

Images of Amenhotep IV and Nefertiti in the Style of the Previous Reign *

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There is no doubt about the great scholarship of Bill Murnane as his publications speak for themselves. Few Egyptologists outside of the members of the Karnak Mission that he led were around Bill on a daily basis. For several years Bill and his staff also stayed at the Windsor Hotel in Luxor, during their field seasons. We of the Amenmesse Project also stayed there for some years during our early work in the Valley of the Kings. This put us into contact on several levels with him from breakfast to some evening meals and at times some after working hours discussions of many of the same issues and topics published in this commemorative volume. Bill was a quiet, thoughtful man immersed in many periods in ancient history, especially those in Egypt. He was willing to share his insights with anyone who asked or cared to discuss an issue. He is obviously missed as a beloved individual, but also to many, he is missed for the loss of insight into problems left unstudied and unpublished that will not now be investigated by this brilliant scholar. To him and his memory this brief article is dedicated. (And, thanks again for all the good bakery bread you often brought to breakfast.)

When one speaks of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, Amarna style representations often come to mind. These images are ‘mannered’ and apparently distorted since later renderings of these two historic individuals show them in a less artificial style with ‘near-normal’ proportions and features.

Representations of Amenhotep IV are known from early in his reign. These images are in the style used by the carvers who decorated for his father, Amenhotep III. None of the distortions so familiar from what Cyril Aldred has termed the ‘Early Period’ of the Amarna Style¹ are shown in a few renderings of him like an example from Theban Tomb 55 of Ramose, Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten’s southern vizier.² A description of this tomb indicates that:

“The north-west wall of the great hall of pillars has reliefs dating from the years immediately following the death of Amenhophis III on both sides of the doorway... Of these reliefs, those on the left of the door clearly belong to the earliest period of the reign of Amenhophis IV, certainly no later than the third regnal year. The king is shown seated on a throne beneath a canopy with the

* This article is based on my presentation in Tucson, Arizona at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, April 17, 2004. It has been enlarged since then.

¹ C. Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum / Viking Press, 1973), pp. 48-57 and *passim*.

² K. Lange and M. Hirmer, *Egypt: Architecture, Painting, Sculpture in Three Thousand Years* (New York: Phaidon, 1968), p. 449. This scene of the king and Maat is illustrated in W. S. Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, revised with additions by W. K. Simpson (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), fig. 256 and in a larger format in the 1958 edition, pl. 115. For a line drawing see N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1941), pl. XXIX.

goddess Maat seated behind him. The whole of the scene is executed in the style of the reign of Amenhotep III.”³

A sandstone block (Berlin 2072) with the god Re-Harakhty facing left and the king facing right is another example of Amenhotep IV’s image in the style of his father’s reign.⁴ The king wears a *khepresh* crown and his features are not distorted. The images are in raised relief. The scenes from the tomb of Kheruef (TT 192)⁵ show Amenhotep IV on both ends of a lintel along with his mother Queen Tiy. They make offerings to Re-Harakhty and Maat on the left while on the right they offer to Atum and Hathor, all in the style of Amenhotep III. Another relief (Louvre E 13482) portrays the king with the baby-face features found in the reign of his father, but with the additional feature of a protruding belly.⁶

After a discussion of the two scenes in different styles in the tomb of Ramose of Amenhotep IV in a pavilion with the goddess Maat behind him and the king with Nefertiti in the window of appearances, Cyril Aldred indicated, “We cannot say whether Nefertiti’s appearance underwent a comparable change, since no representation of her is known before the advent of the new style, but it seems likely.”⁷ Aldred was correct when he wrote this statement and his belief that representations of Nefertiti in the style of Amenhotep III were likely. This can now be confirmed, for at least one representation is preserved and one or more are probable based on surviving evidence. A scene on the north-west wall in the tomb of Ramose is considered to have been carved early in the ‘new’ style just coming into vogue with the name change of the king from Amenhotep IV to Akhenaten. Here we see Nefertiti (fig. 5) behind her husband in a window of appearances.⁸ What remains of Nefertiti’s distorted features⁹ mimic many of those of the king from this scene. This distortion is also true of her image on the majority of the *talatat* that we are familiar with from Thebes where her extended jaw and angular features, while not as prominent as those of her husband, are never-the-less distinctive.

³ Lange and Hirmer, *Egypt*, p. 449.

