More than thirty-three centuries have come and gone since King Neb-ma'et-Re', Amun-hotpe III, was laid to rest in his tomb in the western cliffs at Thebes; but in the plain below these cliffs his towering colossi still gaze across the Nile at the vast colonnades of his temple at Luxor, and in the museums of the world there are still preserved many incomparable works of art and craftsmanship produced during his reign. It was not a great reign in the sense that it contributed materially to the growth of Egypt’s already gigantic stature among the nations of the ancient Near East, but from a cultural and artistic point of view it possessed a brilliance unsurpassed by that of any other single period in Egyptian history. In striving to gratify a royal love of luxury and display more extravagant and at the same time more sophisticated than any previously known, hundreds of highly trained architects, artists, and craftsmen exerted skills perfected during a century and a half of national prosperity and powers of invention stimulated by contacts with the other great cultures of the eastern Mediterranean world.

Against their background of oriental splendor Amun-hotpe III and the members of his extensive family stand out as well-defined and interesting personalities. The king’s life, from his vigorous youth to his languid old age, seems to have been given over chiefly to self-glorification and the pursuit of pleasure and to have been dominated throughout most of its length by his love for his shrewd and beautiful queen,
the great Teye. Second only to Teye in the king’s favor was their eldest daughter, Sit-Amûn, whom her father married sometime before the thirty-first year of his reign and by whom he subsequently had four children, including apparently the future queen, Nofret-ity, and two future kings, Smenkh-ku-Reñ and Tût-ñanh-Amûn. Amun-ñhotpe IV, Teye’s eldest son and Amun-ñhotpe III’s coregent during the last third of his reign, is better known to posterity as Akh-en-Aten, the name which he assumed at the time of his adoption of the solar cult of the god Aten and previous to his transfer of the royal residence from Thebes to Tell el-‘Amûrneh. Less well known than their famous relatives are two younger daughters of Teye and Amun-ñhotpe III, whose names and figures are preserved, together with those of their parents, on a carnelian bracelet ornament acquired by the Museum in 1944.

For the sake of clarity the delicately carved little cameo is shown greatly enlarged in the illustration on the opposite page. It was necessary, moreover, to light it in such a way that the translucency and varying shades of color of the fine, orange-red stone are not apparent. This is a pity, for in beauty and quality the piece is the equal of three similar—and now famous—bracelet plaques (ill.) which came to the Museum in 1926 in the Carnarvon collection.

All four of these plaques and a fragment of a fifth, presently to be discussed, were evidently products of the same jeweler’s atelier. So far as is now known, they are of a type peculiar to the reign of Amun-ñhotpe III. There is evidence that the three Carnarvon gems—and, therefore, probably the entire group—are from the king’s tomb at Thebes, which must have been also the as-yet-unrecorded burial place of Queen Teye, in whose honor the designs on most of the gems seem to have been devised. Ancient robbers of the royal tomb, it may be supposed, kept the gold or silver bracelets in which the plaques were mounted and discarded the plaques themselves as being not only of little intrinsic value but dangerous to possess and difficult to dispose of because of the telltale figures and inscriptions which they bear. Modern plunderers, of course, suffer from no such inhibitions.

Bracelet plaques made during the reign of Amun-ñhotpe III, probably on the occasion of the king’s first jubilee in 1375 B.C. The two upper examples are of carnelian; the lower, of sard. The gold mountings are modern. Shown slightly reduced in scale. Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1926
Bracelets of King Tūt-āmün (1363-1354 B.C.) from his tomb at Thebes. Above: As first seen, on the forearms of the king's mummy; below: after cleaning. Now in the Cairo Museum. Reproduced from Carter, "The Tomb of Tūt-āmün Amen," II, pls. XXXIII, LXXXVI

Some notion of the general appearance of the bracelets in which these ornaments were set and the manner in which they were worn can be had from the accompanying photographs of the bracelets of Amun-ḥotpe III's son, King Tūt-āmün. Previous to the discovery of the tomb of Tūt-āmün the closest known parallels were the silver bracelets of Queen Te-Wosret of the late Nineteenth Dynasty, and it was on these that the modern settings in which the Carnarvon gems are mounted were modeled. Both the back and front surfaces of the plaques themselves follow the curve of the bracelets in which they were set, and the more recently acquired of the Museum's five related plaques is pierced near its ends with small holes for the studs by means of which it was anchored to its mounting.

