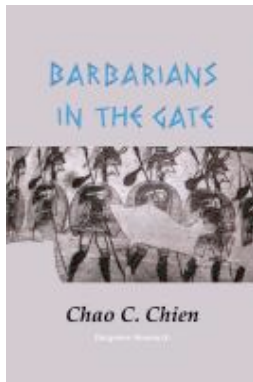


BARBARIANS IN THE GATE



Chao C. Chien

Diogenes Research



*The origins of the world's ancient civilizations re-examined; looked at not individually, but as a whole. We know little of our remote past. What we cannot explain, we consign to the domain of mysteries and legends. This is often because of over-specialization-scholars versed in and focusing on very specific disciplines. Ignorance in alien cultural elements, such as languages, also contributes to the problem. **Barbarians in the Gate** takes an all-encompassing approach, and offers a new perspective.*

Barbarians in the Gate

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First Edition

The Realm of Mythology

As noted, Egypt's ancient history predates those of many other cultures. However, we will begin our understanding of Egypt starting from about the end of the 3rd millennium BCE to be in line with our previous efforts on the surrounding areas. That will bring us to approximately the Middle Kingdom.

By the last centuries of the 3rd millennium BCE Egypt had gone through hard times. It had become fragmented, suffering from periodic famines and civil war, as any civilization would, but by the 22nd c. BCE Egypt was recovering. The country was reunified and reinvigorated. The government ruled from Thebes, a name given later by the Greeks for the city the Egyptians called Waset but we call Luxor today. About 150 years later Mentuhotep IV's vizier Amenemhet I took control and began the 12th Egyptian Dynasty.

Amenemhet worked hard to restore royal prestige and semideified the king, adding 'Amen,' as part of the king's title, Amen being the sun god. He moved the capital near Memphis, and strengthened the country's defense against foreign incursions. It was a golden age for Egypt. The economy was booming, and Egypt returned to its glorious days of city and monument building. By about 1,700 BCE foreigners were permitted to enter the country to satisfy a need for labor.

By after the turn of the 2nd millennium Egypt had already annexed Lower Nubia, extending Egypt's southern border to the second cataract of the Nile, and fought Libya. To celebrate

his waterworks on the Nile Amenemhet III (1,817 to 1,772 BCE) had colossal statues of himself erected.

Yet such high-energy momentum could not be sustained for long. By the 13th Dynasty (1,786 to 1,633 BCE) Egypt had gone into decline. Frontier defenses relaxed. Nubia started to revolt, and more Asiatics entered the country. In fact, it was so relaxed these Asiatics could basically come and go at will, resulting in the Eastern Nile Delta populated mostly by them. By about 1,700 BCE these Asiatics openly “set up shops” in the delta area and Egyptian authority could do nothing about it. These Asiatics were known as the Hyksos. They set up two contemporaneous dynasties that Egyptologists catalogued as the 15th and 16th Dynasties, with the 15th Dynasty of the great Hyksos kings (1,674 to 1,567 BCE) dominating the Hyksos vassal chiefs of the 16th Dynasty (1,684 to 1,567 BCE).

The name ‘Hyksos’ was coined (perhaps documented or recorded) by the 3rd c. BCE Egyptian historian Manetho’s by way of the 1st c. CE Jewish-Roman historian Josephus. Manetho’s manuscript has been lost. According to the citation ‘Hyksos’ means “shepherd kings.” In Egyptian it is ‘heqa-khasut,’ which means “rulers of foreign lands.” However, the Egyptians called them Amu, which meant Asiatics, or Shamu, which meant sand-dwellers. Thus the Hyksos³¹ were Asiatic nomads (sand-dwellers), and are believed to have come from southern Canaan or Syria. We know that in those areas were the Amorites; thus many historians think the Hyksos were Amorites, Amu. They also think that they were Semitic people,

³¹ The name originally referred to the rulers, but later was applied to the Asiatic people as a whole.



Figure 37
Egyptian Cities

but I should point out that they were nomads. Semitic people in those days were not nomads; they were not sand-dwellers.

The Hyksos kings set up their capital at a place in the Nile Delta called Avaris, Tell ed-Dab'a today. Their main cities were at Tell el-Yahudiyeh, Heliopolis, and Tell el-Maskhuta.

Unlike Indo-European speakers, the Hyksos were not destroyers. They did not “overlay” the local culture with their own. For sure, they had brought with them their way of life and beliefs, some of which rubbed off on the natives. They introduced to Egypt the horse-drawn chariot and the composite bow, of which we will look at. They also built rectangular fortresses using beaten earth and straw, a new technology usually found in northern China, such as that used



Figure 38

The Amenhotep III Statues (The Memnon Colossi)

to build the Great Wall. However, it was the Hyksos that ultimately adopted the Egyptian ways, including the language. They employed Egyptians in the government and their reign was generally peaceful.

Nonetheless, within a century the Hyksos regime collapsed. Upper Egypt, with its capital at Thebes, rose up against the

foreign rulers. The Hyksos government retreated to the delta areas around Avaris. Eventually the last king of the Hyksos 15th Dynasty gave up Avaris and left Egypt by 1,550 BCE.

Whereas the history of the Hyksos period is scant, that of the 18th Dynasty of the 15th c. BCE, founded by Aahmes, is rich. During this period Egyptian imperial greatness again reached its peak. This is partly due to its newly found military might, boosted by the acquisition of advanced weaponry such as the chariot. Also, the neighboring powers, such as the Kassites' Babylon, had declined. The Hittites of "the Great Kheta" were far away in Anatolia, and the Hyksos were gone. Taking advantage of the situation Egypt expanded. Thothmes I, the second successor of Aahmes, took the Egyptian army to Palestine and Syria and extended Egyptian influence all the way to Mesopotamia.

According to accepted Egyptology time scales Amenhotep III reigned from 1,386 to 1,350 BC, or thereabouts. He was the son of Tutmose IV and a minor wife, purportedly a Mitanni princess. Under his reign ancient Egypt reached the height of power and prestige. It was a peaceful time, and trade with foreign countries flourished, reaching as far as Mycenae. To maintain this peace and prosperity Amenhotep III made treaties or alliances with not only the Mitanni, but the Hittites, the Kassites (Babylon), and Assyria. Instead of waging war, Amenhotep III built temples and monuments. The two colossal seated statues of himself (Figure 38) are as well known as the pyramids. Also remaining are two Sphinxes. Unfortunately both are headless. One of these is a typical lion bodied sculpture, which originally had a human head.

