

Amarna, Memphis, and Thebes landscapes: a comparison with a multiscale approach

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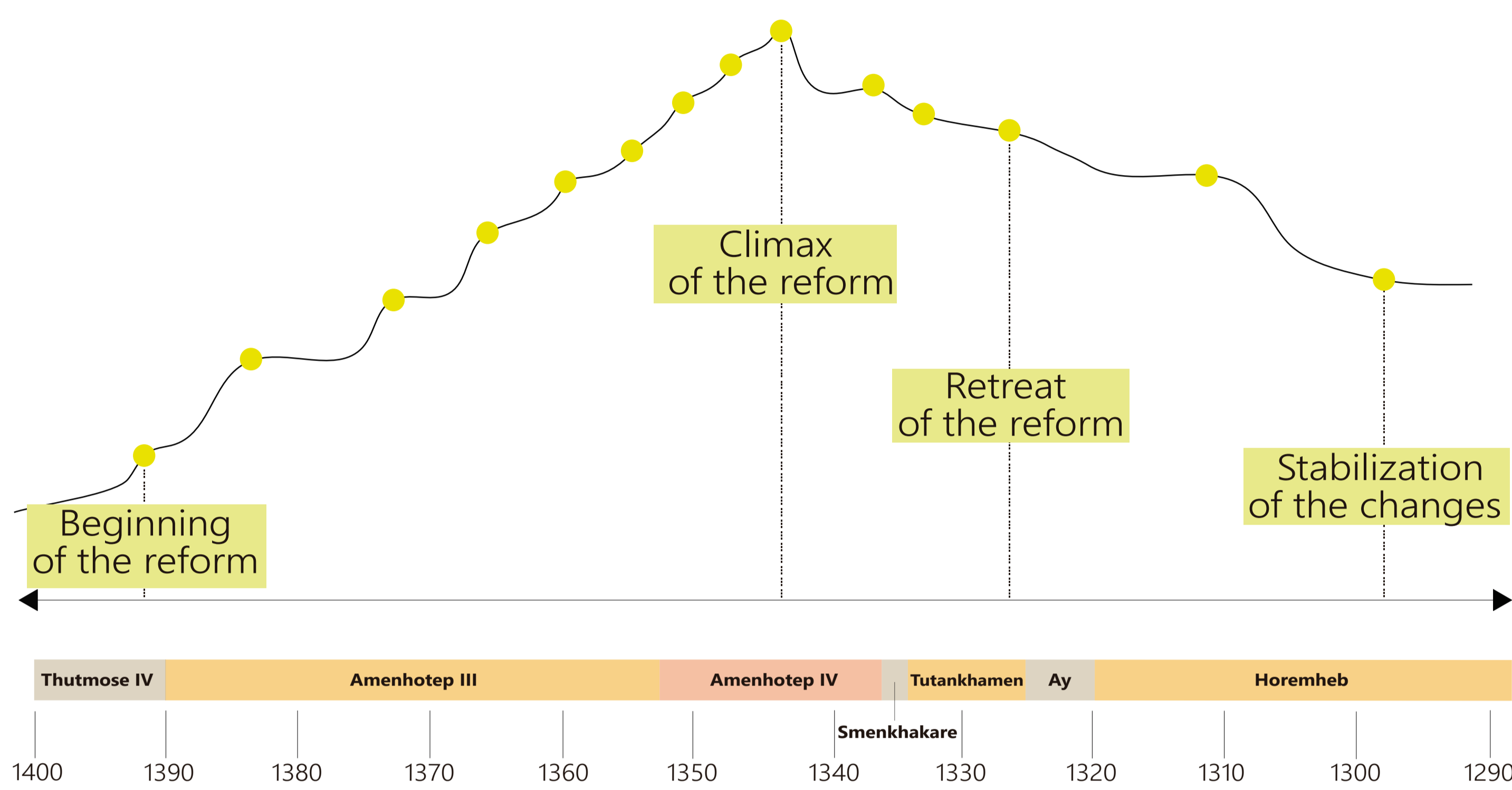
Goals and methodology

The aim of this work is to understand changes and adaptations made in Amarna, Memphis, and Thebes during the Amarna reform to reconstruct regional landscapes and its settlement histories. Most permanencies and innovations observed in the distribution of tombs, temples, and administrative and residential buildings are analyzed across different time and spatial scales.

