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Tutankhamun's Golden Armchair: Its Original Owner and Shape Reconsidered

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AMONG THE numerous seats¹ – stools, chairs, armchairs – from the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV62), the most impressive and famous one is the golden lion-headed armchair². It is not only the biggest seat from the treasure³, but also the biggest ever discovered in Egypt, measuring 104 cm high. The seat is at 51,7 cm above the floor⁴. It is fully gilded, and inlaid with faience, glass, silver and travertine.

It is globally intact, except for the four *sema-tawy* signs, above the stretchers: only the tracheas, lungs, and bases of the heraldic plants remain. Some inlays from the front scene of the backrest are missing.

The armchair is inscribed with the first name of the king and queen, Tutankhaten and Ankhesenpaaten, and their second name, Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun, implying it was used from the beginning of his reign.

However, the general splendor hides several curious anomalies. From a structural point of view, the construction is weak. There are no braces at the angles, in order to strengthen the set-up⁵. The finishing work is pretty flimsy, most especially considering the front scene on the backrest, as we will see below.

Thus, doubts arise considering the original aspect of the seat, along with its date of production.

We know, thanks to his treasure, that Tutankhamun reused “every day” and pure funerary objects made for his predecessors, among others Akhenaten and most especially

¹ We prefer not to use the term “throne”, which designates a seat by its use, for two reasons: first, the term has no well-defined boundaries and we might not know the use of said seat; second: it gives no information on the type of seat, which is our main concern here.

² Grand Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 62028, Carter n° 091. See, among others, H. CARTER, *The Tomb of Tut.Ankh.Amen Discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*, London, New York, Toronto, Melbourne, 1923-1933, I, p. 46, 99, 117-119, pls. II, XXIV, LXII-LXIV; N. REEVES, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King. The Tomb. The Royal Treasure*, London, 1990, p. 184-185; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *The Thrones, Chairs, Stools, and Footstools from the Tomb of Tutankhamun*, Oxford, 2008, p. 25-56, fig. 2-6, pls. I-VIII; I. BARTOS, *Le lion dans les supports mobiliers égyptiens jusqu'à la fin du Nouvel Empire*, PhD thesis, Université Paris sciences et lettres, Paris, 2020, II, p. 483-488.

³ The dimensions are those taken by H. Carter (*Tutankhamun: Anatomy of an Excavation* <<http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/091.html>> accessed 04.05.2021).

⁴ It was used with a footstool, probably the footstool JE 62046, Carter n° 090, which was stored on its seat (M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 130-131, pls. LXVIa-b, LXVII).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28, 30, 54

Neferneferuaten. Tutankhamun put his own name, for example, on the gold mask, the second and third shrines and the quartzite sarcophagus, all originally made for Neferneferuaten⁶.

The question applies to the golden armchair. Was it initially made for Tutankhamun or another king? We will also discuss its original aspect: was this seat originally a lion-headed armchair?



Fig. 1. Left side of the lion-headed armchair of Tutankhamun (GEM, JE 62028, Carter n° 091; © Ilinca Bartos / Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

⁶ For the mask, see N. REEVES, “The Gold Mask of Ankhkheperure Neferneferuaten”, *JAEG* 7, 2015, p. 77-79; *id.*, “Tutankhamun’s Mask Reconsidered”, in A. Oppenheim, O. Goelet (eds.), *The Art and Culture of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honor of Dorothea Arnold*, *BES* 19, New York, 2015, p. 511-526. For the other reused and usurped objects, see Cl. VANDERSLEYEN, “L’iconographie de Toutankhamon et les effigies provenant de sa tombe”, *BSEG* 9-10, 1984-1985, p. 309-321; J.R. HARRIS, “Akhenaten and Neferneferuaten in the Tomb of Tut’ankhamūn”, in C.N. Reeves (ed.), *After Tut’ankhamūn: Research and excavation in the Royal Necropolis at Thebes*, London, 1992, p. 55-72; D. LABOURY, “Mise au point sur l’iconographie de Neferneferuaton, le prédécesseur de Toutankhamon”, in M. Eldamaty, M. Trad (eds.), *Egyptian Museum Collections around the World: Studies for the Centennial of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo*, Cairo, 2002, p. 711-722; M. GABOLDE, *D’Akhenaton à Toutankhamon*, *CIAHA* 3, Lyon, 1998, p. 152, 224-226; *id.*, “Pour qui fut confectionné le mobilier funéraire de Toutankhamon?”, in *Akhénaton et l’époque amarnienne*, Paris, 2005, p. 273-286; J.P. ALLEN, “The Original Owner of Tutankhamun’s Canopic Coffins”, in Z. Hawass, J. Houser Wegner (eds.), *Millions of Jubilees: Studies in Honor of David P. Silverman*, *CASAE* 39, Cairo, 2010, p. 27-41.

Previous reassessments

It is generally admitted the armchair was made for Tutankhamun, at the beginning of his reign, according to the cartouches with the first name of the royal couple, and the Atenist scene on the backrest representing the couple below the Aten rays [fig. 2]. Anomalies in the scene were noticed, but were mainly explained by repairs, and changes in the names, from Aten names to Amen names, and titulary⁷.



Fig. 2. Detail of the inside of the backrest (© Ilinca Bartos / Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

However, some authors think the seat belonged to a previous Amarna king.

