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The President's Papyrus

Greetings Amarnaphiles,

Well, when I last wrote this piece (January), I had no idea how the world would be changed by the Pandemic. I sincerely hope that all of our members are staying safe and well. The future is still uncertain, however, as the Pandemic is far from over.

Due to the COVID-19 virus, we have postponed Barry Kemp's excavation report, in favor of an article by our own David Pepper that gives an overview of the City of Amarna. One of the benefits of the stay-at-home lockdown is that it has given David the opportunity to do some serious research about Amarna. The next issue of the Sun will also include an article on the Royal Court of Akhenaten, in addition to the usual updates on excavation and conservation work at the site.

The Pandemic has affected all of us in innumerable ways, and it continues to do so, but I would like to remind everyone as Abraham Lincoln said, in times of crisis, "this too shall pass".

Thanks for your continued support! Everyone stay well and stay safe,

With best wishes always,

Floyd

The City of Akhetaten

David Pepper

In the 5th year of his reign, Akhenaten decided to cease ruling from Karnak and move his capital to Amarna, at that time unoccupied ground in Middle Egypt. He called his new city **Akhetaten** (**Akhet**, “the Horizon of,” the **Aten**). Buildings were erected at the new site (e.g. Figure 1), and nearby cemeteries were constructed both for the workers, and the king and his royal court.

Akhetaten occupies a site of about 8 miles (13 km) long, and is situated along the east bank of the Nile, about 250 miles (400 km) north of Luxor. Surrounded by Boundary Stele marking out its territory, the city has three main parts: a Northern section, a Central section, and the Southern Suburbs.

The northern and southern rock-cut tombs for the nobles of the Royal Court were constructed on the cliff faces east of the city, and a sloped shaft tomb for the Royal Family was dug several miles up the nearby Royal Wadi (valley). Two workers’ cemeteries were placed up two small wadis to the east of the city, and a third workers’ cemetery was located on the desert below the tomb of Panehesy. Much of what we know about Akhetaten’s inhabitants comes from the decorated tomb walls in the Noble’s Tombs, and from the archaeological excavation of the city during the past 130 years.

Akhetaten is a very special place as it was abandoned some 12 years after it was built, and – uniquely in Egypt – it is preserved as a snapshot of life during this time. Other Egyptian cities were overbuilt during later periods forming the layered “Tells” that are familiar today.



Figure 1: The North Palace at Akhetaten [1]

Amarna, shown in Figure 2, is the modern name for the ancient city of Akhetaten. The name is derived from a group of people, called the Beni Amran, who occupied the site when it was first 'discovered' by Western travelers



Figure 2: Modern view of Amarna looking towards the south [2]

Figure 3 shows the layout of Akhetaten. Within its boundaries were the North City, the North Suburb, the Central City, the Main City, and the Southern Suburbs..

The major buildings, from north to south, were: the Riverside Palace, the North Palace, the Great Aten Temple, the Great Palace, the so-called Kings House, the Records Office, the House of Life, the Small Aten Temple, the military and police quarters, various storage & administrative buildings, the Kom el Nana, and the Maru Aten.

East of the city is the Royal Tomb, the worker's cemeteries, and the tombs of the nobles who served at Akhenaten's royal court.

Several large estates surrounded by smaller houses of retainers and support staff were scattered throughout the city, and there were associated workshops, stables, and animal pens. Some of the houses have not yet been excavated.

Shortly after Akhenaten's death the 'next' king, Tutankhamun, abandoned the city, only a dozen or so years after it was built. King Tut moved back to Thebes and reinstated Amun as the chief god of Egypt.

Then, around 15 years later (about 1320 BCE), pharaoh Horemheb tore down Akhenaten's buildings at both Thebes and Amarna, destroyed his statues, and purged Akhenaten from the written record.

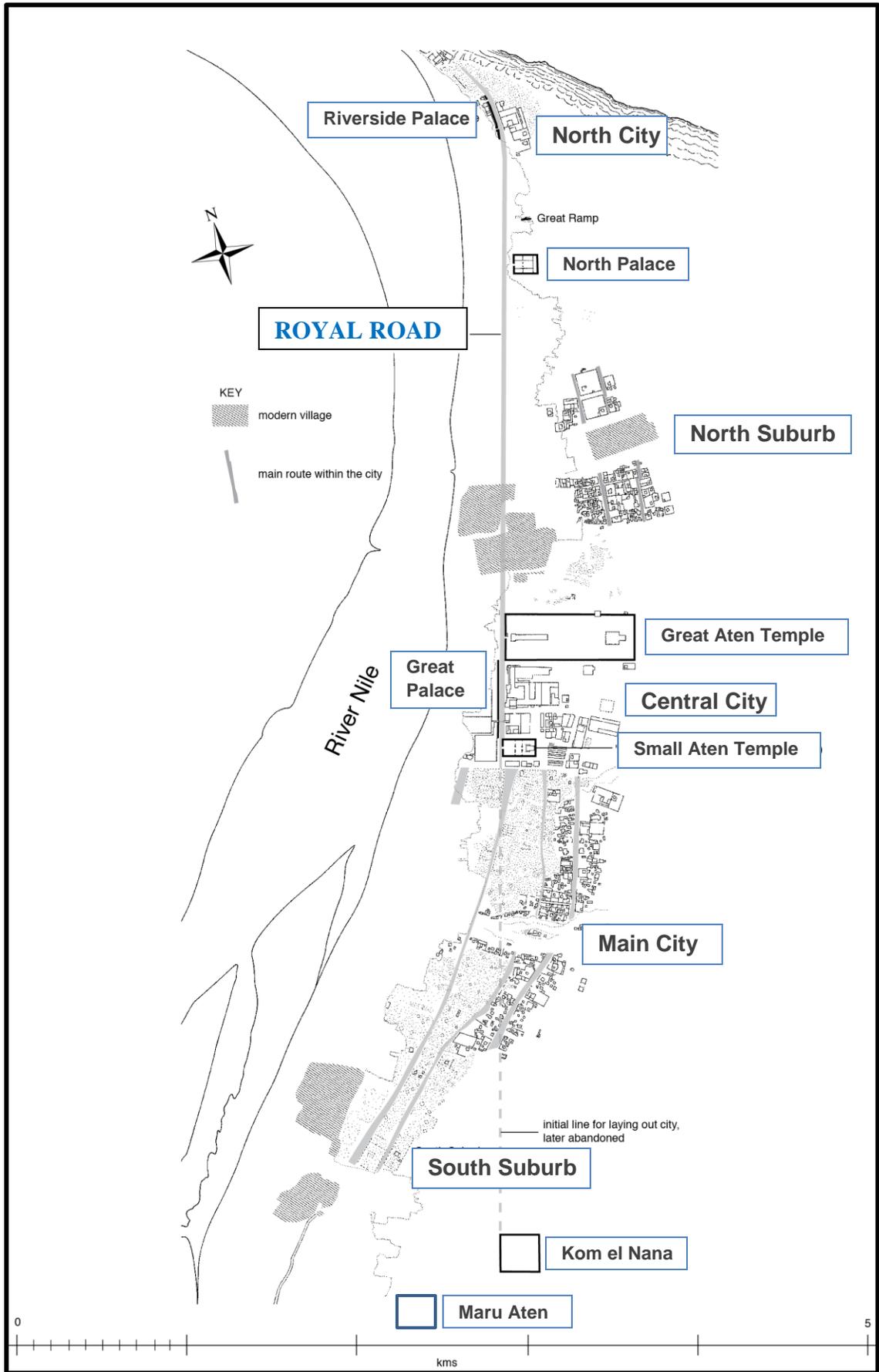


Figure 3: Map of Amarna [3]

The boundaries of the city were marked with a series of markers, called the Boundary Stelae. They enclosed an area approximately 15 miles (25 km) across east-to-west, and 8 miles (13 km) north-to-south. The Amarna 'dry bay' on the east was desert, but the land across the Nile on the west was fertile floodplain.

Each stela was rock-carved with a scene of the royal family at the top and hieroglyphic text below. Rock-carved statues of the royal family and some of their daughters were usually carved on either side. (e.g. Figures 4 & 5)

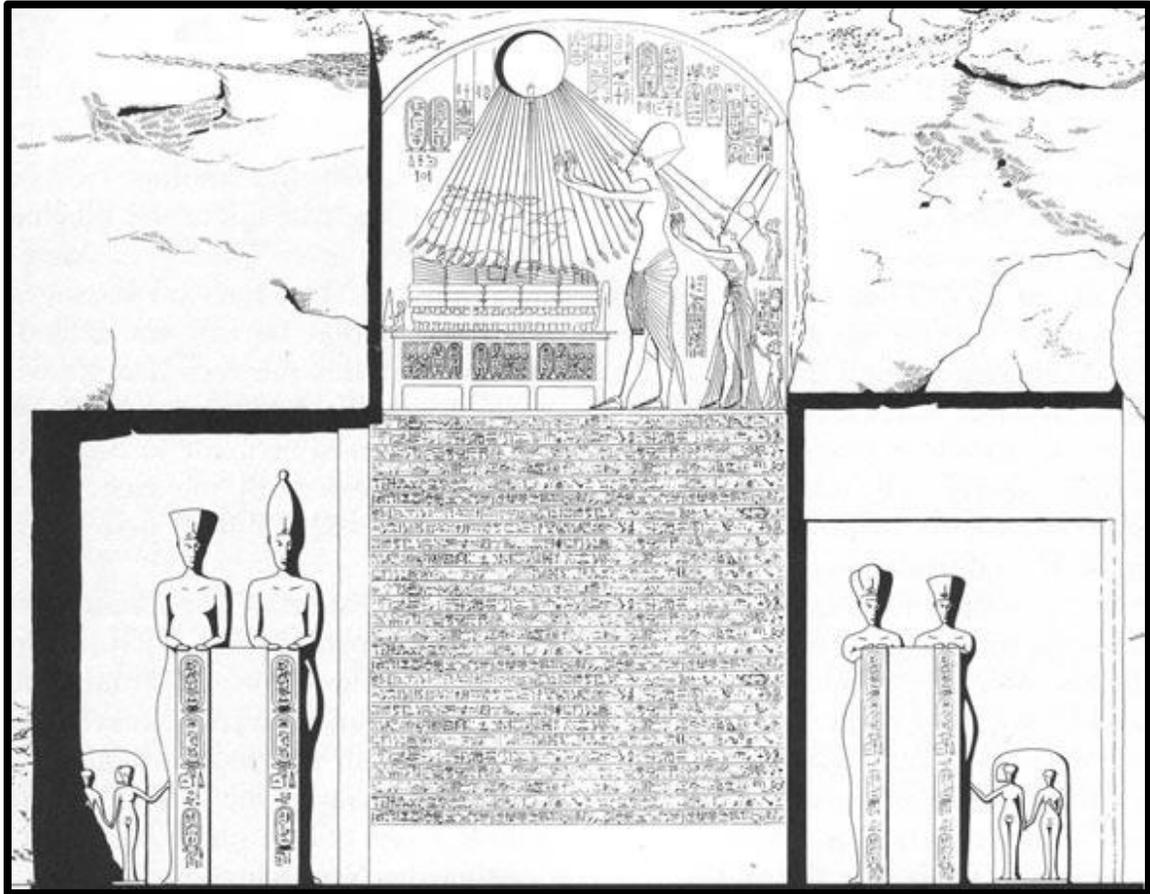


Figure 4: A reconstruction of Boundary Stela N [4]

Sixteen stelae have been found, now designated with capital letters A through X, with gaps left in places for future discoveries. The text is one of two proclamations by Akhenaten, the first carved in the 5th year of his reign, and the second a year later in the 6th year of his reign.

The first proclamation says that Akhenaten appeared on his golden (electrum) chariot and stated that the Aten advised him to build his new city at Akhetaten on virgin land. He goes on to say he will build a great city here and a royal tomb for himself, Nefertiti, and daughter Meritaten.

The second proclamation describes further the boundaries of the city and it dedicates all land enclosed within it to the Aten. Today, most of the stelae are very damaged [5].



Figure 5: Boundary Stela U, with flanking statues [6]

The main road ran north-to-south through the city, and there were several outlying villages and two cemeteries accessed by roads across the desert. Rock cut tombs for the court's nobles are located along the northern and southern cliffs (Figure 6). The Royal Tombs are located up the Royal Wadi, and there are two workers' cemeteries along the northern and southern cliffs.



