure that housed the letters was excavated four years later by Flinders Petrie.

The Amarna letters have been organized into two general categories: one relates communications between the Egyptian pharaoh and his contemporary peers; the other addresses interactions between these rulers and their vassals. Collectively the first category of Amarna letters sketches a picture that the reign of Amenhotep III was stable and relatively peaceful. Egypt was wealthy due to booming trade and a continuous flow of tribute. Amenhotep III was on good terms with the other powerful rulers in the ancient Near East and they all treated each other as equals.

Akhenaten inherited this state of affairs. Nevertheless, during his reign, problems between neighboring peer leaders arose and intensified, allied rulers petitioned Akhenaten for troops, and vassal governors who controlled Egyptian territories to the north begged for more resources. Apparently Akhenaten ignored many of these requests. His strategy seems to have been to maintain Egyptian territorial possessions and deal with his vassal governors as necessary, rather than engaging in proactive military campaigns. Akhenaten's lack of interest in military matters is reflected in the iconography at el-Amarna.

Scenes of the fighting pharaoh towering over a prostrate enemy or riding to battle in his chariot so common in other New Kingdom temples on pylons and interior walls are strikingly absent from el-Amarna.<sup>72</sup>

Foreigners are shown in non-militaristic contexts. The tribute ceremony rendered in the elite tomb of the Royal Scribe, Steward, Overseer of the Two Treasuries, Overseer of the Royal Harem displays a great number of individuals, foreigners as well as Egyptians, carrying tribute items to the royal family presented on a podium accessed by ramps (figure 1.10b). Foreigners clearly came to el-Amarna to bring or exchange tribute, depending on their status. A diplomatic letter from the ruler of Assyria states that many emissaries complained Akhenaten made them wait for hours in full sunlight in his unroofed governmental buildings intended to physically introduce them to his new god, the Sun Disk.<sup>73</sup>

This essay has demonstrated that el-Amarna was designed to be both a political capital and a ceremonial city.<sup>74</sup> It was constructed into micro- and macro-units of space that broadcast the interweaving power relations between Akhenaten and Aten down to the household level, throughout the city, and to the rest of Egypt. The ideological landscape was grounded in the natural setting of the Bay of Amarna and el-Amarna/Akhet-Aten became a miniature version of the cosmogram conflating the pharaoh and the Sun God:

Now within these four stelae, from the eastern mountain to the western mountain, is Akhet-Aten itself. It belongs to my father . . . who gives life forever, with mountains, deserts, meadows, new lands, highlands, fresh lands, fields, water, settlements, shorelands, people, cattle, trees, and all other things that Aten my father will let be forever.<sup>75</sup>

## APPENDIX 1.A

### The Later Proclamation

- I. Dateline (= regnal year 6, IV Prt 13) . . .
- II. Titulary of the king
- III. Titulary of the queen
- IV. Public appearance of the king, journey to the site of Akhet-Aten . . .
- V. Journey to the southeastern mountain of Akhet-Aten
- VI. The Royal Oath:
  - A. Preamble

- B. The borders of the city's territory are defined by means of the six principal boundary stela.

“As for the southern stela which is on the eastern mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, it is the stela of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, the one beside which I make my stand. I shall not go past it to the south forever and ever. Make the southwestern stela across from it on the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ exactly!

“As for the intermediate stela on the eastern mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, it is the stela of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, the one beside which I make my stand on the mountain of the orient-(side) of ‘Horizon of the Orb’. I shall not go past it to the orient forever and ever. Make the intermediate stela which is on the western (side) of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ across from it on the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ exactly! I shall not go past it to the west forever and ever.

“As for the northeastern stela of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ by which I make my stand, it is the northern stela of ‘Horizon of the Orb.’ I shall not go past it downstream forever and ever. Make the northwestern stela which is on the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ across from it exactly!

- C. Dimensions of Akhet-Aten

“Now, as for ‘Horizon of the Orb’, starting from the southern stela of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ as far as the northern stela, measured between stela to stela on the eastern (*var.* western) mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, it makes six *iter*, one and three-quarter rods and four cubits.

“Similarly, starting from the southwestern stela of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ to the northwestern stela upon the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, it makes six *iter*, one and three-quarter rods and four cubits similarly, exactly!

- D. Dedication of this territory to the god

“As to the interior of the four stela, starting with the eastern (*var.* “western”) mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’ as far as the western (*var.* “eastern”) mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, it is ‘Horizon of the Orb’ in its entirety. It belongs to my Father, THE ATEN, given life everlastingly forever—consisting of hills, flatlands, marshes, “new lands”, basin lands, fresh lands, fields, waters, towns, banks, people, herds, groves (and) everything that the Orb, my father, has made and caused them to come into existence forever and ever.



