

Thebes in the time of amunhotep iii

Thebes in the Time of Amenhotep III: A Golden Age of Egyptian Grandeur ** The reign of Amenhotep III (c. 1391-1353 BCE) is often lauded as a golden age in Egyptian history. His vast building projects, artistic achievements, and diplomatic prowess profoundly impacted Thebes, the then-vibrant capital city. This delves deep into the opulent and dynamic landscape of Thebes during this pivotal era, exploring its magnificence, societal intricacies, and the challenges it faced. We'll uncover the architectural marvels, examine the economic underpinnings, and gain insights into the social fabric of this extraordinary period. The Magnificent City of Thebes under Amenhotep III: Thebes, under Amenhotep III, experienced an unprecedented surge in grandeur. Vast building projects transformed the city, leaving a lasting legacy that resonates even today.

Monumental Architecture: A testament to Power and Prosperity

Amenhotep III's reign saw a flurry of construction activities, focusing on temples and palaces to showcase the Pharaoh's divinity and power. The Karnak Temple, already significant, was further embellished, with the addition of grand pylons, courtyards, and obelisks. The Luxor Temple, a testament to royal devotion to Amun-Re, was begun during his reign and continued by subsequent rulers. These colossal structures required immense manpower and resources, reflecting the robust economy and social organization of the time.

Economic Prosperity: Flourishing Trade and Resources

The empire flourished under Amenhotep III, facilitated by a well-established network of trade routes stretching across the Near East. The wealth generated fuelled the construction boom and supported the burgeoning population of Thebes.

Example: Archaeological evidence suggests substantial imports of cedar wood from Lebanon, used extensively in construction.

Cultural Achievements: Artistic Flourishing and Royal Patronage

The artistic scene also flourished. The artistic style, known for its elegance and detail, reached new heights under the patronage of Amenhotep III. The sheer number of preserved statues, reliefs, and decorative items reveals a vibrant cultural scene.

Case Study: The famous Colossal Statues of Amenhotep III at the Luxor Temple showcase the advanced sculpting techniques of the time.

Advantages of Thebes during Amenhotep III's Reign: • Economic Prosperity: *Thriving trade and abundant resources.* • Architectural Marvels: *Majestic temples and palaces reflecting imperial power.* • Cultural Flourishing: *High artistic standards and royal patronage.* • Strategic Location: *Thebes' central location facilitated communication and trade throughout the empire.* • Political Stability: *The relative peace and security under Amenhotep III enabled extensive projects.* Challenges and Related Themes: *While Thebes prospered, challenges existed. The intricacies of maintaining this grandeur are not without complexities.*

The Challenges of Maintaining Imperial Grandeur

Maintaining Social Order and Stability

The vast construction projects required organized labor. Maintaining social order and ensuring food supplies were crucial for the sustained success of the construction.

Discussion: Evidence from papyri suggests potential labor disputes, yet these were likely resolved for the continuation of the construction.

Managing Resources and Supplies

Organizing and supplying the vast quantities of resources needed for construction required sophisticated logistics and administration.

Potential Environmental Pressures

The extensive building projects and the growing population potentially put pressure on the region's environment and resources. Maintaining agricultural output was essential for a healthy population.

Example: Possible disruptions in the Nile flood patterns could have caused hardship.

The Legacy of Amenhotep III's Thebes

Impact on Subsequent Dynasties

The reign of Amenhotep III shaped the course of Egyptian history. The political and cultural structures built during his time laid the foundation for subsequent dynasties. The large-scale building projects and cultural achievements created a model for future pharaohs.

Visual Aid: A table comparing the dimensions of temples built under Amenhotep III to those of his predecessors could be included.