Figure 6: Pathway along the Northern Tombs [7]

Excavations at Amarna were undertaken by Flinders Petrie in 1891-92, Ludwig Borchardt 1907-14, the Egypt Exploration Society in 1921-36 and 1977-2006, and by the Amarna Trust from 2006-present.

Our “walking tour” of Amarna begins at the north end of the city by the Riverside Palace, which is proposed by Barry Kemp to have been the residence of the king [8]. A scene in Mahu’s tomb (TA 9), Figure 7, shows a building which may be the entrance gate of the Riverside Palace.

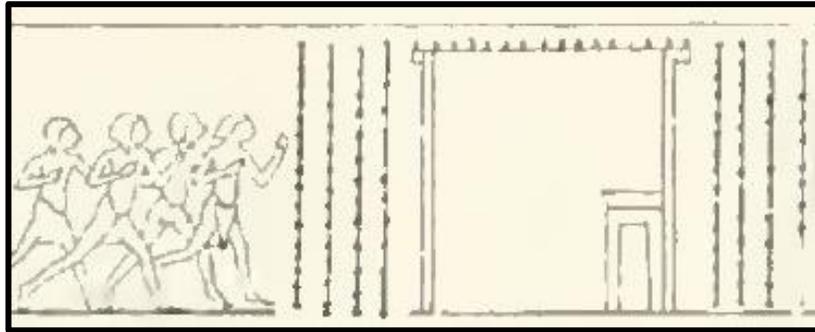


Figure 7: Possible gate of Riverside Palace, tomb of Mahu [9]

A reconstruction of the Riverside palace gate is shown in Figure 8. Figure 9 shows what the gate looked like in 1977.

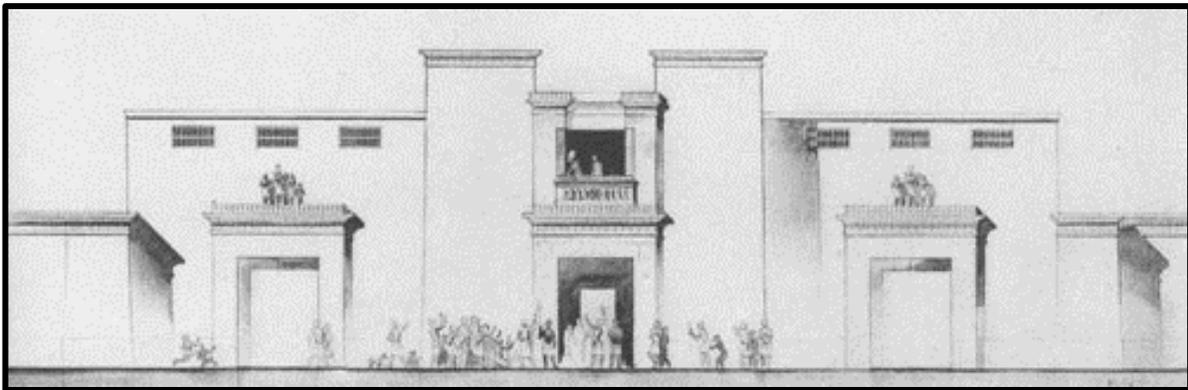


Figure 8: Reconstruction of the gateway façade of the Riverside Palace by Ralph Lavers [10]



Figure 9: The wall of the Riverside Palace with its gateway, taken in 1977 [11]

The façade of the gateway was covered in plaster with colorful scenes, a fragment of which is shown in Figure 10. On the left side it shows the top of a cartouche of the 'birth name' of Akhenaten, prefixed with *sa Ra*, or son of Ra, and on the right side the bee hieroglyph would have been above the king's 'throne name' of *Neferkheperu Ra, wa en Ra*.



Figure 10:Watercolour of painted plaster fragments from the Riverside Palace gateway [12]

Much of the Riverside Palace has been lost, due to a shift eastward of the channel of the Nile, and a band of cultivation that extends from the river bank to the eastern perimeter wall that surrounded the palace. It was a huge building, 886 ft (270 m) in length with a 4.9 ft (1.5 m) thick double wall, separated by a space 23 ft (7 m) wide (Figure 11). The outer wall had square towers or buttresses along its top [13].



Figure 11: The double wall of the Riverside Palace at the south end, looking south, taken at the end of the original 1923 excavation [14]

The next buildings encountered are the North City houses, across the Royal Road from the Riverside Palace. Further to south along the Royal Road is the North Palace (Figures 12 - 15), which lay between the North City and the North Suburbs. Inscriptions show that it may have originally been built for Akhenaten's secondary wife, Kiya. It was later converted into a palace for Meritaten [15].

The North Palace had a large entry court, a central pool, a sunken garden, a sun chapel, a throne room, and a bedroom with a private bath.

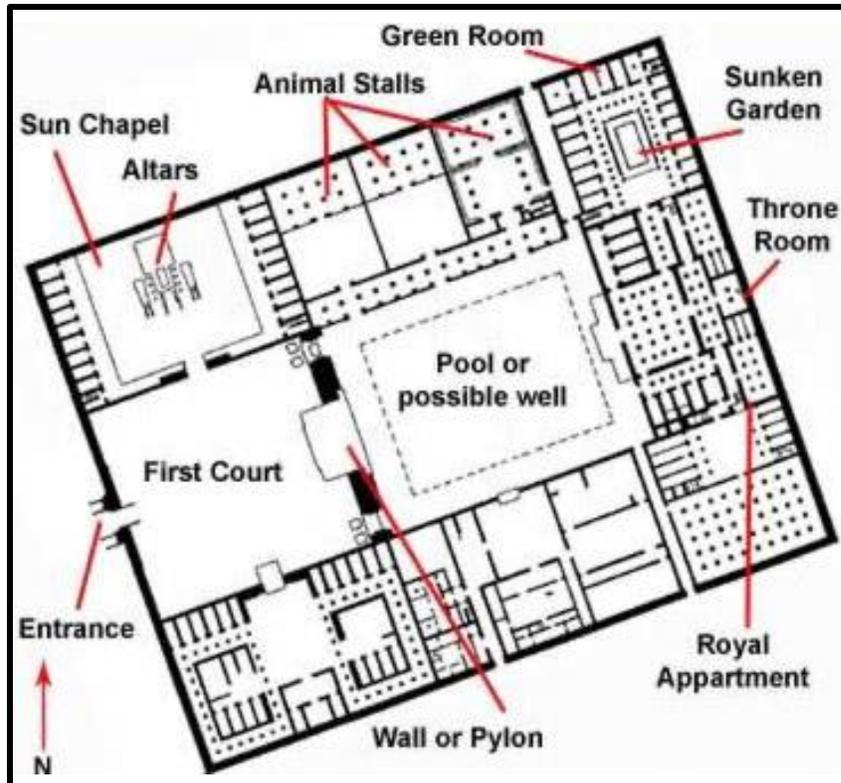


Figure 12: Plan of the North Palace [16]

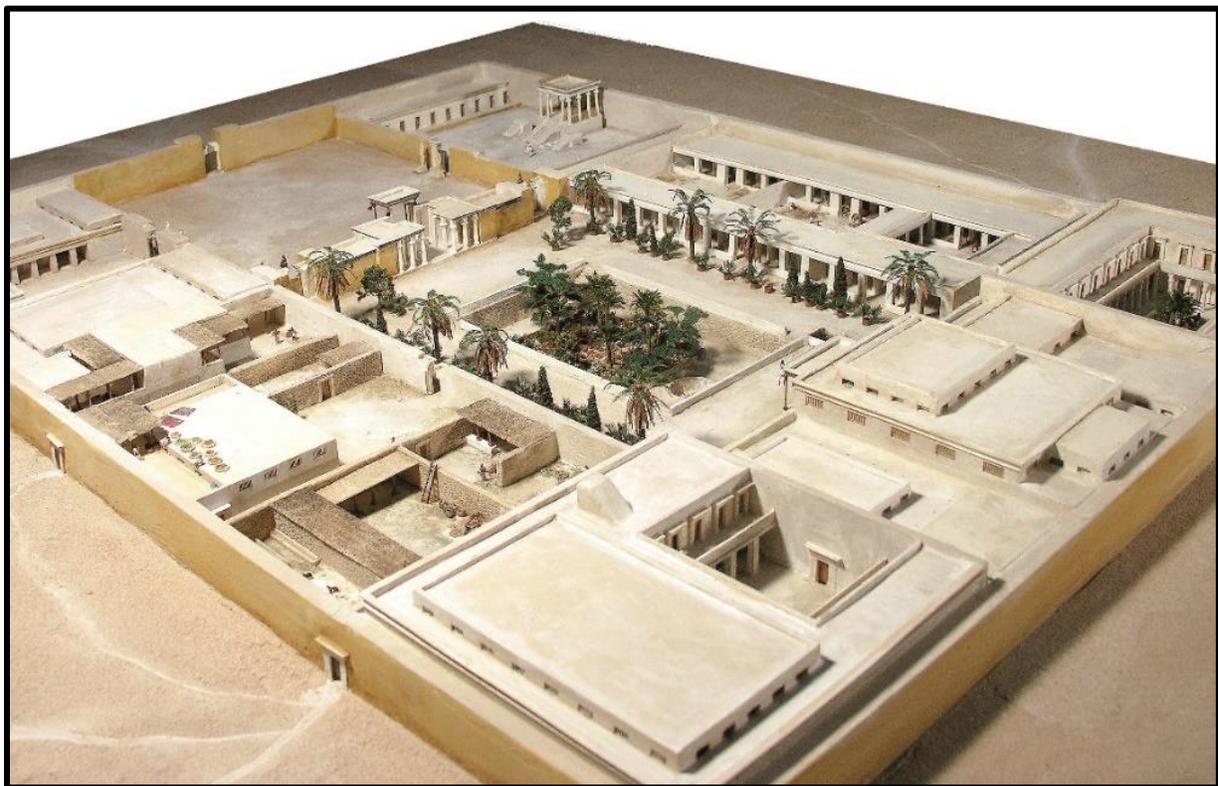


Figure 13: The North Palace, model now in the Amarna Visitor Center [17]



Figure 14: Ruins of the North Palace [18]



Figure 15: Reconstruction of the Green Room [19]

Traveling further south, one reaches the Central City, Figure 16, with its many state buildings. Note that this area was surrounded by desert, and it would not have been as green as shown here.



21- Smenkhkare Hall

Figure 16: The Central City, Amarna [20]

The Great Aten Temple , # 1 in Figure 16, is the largest building at Amarna. It is one of two temples dedicated to the Aten in the city. The main part is sometimes called the Long Temple, and was surrounded by hundreds of offering tables in a huge walled enclosure measuring 2624 ft (800 m) x 984 ft (300 m). The temple itself, shown in Figures 17 and 18, measured 623 ft (190 m) x 108 ft (33 m). It's depicted in tomb scenes of Meryre I, Panehesy, Huya, Ahmes, Penthu and Mahu.



Figure 17: Reconstruction of the Great Aten Temple [21]



Figure 18: Ruins of Great Aten Temple, with modern reconstruction of part of the foundation [22]. The inset shows some of its mud-brick offering tables as found during excavations in 1932 [23]

At Amarna, the Great Palace was located just south of the Great Aten Temple, between the Royal Road and the river. Figures 19 and 20 show two depictions of the palace from the tombs of Meryre I and Ahmes. There may also have been a landing dock leading to one of the Palace entrances, as shown in #17 in Figure 16.