⁴ Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, fig. 30, and R. Freed, Y. Markowitz and S. D’Auria, *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts / Bullfinch Press/Little, Brown and Co., 1999), fig. 75 and no. 20.

⁵ The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef, Theban Tomb 192* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1980), pls. 8-9.

⁶ Freed, fig. 38 and p. 207, no. 21; R. Vergnienx and M. Gondran, *Aménophis IV et les Pierres du soleil. Ahkénaton retrouvé* (Paris: Arthaud, 1997), p. 93. I thank Joann Fletcher for calling this book to my attention. *Talatat* blocks pictured in this book are not as well known in the United States as are those blocks excavated and published by Donald Redford and his team from the Akhenaten Temple Project or those illustrated in G. Roeder, *Amarna Reliefs aus Hermopolis* (Hildesheim: Gebrüder Gerstenberg, 1969).

⁷ Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, p. 54.

⁸ For a drawing of this scene, see Davies, *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose*, pl. XXXIII; Lange and Hirmer, *Egypt*, fig. 38.

⁹ Also visible in Johnson’s close-up photograph are the dual uraei on Nefertiti’s brow, each wearing horns, with one possibly wearing a sun disk.

On lesser known blocks from Karnak, Amenhotep IV and Nefertiti both face left with the queen behind her husband as they bow to kiss the ground:¹⁰ scene number A 0081 (figs. 1-2, 6). A cartouche inscribed with Nefertiti's name and placed in front of her image between the soles of the king's feet and her head makes this identification certain.¹¹ Both the king and queen have long spindly fingers which are more mannered than naturalistic. Similar finger shapes are known from earlier dynasties, but during the reign of Amenhotep III, they are seldom found on royal images. In scenes of dancers in the tomb of Kheruef (TT 192) the dancers' hair hangs down vertically, their hands are 'cupped' near the ground line with curved, but jointless thumbs and fingers.¹² The rays of the Aten, in early representations like those in the tomb of Ramose (see Johnson's photograph, fig. 5) also are without bone structure for all the digits, except the thumb.

In the complete *talatat* scene under study,¹³ the king wears a *khepresh* crown. On the right hand side of A 0081, block number 34-118, the queen wears a tripartite wig surmounted by an undecorated modius and two tall plumes – she is obviously dressed as a goddess (figs. 2 & 6). Two uraei, each topped by sun disks are held in place by a band around her deeply cut wig.¹⁴ A gold browband is present, visible from the front of her heavy wig to her ear. She may wear a very small circular earring.¹⁵ Her face, often angular in representations from Theban *talatat*,¹⁶ is more rounded here with little emphasis on her cheek bones or extended jaw. This is in stark contrast to the representation of King Amenhotep IV in front of her whose sharp angular features and prominent jaw recall many other similar representations from this early time in the reign prior to the move by the king and court to Akhetaten.

There are two relief portraits of Queen Tiy which are quite similar to the *talatat* image of Nefertiti under review. One is the queen from the right end of the Kheruef lintel (fig. 3) mentioned earlier (see note 5 *supra*). There are many similarities to the Nefertiti image. Tiy's modius (on both ends of the lintel) is plain and undecorated. A heavy circlet is placed over her wig. A distinctive and pronounced gold browband extends from brow to ear with the 'tab' of this browband showing under her wig. Individual sections of the wig (locks or curls) are rendered in a similar fashion.

A portrait of Queen Tiy on a relief¹⁷ (Brussels E2157) from the tomb of Userhet (TT 47) also compares well, including those features cited for the Kheruef lintel (right side). A drawing by Elaine Taylor of this image (fig. 4) compares well to the *talatat*

¹⁰ Vergniew and Gondran, *Aménophis IV et les Pierres du soleil*, p. 43, top. I thank both E. C. Brock for his help and Alain Arnaudès, in charge of the documentation of Karnak for the French Egyptian Centre in Luxor, for his assistance in obtaining the photograph of Nefertiti as well as permission to publish it.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73 where the *talatat* blocks which make up the larger scene are assembled.

¹² The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef*, pls. 24, 33-4 and Lange and Hirmer, *Egypt*, pl. 168. The fingers of some other individuals in this same tomb also exhibit this boneless structure of their hands from the knuckles to the finger tips.

¹³ Vergniew and Gondran, *Aménophis IV et les Pierres du soleil*, pp. 73-5, 170-1.