## VII. Guarantees

- A. The oath shall not be ignored, but will remain permanently on the boundary stelaē

“I shall not ignore this oath that I am making for the Orb, my father forever and ever, but it shall remain upon a tablet of stone at the southeastern border of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

“Similarly upon the intermediate stela that is on the eastern mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

“Similarly upon the northeastern border of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

“Similarly upon the southwestern (*var.* northwestern) border of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

“Similarly the intermediate stela which is on the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

“Similarly, it shall remain in ‘Horizon of the Orb’ on a tablet of stone at the southwestern border of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

“Similarly upon the northwestern border of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

- B. The boundary stelaē shall be maintained and repaired as needed

“It shall not be obliterated. It shall not be washed (away). It shall not be hacked out. It shall not be (white)washed with plaster. It shall not go missing.

“If it does go missing, if it disappears, if the tablet on which it is falls down, I shall renew it again as a new thing in this place in which it is.”

## XIII. Repetition of the Oath in regnal year 8, I Peret 8

### IX. The Colophon

- A. Preamble to the new Royal Oath

- B. Reaffirmation of the borders that are defined by the six principal boundary stelaē

“As my Father, THE ATEN—given life everlastingly forever—lives: regarding the six stelaē that I have established at the boundaries of ‘Horizon of the Orb’—the three stelaē that are on the orient mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, together with the three stelaē across from them, which are on the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’—let the southern stela that is on the orient mountain be opposite the southern stela that is across from it on the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’. Let it be the southern boundary of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, while the northern stela, which is on the orient mountain

of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, is opposite the northern stela that is across from it, upon the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’. Let it be the northern border of ‘Horizon of the Orb’. Similarly, the intermediate stela which is on the orient mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, opposite the intermediate stela that is across from it, upon the western mountain of ‘Horizon of the Orb’.

C. Reaffirmation of the god’s ownership of Akhet-Aten

“Now, regarding the territorial extent [*literally* “breadth”] of ‘Horizon of the Orb’, mountain to mountain, starting from the eastern horizon of the sky [to] the western horizon of the [sky], it shall belong to my Father, THE ATEN, given life everlastingly forever—consisting of its mountain(s) (and) desert lands, consisting of [its marshes and “new lands”, as] well [as] consisting of its sustenance, consisting of its birds, consisting of all its people, consisting of all its herds, consisting of everything which the Orb has brought into being and on which his rays shine, consisting of everything [that is] in the . . . of ‘Horizon of the Orb’. [They] belong to my Father, the living orb, to (be) the Estate of the Orb forever and ever. Their entirety is offered to His Ka, and his brilliant rays receive them.” (Murnane and van Siclen III, 1993), 99–104, 196

## NOTES

1. Psychologists have long argued that human beings cannot create anything without reference to something that came prior and recent research has focused on physical and religious elements Akhenaten indeed adopted and emulated from his predecessors; see M. Mallinson, “The Sacred Landscape,” in *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun*, ed. R. E. Freed, Y. J. Markowitz, and S. H. D’Auria (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1999), 72–79; M. Mallinson, “Akhetaten—Nothing Comes From Nowhere,” in *Beyond the Horizon: Studies in Egyptian Art, Archaeology and History in Honour of Barry J. Kemp*, ed. S. Ikram and A. Dodson (Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2009), vol. 1: 223–240.

2. Adam T. Smith, *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

3. Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 73–75.

4. Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 75–77.

5. The case of el-Amarna is strikingly different from that of other capitals discussed in this volume, which were copied and emulated in other locations (see Constantinople, Cusco), had to negotiate political and spatial relations with neighbors (see

Tenochtitlan), or experienced changing geopolitical relations as they grew and were altered over time (see Rome, Matera, Tehran).

6. Most important are the many publications by scholars associated with the British Amarna project referenced at their meticulously updated website [www.amarna-project.com](http://www.amarna-project.com). Two major exhibitions about Akhenaten and el-Amarna have generated richly illustrated catalogues with chapters that contextualize the current state of knowledge for wider public audiences: R. E. Freed, Y. J. Markowitz, and S. H. D'Auria, *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1999); David P. Silverman, Josef W. Wegner, and Jennifer Houser Wegner, *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun: Revolution and Restoration* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2006).

7. The latest publication by Barry Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Amarna and Its People* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012) is doing this. The primary referent in this chapter remains the natural and political landscape.

