

CYRIL ALDRED

Akhenaten

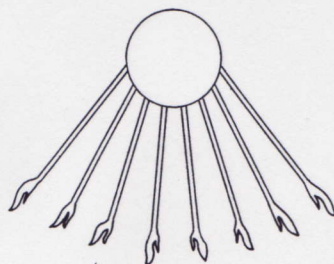
King of Egypt

With 107 illustrations



THAMES AND HUDSON

Crown. The
guise, must
colonnade,
Gempaaten.
problems.
against the
es it almost
than of any
nations of a
the bizarre
of the royal
almost exact
ins not the



CHAPTER 21

The Heresy

The culture of Upper Egypt, which had coloured the outlook of the princes of Thebes, declined in its influence after the reigns of the first two pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty; and the dominance of Lower Egypt, and particularly of its ancient capital, began to reassert itself during the reign of Tuthmosis I. As has already been mentioned, this king founded a great palace complex at Memphis, which was still flourishing at the end of the dynasty, and continued to be important under the Ramessides, despite the rise of the Delta residence of Pi-Ramesse. It became the custom for the eldest son of the pharaoh to assume the governorship of Memphis, as did Amenophis II before he became king, or Tuthmosis the son of Amenophis III who was also appointed High Priest of Ptah in the reign of his father.

The dominance of Lower Egypt is seen particularly in the revived sun-cult of Heliopolis which under the Hyksos kings maintained its supremacy during the Second Intermediate Period. Heliopolis, 13 kilometres to the northeast of Memphis, had always influenced the dynastic cult of Ptah and may have experienced a reinvigoration from ideas introduced from Asiatic sun-cults. Officials of Lower Egyptian origin had risen to high position by the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Intervention at the highest level is seen in the undertaking of Tuthmosis IV to uncover the giant image of Rē-Herakhte, the god of Lower Egypt, from the sands that engulfed his great sphinx at Giza. The sun-religion had in fact been closely identified with the kingship from the days of Djoser at the inception of the Third Dynasty, by which time the sky-god Horus, incarnate in a falcon and the king, had become assimilated to the sun-god Rē. The myth had already developed that Rē, the first king to rule Egypt, wearying of mankind and its affairs, retired to the heavens leaving his son the pharaoh to rule on earth in his stead. The strength of these beliefs owed much to the intellectual vigour of the priesthood of the sun-cult in Heliopolis, the traditional wise men, or intelligentsia of Egypt, whose reputation was celebrated far beyond the borders of the land. Theological speculation has ever been the peculiar character of the Egyptian genius, whether in pagan or Christian times, or under Islam. It has maintained its vitality even in periods of

political decline. The solar destiny, which had been exclusive to the king and his entourage in the Old Kingdom, extended its scope in the Middle Kingdom. This increased influence can be seen in the arrogation of royal privileges, particularly in the items of royal dress pictured on the interior of 'palace' coffins of private burials of the period, such as kilts, jewels, sceptres, amulets, and even the kingly uraeus. However lowly their position on earth, all the dead who could afford such coffins expected to become as kings in the other world.

Pls. 53, 54

These ideas continued to expand after the Middle Kingdom. The exhortation of the dead king in the Pyramid Texts, calling upon Nut, the universal sky-mother of the sun-cult, to descend and embrace him as the imperishable stars which were in her, now became an essential prayer inscribed upon the sarcophagus, just as the coffin was decorated with her enfolding wings in a feather pattern which was still in fashion for royalty in the case of Queen Kiya. Thus the intervention of the solar gods was the best hope of eternal life in Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty, and by the reign of Tuthmosis III was well established in the Theban necropolis, when the private tomb emerged in its developed form, the superstructure crowned with a pyramidion representing the solar symbol of rebirth, from the primaeval mound in Heliopolis. Hymns to the rising and setting sun were inscribed at the entrance to the chapel, or on stelae held by kneeling statues of the tomb-owner. All such ritual was to ensure a destiny that was royal and dynamic, enabling the deceased, like the king, to enter the bark of the sun-god and take part in the transformations that would occur during its triumphal passage across the sky, following the daily birth of the god at sunrise, and his inert gestation during the hours of night, to a resurrection at the next dawn. The eternal return of the sun-god is the motive force that activates the universe, as is expressed in the later name of Akhenaten's deity.