Most of them focused on the scene. Cl. Vandersleyen⁸, comparing with other representations of the couple, argued that the couple here had no such childish features, different facial features and proportions, and for the king a more slouched position. He identified the king with Akhenaten, and made no claim for the queen in his last article. E.L. Ertman⁹ also thought the king was Akhenaten, by noticing two details specific to this king's reign: the shape of the navel and the bulges under the chest. He also believed the crowns were added afterwards.

Cl. Vandersleyen and M. Gabolde¹⁰ also put forward the size of the seat, not suitable for a child. M. Gabolde then wished to interpret literally a section of the Restoration stela of Tutankhamun, "His Majesty appeared on his father's throne", as an explanation of the adult

⁷ See the discussion by M. Eaton-Krauss (*op. cit.*, p. 39-41).

⁸ "Objectivité des portraits égyptiens", *BSFE* 73, 1975, p. 23-24; *op. cit.*, *BSEG* 9-10, p. 320; *id.*, "Royal Figures from Tut'ankhamūn's Tomb: Their Historical Usefulness", in C.N. Reeves (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1992, p. 76-78.

⁹ "The Identity of the King and Queen on Tutankhamun's Golden Throne", in Z. Hawass (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000*, Cairo, New York, 2003, p. 209-214.

¹⁰ Cl. VANDERSLEYEN, *op. cit.*, 1992, p. 77; M. GABOLDE, *D'Akhenaton à Toutânkhamon*, p. 291-292; *id.*, "La parenté de Toutânkhamon", *BSFE* 155, 2002, p. 2-3.

size of the armchair, who belonged to Akhenaten.

M. Eaton-Kraus, the other main author who studied the armchair, dismissed all these arguments¹¹. She argued the armchair, as a ceremonial seat, was made for an adult no matter the initial size of the king. The iconography from one reign was perduring into the succeeding one. She also didn't accept the literal interpretation of the Restoration Stela.

Lately, M. Gabolde came with two more arguments¹². He argued that the composition of the scene was not balanced, with the queen rather than the king being the center of attention. He thought the table with the collar behind the queen, whose gold foils were reworked, and which were way too big, were replacing the figure of a princess. He also put forward the fact that the golden foils of the couple's cartouches, on the stiles and central brace at the back of the backrest, were reworked. The cartouches being the first names of the couple, they were replacing the names of the previous owner. M. Gabolde wished to attribute the armchair to Akhenaten, rather than Neferneferuaten who re-established the traditional cults, and who would not have made a seat with the Aten disk.

While we are unable to judge the stylistic arguments of the previous researchers, we agree to the fact that the scene¹³ was seriously altered, and that the table is incongruous. Besides the missing small inlays, and the alterations already noticed by previous authors¹⁴, such as the new cartouches with the second names, the strange blank behind the queen's head instead of titulary, the crowns moved from their original place (as shown by the negative shapes above them, in the grape garland, and by the overlapped Aten hands), we can notice some other anomalies.

Among others, the couple is not standing on the floor, contrary to the feet of the table. The chair of the king is obviously leaning forward (the seat and the stretcher are not horizontal). Part of the *sema-tawy* of the chair is missing and replaced by gold foils. The footstool is shortened, as we can see from its unshaped silhouette and the king's foot being partially unsupported. The cartouches of the king are small (smaller than those of Ankhesenamun), and are curiously cramped between the king and the floral column. The neck of the queen does not fit the collar correctly. The cup she holds has no well-defined shape. We can see the shape of a previous wig inlay, which might have been a round wig and not the actual Nubian wig.

It seems that the whole figures of the king and queen were edited, and moved from their original place. We agree with M. Gabolde that the table is replacing something else. The floral columns framing this open-roof space are not touching the floor and confirm even greater changes.

In this study we will propose two more analyses, that no one as we know of has ever considered: the typological context of the armchair, and his global iconography.

But first, we shall specify that we will not discuss the chronology after the reign of Akhenaten, nor will we debate the family ties between all the sovereigns¹⁵. We will only take

¹¹ M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 42-45.

¹² M. GABOLDE, "Le confort d'un roi", *OLZ* 111/1, 2016 (review of M. EATON-KRAUSS, *The Thrones, Chairs, Stools, and Footstools*, Oxford, 2008), p. 1-9.

¹³ See also the good illustration in I.E.S. EDWARDS, *Tutankhamun. His Tomb and its Treasures*, New York, 1976, p. 40-41.

¹⁴ J.R. HARRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 62; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 39-41; G.Th. MARTIN, review of M. Eaton-Krauss, *The Thrones, Chairs, Stools, and Footstools* (Oxford, 2008), *JEA* 97, 2011, p. 258; M. GABOLDE, *op. cit.*, p. 3-8.

¹⁵ For the different theories, see among others *id.*, *Toutankhamon*, Paris, 2015, p. 55-109; J.A. BELMONTE, "DNA, Wine & Eclipses: the Dakhamunzu Affaire", *Anthropological Notebooks XIX, Supplement*, 2013,

into consideration the fact that, between Akhenaten and Tutankhamun, there were two rulers: Smenkhkare and then the female king Neferneferuaten. When Tutankhamun acceded to the throne, the traditional cults were already established, as proven by the objects of Neferneferuaten with traditional iconography reemployed by Tutankhamun.

Typological context of the armchair

The lion-headed armchairs are one of the typical king's seats of the Eighteenth dynasty. They appear under the reign of Hatshepsut¹⁶, when the female pharaoh brings back into fashion the low-legged, square arms, lion-headed armchairs of the kings and queens of the Old Kingdom¹⁷. From then on taller and with sinuous arms [fig. 3, 5], they are attested for Thoutmosis III, Amenhotep II, Thoutmosis IV, Amenhotep III and Tutankhamun¹⁸. They disappear after Tutankhamun¹⁹.

