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BALUSTRADES, STAIRS AND ALTARS IN THE CULT OF THE ATEN AT EL-AMARNA*

By IAN SHAW

The fragments of stone balustrades, parapets and screen walling from the city of el-Amarna are an invaluable source of evidence for the idiosyncratic nature of the cult of the Aten and its associated architecture. The presence of ramps and steps flanked by balustrades in most of the major buildings at el-Amarna suggests that Akhenaten was obliged to devise innovative architectural forms to provide suitable contexts for the worship of the Aten.

THE religious and ceremonial buildings of the city of Akhetaten are the most important sources for the study of the rituals and symbolism of Atenism. Along with Akhenaten's slightly earlier temples dedicated to the Aten in East Karnak,¹ the remains of the temples, chapels and shrines at el-Amarna are the surviving physical record of a unique and idiosyncratic phase in the history of Egyptian religious thought. Ranging from scenes of rituals and processions carved and painted in the tombs of Akhenaten's courtiers to the surviving remains of the temple walls and foundations themselves, the architectural evidence at el-Amarna can still offer fresh insights into the cult of the Aten. The current Egypt Exploration Society excavations at the Small Aten Temple (or *Hwt-Itn*) and Kom el-Nana show that new excavation can add greatly to the understanding of the distinctive nature of temples dedicated to the Aten,² but fresh insights can also be gained by re-examination of the sculptured and inscribed material excavated between 1891 and the late 1930s and now in various museum collections.

In 1951 John Cooney and William Kelly Simpson published an article dealing with six parapet fragments and a balustrade newel-post, which appear to have derived from an altar in the Great Temple at el-Amarna, excavated by Flinders Petrie in 1891–2. They concluded that 'examination of fragments, mostly unpublished, now scattered throughout museums in Egypt, Europe and America is the sole means of assembling what still survives of this or of duplicate altars. The collections at Oxford and University College London, along with scattered portions of the Amherst Collection still in private possession, are perhaps the best chances of locating related fragments.'³ The present article concentrates on a number of such fragments now in collections throughout the world.

*For assistance in the preparation of this article, my thanks go firstly to Janine Bourriau for allowing me the opportunity to study the Amarna objects in the Fitzwilliam Museum. My research has been generously supported by the British Academy and New Hall, Cambridge. I am indebted to Helen Whitehouse, Barbara Adams, Rosalind Janssen, Catharine Roehrig, Richard Fazzini and Rosemarie Drenkhahn, for information and photographs, to Ann Jones, for the line drawings, and to the *JEA*'s referees for many helpful suggestions. Finally, special gratitude must go to Margaret Serpico for inadvertently reviving a dormant article.

¹ R. W. Smith and D. B. Redford, *The Akhenaten Temple Project*, 1 (Warminster, 1976); D. B. Redford, *Akhenaten, the Heretic King* (Princeton, NJ, 1984); J. Gohary, *The Akhenaten Sed-festival at Karnak* (London, 1992).

² B. J. Kemp, *Amarna Reports*, v (London, 1989); id., *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London, 1989), 276–87.

³ J. D. Cooney and W. K. Simpson, 'An Architectural Fragment from Amarna', *Brooklyn Museum Bulletin* 12/4 (1951), 1–12.

Of the major sections of parapet or balustrade which are discussed here (multiple joining fragments being regarded as effectively single sections), two are in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, two in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, five in the Petrie Museum, University College London, nine in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, two in the Metropolitan Museum, seven in the Brooklyn Museum and one in the Kestner-Museum, Hanover. By studying a large number of these fragments of balustrades and parapets *en masse*, their roles within the state buildings at el-Amarna can be more accurately assessed.

The nature of Amarna balustrades and parapets

There are at least thirty surviving fragments of balustrades and parapets from el-Amarna and el-Ashmunin, those at the latter site having been re-used as *talatat*-blocks. These are currently in museum collections, and it has proved possible to examine most of them at first hand (Appendix 1). In addition to the surviving examples which can be traced, there are also a number of fragments which are mentioned in the reports of the various excavators at el-Amarna from 1892 to 1937, but their current locations are not known (Appendix 2). The total number of excavated pieces is therefore probably at least forty, by the time the 'lost' fragments are included.

Probably the most diagnostic feature of these narrow slabs of stone (usually limestone, quartzite or granite) is the fact that they were decorated with sunk relief or engraved inscriptions on both main faces. This decoration invariably consists of multiple depictions of the typical scene of the Amarna royal family offering to the Aten; Cairo JE 87300, a section of granite balustrade, is one of the best surviving examples (fig. 1). When one decorated face is missing, the fragments are often still identifiable as balustrades either by the existence of a single or double roll-shape on the upper edge, or by the fact that the royal figures in the typical offering scene are placed on a diagonally ascending base-line and the scene itself may often be repeated several times. A typical Amarna balustrade, parapet or screen wall, therefore, usually has the appearance of a quadrilateral double-sided stele, of which the upper edge is generally in the form of a single or double convex roll (see top views of Ashmolean 1922.141 and Fitzwilliam E16.1950 in pl. X, 1 and 2). When Petrie encountered the first fragments of balustrades and parapets at el-Amarna, he appears to have misidentified them as stelae. In 1924 he wrote, 'In many collections are examples or portions of the stone steles with which the palace was profusely decorated. These steles are always curved and slightly slanting at the top, and bear the scene of the king, queen and daughter offering, without any inscription beyond the names and titles. They are cut in all materials, limestone, alabaster, quartzite, black granite, red granite etc.; and their purpose is unknown. Such slabs are now in the Gizeh museum; in the room built over the pavement at Tell el-Amarna; in the Ashmolean Museum; Berlin Museum; Cabinet des Médailles, Paris; Lord Amherst's collection; and the Edwards Collection.'⁴

The characteristic shape of the parapets and sections of screen wall (such as Ashmolean 1922.141, pl. X, 1) would have been a long rectangle, whereas that of the balustrades (e.g. Cairo T.30.10.26.12, pl. XI, 1) would have been an irregular quadrilateral. Although the total length of most balustrades would usually have been greater than their average height, most of the larger, thicker examples appear to have been

⁴ W. M. F. Petrie, *A History of Egypt*, II (London, 1924), 223.