This idea is given substance in the new religious texts that decorate the walls of the tombs of the kings at Thebes from the time of Tuthmosis I, when the first known version of the *Imy Det* (*The Book of What is in the Underworld*) makes its appearance. Another work, *The Litany of the Sun*, is written on a winding sheet of Tuthmosis III, while *The Book of Gates* is found in the tomb of King Haremhab soon after the Amarna period. In this the sun-god Rē is called 'The Lord of the Aten', which the gods of the morning lift up at every dawn in the eastern horizon of heaven, a theme which is illustrated most enigmatically on the second shrine of Tutankhamun, and in the burial chamber of Ramesses VI. *The Book of What is in the Underworld* is largely concerned with the progressive nightly transformation of a chrysalid divine power, called 'Flesh of Rē', into the new sun, the scarab Khepri, at the break of day. This metamorphosis took place during the twelve-hour journey of the 'Flesh of Rē' through the cavernous regions of the underworld, bringing light for each hour

to its denizens and awakening them from death or sleep. During this transit, which was also through the star-studded body of the sky-goddess Nut, the dead king like the sun-god would be born again at the dawn. The constant element in this ever-changing transfiguration is the Aten, the disk of the sun, as carried by 'Flesh' through the regions of the night. During the Amarna period, the invisible source of energy of the solar divinity was identified as Rē-Herakhte; while the visible manifestation of such power appeared under the name of Aten, the Great, the Living.

The Aten had been known by the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty at least, when Ammenemes I is referred to in *The Story of Sinuhe* as dying and flying to heaven to unite with Aten, the divine flesh mingling with him who had begot him. The same poetic expression is revived to announce the death of Amenophis I; while his successor, Tuthmosis I, chose as one of his titles the phrase, 'Horus-Rē, Mighty Bull with sharp horns, who comes from the Aten'; Rekhmirē, the vizier of Tuthmosis III, refers to the closeness of his relations with his king as, 'I saw his person in his true form, Rē, the Lord of Heaven, the Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt when he rises, the Aten when he reveals himself.' In the reign of Amenophis II, the symbol of the sun-disk appears with a pair of enveloping arms. Under Tuthmosis IV, the Aten is referred to on a large scarab as a god of battles who makes the pharaoh mighty in his domains and brings all his subjects under the sway of the sun-disk.

In the reign of Amenophis III references to the Aten as a solar divinity become more numerous. The name 'Radiance of the Aten' is applied to his state barge on the commemorative scarabs of his Regnal Year 11, and to the Malkata palace complex before his first jubilee, perhaps even to the king himself. A name compounded with the Aten was conferred upon at least one of his children.

Fig. 29

There was thus a progressive increase in the mention and importance of the Aten as a separate divinity throughout the period. This is but one aspect of the rising ferment in the theology of the solar cult, in conjunction with such manifestations of the same beliefs evident in the religious texts that appear in the tombs of the kings and their more intimate officials. The new concept of Rē is that he is more than a sun-god. He is the Universe who has assimilated all the other gods in his being. He is 'the sole god who has made himself for eternity'. In the *Litany* he is invoked under his seventy-five names which are his bodies (or aspects), and these bodies are the gods. Thus Rē is the bodies of Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb and Nut, the entire first and second generation of the solar deities. He is hailed as, 'Rē of the Disk, supreme power whose forms are his transformations when he makes successively his appearance as the Aten or solar disk'. This dogma is already close to that proclaimed by the titles and didactic name of Akhenaten's god, the Aten, if not identical with it.

