

ARCHAEOLOGY

# Political Cartoons Are Old Stuff

## World's Oldest Political Caricature Found In Egypt— Pharaoh was Subject of First Candid Camera Studies

By EMILY C. DAVIS

**T**HE world's oldest political caricature has been unearthed in Egypt.

So, to other famous caricatured features—Teddy Roosevelt's teeth, Franklin D. Roosevelt's chin, Herbert Hoover's plump face and stiff collar—add this interesting item:

The skinny neck and big ears of the dignified Pharaoh Akhnaton, one-time ruler of Egypt.

It turns out that a royal artist—ancient term for government clerk—couldn't resist caricaturing Egypt's king, 3,300 years ago.

So far as is known, he was the first to dare any such stunt. Egypt gets one more distinction, as the cradle land of a popular form of modern humor.

It happened when Egypt was having a new deal, with idealistic Pharaoh Akhnaton trying to give his country a new religion, new government, a new capital city. Naturally, there were old dealers, too. And so this artist, employed at the new capital city, put in an idle hour, perhaps at lunch time, to cut on stone a comic portrait in profile of his king.

The artist did not need to be taught the basic principle of caricature art. When a human being takes pencil in hand and sets out to make fun of another, he instinctively knows what to do. You seize upon the most conspicuous, the most unflattering feature you can find, and you play up that weakest point—big. Any schoolboy, drawing crude pictures of the teacher, knows the trick.

### Easy to Caricature

It was cruelly easy to caricature Akhnaton. He was odd looking to start with. He was thin. He had a spindly neck and a sharp chin. His head bulged noticeably at the back. He had a big mouth and big ears.

There is not much doubt as to how Akhnaton really looked, for one of his novel ideas was to insist on realism in art. Egyptian Pharaohs before him had approved of smoothing over and conventionalizing royal features. But Akhnaton ordered: Paint me as I am.

Because modern museums have accustomed the public to stereotyped poker-

faced Pharaohs, the official portraits of this Pharaoh Akhnaton have sometimes been mistaken for caricatures. They look queer enough. But put the actual caricature beside any of Akhnaton's other profiles, and the real Akhnaton becomes almost handsome by contrast.

The obvious test of any caricature is whether people recognize the victim. Akhnaton's artist passed the test with flying colors. For when Egyptologists unearthed the ancient comic, they gave one look and said, Akhnaton.

Undoubtedly, the artist knew his sketch was good, and therefore dangerous. Pharaoh Akhnaton would recognize himself instantly. And if he did! No need to imagine the royal wrath or how the painter's career would be blasted.

Pharaoh Akhnaton probably had no strong sense of humor. He has come down in history as a most idealistic king. He overthrew the powerful collection of Egyptian gods and their priests, and instead gave Egypt one deity, the Sun, to worship. He has been called the world's first pacifist ruler. Expecting any Pharaoh, and especially an earnest reformer type, to enjoy having fun poked at his royal features, would be too much.

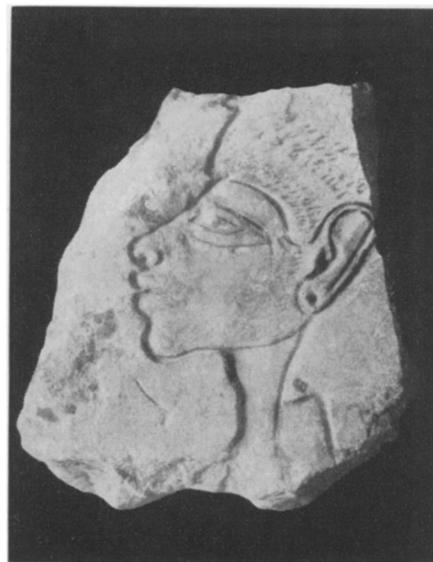
### Buried His Art

So, the artist who had been so daring as to make fun of a king, became frightened of his own too-clever work. Apparently, he dug a deep hole and quickly buried the dangerous picture. One disadvantage of sculptured art was that it was hard to destroy.