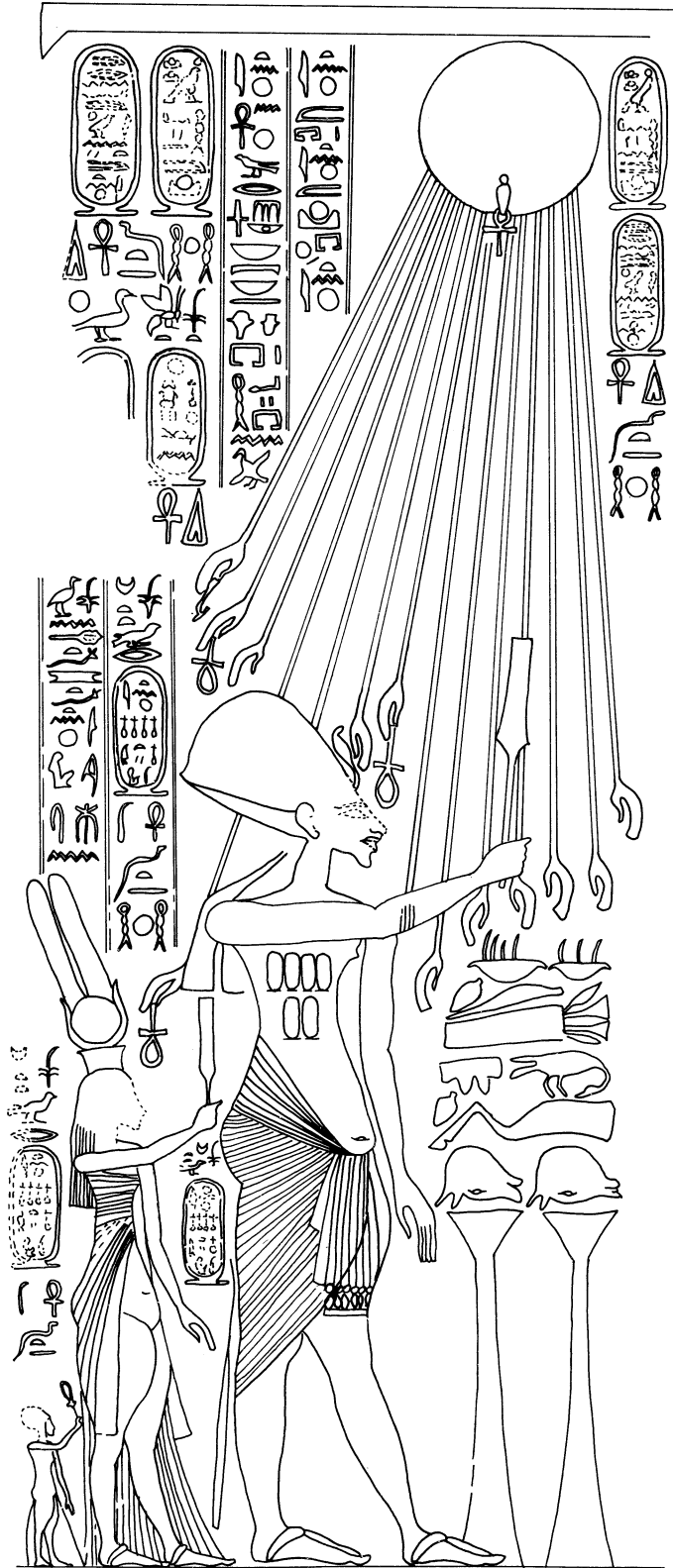


FIG. 1. Depiction of the Amarna royal family making offerings to the Aten, decorating one side of the segment of balustrade Cairo JE 87300 (after Roeder, *Amarna Reliefs aus Hermopolis*, pl. 1).

composite, each consisting of at least two or three joining pieces, so that the individual sections of balustrade are usually tall and narrow, with slanting upper edges. The thickness of both balustrades and parapets characteristically widens from top to bottom. There are also a few surviving 'newel-posts' from balustrades (Metropolitan M21.9.447, Cairo SR 13265 and Fitzwilliam E16.1950). It is possible that the round-topped shape of the upper edge of the balustrades inspired the engraving of cartouches—or pairs of cartouches—on the ends of their lower newel-posts, as on Cairo SR 13265 and Metropolitan M21.9.447. Both of these were made as separate, wider sections for attachment to the ends of heavy multipartite balustrades. As Cooney and Simpson point out, 'In commenting on the "stelae" which he found at Amarna, Petrie remarked that their ends were unworked, a detail without precedent in Egyptian stelae. A plausible explanation of this seeming carelessness is that the terminal post was made as a separate piece and joined to the balustrade with a binder.'⁵ Fitzwilliam E16.1950, on the other hand, is not a separately carved newel-post but simply a fragment broken off one end of a fairly thin balustrade or parapet (see pl. X, 2), similar in dimensions to the fragments of screen wall or parapet from the temple and kiosks in the Maru-Aten at el-Amarna.⁶ Depictions of balustrades in some of the rock-tombs of the nobles at el-Amarna clearly show such newel-posts, which are usually represented frontally (see figs. 4 and 5).

Earlier decorated balustrades in Egyptian temples

The erection of ramps and steps, flanked by balustrades and invariably leading to altars surrounded by parapets, was evidently a distinctive and idiosyncratic feature of Akhenaten's shrines and temples to the Aten. Throughout the rest of the New Kingdom the ramps and stairways in temples were often provided with low roll-topped balustrades, but these were usually plain and undecorated. There are, however, several surviving examples of decorated balustrades from earlier periods, notably those which run alongside the wide ramps and steps in Queen Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri.⁷

The two pairs of balustrades at Deir el-Bahri, excavated and reconstructed by Herbert Winlock between 1923 and 1931, are considerably thicker and squatter than those at el-Amarna. Like the Amarna balustrades, the Deir el-Bahri ones show traces of decoration on both sides; the pair flanking the ramp leading to the middle terrace are decorated with relief depictions of a seated lion on either side of the lower newel-posts and limestone sphinxes on top of each of the upper newel-posts. The pair of balustrades on either side of the ramp leading to the upper terrace are evidently carved to resemble the serpent-form of the goddess Wadjet, with the lower newel-post of each carved in the form of a cobra's head surmounted by the form of the hawk-god (see fig. 2 and pl. XI, 3). The head of the cobra was deliberately destroyed and, ironically, Winlock suggests that this may have happened during the Amarna period: 'her hooded cobra-head ... had been painstakingly chiseled away by Akh-en-Aten, we must suppose, when all the gods were proscribed except the sun god. But the hawks were all forms of Horus, and Horus was a manifestation of the sun, and therefore these hawks escaped proscription.'

⁵ Cooney and Simpson, *Brooklyn Mus. Bull.* 12/4, 6.

⁶ T. E. Peet and C. L. Woolley, *City of Akhenaten*, 1 (London, 1923) (hereafter *COA* 1), 121–2, pls. xxxii.2, xxxiii.2 and xxxiv.1–2.

⁷ H. E. Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahri: 1911–1931* (New York, 1942), 106–7, 172–3, 219, fig. 14.

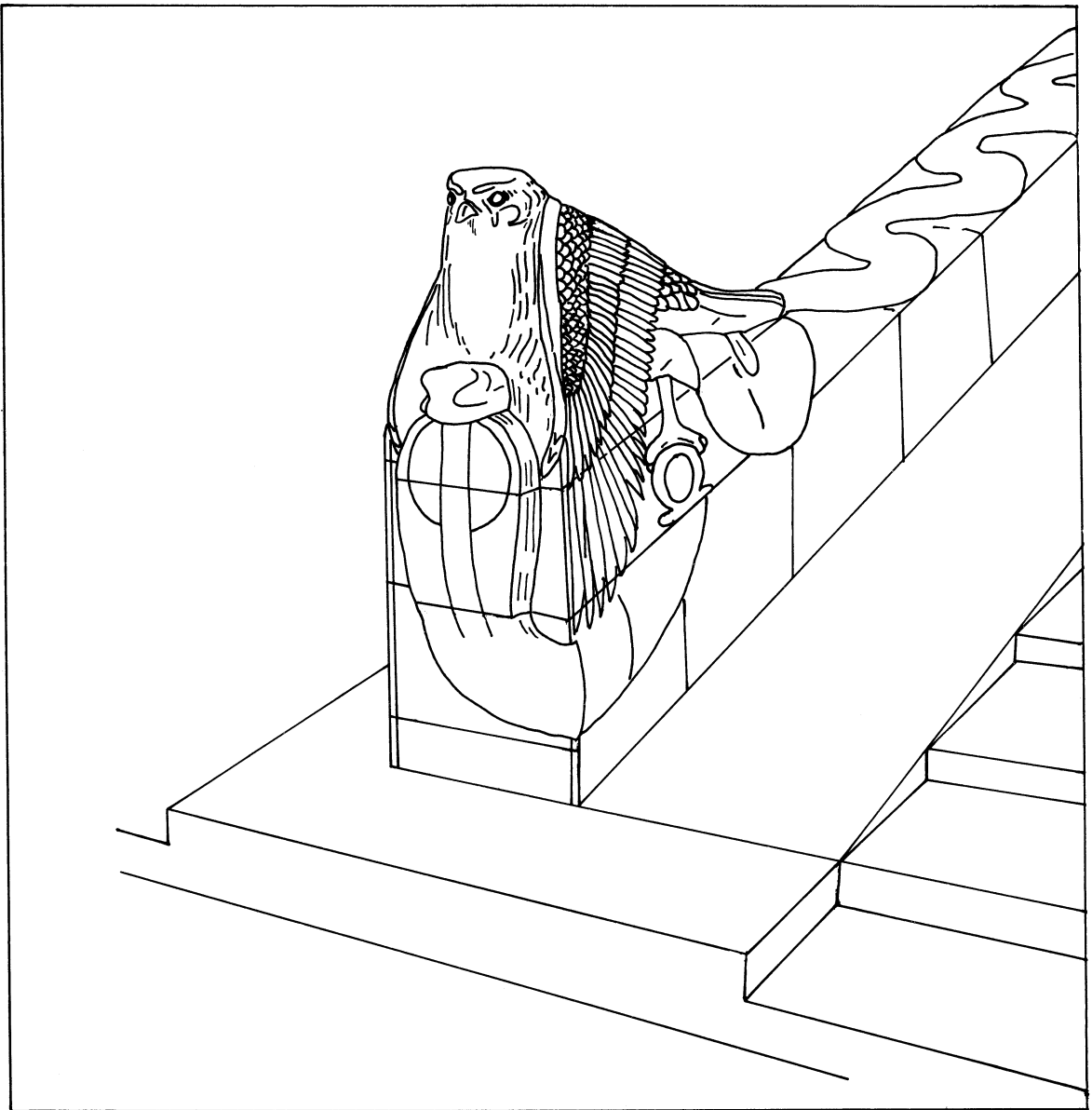


FIG. 2. Reconstruction drawing of one of the balustrades flanking the ramp leading to the upper terrace at the temple of Hatshepsut, Deir el-Bahri (after Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el-Bahri*, fig. 14).