Despite the abundant iconographical representations from the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, the lion-headed armchairs are not attested. Some armchairs with only lion-legs are represented on the Karnak *talatat*, as empty seats for the royal couple in front of offering tables, and as the king's seat in a simple palanquin²⁰. Many other

p. 419-441; T. TAWFIK, S. THOMAS, I. HEGENBARTH-REICHARDT, "New Evidence for Tutankhamun's Parents Revelations from the Grand Egyptian Museum", *MDAIK* 74, 2018, p. 179-195.

¹⁶ E. NAVILLE, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari V*, *MEEF* 27, London, 1906, pl. CXXV ; N. BEAUX, J. KARKOWSKI, E. MAJERUS, G. POLLIN, *La chapelle d'Hathor: Temple d'Hatchepsout à Deir el-Bahari II. Façade et salles hypostyles 1. Figures et planches*, *MIFAO* 133, Cairo, 2016, pl. 17; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, p. 151 ; II, p. 531-538.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 98-120; II, p. 477-480, 495-501, 509-515, 519-526. See for example the armchairs of Sahure (T. EL AWADY, *Sahure – The Pyramid Causeway: History and Decoration Program in the Old Kingdom*, *Abusir* 16, Prague, 2009, pl. 11) and of his mother Neferhetepes (*ibid.*, pl. 6). Those armchairs have a cover over them. For the shape of the Old Kingdom armchairs, see the lion-legged objects of Hetepheres I (G.A. REISNER, W.St. SMITH, *A History of the Giza Necropolis II. The Tomb of Hetep-Heres the Mother of Cheops*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955, figs. 31-32). Hatshepsut brings back into fashion many other Thinite, Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom themes (D. LABOURY, "Citations et usages de l'art du Moyen Empire à l'époque thoutmoside", in S. Bickel (ed.), *Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Studien zum historischen Bewusstsein in der Thutmosidenzeit*, *AegHelv* 22, Basel, 2013, p. 11-28; A. ĆWIEK, "Old and Middle Kingdom Tradition in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari", *EtudTrav* 27, 2014, p. 62-93; J. IWASZCZUK, "The Legacy of Senwosret I During the Reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III", *EtudTrav* 27, 2014, p. 161-178).

¹⁸ For Thutmose III, see E. DZIOBEK, *Die Gräber des Vezirs User-Amun: Theben Nr. 61 und 131*, *ArchVer* 84, Mayence, 1994, pls. 18, 83. For Amenhotep II, see N. de G. DAVIES, *The Tomb of Ken-Amūn at Thebes*, New York, 1930, pls. XX, XXII.A. For Thutmose IV, see A. RADWAN, *Die Darstellung des regierenden Königs und seiner Familienangehörigen in den Privatgräbern der 18. Dynastie*, *MÄS* 21, Munich, 1969, pl. XII. The two arms of an armchair were discovered in his tomb, but may also belong to a lion-legged armchair (MMA 30.8.45a-c; Boston MFA 03.1131; H. CARTER, P.E. NEWBERRY, *The Tomb of Thutmōsis IV*, Westminster, 1904, New York). For Amenhotep III, in the TT 48, see T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs*, Oxford, 1957, pls. XXX, XXXVI; in the TT 57, see I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, II, p. 549-555; in the TT 120, see New York, MMA 33.8.8; N. de G. DAVIES, "The Graphic Work of the Expedition", *BMMA* 24/11, 1929, p. 38-39 (figs. 1-3); in the TT 226, see New York, MMA 15.5.1; N. de G. DAVIES, *The Tombs of Menkheperasonb, Amenmosē, and another (Nos. 86, 112, 42, 226)*, London, 1933, pls. XLI-XLIII. For Tutankhamun, see below.

¹⁹ Two lion-legged armchairs are attested afterward, in a palanquin, under the reign of Horemheb (A.-Chr. THIEM, *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh*, *ÄAT* 47, Wiesbaden, 2000, pl. 57; fig. 8), and under the reign of Ramses III (*MH IV*, pls. 196-199).

²⁰ R. VERGNIEUX, *Recherches sur les monuments thébains d'Amenhotep IV à l'aide d'outils informatiques. Méthodes et résultats*, *CSEG* 4, Geneva, 1999, pl. III; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, II, 417. Some representations of chairs, with a bulky cushion, can be mistaken with an armchair. Compare with the bulky sheets or mattresses of the beds, on the Karnak and Amarna representations (Boston, MFA 1997.98; Boston, MFA 63.962; G. ROEDER,

representations, on the Karnak *talatat* and from Amarna, show lion-legged armchairs inside the king's palanquin, which is decorated among others with a striding lion [fig. 4]²¹. This lion hides most of the armchair, so we can't know if the seat has a lion head. As we will see in the next part, by analogy with the chairs, we don't think the armchairs, at least at Amarna, have lion heads.



Fig. 3. Amenhotep III enthroned in a kiosk on a lion-headed armchair, represented in the TT 57 (from N. Scott, "Our Egyptian Furniture", *BMMA* 24/4, 1965, p. 150, fig. 53).