At any rate, in a deep hole modern archaeologists found the broken fragment, and that is their explanation of how it probably came to be hidden there.

It looks as though Pharaoh Akhnaton never knew that he was the first ruler of history to be immortalized in caricature style. The picture lay safely buried awaiting discovery by a generation that appreciates this specialized form of humor.

If the artist had been at Egypt's old capital, Thebes, or some other distant city, he might have been bolder. Political lame ducks, such as the priests of Amon, would have laughed heartily and bitterly at the comic king. The priests of Amon had plenty to be bitter about, for when



### OLDEST POLITICAL CARTOON

*Pharaoh Akhnaton was the victim, but he probably never saw his comic portrait.*

Akhnaton outlawed the whole troop of Egypt's specialized gods, replacing them by a single deity, he struck hardest at the god Amon and Amon's powerful politician-priests.

It was to make a clean break with the old system of religion that Akhnaton moved the capital of Egypt almost 200 miles down the Nile and built an entire new city, with roofless temples open to the Sun he worshipped, and with airy palaces and houses and shops, all springing up like a mushroom city in a gold rush.

Even the names of the royal family and their courtiers had to be changed, if they called to mind the hated old regime.

### Akhnaton Himself

Akhnaton himself had been named Amenhotep IV. The name, which three Pharaohs before him had borne, meant Amon is Satisfied. He changed it to honor the Aten or Sun Disk, source of light and life. Akhnaton means Glory of the Aten.

Vowels in Egyptian names such as this, incidentally, are apt to change from o's to e's or u's with the greatest fickleness. This erratic behavior is not "old Egyptian." There were no vowels expressed in Egyptian hieroglyphics. In fact, the lack of them is just the trouble.

Akhnaton's name in Egyptian signs read simply K-H-N-T-N, and Egyptologists are left to argue and reason over how the name should be spelled and pronounced to render it most correctly. This name can be spelled Khuenaten, Ikhnaton, Akhenaten, and in a variety of other ways.

### King Tut, Too

Akhnaton's son-in-law, the future Pharaoh Tutankhamon, tactfully shifted to the name Tutankhaten while the religious reform was at its height.

Obviously, a king who took his ideals and convictions as seriously as Akhnaton was no person to tolerate ridicule. The time was not ripe for political cartooning to get a start in Egypt, even though the germ of the art was there, ready to grow and flourish.

However, another very modern line of informal art did spring up then, and got royal encouragement. To see where the candid camera idea began, go to the ruins of Akhnaton's capital at Tell-el-Amarna, where so many new ideas were introduced into Egypt about 1370 B.C.

It seems a long way from that ancient capital city of Egypt to our cities where news photographers snap their candid camera studies of the great in action. But the Egyptian pictures, found on

tomb walls in Tell-el-Amarna, are in exactly the same spirit of informality.

There is a candid-camera style picture of the Queen kissing the King while he drives the royal chariot. Like many another driver, Akhnaton returns the salute, letting the traffic take care of itself.

Then there is another candid-camera picture of Akhnaton standing not at all like a monarch. He has his legs crossed, and leans on his staff.

There is another traffic scene, with a small princess poking the horse with a stick while her father the Pharaoh drives.

And there is a scene that recalls the hearty table manners of Henry the Eighth, for it shows Akhnaton and his beautiful Queen Nefertiti at a banquet in honor of his mother Queen Tiy.

### Gnawing a Bone

Each of the three sits beside a small table loaded with delicacies. The King of all Egypt gnaws at a bone as long as his arm, wrapped in meat. The dainty Nefertiti holds a roast duck or chicken in one hand, devouring it.

What the guest of honor, Queen Tiy, is eating is left to imagination, for a scarred blank is all that is left of that. The royal faces were scraped off by

Akhnaton's successors, in the usual Egyptian manner of wiping out an opponent. Rays of the Sun Disk, however, still beneficently shine down on all members of the royal dinner party, giving a religious touch to the scene that Akhnaton would have approved.