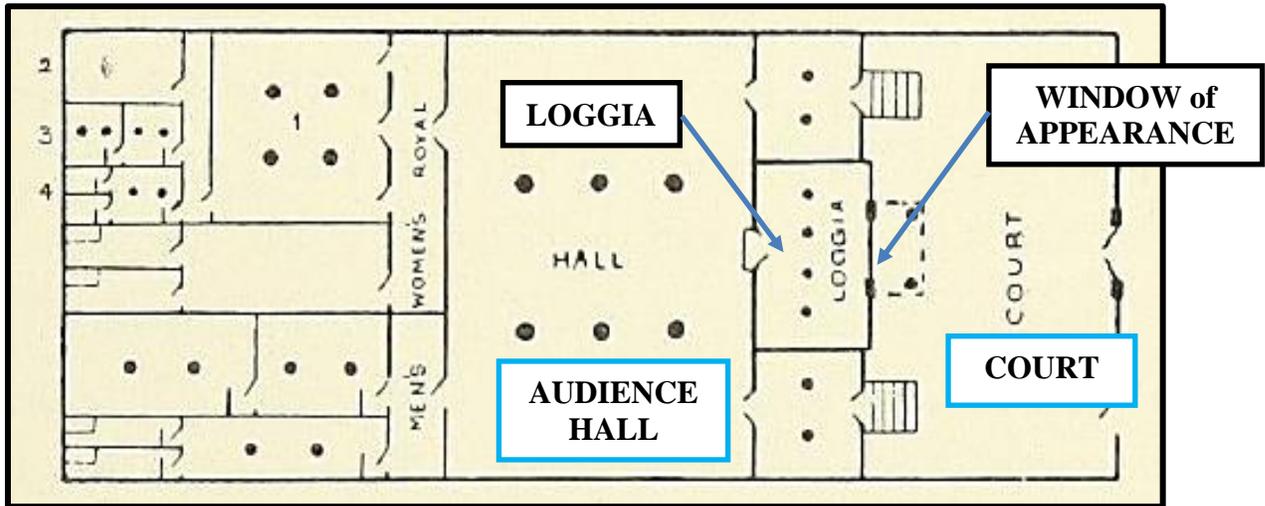


Figure 19: Plan of the Great Palace as shown in tomb of Meryre I [24]

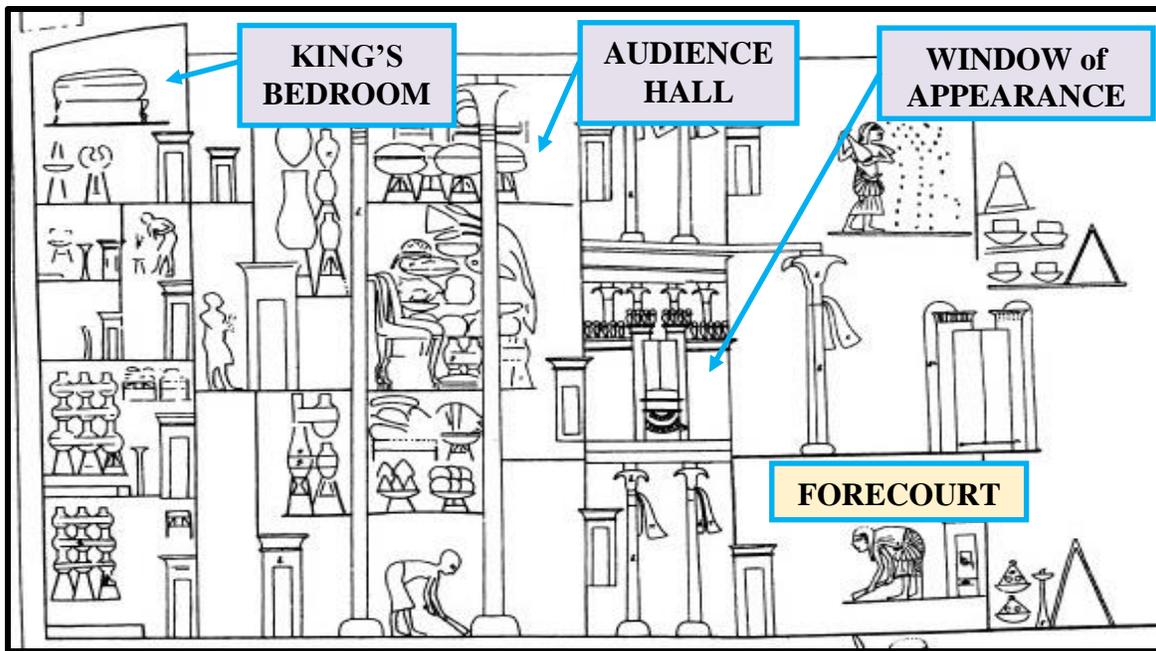


Figure 20: The Great Palace, plan from tomb of Ahmes [25]

Several scenes show Akhenaten and Nefertiti driving chariots to visit the Great Aten Temple, with additional parked chariots awaiting use by members of the court. The north entrance of the palace seems to be depicted in tomb scenes as the starting place of processions to the Great Aten Temple.

Five members of the court (Meryre I, Parennefer, Huya, Panehesy, Tutu, and Ay) show themselves being rewarded by the king with gold collars from a window of appearance, e.g. Figure 21, which was probably in the Great Palace.

From such a window, shown reconstructed in Figure 22, the king rewarded his loyal subjects.

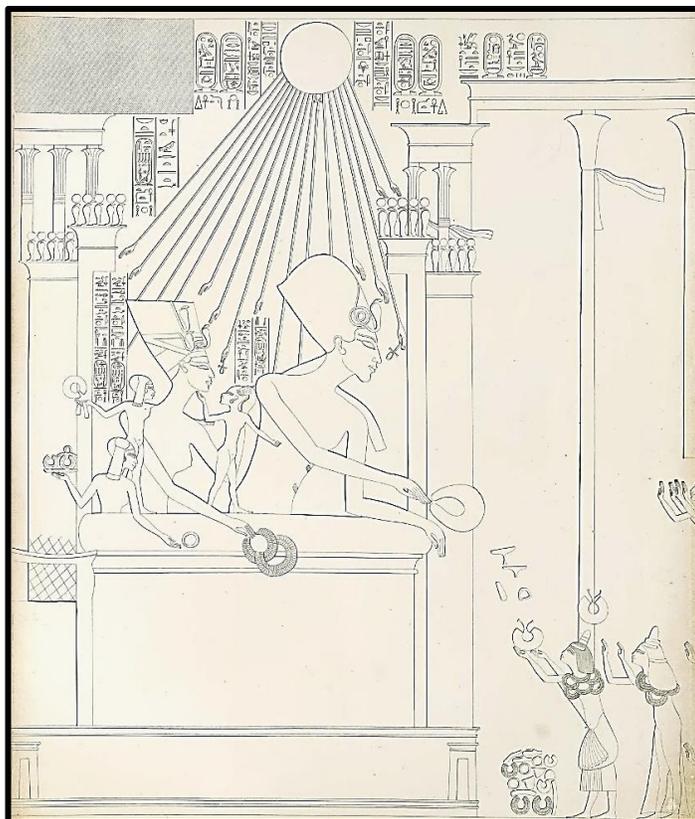


Figure 21: Akhenaten and Nefertiti at the Window of Appearance, tomb of Ay [26]

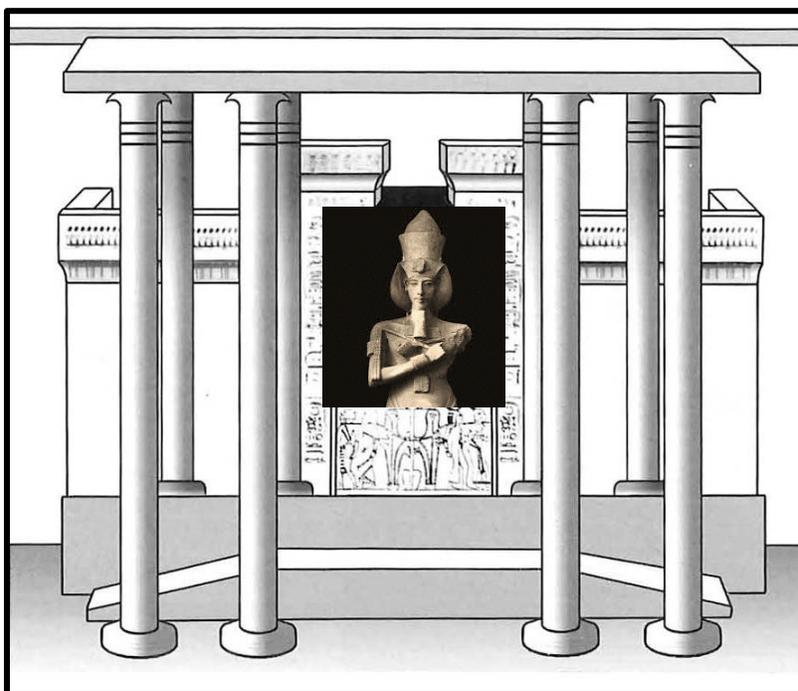


Figure 22: Reconstruction of the Window of Appearance [27]

Windows of Appearance were located in palaces, such as in Amenhotep III's palace at Malkata, and Ramses III's palace at Medinet Habu.

Inside the audience hall was a loggia (receiving platform) on which was mounted a baldachin (canopy), shown in Figures 23 & 24, where thrones for Akhenaten and Nefertiti were mounted. Here, the king could meet with his advisors and receive tribute.

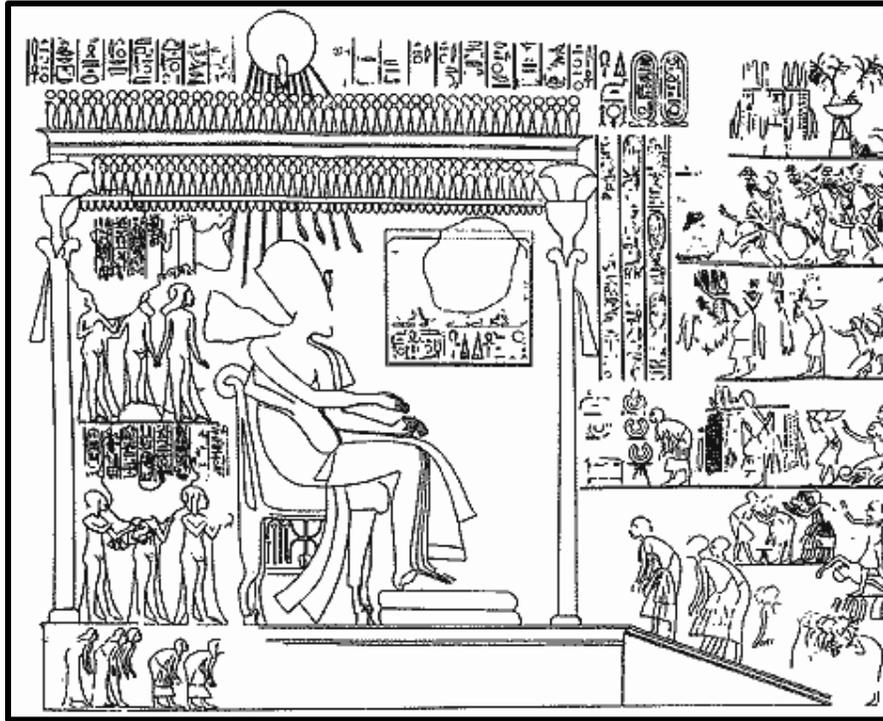


Figure 23: The King receives tribute in his loggia [28]

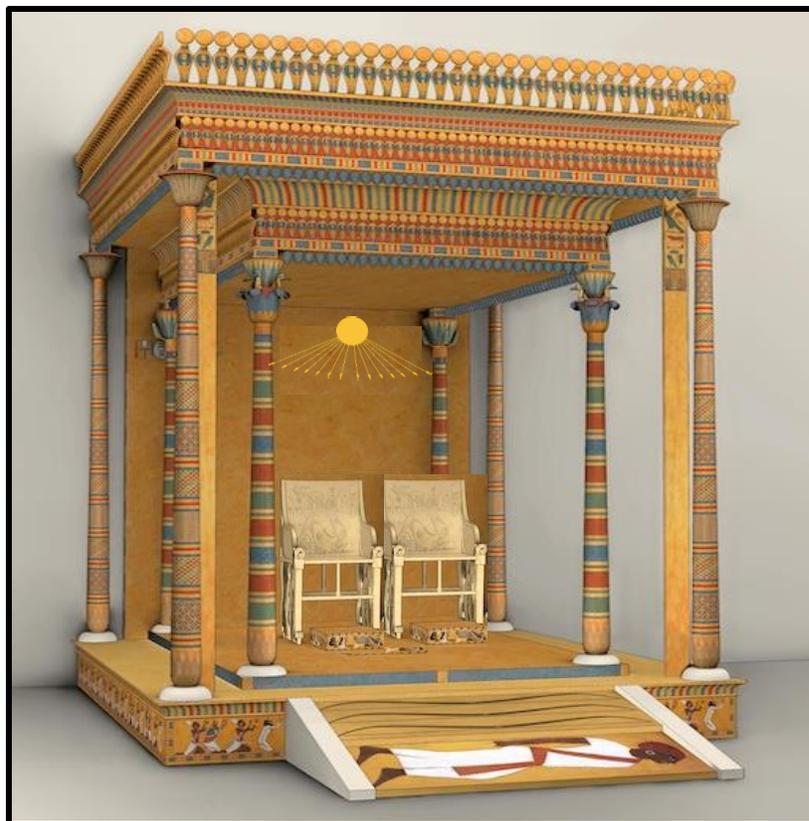


Figure 24: Reconstruction of Akhenaten's loggia and baldachin [29]

In 1891 Flinders Petrie excavated the Great Palace and discovered beautiful painted floors. He temporarily protected them with a building, shown in Figure 25. Parts of the floor are now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Figure 26).