The balustrades in Hatshepsut's temple clearly relate to the use of large-scale ramps and terracing rather than specific cultic imagery—it would be perverse (and anachronistic) to suggest that they had any links with the cult or architecture of the Aten. However, it is interesting to compare their decoration with those at el-Amarna. The primary image conveyed by the upper balustrade at Deir el-Bahri was evidently the symbolism of the northern and southern deities, Wadjet and Horus respectively. On the lower balustrade the relief carvings of lions on either side of the bottom newel-posts must have signified the power of the queen as ruler. The architects of Hatshepsut's temple, unlike the creators

of the Amarna balustrades, were not using the decoration of the balustrades to make any descriptive statement about the act of worship itself. Instead, they simply concentrated on the serpent-shape of the balustrade, using it to express the union of the country rather than attempting to refer to the practice of the cult in the temple. It is noteworthy, however, that the ends of the lower balustrades' newel-posts at Deir el-Bahri were each decorated with a personification of an *ankh*-sign holding up the queen's cartouche in its hands. As with the Amarna balustrades, an association seems to be made here between the cartouche-shape and the outline of the balustrade.

The upper terrace of Hatshepsut's temple also incorporates a monumental limestone altar approached by steps and located in the centre of a small courtyard, which is considered to have been dedicated to the sun-god Re-Harakhti.⁸ Although the altar itself is thought to have once been surrounded by a parapet,⁹ the steps leading up to the altar on its western side were apparently not provided with balustrades.

Locations and patterns of use of the balustrades at el-Amarna

Less than half of the sections of parapet and balustrade at el-Amarna have known provenances, but this is a sufficiently high proportion to permit some discussion of their characteristic locations and patterns of use. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the provenances of fragments from locations in the central part of the city. Seven are known to be from various sections of the Great Temple, at least six from the Great Palace and five from the Maru-Aten, as well as two balustrades (U4, whereabouts now unknown) which are mentioned by John Pendlebury in his report on the excavation of the Small Aten Temple (see Appendix 2).

As far as materials are concerned, there are few distinct patterns, although particular stones appear to have been used in two different parts of the Great Temple: the balustrades in the Gem Aten are of limestone and those from the Per-Hay are of pink and black granite (see Appendix 2). In the Great Palace, on the other hand, Pendlebury pointed out that a mixture of limestone and granite parapets and balustrades were associated with the complex's earlier phases, while a number of sandstone balustrades were inscribed with the later version of the Aten's cartouches and therefore evidently formed part of a later phase of construction. In the Maru-Aten there are fragments of parapets and screen walls carved from purple quartzite, pink granite and calcite.¹⁰

Undoubtedly the high number of elaborate balustrades at el-Amarna is closely connected with the prevalence of the architectural combination of the podium and the ramp or set of steps, which Barry Kemp has noted.¹¹ Once adopted, however, the double-sided balustrade seems to have been employed at various scales throughout the city, ranging in size from the 50-centimetre-thick sections of stone along the main processional ways of the three principal ceremonial buildings (the Great Palace, Great Temple and Small Aten Temple—see pl. XI, 1) to the delicate parapets serving as screen-walls in the kiosks of the Maru-Aten (e.g. Ashmolean 1922.141, see pl. X, 1), a set of ritualistic pleasure-gardens at the southern end of the city.

⁸ E. Naville, *The Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, I (London, 1895), pls. v–vii; PM II², 362, plan xxxvi.4.

⁹ Naville, op. cit. 7–8, pl. viii. But see also R. Stadelmann, *MDAIK* 25 (1969), 166–7, where the altar of Re-Harakhti at Deir el-Bahri is identified as a precursor of the ubiquitous *šwt-R'w* ('sun-shades') at el-Amarna.

¹⁰ J. D. S. Pendlebury et al., *The City of Akhenaten*, III (London, 1951) (hereafter *COA* III), 184–5.

¹¹ B. J. Kemp, *JEA* 62 (1976), 89.

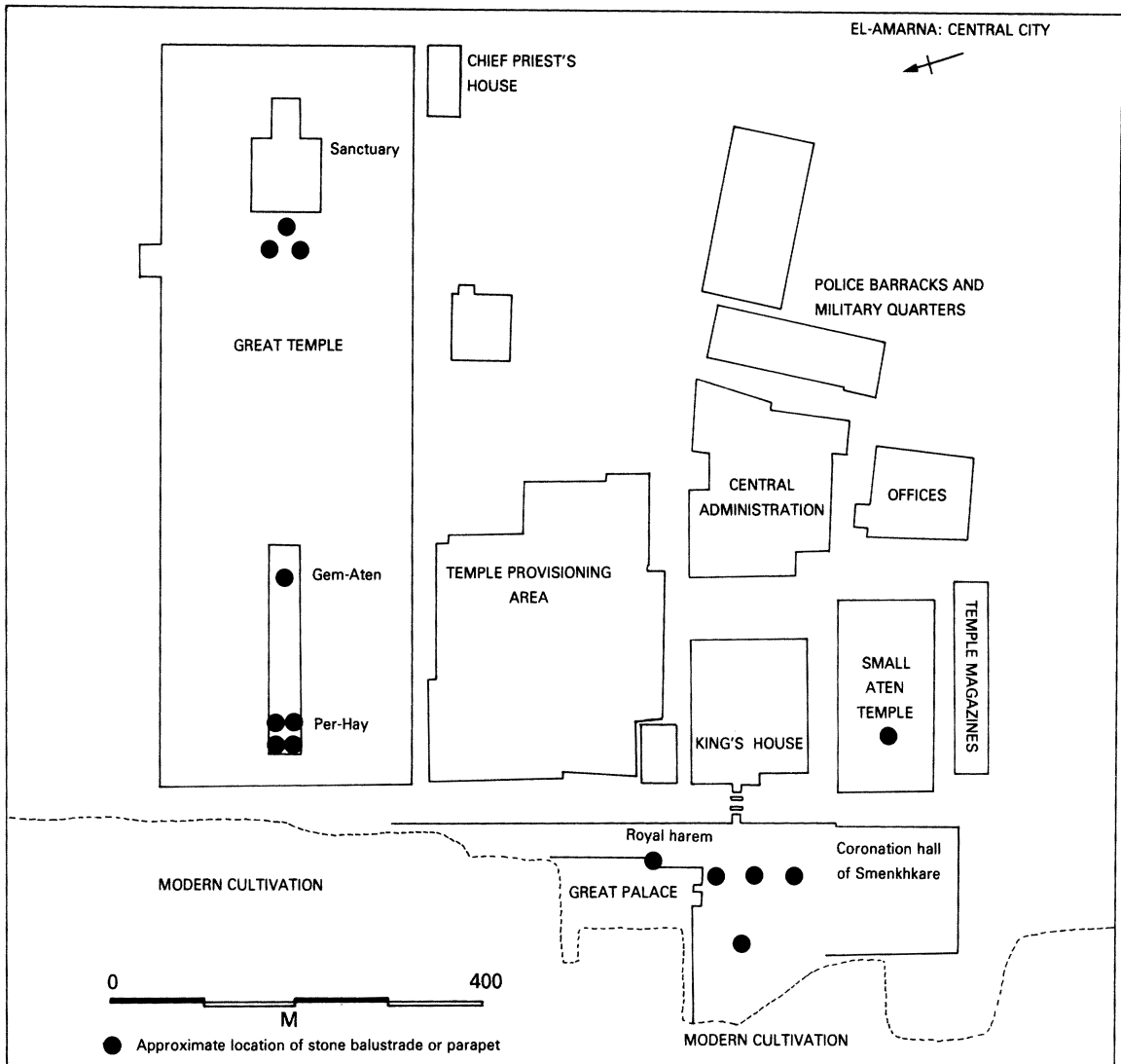


FIG. 3. Schematic plan of the central city at el-Amarna (after *COA* III, pl. i), showing the approximate provenances of parapets and balustrades, with the exception of those in the Maru-Aten complex, 4 km to the south.

