



Excavations at Tell el-Amarna: A Window into Ancient Egypt

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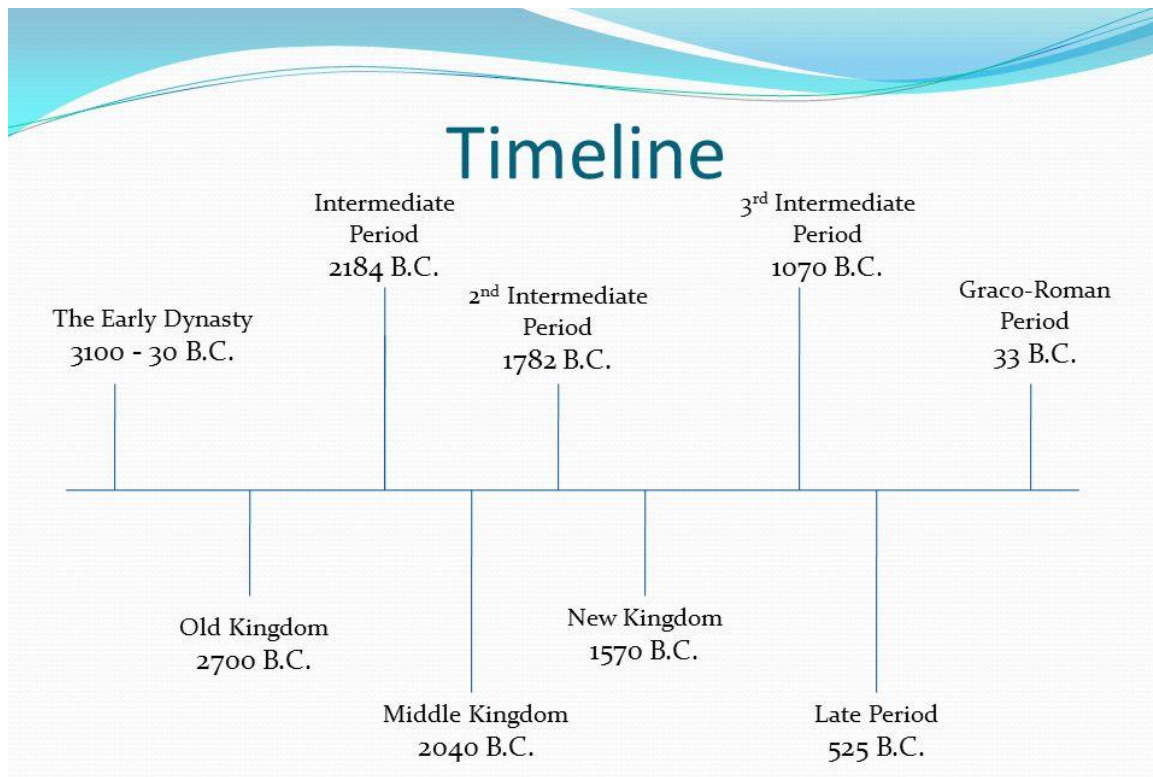
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Timeline of Egyptian History

Period Discussed Today:

The Amarna Period (which is in the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom)



Translation of the Great Hymn to the Aten

This version is found in the Tomb of Ay (number 25) at Tell el-Amarna.

Dr. Williamson's translation references William Murnane's work in *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*. The line breaks are added to enable easier reading.

You rise beautiful from the horizon of heaven,
Oh Living Aten, who originates life.
You are arisen from the eastern horizon,
and have filled every land with your beauty;
For you are fair, great, dazzling and high over every land,
and your rays enclose (circle) the lands to the limit of all you have made,
For you are Re, you have reached their limits.
and you subdue them (for) your beloved son.
Although you are distant your rays are on earth,
You are in their sight, but your movements are hidden.
When your movements vanish, you rest in the western horizon
and the land is in darkness in the manner of death,
People lie in bedchambers, heads covered up, and one eye does not see its fellow.
All their property is robbed, although it is under their heads, and they do not realize it.
Every lion goes out from its den, all creeping things bite.
Darkness gathers, the land is silent. The one who made them is set in his horizon.