¹⁴ See this author's comments on dual uraei wearing sun disks in "An Amarna Icon Reconsidered: Berlin Relief 15000," *KMT* 15.4 (2004-05), pp. 41-2.

¹⁵ It is difficult to determine if a small earring is present or not. A larger earring is seen in the later statuette of Nefertiti (Berlin 21 263). See D. Arnold, *The Royal Women of Amarna* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), figs. 68-9, 71. The yellow quartzite head of this queen from the Thutmose workshop at Amarna (Berlin 21 220), shows double piercing of the ears in this later work, figs. 66-7.

¹⁶ For examples see Aldred, nos. 23-25, 31 and other especially early works.

¹⁷ C. Aldred, *New Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1961), pl. 85.

carving under study. The overall shape of the faces of each are closer than any other two images of these queens in their rounded softer forms.

Returning to the *talatat* image of Nefertiti (fig. 6), what would account for this difference in rendering the king's and queen's faces in different styles and why is the queen's image in the style of the previous reign?¹⁸ One possibility would be that while the king's image followed a new canon there may not have been a new canon yet designed for images of the queen so she was sculpted as her mother-in-law Queen Tiy had been. Another possibility is favored by this writer, that obviously two different draftsmen/sculptors, carving in different styles, created this scene. Seemingly against this scenario, Cyril Aldred, referring to the two different styles in the tomb of Ramose, indicated regarding the scene of the king with the goddess Maat:

“This scene had not been completed before the companion relief was drawn and partly cut in the new style and with the new subject of Akhenaten and Nefertiti at their Window of Appearances ... albeit by the same craftsman responsible for the traditional style of work.”¹⁹

It is possible that the work in Ramose's tomb followed this formula, but as far as the *talatat* scene under study is concerned this writer's view is that the carver of the king's image on the left worked in the 'new' style while the carver of the queen's face, on the right, worked in the style of Amenhotep III with which he was probably more familiar. It would seem that no time interval elapsed between the carving of each of these figures since they are placed side by side and it is thought that the carved decoration was cut only after the wall blocks were set in place. If Aldred's assumption is correct that the carver of Ramose's tomb (if indeed there was only one master involved) was one craftsman working in both styles, it does not seem to follow that both images, those of the king and queen on the *talatat*, would be created in different styles. The fact that Queen Nefertiti's face does not resemble any of the later inscribed representations of her on *talatat* nor those features of her known images from the studio of Tuthmosis at Akhetaten does not mean that this *talatat* image is the earliest known representation of Nefertiti as queen. At this time it is the only image of her in the style of Amenhotep III's reign. Since the construction of the Aten temple complex in Thebes commenced around the second year of her husband's reign, as Donald Redford believes,²⁰ images like that seen in Ramose's tomb may actually have been carved earlier in the reign, but they are carved in the 'new' style. Important, however, is the fact that this *talatat* image of Nefertiti has to be early in

¹⁸ P. Dorman's comments related to Nefertiti in “The Long Coregency Revisited: Architecture and Iconography: Conundra in the Tomb of Kheruef,” in this volume. Dorman suggests that the status or iconography for Nefertiti may not have been established when Kheruef's lintels were carved and this could support the idea that Nefertiti is shown as a goddess on the *talatat* under study (similar to ways Queen Tiy was at times depicted) in terms of form at the earliest time of Amenhotep IV's reign. Dorman's comments in reference to Kheruef's tomb decoration are, “The relief decoration in Kheruef's tomb ... belongs to the very early period of Amenhotep IV, doubtless to his first two years ... and thus while Nefertiti's rise to unusual ritual status had not yet taken place...” Therefore she may not yet have had her own personal symbols to distinguish her from other queens, but used those of the last reigning queen (Tiy) or at least the sculptors did.

¹⁹ Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, pp. 50-51.

²⁰ Confirmed in an e-mail conversation with Don Redford whom I thank for his assistance.

date, surely within the first year or two of the reign, since a craftsman familiar with the previous style (that of the reign of Amenhotep III) had not yet assimilated the newly desired structure of images for Akhenaten's radical decorative plan. Surprising is the fact that the king appears much more harshly, with angular features and that Nefertiti has a soft serene appearance. The sculptor who had worked for Amenhotep III created an image more like those seen in Amenhotep III's reign, but he did include two features found in other late representations of Nefertiti. I have commented on these in other presentations and papers. These are: virtually an unbroken profile line from the top of the forehead to the tip of the nose without a noticeable depression for the bridge of the nose and a ball-like chin.²¹

Until more images of Nefertiti in the style of Amenhotep III are recognized, this *talatat* proves that she along with her husband were portrayed early in Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten's reign with more examples of his image surviving than her own.