Akhenaten

Then something that can be described as truly strange happened. Some time about the middle of the 14th c. BCE Amenhotep IV came to the throne. Egyptologists are of the opinion that he had come to the throne suddenly because he did not appear on any of his father's monuments. It is as if he just came out of nowhere, giving us no information about his youth.

There are many oddities about Egyptian history at this time. Records of king Amenhotep III, Amenhotep IV's father, stopped abruptly. The reign of Egypt might have passed on to Queen Tiy, but if this in fact happened, her rule was exceptionally brief. Amenhotep IV became king almost immediately after his father, but the two seemed not to have met each other. Some scholars attempt to rationalize this by claiming that Amenhotep IV had been sent to Kush as a viceroy, but even if that were true, which enjoys no evidentiary support, it can hardly explain the complete absence of the prince in his father's inscriptions. Others surmised that he might have spent his youth somewhere in Asia, but there is no evidentiary basis for such speculations either.

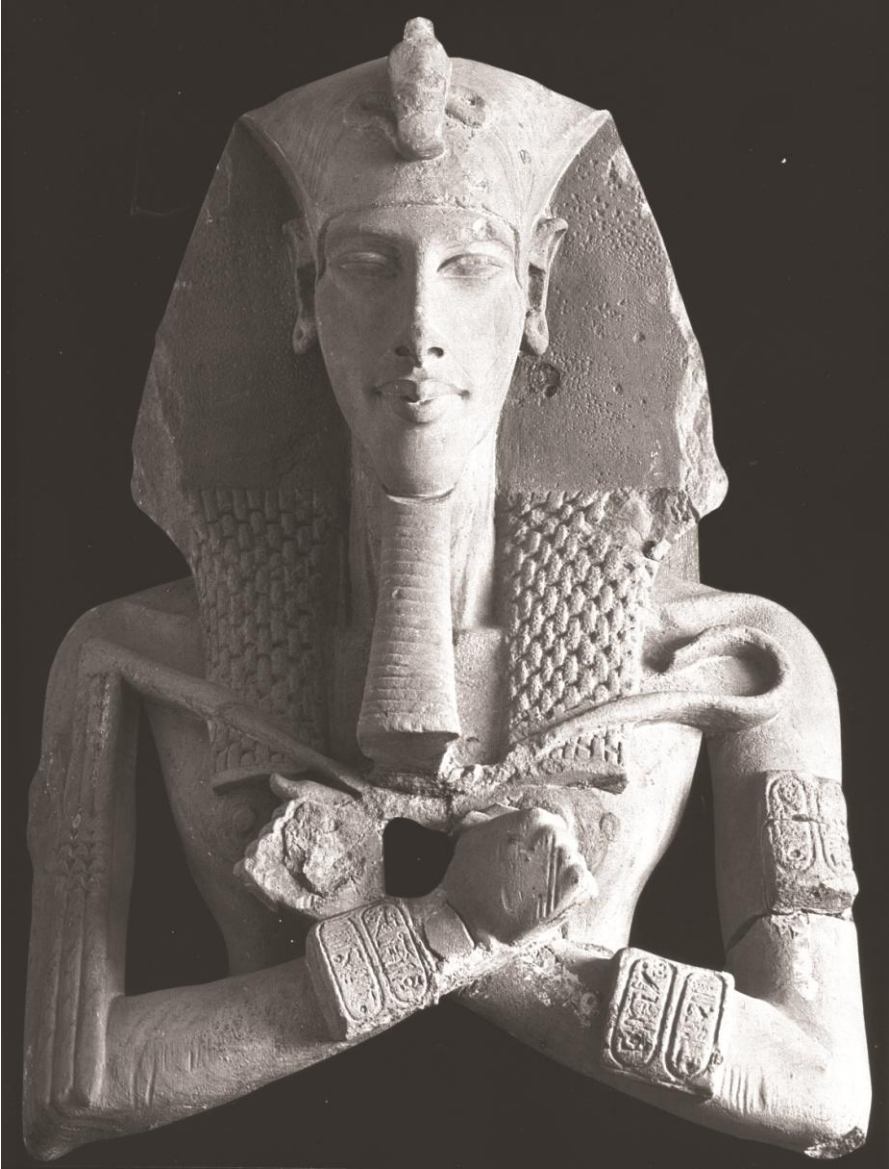


Figure 39

Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten



Figure 40

Akhenaten in Profile

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Amenhotep IV was by far the strangest of all the known Egyptian rulers. To begin with, he looks strange (Figure 39 and Figure 40). Despite his full lips he is decidedly not black African on account of his long, straight nose, but clearly neither is he white Caucasian on account of his slanted eyes. He was decidedly different from the typical Egyptian kings.

Then he did several extraordinary things. Amenhotep IV literally abolished Egypt's traditional religion and devoted himself to a new god, the only god, which Egyptologists call Aten, or Aton, over the old sun god Amon, Amen, or Amun, and all other traditional and local deities. Mainstream scholars explain this new god, deity, or object of worship, as the "disk" of the sun as opposed to the Amon the sun god. This conclusion was largely derived from Aten being depicted as a round disk giving off visible rays (Figure 44). He changed his name to Akhenaten, meaning "Life of Aten," erased all mentions of Amon from all inscriptions, built and moved to a brand new capital which he



Figure 41
Egyptian Wall Painting, c2,000 BCE

called Akhetaten, “Devotion of Aten,” downstream the Nile from Thebes at a site known as Tell el-Amarna today. For this act Akhenaten has been called the world’s first monotheist.