We notice a second evolution, this time in the armchair use. Before the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, the king could appear on a lion-headed armchair in the audience kiosk, in front of his court²². He could also go out from his palace on a lion-headed armchair

Amarna-Reliefs aus Hermopolis: Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Hermopolis-Expedition in Hermopolis 1929-1939 II, Hildesheim, 1969, pls. 59, 76, 95, 189, 208; Cl. TRAUNECKER, "Aménophis IV et Néfertiti. Le couple royal d'après les talatates du IX^e pylône de Karnak", *BSFE* 107, 1986, p. 17-44; R. VERGNIEUX, *op. cit.*, p. 132, fig. 55 and pls. XLIII.b-c; N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs of el Amarna, ASEg* 13-18, London, 1903-1908, I, pls. X, XVIII, XXV-XXVI; IV, pl. VIII; VI, pls. IV, XVII, XIX, XXVIII.

²¹ For the Karnak *talatat*, see R.W. SMITH, D.B. REDFORD, *The Akhenaten Temple Project, I: Initial Discoveries*, Warminster, 1976, pls. 24, 86.4-6; J. GOHARY, *Akhenaten's Sed-festival at Karnak*, London, New York, 1992, *passim*. For the Amarna representations, see N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs*, II, pls. XXXVII, XL; III, pl. XIII. Nefertiti has palanquins, too. One type is with a female sphinx. But another might be with a lioness, and the scenes in the *talatat* being fragmentary, it is not always easy to guess whose palanquin it is (I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, p. 134-135; II, p. 399-420, 423).

²² He could also appear on lion-legged chairs and armchairs, and mostly on cubic seats. On this scene, as represented in the private tombs, see A. RADWAN, *op. cit.*; M. HARTWIG, *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes, 1419-1372 BCE, MonAeg* 10, Brussels, 2004, p. 54-73; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, 155-160.

carried in a simple palanquin²³. During the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, an armchair is no longer used by the king enthroned in the kiosk. On most of the documents from Karnak, and on all those of Amarna, the armchair is relegated to the trips in palanquin.

Outside the palanquin, the king seats only on chairs²⁴ and stools²⁵. On the Karnak *talatat*, but not at Amarna, the chairs can be lion-headed²⁶. Never attested before, they are replacing the lion-headed armchairs. The choice between chairs, stools and armchairs depending on the situation is noticeable in the Amarna scene representing the reception of the foreign tribute [fig. 4]²⁷. The king and queen, enthroned in the kiosk, are seated on a lion-legged chair and on a stool, while their armchairs are left in the palanquins.

To summarize, the lion-headed armchairs are no longer attested and the armchairs in general are relegated to the palanquin. The chairs and stools are since then chosen, in order to left the body of the royal couple visible²⁸. Armchairs are still used in the palanquin for the stability they offer.

Under the next ephemeral reigns of Smenkhkare and Neferneferuaten, we have no representations of armchairs. The sovereign seats on lion-legged chairs or stools²⁹.

²³ E. NAVILLE, *op. cit.*, V, pl. CXXV; E. DZIOBEK, *op. cit.*, pls. 18, 83.

²⁴ For lion-legged chairs, see the representations in the Amarna tombs, N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs I*, pls. XVIII, XXVI; II, pls. XIV, XVIII, XXXII, XXXVIII; III, pls. IV, VI, XIII, XVIII, XXXIV; VI, pls. IV, XIX, XXVIII. See the chairs of the royal couple on the *talatat* from Amarna, reemployed at Hermopolis (G. ROEDER, *op. cit.*, pls. 43, 60, 199). See the stelae Louvre, E 11624 (D. ARNOLD, *The Royal Women of Amarna. Images of Beauty from Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1996, p. 102, fig. 93; A. DAVID, "A Throne for Two: Image of the Divine Couple During Akhenaten's Reign", *JAEl* 14, 2017, p. 1, fig. 1); the stelae BM EA24431+EA63778 (*Akhénaton et Néfertiti. Soleil et ombres des pharaons*, Turin, Milan, Geneva, 2008, p. 245-246, cat. 164); the ivory fragments Louvre, E 11203 (B. KOURA, "Anmerkungen zu den Elfenbeinfragmenten Louvre E 11203 aus der Amarnazeit", *RdE* 45, 1994, p. 193-196); the statuette Cairo, JE 44866 (D. ARNOLD, *op. cit.*, p. 103, fig. 96; A. EL-SHAHAWY, *The Egyptian Museum in Cairo. A Walk through the Alleys of Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, 2005, p. 202-203). For other kind of chairs, see G. ROEDER, *op. cit.*, pls. 21, 91.

²⁵ See the representations in the Amarna tombs (N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs VI*, pls. VI, XVII); the stelae Berlin, ÄM 14145 (R.E. Freed, Y.J. Markowitz, S.H. D'Auria (eds.), *Pharaohs of the Sun. Akhenaten. Nefertiti. Tutankhamen*, London, 1999, p. 119, fig. 81; p. 220, cat. 53); the stelae Cairo, JE 44863 (*ibid.*, p. 106, fig. 70), whose authenticity is questioned by R. Krauss ("Nefertiti's Final Secret. Did Cairo Receive a Modern Forgery in Exchange for the Bust of the Queen?", *AmarnLett* 5, 2015, p. 132-149); the stelae of the Amarna house N 50.22 (Vienna, inv. 8038).

²⁶ R. VERGNIEUX, *op. cit.*, pls. XVII.a, XLIII.c. We know of no lion-headed chairs before this reign. Some Eleventh dynasty furniture, on which a person is seated, are sometimes identified as chairs, but they are beds. Same with the three furniture on which Khafra is seated, on his statues: two are armchairs and the third might be a bed (I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, p. 95-96).