Based on the collection of information derived from historical, archaeological, and cartographic sources, we develop a spatial database that covers reigns from Thutmose IV to Horemheb. This combination is expected to explain how the reform was developed in each of these political, religious, and economic centers.

Temporary multiscale

The present analysis makes use of a broad scale that includes isolated and observable events on smaller scales. The period of the Amarna reform exceeds the years that Akhenaten ruled and those the city of Akhetaten was inhabited.



At the beginning of the process, an accumulation of disruptive events is observed that has its corollary in the transfer of the royalty to Akhetaten. Although the abandonment of the city and restitution of the cult of Amun did not mean a return to the situation before the beginning of the reform, but it was a new political and religious order as a consequence of the primary changes that took place within Akhetaten.

Space multiscale

The structural characteristics of the archaeological record (Foley 1981) are addressed through integrating: macro (Egyptian state), meso (districts, areas or sectors) and microscales (tombs, residences, and administrative-religious buildings).

The **MACROSCALE** provides a visualization of spaces that present evidence of the cult of Aten. This approach enables:

- to recognize the adherence of different locations to the political project that represents the power of the state as part of the "Horizon of Aten".
- to discuss Tell el-Amarna as an "atypical" settlement.
- to identify differences and similarities in the settlement pattern of Memphis and Thebes during the period in question.

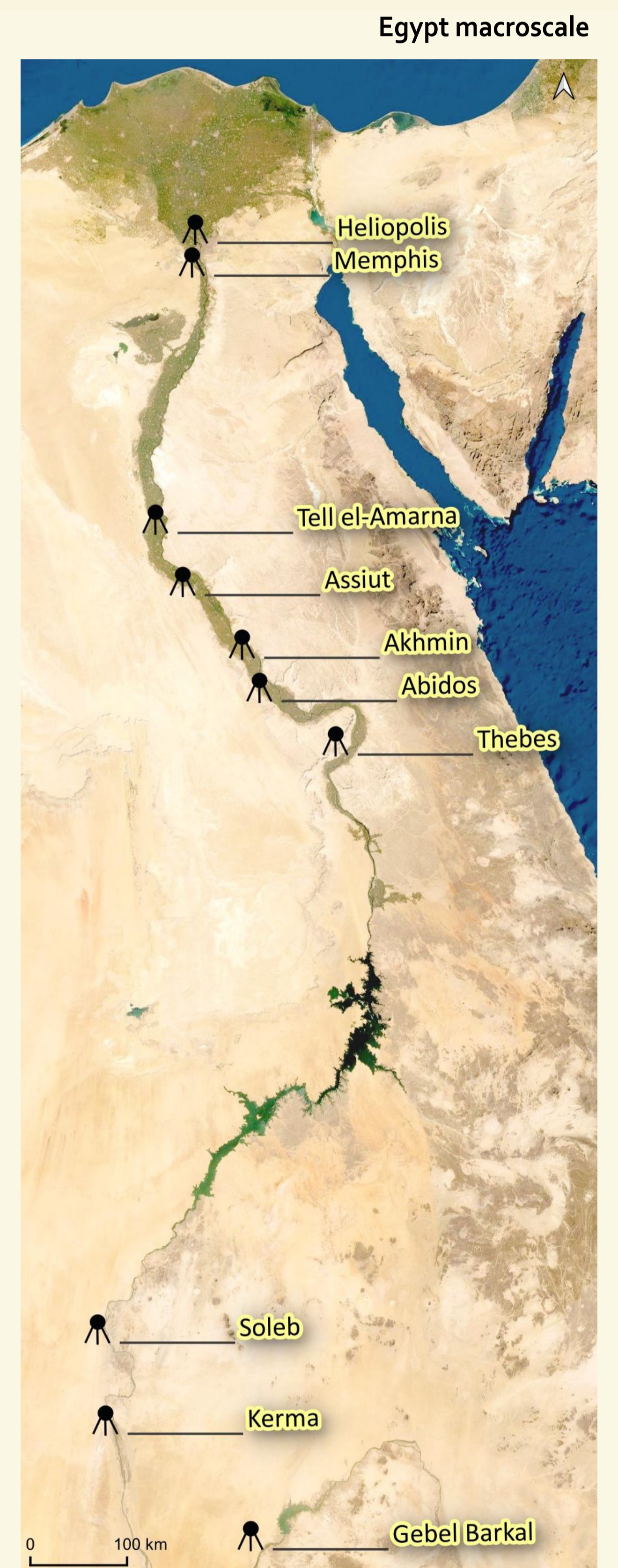
At the **MESOSCALE**, the distribution of buildings in different areas of Akhetaten, Memphis, and Thebes shows relationships between structures in terms of movement and relevance that reached certain places.