8. Ideology is here understood as an interweave of political ambitions and spirituality.

9. Janet Richards, "Conceptual Landscapes in the Egyptian Nile Valley," in *Archaeologies of Landscape*, eds. Wendy Ashmore and Bernhard Knapp (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 85–91.

10. [www.amarnaproject.com](http://www.amarnaproject.com). This updated website and its extensive links constitutes a treasure trove of most of the information currently available about el-Amarna. Most noteworthy are a three-dimensional model of a large section of the city of el-Amarna produced for the 1999 Amarna exhibition held in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston as well as the extensive bibliography. Most excavation data are accessible (though not via the website) in Barry Kemp, ed., *Amarna Reports I–VI*, Occasional Papers 1, 2, 10, Occasional Publications 4–6 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1984–1987, 1989, 1995). A brilliant summary of the current understanding is Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*.

11. Cyril Aldred, "The Horizon of the Aten," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 62 (1976): 184.

12. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 45.

Since this records the essential founding event of el-Amarna, the full text of Sections I and IV of the Earlier Proclamation are given here:

I. Regnal year 5, IV Peret 13 (a): Live the Good God, who rejoices [in Ma'at], Lord of heaven, lord of [earth]; the [great living] o[rb] who illumines the two banks (b); (my [?]) Father (c), THE ATEN; the great living orb who is in jubilee within the [House] of the Orb (d) in 'Horizon of the Orb'.

IV. On this day, when One was in 'Horizon of [the Orb],' his Majesty [appeared] (o) upon the great chariot of electrum, like the orb when He

rises in His horizon and fills the land with the [lo]ve [and pleasantness (?) of] the Orb (p).

Setting [off] on a good road [toward] 'Horizon of the Orb' (q), His place of the primeval occurrence, which He made for Himself that He might set within it daily, (and) which His son Waenre made—His great monument, which He founded for himself; His horizon, [in which the circuit] comes into being (r), He being [behe]ld with joy (s), the land being in rejoicing (and) every heart in exultation when they see Him.

There was presented a great oblation to the Father, THE ATEN, consisting of bread, beer, long- and short-horned cattle, calves, fowl, wine, fruits, incense, all sorts of fresh green plants, and everythi[ng] good in f[ront of] (t) the mountain of 'Horizon of the Orb'; [and there was caused the o]ffering (u) of a [go]od [and pure] libation (v) on behalf of the life, prosperity and health of the Lord of the Two Lands, Neferkheprure-Waenre.

After this were performed the rites of the Orb (w), who was [satis]fied (x) with what was done for Him. One rejoiced, and the heart [of this god (?)] was joyous [concerning] 'Horizon of the Orb' with exuberant delight (y), while resting over [His] place so that he could be glad concerning it and concerning the raising up of His beauty [in it daily and in the course of every day (?)] (x). And his [Majes]ty was in the presence of his Father THE ATEN, the rays of the orb being upon him in life, stability, [dominion, health and joy (?)] (aa) fore]ver and ever. (William J. Murnane and Charles C. van Sicklen III, *The Boundary Stelae of Akhenaten* [London: Kegan Paul International, 1993], 35–37)

13. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 46–48.
14. Richards, "Conceptual Landscapes," 85–91.
15. Richards, "Conceptual Landscapes," 91–95.
16. Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 8.
17. Richards, "Conceptual Landscapes," 95.
18. Mark Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 83.
19. Richards, "Conceptual Landscapes," 95–98.
20. [http://www.amarnaproject.com/pages/amarna\\_the\\_place/boundary\\_stelae/index.shtml](http://www.amarnaproject.com/pages/amarna_the_place/boundary_stelae/index.shtml), accessed August 17, 2013.
21. [www.amarnaproject.com](http://www.amarnaproject.com).
22. Norman de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El-Amarna*, vol. 5, *Smaller Tombs and Boundary Stelae* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund 1908. Reprinted by the Egypt

Exploration Society, 2004). Davies covered all monuments known at his time and recorded their architectural features as well as their inscriptions.

23. William J. Murnane and Charles C. van Sicklen, *The Boundary Stelae of Akhenaten* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993).

24. See Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, vol. 5.

25. In the first proclamation Akhenaten sets out his intentions. It is dated to his regnal year 5, 4th month of winter, day 13:

‘On this day, when One (Pharaoh Akhenaten) was in Akhetaten, His Majesty [appeared] on the great chariot of electrum . . . Setting [off] on a good road [toward] Akhetaten, His place of creation, which He made for Himself that He might set within it every day . . . There was presented a great offering to the Father, The Aten, consisting of bread, beer, long- and short-horned cattle, calves, fowl, wine, fruits, incense, all kinds of fresh green plants, and everything good, in front of the mountain of Akhetaten . . .’