²⁷ N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs*, II, pls XXXVII, XL.

²⁸ S. BICKEL, "Der leere Thron Echnatons. Zur Ikonographie der Amarnazeit", in S. Bickel, S. Schroer, R. Schurte, Chr. Uehlinger (eds.), *Bilder als Quellen. Images as Sources. Studies on ancient Near Eastern artefacts and the Bible inspired by the work of Othmar Keel*, Fribourg, Göttingen, 2007, p. 189-213.

²⁹ See the stelae representing the deceased Akhenaten on a stool, Petrie Museum, UC410 + Cairo, JE 64959 (M. GABOLDE, *D'Akhenaton à Toutânkhamon*, pl. XXIVa; *id.*, *op. cit.*, *OLZ* 111/1, p. 7, fig. 8; D. LABOURY, *Akhénaton*, Paris, 2010, p. 342, fig. 6.5); a king on a lion-legged chair, Berlin, ÄM 20716 (M. GABOLDE, *D'Akhenaton à Toutânkhamon*, pl. XXIIIb; *id.*, *op. cit.*, *OLZ* 111/1, p. 6, fig. 7; Fr. KAMPP-SEYFRIED (ed.), *In the Light of Amarna. 100 Years of the Nefertiti Discovery*, Berlin, 2012, p. 412-413, cat. 200; D. LABOURY, *op. cit.*, p. 341, fig. 6.4); two kings on lion-legged chairs, Berlin, ÄM 17813 (M. GABOLDE, *D'Akhenaton à Toutânkhamon*, pl. XXIIIa; D. ARNOLD, *op. cit.*, p. 93, fig. 84; p. 130, cat. 7; D. LABOURY, *op. cit.*, p. 340, fig. 6.3).

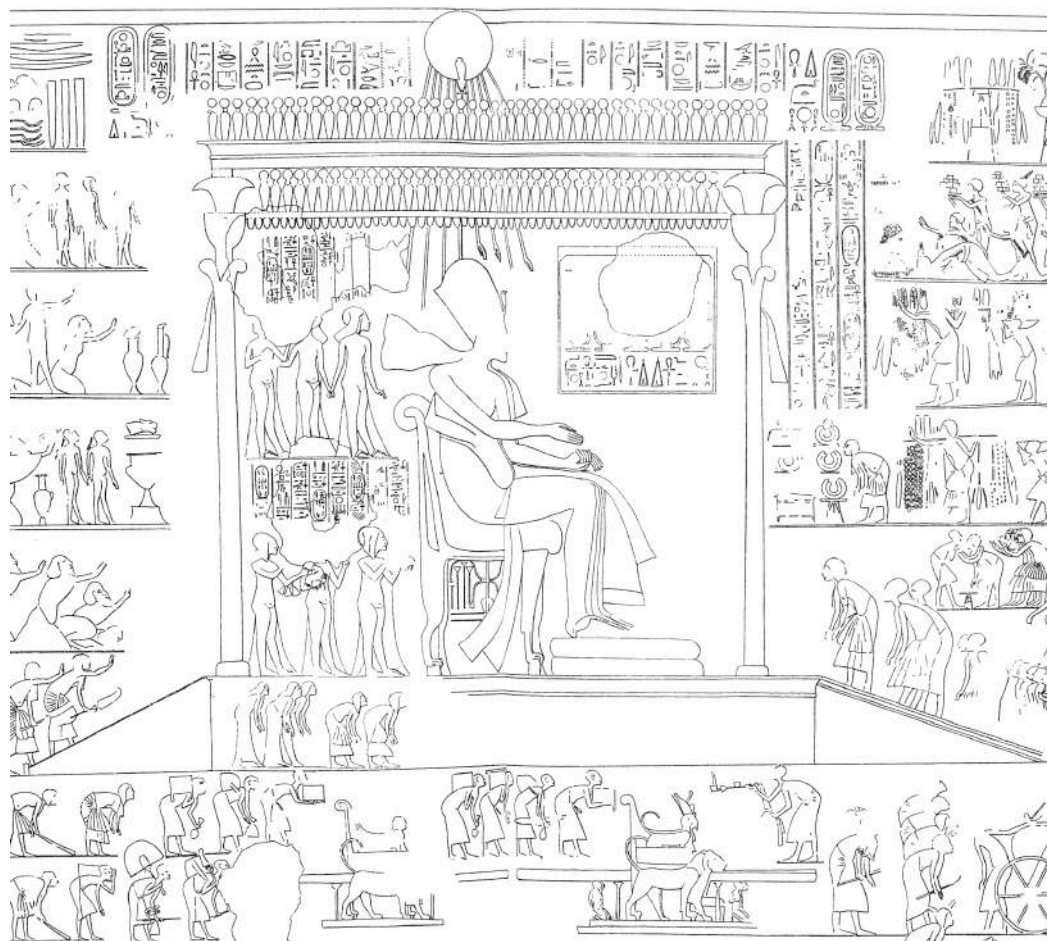


Fig. 4. Akhenaten receives the foreign tribute, Amarna tomb of Meryra II (from N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs II*, pl. XXXVII).

The lion-headed armchairs reappear under the reign of Tutankhamun. They are attested by three documents, besides the object. Two armchairs are represented empty, in the tomb of Huy, as part of the Nubian tribute³⁰. In two other representations, on a shield³¹ and on a gold openwork plaque [fig. 5]³², the armchairs are once again the seats of the enthroned king in the audience kiosk.