Monolithic

Thus a syncretism of religious beliefs in the Eighteenth Dynasty was already embracing a monotheistic conception of a supreme solar divinity. Furthermore, such a deity takes on the aspect of king in conformity with the ideas of the time at the level of the control of human affairs. While the sun-god from his inception in Egypt had been such a ruler, he was most triumphantly proclaimed in the heavenly king that Akhenaten affirmed, enclosing his name in double-bordered cartouches, and giving him titles and epithets like a pharaoh *par excellence*. It is true that other gods like Amun or Osiris had been conceived of as kings and given titles, 'Lord of the Thrones of Upper and Lower Egypt', 'Ruler of Eternity', and so on, yet their names were not enclosed in cartouches. The god that Akhenaten adjured in the Boundary Stelae at Amarna is a heavenly pharaoh, a 'Good God', 'Divine and Regal', whose reign began with that of the king. Indeed, the durbar of Year 12 is dated to the reign of the Aten in the tomb of Huya, and to the reign of Akhenaten in the tomb of Meryrē II, as though god and king were regarded as co-regents. Like a king, the Aten can also celebrate jubilees after a period of rule. As a pharaoh, like the king whom Rekhmirē salutes, he is the mother and father of mankind, alone by himself without an equal. The monotheism that Akhenaten proclaims is not the henotheism of earlier times, the belief in one supreme god without any assertion of his unique nature, but the worship of an omnipotent and singular divinity. The full development of the king's thought is seen in the careful suppression later in the reign of the plural form of 'god' wherever it appears in earlier texts. There was now but one god, and the king was his prophet.

This intimate relationship was expressed in a familial form. The king is still called by a title that the pharaoh had borne since the days of the early Old Kingdom, 'Son of the Sun-god', but now with the addition of 'The beautiful child of the Aten'. In the tomb of Parennefer, the courtier addresses his lord as 'the radiant child of the Aten who has vouchsafed a sight of thyself to us(?)'. To Ay, the king's relationship to the Aten is, 'Thy son who issued from thy rays. Thou transferrest to him thy duration and thy years. Thou listenest to him and what is in his heart.' A feature of the religious development that had evolved during the New Kingdom was the widespread worship of a group of gods who were represented as a Father and Mother figure, together with their male offspring, a trinity which appealed strongly to the love of family among the Egyptians. Thus Amun of Karnak had a consort Mut, and their son Khons the moon-child: other triads were Ptah, Sekhmet and Nefertem of Memphis; and Osiris, Isis and Horus the Child of Abydos. The Aten, however, was a sole god who created himself daily, having no female counterpart. Although he is sometimes addressed, in the tombs of Ipy and Meryrē I for instance, as 'the father and mother of all that thou hast made', he is predominantly 'Father Aten'. Nevertheless, one gains the impression that Akhenaten, in publicizing

his domestic life as the family man with Nefertiti and one or more of their children, is consciously or otherwise creating a significant icon of a holy family as a focus of daily worship, particularly in the chapels attached to the private houses at Amarna. And while the Aten shares his divinity with no female principal, one suspects that the erotic extravagance given to Nefertiti, both in her appearance and in the epithets lavished upon her, have the effect of elevating her into a love-goddess, a Venus figure like Hathor or Astarte. The door-jambs at the entrance to the tombs at Amarna, where they are complete, contain prayers, addressed to this trinity of powers, the Aten, the king and the queen.

Pl. 24

At least the courtiers addressed their king as an incarnation of the sole god the Aten. Ay refers to him as 'my god who fashioned me'; for Pentu he is 'the god who fashions mankind, and makes the Two Lands live'; Tutu hails him as his 'god who fashioned and fostered him'. Their invocations to the Aten are also addressed to the king. The prayers that now appear in the tomb inscriptions expressing the quintessential tenets of the new creed quote from a longer composition which is generally taken to be the work of the king himself. The longest extract is found in the tomb of Ay, who as one of the king's private secretaries must have found a good copy for his scribe to follow, though it is not entirely free from corruptions. The doctrine enshrined in the psalm, to which the name of the 'Great Hymn' has been given in modern times, is that the universe has been fashioned by the sun-god immanent in the Aten, and he alone cares for his creation. His mysterious hand is upon all that he has made, although he is afar off in the remote heavens. When the living Aten goes to rest the world becomes dark and hostile, and sleeps after the manner of death until the next day dawns, when all creation by the power of the Aten awakens and rejoices. It runs as follows:

Thou arisest fair in the horizon of Heaven, O Living Aten, Beginner of Life. When thou dawnest in the East, thou fillest every land with thy beauty. Thou art indeed comely, great, radiant and high over every land. Thy rays embrace the lands to the full extent of all that thou hast made, for thou art Rē and thou attainest their limits and subduest them for thy beloved son [Akhenaten]. Thou art remote yet thy rays are upon the earth. Thou art in the sight of men, yet thy ways are not known.