Though they come almost certainly from a royal burial, the type and quality of these bracelet ornaments and the signs of wear evident on their surfaces show that they were not designed
Colossal limestone group showing King Amun-hotpe III and Queen Teye, with smaller figures of their daughters. Found at Medinet Habu in 1897 and now in the Cairo Museum. Height 23 feet. Reproduced from Jéquier, “Les Temples memphites et thèbains,” pl. 77.
as items of funerary jewelry, but were made for and worn by their owner during his or her lifetime. Since the little scenes carved on four of them either represent or refer to the celebration of the royal jubilee (Heb-Sed), we may suppose that they were among the numerous small monuments customarily made on such occasions and offered as gifts to the king and other members of the royal family (see ill.). Scenes in the tomb of the Royal Scribe Kheruef at Thebes show jewelry— including, apparently, bracelets with lozenge-shaped ornaments— being presented to Amun-хотpe III and Teye on the occasion of two Sed-festivals. Although Amun-хотpe III is known to have celebrated at least three Heb-Seds, it is probable, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the Museum’s bracelet gems were executed to commemorate the first occurrence of the festival in the thirtieth year of the king’s reign (1375 B.C.).

Like one of the Carnarvon plaques, the gem recently acquired shows us King “Neb-mаfet-Rēc” (Amun-хотpe III) enthroned in royal state and attended by Queen Teye (seated behind him) and, as already noted, by two of their daughters. The occasion is obviously one of great formality, for the king wears the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (𓊪) and the curious shirt of archaic type normally reserved for the Sed-festival, and holds in his hands the ancient Osirian symbols of rulership, the shepherd’s crook (𓀫) and the ladanisterion (𓀭). Teye, wearing the tall, plumed headdress of a queen, stretches out her hand in salutation to her husband, while the princesses, crowned with low, cylindrical diadems, perform their ceremonial functions as musician priestesses, rattling their sistra (𓀭) in the king’s presence to dispel evil and grasping in their left hands the emblem of “life” (𓀭).

The participation of the numerous daughters of Amun-хотpe III in ceremonies conducted by and in behalf of their father is illustrated by the fine reliefs in the tomb of Kheruef mentioned above. Here, in one scene, we see sixteen royal ladies carrying sistra and attending the king and queen at the ceremonial raising of the pillar and, on an adjacent wall, two princesses holding sistra and eight pouring libations before Amun-хотpe III and Teye on the occasion of the first Sed-festival (ill. opposite).

The little man who appears behind Queen Teye, bending forward and holding over his shoulder a long-handled, ostrich-plume fan (𓀭), is probably one of the great officials of the reign, apparently made as a souvenir of the king’s first jubilee in 1375 B.C. L. about 5 in. (12.5 cm.). Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1926.

Box lid of white faience from Karnak, inscribed with the titulary of Amun-хотpe III. Apparently made as a souvenir of the king’s first jubilee in 1375 B.C. L. about 5 in. (12.5 cm.). Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1926.
Daughters of King Amun-hotpe III participating in the ceremonies at their father's first jubilee festival. Limestone relief in the tomb of the Royal Scribe Kheruef, at Thebes. Reproduced through the courtesy of LIFE Magazine.
and her younger sister, the Princess Iset. Both girls are known from other monuments of the reign; Henet-to-neb is mentioned in a fragmentary inscription recovered by the Museum’s Expedition in the ruins of the palace of Amun-hotpe III in Western Thebes, as well as in the references listed in Gauthier’s Livre des rois. In the illustration on page 275 more or less the same family group is seen at colossal scale in a well-known work of sculpture from Medinet Habu, now in Cairo. Here the Princess Henet-to-neb, whose figure on the gem measures scarcely five eighths of an inch in height, appears as an over-life-size statue on the front of her parents’ throne. Remains of the figures of two other princesses, the second of whom may have been Iset, flank the royal pair at the ends of the throne.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the scenes on the plaques is the absence of any representation of or reference to the king’s eldest daughter, Sit-Amûn. The fact that by the time the plaques were carved Sit-Amûn was not merely the daughter of Amun-hotpe III but also his wife, and possibly even had children of her own, would naturally preclude the likelihood of her being shown among the younger princesses. There would, on the other hand, be no reason why she should not have appeared as a queen on at least one of the gems unless, as suggested above, they were made specifically for Teye. In this case the representation of any other woman—even Teye’s own daughter—as the king’s consort would have been highly inappropriate, perhaps even tactless. To refer to such a breach of taste in stronger terms, however, would be an exaggeration, for there is no evidence that Teye and Sit-Amûn ever regarded one another with anything but affection.