There may also have been many mud-brick balustrades and parapets at el-Amarna which have not survived. There was, for instance, a low rectangular platform in the north-east corner of the King's House, with a short ramp or staircase leading up to it. Pendlebury gave the following account of this structure: "The supporting walls of the ramp or steps have a whitewashed roll-top, a white band along the base and, as far as we could make out, some fresco showing kneeling figures."¹²

The cult of the Aten, relying as it did on open courtyards and unroofed sanctuaries exposed to the sun's rays, required the development of a new and flexible style of architecture capable of focusing and containing this new style of worship. The succes-

¹² *COA* III, 87.

sions of platforms approached by steps and balustrades effectively channelled the royal family through the vast temples and palaces, providing suitable scenarios both for major offering ceremonies and private devotions. There are precedents for this form of 'processional' architecture in the way-stations and chapels that punctuate the routes through and between many earlier temples.

All but one of the surviving balustrades and parapets from el-Amarna are decorated with the same basic scene of the royal family—the king, queen and a princess—processing towards altars or cult-stands caressed by the rays of the Aten. This composition is recurrent throughout the decoration of the city and necropolis of el-Amarna, but it was clearly particularly appropriate to the balustrades and parapets, the purpose of which was to enclose and surround the stairways and platforms that punctuated the royal processions. Such details as the royal regalia and the types of offering differ from one piece to another: on Cairo T.30.10.26.12 Akhenaten wears the white crown, on one side of Ashmolean 1922.141 and on Cairo JE 87300 he wears the blue crown, and on the other side of Ashmolean 1922.141 he wears a bag-wig and uraeus. On Cairo T.20.6.28.8 the king wears an unusual form of crown combining sun-disk, horns and double feathers, which is identical to that worn by Nefertiti on a column fragment in the Ashmolean Museum (1893.1.41 (71)).¹³

Although most of the surviving balustrades and parapets at el-Amarna were components of a succession of ramps, steps and altars—as depicted in the tombs of such nobles as Panehsy and Meryra I (figs. 4 and 5)—the unusual decoration on one fragment of balustrade in the Petrie Museum (UC 68; fig. 6) suggests that double-sided balustrades may also have formed part of a somewhat different type of architectural element. UC 68 consists of a rounded upper section of a limestone balustrade (measuring 7 × 12.5 × 12 cm) with sunk relief decoration on both sides. One side is carved with the heads of the figures of two foreign captives. To the left is part of the head of a Libyan wearing a side-lock, with a headdress consisting of two feathers and a streamer, and to the right is the face and hair of a Nubian, with his curls engraved in the form of small squares. Both heads bear some traces of the red paint with which they were originally decorated. The other side of the fragment is carved with the head of another Nubian wearing a large earring.¹⁴ Since UC 68 is clearly not decorated with the usual scene of the royal family making offerings to the Aten, but instead bears depictions of Egypt's traditional enemies, it is possible that it originally formed part of the structure of a 'window of appearances' either in the Great Palace or the King's House. Certainly the depictions of windows of appearance in the Amarna-period tombs at el-Amarna and Saqqara show lines of foreigners along the lower façade, below the window, as in the tomb of Horemheb (fig. 7).¹⁵ The approach to the window is usually depicted as a balustraded stairway, as in

¹³ See A. Rammant-Peeters, *OLP* 16 (1985), 38, no. 5, where this style of crown is described as 'la coiffure en forme de mortier complète des plumes'. See also J. Samson, *JEA* 63 (1977), 92, figs. 2 and 3, where the crowns on the balustrade (Cairo T.20.6.28.8) and the column fragment (Ashmolean 1893.1.41 (71)) are compared.

¹⁴ J. Samson, *City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti* (Warminster, 1972), 58–9, pls. 31–2; H. M. Stewart, *Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs and Paintings from the Petrie Collection*, 1 (Warminster, 1976), 18, fig. 9.7.

¹⁵ G. T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander in Chief of Tut'ankhamun*, 1 (London, 1989), 24–8, pls. 18–19; id., *The Hidden Tombs of Memphis* (London, 1991), 49–50, fig. 16. See also Norman de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, II (London, 1905), pl. xxxiii, for the scene of the rewarding of Meryra II by Akhenaten and Nefertiti, in which the parapet of the window of appearances is decorated with depictions of Asiatic and Nubian captives.

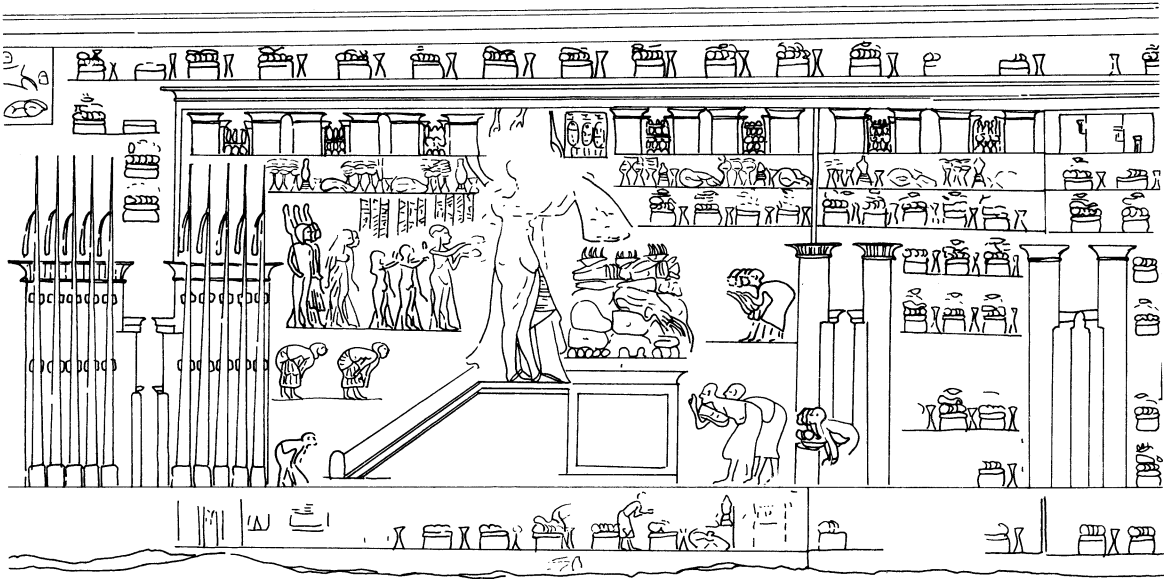


FIG. 4. Depiction of an altar approached by balustraded steps, in the tomb of Panehsy, el-Amarna (after Davies, *Amarna* II, pl. xviii).

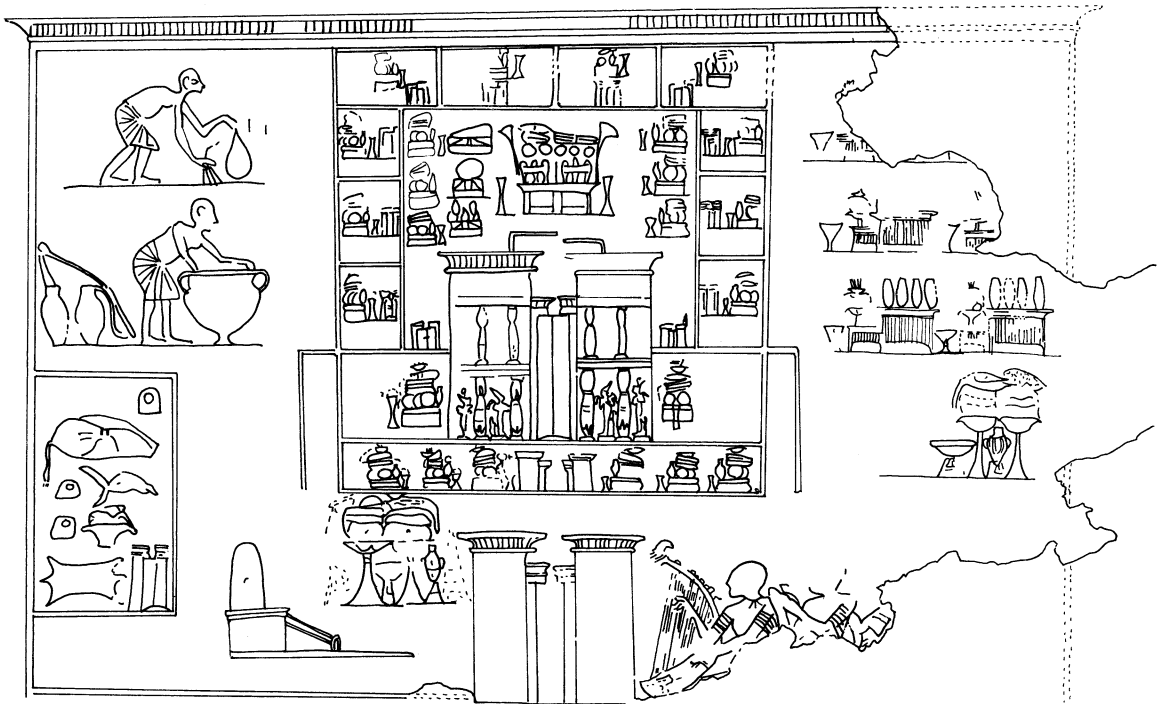


FIG. 5. Depiction of the balustraded approach to the Great Stele in the Sanctuary of the Great Temple at el-Amarna, in the tomb of Meryra I, el-Amarna (after Davies, *Amarna* I, pl. xi).

