

Amarna Life Under the Sun

An Ancient Egyptian Story and Activity Book

BLKVLD

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Published by BLKVLD publishers

Publication date 2020

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Dedication To the people of Amarna whose knowledge and experiences shaped this book.

Acknowledgement With thanks to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Dr Yasmin El-Shazly, Professor Barry Kemp and the Amarna Project, the team at the Amarna Visitor Centre and the communities at Amarna.

This work was supported by an Institutional Links grant, ID 261861975, under the Newton-Mosharafa Fund partnership. The grant is funded by the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Science and Technology Development Fund in Egypt and delivered by the British Council. For further information, please visit www.newtonfund.ac.uk.

Additional support was provided by the University of Cambridge through the Arts and Humanities Impact Fund and the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.



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Welcome to Amarna!

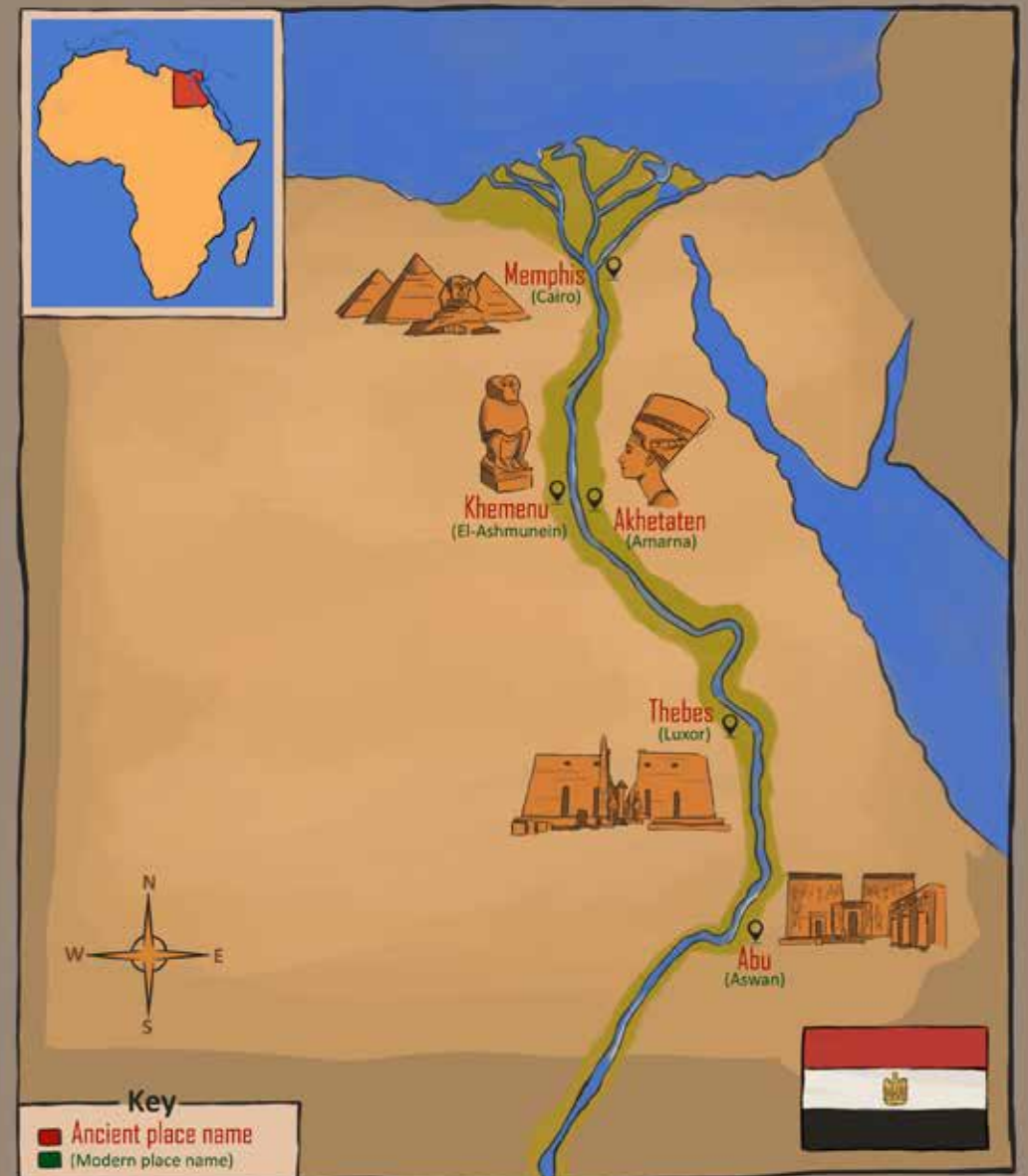


Egypt is a country with many fascinating stories to tell. From ancient history to life today, the people, places, buildings and traditions of Egypt have captured the imagination of the world.