When thou settest in the Western horizon, the earth is in darkness after the manner of death. Men spend the night indoors with the head covered, the eye not seeing its fellow. Their possessions might be stolen, even when under their heads, and they would be unaware of it. Every lion comes forth from its lair and all snakes bite. Darkness lurks, and the earth is silent when their Creator rests in his habitation.

The earth brightens when thou arisest in the Eastern horizon and shinest forth as Aten in the daytime. Thou drivest away the night when thou givest forth thy beams. The Two Lands are in festival. They awake and stand upon their feet for thou hast raised them up. They wash their limbs, they put on raiment and raise their arms in adoration at thy appearance. The entire earth performs its labours. All cattle are at peace in their pastures. The trees and herbage grow green. The birds fly from their nests, their wings [raised] in praise of thy spirit. All animals gambol on their feet, all the winged creation live when thou hast risen for them. The boats sail upstream, and likewise downstream. All ways open at thy dawning. The fish in the river leap in thy presence. Thy rays are in the midst of the sea.

Thou it is who causest women to conceive and makest seed into man, who givest life to the child in the womb of its mother, who comfortest him so that he cries not therein, nurse that thou art, even in the womb, who givest breath to quicken all that he hath made. When the child comes forth from the body on the day of his birth, then thou openest his mouth completely and thou furnishest his sustenance. When the chick in the egg chirps within the shell, thou givest him the breath within it to sustain him. Thou createst for him his proper term within the egg, so that he shall break it and come forth from it to testify to his completion as he runs about on his two feet when he emergeth.

How manifold are thy works! They are hidden from the sight of men, O Sole God, like unto whom there is no other! Thou didst fashion the earth according to thy desire when thou wast alone – all men, all cattle great and small, all that are upon the earth that run upon their feet or rise up on high flying with their wings. And the lands of Syria and Kush and Egypt – thou appointest every man to his place and satisfiest his needs. Everyone receives his sustenance and his days are numbered. Their tongues are diverse in speech and their qualities likewise, and their colour is differentiated for thou hast distinguished the nations.

Thou makest the waters under the earth and thou bringest them forth [as the Nile] at thy pleasure to sustain the people of Egypt even as thou hast made them live for thee, O Divine Lord of them all, toiling for them, the Lord of every land, shining forth for them, the Aten Disk of the day time, great in majesty!

All distant foreign lands also, thou createst their life. Thou hast placed a Nile in heaven to come forth for them and make a flood upon the mountains like the sea in order to water the fields of their villages. How excellent are thy plans, O Lord of Eternity! – a Nile in the sky is thy gift to foreigners and to beasts of their lands; but the true Nile flows from under the earth for Egypt.

Thy beams nourish every field and when thou shinest they live and grow for thee. Thou makest the seasons in order to sustain all that thou hast made,

the winter to cool them, the summer heat that they may taste [of thy quality]. Thou hast made heaven afar off that thou mayest behold all that thou hast made when thou wast alone, appearing in thy aspect of the Living Aten, rising and shining forth. Thou makest millions of forms out of thyself, towns, villages, fields, roads, the river. All eyes behold thee before them, for thou art the Aten of the daytime, above all that thou has created.

Thou art in my heart, but there is none other who knows thee save thy son Akhenaten. Thou hast made him wise in thy plans and thy power.

All the sentiments expressed in the above hymn have little that is revolutionary about them, and would have been approved by most worshippers in the world of ancient Egypt. The sun-god is regarded as the demiurge who created the Universe 'when he was alone' (in Chaos), a concept which is of great antiquity. Many of the other ideas expressed in the hymn had appeared in similar compositions addressed to other gods during this same dynasty. A hymn to Amun which dates to the reign of Amenophis II, but which has elements of greater antiquity, reveals the same joy in nature, and speaks of the god almost exclusively in his solar aspect which had resulted from his identification with Rē-Atum. He is referred to as:

Father of the Gods, who fashioned mankind, and made the beasts, and the herbage which sustains cattle . . . Lord of the sunbeams who createst light . . . Thou art the Sole One who made all that there is: the Unique One who made what exists . . . He it is who has made pasturage for cattle, and the fruit tree for mankind. He it is who has made that whereon the fish live in the river, and the birds in the heavens. It is he who gives breath to him in the egg, and sustains the son of the worm.