The land grows bright when you are risen from the horizon,
Shining in the orb (the sun, the Aten) you remove the darkness, you grant your rays,
and the Two Lands (Egypt) are in a festival of light,
Awake and standing on legs.
For you have raised them up, their bodies cleansed, clothing on,
their arms are (raised up) in adoration at your appearing (sunrise).
The entire land carries out its tasks,
every herd rests in its pastures,
trees and plants flourish,
birds flying up from their nests,
their wings in adoration for your ka (soul).
All small cattle prance upon their legs,
all that fly up and alight,
they live when you rise for them.
boats sail north and south too,
every road is opened at your appearance (sunrise),
and the fish on the river leap up in front of you,
and your rays penetrate the Great Green (the sea).

You who brings into being fetuses in women,
who makes fluid in people,
who causes the son to live in the womb of his mother,
who silences/calms him by stopping his tears.
Nurse in the womb, who gives breath to cause all he has made to live,
when he goes down from the womb to breathe on the day of his birth,
you open his mouth completely,
and you make what he needs.
When the chick in the egg speaks in the shell,
you give him breath within it to cause him to live,
you have made him, he is complete, to break out from the egg,
And when you have made his appointed time for him, so that he may break himself out of the egg,
he comes out of the egg to speak at his appointed time and goes on his two legs when he comes
out of it.

How numerous are your works, although mysterious in the face (of humanity).
O sole god, without another beside him.
You create the earth to your wish, being alone.
People (and) all large and small animals
All things which are on earth which go on legs, which rise up and fly by means of their wings,
The foreign lands of Khar and Kush, and the land of Egypt
You place every man in his place, you make their requirements, each one having his food and the
reckoning of his lifetime. Their tongues differ in speech, and their natures likewise. Their skins are
distinct, for you have made foreigners to be distinct.
You make a Flood in the underworld, and bring it at your desire
to cause the populace to live, as you made them for you,
lord of all they labor over,
the lord of every land, who rises for them
The orb (the sun/the Aten) of the daytime, whose awesomeness is great.
All distant lands, you make them live,
you place a Flood in the sky, that it might come down for them
and make waves over the mountains like the Great Green (the sea),
to water their fields with their settlements.
How effective they are, your plans, O lord of eternity!
A Flood in the sky for foreigners, for the flocks of every land that go on foot,
and a Flood to come from the underworld for Egypt,
your rays nursing every meadow,
you shine and they live and grow for you.
You make the seasons to nurture all you made,
winter to cool them,
heat so they may taste/feel you.

....(edited for length)

There is none who knows you
beside your son Neferkheperura-sole-one-of-Ra (the throne name of Akhenaten).
You instruct him in your plans and your strength.
The land comes into being by your action, as you make them (the people),
When you have risen, they live, but when you set, they die. You are lifetime, in your limbs,
and one lives by means of you.
Eyes are on your beauty until you set.
All work is stopped when you set in the west;
You who rise and make (all creation) grow for the king, (as for) everyone who hurries about on foot
since you founded the land.
you raise them up for your son who comes from your body,
the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who lives on Maat (truth, justice, order), the Lord of the Two
Lands, Neferkheperura-sole-one-of-Ra (Akhenaten's throne name),
The Son of Re, who lives on Maat, Lord of Crowns, Akhenaten, long in his lifetime,
and the King's chief wife whom he loves, the Lady of the Two Lands,
Neferneferuaten Nefertiti, may she live forever and ever.

Tutankhamun's Restoration Stele

Complete Translation of: *The Restoration Stele of Tutankhamun (in the Cairo Museum)*. Dr. Williamson's translation, but with reference to the excellent translation in: *Egyptian Historical Records of the Later Eighteenth Dynasty*, Fascicle VI, B.G. Davies, 1995.

May he be given Life, like Re forever and ever, Beloved of Amun Lord of the Two Lands, Foremost in Karnak [Ipet-esut], beloved of Atum Lord of the Two Lands of Heliopolis; of Re-Horakhte and Ptah-south-of-his-wall, Lord of Memphis; and of Thoth, Lord of Hieroglyphs, the one who appeared upon the throne of the living Horus, like his father Re.

The good god, son of Amun, son of Kamutef [literally, Bull-of-his-Mother, a title of the god Horus, the divine king of Egypt embodied by the living king], the good son, the holy egg whom Amun created, father of the Two Lands, the one who makes the one who made him, the *bas* [souls] of Heliopolis united in order to form him, to be King forever and ever, as Horus, living immortally. He is the effective King who did what was good for his father and all the gods. He restored everything that was ruined, to be his monument forever and ever. He has vanquished chaos from the whole land and has restored Maat (the goddess of Truth, Justice, and Order) to her place. He has made lying a crime, the whole land being made as it was at the time of creation.