The king addresses his gathered courtiers:

‘As the Aten is beheld, the Aten desires that there be made for him . . . as a monument with an eternal and everlasting name. Now, it is the Aten, my father, who advised me concerning it, [namely] Akhetaten. No official has ever advised me concerning it, not any of the people who are in the entire land has ever advised me concerning it, to suggest making Akhetaten in this distant place. It was the Aten, my fath[er, who advised me] concerning it, so that it might be made for Him as Akhetaten . . . Behold, it is Pharaoh who has discovered it: not being the property of a god, not being the property of a goddess, not being the property of a ruler, not being the property of a female ruler, not being the property of any people to lay claim to it . . .’

‘I shall make Akhetaten for the Aten, my father, in this place. I shall not make Akhetaten for him to the south of it, to the north of it, to the west of it, to the east of it. I shall not expand beyond the southern stela of Akhetaten toward the south, nor shall I expand beyond the northern stela of Akhetaten toward the north, in order to make Akhetaten for him there. Nor shall I make (it) for him on the western side of Akhetaten, but I shall make Akhetaten for the Aten, my father, on the east of Akhetaten, the place which He Himself made to be enclosed for Him by the mountain . . .’

‘I shall make the “House of the Aten” for the Aten, my father, in Akhetaten in this place. I shall make the “Mansion of the Aten” for the Aten, my father, in Akhetaten in this place. I shall make the Sun Temple of the [Great King’s] Wife [Nefernefruaten-Nefertiti] for the Aten, my father, in

Akhetaten in this place. I shall make the “House of Rejoicing” for the Aten, my father, in the “Island of the Aten, Distinguished in Jubilees” in Akhetaten in this place . . . I shall make for myself the apartments of Pharaoh, I shall make the apartments of the Great King’s Wife in Akhetaten in this place.’

‘Let a tomb be made for me in the eastern mountain of Akhetaten. Let my burial be made in it, in the millions of jubilees which the Aten, my father, has decreed for me. Let the burial of the Great King’s Wife, Nefertiti, be made in it, in the millions of yea[rs which the Aten, my father, decreed for her. Let the burial of] the King’s Daughter, Meritaten, [be made] in it, in these millions of years. If I die in any town downstream, to the south, to the west, to the east in these millions of years, let me be brought back, that I may be buried in Akhetaten. If the Great King’s Wife, Nefertiti, dies in any town downstream, to the south, to the west, to the east in these millions of years, let her be brought back, that she may be buried in Akhetaten. If the King’s Daughter, Meritaten, dies in any town downstream, to the south, to the west, to the east in these millions of years, let her be brought back, that she may be buried in Akhetaten. Let a cemetery for the Mnevis Bull [be made] in the eastern mountain of Akhetaten, that he may be buried in it. Let the tombs of the Chief of Seers, of the God’s Fathers of the [Aten . . . ] be made in the eastern mountain of Akhetaten, that they may be buried in it. Let [the tombs] of the priests of the [Aten] be [made in the eastern mountain of Akhetaten] that they may b[e bur]ied in it.’ (www.amarna project.com)

26. On the ground, the two stelae are out of sight from each other. Topographically, Stela X more precisely aligns with Stela B on the west side yet they cannot define the northern border since such a scenario would leave Stela A outside the city limits (figure 1.4). We begin to see that the clear and mathematically structured layout of el-Amarna as articulated by Akhenaten in his oaths does not match the realities on the ground. We have to treat it as an idealized construct, as Akhenaten’s imaginative vision of his capital that is partly materialized.

27. A full build-out of the Bay of Amarna would have been very difficult due to problems with water supply. The main sources of water in the city were wells dug down from the desert surface. The farther that buildings were situated away from the Nile floodplain, the deeper the wells had to be cut in order to reach the water table. It proved impractical to extend the settlements much more than half a mile into the desert (Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 57; Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, 53–55).

28. www.amarnaproject.com, Amarna the Place, Boundary Stelae.