Figure 25: Protective cover over the Great Palace's painted floor [30]



Figure 26: Great Palace floor, now in Cairo [31]

Connected by a bridge over the Royal Road (Figure 27) was a building that modern excavators have called “The King’s House” (Figures 28 - 30). It is in all likelihood, however, an administrative building. Barry Kemp says:

“In a set of written duties, the ‘office of the Vizier’ seems to be part of a larger ‘house of the Vizier’, which in turn, is part of the ‘house of the king’. The King’s House at Amarna seems better fitted to the role of ‘house of the Vizier’ than any other. It has sufficient size and dignity for the holding of court. As befitted the general custodial role of the Vizier, it was also, through the bridge, designed like a funnel into the Great Palace ... The King’s House had a further function. Roughly one third of the building consisted of storerooms (like those shown in the tomb of Meryre I).” [32]



Figure 27: Aerial photo of bridge between the Great Palace & King’s House [33]

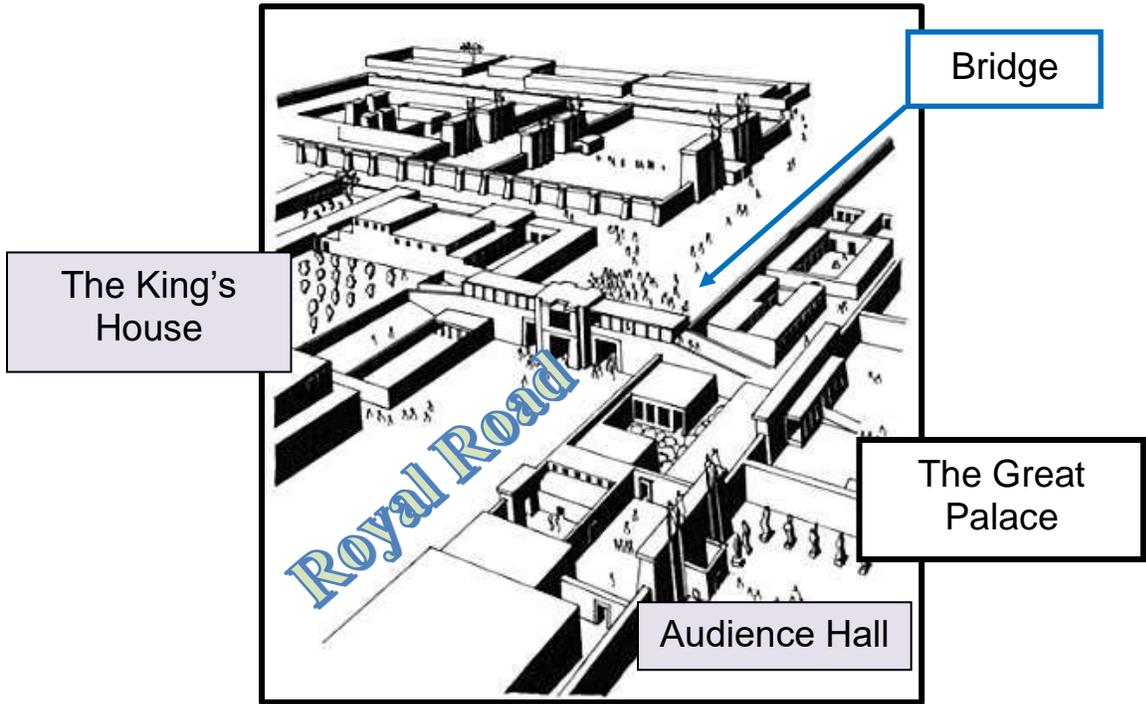


Figure 28: Bridge connecting the King's House to the Great Palace [34]

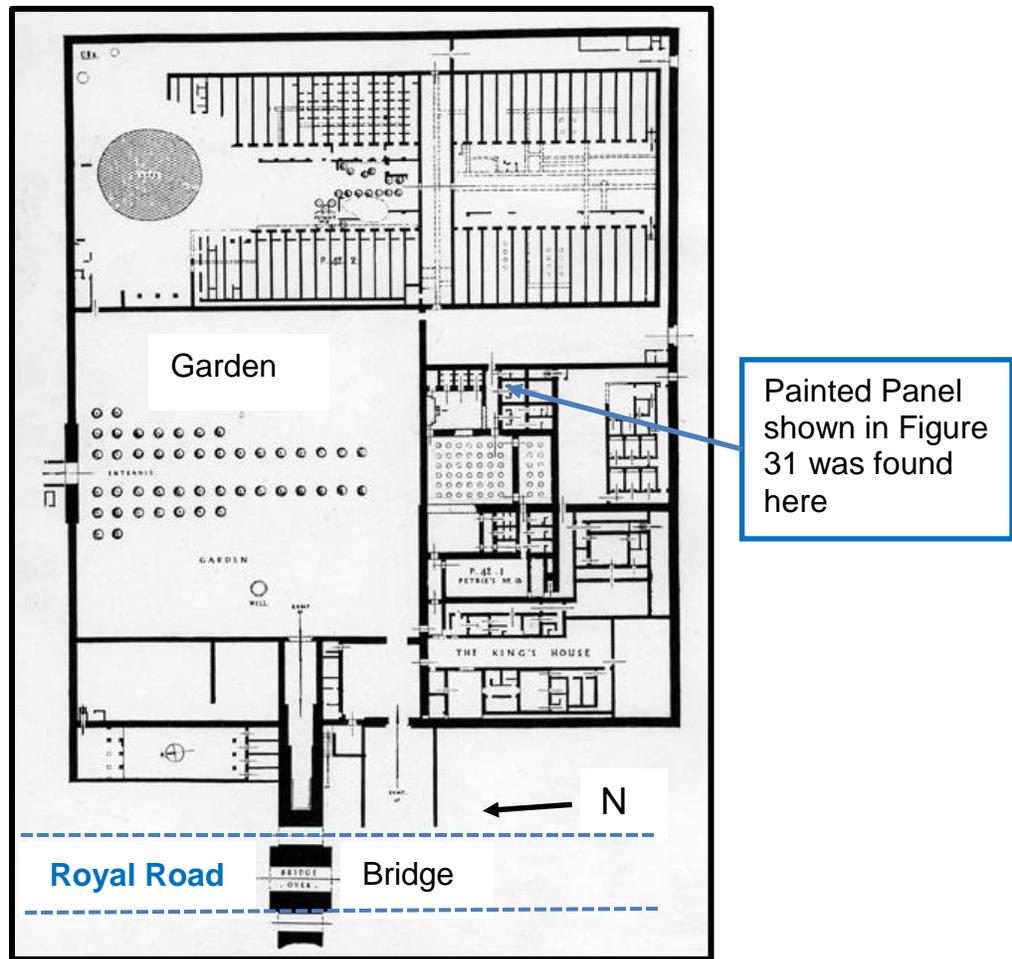


Figure 29: Plan of the King's House: [35]

One wall of the King's House was decorated with the scene, shown in Figure 31, that shows two of Akhenaten's daughters relaxing on cushions. In addition, an outside wall of the King's House was painted with a scene of kneeling captives [36].



Figure 30: Modern view of the King's House, looking towards the east [37]



Figure 31: Painted wall found in the King's House [38]

East of the King's House were numerous mud-brick buildings that included scribal offices, the 'Bureau of Correspondence of Pharaoh' (the Records Office), and the 'House of Life' (a place of learning and study) (Figure 32).



Figure 32: Map of the Central City administrative buildings [39]

Each of the scribal offices had labels naming who the office belonged to. Included in the names were the offices of Royal Scribes Ipy (tomb TA10) and Ahmose (tomb TA3).

Within the Records Office were found the Amarna Letters. These letters were clay tablets in cuneiform of correspondence between Akhenaten and foreign rulers. Three hundred eighty-two letters have been discovered to date. Figure 33 is an example of one of these letters.

Written in Akkadian, the language of international correspondence at the time, some of the letters to Akhenaten were from the kings of Assyria, Mitanni (Syria), Babylonia, Arzawa (western Turkey), Alashiya (Cyprus), Hatti (Turkey), and Egypt's vassal states in Lebanon, and Canaan.

The letter which is shown in Figure 33 is from Egypt's vassal king Abi-milku of Tyre. Written to Akhenaten, it says:

"I fall at your feet 7 times and 7 times. What the king, my lord, ordered, that I have done. The entire land is afraid of the troops of the king, My Lord. I have had my men hold ships at the disposition of the troops of my king, My lord. Whoever disobeyed has no family, has nothing alive. Since I guard the city of my king, my safety is the king's responsibility. May he take cognizance of his servant who is on his side?" [40]

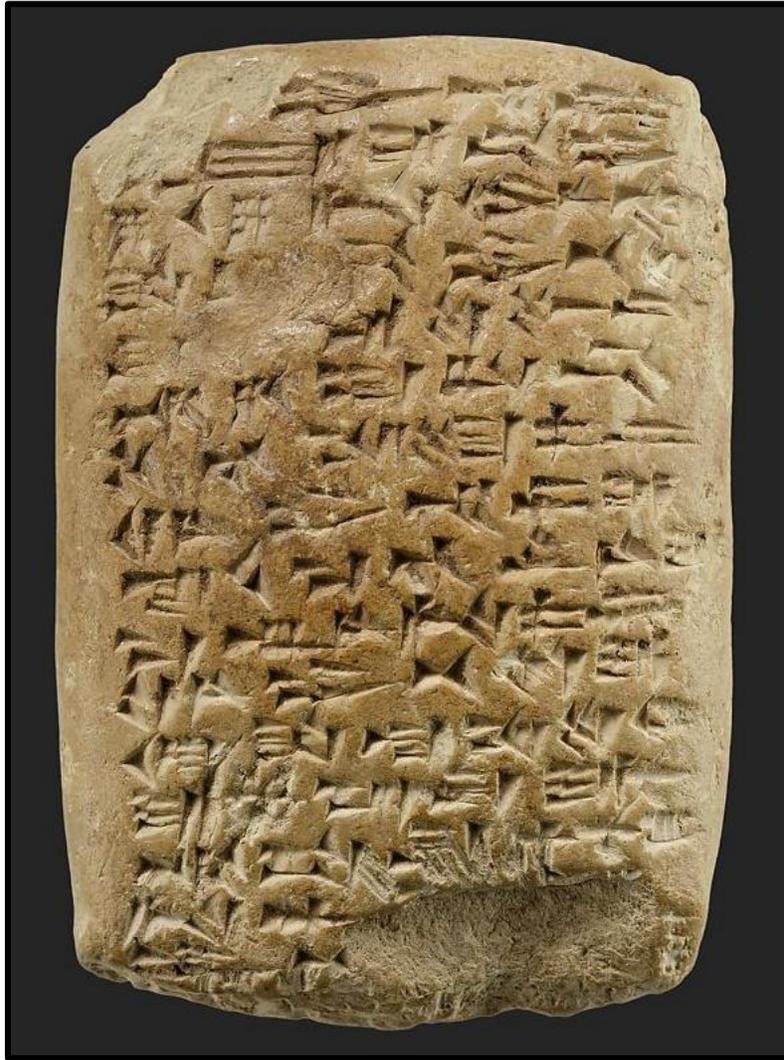


Figure 33: Cuneiform letter from vassal king Abi-milku of Tyre [41]

Kemp says texts of a serious intellectual nature were copied and stored in the House of Life. This building, across the street from the Records Office, served as a center for study and education, attended by both foreign visitors as well as Egyptians. [42]

Storerooms adjoined the scribal building in the City Center. Some had alcoves and supports for (probably wooden) shelves, and chests and jars were also used for storage. Some tomb scenes, e.g. Figure 34, show buildings with rooms of stored commodities, everything from beer and wine jars and chests, to food and offerings.

