

# AMUN-HOTPE THE MAGNIFICENT

When Amun-hotpe III came to the throne of Egypt he was a boy of about seventeen, handsome and dashing, who recorded his feats of athletic prowess with pardonable pride and immediately married Ty, a commoner—an act which must have astounded his subjects. Thirty-eight years later he “joined his fathers,” a stout, indolent, and prematurely aged man.

The marriage was announced with terse finality: “The Great Royal Wife, Ty, who lives (eternally). The name of her father is Yuya, the name of her mother is Tjuyu, she is the wife of the omnipotent King.” The same announcement records the extent of the empire: from Ethiopia in the south to Mesopotamia in the north. Egypt was the most powerful and the richest nation on the face of the earth, her court the most luxurious; modern writers have given her pharaoh the title at the head of this page. Never had the Egyptians enjoyed such unquestioned supremacy. They were never to know it again.

Ty was one of those forceful women we meet from time to time in Egyptian history. A yellow jasper head in our collection, fragmentary though it is, shows that she was very pretty in her youth. As the years passed her face became pinched and shrewish while her husband's grew more and more rotund.

These were the parents of Akhenaten, who apparently combined his mother's intelligence with a lack of practical common sense that he may have inherited from his father. Akhenaten married his cousin, Nefretity, who bore him six daughters but no son. He was succeeded by his two younger half-brothers, Smenkh-ka-Rē and Tūt-ankh-Amūn, in turn, who had married respectively their eldest and third nieces. The latter, Ankhes-en-pa-Aten, seems to have been consumed by a passion for intrigue. That she survived to become the wife of the aged Ay, who followed Tūt-ankh-Amūn and ruled Egypt for four years, must surely have been due to an almost incredible power to charm. Then she too was swept away like all the other relatives of “that criminal of Amarna.”

The private lives of this remarkable royal family are spread out before us by the ancient monuments almost as in a present-day gossip column. At no other period in Egyptian history were such intimate domestic details recorded, and never in any country have the *dramatis personae* been more interesting in their own right. The Metropolitan Museum is particularly rich in objects that can be directly associated with Amun-hotpe III and his family, from the colossal statues of the king himself in the Great Hall to the little ivory paint box given by Akhenaten to “his own dear daughter Meket-Aten”—the second princess, who died young. The jasper head of Ty, the quartzite head of Akhenaten, the limestone head of Tūt-Ankh-Amūn and the alabaster portrait of Meryet-Aten discussed in the preceding article are all outstanding, the charming little head of Ankhes-en-pa-Aten has recently received wide attention, and a life-sized red granite head with narrow eyes and a long, thin nose has now been identified as a rare portrait of Ay. To these the Museum has recently added the quartzite head of Amun-hotpe shown opposite. It is said to have come from the sanctuary which he built in the Temple of Ptah at Memphis. The king wears the Blue Crown, or helmet, in which he liked to be portrayed. His face is still that of a young man, but the cheeks have begun to fill out. The slightly up-turned nose has been broken away, but the widely spaced, almond eyes and the full lips with the characteristic depression in the middle are unmistakable; this mouth was either inherited by or copied in representations of all the members of his family and adopted in portraits of his courtiers; it is in fact a badge of sculpture in the round of the late XVIII Dynasty. These portraits, other antiquities closely connected with Amun-hotpe, his children, and his grandchildren, and some of their personal possessions have been assembled temporarily in the vestibule leading to the Egyptian galleries. Other objects of the Amarna age may be seen in the Sixth and Tenth Egyptian Rooms.

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*Head of a statue of Amun-hotpe III dating from about 1375 B.C.; briefly on exhibition in the vestibule leading to the Egyptian galleries. Quartzite; height 13¾ inches. Rogers Fund, 1956*