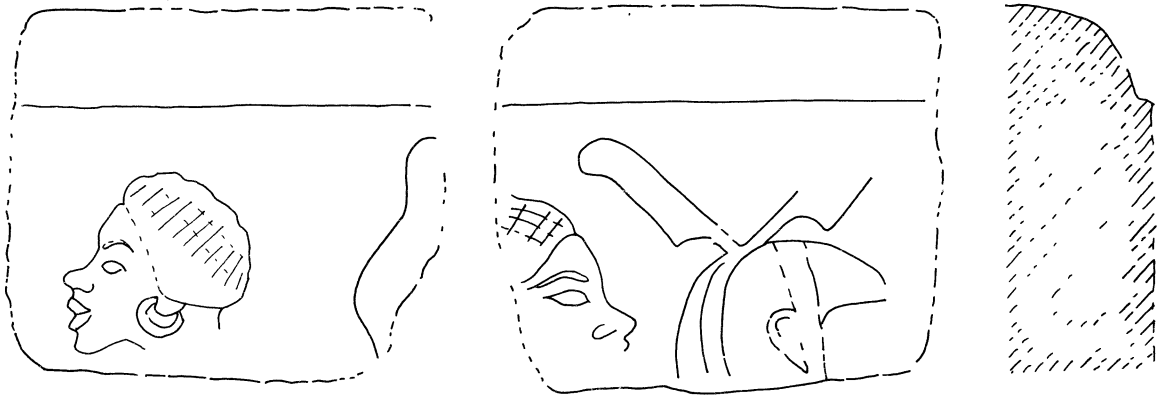


FIG. 6. The two decorated faces of the fragment of limestone balustrade, Petrie Museum UC 68 (after Stewart, *Egyptian Stelae* I, pl. 9.7).

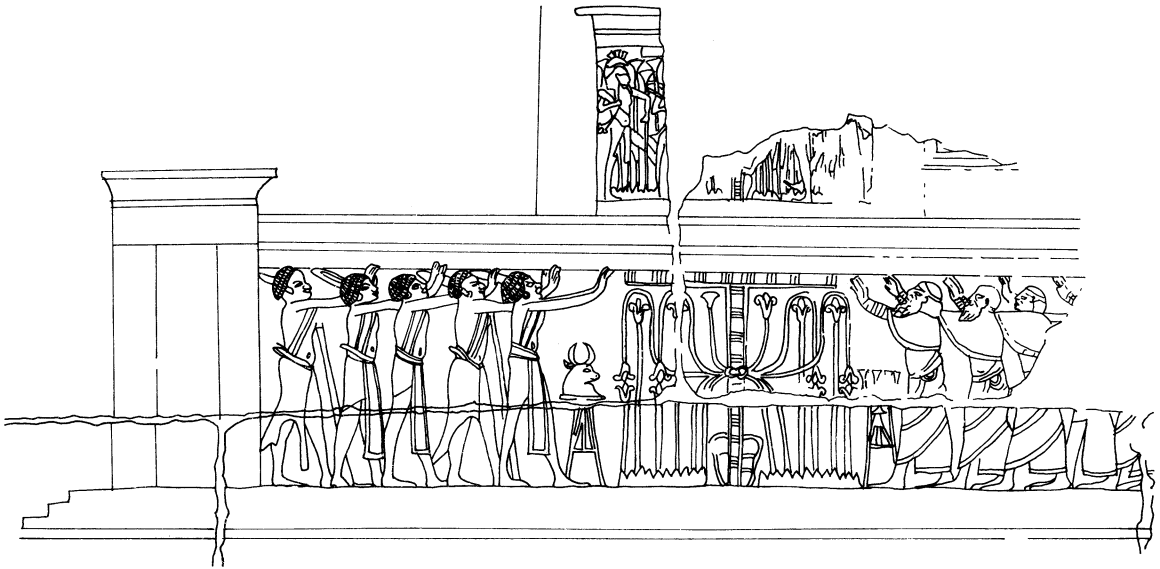


FIG. 7. Depiction of a possible window of appearances in the Memphite tomb of Horemheb (after Martin, *Hidden Tombs of Memphis*, fig. 16).

the tomb of the Amarna courtier Meryra II (fig. 8).¹⁶ It is therefore possible that UC 68, instead of being part of an altar, derives either from a window of appearances or perhaps from a royal throne room or platform-kiosk similar to those excavated at Malkata and Kom el-Samak.¹⁷

¹⁶ Davies, *op. cit.* 43-4, pl. xli.

¹⁷ The Palace of the King at Malkata included two 'audience halls' and a small columned 'reception room', each containing a mud-brick throne dais painted with figures of foreign captives on the floor and steps: the balustrade fragment UC 68 might well have formed part of such a structure. For brief descriptions of the throne dais at Malkata, see R. de P. Tytus, *A Preliminary Report of the Pre-excavation of the Palace of Amenophis III* (New York, 1903), 15-18, and W. Stevenson Smith, rev. W. K. Simpson, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*² (Harmondsworth, 1981), 285-6. The platform-kiosk at Kom el-Samak, which is approached by a stairway and ramp incorporating paintings of captives, is described in the Japanese excavation report: see Y. Watanabe and K. Seki, *The Architecture of 'Kom el-Samak' at Malkata South: A Study of Architectural Reconstruction* (Tokyo, 1986).

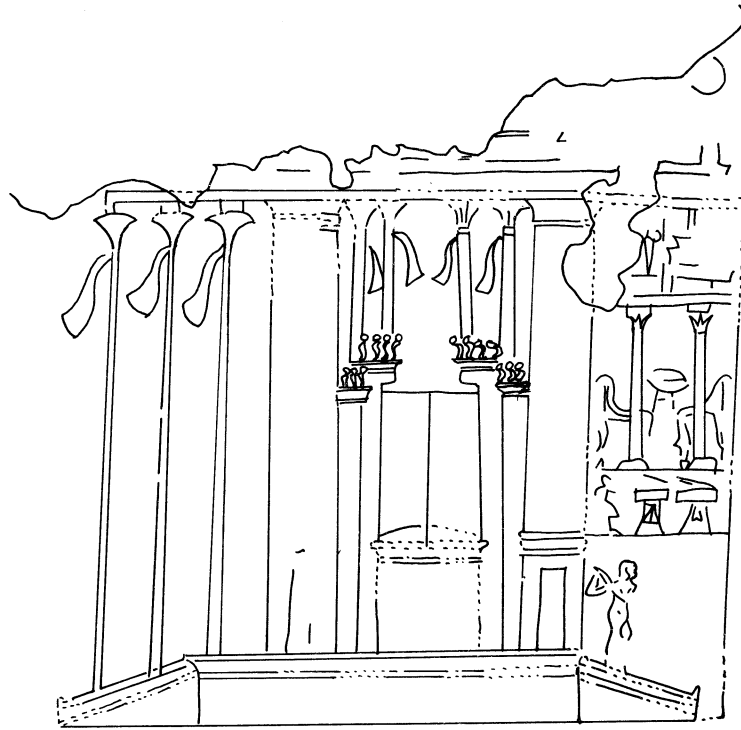


FIG. 8. Distant view of a window of appearances, depicted in the tomb of Meryra II (after Davies, *Amarna* II, pl. xli).