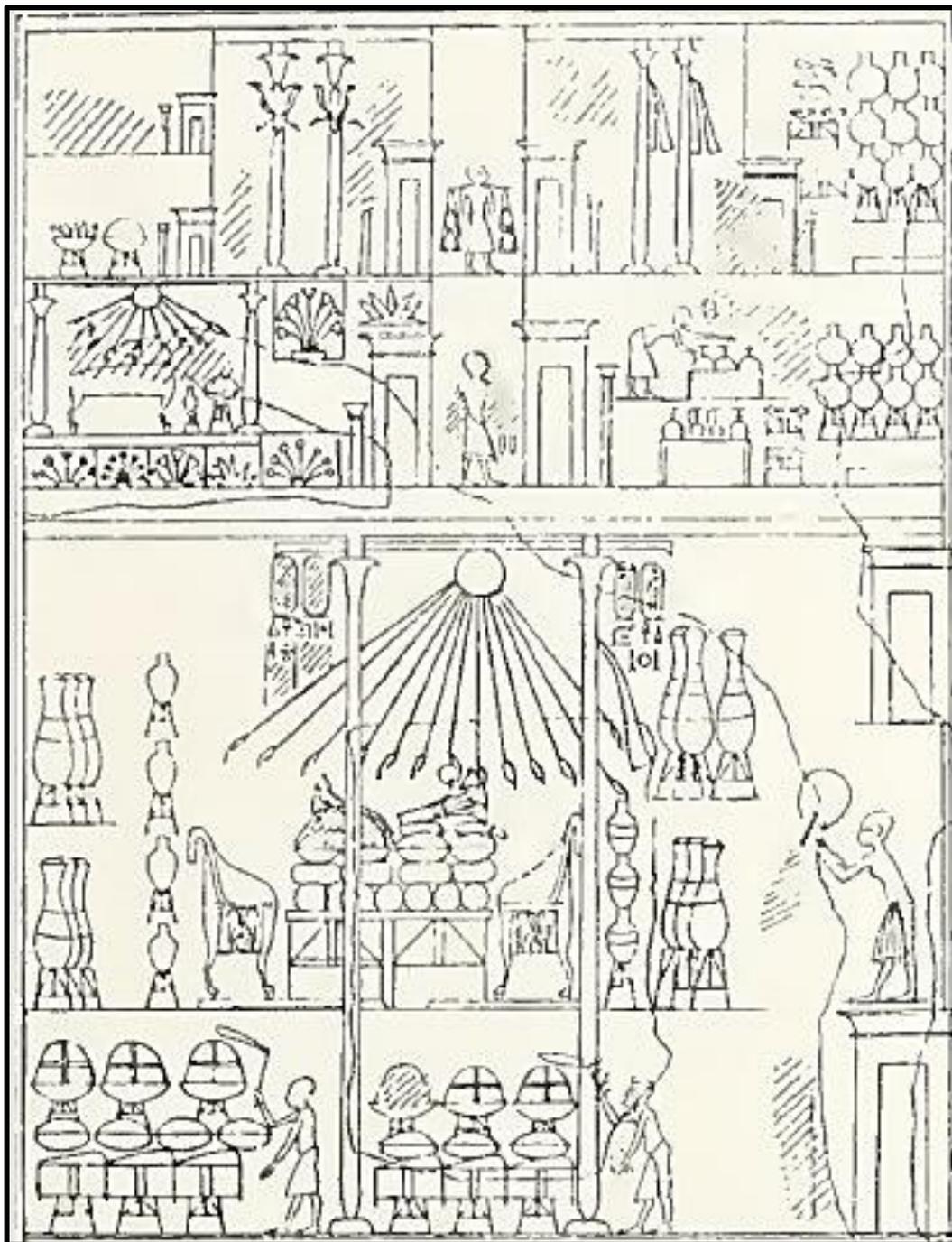


Figure 34: Storeroom shown in tomb of Parrennefer (TA7) [43]

Just to the south of the Great Palace is an area built of mud bricks, that was used for the coronation of Akhenaten's short-lived co-ruler Smenkhkare. Modern excavators have called it "the Smenkhkare Coronation Hall."

The Small Aten Temple, #14 in Figure 16, was near the Great Palace and King's House. It was built in an enclosure 626 ft. (191 m) long x 364 ft. (111 m) wide, containing many stamped bricks naming it "The Mansion of the Aten." The temple was aligned with a notch in the cliffs, through which the sun rose during the equinoxes. Its shown reconstructed in Figure 35, and as it looks today in Figure 36.

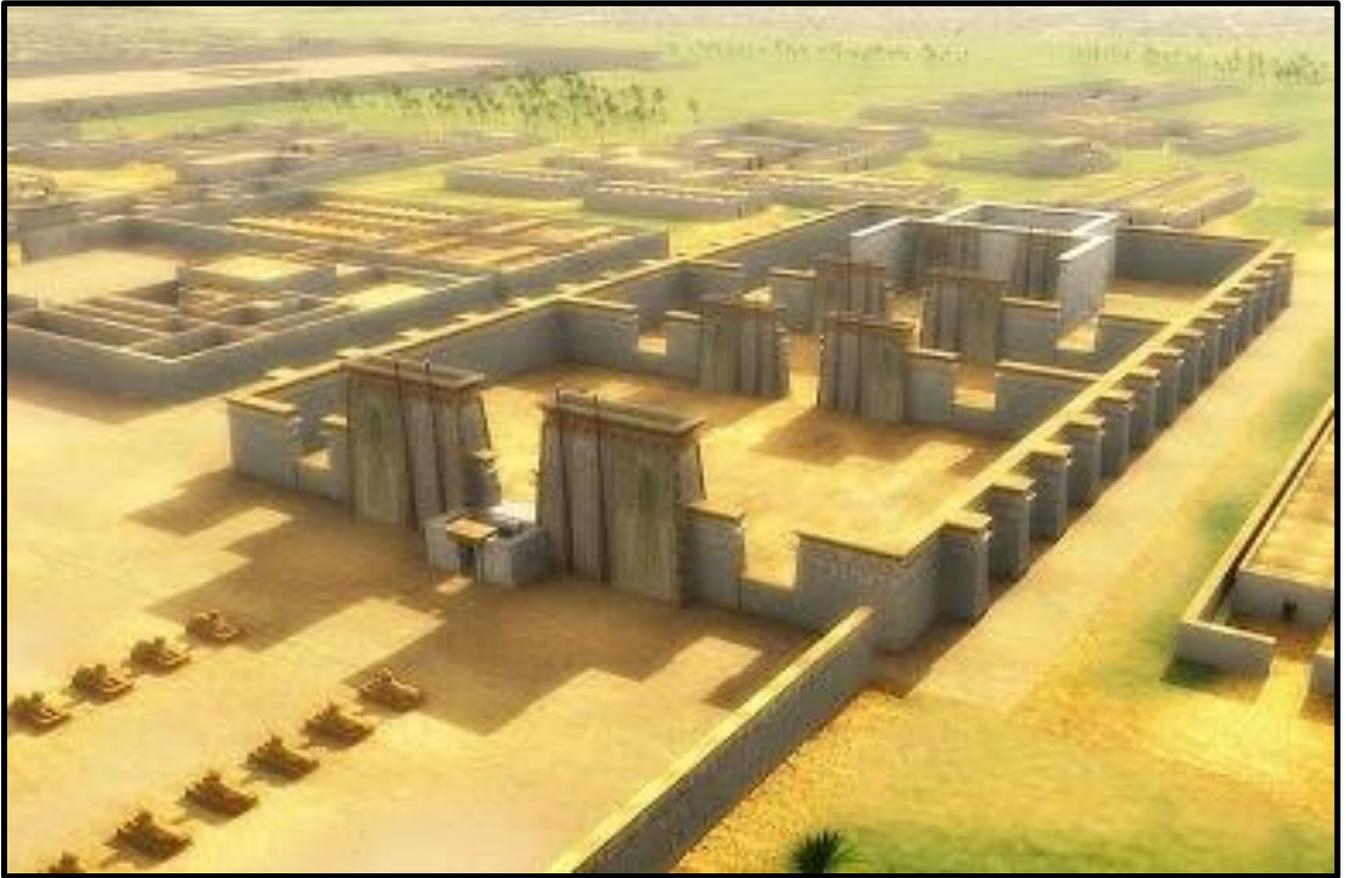


Figure 35: The Small Aten Temple reconstructed [44]



Figure 36: Foundations of the Small Aten Temple [45]

The 'Main City' at Amarna was the area extending south of the Central City containing houses and workshops. (Figure 37)

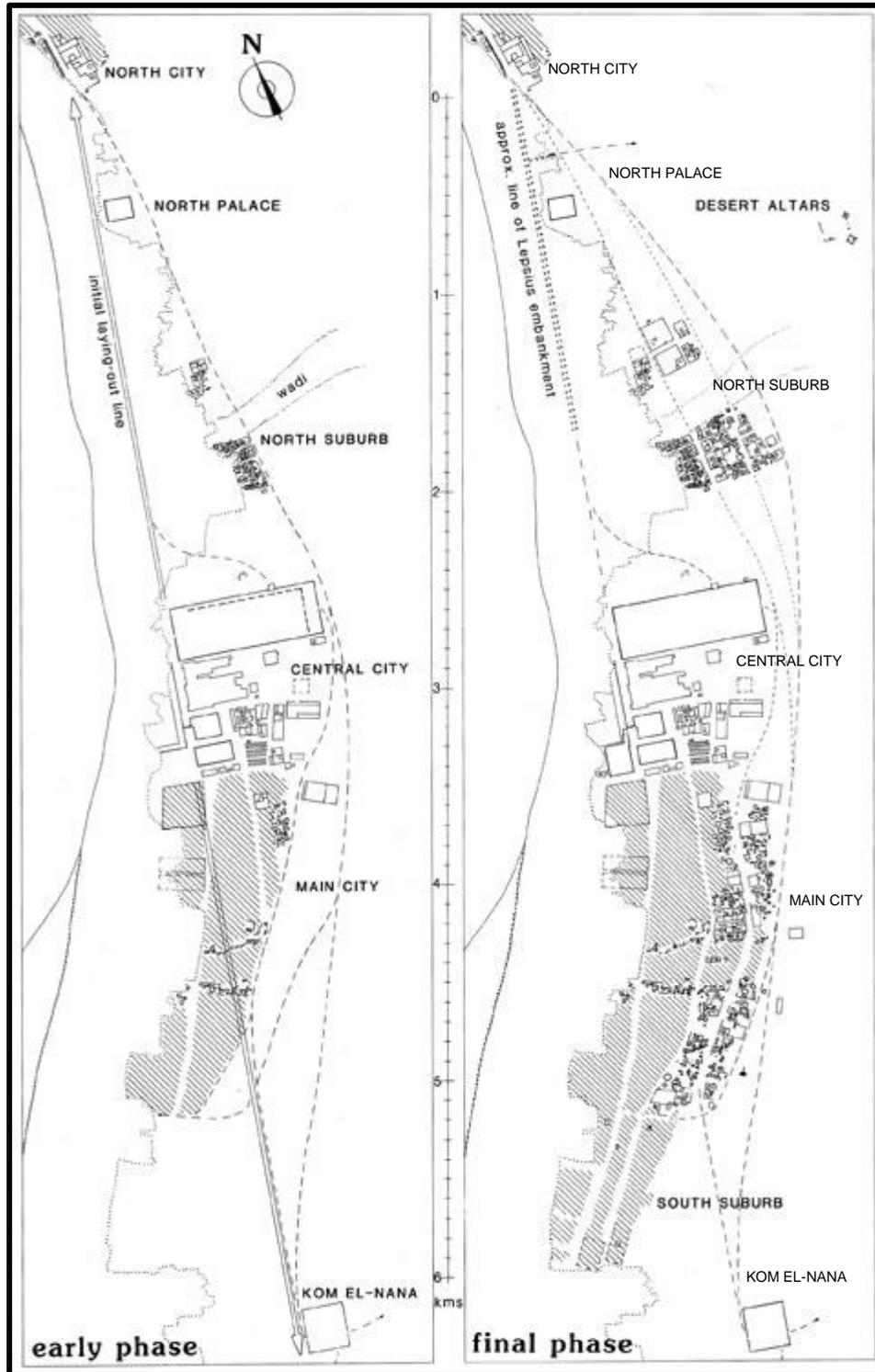


Figure 37: Map of the Main City & South Suburbs [46]

Large houses and estates are scattered throughout the Main City, and haphazard streets and alleys surrounding them are filled with small houses and workshops. Figure 38 shows one of these houses, whose owner is not known.



