

Amarna; the Missing Evidence By Sue Mosley

Peach Pixel Publishers 228 pages.

The blurb on the back of this book promises great things; including the identity of Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun's true parentage, and evidence never before published. However the content does not deliver these promises. There is nothing in this volume that has not been discussed before, and more articulately, and the so-called unpublished evidence is widely available to the public should they wish to access it.

The book itself is badly written, and has clearly not been proofread by an editor, as there are numerous typos, repeated lines, inappropriate usage of capitalisation of nouns, inconsistent spelling of Akhenaten/Akhenaton (sometimes on the same page) and many sentences written using terrible grammar.

Her main arguments throughout the book are based on hieroglyphic renditions of names which have been discussed at length by professional philologists, and I am uncertain how good Mosley's hieroglyphic knowledge actually is, as she mistranslates some of the simplest hieroglyphic phrases; one such example being nsw bity which she consistently translates as 'Lord of the Two Lands' when in fact it means 'He of the Sedge and Bee' which interprets as King of Upper and Lower Egypt – a slight difference but when using linguistics as your main evidence accuracy is essential.

I want to write something positive about this book but it is difficult to overcome the issues already mentioned. Often in such books the illustrations can be a plus point but as Mosley states in the introduction "I must apologise for the quality of some of the illustrations. I am not a professional photographer, so my photos will not win prizes". Those images that are not her own have simply been scanned from books, and not particularly well with pixilation where they have been blown-up as well as page creases across the centre of images.

The layout of the book is unusual, with lots of words in bold, although the reason for this isn't immediately obvious, with lots of questions and leading phrases such as "Let's find out" and "Let's see". At the end of each chapter she writes a short summary of the points with an "Established Version" and "My Version" which is a good idea for someone presenting new ideas but unfortunately the "Established Version" is often out of date with such statements as 'Tutankhamun was murdered' and 'Akhenaten was homosexual'; the former was disproved in 2005 with the CT Scan of the mummy, and the latter hasn't really been accepted by Egyptologists since the 1960's, rendering these summaries misleading. She also tries to get the reader involved with the question "What do you think?" which is a good idea as it does get the reader to think about the evidence as it is presented.

The book jumps around a little bit, with chapter 1 as a background to the 18th dynasty and the kings who ruled before the Amarna period, which then moves on to the foundation of Akhetaten, Akhenaten's city of the Aten and his reasons behind it.

Chapter 3 is essentially a list of 22 tombs at Amarna, and who they belonged to and forms the basis for her argument that Amarna was never an administrative city. Chapter 4 discusses the art of the Amarna period, and particularly the representation of Akhenaten himself and the possible reasons for it, something that has been discussed elsewhere extensively. Chapter 5 is dedicated to Moseley's discussion on the co-regency between Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, with an investigation of year 3,6,9 and 12 of Akhenaten's reign. Chapter 7 and 8 look at Smenkhkare and who he was resulting, in the conclusion that he was in fact Nefertiti and idea originally put forward about 30 years ago. Chapter 9 looks at the death and burial of Akhenaten, with the conclusion that the KV55 body is Akhenaten even though it is widely accepted that the body is too young, followed by a chapter on Tutankhamun and Ay.

Her key arguments throughout the book are regarding a co-regency between Akhenaten and Amenhotep III for 11-12 years, Smenkhkare was in fact Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun was the son of Amenhotep III and Tiye – all of which have been discussed at length for many years with convincing arguments for and against all of them. Mosley seems to base her arguments on a handful of tombs at Amarna, without any reference to the excavations and evidence from the city, workman village, or palaces themselves. These are treated almost as if they do not exist.

The book ends with a revised time-line of the Amarna period and a further reading section. The books and articles used are well-respected although for some journal articles she has failed to put dates or titles making it almost impossible to identify the paper.

Although the foundations are here for another average book on the Amarna period, the poor presentation really lets it down. Peach Pixel is a self-publishing company and therefore the book was not reviewed, edited or proofread before publication; and it shows. A decent and extensive edit and re-write would make this book worthwhile, but as it stands there are hundreds of better written, better illustrated and better argued volumes on Amarna upon which to spend your £14.99.