

Juliette Bentley.: 'Amenophis III and Akhenaten: co-regency proved?' .JEA 66, 1980, 164-165

Amenophis III and Akhenaten : co-regency proved?

THE identification of the 'Elder Lady' from the tomb of Amenophis II as Queen Tiye, wife of Amenophis III and mother of Akhenaten,⁶ would seem to settle once and for all at least two questions about Akhenaten's reign. The main one is the co-regency issue which has long divided scholars. It has now been shown that Tiye was in her forties at death.⁷ She was married for approximately thirty-eight years, as we know from Amenophis III's Year Two scarab,⁸ and survived her husband, as we know from several of Tushratta's letters to her and to Akhenaten,⁹ in particular that which congratulates the latter on his accession.¹⁰ In the tomb of Huya at El-'Amarna¹¹ she is shown

¹ Naville, *op. cit.* 1, pls. clv, clxiv.

² *Wb.* iv, 91, 10-20.

³ *Ibid.* 92, 10.

⁴ W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford, 1939), 324a.

⁵ J. Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (Cambridge, 1976), 148.

⁶ J. E. Harris, E. F. Wentz, *et al.*, 'Mummy of the "Elder Lady" in the Tomb of Amenhotep II: Egyptian Museum Catalog Number 61070', *Science* 200 (9 June, 1978), 1149 ff.

⁷ The report does not make it clear whether early, middle, or late forties is meant, but it seems to indicate the middle forties; were either end of the decade intended, the age would presumably be given as 'around forty' or 'around fifty'.

⁸ C. Aldred, *Akhenaten, Pharaoh of Egypt* (London, 1968), 44.

⁹ *EA* 26, 27, 28, 29.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* 27.

¹¹ N. de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, III, pl. vi.

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dining with Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Meritaten, and 'Ankhesenpaaten. It appears that all Akhenaten's daughters were born by his Year Nine, since all six appear in the Year Twelve 'foreign-tribute' scene in the tomb of Meryrē II,¹ and, if the youngest was old enough to attend public functions by Year Twelve, it would seem likely that they were all born by Year Nine at the latest. This in turn means that 'Ankhesenpaaten was born by Year Six at the latest. If we allow another four or five years for her to be old enough to dine with her parents and grandmother, this would suggest that the dinner took place in Year Ten at the earliest—at any rate, after Year Nine. Even if the iconography of the princesses is unreliable, the dinner must have happened after Year Eight, since the later Aten-name is employed.

If there were no co-regency, and Akhenaten succeeded upon his father's death, and only then married and started a family (since there is no indication that he had any children before he became king), this would mean that Tiye survived her husband by at least nine years, or else she could not have been depicted dining with her son and his half-grown children. But if she survived him by this length of time, it means that she would have had to be married before she was born! (see Table I).

Table I

Akhenaten Year 9-12	Tiye visits Akhenaten, and dies some time within these three years, aged 45/46
Akhenaten Year 1	Tiye aged c. 35/36
Amenophis III Year 38/39	
Amenophis III Year 1	Tiye aged c. -2/-1

Since this is clearly an impossibility, it follows that there must have been an overlap of at least nine years between the two reigns. In fact it is now possible to ascertain the length of the co-regency more closely than this, because Tushratta's congratulatory letter must now be dated to Year Twelve rather than Year Two, which in turn indicates that the overlap was of between eleven and twelve years' duration, as postulated by Aldred.² Perhaps the following chronology (Table II) may be suggested:

Table II

Amenophis III Year 1	Tiye aged 6
Amenophis III Year 38/39	Tiye aged 44. Akhenaten Year 12
Tiye dies a year or so later, which closely fits the physical evidence.	

This proof of the co-regency also settles the question of whether or not Nefertiti can be identified with Tadukhipa, the Mitannian princess who married Amenophis III shortly before his death and then married Akhenaten.³ By the time this marriage took place, Akhenaten had been married to Nefertiti for at least eleven years, and had six children by her.

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