Akhenaten also revolutionized Egyptian art. Prior to his reign Egyptian art was, as a rule, stylized; that is, looking artificial, posed, stilted, stiff, unreal, and conforming to an established style of presentation that expressed preset conceptions of

aesthetics (Figure 41 to Figure 43). The people depicted almost always stand forward but the torsos are turned sideways, and the subject matters often had to do with events important to the state such as battle scenes or god-worshipping. Instead, the art of the Akhenaten period focused on his family life, showing him, his wives, and his children in intimate family settings. They are also often shown naked.

AKHENATEN



Figure 42
Ani, c1,600 BCE



Figure 43
An Egyptian Hunting Scene, c1,550 BCE



Figure 44

Akhenaten, Queen Nefertiti, and Children

These intimate family scenes, by their poses, also show that Akhenaten most likely had two wives, Queen Nefertiti (Figure 46) and the other, as unbelievable as it may be, his mother Queen Tiy (Figure 47), each grouped with her offspring.



Figure 45
Akhenaten, Queen Nefertiti, and Children Worshipping

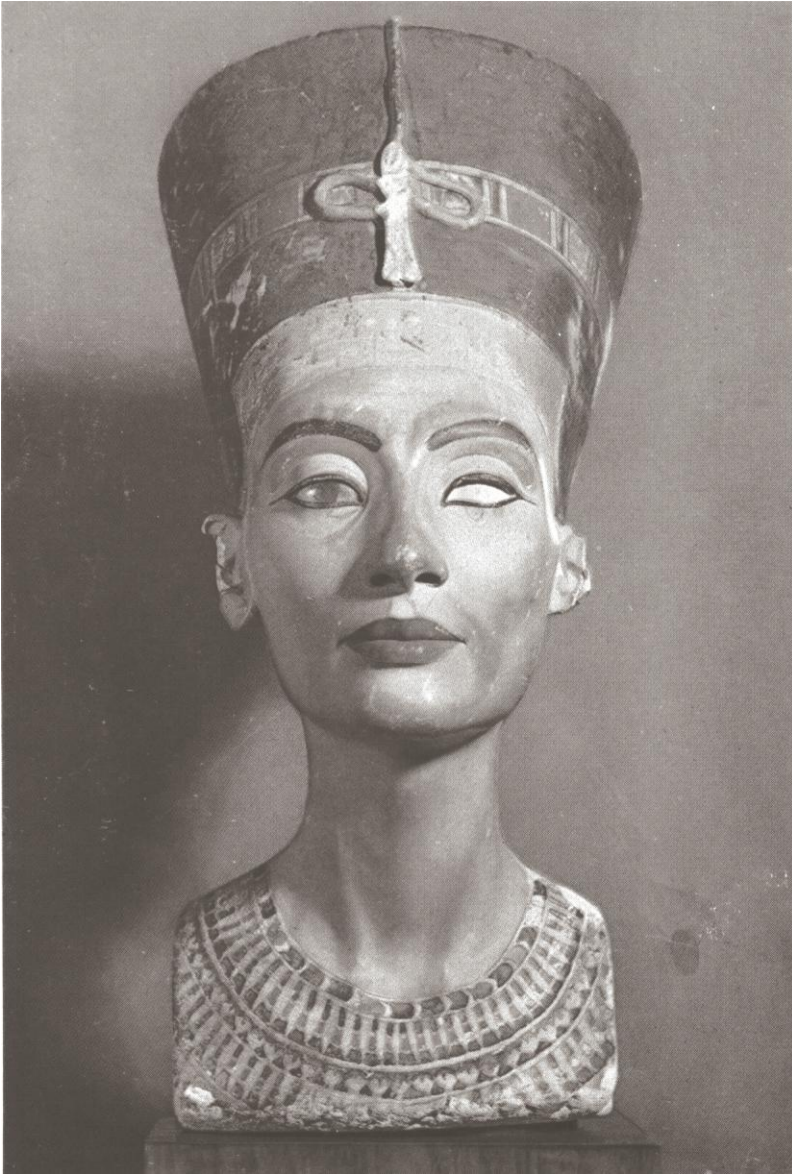


Figure 46
Queen Nefertiti



Figure 47
Queen Tiy



Figure 48

Akhenaten Worshipping



Figure 49
Akhenaten's Prominent Abdomen

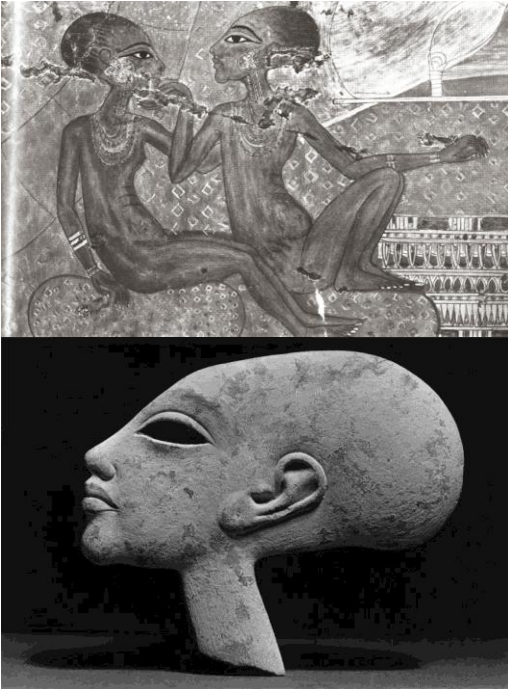


Figure 50
Akhenaten's Daughters

These portraits also reveal something else that is peculiar. Akhenaten is almost always shown with unusually fattened (swollen or deformed) thighs (Figure 48 and Figure 49). Generally Egyptologists and pathologists suspect that Akhenaten might have suffered from some form of disease, such as *lipodystrophy*, symptomized by a deprivation of upper body fats accompanied by an upsurge in lower body adipose tissues.

Others believe that this peculiarity is just one of the elements of the new artistic style introduced by Akhenaten, for whatever aesthetic reasons unfathomable. It is unconvincing to assert that a deformed portrait is merely a stylistic idiosyncrasy without supporting evidence, especially when only he and his blood family are depicted in that way and nobody else. In fact, it is more reasonable to believe that what is rendered is in fact what Akhenaten looked like: he had swollen or deformed legs.