Figure 38: Amarna House of unknown owner, photo by Anna Hodkinson [47]

A southern suburb was built onto the Main City in the latter years of Akhenaten's reign. (See Figure 37, 'final phase') Akhenaten's Vizier, Nakhtpaaten, lived in the South Suburb. The modern village and cemetery of el-Hagg Qandil now covers much of the Southern Suburb.

South of the Southern Suburb is a building known by its modern name of Kom el-Nana. Originally thought to be the remains of a Roman fort, it was excavated in the 1990s, Figure 39. It is now thought to be a 'sunshade;' probably the sunshade temple of Nefertiti mentioned on the boundary stele.

A sunshade is a roofless solar cult temple called *šwt r* by the ancient Egyptians, literally "the shade of Re". [48]

At the southern end of the 'bay' of Amarna, was the Maru-Aten, Figure 40. Figure 41 shows its plan, and Figure 42 is a reconstruction of its Sunshade. It has been entirely lost under cultivated fields, but when first excavated in 1922 by the Egypt Exploration Society it was revealed to be a huge enclosure of shallow ponds, gardens and buildings.

The Maru-Aten was originally dedicated to Akhenaten's secondary wife, Kiya, but her name was later erased and replaced by Akhenaten's oldest daughter Meritaten. It is not known why this was done.



Figure 39: The Kom el-Nana 'sunshade' [49]



Figure 40: The Maru Aten [50]

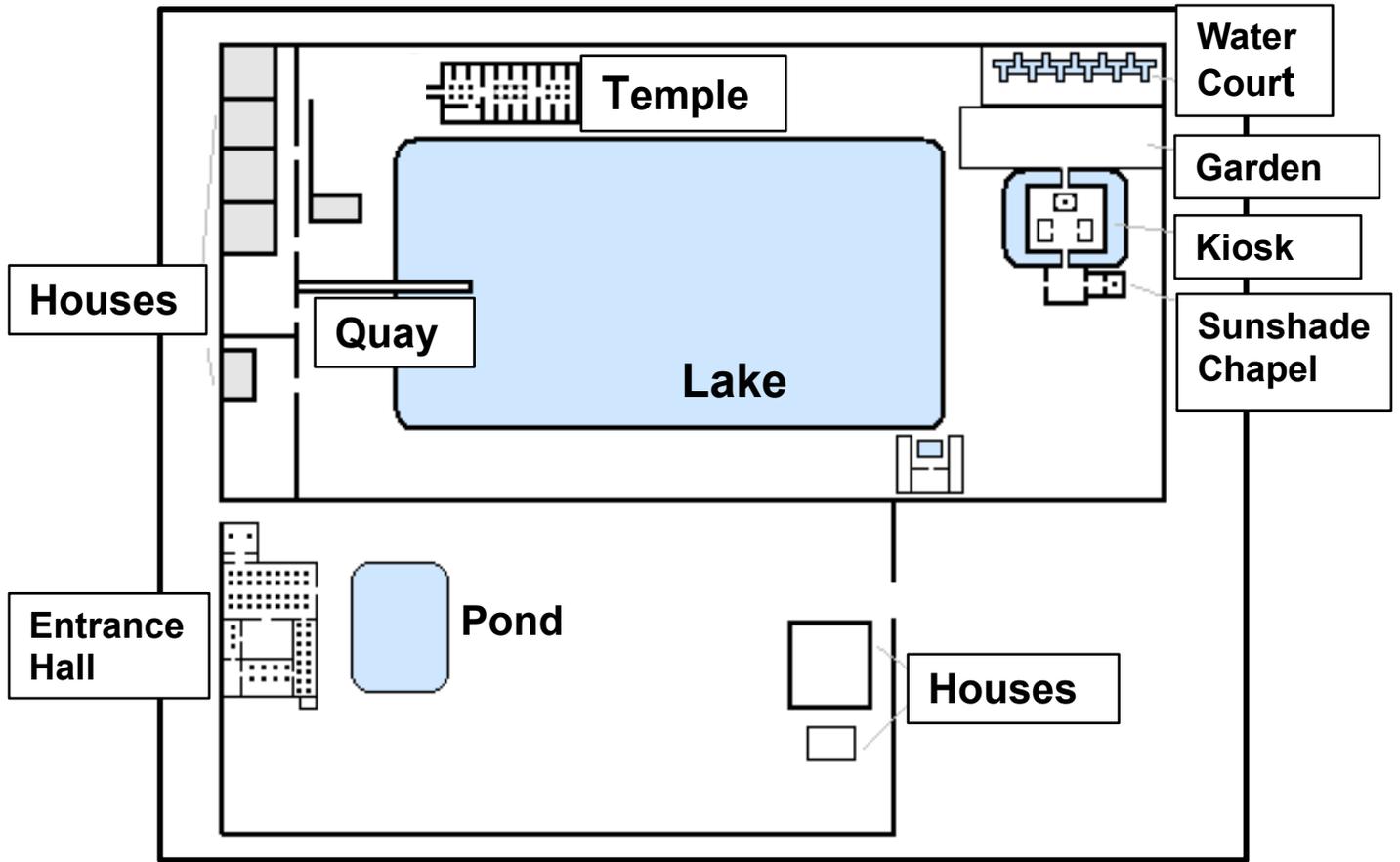


Figure 41: Maru Aten plan [51]

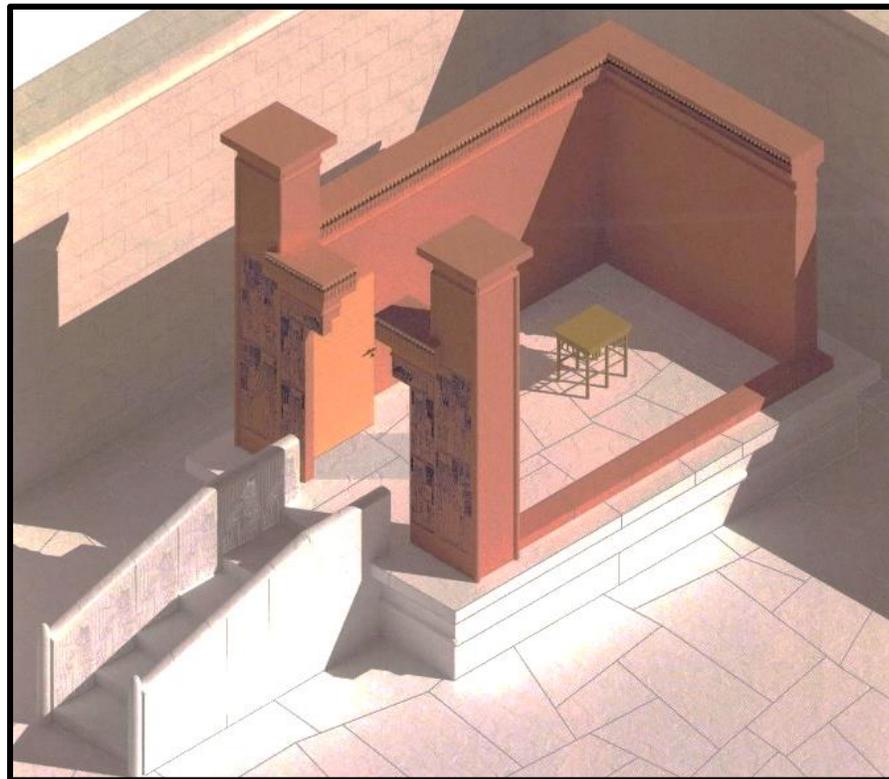


Figure 42: Maru Aten Sunshade [52]

Continuing our walking back northwards along the roads thru the desert, Figure 43, the South Tombs, South Worker's Tombs, the Workmen's Village, the Stone Village, the Royal Wadi and Tomb, the North Tombs, the North Tombs, the Desert Altars, and finally at the north end of Amarna, the Limestone Quarries, are encountered.

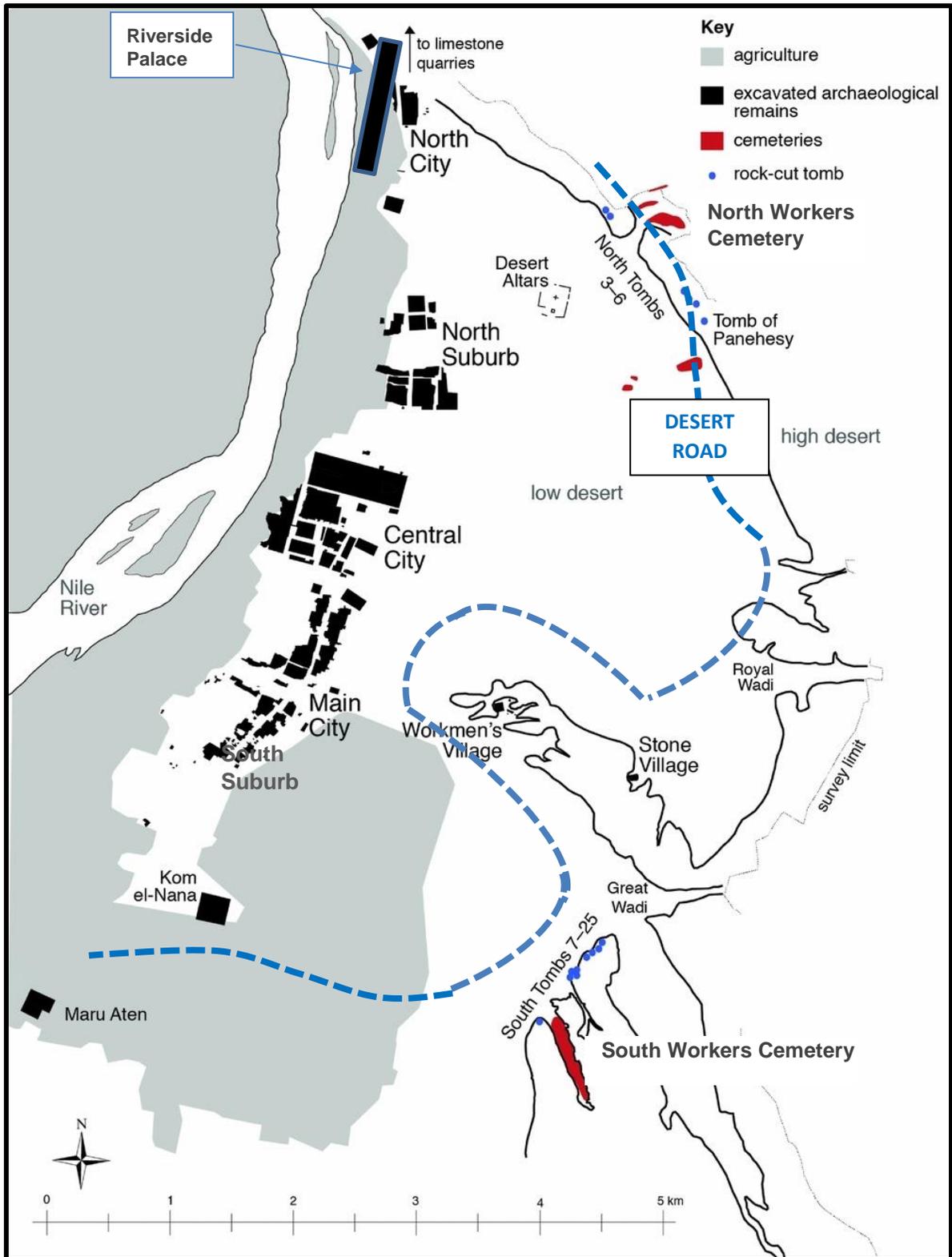


Figure 43: Map of Amarna [53]

North and South Tombs of the Nobles:

Rock-cut tombs, mapped in Figure 44, were dug along the cliffs east of the city. There are two groups near the north and south ends of the Amarna bay.

The six tombs in the north group were elaborately decorated for the elite of Akhenaten's court. The southern group consists of nineteen more tombs in various stages of completion. Most were undecorated, and the owners of six of them are unknown. Figures 45 and 46 show the interior of two of these tombs.

None of the Noble's tombs appear to have been used for a burial.

Details about the members of Akhenaten's Royal Court who built these tombs will follow in a future edition of the Akhetaten Sun.