Atenism at Heliopolis: 'Great Stele' or parapet?

There is one further item of evidence relating to the use of ramps and parapets in the cult of the Aten. A very large rectangular stele of red quartzite in the Cairo Museum, CG 34175, (fig. 9 and pl. XI, 2) is decorated on both sides with relief carvings and inscriptions dating to the Amarna period. One face was re-worked into a round-topped stele in the time of Horemheb, transforming it into a traditional scene in which the king makes offerings to Atum and Hathor, while below them the High Priest of Heliopolis, Pa-ra-emheb, offers a prayer to Atum. The sunk-relief sun-disk of the Aten is, however, still clearly visible at the top of the stele. On the other, more damaged, side two scenes of the Amarna royal family worshipping the Aten have been left intact. The scene at the top shows the family (Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Meretaten) kneeling before the rays of the sun-disk, whereas the scene below is more unusual, depicting the king, a princess and an unknown male figure apparently prostrate on the ground in the presence of the Aten. The reliefs were discussed by Labib Habachi,¹⁸ who interpreted CG 34175 as a large rectangular votive stele from an Amarna-period temple at Heliopolis.

CG 34157 is identified by its inscription as an architectural element of a temple dedicated to the Aten at Heliopolis, the original centre of sun-worship in Egypt. The Heliopolitan cult of the sun is widely considered to have exerted a considerable influence

¹⁸L. Habachi, 'Akhenaten in Heliopolis', *Festschrift Rieke*. (Beiträge Bf 12; Wiesbaden, 1971), 35-45. See also C. Aldred, *Akhenaten King of Egypt* (London, 1988), 275, fig. 25.

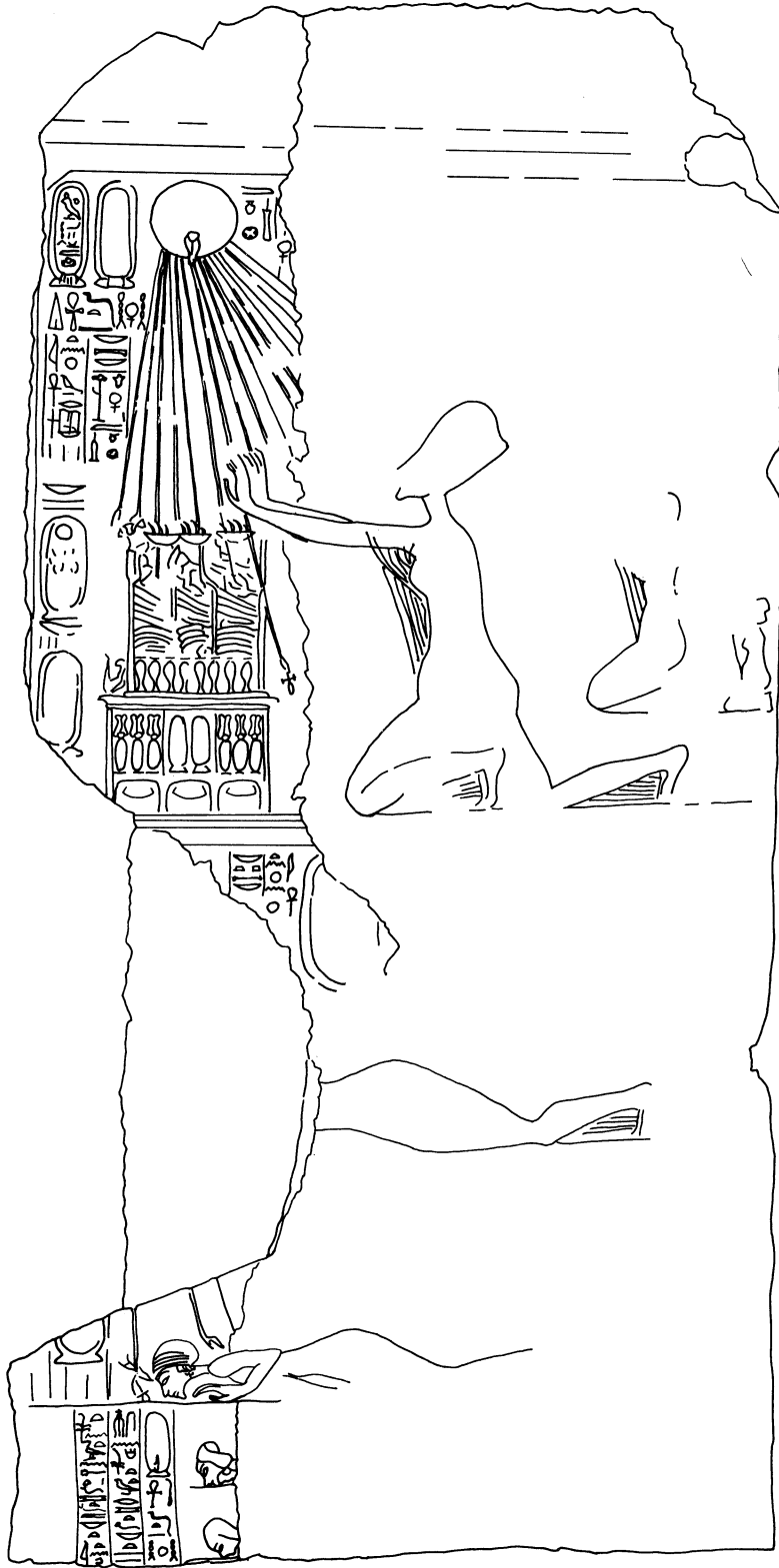


FIG. 9. 'Stele' from the Amarna-period temple at Heliopolis, Cairo CG 34175 (after Habachi, *Festschrift Ricke*, fig. 20).

on the roots of Atenism,¹⁹ and it seems that Akhenaten acknowledged this debt by constructing a 'temple called Which-lifts-Re-in-Heliopolis-of-Re'. Although few traces of the temple to the Aten have been found *in situ* at the site of Heliopolis itself, several relief blocks, apparently deriving from such a complex, have been preserved through their re-use in the minaret of the nearby eleventh-century Mosque of Hakim in northern Cairo.²⁰ Some fragments of inscribed quartzite, thought to derive from the pedestal-blocks of royal statues, also bear the name of the Heliopolitan temple.

In 1933, during Pendlebury's excavations at el-Amarna, many fragments of purple quartzite were discovered between the Butchers' Yard and the Sanctuary of the Great Temple. These were identified as fragments of the so-called Great Stele (or Benben), which is depicted in the tombs of Meryre I and Panehsy (see figs. 4 and 5). The inscription on stele CG 34175 mentions the temple 'Which-lifts-Re-in-Heliopolis-of-Re', and Habachi has suggested that it may have been a 'free-standing stela' forming a focus of worship in the Heliopolitan Aten temple, just as the 'Great Stele' appears to have been venerated in the Great Temple at el-Amarna. One problem with this interpretation, however, is that the 'Great Stele' at el-Amarna is represented in some of the tombs of Akhenaten's nobles as a round-topped stele, whereas CG 34175, in its original state before Horemheb's re-use, was clearly a rectangular slab.

Many of the surviving stelae from private shrines to the Aten in the gardens of élite inhabitants of el-Amarna²¹ have horizontal upper edges rather than curved profiles, but they tend to be much smaller than CG 34175 and are only decorated on one side (e.g. Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, 14145).²² Clearly the Heliopolitan 'stela' does not fit neatly into either category—it does, however, bear some resemblance to the Amarna parapets. It is therefore arguable that CG 34175 was part of a high parapet surrounding the temple's principal altar, rather than a Heliopolitan equivalent of the 'Great Stele' at el-Amarna. The interpretation of CG 34175 as a parapet would cast some doubt on the supposed 'visibility' of the Amarna royal family during their worship of the Aten, given that the Heliopolitan parapet would have been higher than any of those so far identified at el-Amarna.²³ Even if CG 34175 were some form of stele rather than a parapet, its discovery at Heliopolis nevertheless suggests that the double-sided relief slab—whether stele, parapet or balustrade—was a recurrent element of Atenism throughout the country, rather than simply an idiosyncrasy of the site of el-Amarna itself.