### Amazed the Court

All the candid and informal pictures of the royal family must have amazed the Egyptian court and populace. The pictures were as different from stiff and stony Pharaonic portraits as the rigidly posed tintypes of grandfather's time are different from lively snapshots.

Egyptian Pharaohs were fond of boasting "Never Before" was such and such a thing done, until my time. Akhnaton could certainly say: Never before was art so truthful.

So far did the King go, in demanding truth in art, that his own personal defects and those of his wife were duly shown. No tactful retouching of features, in this extraordinary age.

As a result, the most famous and lovely piece of Egyptian sculpture known today—the limestone portrait head of Queen Nefertiti in the Berlin Museum—shows the Queen with a sad cast or glaze over one eye.

The beautiful Queen was afflicted with ophthalmia in one eye, according to a recent statement of the British Egyptologist J. D. Pendlebury, who has directed some of the latest excavations at Akhnaton's capital city and has studied this age of Egyptian history closely.

Mr. Pendlebury imagines Akhnaton demanding Truth, truth, truth! like Cromwell's decision that a portrait should show "Wart and all!"

Modern photographers have been more gallant than the artists of Nefertiti's time. They have usually photographed the famous portrait in profile at an angle not showing the Queen's eye defect.

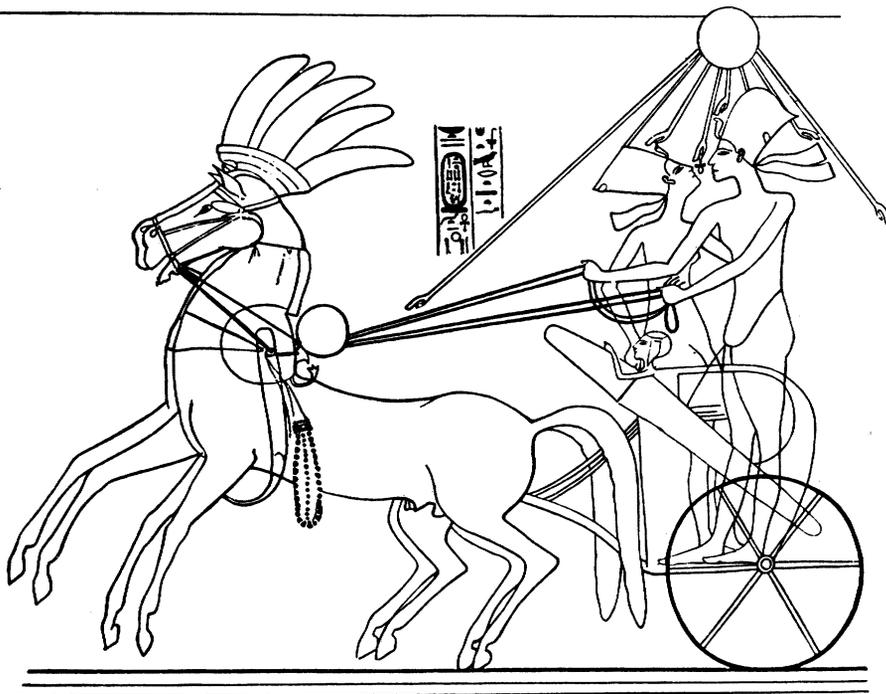
### Justification

The delicate beauty of the Queen and the skill of the Egyptian sculptor have made this head of Nefertiti a bone of contention between two countries. Berlin and Egypt have warmly disputed possession of the most attractive bit of sculpture that has survived ancient Egypt. If Pharaoh Akhnaton cared for public opinion and what future generations might think of him and his art theories, here surely is justification for his school of art that would please him.