Now when His Majesty was crowned King the temples and the estates of the gods and goddesses from Elephantine as far as the swamps of Lower Egypt had fallen into ruin. Their shrines had fallen down, turned into piles of rubble and overgrown with weeds. Their sanctuaries were as if they had never existed at all. Their temples had become footpaths. The world was in chaos and the gods had turned their backs on this land. If an army was sent to Djahy to extend the boundaries of Egypt, it

would have no success. If you asked a god for advice, he would not attend; and if one spoke to a goddess likewise, she would not attend. Hearts were faint in bodies because everything that had been, was destroyed.

Now some days after His Majesty appeared upon the throne of his father and he ruled the "Two Banks of Horus" [Egypt], the Black Land and the Red Land being under his authority and every land bowed down before his might. How His Majesty was in his palace which was in the House of Aakheperkare, being like the Sun in the sky, and His Majesty carried out the works of this land and everything the Two Lands needed every day. Then His Majesty considered in his heart and looked for something which would be effective for his father Amun. He made the holy statue out of genuine electrum, giving to it more than he had done before. He made his father Amun 13 poles long, the holy statue being made of electrum, lapis lazuli, turquoise and every noble and precious stone, although the majesty of this noble god had been only 7 poles long before. His Majesty made monuments for the gods, making their statues from electrum from the tribute of the foreign lands. He renewed their sanctuaries as his monuments forever and ever, endowing them with offerings forever, laying aside for them divine offerings daily, laying aside bread from the earth. He added great wealth on top of that which existed before, doing more than his predecessors had ever done. He allocated *waab*-priests, God's Servants and the heirs of the Chiefs of the Cities to be the sons of wise men whose reputation is established. He has enriched their tables with gold and silver, bronze and copper without limit. He has filled their storehouses with male and female workers and with His Majesty's booty. He has added to the wealth of every temple, doubling, trebling and quadrupling the silver, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise and every noble precious stone, together with byssus, white linen, ordinary linen, oil, fat, resin, incense, perfumes and myrrh without limit.

His Majesty, may he have Life, Prosperity, and Health, has made quays for the river from new wood from the hillslopes from the pick of Negau, inlaid with gold, the tribute of foreign countries, so that they might decorate the river. His Majesty, may he have Life, Prosperity, and Health, picked male and female servants, musicians and dancers who had been women of the palace, their cost being charged to the palace and to the treasury of the Two Lands. I shall have them protected and guarded for my ancestors, the gods, in the hope that they will be contented, by doing what their *kas* (souls) wish while they protect Egypt.

Now the gods and goddesses of this land are rejoicing in their hearts, the Lords of the temples are in joy, the provinces all rejoice and celebrate throughout this whole land because good has come back into existence. The Ennead [the nine gods of creation] in the temple, their arms are raised in adoration, their hands are filled with jubilees forever and ever. All life and might is with them, and it is for the nose of the mighty King Horus, repeater of births [reborn forever in the body of the living king], beloved son of his father Amun Lord of the gods, who made the one who made him [a creator god who self-creates], the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, his eldest son, the true and beloved one who protects his father who begot him. His Kingship is that of his father Osiris, son of Re, the son who is good to the one who begot him, plentiful in monuments, rich in wonders, the one who makes an accurate monument for his father Amun, fair of births, the King who has established Egypt.

The Tell el-Amarna Project Web site:

<https://www.amarnaproject.com/>

Maps, details of current research, and many other resources can be found here!

Do you want to support our work at Tell el-Amarna?



Go to the Amarna Trust: <https://www.amarnatrust.com/>

And <https://www.amarnatrust.com/supporting-the-trust/>

Further Reading:

Douglas Brewer and Emily Teeter, *Egypt and the Egyptians* (second edition), Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Barry Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Amarna and Its People*, Thames and Hudson, 2014.

William J. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*, SBL, GA, 1995.

Anna Stevens (with contributions by Dr. Jacquelyn Williamson and other members of the Tell el-Amarna expedition), *Amarna: A Guide to the Ancient City of Akhenaten*, The American University in Cairo Press, 2021.

Jacquelyn Williamson, *Nefertiti's Sun Temple: A New Cult Complex at Tell el-Amarna*, Brill/Harvard Egyptology Series, 2016.