

Akenaten the hymn to the aten history essay




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Ancient Egypt was source of large works in writing on papyrus and on partitions of temples, tombs, pyramids, obelisks, portraits, and monuments. These works of art did well for numerous centuries. Over time numerous alterations took place; numerous authorities and civilizations, disappeared and other ones emerged, but ideals of Ancient Egyptian publications preserved even up to our age. Ancient Egyptian publications formed central components in folkloric works of numerous nations. This displays how unique Ancient Egyptian's lessons and scholarly insights were, even before divine beliefs were disclosed or even before the world knew of large scholarly masterpieces. Ancient Egyptian works increased and rapidly developed to deal with man's day-to-day life. The Ancient Egyptians examined publications as the source of religious nourishment and the exclusive way to increase method of expression. Scholarly methods were the source of dignity for the author and admiration and pleasure for the reader. Ancient Egyptian publications undertook nearly all facets of life. Literary works were classified by topics into diverse "genres" for example books, short tales, verse, folkloric tales, proverbs, wise-sayings, lesson teaching, philosophical meditations, and scholarly messages. Ancient Egyptians composed performances, extravagant verses, pieces of music, devout hymns and love verses.

Many aspects of the religious reform introduced by the Pharaoh Akhenaten during his reign (1352 - 1336 BC) were initially seen as revolutionary upon their discovery last century. At a stage when the successful military campaigns of his predecessors into Asiatic territories had brought the Egyptian Empire to the height of its power, Akhenaten's abandonment of the

military in order to focus on a new monotheism, the cult of Aten, led to his initial description by modern eulogists as a pacifist visionary, eager to preach the brotherhood of mankind. Recent works concerning the king's new religion, particularly those of Cyril Aldred, explore the evidence that Akhenaten's reign was more of a return to conservatism involving the reintroduction of old ideas such as self-deification and Aten-worship held by earlier rulers of Egypt and that in this way Akhenaten wished to associate himself. This information was discussed in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, by William Kelly Simpson.

Akhenaten was born  menhotep IV as the son of the pharaoh Amenhotep III. He inherited a situation that would have been a challenge to any new king. During the Eighteenth Dynasty into which Akhenaten came had undergone a change of increased globalization from the Egypt that had preceded it. The Asian occupation of Lower Egypt, the taking over of the Egyptian Throne by Hyksos kings and the introduction of the horse-drawn carriage had all brought about changes leading to a greater mobility of forces within the empire.

The expansion of Egypt into a World Empire during this dynasty and the influences of other cultures that followed had brought a new concept into Egyptian thought; the idea of the sun as a universal god who surveyed the whole earth and was lord of all countries. Egyptian religion at this time can only be described as an indefinite amount of Gods and their various appearances. The most important overall deity can be identified as Re-Horakhty, the creator god and the first ruler of Egypt, " Worshipping (The <https://assignbuster.com/akenaten-the-hymn-to-the-aten-history-essay/>

Living One) Re-Horakhty who Rejoices in the Horizon)| (In his Identity as the Light who is in the Aten)| living forever and ever, the Living Aten, the Great One who is in Jubilee, Master of all that the Aten encircles, Master of Heaven, Master of the Earth, Master of the Per-Aten; and the King of Upper and Lower Egypt..." (Simpson 2003: 279).

In the city of Thebes from where Amenhotep III ruled, Amun was the local city god and it's most worshiped. Like Re-Horakhty he was a " solar deity." It was the Aten or sun-disc; the physical form of Re as he appears to living beings, that Akhenaten was to adopt as his god and to hold up as sole deity. In the centuries preceding Akhenaten, there is some evidence given by Aldred that worship of the Aten as a separate deity from Re became more common. He connects this to the idea of a global god for a more global universe. Akhenaten changed the religion in Egypt to full effect, and Aten was projected by the king not only as a supreme deity, but the sole one as well. A temple to Aten was erected at Karnak, and Thebes renamed the city of the Radiance of Aten in preference to the earlier city of Amun. A new abstract image of the divinity emerges to replace that of Re-Horakhty, who is depicted as a falcon-human form bearing an Aten on its head. Aldred describes the new symbol as an elaborated hieroglyph in which the old sign for sunshine as a disc with three emergent rays becomes a disk having the encircling urges of kingship with an ankh around its neck and a dozen long rays extending from its hand.