Susan Redford, who has cleared the tomb of Parennefer, has indicated to me in personal communication that, "I agree that there were probably some traditional style representations in the tomb..." Charles Nims had inferred this in an article in 1973 stating, "From the style of the decoration in the tomb [Parennefer] it is almost certain that the king and queen were conventionally represented."²² From the present evidence, Susan believes that:

"There is only one scene in the hall that I can say once depicted Nefertiti and it is my belief that she and her husband are depicted in the Amarna art-style on this wall... On the outside façade, Akhenaten and Nefertiti were shown in the usual Amarna art style offering scene to the sun-disk."

Although this tomb may have been started early in the reign of Amenhotep IV, the sculptors of this tomb may not have relied on any forms from the previous reign, at least not for images of Nefertiti.

The *talatat* block under study depicts Nefertiti in the earlier style of her father-in-law, but the king, Amenhotep IV, was carved in the 'new' style, an unusual circumstance at best. In a similar, but heavily damaged scene, we can see Nefertiti again bowing to kiss the ground apparently in the same style as the undamaged example we have been reviewing.²³ So originally there were at least two and possibly more examples like this of Nefertiti in the style of her father-in-law, Amenhotep III.

²¹ A point of interest while noting the facial structure of Nefertiti on this *talatat*, it may be that we should not so hurriedly exclude Nefertiti as a possible candidate for the ownership of Metropolitan Museum 26.7.1396 (the famous yellow jasper head) if it was in fact not from Amarna, but from Thebes. See Aldred's remarks, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, p. 107. "Probably from Tell el Amarna." The similarity of the *talatat* image here under study of Nefertiti to relief carving of some representations of Queen Tiy could suggest a similarity in the earliest years of the reign also in three-dimensional representations of Nefertiti, depending on the sculptor's experience. See Arnold, *The Royal Women of Amarna*, figs. 27, 29 and her comments on this head included in the chapter, "An Artistic revolution: The early years of King Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten," pp. 35-39.

²² C. Nims, "The Transition from the Traditional to the New Style of Wall Relief under Amenhotep IV," *JNES* 32 (1973), p. 184.

²³ Vergnienx and Gondran, *Aménophis IV et les Pierres du soleil*, p. 172.

Once more Theban *talatat* blocks with their decoration are published and studied we will possibly see more ‘early’ representations of Queen Nefertiti in the style of the previous reign, but perhaps not juxtaposed with those of her husband in the ‘new’ style.

Figures

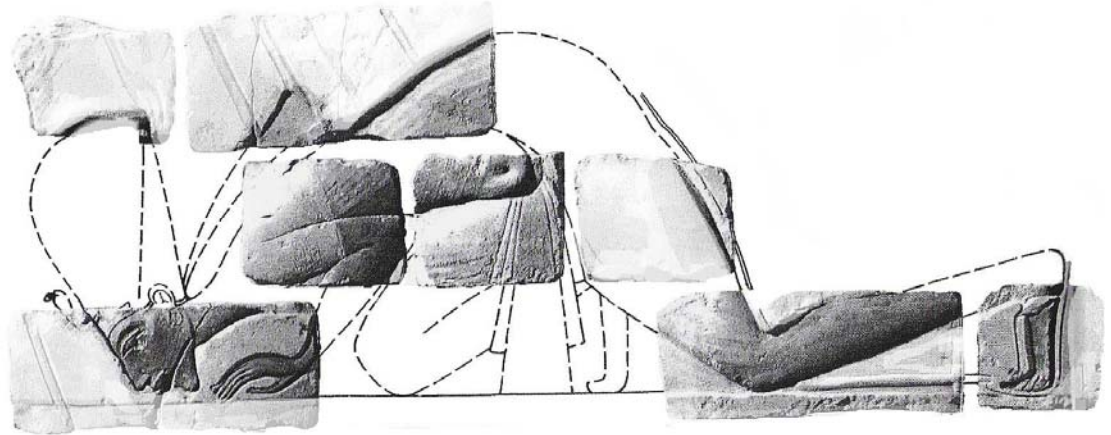


Fig. 1. Akhenaten kissing the ground: Karnak *talatat* assemblage A 0081, after R. Vergnieux and M. Gondran, *Aménophis IV et les Pierres du soleil. Ahkénaton retrouvé* (Paris: Arthaud, 1997), pp. 170-1.