The Transition to Subsequent Reigns

The transition to the Amarna Period marked a significant shift in Egyptian religion and art. The reign of Amenhotep III paved the way for this drastic change. It's important to consider this as part of the context and broader picture. Conclusion: Thebes during Amenhotep III's reign was a period of unparalleled splendor and dynamism. While the challenges were undoubtedly present, the achievements in architecture, art, and economic prosperity left an enduring legacy. The vast building projects, the cultural achievements, and the sophisticated administration reflect a powerful and organized society. This era, though short, profoundly impacted the course of Egyptian civilization, laying the groundwork for both continued prosperity and eventual transformation. Advanced FAQs: **1.** What evidence exists regarding the foreign relations of Amenhotep III's Thebes? (Further exploration of diplomatic correspondence and artistic exchange) **2.** How did the social hierarchy within Thebes during Amenhotep III's reign affect construction projects and societal harmony? **(Examination of the roles of different social classes)** **3.** What were the potential environmental impacts of the extensive building activities in Thebes during Amenhotep III's

reign? (Analysis of evidence for land use changes and resource depletion) 4. To what extent did the religious beliefs and practices of Thebes influence the development of the city during the reign of Amenhotep III? (Detailed examination of religious practices and their influence on societal structures) 5. How can contemporary insights into similar modern mega-projects inform our understanding of the logistical and societal challenges faced during Amenhotep III's reign? (Comparison of contemporary challenges with historical issues, using case studies from modern architecture and construction) This in-depth exploration provides a comprehensive understanding of Thebes during Amenhotep III's remarkable reign. Remember to cite relevant sources for accurate representation of the information provided. Further research can be conducted using the provided resources.

Thebes in the Time of Amunhotep III: A Golden Age of Prosperity and Grandeur

Step back in time with me, and imagine a city bathed in the perpetual sunshine of ancient Egypt, a city humming with unparalleled prosperity and breathtaking artistic achievement. We're not just talking about any ancient city; we're journeying to Thebes during the reign of Amenhotep III, a pharaoh whose name itself evokes images of wealth and power. His era, often dubbed the "Age of Splendour," saw Thebes transform into a glittering jewel on the Nile, a testament to human ingenuity, divine favor, and a truly remarkable leader. This period, roughly from 1390 to 1352 BCE, marked the zenith of the 18th Dynasty, a time when Egypt commanded respect and influence across the Near East. And at the heart of this flourishing empire, Thebes stood as its spiritual and administrative capital, a vibrant metropolis teeming with life, art, and monumental architecture. Let's delve into what made Thebes during Amenhotep III's reign so extraordinary.

Thebes: The City of Amun's Grandeur

Thebes wasn't just any city; it was the undisputed religious center of Egypt, its identity intrinsically linked to the supreme god Amun-Ra. During Amenhotep III's rule, this connection reached new heights. The pharaoh, seeing himself as the earthly manifestation of Amun's power, poured immense resources into the god's domain, particularly the Karnak Temple Complex.

Karnak: A Monument to Divine and Royal Power

Karnak was already a vast and ancient religious site, but under Amenhotep III, it underwent a spectacular expansion. Imagine approaching this colossal complex, its towering pylons and obelisks piercing the azure sky. The pharaoh commissioned magnificent additions, including a new temple dedicated to Amun, adorned with intricate reliefs and vibrant paintings depicting his divine kingship and military triumphs. The sheer scale of Karnak during this period is almost unfathomable. It wasn't just a single temple but a sprawling city of sanctuaries, chapels, halls, and courtyards, each built and embellished over centuries. Amenhotep III's contributions were crucial, solidifying Karnak's status as the paramount religious institution in Egypt and a powerful symbol of the pharaoh's devotion to Amun. This investment in Karnak

wasn't just about pleasing the gods; it was a shrewd political move, reinforcing his divine right to rule and his connection to the cosmic order.

Luxor Temple: A Personal Sanctuary and Celebration of Royalty

While Karnak was the domain of Amun, Luxor Temple, also known as "The Southern Harem" of Amun, received significant attention from Amenhotep III. He initiated its construction, transforming it into a beautiful precinct dedicated to the Theban Triad (Amun, Mut, and Khonsu) and, crucially, to himself and his divine lineage. Luxor Temple, with its elegant colonnades and open courtyards, offered a more intimate setting for royal ceremonies. Amenhotep III envisioned it as a place where the divine king could interact with the gods and reaffirm his role in maintaining *maat* – the concept of cosmic order, truth, and justice. The temple's reliefs often depict the pharaoh participating in rituals, further cementing the divine nature of his kingship.

The Golden Life of Thebes: Prosperity and Everyday Existence

The grandeur of the temples was a reflection of the overall prosperity that Thebes enjoyed. Amenhotep III's reign is often described as a "golden age," and the evidence suggests this was no exaggeration.