The fifth gem of the group, which passed in 1922 from the MacGregor collection to the Carnarvon collection and with the latter in 1926 to the Museum, is represented by a fragment only. Like three of the other gems, it is of a fine grade of carnelian and bears on its convex surface a small scene carved in relatively bold relief. A clue to the significance of this scene is provided by the reliefs of King Amun-hotpe III in the first and second antechambers of his temple at Luxor. There in several instances we see the king kneeling between Amun Rê and another divinity and receiving from one of them the crown he wears (see ill. opposite). The presentation of the crown, which may be one of the several known types, is usually accompanied by a short speech addressed by the divinity to the king, such as: “I establish for thee the White Crown on thy head,” or “I establish thy crown on thy head for a million years.”

On the gem the falcon-headed deity seated at the right of the scene appears to be “Rê Hor-akhthy, the Great God” (—if I have read correctly the very small and indistinct inscription in the panel in front of his face. The god holds in his left hand the jointed or notched plant stem indicative of “many years” and extends his right hand forward and upward to adjust the crown on the king’s head. The latter, kneeling before his divine benefactor, is dressed in an elaborately decorated kilt and grasps in his left hand the crook and ladanisterion, the streamers of which may be seen hanging down over his bent arm. It is a reasonably safe guess that on the missing left half of the plaque there was, behind the figure of the...
king, a second seated divinity, facing to the right, and that this divinity was the great Lord of Karnak and King of the Gods, Amun Re. In any event, its loss is much to be regretted, for from the point of view of fine, detailed engraving this broken gem is one of the best of the lot.

In the foregoing discussion an unconscionable amount of printer's ink seems to have been expended on two little carvings the combined areas of which do not exceed that of a silver dollar. In defense of such verbosity we may, however, advance the beauty and extreme rarity of the objects and the rather surprising amount of light which they shed on one of the most interesting families in Egyptian history.

Of the two plaques that form the subject of this article, the first (acc. no. 44.2.1) measures 4.1 x 2.3 x 0.2 cm. Until early in 1944 it was in the private collection of Henry Walters of Baltimore. The second, the broken plaque from the Carnarvon collection (acc. no. 26.7.1344), measures 2.6 x 2.5 x 0.2 cm.

The three other Carnarvon plaques (acc. nos. 26.7.1339, 1340, 1342) were first published by Alan H. Gardiner in The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, III (1916), pp. 73-75, plate xi, and have subsequently appeared in many books and articles—recently in Steindorff and Seele’s When Egypt Ruled the East (1942), p. 196, fig. 69.

The box lid (acc. no. 26.7.916) shown on page 276 also is from the Carnarvon collection.

Tutankhamun’s bracelets are described by Howard Carter in The Tomb of Tutankhamun, II, pp. 128 ff., plates xxxiii, lxxxvi; those of Queen Te-Wosret by George Daressy in The Tomb of Siptah, pp. 39-40 (with 2 plates).


![Amun-hotpe III kneeling between Amun Re and a falcon-headed divinity. Relief in the temple of Amun at Luxor. Reproduced from Gayet, “Le Temple de Louxor,” pl. lxiv](image-url)