**AKHNATON AND HIS WIFE**

*This is how Akhnaton really looked. He believed in realistic art, and encouraged artists to portray his defects. The portrait is in the Brooklyn Museum.*



#### ANCIENT CANDID CAMERA ART

*It is as old as the Egyptians. In this ancient sample Queen Nefertiti tries to kiss her husband while he is driving the royal chariot.*

In portraying the physical defects of women, Akhnaton's artists were going farther than modern art generally goes. Portrait studies of men may play up wrinkles, irregular features, and other traits that make the man. But women are generally flattered. And it was the same in Egypt, before Akhnaton, and again after his influence waned. Egyptian artists ordinarily knew that the right thing was to make a woman young and beautiful and slender, no matter what her age or figure. And in this fashion Egyptian women were portrayed in the tomb paintings and religious scenes. Against such a tradition, the stark realism that Akhnaton demanded of his artists in portraying women becomes a startling innovation.

As for his own features, Akhnaton

stood for seeing them portrayed even by artists who were not particularly expert, and who made him look even worse than he really did. All this is known, because, in the unearthing of his capital, sculptors' studios have been excavated. And in the ruins are found the molds of faces of the royal family. It appears that Akhnaton and his wife and daughters posed for the royal artists and permitted their masks to be made. A death mask of Akhnaton was also found, near the palace.

In one respect the artists did slip conspicuously from their ideal of serving truth. That was when they came to portraying other Egyptians with the King's physical defects. It was fashionable and good politics to be like the Pharaoh. So, many of the people of this time are shown with bulging heads, thin bodies, bay-window figures.

Akhnaton's reforms lasted as long as he did. His reign was only about twenty years, and then Egypt reverted to the old ways of worshipping many gods and not being quite so natural in portraying royal families for the immortal record of art.

At its worst, Akhnaton's art produced some grotesque exhibits. At the best, the art buried in the short-lived capital city is pronounced unsurpassed in the art works of ancient Egypt.

*Science News Letter, June 13, 1936*

#### MEDICINE

### Addison's Disease Successfully Treated by Diet

**O**NCE-FATAL Addison's disease may be successfully treated by diet alone, it appears from studies by members of the staff of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.

Patients suffering from this condition, which is characterized by extreme weakness and wasting and a peculiar bronze coloration of the skin, can be kept in good condition by a diet low in potassium and high in sodium salts, Drs. R. M. Wilder, A. M. Snell, E. J. Kepler, E. H. Rynearson, Mildred Adams and E. C. Kendall conclude in a recent report.

Addison's disease is caused by disease or injury to the cortex of the adrenal gland which prevents its producing enough of its vital hormone, cortin. Extracts of the gland have been successfully used in the treatment of the disease during the past few years. The extract, however, is expensive and the treatment must be continued throughout the patient's life. This may deprive some patients of its benefits.

Research, continued after the discovery of the value of cortin, showed that a diet containing large amounts of salt was of benefit in Addison's disease. But in certain severe cases, not even adequate intake of salt and liberal use of the gland extract were sufficient to keep the patient from dying of lack of cortin.

Studies conducted by Drs. W. D. Allers, H. W. Wilson, and E. C. Kendall showed that dogs which had no adrenal glands at all could be kept alive without cortin if they were given proper amounts of both salt and sodium citrate and the amount of potassium in the diet was kept low. Giving the dogs more potassium, however, caused a critical condition similar to the crisis which may prove fatal to human Addison's disease patients.

Following this lead, a low potassium diet was given to Addison's disease patients. The patients did very well and required less of the sodium salts and less or even no cortin at all.

Studies made on three volunteer patients of the effects of different amounts of potassium and sodium salts showed definitely the importance of restricting the amount of potassium in the diet.

*Science News Letter, June 13, 1936*

Canned cheddar cheese is a new product tried out by dairy scientists at the University of California.

## ● RADIO

June 16, 2:15 p.m., E.S.T.

**CRIME LABORATORIES**—Dr. William Souder of the National Bureau of Standards.

June 30, 2:15 p.m., E.S.T.

**BIGGER AND BETTER BERRIES**—Dr. Frederick V. Coville of the U. S. Bureau of Plant Industry.

In the Science Service series of radio discussions led by Watson Davis, Director, over the Columbia Broadcasting System.