Economic Boom and International Trade

Egypt, under Amenhotep III, was a major economic power. The pharaoh's astute diplomacy and military strength facilitated secure trade routes, bringing immense wealth into the country. Thebes, as the capital, was the hub of this economic activity. Goods flowed in from distant lands – Nubian gold, Levantine timber, Mediterranean luxury items – enriching the city and its inhabitants. Imagine the bustling marketplaces of Thebes, filled with merchants hawking their wares, artisans showcasing their skills, and laborers toiling away. The Nile, the lifeblood of Egypt, was a constant highway for commerce, its banks lined with busy docks and warehouses. This economic prosperity wasn't limited to the elite; it trickled down, creating a generally comfortable standard of living for many.

Artistic Flourishing: The Pinnacle of Egyptian Craftsmanship

The wealth and stability of Amenhotep III's reign allowed for an unprecedented flourishing of the arts. Thebes became a center for artistic innovation and exquisite craftsmanship. Sculptors, painters, jewelers, and architects produced works of unparalleled beauty and refinement. Think of the exquisite statues of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye, capturing their regal presence with remarkable lifelikeness. The intricate tomb paintings that adorned the final resting places of nobles depicted scenes of daily life, banquets, and religious rituals with vibrant colors and meticulous detail. The workshops of Thebes were alive with activity, producing everything from monumental temple reliefs to delicate personal adornments. The so-called "Amarna Period," which followed Amenhotep III's reign, is famous for its artistic revolution. However, it's crucial to remember that the seeds of this artistic experimentation were sown during Amenhotep III's era. His court patronized artists who were already pushing boundaries, leading to a more naturalistic and expressive style in their works.

Royal Patronage and the Queen's Influence: The Power of Tiye

No discussion of Amenhotep III's Thebes would be complete without mentioning his Great Royal Wife, Queen Tiye. Tiye was a formidable figure, a woman of intelligence and influence who played a significant role in her husband's court and in the administration of the kingdom. Amenhotep III openly displayed his affection and respect for Tiye, commissioning statues of her and even depicting her alongside him in monumental reliefs. This elevation of the queen was unusual and speaks to her significant power. Her presence at court, her involvement in diplomatic affairs, and her patronage of the arts undoubtedly contributed to the vibrant atmosphere of Thebes. Queen Tiye's influence was a hallmark of this era, demonstrating a more prominent role for royal women than in many previous periods.

Thebes: A City of Residences and Daily Life

Beyond the monumental temples and opulent palaces, Thebes was a living, breathing city with a diverse population.

Noble Estates and Luxurious Residences

The wealthy elite of Thebes lived in well-appointed villas and estates. These residences, often located on the west bank of the Nile, closer to the necropolis, were designed for comfort and display. They featured courtyards, gardens, and richly decorated interiors. Tomb paintings provide us with valuable insights into the domestic life of these noble families, showcasing their leisure activities, banquets, and the general opulence of their surroundings.

The Common People: Artisans, Laborers, and the Nile's Embrace

Life for the common people in Thebes revolved around their professions and their proximity to the Nile. Artisans toiled in workshops, producing goods for temples, nobles, and the wider market. Laborers worked on construction projects, agricultural fields, and riverine transport. The rhythm of their lives was dictated by the inundation of the Nile, the agricultural seasons, and the demands of the state and religious institutions. While their lives might not have been as luxurious as the elite, they were still part of a prosperous and relatively stable society. The surplus generated by Egypt's wealth meant that even the common folk likely enjoyed a degree of comfort and security.

The Legacy of Amenhotep III's Thebes

Thebes in the time of Amenhotep III was more than just a city; it was a symbol of Egypt's golden age. Its monumental architecture, unparalleled artistic achievements, and economic prosperity set a standard that would influence subsequent dynasties. The temples of Karnak and Luxor stand today as silent witnesses to this era of grandeur, their colossal structures still awe-inspiring. The surviving artifacts – statues, reliefs, jewelry, and papyri – offer us a tantalizing glimpse into a world of immense wealth, sophisticated culture, and powerful leadership. Amenhotep III's reign represents a peak in Egyptian history, a period when Thebes truly shone as the "City of Amun," a beacon of civilization and a testament to the enduring power of art, religion, and effective governance. To understand this pharaoh is to understand the dazzling brilliance of his capital city, a city that, even in its ruins, continues to captivate and inspire us millennia

later. The echoes of its splendor still resonate, reminding us of a time when Thebes, under the watchful eye of its magnificent pharaoh, was truly the center of the world.