Tutankhamun reuses the typical lion-headed seat of the kings until the reign of Amenhotep III, and he even reproduces a rare detail specific to Amenhotep's III armchairs [fig. 3]: on the gold openwork plaque, the lion is showing its teeth and has its tongue out³³.

³⁰ N. de G. DAVIES, A.H. GARDINER, *The Tomb of Iuy Viceroy of Nubia in the Reign of Tutaankhamūn (No. 40)*, London, 1926, pl. XXIV; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, II, p. 579-580.

³¹ GEM, JE 61578, Carter n° 488 B (H. CARTER, *op. cit.*, III, p. 142-143; A. NIBBI, "The Four Ceremonial Shields From the Tomb of Tutankhamun", *ZÄS* 133, 2006, pl. XXII; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, II, p. 572-578).

³² GEM, JE 61982, SR 1/3402, Carter n° 044a (H. CARTER, *op. cit.*, I, pl. LXVII; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, II, p. 571-573).

³³ Lions seldom have their mouth open in Egyptian art, most specially those giving shape and decorating furniture, see *ibid.*, I, p. 217-219. All the correctly preserved lions of the armchairs of Amenhotep III have their mouth open and tongue out: in the TT 48, TT 57, TT 226 (see above for the bibliography).

The armchairs being the typical sovereign's seats under Tutankhamun but not under the previous Amarna reigns, it seems logical to attribute the golden armchair to Tutankhamun. But the global iconography is not heterogenous and indicates the contrary.

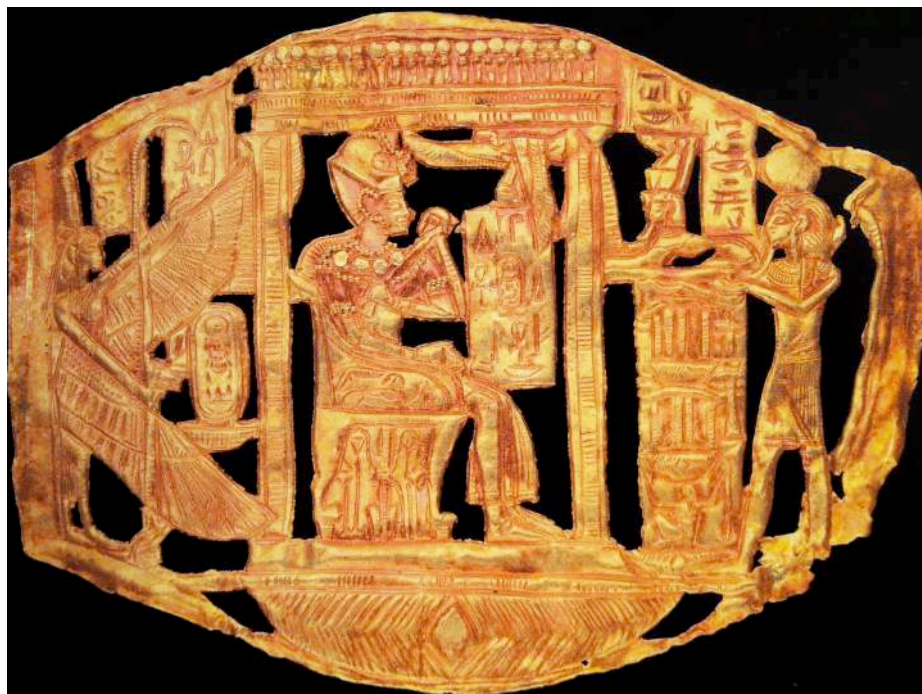


Fig. 5. Tutankhamun enthroned in a kiosk on a lion-headed armchair (GEM, JE 61982, SR 1/3402, Carter n° 044a; from Z. Hawass, *Tutankhamun. The Treasures of the Tomb*, London, 2007, p. 39).

The iconography of the armchair

The scene at the front of the backrest, with the Aten disk, is obviously Atenist.

The scene at the back of the backrest³⁴, representing a papyrus thicket and flying birds, is a non-exclusive but recurrent theme of the Amarna art, where the creative powers of Aten is shown through depictions of luxuriant nature³⁵.

The *sema-tawy*, which once decorated and strengthened the legs, is a traditional element that was kept at Amarna³⁶.

The four uraei with a solar disk that are protruding at the back are also traditional elements

³⁴ For a good photo, see T.G.H. JAMES, *Tutankhamun: The Eternal Splendor of the Boy Pharaoh*, London, New York, 2000, p. 288-289.

³⁵ See for example the floor decoration of the South palace, with papyrus thickets and ducks (Berlin, ÄM 15335); the wall decoration of the North palace, with thickets and birds (New York, MMA, inv. 30.4.136); the faience tiles making up scenes in the swamps (Louvre, E 11113, E 17357; New York, MMA, inv. 26.7.932, 26.7.950, 26.7.941, 26.7.944, 26.7.938, 26.7.937, 26.7.933, 26.7.942; Berlin, ÄM 25476, 30590, 30541, 30552, 30595). D. Arnold (*op. cit.*, p. 104) made an analogy with the representation of Amarna stela, Berlin, ÄM 14511, showing Akhenaten seating on a seat, a thicket of papyrus behind his back. We don't agree with her when she says (p. 107) there are traditional mythological allusions to Horus in the Chemnis thickets.