Akhenaten's portraits also show that he had an elongated skull. Because Akhenaten's body has never been located,

(despite some archaeological claims otherwise,) the cranial deformation can only be confirmed in the mummies of his offspring (Figure 50). Medical investigators usually attribute this characteristic to some form of genetic mutation that took place within the family. However, it could also be simply man-made; that is, the results of some form of cultural practice, as that practiced by the ancient Kushans of Chinese Turkistan; Western China. Nonetheless, this fact supports the proposition that Akhenaten's portrayals are realistic.

However, there may be another explanation of this physical distinction of Akhenaten's family. His father, Amenhotep III, had a Mitanni mother. Akhenaten himself supposedly was issued from a minor wife of Amenhotep III, a Mitanni (possibly a princess). Akhenaten's mother, Queen Tiy, had one parent of Mitanni descent. Therefore he had non-Egyptian blood in him.

A close contact with Mitanni had occurred since the days of Amenhotep II, who took his army north across the Euphrates and entered into Mitanni territory. An inscription at the Karnak temple complex in Thebes suggests that Mitanni might have submitted to Egypt. It also appeared that the Egyptian king set up a new Mitanni royal family that was favorably disposed toward Egypt. Then the two countries further solidified their bond through royal marriages. Thothmes IV might have married the daughter of the Mitanni King Artatama, and she was to become the mother of Amenhetep III, Akhenaten's father. Thus the physical characteristics, strange cultural practices, and new intellectual concepts all could have been of foreign origin.

The location of the state of Mitanni is not totally sure, although most scholars place it in the area of northern Syria. It

likely had extended as far east as northern Iran, about present day Armenia. Herodotus mentioned a people known as Matiene there. Whether the Matiene was the same as Mitanni we do not know. However, mainstream scholars believe the Mitanni had moved in from somewhere in the east. If all this is true, and if indeed Akhenaten had Mitanni blood in him, his realistic portraits then shed a light on what kind of ethnicity Mitanni royalty might have been.

Besides his personal aspects, Akhenaten's reign is also unusual in other regards. Again, this is born out in the inscriptions and artistic depictions left behind.

In the tomb of Yuya, his grandfather on the mother's side, the bas-reliefs repeatedly depict Queen mother Tiy, Yuya's daughter, in positions that are equal to and not above that of Akhenaten's wife Nefertiti. Further, the two women are always shown with the same different sets of accompanying children. The artworks suggest that Akhenaten was with two co-existing families. They suggest that Akhenaten had married his mother Queen Tiy and had children with her.

As an adjunct to the Akhenaten drama, his grandfather Yuya, father of Queen Tiy, could very well have been the Biblical Joseph "of multicolored coat who got sold by his brothers into Egypt." It is known that Yuya was not a native Egyptian but had come from the "Eastern Desert." This is not to say that this is confirmed history; the Jewish ethnicity had yet to be defined at this time. However, the parallel between Yuya and the Biblical character suggests that there may have been a Jewish (Hebraic) presence in Egypt at this time, and Yuya might have engendered the later Biblical characterization. The names Yuya and Yusef (Joseph) are not that far apart.

As to Akhenaten's religion, it might not have been his own idea entirely. It appears that the veneration of Aten had already begun during his father's last years. It appears that Amenhotep III and his wife Tiy worshipped both Aten and Amen-Ra, along with other gods. With a Mitanni mother, Amenhetep III had Indo-European blood in him, therefore might have been influenced by foreign religious persuasions. Akhenaten married his sister Nefertiti, and it seems Akhenaten began venerating Aten. This suggests that there is a possibility Aten was instigated, if not introduced, by Nefertiti. If that is so, then why was Akhenaten not influenced earlier? The answer may just be that he was not in a position to be influenced, which speaks to his being not present in Egyptian court. It also could be as simple as Egyptologists had gotten their chronology mixed up. Perhaps it had been right from the beginning when Akhenaten suddenly appeared after being absent and he brought everything with him.

It is known that nomads of the Eurasian steppe worship the heaven, the sun, in an amorphous form, as opposed to a god with human attributes. The Turkic/Mongol people called such a deity *Tengri* or *Tangri*, basically the sky, or Father Sky. Indo-Europeans held 'Ar,' a sky god, the sun, in high regard, wherefore the name 'Aryan.' Today the Chinese word for the sun is 'ri.' Even the old Egyptian god was 'Ra' or 'Re,' as there was no vowel designation. Whether such a god would have any remote relationship with Akhenaten's Aten is anybody's guess. In any case, Akhenaten's new god Aten is unique to Egypt in that it was a sun god, an amorphous god, and the only god.

It must be pointed out that all of this, from Akhenaten's identity, his reign years, his family, his religion, his art, to his

abnormal physicality, is all interpreted by scholars. Ancient Egypt had no written history per se. Everything is derived from inscriptions on monuments and writings of later scribes, who often were foreigners. What we know about Akhenaten is to a large degree what we want to believe.

What is clear, though, is that Akhenaten was not interested in politics or the affairs of state. Assyria, then an Egyptian territory, was under siege by rebels, but Akhenaten took no action to quell it. Indeed, he permitted virtually all Egyptian territories to free themselves from Egyptian influence seemingly with no fear of reprisal.

Akhenaten ruled for sixteen years from 1,349 to 1,334 BCE, according to one school of Egyptology, and then abruptly disappeared. Disappeared, not necessarily dead, regardless of whatever claims there may be to the otherwise. In other words, if he died—everybody eventually dies—he either did not die in Egypt or he was not entombed where he should have been, and the event was not recorded. His mummy or corpse has never been found and his designated tomb is empty.

Who succeeded him to the throne is also a subject of debate. Today it is generally agreed that he was succeeded by his son Tutankhaten, popularly known nowadays as “King Tut,” who changed his name to Tutankhamen (replacing ‘aten’ with ‘amen’) and restored the god Amen or Amon.