The Theban Heart of Ancient Egypt Under Amunhotep III

In the golden age of the 18th Dynasty, Thebes stood as the spiritual and political epicenter of Egypt, shining brightest during the reign of Pharaoh Amunhotep III. His rule, spanning much of the 14th century BCE, marked a zenith of prosperity, artistic innovation, and religious devotion. Thebes, nestled along the fertile banks of the Nile opposite modern Luxor, was more than a city—it was the sacred capital where the divine and earthly realms converged under the aegis of Amun, the king of gods.

The Religious Apex of Amun and Theban Complexes

At the heart of Thebes' prominence lay its unparalleled religious infrastructure, dominated by the colossal Temple of Amun at Karnak and the sacred precinct of Luxor. Amunhotep III presided over a period when Amun's cult reached unprecedented heights, transforming Thebes into the unchallenged spiritual capital of Egypt. The pharaoh's unprecedented building programs at Karnak expanded the temple complex into a monumental labyrinth of hypostyle halls, sacred lakes, and towering pylons, each structure dedicated to glorifying Amun and reinforcing divine kingship. These architectural feats were not mere displays of power—they were physical manifestations of cosmic order, where ritual and ceremony reinforced the pharaoh's role as mediator between gods and mortals.

Thebes in the Golden Age: Amunhotep III's Reign and the City's Zenith

Thebes, the venerable capital of Upper Egypt, reached an unparalleled zenith during the reign of Amunhotep III, often considered one of the most prosperous and artistically prolific periods in ancient Egyptian history. This Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh, whose rule spanned from approximately 1391 to 1353 BCE, presided over an era of profound peace, immense wealth, and unparalleled architectural grandeur. Under his stewardship, Thebes transformed from a significant religious center into a sprawling imperial metropolis, a testament to Egypt's dominant position in the Near East and its sophisticated administration.

Amunhotep III's reign, aptly dubbed the "Age of Amunhotep III," was a period where the god Amun, whose cult was famously centered in Thebes, enjoyed immense favor. The pharaoh's dedication to Amun was not merely religious; it was a sophisticated political strategy that cemented his legitimacy and amplified the city's prestige. This article delves into the multifaceted life of Thebes during this golden age, exploring its monumental architecture, religious significance, economic prowess, and the social fabric that defined this magnificent ancient city.

A City Adorned: Architectural Marvels of Amunhotep III

Thebes during Amunhotep III's reign was a city of unparalleled architectural ambition. The pharaoh, a prodigious builder, left an indelible mark on the landscape, transforming both the East and West Banks of

the Nile into vast construction sites. His projects were not just about religious devotion but also about projecting royal power and the glory of Egypt to the world.

Karnak: The Heartbeat of Amun's Power

The **Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak**, already a sprawling complex, experienced a dramatic expansion under Amunhotep III. He commissioned the construction of the magnificent colonnade of the Luxor Temple, an integral part of the Karnak precinct. His most significant contribution to Karnak itself was the construction of the third pylon and the vast forecourt that preceded the main sanctuary. This forecourt was lined with colossal statues of the pharaoh, many depicting him seated and larger than life, a clear assertion of his divine kingship and his personal connection to Amun. The sheer scale of these additions speaks volumes about the wealth and manpower available to the pharaoh. The architectural innovations, such as the use of massive stone blocks and the intricate relief carvings that adorned the temple walls, showcased the peak of Egyptian craftsmanship. The inscriptions found within Karnak offer invaluable insights into the religious rituals, military campaigns, and diplomatic relations of the time, making it a cornerstone for understanding ancient Egyptian civilization. The ongoing efforts to preserve these **Theban monuments** continue to draw scholars and tourists alike.