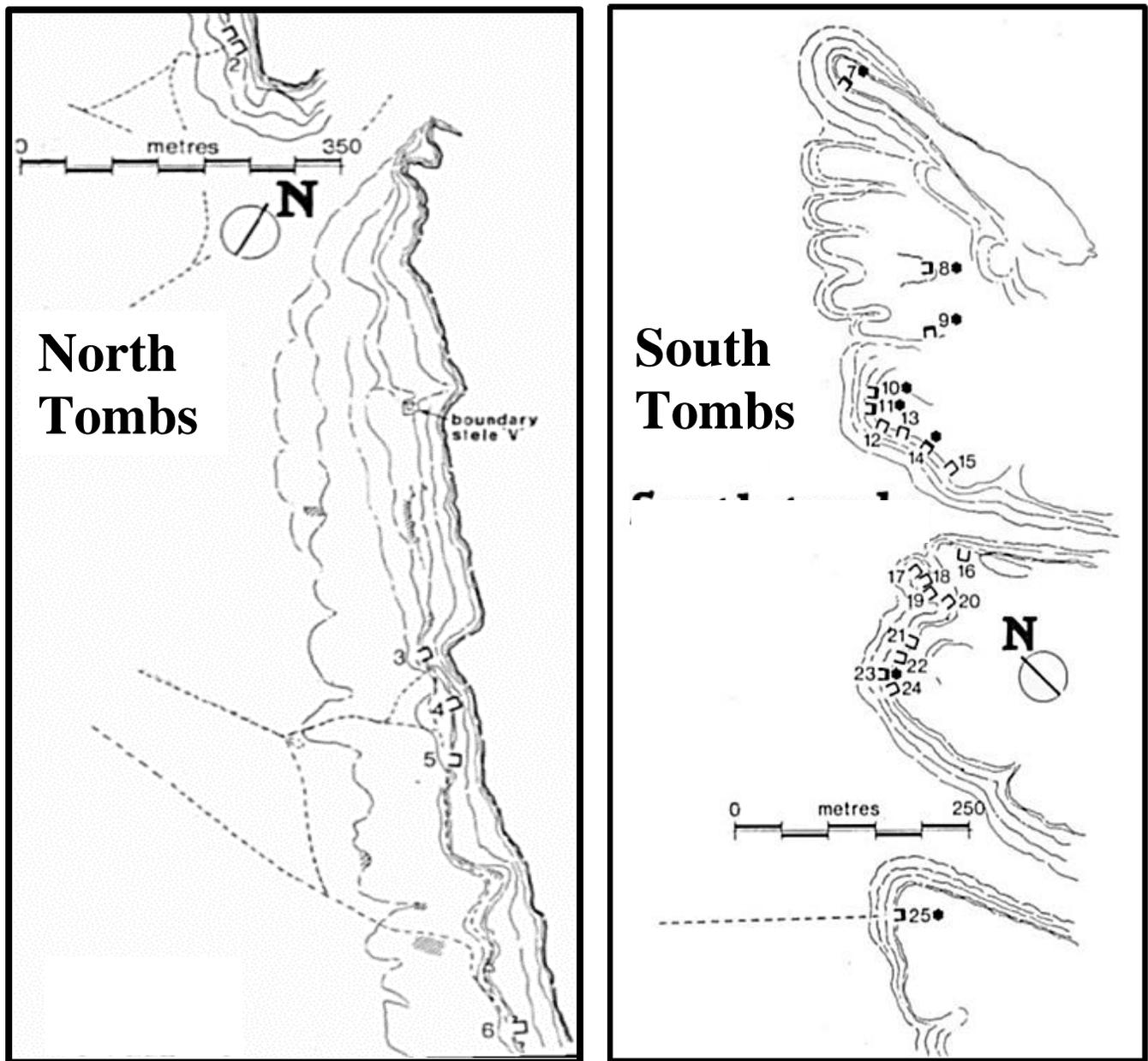


Figure 44: Maps of the North and South Tombs at Amarna [54]



Figure 45: Interior of the Amarna tomb of Meryre I, TA4 [55]



Figure 46: Pillared Hall in the Amarna tomb of Ay, TA25 [56]

WORKMEN'S VILLAGE

The workmen's village, shown in Figures 47 - 50, was located $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile (1.2 km) east of the main city, and it was contained within a walled enclosure, approximately 225 ft. (69 m) square. Seventy-two similar houses were built along a set of parallel streets. The remains of furnishings and textile manufacturing materials were found in these houses. A larger house in the south-east corner was probably for the supervisor in charge of the workers. [57]

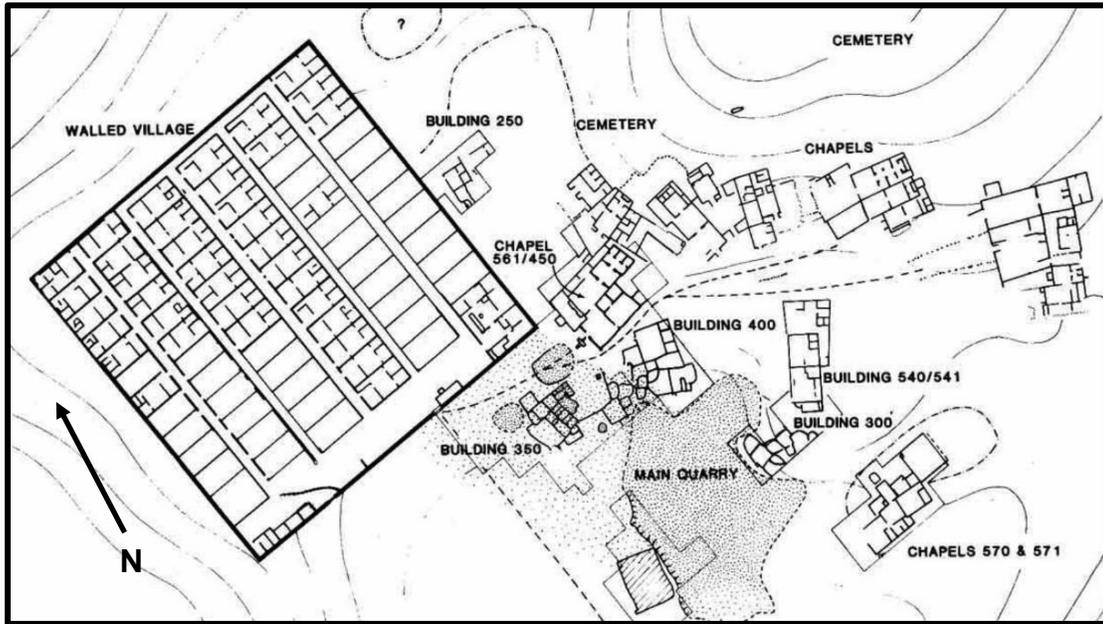


Figure 47: Plan of the Workmen's Village [58]



Figure 48: Reconstruction of Workmen's Village [59]



Figure 49: Home found at #9 Gate Street in the Workmen's Village [60]

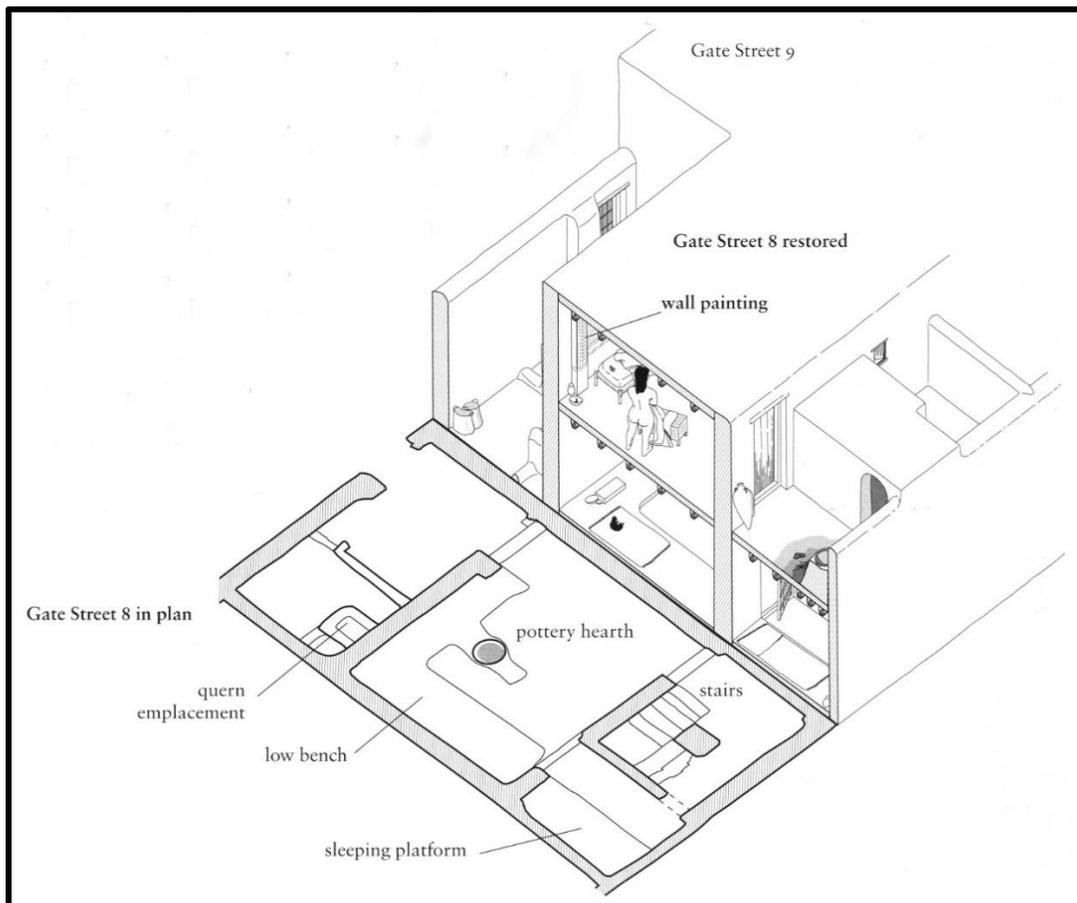


Figure 50: Reconstructed cross-section of the worker's house in Figure 49 [61]

STONE VILLAGE

Located about 20 minutes' walk east of the Worker's Village, and near the mouth of the Royal Wadi, is a workers' settlement now called the Stone Village (Figures 51 & 52).

Surveys and excavations between 2005 and 2009 revealed settlement areas, burials, a quarry, rubbish deposits and peripheral structures that may be connected with the policing of the area. The Stone Village laborers probably worked on the Royal Tomb, and perhaps the north and south noble's tombs as well. [62]



Figure 51: Excavation at the Stone Village [63]



Figure 52: Site of the Stone Village [64]

ROYAL TOMB – TA26

The Royal tomb, shown in Figures 53 – 56, is four miles (6 km) up the Royal Wadi that begins 3 miles (5 km) east of the Small Aten Temple. In fact, if one stands on the axis of the Small Aten Temple, the sun would rise directly east in the notch created by the Wadi (appearing to rise in the hieroglyphic sign for Horizon ☀).