Upon the new distribution of elite tombs, based on the tomb of the pharaoh in the necropolises of Akhetaten, the behavior previously observed in the necropolis of nobles of Memphis and Thebes was affected.

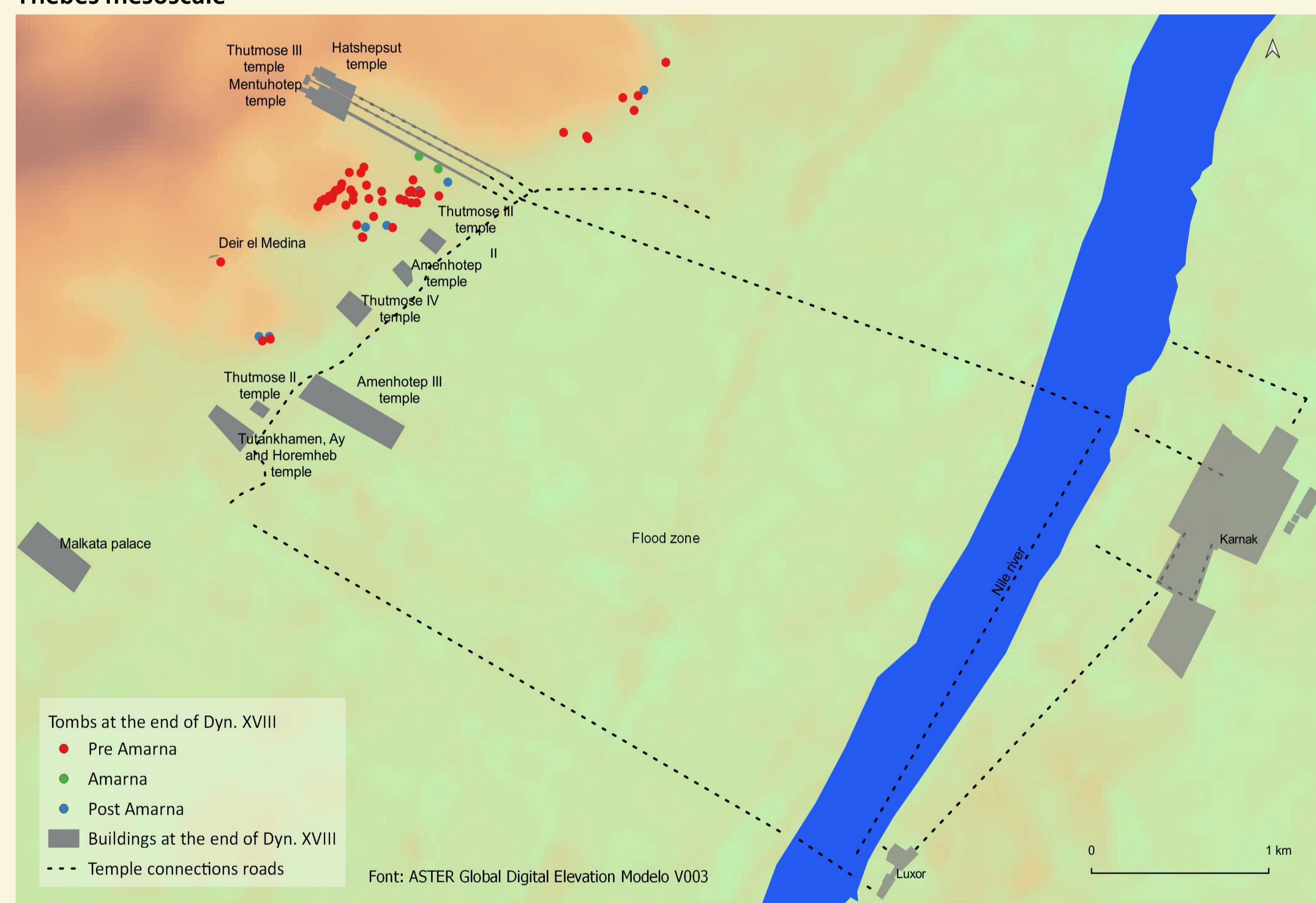
In Saqqara, the use of new necropolises led to a marked decrease in the number of tombs assigned to the elite, and the subsequent large increase after the restoration of the cult of Amun.