Luxor Temple: A Royal and Religious Nexus

While often considered a separate entity, the **Luxor Temple**, dedicated to the Theban Triad (Amun, Mut, and Khonsu), was intimately linked to Karnak and a major focus of Amunhotep III's building program. He initiated the construction of the processional colonnade that connected the two temples, a grand avenue intended for the annual Opet Festival. The **Opet Festival**, a pivotal religious event where the statues of the gods were transported from Karnak to Luxor, solidified the divine legitimacy of the pharaoh and reaffirmed the bond between the divine and mortal realms. Amunhotep III's additions to Luxor Temple included a grand colonnade, a hypostyle hall, and a sanctuary, all adorned with exquisite reliefs depicting his coronation and the festival itself. The grandeur of Luxor Temple, especially at sunset, continues to evoke a sense of awe, making it a must-visit for anyone interested in the **history of ancient Egypt**.

The West Bank: Necropolis and Royal Residences

Thebes was not just a city of temples; it was also the resting place of pharaohs and nobles. The West Bank, across the Nile from the city, was the traditional necropolis. Amunhotep III's mortuary temple, though largely destroyed, was once one of the largest and most opulent in Egypt, rivaling that of his predecessor, Amenhotep II. Located on the West Bank, it featured massive statues of himself and his great royal wife, Tiye, which once stood as sentinels overlooking the Nile. The **Valley of the Kings**, the burial ground for pharaohs of this era and later, saw the preparations for Amunhotep III's own tomb, KV22. While the tomb itself has been extensively plundered, its size and elaborate decoration, as evidenced by surviving fragments, suggest it was one of the grandest in the valley. The **tombs of Thebes** on the West Bank, including those of nobles and officials, further illustrate the wealth and social stratification of the period.

The Power of Amun: Religion and Politics in Thebes

The flourishing of Thebes under Amunhotep III was inextricably linked to the ascendancy of the god Amun-Re. The priests of Amun wielded immense power and influence, controlling vast estates and considerable

wealth. Amunhotep III, recognizing this, strategically aligned himself with the Theban priesthood, showering the god and his temple with lavish gifts and commissioning monumental building projects in his name.

Amunhotep III's Devotion to Amun

Amunhotep III presented himself as the earthly embodiment of Amun's will, and his reign was marked by a conscious effort to elevate Amun's status. His epithets frequently referenced his divine parentage by Amun, and his monumental constructions at Karnak and Luxor served to glorify the god and solidify the pharaoh's divine mandate. This symbiotic relationship between the pharaoh and the god was crucial for maintaining political stability and projecting an image of unchallenged authority throughout Egypt and its vast empire. The theological concepts developed during this period, particularly the emphasis on Amun's universal nature, would later influence the Amarna Period, albeit in a contrasting manner.

The Priesthood of Amun

The priests of Amun at Karnak were not merely religious officiants; they were powerful landowners, administrators, and economic players. Their wealth and influence grew in tandem with the pharaoh's devotion. Amunhotep III's building programs not only served his own glory but also provided employment and resources for the vast temple establishment. The management of these vast temple complexes required a sophisticated administrative structure, contributing to the overall efficiency of the Egyptian state. Understanding the **Theban priesthood** is essential to grasping the dynamics of power in New Kingdom Egypt.

A Thriving Metropolis: Economy and Society in Thebes

Thebes was more than just a religious and political capital; it was a vibrant economic hub and a bustling metropolis. Its strategic location on the Nile, coupled with Egypt's extensive trade networks, ensured its prosperity.

Trade and Commerce

The wealth of Amunhotep III's Egypt flowed into Thebes. The pharaoh's foreign policy was largely characterized by diplomacy and trade rather than large-scale warfare, allowing for the accumulation of vast riches from Nubia (gold, ivory, ebony), the Levant (timber, precious metals), and Punt (incense, exotic goods). Thebes served as the administrative and distributive center for much of this imported wealth. **Ancient Egyptian trade routes** converged on the Nile, with Thebes acting as a crucial node. Markets within the city would have bustled with activity, trading in both locally produced goods and luxury items acquired through international commerce. Archaeological evidence from the period, including imported pottery and artifacts, attests to this global reach.

Craftsmanship and Artistry

The period of Amunhotep III is renowned for its exquisite artistry and craftsmanship. The monumental architecture was adorned with intricate reliefs and vibrant paintings, showcasing the skill of Egyptian artisans. Jewelers, sculptors, woodworkers, and scribes all contributed to the splendor of the court and the temples. The famous **statues of Amenhotep III** and Queen Tiye, known for their lifelike qualities and

exquisite detail, are prime examples of the artistic achievements of this era. The demand for skilled labor would have been immense, fostering a thriving artisan class within Thebes. The quality of **ancient Egyptian art** from this period continues to captivate and inspire.