Conclusion

Most discussion regarding the ceremonial architecture at el-Amarna has tended to concentrate on its place in the overall chronological development of pharaonic temples and palaces.²⁴ These studies have focused particularly on the identification of the ground plans of buildings at el-Amarna and Thebes with various surviving fragments of ancient Egyptian religious and architectural terminology, for instance, the Per-Hay, Gem-Aten,

¹⁹ Redford, *Akhenaten*, 169–81; Aldred, *Akhenaten*, 237–48.

²⁰ Habachi, in *Festschrift Rieke*, 37–8.

²¹ S. Ikram, *JEA* 75 (1989), 89–102.

²² See Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 285, fig. 94.

²³ See Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 276–85, for a discussion of the apparent 'semi-public' nature of Akhenaten's worship of the Aten.

²⁴ A. Badawy, *JEA* 42 (1956), 58–64; E. P. Uphill, *JNES* 29 (1970), 151–66; J. Assmann, *JNES* 31 (1972), 143–55; R. Stadelmann, *MDAIK* 25 (1969), 159–78.

Maru-Aten and *Šwt-Rꜥw*. Such work has undoubtedly shed a great deal of light on the antecedents and eccentricities of Atenist architecture—and the reconciliation of texts with artefacts is certainly among the most crucial interpretive roles of the historical archaeologist—but the discussion of Amarna architecture has tended to be concerned with the ‘labelling’ of buildings and complexes rather than with the analysis of the physical remains in their own right.

The present paper has taken the approach that the ceremonial architecture at el-Amarna was made up of a series of essential, interlinked elements, each making a contribution to the overall theatrical backdrop, which has been called by Kemp ‘the arena of royal display’.²⁵ It is in these pragmatic terms that the architectural components of the city at el-Amarna are perhaps best examined—since the shape, size, decoration and positioning of the individual elements were clearly designed to facilitate the royal and priestly enactment of Atenist ceremonies. Balustrades and parapets are part of the essential architectural ‘vocabulary’ at el-Amarna and their detailed analysis may elucidate some of the underlying ritual and ideology peculiar to the site. It is to be hoped that this paper may help to bring to notice other surviving Amarna balustrades, parapets or screen walls, which perhaps have been misidentified as fragments of stelae. Any further pieces that come to light, particularly those with known provenances within the city, may provide further clarification of the essential role played by these unusual architectural elements in the public buildings of the Amarna period.

Appendix 1: List of Amarna-period balustrades and parapets currently in museum collections

Dimensions are listed in centimetres in the following order: height × width × thickness.

Oxford, Ashmolean 1893.1-41(2)

Material: pink and grey granite. Dimensions: 18 × 14.6 × 5.2.

Description: two joining fragments of a parapet.

Provenance: Per-Hay, Great Temple, el-Amarna (Petrie excavations).

Bibliography: unpublished.

Oxford, Ashmolean 1922.141 (excavation no. 1922/273)

Material: purple quartzite. Dimensions: 15 × 36 × 6.

Description: three joining fragments of a parapet or screen-wall.

Provenance: Maru-Aten, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* 1, 121–2, pl. xxxiv, 1, 2; PM IV, 208; J. Samson, *JEA* 59 (1973), 49.

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam E13.1933

Material: black granite. Dimensions: 16.3 × 12.5 × 5.2.

Description: double roll-top balustrade.

Provenance: the ‘platforms’ in the Per-Hay, Great Temple, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 18.

²⁵ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 276–9, fig. 91.

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam E16.1950 (ex MacGregor Collection)

Material: pink granite. Dimensions: 36.6 × 7.8 × 10.2.

Description: part of the newel-post of a single roll-top balustrade.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: Sotheby, *Catalogue of the MacGregor Collection* (London, 1922), lot no. 1558.

Cairo JE 63853

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 20 × 53 × 10.

Description: part of a balustrade with cartouches and Aten-disk.

Provenance: Tuna el-Gebel (excavations of Ghombert).

Bibliography: R. Weill, *CRAIBL* (1912), 484-90.

Cairo JE 63854

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 25 × 30 × 10.

Description: part of a balustrade with Aten-disk and head of Nefertiti.

Provenance: Tuna el-Gebel (excavations of Ghombert).

Bibliography: Weill, *op. cit.*

Cairo JE 87300

Material: black granite. Dimensions: 119 × 51 × 41.5.

Description: single roll-top section of balustrade.

Provenance: Per-Hay, Great Temple, el-Amarna (but excavated as a *talatat* at Hermopolis Magna).

Bibliography: G. Roeder, *Amarna-Reliefs aus Hermopolis* (Hildesheim, 1969), 23-5, pls. 1-2.

Cairo T.20.6.28.8 (SR 13415)

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 43 × 40 × 16.5.

Description: single roll-top parapet.

Provenance: Great Palace, el-Amarna

Bibliography: *COA* III, pl. lxix.4.

Cairo T.27.3.25.9 (SR 13414)

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 73.5 × 49 × 48.

Description: fragment of balustrade with slanting, single roll-top.

Provenance: Gem-Aten, Great Temple, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 16, 19, pl. lvii.5,6,8.

Cairo T.30.10.26.12 (487 and SR 13416)

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 97 × 49 × 15.5.

Description: fragment of balustrade with slanting, single roll-top.

Provenance: Per-Hay, Great Temple, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, pl. lxix.5; É. Drioton, *Encyclopédie photographique de l'art. Le Musée du Caire* ([Paris], 1949), 40, no. 105; W. Westendorff, *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1968), 138; M. Saleh and H. Sourouzian, *Official Catalogue: The Egyptian Museum, Cairo* (Mainz, 1987), no. 164.

Cairo SR 13265

Material: grey granite. Dimensions: 49.8 × 28 × 12.5.

Description: newel-post of a balustrade, with double roll-top and end inscribed with the cartouches of the Aten.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: unpublished.

Cairo CG 34175 (SR 13348)

Material: quartzite. Dimensions: $244 \times 121 \times 20.5$.

Description: double-sided, stele/parapet with one face decorated with reliefs showing the royal family offering to the Aten. The other face has been reworked into a more traditional stele format, showing Horemheb offering to Atum and Hathor, but the original deeply-carved Atenist sun-disks are still visible.

Provenance: Heliopolis.

Bibliography: PM IV, 63; P. Lacau, *Stèles du Nouvel Empire*, 1 (Cairo, 1909), 214-6, pl. lxxv; G. Daressy, *Rec. Trav.* 16 (1916), 123-4; Habachi, in *Festschrift Ricke*, 35-45.

Cairo (accession no. unknown; excavation no. 1922/271)

Material: pink granite. Dimensions: $30 \times 55 \times ?$.

Description: thirteen fragments of parapet or balustrade. The figure of the queen has been altered to that of Meritaten by modifying the face and elongating the head, and the latter's name and epithets have been substituted for the queen's names.

Provenance: Maru-Aten, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* I, pls. xxxii.2 and lvi.

Cairo (accession no. unknown; excavation no. 1934/72)

Material: granite. Dimensions: unknown.

Description: fragments of the lower part of a granite stele, with relief decoration on both sides depicting the royal family offering to the Aten.

Provenance: North Harem, Great Palace, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 45, pl. lxxix.1.

London, Petrie Museum UC 68

Material: limestone. Dimensions: $7 \times 10.7 \times 13$.

Description: fragment of a balustrade with a rounded top, horizontal ridges along either side of the top and sunk relief decoration on both faces.

Provenance: unknown.

Bibliography: H. M. Stewart, *Egyptian Stelae* I, 18, pl. 9.7.

London, Petrie Museum UC 166

Material: grey granite. Dimensions: $17 \times 13 \times 5.5$.

Description: fragment of parapet/balustrade bearing sunk relief carving on both sides, showing Aten rays descending into a pile of offerings.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: Stewart, op. cit. 13, n. 9.

London, Petrie Museum UC 401

Material: calcite. Dimensions: $54 \times 52.5 \times 10.2$.

Description: only one side decorated in deep sunk relief with incised hieroglyphs (other decorated side missing).

Provenance: Great Palace, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: Samson, *City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, 58, pls. 31-2; Stewart, op. cit. 10, pl. 6.

London, Petrie Museum UC 24323

Material: calcite. Dimensions: 27.5 × 26 × 19.5.

Description: part of a scene of the royal family offering to the Aten, possibly from a balustrade but with relief on one side only.

Provenance: Broad Hall, Great Palace, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 67 [35/200]; Stewart, op. cit. 10, pl. 7.1.

London, Petrie Museum UC 24326 (ex Wellcome Collection)

Material: pink granite. Dimensions: 12 × 9 × 5.5 (tapering in thickness from 5.7 at the bottom to 5.3 at the top).