He is also identified with Atum 'who fashioned men of different natures and created their life. He made them differ in colour, each from the other'. This universalist sentiment, that all the nations, barbaric as well as Egyptian, are God's creatures, is proper to a kingdom at the height of its imperial greatness, but it is expressed more powerfully in the hymn to the Aten. An epithet of Thoth, the god of writing and learning, referring to him as he 'who made different the tongue of one land from another', belongs to the very end of the Amarna period. Yet it appears to have been already of some antiquity. It is thus clear that even from the haphazard body of texts that has survived from an earlier time, the Great Hymn to the Aten contained ideas and phrases which had long been familiar in the religious literature. Its novelty lay not in what it expressed but in what it left out. Nowhere is there the slightest mention of other gods. An earlier hymn to the Theban Amun, which echoes many of its

ideas, speaks of Amun as the Sole God yet equates him with Ptah, Min, Rē, Khepri and Atum. It apostrophizes him as the One and Only Creator from whose tears men originated and from whose mouth the gods came into existence, thus identifying him with Atum and Ptah in the same breath. There is no such pantheism evident in the hymns to the Aten, but, on the contrary, an austere monotheism which is quite unprecedented in the world of the Late Bronze Age.

The remarkable feature of this revolution in religious thought is that it apparently springs into life from the moment of the king's advent. The curtain falls on the old drama of the sun-god's progress across the heavens with his divine retinue defeating the ever-resurgent forces of evil by day, and bringing a brief hour of light and life to the dead in the various regions of the Underworld by night. In its place was presented a far less tumultuous monodrama enacted in the presence of worshipping mankind with its joyous offerings. The Aten rose and set in solitary majesty in a heaven devoid of other gods. In this respect Professor Redford is justified in speaking of Akhenaten as a literal atheist.

This is emphasized by a fragment of woefully damaged text found inscribed on two blocks from the interior of the Tenth Pylon at Karnak, and brought to notice by Redford. It gives the only hint of the king's new 'teaching', to which he often refers on his monuments, but all other examples of which must have been diligently suppressed after his death as utter heresy. Only disjointed phrases can be extracted from this inscription which is evidently from a homily which the king addressed to his followers very early in his reign when he still sanctioned the representation of Rē-Herakhte in the traditional form of a falcon-headed man bearing the disk of the sun on his vertex, and spelt his name in its first didactic form though not yet enclosed in double cartouches. The drift of his discourse seems to be that the original forms of the gods were known from the catalogues and specifications which were preserved in temple libraries and consulted only perhaps by wise men or scholars. But though these gods might have been made of gold and precious stones they had somehow died or ceased to function and were now ineffective. The mysterious god which the king proclaimed was self-created, unique, eternal, universal and omnipresent in the daylight.

The truths that the king expounded were to a large extent self-evident, though they took no account of sympathetic magic which could transform symbols into actuality. Since prehistoric times the gods of Egypt had existed as graven images, their forms defined in the manuals preserved in temple libraries. Thus when King Neferhotep I of the Thirteenth Dynasty wished to make a statue of Osiris for his monument in Abydos, he searched among ancient archives in a temple at Heliopolis to ensure that the image should be fashioned in its proper and correct form. Such images lived in 'great mansions'

(temples), and were protected and tended by 'servants' (priests) who daily awakened them, cleaned, anointed, clothed, fed and put them to rest as though they were living grandees. All this ritual was condemned as a vanity by Akhenaten, who dismissed the gods, banished their images, abandoned their habitations and soon represented his sole divinity by a symbol, an elaborate form of the hieroglyph for sunlight – the many-armed disk of the sun. Thus on the Boundary Stelae, Akhenaten apostrophizes the Aten as one who fashions himself with his two hands, whom no craftsman has devised.