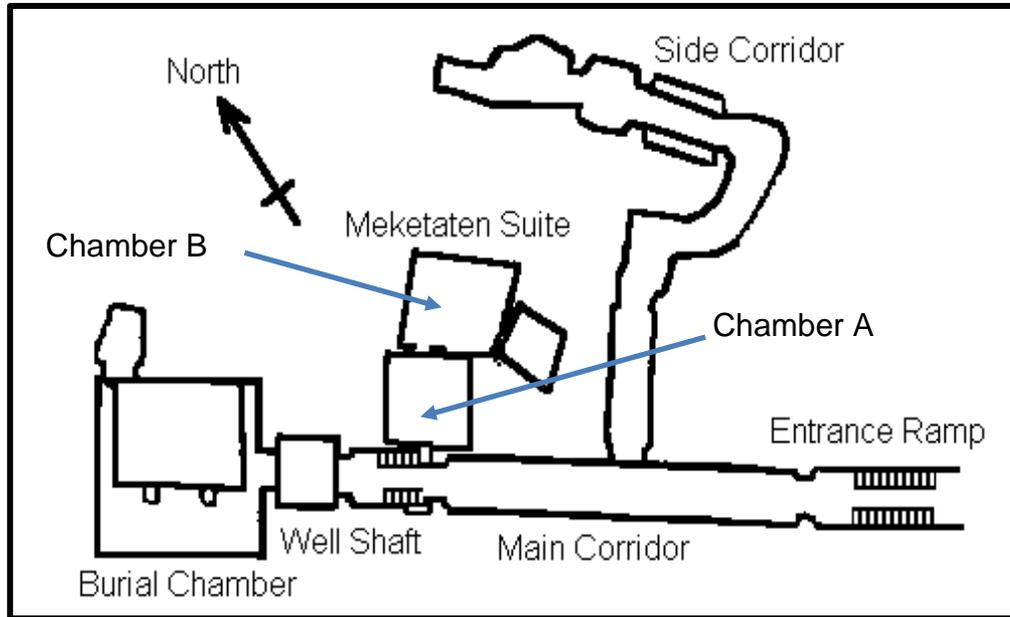


Figure 53: Plan of the Royal Tomb [65]



Figure 54: Entry corridor of the Amarna Royal Tomb [66]



Figure 55: Looking into Chamber B from Chamber A, Amarna Royal Tomb [67]

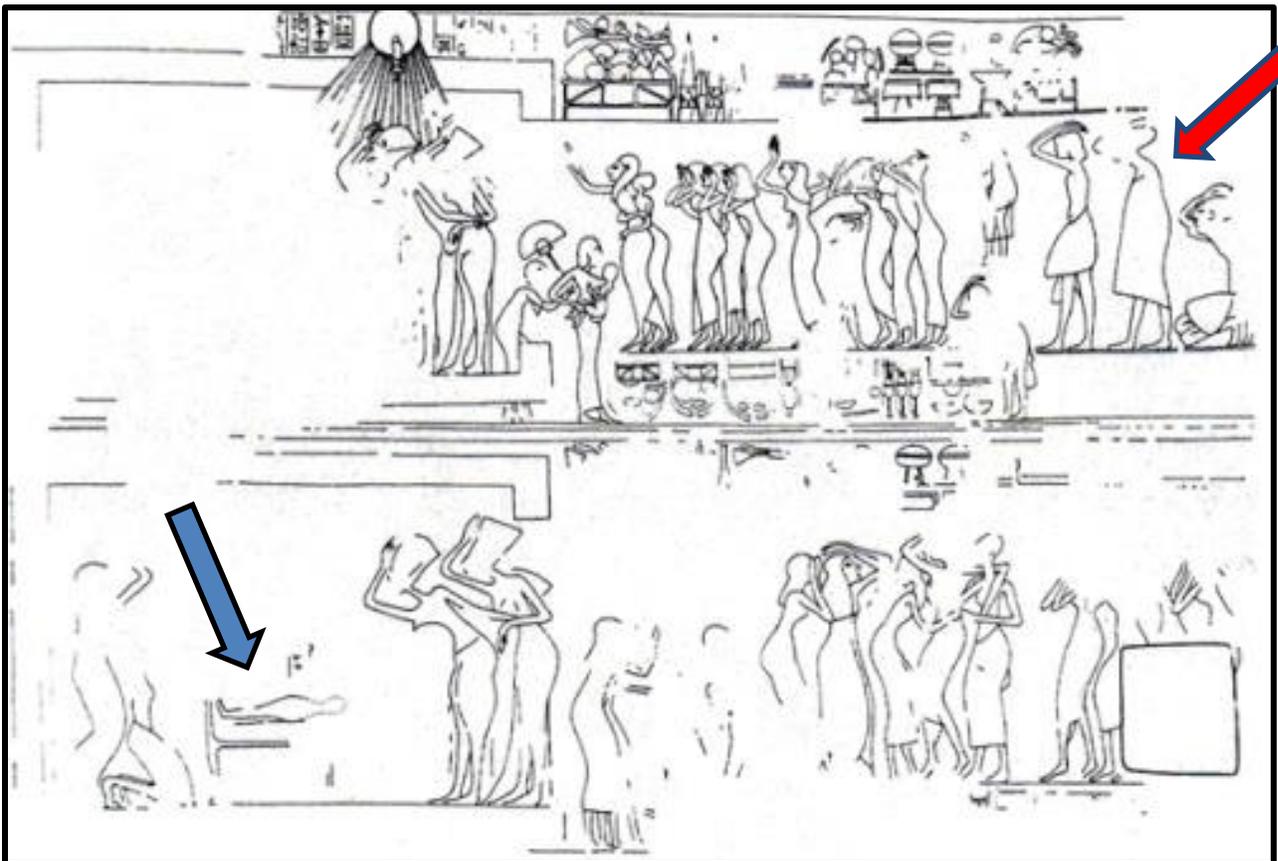


Figure 56: Scene from Royal Tomb showing mourners (red arrow) and the funeral of Meketaten (blue arrow) [68]

WORKER'S CEMETERIES

Three cemeteries for the non-elite citizens have been discovered at Amarna. They contain in excess of 10,000 graves.

Six thousand pit graves are located in a wadi beside the South Tombs of the Nobles. Four hundred of these graves were excavated between 2005-2013. Although several of these graves contained wooden coffins, most had modest grave offerings, and bodies were simply wrapped in reed mats and linen cloth bundles. Approximately 4,000 commoners were buried in the northern Worker's Cemetery. Like the southern burials, these were pits dug in the sand, with cloth/reed wrappings around the bodies.

Forensic analysis of the bodies show many of the individuals had load bearing injuries, indicating they lifted heavy loads during their lives. Bodies in the southern cemetery showed a typical distribution of age-at-death; high infant mortality, followed by increasing death rates with age as illness, childbirth, injuries and age took its toll.

Ninety percent of the bodies from the north cemetery, however, were children, teenagers, and young adults. (Figure 57) These individuals showed significant traumatic injuries and degenerative conditions from heavy labor. In short, Akhenaten's young workforce was worked into an early death. [69]



Figure 57: Pit graves in the northern worker's cemetery [70]

The third cemetery, called the North Cliffs Cemetery lies on the flat desert west of the tomb of Panehesy. A modern road runs between two separate parts. Its excavation is ongoing as of 2020. [71]

QUARRIES

At Amarna, mud brick was generally used for wall construction since it was readily available, cheap, and allowed for rapid construction. Small limestone 'talatat' blocks, about one-half by one-half by one cubit in size (10" H by 10" D x 20 L", or 26x26x52 cm), used for official buildings at Amarna was quarried locally. There were several limestone quarries along the cliffs (e.g. Figure 58). Stone from these quarries was also used to make columns, statues, altars, and flooring. [72]



Figure 58:Limestone quarry near Amarna [73]

Also, in the valley behind the North Tombs is a quarry, Figure 59, where Flinders Petrie found the name of Queen Tiye carved inside.

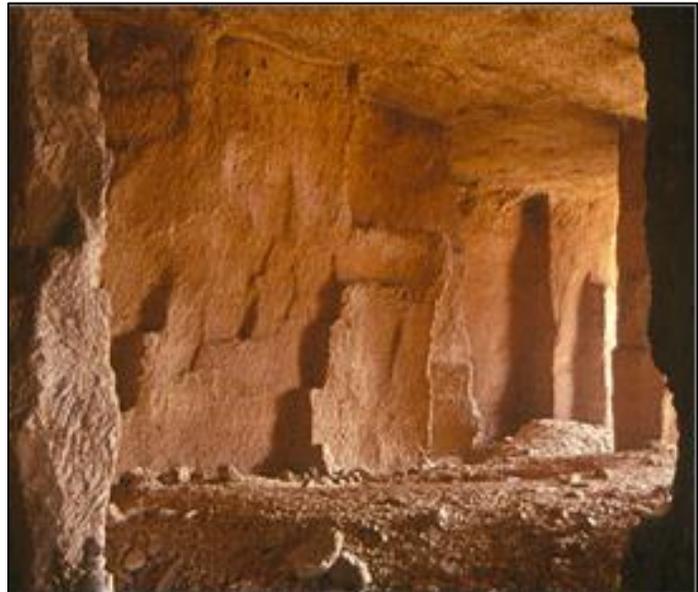
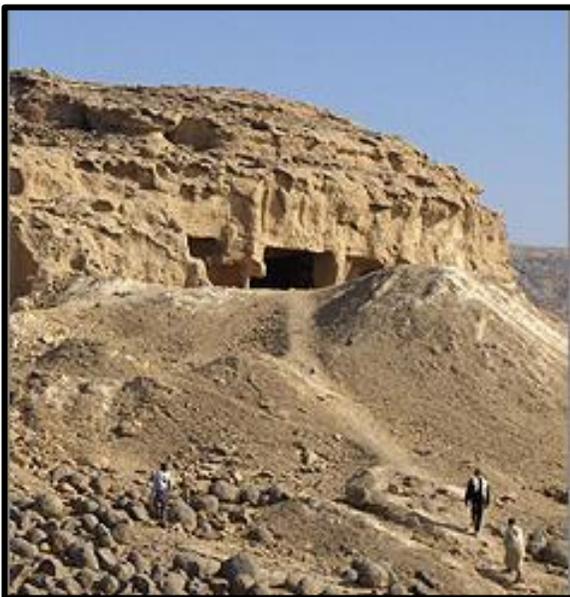


Figure 59: Queen Tiye quarry [74]

DESERT ALTARS

Near the North Tombs are the remains of three aligned structures that probably served as some kind of altar (Figure 60).

One is a square mud-brick platform with ramps leading up on all four sides, which seems to once have had an obelisk or standing stone in the middle. In the center is a small stone platform reached by a ramp. And, southernmost, was a large rectangular platform reached by ramps on all four sides. A little to the west are the remains of a mud brick wall which surrounded a small stone building. The road from these altars led northwards up to the tomb of the High Priest Panehesy [75].

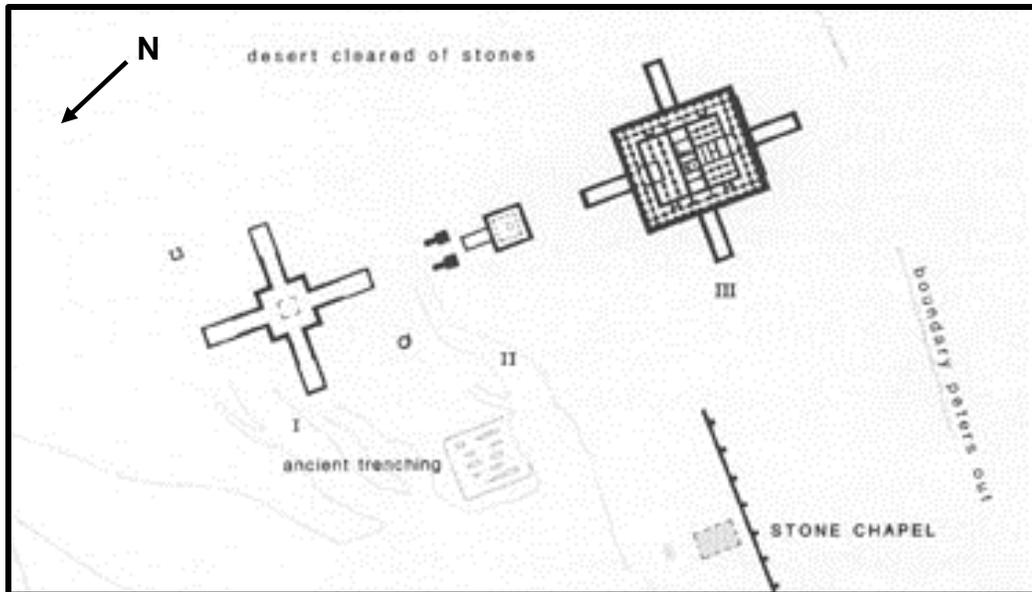


Figure 60: Plan of Desert Altars near the North Tombs [76]

Salima Ikram identified forty-six shrines and altars amidst the excavations at Amarna [77]. They ranged from small niches and platforms in houses and gardens to large pavilions with ramps and steps transitioning from the ground up to a raised platform. Some were in walled compounds with pylons flanking the entry. Spaces were provided for both stele and statues, which in a few instances have been found in situ. Most showed the royal family worshipping the Aten.

Ikram says:

“... under Atenism, the only people to have direct contact with the god were Akhenaten and Nefertiti ... If any non-royal person wanted to request something from the god, he or she had to go through Akhenaten or Nefertiti ... By praying to statues of the pharaoh ... his sole representative on earth, the worshiper might obtain his wish and/or the grace of the god.” [78]

This may be the reason there are so many depictions of Akhenaten and Nefertiti in houses, workshops, and temples at Amarna.

In the next issue of the Akhetaten Sun, I'll discuss the members of the Royal Court at Amarna

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