Social Structure and Daily Life

Thebes was a stratified society, with the pharaoh and his court at the apex, followed by priests, scribes, military officials, artisans, and a large population of laborers and farmers. While the grand pronouncements and monumental constructions dominate the historical record, understanding the lives of ordinary Thebans is also crucial. Evidence from the **daily life in ancient Egypt** suggests a vibrant urban environment with bustling markets, family life, and religious observances. The vast number of laborers required for the construction projects would have significantly impacted the city's demographics and social dynamics.

Legacy and Decline: The Sunstone of Amunhotep III

The reign of Amunhotep III marked a high point of Egyptian power and prosperity. Thebes, as the imperial capital and the center of Amun's cult, benefited immensely from this golden age. The city's monumental architecture, particularly the vast complexes at Karnak and Luxor, stands as an enduring testament to the pharaoh's ambition and Egypt's capabilities.

However, the seeds of future upheaval were also sown during this period. The immense wealth and power of the priesthood of Amun, while contributing to the city's grandeur, also created a powerful counterweight to royal authority. This internal tension would become more pronounced in the subsequent reign of Amunhotep III's son, Akhenaten, who would famously attempt to dismantle the Amun cult and shift the religious and political center of Egypt away from Thebes. Akhenaten's radical reforms, known as the Amarna Period, represented a direct challenge to the established order and the dominance of **Thebes ancient Egypt** had enjoyed. Despite the upheaval that followed, the legacy of Amunhotep III's Thebes as a city of unparalleled magnificence and a beacon of Egyptian civilization remains undimmed.

The study of **Thebes in the time of Amunhotep III** offers a profound glimpse into a period of immense cultural and political achievement. It was a city where divine kingship, monumental architecture, and economic prosperity converged, creating an imperial capital that left an indelible mark on the course of human history.

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Questions & Answers About thebes in the time of amunhotep

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No	Question	Answer
1	What made Amunhotep III's reign such a golden age for Thebes?	Amunhotep III's reign was a golden age for Thebes due to immense prosperity, peace, and extensive building programs. He poured vast wealth into the city, particularly for the god Amun, commissioning magnificent temples like Luxor Temple and expanding Karnak Temple, solidifying Thebes' status as the religious and political heart of Egypt.
2	How did Amunhotep III transform Luxor Temple?	Amunhotep III dramatically expanded Luxor Temple, commissioning the colonnaded court, the monumental courtyard, and the striking avenue of sphinxes that would later connect it to Karnak. His additions transformed it into a grand ceremonial center, showcasing his divine connection and the power of Amun.
3	What was the significance of Amunhotep III's colossal statues in Thebes?	The colossal statues commissioned by Amunhotep III, such as the famous Colossi of Memnon, served as powerful symbols of his divine kingship and his immense power. They were strategically placed to adorn his mortuary temple on the west bank of Thebes and were visible across the landscape, reinforcing his presence and authority.
4	How did Thebes flourish economically and socially under Amunhotep III?	Thebes flourished economically due to abundant resources from Egypt's vast empire and lucrative trade routes, much of which Amunhotep III channeled into the capital. Socially, the extensive religious construction projects provided employment, and the peace fostered by his strong rule allowed for cultural and artistic advancements.
5	Beyond temples, what other architectural achievements characterized Thebes during Amunhotep III's rule?	While temples were dominant, Amunhotep III's era also saw the construction of grand palaces and administrative buildings. Evidence suggests extensive urban development, including housing for officials and artisans, and possibly the expansion of the royal palace complex, demonstrating a well-organized and thriving capital city.

Thebes during Amenhotep III reign, Thebes religious life under Amenhotep III, Amenhotep III and Thebes ancient history, Thebes temples in the time of Amenhotep III, Religion and power in Thebes during Amenhotep III, Amenhotep III's era in Thebes archaeological insights, Thebes architecture under Amenhotep III, Amenhotep III and Theban priesthood, Thebes cultural development in the 14th century BCE, Thebes and the golden age of Amenhotep III

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