All this is new, or rather expressed for the first time; for it is to be suspected that not all the ideas were entirely of the king's invention. Such sentiments must have been abroad at this time, but it would have required the initiative and authority of the pharaoh to promote them. The 'Teaching' which he promulgated was dutifully followed by his friends and favourites, such as his old childhood servant Parennefer, his father-in-law Ay, and the chief servitors of the Aten cult, Meryrē I and Tutu; but it is doubtful whether whole-hearted support was secured outside court circles. The artisans, labourers and ordinary folk appear to have clung to their old gods and superstitions. Even among the king's entourage there were those who appear to have been no more than lukewarm to some of his ideas, for later he had to rally them to his views by declaring that it would be 'evil' if they listened to rumours concerning burial arrangements at Akhetaten. The proof of the shallow rooting of his reforms is seen in the almost complete withering that occurred as soon as his immediate successors achieved power. The images of the proscribed gods were fashioned anew, their shrines were refurbished, their priesthoods restored, the old worship re-established, and the traditional eschatology fervently embraced.

But for little more than a decade the elevation of an abstract and intangible god to the position of a lone supremacy wrought important changes in religious practices at Amarna and in Egypt beyond. The worship of a god in aniconic form simplified temple architecture which no longer had to consist of a 'mansion' but reverted to the court, open to the sunlight, and to the colonnades of the ancient sun-temples. The suppression of other gods made innovations necessary in beliefs concerning life after death, particularly in the influential cult of the resurrected god Osiris, despite the nature of the destiny that he promised all believers: an eternity at once blessed and agrarian, such as the deceased had enjoyed in life among the fields of Egypt, but more glorious. Osiris and his chthonic realms were opposed to the idea of an after-life among the stars, or its later development as a following of the sun-god in the regions of light. This dichotomy existed in Egyptian religion until paganism was replaced by Christianity in the third century BC; but as early as the Fifth Dynasty the Pyramid Texts had made it evident that the funerary cult of Osiris had penetrated the solar beliefs concerning the pharaonic destiny, and that the dead

king had become assimilated to Osiris, while his successor stood as Horus, the champion of his murdered father and the ruler of the living. The gods of the Osirian cycle have in fact become the third generation of the solar gods in the great ennead of Heliopolis.

From the earliest Dynastic period, kings had built shrines and cenotaphs at Abydos, an Upper Egyptian focus of the cult of Osiris and the royal ancestors, to legitimize their claims to the long tradition of sovereignty. In the reign of Amenophis III this activity reached a climax with the clearing up of the royal necropolis at Abydos, and an antiquarian search for the tomb of Osiris which the pundits of the day identified in the cenotaph of King Djer, the third king of the First Dynasty. But this pious duty ceased abruptly under Akhenaten, when all mention of Osiris, together with the gods of his cycle, was suppressed in the funerary texts, and the Osirian epithet of 'justified' with the force of 'deceased' was dropped from the titles of the defunct. The votive block-statue in the form of a pilgrim to Abydos, or other holy places, squatting in his cloak, disappeared from the repertoire of funerary sculpture, and is not revived until the reign of King Ay. The shawabti figure, a substitute for the deceased in the *corvée* of the Osirian Underworld, however, was not discarded, but the texts inscribed upon it were considerably modified and lacked the magic spell that would activate it.

Pl. 63

Pls. 11, 12

Pl. 51

In the reaction that followed the death of Akhenaten, not only were the temples and statues of Amun, Mut and other important gods restored on a lavish scale, but the cult of Osiris at Abydos received an unstinted rehabilitation, especially under the early Ramessides. Sethos I, for instance, entered the names of kings whom he considered his legitimate predecessors, commencing with Menes, the first pharaoh, in the Table of Ancestors carved on the wall of a corridor in the great temple associated with his cenotaph, the so-called Osireion, and so reconsecrated their memorials anew. Ramesses II did likewise in his temple on the neighbouring site.

The proscription of Osiris by Akhenaten ensured that the gods of burial were banished together with the pantheon, and a new eschatology had to be invented, though much of the old funeral practice was retained, such as mummification, burial in an anthropoid coffin and Canopic jars, and the deposit of grave goods with the deceased. In place of the old funerary deities, Akhenaten undertook the care of his subjects in the afterlife, and it is to him that they pray for patronage and succour after death. Parennefer hails him as 'Lord of Burial, Giver of Longevity, Lord of the Life-span, at the sight of whom there is life'. Ay addresses him as 'this cool North wind, the breath by which I live, an infinity of Niles pouring forth its water daily'. 'Grant me,' he prays, 'a life prolonged by thy favours; award me a goodly burial . . . in my tomb which thou hast ordained for me . . . Grant me pure food which has been placed before thee from the surplus of thy Father Aten every day.'