Tutankhamen died young, perhaps at 20 years of age. His tomb was discovered in early 20th c. CE by archaeologist Howard Carter and it proved to be the most opulent of all Egyptian tombs discovered. Yet there is evidence suggesting that another son of Akhenaten, Smenkhkare, also ruled for a short time; so short that we know virtually nothing about him. After the young prince(s) a royal house chief of staff Ai,

supposedly Queen Nefertiti's father and Queen Tiy's brother, took over, but soon he also was deposed. Horemheb, the last king of the 18th Dynasty who started out as an army commander assigned to Lower Egypt ultimately took power and made a real effort to erase everything about that period, although it is clear that the aftermath of Akhenaten's reign was tumultuous.

In fact, the end of Akhenaten's reign was to a degree as confused and as bizarre as the reign itself. Few scholars dare claim they know the truth of the history of the period. As mentioned, almost all that have been written about Akhenaten, from his physicality, his religious obsession, his reign, his personal history, his family—wives, sons, daughters, to his demise can be legitimately called speculations.

Now we shall do some speculations of our own.

First, let us understand that old Egyptian kings' names often contain the component 'meses,' as in 'Ramesses.' 'Meses,' or more appropriately 'mss,' as vowels were not denoted, meant 'lord or 'prince.' It can easily be rendered 'moses' as opposed to 'messes' or 'meses.' 'Ramesses' simply means the 'Prince of Ra,' 'Ra' being the sun god. 'Tutmoses' is the same as 'Thothmoses,' and it means the 'Prince of Thoth.' Thus 'Moses' referring to the 'Prince' of Egypt is unmistakable. Yet, which prince was it?

Moses was a prince from Egypt who introduced to the Hebrew people the concept of monotheism. Was there an Egyptian prince known to be intimately connected to religion and an 'only god' who annihilated idol-worship and then left Egypt or disappeared at the end of his reign? Why, it was Akhenaten, of course, who introduced to the Egyptian people an amorphous god named Aten (or Aton, or other ways of

pronunciation), a close facsimile of the Hebraic god name Adon (pl. Adonai)! So could Moses have been modeled after Akhenaten, or was Akhenaten himself incarnated in Hebraic consciousness as their forefather? If this is indeed the case; that is, the Hebraic Moses was patterned after Akhenaten, it opens many doors in our study of the history of the time. However, before we walk into these openings, or trapdoors, let us first look at another mythical figure: Oedipus.

Oedipus Rex

According to the Greek legend, when a son was born to King Laius of Thebes (of Greece, as opposed to the one in Egypt, which the Greeks called Thebes but the Egyptians called Waset) and his wife Jocasta, the oracle prophesied that the child would one day kill his father the king and marry his queen, the child's own mother. For this, the king ordered that the child be abandoned to wilderness to die, and, to ensure that the prophesy would never come to be, he had the child's feet broken so he could not walk, thus ensuring his death.

As it was, the child was saved by a shepherd, who took him to Corinth and gave him to King Polybus. The king raised him and gave him the name Oedipus, which means "ill (deformed) feet or legs." When Oedipus reached manhood he found out that he was adopted. To discover his true identity he consulted with the oracle, who told him he was destined to kill his father. Upon hearing this, misconstruing the oracle's meaning to kill his adopted father King Polybus, Oedipus fled the royal house in order to escape his destiny and wandered the land.

At a junction of three roads he came across his birth father, which happened to be traveling in a chariot. King Laius' driver struck the young man for failing to yield his way, and Oedipus killed him and his father.



Figure 51

Oedipus and the Sphinx, Attic Red Figure Cup from Vulci, c470 BCE

Without knowing he killed his father Oedipus continued on with his journey and arrived at Thebes (Greek Thebes). There he ran into a Sphinx which was guarding the city. To enter the city a traveler must solve a riddle posed by the winged beast with a human upper body (Figure 51). Failing to crack the puzzle would result in death. The riddle is well-known to us

today: What walks on four in the morning, on two during the day, and in the evening on three? Oedipus answered correctly: it was a man. The Sphinx was so distressed by someone answering its riddle correctly that it killed itself by leaping off its stone pedestal. For freeing the city from the menace of the Sphinx Oedipus was offered the hands of the widowed queen in marriage and made him king. With his mother/queen Oedipus had children: sons Polynices and Eteocles, and daughters Antigone and Ismene.

Oedipus ruled Thebes for a number of years and was beloved by its citizens, until they finally learned of what he had done. From the shepherd who raised him and others Oedipus learned that he had killed his father as predicted and married his own mother. Queen Jocasta hanged herself for this disastrous mistake, and Oedipus blinded himself in anguish and went into exile, never to be seen again.

After the disappearance of Oedipus prince Polynices ascended the throne, but it was Creon, Jocasta's brother, who assumed the control of state. Creon decided that the two princes should rule in turn, each being king one year at a time. When Eteocles's term was up, with Creon's consent he refused to relinquish power. To claim his rightful place Polynices enlisted his father-in-law, King of Argos, and his allies, and seven foreign leaders to besiege the seven gates of Thebes. The two Theban princes slew each other at the end of the conflict.

After this Creon decreed that Polynices' body be left where he fell, and death would become those who attempted to bury him. In contrast, Eteocles was to be entombed in glory. Creon himself would then become king. In spite of this, princess Antigone disobeyed and secretly buried her brother. For her

crime she was condemned to die in a cave tomb; that is, buried alive.

Some years later, the sons of the "Seven Against Thebes" renewed their forefathers' attack and invaded Thebes once more. This time they sacked the city.

The abandonment of a legendary hero is a common motif in mythology, and the killing of a potential royal rival is also often adopted as a mythological theme. According to traditions, Moses was a Hebrew threat to a pharaoh who ordered the firstborns of the Hebrew slaves slain. Moses was rescued and saved, reared to manhood and came back to be the leader of his people. His youth was unknown. Many even see a parallel in the story of Jesus, whose family fled to Egypt to escape persecution and whose youthful years were undocumented. Indeed, the skeptics allege that Jesus' story was lifted right out of Moses' biography.

Indeed, if you recall, Sargon, king of Akkadia, was born a bastard and abandoned at youth but came back and became king.

Yet, the similarities between Oedipus and Akhenaten are too many, and if you exclaimed upon reading the story of Oedipus: "But that is Akhenaten" I would not chide you, but instead commend you for being a reasoning man. However, I must at the same time admonish you to be prudent, as legends, although often based on facts, are spun by story tellers, and contain much fantasy and fabrications.