Description: fragment of a balustrade decorated on both sides, each having originally been decorated with representations of Nefertiti and Meretaten.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: Stewart, op. cit. 15–16, pl. 8.8.

Hanover, Kestner-Museum 1935.200.195

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 52 × 25.5 × 4.2.

Description: narrow slab with decoration on one side only but slanting base-line indicating that it probably derives from a balustrade.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: R. Drenkhahn, *Ägyptische Reliefs im Kestner-Museum Hannover* (Hanover, 1989), 96–7.

New York, Metropolitan Museum M21.9.447

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 15.2 × 16.2 × 9.4.

Description: balustrade end-piece with double roll-top.

Provenance: Great Temple, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: Cooney and Simpson, *Brooklyn Mus. Bull.* 12/4, 6, fig. 4.

New York, Metropolitan Museum M21.9.469, 573, 597 and 604

Material: limestone. Dimensions: M21.9.469: 11.5 × 8.5 × 8; M21.9.573: 7 × 5 × 5.5; M21.9.597: 12 × 8 × 12.5; M21.9.604: 9.5 × 13.2 × 12.

Description: fragments of the upper edge of a parapet with double roll-top. These fragments are currently on long-term loan to the Brooklyn Museum (L49.13a–b), where they are displayed together with the joining fragment Brooklyn 41.82. The collective dimensions of the re-assembled parapet are therefore 41.8 × 44.6 × 13 (12.1 at top and 13.9 at base). All five fragments were originally in the collection of Lord Amherst, therefore they ultimately derived from Petrie's excavations at el-Amarna.

Provenance: Great Temple (probably east end).

Bibliography: Cooney and Simpson, op. cit. 4–5, fig. 2.

Brooklyn Museum 41.82

Material: limestone. Dimensions: 37.8 × 42.2 × 13.9.

Description: fragment of a double roll-top parapet, joining up with Metropolitan Museum M21.9.469, 573, 597 and 604 (see above).

Provenance: Great Temple (probably east end).

Bibliography: W. M. F. Petrie, *Tell el-Amarna* (London, 1894), 11, 19, pl. xii. 1, 2; *William Randolph Hearst Collection, Sale Catalogue*, Sotheby (London, 1939), pl. 3; Cooney and Simpson, op. cit. 1–5, figs. 1–2.

Brooklyn Museum 16.660 (ex Wilbour Collection)

Material: limestone. Dimensions: $9.5 \times 10 \times 3$ (thickness actually tapering from 3.1 at top to 2.9 at base).

Description: a small portion of a balustrade or similar architectural element with two inscribed surfaces.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: T. G. H. James, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Inscriptions in the Brooklyn Museum* (Brooklyn, 1974), 141 (no. 344), pl. lxxix.

Brooklyn Museum 16.674 (ex Wilbour Collection)

Material: grey granite. Dimensions: $12.5 \times 16 \times 9.3$.

Description: upper edge of a balustrade or parapet.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: James, op. cit. 141 (no. 319), pl. lxxvii.

Brooklyn Museum 16.701 (ex Wilbour Collection)

Material: purple quartzite. Dimensions: $11.3 \times 9.2 \times 4$.

Description: possibly fragment of an altar parapet.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: James, op. cit. 153 (no. 361), pl. lxxx.

Brooklyn Museum 16.705 (ex Wilbour Collection)

Material: black granite. Dimensions: $16.5 \times 9.3 \times 3.1$.

Description: slab with two decorated surfaces, therefore probably part of an altar or balustrade, possibly belonging to the same monument as Brooklyn 16.706.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: James, op. cit. 152 (no. 355), pl. lxxix.

Brooklyn Museum 16.706 (ex Wilbour Collection)

Material: black granite. Dimensions: $11.3 \times 8.3 \times 5$.

Description: fragment of an altar or balustrade, possibly belonging to the same monument as Brooklyn 16.705.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: James, op. cit. 152 (no. 356), pl. lxxix.

Brooklyn Museum 16.713 (ex Wilbour Collection)

Material: quartzite. Dimensions: 8.6×8.6 (average) $\times 3.7$.

Description: fragment of a balustrade or parapet decorated on both faces.

Provenance: el-Amarna.

Bibliography: James, op. cit. 152 (no. 358), pl. lxxix.

Appendix 2: Amarna balustrades and parapets described in excavation reports; current whereabouts unknown

U₁

Material: calcite.

Description: five inscribed fragments of balustrade, with relief decoration on both sides.

Provenance: Maru-Aten, el-Amarna.

Excavation number: 1922.208A-E (handcopies HC53-60).

Photograph number: 1922.106.

Bibliography: *COA* 1, pl. xxxiii.2(?); see also unpublished object-cards in the EES archives.

U₂

Material: calcite.

Description: five inscribed fragments of calcite, two (A–B) with relief decoration on both sides and three (C–E) only worked on one side.

Provenance: Maru-Aten, el-Amarna.

Excavation number: 1922.287A–E (handcopies HC64–9).

Bibliography: Unpublished object-cards in the EES archives.

U₃

Material: granite.

Description: fragments of the lower part of a stele, showing on both sides a relief of the royal family worshipping the Aten.

Provenance: North Harem, Great Palace, el-Amarna.

Excavation number: 1934.72.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 45, pl. lxix. 1.

U₄

Material: unknown.

Description: Pendlebury describes a ‘mud-paved ramp’ in the Sanctuary of the *Hwt-’Itn*. This ramp ‘passes between two thin pylon towers and wall-trenches on either side seem to indicate the presence of a balustrade’.

Provenance: Small Aten Temple (*Hwt-’Itn*), el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 95.

U₅

Material: sandstone.

Description: fragments of balustrades bearing the later Aten cartouches.

Provenance: Great Palace, el-Amarna.

Bibliography: *COA* III, 184.

Appendix 3: Provenances of fragments of balustrades, parapets and screen walls at el-Amarna

GREAT TEMPLE**(EASTERN END)**

Metropolitan M21.9.447

Metropolitan M21.9.469, 573, 597 and 604

Brooklyn B.41.82

(PER-HAY)

Ashmolean 1893.1-42(2)

Fitzwilliam E13.1933

Cairo JE 87300

Cairo T.30.10.26.12 (SR 13416)

(GEM-ATEN)

Cairo T.27.3.25.9 (SR 13414)

SMALL ATEN TEMPLE (*Hwt-’Itn*)

U₄ (see Appendix 2)

GREAT PALACE**(UNSPECIFIED LOCATION)**

Cairo T.20.6.28.8 (SR 13415)

UC 401

U₅

UC 68?

(BROAD HALL)

UC 24323

(NORTH HAREM)

U₃

MARU-ATEN

Ashmolean 1922.141

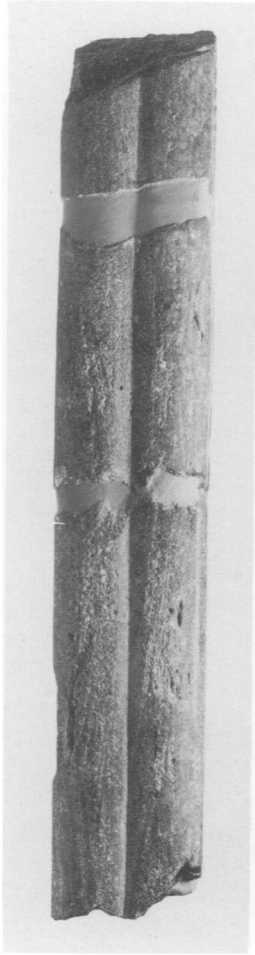
Cairo (JE unknown 1)

U₁

U₂



2. Side and top views of a fragment of pink granite balustrade newel-post from el-Amarna, Fitzwilliam Museum E.16-1950 (reproduced by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)



1. Side and top views of a fragment of purple quartzite parapet or screen wall from the Maru-Aten at el-Amarna, Ashmolean 1922.141 (courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)



1. Side view of a section of limestone balustrade from the Great Temple at el-Amarna, Cairo T.30.10.26.12
(courtesy of Lehnert and Landrock)



2. Quartzite stele/parapet from the Amarna-period temple at Heliopolis, Cairo CG 34175
(courtesy of Lehnert and Landrock)



3. Left-hand balustrade of the ramp leading to the upper terrace of the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri
(photograph by I. Shaw)