Such petitions are commonplace in the inscriptions that the courtiers have left in their tombs at Amarna. Requests for 'a gift of loaves in the temple of the Aten', 'a sight of the Aten in the necropolis', 'departure in the morning from the Underworld to [see] the Aten as he rises every day' alternate with simpler appeals for 'unguent', 'water from the swirl of the river', and similar supplications addressed to the king. The prayer on the footboard of Kiya's coffin makes virtually the same requests by the queen to Akhenaten, but in a more poetic form:

May I breathe the sweet air that issues from thy mouth. May I behold thy beauty every day – that is my prayer. May I hear thy sweet voice in the North Wind. May my body grow vigorous with life through thy love. Mayest thou give me thy two hands bearing thy sustenance, and I receive it and live by it. Mayest thou ever call upon my name and it shall not fail on thy lips.

In this address the deceased asks for mortuary favours from the king who is now the only donor of such privileges. The wandering soul could no longer pass through dangers and hazards to reach the Hall of the Two Truths where his deeds on earth would be weighed in the balance and his fate decided at a Last Judgment before Osiris. In the Royal Tomb at Amarna the drama of the sun's daily circuit as represented in the *Book of What is in the Underworld* is replaced by the scene on the eastern wall of chamber alpha of the rising of the Aten and the awakening of the temple and its royal worshippers to life and joy. On the western wall is the counterpoise, the relief of the setting of the Aten and the putting of its creation to rest. The part that the Great Temple of the Aten at Akhetaten plays in this daily cycle is paramount, and supersedes the apparatus of gods and demons that belongs to the old eschatology. The immense extent of the temple with its forest of offering-tables, two for each day of the year, heaped with consecrated food for the benefit of the dead as well as the living, is an indication of its importance in the cult.

There was in this a return to an earlier concept of immortality which was revived by the Aten-religion and opposed to the agricultural eternity of the Osirian beliefs. Fairman, following Etienne Drioton, has pointed out that the Aten-worshippers held that the souls (*ba*) of the dead came forth by day at sunrise to enjoy a full life in some immaterial world, returning to the tomb at nightfall, an imagery suggested from the habits of sand-martins in Egypt that nest in holes in the sandy river-banks and cliffs. Both the dead and the living were believed to lapse into sleep when the Aten sank beneath the western horizon, and were all awakened by its rays in the morning. The dead left their tombs, and the living their habitations, and all accompanied the Aten to his temple, and by his grace were permitted to share in the services and the food

offerings. Thereafter they were to be imagined as continuing near their homes and 'houses of eternity' until sunset. 'Life after death for the worshipper of the Aten was to live near his god and his king in the temple on earth, and near his former home and tomb. The prayers for long life and for benefits after death are addressed by the dead man to the Aten, often to the king himself and occasionally to the queen.'

Such a creed reveals an attempt to rationalize beliefs that had developed accretions from prehistoric times. It sought to establish the relationship of the dead with the living, and mankind and all the natural world with a unique, invisible and self-created god. Its cult was simple, its worship enhanced by the enchantment of the arts and the excitement of a daily pageantry. But it seems to have satisfied no deep need in the mass of the people. Outside of Akhetaten life was no better than before and may, indeed, have been more burdensome and ominous. Plague and sickness were becoming endemic; rumours of military reverses percolated from abroad; and exactions by a new rapacious breed of tax-collectors in place of the old tithe-gatherers caused resentment at home.

Fig. 2

There must have been among Akhenaten's courtiers sincere men who shared his convictions and were whole-hearted in following a charismatic leader. Others may have found it convenient to pay him lip-service. Such disciples were rewarded not only with lucrative office and the king's favour, but with more tangible rewards, the gold of honour, food and drink from the royal table, splendid tombs and burial equipment. Some of these followers, such as Tutu, Parennefer and Meryrē I, are not heard of again after the king's death; others, like Pentu and Ay, were prominent in the return of the *ancien régime*. The novel ideas of the king won no wide acceptance even among his privileged entourage and were quickly abandoned as an unfortunate aberration soon after his disappearance from the scene.