That said, we have the right to ask, was Akhenaten similarly persecuted and rescued, then he came back to claim a royal throne? After all, we know nothing about his youth and his lower limbs clearly look unhealthy, amply qualifying him as "sick lower limbs," 'Oedipus.' If the legend of Oedipus in



Figure 52

The Sphinx of Giza, Egypt

fact reflects that of the life of Akhenaten, could his father have ordered his murder because of certain ill omen but Akhenaten survived the disaster and came back to claim his throne?

The Oedipus saga is preserved in Sophocles' trilogy: *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*, all famous Greek plays that are still performed today, as well as other works by Greek dramatists such as Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Aeschylus' *The Seven against Thebes*. There are many more writings and versions, but the essence of the story are as presented above.

It is generally estimated that the Oedipus episode, if it indeed had any historical basis at all, predated the saga of the Iliad, perhaps by a generation; that is, anywhere from twenty to fifty years prior. If, as generally assumed, the story of the Trojan War (Iliad) took place around 1,200 BCE—and that is a big “if,” as the historicity of Iliad is yet unproven—that places the Oedipus Rex legend in the last quarter of the 2nd millennium BCE, and that, from a historical chronology standpoint, poses a big problem. First, at the time frame being speculated upon there was no such known settlement as the city of Thebes in the Balkans, the Greek homeland. Second, there was no Sphinx guarding the historic Greek city of Thebes. There is, however, a famous Sphinx outside another Thebes, the once royal city in Egypt, where Akhenaten once held court (Figure 52).

Then there are other inconsistencies and implausibilities in the Greek stories as well. For one, Greeks did not bury their deads in cave tombs, as Antigone was. Egyptian royalties did. So, did the Greeks get their history mixed up with that of the Egyptians?

Thebes, the ancient capital of the Greek state of Boeotia, was founded by Cadmus, who, we are told, derived the Greek alphabet from Phoenician. Cadmus is, of course, legendary. Did he really exist, and if so, who was he? Could the ‘mus’ in ‘Cadmus’ really have been the ‘mes’ or ‘meses’ found in the names of Egyptian kings, such as ‘Ramesses’ or ‘Tutmose’, or even ‘Moses,’ meaning ‘Prince’ of Egypt? Was the name ‘Cadmus’ really a corruption or a Hellenization of a name such as ‘Ahmose’ or ‘Kamose,’ the last king of the Theban 17th Dynasty who ruled during the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE, thus pointing to an Egyptian origin of the Oedipus Rex

tale? If the legends of Oedipus were in fact modeled after Akhenaten, even if we cannot, and must not, take mythology and legend at their face value, can the coincidences at least suggest that the Proto-Greeks had been in Egypt at the time of Akhenaten; that is, during the later part of the 2nd millennium BCE, and could the Greek legends shed light on the real history of Egypt, and vice versa?

The Greek play *The Seven against Thebes* by Aeschylus written in the 5th c. BCE is the third play in a trilogy about Oedipus. The first and second plays *Laius* and *Oedipus* are now lost. *The Seven against Thebes* centers about the battles fought between Polynices and Eteocles, sons of Oedipus, as related above. For the readers who may be paying special interest to the topic at hand, Polynices would have been the real-life Smenkhkare and Eteocles would be Tutankhamen, if indeed they were modeled after real-life personae.

In *Antigone*, a play by Sophocles written a short time after *The Seven against Thebes*, after the death of the two Theban princes Creon; that is, the real Egyptian Ai, becomes the new ruler of Thebes. He decides that Eteocles will be honored in burial while Polynices the renegade will be left exposed to predators in public. However, princess Antigone wants to bury her brother. For that she is imprisoned by Creon, who later condemns her to die in a living tomb. However, the blind prophet Tiresias warns Creon against his mistake and that the gods will punish him for it. Creon submits but is too late. Antigone has killed herself, and Creon's own son, Antigone's betrothed, has also committed suicide upon learning of the sad news. The series of tragic events then drive Eurydice, Creon's wife, to kill herself.

The historical prince of Thebes, the Egyptian Thebes, Tutankhamen, died young, and modern day examinations of his mummy show that he died of bodily wounds. One testimonial even has him dying of wounds suffered from an onrushing chariot when he was in a crouching position. Tutankhamen was regally entombed while the body of his brother Smenkhkare disappeared, or was shabbily buried, if the mummy found in a dilapidated tomb was indeed his as claimed by some Egyptologists.

Akhenaten was succeeded by Smenkhkare, variously claimed to be his son-in-law, husband of Akhenaten's daughter Meritaten, or his son. Smenkhkare reigned for perhaps a year or two, and was in turn succeeded by Nebkheperura Tutankhamen (initially Tutankhaten). Tutankhamen married Akhenaten's third daughter with wife Nefertiti, Ankhsenpaaten. It is interesting to note that Tutankhamen himself was of the same royal blood. He called Amenhetep III his father, thus he was identified by some Egyptologists as Akhenaten's brother, as was Smenkhkare, namely, sons of Queen Tiy (but who as father?).

After a reign of perhaps ten years Tutankhamen was succeeded by Ai, a royal court official.

Ultimately, with the ascension of Horemheb, a military commander, after five years the cult of Aten was eradicated.

There are many other points of interest to the Akhenaten affair, but it is not the focus of this work to unravel those mysteries. Yet one must say it would take an extreme intransigent to not see the parallel between the story of Akhenaten and that of the legendary Oedipus Rex, not to mention Moses of the Hebrew tradition. Perplexingly, mainstream historians seem to take precisely such a position,

perhaps out of fear of being accused of taking mythology for history, although no less than Sigmund Freud had seen the possibility of the biography of Moses being derived from that of Akhenaten. So, if we cannot see the similarities between Moses and Akhenaten, we are indeed as blind as Oedipus.