In Thebes, the number of tombs assigned during the reigns of Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III was the highest of the period. Their number dropped considerably during the occupation of Akhetaten, and decreased even further after the restitution of Thebes as a ceremonial center.

The choice of Saqqara after the abandonment of Akhetaten, is associated with the need for the elites to move away from the pharaoh's tomb as a consequence of the reform, which also explains a novel way of understanding the relationship between royalty and elites.



Thebes mesoscale



	Pre Amarna	Amarna	Post Amarna
Memphis	14	3	37
Amarna	----	24	----
Thebes	52	2	5

Table with frequency of tombs by settlement and period of Amarna moment. Fonts: Porter and Moss (1970, 1972, 1981) and Davies (1903-1908)

The **MICROSCALE** analysis allows to know how limited spaces were inhabited. Thus, it is observed that elites and non-elites coexisted near temples and official buildings located in the North and South Suburbs of Akhetaten (Kemp 2016), while areas such as the Stone Village and the Workmen Village were inhabited by workers dedicated to construction and maintenance of the necropolises (Kemp 2012).

Based on this information, we propose some issues regarding residential spaces of Memphis and Thebes. These settlements had different degrees of connection with the tasks needed to ensure the functioning of the state management since they were located inside ceremonial centers and the royal residence (O'Connor 1989). They housed those who served in religious rituals, the production and administration of food, and the construction and maintenance of tombs and temples, among other activities that the state carried out to legitimize its power.

In religious perspective Memphis and Thebes adhered to the cult of Aten, and its population should have been receptive to official religious proposals. Findings made in different areas of Akhetaten show the coexistence of traditional cults (Bes and Taweret, for example) with the cult of Aten and royalty (Stevens 2006). Different socio-economic groups also practiced traditional cults and the cult of the Akhenaten moreover the combined cults practices have been replicated in other settlements. In regard to the cases of Akhetaten and Deir el Medina, domestic spaces could have been conducive to the deployment of religious practices that were further removed from the official worship.

Conclusions

Multiple scale approach ensure the comparison and interpretation of historical processes that go through different spatialities and temporalities. Here we focus on how the Memphis and Thebes landscapes were adjusted to the reforms carried out by the Akhenaten's reign, although these adaptations have antecedents in previous reigns and consequences in later ones. Among other aspects it is worth mentioning that, the tombs of Akhetaten were located in relation to the tomb of the pharaoh, while their locations in Memphis and Thebes depended on the centrality reached by the figure of Akhenaten as ruler. Finally, in regard to the adherence that different components of Egyptian society had to the reform, the microscale level allows adding the study of residential areas to assess the state plan and the total adherence observed on large spatial scales are diluted on smaller scales.

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