³⁶ Under venerated cartouches, see N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs*, II, pl. IV. Decorating the Window of Appearance, see *ibid.*, II, pl. XXXIV; VI, pls. IV, XIX. Decorating seats, see *ibid.*, II, pl. XXXVIII; III, pl. XXXIV; IV, pl. VIII; VI, pls. IV, XVII.

that were kept at Amarna³⁷.

The arms are decorated with Nekhbet and Wadjet, merged into a winged cobra with the *pschent*. They also appear as cobras, each with their specific crown, on the sides of the backrest. Both goddesses are absent from Amarna, except Nekhbet in the main chapel of the artists village³⁸. But the chapel has no Atenist decoration. Thereby, both goddesses on the armchair are traditional figures.

The lion heads are not typical elements of seats from the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, as we have seen before. They appear on some chairs, and only before the court moved to Amarna. At Amarna, they are no longer decorating the chairs, and by deduction the armchairs. The evolution and radicalization of the Atenist religion, fully achieved at Amarna, explains the removal of the lion heads. In the official sphere, in the end, only Aten was recognized as a god, and the lion heads could no longer be kept because they represented goddesses. The lions on the New Kingdom armchairs have manes, but manes at that time endow lions of both sex³⁹. No texts identify them neither. Thereby, we know their identity thanks to the iconography and the texts of the Old Kingdom armchairs. Back then, the lions of the armchairs were represented with a wig⁴⁰. An epithet confirms it is Bastet, the main lion goddess at that time, and one of the most important protectors of the monarchy⁴¹. As we have already mentioned, the lion-headed armchairs disappear between the Sixth dynasty and the reign of Hatshepsut. The identity of the lions could have changed, most especially since a new icon appears at the end of the Seventeenth dynasty: the lion king⁴². The disappearance of the heads during the Amarna period allows us to identify these lions as deities⁴³. We think they are still goddesses, Bastet and/or Sekhmet⁴⁴.

The iconography, both Atenist and traditional, thus indicates that the seat has undergone structural alterations.

³⁷ For uraeus frieze above cornices, see *ibid.*, I, pl. VII; II, pls. X, XIV, XXXII-XXXV, XXXVIII; III, pls. XIV, XVI-XVII, XXXIV; VI, pls. IV, VI; VI, pl. XVII, XIX, XXIX. On columns, referring to cornices, see *ibid.*, VI, pl. XIV. On lion palanquins, see *ibid.*, III, pl. XIII.

³⁸ Fr. WEATHERHEAD, B.J. KEMP, *The Main Chapel at the Amarna Workmen's village and its wall paintings*, MEES 85, London, 2007.

³⁹ I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, p. 208-212. See for example the tall bed from the tomb of Tutankhamun, which is in the shape of a lion with a mane (Cairo, JE 62011, Carter n° 035). The inscription identifies it with a goddess, Mehyt (*ibid.*, II, p. 87-92).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 196.

⁴¹ Bastet has the epithet *hry.t hnd*, "She who is on the *hnd*-seat" (Fr.L. BORREGO GALLARDO, "Bastet en el discurso teológico de la realeza de la dinastía IV", in E. Sánchez-Moreno, Gl.M. Ródriguez (eds.), *Poder, cultura e imagen en el mundo antiguo*, Madrid, 2011, p. 11-12; I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, p. 120, 256).

⁴² *Ibid.*, I, p. 286-290.

⁴³ We can draw a parallel with the lions of the palanquins. They are well attested on the Karnak *talatat* and are kept at Amarna, because they represent the king (*Ibid.*, I, p. 253-254).

⁴⁴ Bastet, alongside Sekhmet since the Twelfth dynasty, are the most important lion deities of the pantheon and the only ones mentioned in the royal, stately sphere. The texts inform us that the king, as a protector of the country and as a fierce warrior, identifies himself with these aggressive goddesses and is protected by them. In the New Kingdom, these goddesses are endowed with an Eye of Ra dimension, protecting the solarized king. See I. BARTOS, *op. cit.*, I, 264-267. Tutankhamun for example, hunting ostriches with a bow, is "he who hits the target like Bastet", *st r mꜥd mj Bꜣst.t*; base of a fan, GEM, JE 62001, Carter n° 242 (A. Wiese, A. Brodbeck (eds.), *Toutankhamon. L'or de l'au-delà. Trésors funéraires de la Vallée des Rois*, Basel, 2004, p. 321, cat. 78).

Overview and conclusions

The iconography of the entire backrest, minus the free-standing cobras and uraeus, is Atenist, and the text alterations confirm it antedates Tutankhamun. As M. Gabolde stressed out, the cartouches at the back, mentioning the Atenist names of the royal couple, were added afterwards, thus erasing the names of the previous owner (and queen?). Being at the back, the craftsmen didn't bother or didn't have the time to change them again with the second names. The scene at the front was probably altered at least twice: a first time to put the Atenist names of the new royal couple, a second time to put their Amen names. At an undetermined moment, or moments, the scene itself was altered.

The arms, with their traditional iconography, were added during the reign of Tutankhamun. Neferneferuaten already re-established the traditional cults. But the cartouches confirm the arms were made at the beginning of the reign of Tutankhamun. The cartouches on the outside are originals⁴⁵, and the left one is inscribed with the Atenist name of the king⁴⁶. The inside cartouche with the name was edited to include the Amen name⁴⁷. The artists bothered or had time to edit only the golden foils of the inside, not the inlays and golden foils on the outside.

The traditional lioness heads and heraldic cobras were added, like the arms, during the reign of Tutankhamun.

We cannot say when were added the uraeus with solar disks.