Yet let us be cautious. We are not alleging that the Greek and Hebraic story renderings are exact copies of an Egyptian original, therefore by which we can reconstruct lost Egyptian history by using details culled from the replicant yarns. We are, however, in the right to ask why the later Greeks and Hebrews were so obsessed with the history of Akhenaten, and so much of the original story was known to them, to the point that the Greeks had their own Thebes? The only answer possible to the question is that the forefathers of the Greeks and the Hebrews were there in Egypt among the foreign settlers, and when the monotheist Akhenaten was driven out of Egypt in the real "Exodus," he took with him the religious "lepers," the unclean with him. Their memories of the events might have deteriorated when their scribes finally committed their traditions to ink; they were eye-witnesses to the ancient Egyptian events.

If such is true, where did they go after they were expelled? Remember that we had no trace of the early Greeks prior to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE. If they had been in Egypt in late 2nd millennium BCE, there is a large span of time we cannot account for. Thus we have no alternative but to return to legends and mythology—once more, not for their precise contents, but for the peoples' consciousness of history retained therein. If Moses and Akhenaten could be detected in their stories, who knows what one may find in others?

Wanderings



Figure 53
Gilgamesh

The ancient cultures about the eastern parts of the Mediterranean and the Middle East are rich in traditions lionizing wandering founding heroes. In about 2,700 BCE Mesopotamia had Gilgamesh, King of Uruk (ancient name for Iraq), who left us with a great saga on clay tablets written in cuneiform glorifying his conquests, including the city to the north, Kish, ruled by Agga, in order to claim the whole of Sumer. Gilgamesh went on a personal quest, in which he must suffer a series of trials and tribulations, all accompanied by Endiku, who led the way.

The ancient Greeks had their share of wandering legends. Odysseus (Roman Ulysses) and Jason come to

mind immediately. Odysseus was the crafty king of Attica who devised the dastardly scheme of infiltrating Troy with a huge wooden horse full of Greek warriors inside, thus bringing about the destruction of Troy, and angering Poseidon, the god of the sea, in the bargain. For his displeasure Poseidon sent Odysseus on a ten-year wandering in his ship. When he finally reached home, he brought bloodshed to his household by killing his wife Penelope's suitors.

The legends of Herakles (Roman Hercules, who participated in Jason's quest, see below), Atreus, and Perseus are all billed as "labors," such as "the twelve labors of Hercules," yet they are all stories of wandering in disguise. Herakles' labors took him all over, although we do not know over where. Historians today and past believe Herakles went around the Mediterranean, going all the way to the western end of Europe up the Atlantic coast. That is why the Rock of Gibraltar on the southern coast of Spain was known in ancient times as the Pillars of Hercules.

The Hebrew have their ancient wandering heroes as well. Moses was supposed to have cast the plagues on Egypt and led the Hebrew slaves out of bondage from Egypt and wandered into the wilderness for forty years. Forty, of course, does not mean literally forty years. It probably represents a generation. Forty is merely a people's cultural expression for the idea of long, or many, as "...I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights..." (Genesis 7: 4, KJV), Moses going up to Mount Sinai for forty days and nights, Joshua's spies spending forty days scouting out Canaan (Numbers 13), Jesus fasting for forty days and forty nights in the desert, and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

However, Moses never reached Canaan. Supposedly God forbid him to enter the Promised Land presumably because he had defied Him. If Moses did not enter Canaan, today's Palestine, the presumed homeland of the later States of Judea and Israel, where did he go? We have no answer to the question. Moses' successor Joshua continued his efforts and brought his people to the Promised Land Canaan at the end.

After Moses, Joshua took over the leadership of the Israelites. His exploits are documented primarily in Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings of the Biblical Old Testament, and his tenure is normally described as campaign as opposed to wandering. These writings describe how he organized the tribes, brought down Jericho, captured Canaan, and divided the land among the tribes, leading to the ultimate formation of the states of Israel and Judea. The campaign took twenty years, but Joshua supposedly lived for 110 years.

Mainstream scholars are mostly reluctant to accept the historicity of the entire episode of the Joshua campaign because of the lack of real evidentiary support, and when exactly this campaign took place, if it took place at all, is uncertain. However, if Moses was modeled after Akhenaten, Joshua would have lived sometime after 1,350 BCE and perhaps before the episode of the Peoples of the Sea in 1,200 BCE (see below). Yet because Joshua occupies a significant place in the Bible, some scholars insist that the Joshua story is true, and they attempt to affirm it as history. For instance, the modern Near Eastern location of Tell es-Sultan³² had been identified as the ancient Biblical city of Jericho based on the

³² Sellin and Watzinger, 1907 – 1909; Garstang, 1930 – 1936

characteristics of the ruins found there and their dating, even though, as mentioned, the precise date of the story of Joshua, assuming it is historical, is undetermined. Further, others argue that the ruins at Tell es-Sultan are actually remnants of the destruction at the hands of the Hyksos fleeing Egypt in 1,560 BCE. Others simply adjusted the date arbitrarily by hundreds of years either way to make history “fit” the archaeological finds.

Historians who believe in the historicity of Joshua, to a man, assumed that the Israelites (an anachronistic term) went northeast out of Egypt into eastern Levant. The accuracy of this assumption can be checked against a passage from the Bible. The Book of Joshua (24:14-15) informs us that God admonished Joshua to discard the gods worshiped by his forefathers “beyond the River and in Egypt” and serve the Lord instead, otherwise seek out the gods that his forefathers served “beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites,” in whose land he was now living.

This passage is interesting in two regards. First, Joshua was reminded to stay away from the old tribal or regional gods (plural) and serve the only god, the Lord (monotheism), and that the old gods were worshiped in Egypt and “beyond the River.” Thus monotheism resided on “this side” (as opposed to beyond) of the River, whatever “this side” was. Also, “the River” was unidentified. Which river could “the River” be? Traditionalists generally assume that it referred to the Jordan River, the river of the Jewish homeland. Yet Jewish writers would hardly refer to the Jordan River as “the River.” They would surely call it the Jordan. It also could not have been the Nile, for it was to the Hebrew a place of revulsion, and certainly not a place of anonymity. “The River” also could not

have referred to the Tigris or the Euphrates because these rivers were too well-known to the ancient Hebrew. Besides, worshipping of local deities was practiced there. Also, these rivers were usually mentioned in pair, thus “the River” was likely to refer to some other stream in the east, beyond which monotheism was practiced. By referring to it as “the River” the writers of the Book of Joshua (at the earliest 900 BCE) betrayed the fact that the name of the river had already escaped the memory of the Proto-Hebraic people. In other words, “the River” was not in the familiar locations in the Near East, and the Proto-Israelites did not take roots there. After a few generations they had forgotten about its name.