Evidence of this new religion has been found in the form of a " hymn", believed to have been written by Akhenaten, " The Hymn to the Aten", found in the tomb of a later pharaoh. It is written in hieroglyphics in " N. de G. <https://assignbuster.com/akenaten-the-hymn-to-the-aten-history-essay/>

Davies, *The Rock tombs of el Amarna* (London, 1908), pt. 6, pl. 27” (Simpson 2003: 279). The most unique feature of this “hymn” is its complete failure to mention any deity besides Aten. Previously important gods such as Osiris, king of the Underworld, have vanished from the literature of Akhenaten’s reign. Even Aldred admits that this is a sudden and undeniable example of severe monotheism which is quite unique in the Late Bronze Age.

Aldred believes that Aten-worship in itself was an example of the reintroduction of old ideas that, having been expressed in full in the Old Kingdom by Djoser, and had gradually come back into favor when Akhenaten became pharaoh. Further confirmation of the supposed conservatism of Aten-worship is said by Aldred where he claims it lays emphasis on an earlier concept of death, present even before the agricultural life of the Osiris cult. Where in the Aten cult life is renewed with each rising of the sun and death comes with its descent below the horizon. “You rise in perfection on the horizon of the sky, living Aten, who determines life... whenever you set on the western horizon, the land is in darkness in the manner of death” (Simpson 2003: 279).

To secure his idea of his new single god and its influence over the world, Akhenaten needed to create a new capital of origin for his people. The introduction of Aten as a new ruler and the Pharaoh as his sole incarnation was an immediate threat to its stability. A large conflict followed and Thebes was abandoned for the site of the new capital in Amarna called Akhet-Aten or the resting place of Aten. Although all this gives the impression of a somewhat rebellious Pharaoh distancing himself from previous ideas;

evidence given by Aldred suggests that this was another inevitable happening and Aten at Thebes was no more than a visitor.

The buildings that stood at Akenaten, suggest that ancient architectural styles influenced Akhenaten, such as his simple open layout for the sun-temples derived from a Heliopolitan origin. It follows that through such examples of his general conservatism, the question of whether his religious program itself was radical or conservative tends to sway toward how the heretic king looked to a variety of aspects of the older ruler's reigns to influence his own. An important feature of his religious program is that Akenaten often claims on monuments and in inscriptions to be living in truth "Ankh em Maet", an original concept at least for his Dynasty. Aldred suggests that this truth meant the established order of things as they had existed at the creation of the world. He believes it is likely that Akhenaten tried to revive (with the mention of Ma'at or truth') a concept of kingship that went back to the earliest dynasties whose Pharaoh had names signifying that he was the sun god himself. It is likely that Akhenaten believed in the truth of his new religion. His determination to establish it was powerful, but it also helped him as the sole associate of the deity and increased his position of power.

The fact that he introduces monotheistic ideas which were the first of his dynasty and at the same time brings in the concept of living in truth, could come to suggest that Akhenaten believed his ideas were a new way of life of Egypt, and this supports the view that his ideas of religion being imposed were radical. It is evident that the singular deity concept introduced during Akenaten's reign was a new, if not revolutionary concept. It is also evident

that he was clearly influenced by the Aten-worship and self-deification of the ancient Pharaohs. We can see this from the similarities between the conduct of Akhenaten during his reign in these two areas and those of the kings of the earlier dynasties, such as Djoser, that Akhenaten attempted to make a link between himself and his earliest predecessors. It would be wrong not to credit Akhenaten for his beliefs and innovation in his religious reform, as he took a previous ideology to a new extreme with the exclusive worship of his divinity, Aten. After all, evidence of conservatism would likely arise however radical a reform was taking place.

Aldred writes it is likely that many of the changes introduced overnight by Akhenaten would have come about in any case. On the occasion of his second anniversary of Aten and in his sixth reigned year, the then **Ḏmehotep IV** changed his name to Akhenaten in relation to the worship of his new deity. Akhenaten's meaning is interpreted by Aldred as Spirit of the Aten, a title with which Redford agrees. The deification of himself as the divine son of the sole god meant that Akhenaten was the single link between the population and the Aten. This is an interesting aspect of Akhenaten's reign as it clearly does relate back to the ideas of past Pharaohs such as Djoser of the Old Kingdom who wished to be viewed as gods. "The Hymn to the Aten," from *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, by William Kelly Simpson, helped show how religious reforms in ancient times were formed and broken.