29. Dominic Montserrat, *Akhenaten History: Fantasy and Ancient Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2000), 21–23.
30. Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, 50.
31. Mallinson, “The Sacred Landscape,” 75–76.
32. See also Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, 37–39.
33. For an alternative reconstruction of the Royal Road, see *ibid.*, fig. 2.1.
34. My discussion of El-Amarna city follows Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 57–91, unless noted otherwise.
35. Charles Gates, *Ancient Cities* (London: Routledge, 2003), 114.
36. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 61.
37. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 63. See also David O. Connor, “City and Palace in New Kingdom Egypt,” *Cahier de recherches de l’Institut de papyrologie et d’egyptologie de Lille, Encyclopedie universitaire* 11, 11 (1989), 86.
38. Ian Shaw, “Balustrades, Stairs and Altars in the cult of the Aten at el-Amarna,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 80 (1994): 109–127.
39. See David O’Connor, “City and Palace,” 73–74, for a synopsis of the literature about Egyptian royal palaces up to his time.
40. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 66.
41. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 68–69.
42. Jelena Bogdanović alerted me to this possibility.
43. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 71–77.
44. Paraphrased by Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 77–79.
45. See also David O’Connor, 1989.
46. See, for example, Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 156.
47. Shaw, *Balustrades, Stairs and Altars*, 109–127.
48. Shaw, *Balustrades, Stairs and Altars*, fig. 5.
49. Another architectural parallel may exist in the balconies of the Great Palace from which the royal family made ceremonial appearances that cast them in the aura of divine cult images (Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 23). The iconography and setting of the boundary stelae may have been perceived like palace balconies by the attending court audience.
50. The precise east-west axis forms a straight line from the Royal Wadi to the Small Aten Temple (see Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, fig. 4.4). The more general and symbolically charged east-west direction includes Stela U and the Great Aten Temple.
51. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 50.
52. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 93–103; David O’Connor, 1989, 86.
53. See, for example, the analysis of the “Palette of Narmer” by Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 149–152.

54. Alternate scholarly approaches have emphasized that during the New Kingdom before Akhenaten, urbanism in Egypt was in a state of change: old crowded towns were abandoned and relocated to new spacious sites on level ground on the adjacent flood plains (for instance, Memphis). From this perspective, el-Amarna would not be unique but simply constitute one example of this changing form of urban design. Barry Kemp, "The City of el-Amarna as a Source for the Study of Urban Society in Ancient Egypt," *World Archaeology* 9/2 (1977): 123–139, esp. 126.

55. Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 75–77.

56. Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 21. For example, the dead whose bodies had been made permanent through mummification became *akb*-spirits. Thus Akhenaten's new name implied bodily integrity and his liminal status as intercessor between humans and their gods.

57. Lehner, *Complete Pyramids*, 24.

58. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 117–120.

59. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 105, allude to evidence that people from cities throughout Egypt were forced to relocate at el-Amarna.

60. Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 182.

61. See, for example, Smith, *Political Landscapes*, 182–183.

62. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 105–107; Kemp, *The City of el-Amarna*, 123–139.

63. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 107–115.

64. Anna Stevens, "The Material Evidence for Domestic Religion at Amarna and Preliminary Remarks on Its Interpretation," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 89 (2003): 143–168.

65. Stevens, "The Material Evidence," 145–146.

66. Stevens, "The Material Evidence," 149–158.

67. Dominic Montserrat warns that art historians have often misinterpreted the realistic el-Amarna style showcasing Akhenaten and his family as snapshots of royal life and biographical documents. Those scenes on stelae set up on shrines in private houses were clearly religious objects where residents would approach the king and his wife as intermediaries to petition a favor from the Aten (Montserrat, *Akhenaten History*, 44–45).

68. Stevens, "The Material Evidence," 158–159.

69. It is intriguing to note here that Akhenaten's loyalty to Aten was not absolute. He himself integrated older deities into the Aten worship: up to year 9 of his reign, he and his wife Nefertiti frequently identified themselves with and presented themselves as Shu, the god of air, and Tefnut, the goddess of moisture. Shu and Tefnut occupied the space between earth and sky and were believed to greet the rising sun. Such qualities made them fitting analogies for the royal couple and traditional deities to be memorialized (Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 37–38).



From a human psychological perspective, it would have been a daunting task and nearly impossible to alter the religious mindset and the hearts of the populace in a short decade. Some scholars have argued that the social base of Akhenaten's religious reforms may indeed have been narrow and that he primarily targeted the audience of his expanded court (Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 23, 37). These elites and official visitors would have been the individuals privileged to view the non-public monuments and knowledgeable to read the texts and comprehend their ideological claims.

70. Mallinson, "The Sacred Landscape," 75.

71. See, for example, Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 147–159.

72. I have located one example from the "House of Rejoicing of the Aten." This building once had painted pavements depicting naturalistic scenes of animals frolicking in their habitat juxtaposed by bound enemies of Egypt. Both nature and foreigners were symbolically conquered as people walked on the pavement (Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 45).

73. Silverman et al., *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 40–41.

74. Mallinson, "The Sacred Landscape," 72.

75. Excerpt from the Later Proclamation after M. Lichtheim (trans.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. 2: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 51.