If Moses was modeled after Akhenaten, the god of the Proto-Hebrew would likely have been a derivation of Akhenaten’s Aten, a vestige of which name is found in the Greek god of Athena and the city of Athens, and the Hebrew’s god names Adon and Adonai. However, we now have reason to believe that Akhenaten was probably of foreign extract, and that his notion of an amorphous god was likely of foreign derivation. Akhenaten could have had blood ties to the ancient state of Mitanni, or Midian—where Moses’ wife came from—a close cognate of Herodotus’ Metiene or the name Media, which were of Iranian or Aryan blood. We know the earliest forms of monotheism were to be found east of Iran. The later Zoroaster’s religious concepts come to mind, and so is the Eurasian steppe’ Turkic concept of Tangri or Tengri, the Heavenly god, as mentioned.

The passage in Joshua also informs us that the ancestors of the Hebrew people resided among the Amorites in the land “to the other side of the River.” Here we have a more explicit clue as to where Joshua had gone.

Many investigators place the Amorites on the eastern Mediterranean coast. A major factor for this conclusion is the later supposedly historical destination of the Joshua wandering, Canaan. The Amorites occupied a large area in the Near East, and certainly there is no reason to presume that they were not in the Levant. However, we have seen that their influence extended all the way to Mesopotamia, and that they most probably came from further east. Thus it would not be pure fantasy to suppose that Joshua's wandering could have taken place further east and not strictly in the Levant, perhaps as far inland as present day Iran, or even the Pontic area and, who knows, beyond.

Linguistically the name 'Joshua' ('Yoshua,' which is another form of 'Yesu;' that is, Jesus) is cognate with the Greek name 'Jason' (Ἰάσων, phonetically closer to 'Yah-song' than 'Jay-sun').³³ It is apparent that the Proto-Greek and Proto-Hebrew traditions were related; both of them being likely participants in the later saga of the Peoples of the Sea, and probably other adventures. Chapter 6 of the Book of Joshua describes Joshua having his men circle the city seven times. This behavior is reminiscent of Achilles circling the walls of Troy with Hector's corpse in tow. Nevertheless, whether the campaign for Jericho and the subsequent takeover of Canaan in fact alluded to the episodes described in the Iliad would merit no more than mere speculation, but that is not to deny that these activities might have taken place in the same general geographical locale. Also,

³³ The open vs. closed word enDing-linguistic pairing is not uncommon. The Spanish and Portuguese 'San' and 'Sao,' 'salmón' and 'salmão,' the Japanese and Chinese 'Nintendo' and 'rentiantang,' the Russian 'Khitai' (the Russian name for China) and 'Khitan' are all examples.

it is often emphasized that Canaan cities were surrounded by walls. In the middle to the end of the 1st millennium BCE strong walls were not yet a characteristic of Canaanite fortifications, but the Central Asian walled cities, extending all the way to northern China (and famously so), were.

Jason is the Greek mythological hero who went on an adventure to retrieve the Golden Fleece. The story of Jason and the Argonauts can be found in the Greek epic poem *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodius of the 3rd century BCE, a 5th c. ode *Pythian 4* by Pindar, and the 5th c. *Medea* by Euripides. As that of Oedipus, the story of Jason also took place a generation before the Iliad. It was a story of water—seas, lakes, rivers, and it involved a ship named Argo, thus the sailors are known as Argonauts. It tells of the adventures the hero encountered enroute to obtaining a magic Golden Fleece on his way home to Colchis. The story goes like this.

In Iolcus Pelias usurped the throne by killing his uncle the king, although the king's grandson, Jason, Pelias' nephew, was saved and spirited away. However, an oracle foretold that Pelias would be killed by a man with one sandal, and it was to be Jason.

When Jason returned to claim his rightful throne, Pelias agreed to abdicate on condition that Jason obtained the Golden Fleece for him. His real intention, of course, was to get Jason killed because the voyage to the Golden Fleece was to be extremely treacherous.

For the trip Jason had a ship built. It was named Argo after its builder Argus. Thus the heroes, including Herakles, who went on the trip, were called Argonauts.

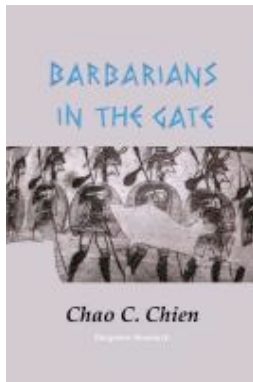
Jason and the Argonauts went through many adventures, including sailing through the Clashing Rocks, but finally

arriving in Colchis, and here is a name worth remembering. There, Hera, queen of the gods, made Medea, daughter of King Aeëtes, fall in love with Jason because she knew Jason needed her help to get the Golden Fleece. Medea was a powerful sorceress and high priestess of Hecate, goddess of magic and witchcraft.

When Jason announced to his host the Argonauts' intent, King Aeëtes agreed to let Jason have the fleece, but only after Jason was to perform a number of tasks. With Medea's help Jason performed the tasks as bid. When King Aeëtes decided to murder the Argonauts Medea helped them kill the guarding dragon and escape with the Golden Fleece. With the fleece Jason was able to reclaim his throne.

Jason married Medea and returned home. Medea bore children with him, but in Corinth Jason took King Creon's daughter as wife. Enraged, Medea killed the king and his daughter, along with two of her children.

We shall also note that in some versions of the story Medea eventually fled to Athens where she married Aegeus. Together they had a son named Medus. When Aegeus' long-lost son Theseus returned she tried to kill him to preserve her own son's inheritance. Her scheme, however, was foiled. Afterward Medea returned to Colchis, where she found her uncle Perses had killed her father. She then avenged her father by killing Perses, and then fled with her son Medus to the Iranian plateau.



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