This book explores one of the special places in Egypt – Amarna. Amarna was once a great city. Today it is the home of communities who lead modern lives next to (and sometimes on top of) the ancient ruins.

More than 25,000 people live in Amarna today in the towns of Tell Beni Amran (El-Till), El-Hagg Qandil, and El-Ammariyya. If you look carefully, in between the modern houses, schools, roads and farmland there are clues that tell us about a time when Amarna was the most important city in all of Egypt!

Amarna can be found about half way between the capital city of Cairo in the north and Luxor in the south. See if you can find Cairo, Amarna and Luxor on the map! Amarna is on the east bank of the great river Nile.



Over 3000 years ago Amarna had a different name. It was called Akhetaten. This is how Akhetaten was written in ancient Egyptian writing, which is called hieroglyphs.

Can you see how the first symbol on the left looks like the sun rising between two mountains? Akhetaten means 'Horizon of the Sun Disc' in ancient Egyptian: the mountain sign is the horizon (Akhet) and the signs to the right spell Aten (the sun).



The King (Pharaoh), Akhenaten, ordered the city to be built. At Akhetaten he started the world's first **recorded** religion to focus on just one god, a sun god, he called the Aten. He **banned** the other gods of ancient Egypt! To please the King, people came from all over Egypt to help build his new capital city out of mudbrick and stone. Akhenaten's wife, Nefertiti, and his family also moved to the new city to support the King. Life was focused on the worship of the sun god. Sculptors, **scribes**, builders, farmers, administrators and craftspeople were all needed.



Turn to the glossary page 56 to learn the meaning of the words written in orange!



Big open-air temples with beautiful sculptures and eye-catching art were at the heart of the city. It was a busy place and lots of work went into preparing **offerings** to the sun god at the temples. In a very short time, palaces, workshops, tombs, roads, cemeteries and thousands of houses also sprang up alongside the temples.

A huge amount of work went into building Akhetaten but after less than twenty years the city was **abandoned**. After Akhenaten died, the kings of Egypt went back to worshipping many different gods and tried to forget Akhenaten's rule had

ever happened. Stone from the city of the sun god was taken to other places like Khemenu (modern El-Ashmunein – it's on the map!) for reuse and everything began to fall into ruin.

It seems like a sad story, but much of Akhetaten survived. It is, in fact, the best-preserved city from ancient Egypt and a sort of **time capsule** of life 3000 years ago! Today we can discover a huge amount about this ancient place and the lives of the people who lived there. Do you know how we can do this? We do it through Archaeology.



What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is not about searching for hidden treasure but aims to learn about people in the past – people like you and me – by looking at the things they left behind. This might be the ruins of buildings, things that they made and used like pottery, tools or jewellery, and even the food they ate and the bodies of the ancient people themselves. Sometimes these things are buried and we have to slowly and carefully dig them out of the ground; this is called excavation. Everything we find has to be **recorded** and studied in great detail. Imagine if archaeologists in the future excavated your home as you left it this morning. What might they think about you and your life? It's likely they would get some things wrong! This is why archaeologists have to link together as many different clues as they can to get the story right.

There is archaeology everywhere (any place where people lived in the past). Amarna is an exciting place for archaeologists to work because hundreds of houses have survived alongside the temples and grand tombs. All this **evidence** is important and gives us information on the lives of people from the very richest to the very poorest. This is why archaeologists from all over the world go there to work and study with Egyptian archaeologists. Archaeologists have been working at Amarna for over 100 years but there is still a lot to learn.



Modern life in the towns around Amarna is equally important. Archaeologists also want to celebrate all the layers of history from the very ancient until today. The modern people of Amarna also have a vital job to do by looking after the ancient city and sharing their stories with visitors. Turn the page to discover what life was like in Amarna for children 3000 years ago and to experience what life is like for children today.