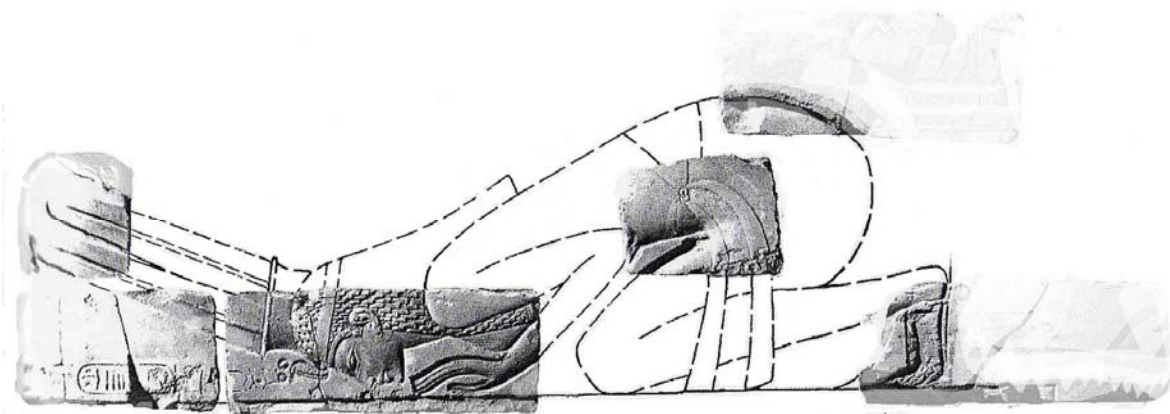


Fig. 2. Nefertiti kissing the ground: Karnak *talatat* assemblage A 0081, after R. Vergnieux and M. Gondran, *Aménophis IV et les Pierres du soleil. Ahkénaton retrouvé* (Paris: Arthaud, 1997), pp. 170-1.

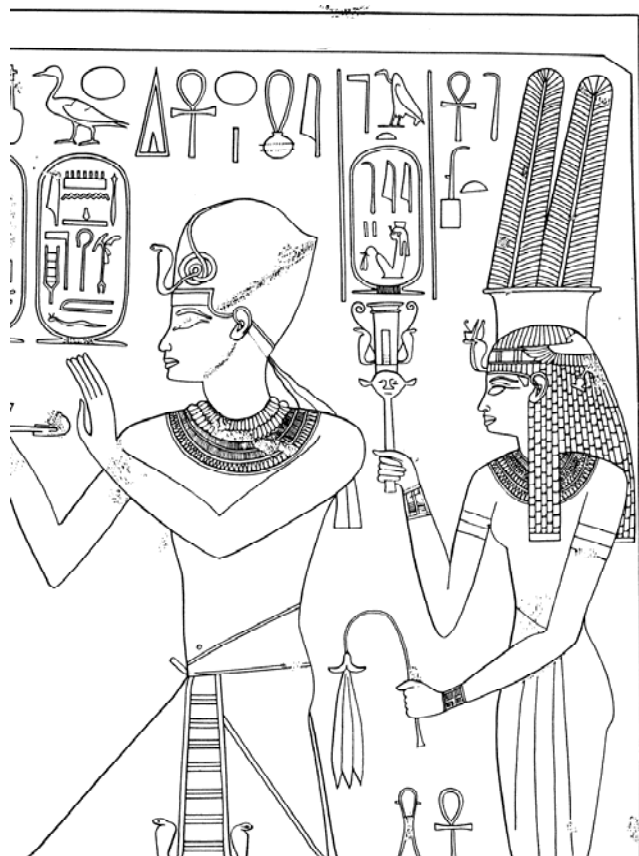


Fig. 3. After the Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef*, pl. 9.



Fig. 4. Brussels E 2157, relief of Tiy from the tomb of Userhet. Drawing by Elaine Taylor.



Fig. 5. Nefertiti in the Window of Appearances, TT 55, Tomb of Ramose. Photograph courtesy of George Johnson.



Fig. 6. Nefertiti *talatat* ©CNRS/CFEETK— A. Bellod.