Thus, the lion-headed armchair of Tutankhamun was originally a lion-legged chair, such as the one represented on the backrest.

Without the arms and the lion heads, the seat seems so deep that we can wonder if it belonged to the original chair⁴⁸. The stretchers and maybe the *sema-tawy* were made for the seat. The lion legs can be the ones of the chair or made for the armchair.

We agree with M. Eaton-Krauss and M. Gabolde, when they say the *sema-tawy* were not stolen or damaged but accidentally broken and evened up⁴⁹. Just as the rest of the reworks, it seems the craftsmen preferred to do the simplest thing: instead of fixing the damaged bits, they broke the rest. They could delete this important symbol maybe because the four sides between the legs were hidden by broad garlands of flowers⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34.

⁴⁶ Tutankhaten is written on the left arm (T.G.H. JAMES, *op. cit.*, p. 288). Nebkheperure is written on the right arm (Z. HAWASS, *Tutankhamun. The Treasures of the Tomb*, London, 2007, p. 37-38).

⁴⁷ Tutankhamun is inscribed on the right arm (T.G.H. JAMES, *op. cit.*, p. 289). Nebkheperure is inscribed on the left arm (Fr. TIRADRITTI, *Egyptian treasures from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo*, Vercelli, 1998, p. 219).

⁴⁸ The rectilinear shape of the seat is not a discriminating element since it can belong to an armchair or a chair. While the lion-legged chairs of Tutankhamun have concave seats (GEM, JE 62029, Carter n° 087; JE 62032, Carter n° 349; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, pls. XI-XIII, XVIII-XXI), several private chairs from the Eighteenth dynasty have rectilinear seats (H.S. BAKER, *Furniture in the Ancient World. Origins and Evolution. 3100-475 B.C.*, London, 1966, p. 121, fig. 160; p. 126, figs. 173-176; p. 131-132, figs. 182-184). Armchairs can have rectilinear seats, like those of Satamun (*ibid.*, p. 64-65, figs. 69-70; p. 68-69, figs. 73, 74; pl. V) or concave seats, like the small one of Tutankhamun, GEM, JE 62022, Carter n° 039 (M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, pls. XXXI-XXXII).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38-39; M. GABOLDE, *op. cit.*, OLZ 111/1, p. 8.

⁵⁰ See the chair of Tutankhamun represented on the small golden shrine (M. EATON-KRAUSS, E. GRAEFE, *The Small Golden Shrine from the Tomb of Tutankhamun*, Oxford, 1985, pl. XVII). Under the reign of Akhenaten, see N. de G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs II*, pl. XXXII; G. ROEDER, *op. cit.*, pl. 43; BM, EA57399 (*Pharaohs of the Sun*, p. 254, cat. 169); Louvre, E 11203 (B. KOURA, *op. cit.*). Under the other Amarna reigns, see Berlin, ÄM 17813 (Do. ARNOLD, *op. cit.*, p. 93, fig. 84; p. 130, cat. 7).

The most obvious owner of the original chair is Akhenaten, even though we cannot completely rule out the two successors, depending on when exactly was the cult of Aten abandoned, and to which degree.

If Akhenaten was the owner of the chair, the chair might have been used by the two rulers before Tutankhamun, so one can wonder which changes they made, most specially to the Atenist scene.

Tutankhamun, by transforming the Amarna chair into the typical lion-headed armchair used by the kings until the reign of Amenhotep III, is thus asserting his direct filiation with Amenhotep III⁵¹.

⁵¹ On Tutankhamun claiming Amenhotep III is his father on monuments of this king, see W.R. JOHNSON, "Honorific Figures of Amenhotep III in The Luxor Temple Colonnade Hall", in D.P. Silverman (ed.), *For his Ka: Essays offered in Memory of Klaus Baer*, SAOC 55, Chicago, 1994, p. 133-144. See one of the two Soleb lions, BM, EA 2 (H. GOEDICKE, "The Living Image", *GöttMisz* 134, 1993, p. 47; E. RUSSMANN (ed.), *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum*, London, New York, 2001, p. 130-131, cat. 51).

Résumé :

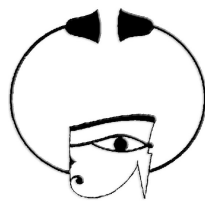
Il est généralement admis que le fauteuil doré léontocéphale de la tombe de Toutânkhamon a été fabriqué pour ce roi, au début de son règne. Cependant, certains auteurs, qui ont étudié la scène atonienne sur le dossier, pensent que le siège a appartenu à un précédent roi amarnien. Dans cette étude, nous proposons deux nouvelles analyses afin d'identifier le propriétaire originel : le contexte typologique et l'iconographie globale. Ces deux approches nous permettent également de reconsidérer la forme originelle du siège. Nous démontrons ainsi que le fauteuil léontocéphale de Toutânkhamon a appartenu à un précédent roi, probablement Akhenaton, et qu'il s'agissait d'une simple chaise léonine, typique de la période amarnienne.

Abstract:

It is often admitted that the lion-headed golden armchair from the tomb of Tutankhamun was made for this king, at the beginning of his reign. However, some authors, who studied the Atenist scene on the backrest, think the seat belonged to a previous Amarna king. In this study, we propose two more analyses in order to identify the original owner of the armchair: the typological context and the global iconography. These two approaches allow us to reconsider the original shape of the seat, too. We show that Tutankhamun's lion-headed armchair belonged to a previous king, most probably Akhenaten, and that it was a simple lion-legged chair, typical of the Amarna period.

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