



27. Nefertiti wearing her distinctive tall crown with ram's horns, disk and plumes on a relief from Amarna. (Petric excavation photograph, courtesy of the Petric Museum.)



17. Nefertiti presenting offerings to Aten on a relief from Amarna. (Petrie excavation photograph, courtesy of the Petrie Museum, UC. 401.)

Nefertiti

flourished 14th century BC



Nefertiti , painted limestone bust, about 1350 BC; in the Egyptian Museum , Berlin

also spelled **Nefertiit** , or **Nofretete** queen of Egypt and wife of King [Akhenaton](#) (reigned 1353–36 BC) who supported her husband's religious revolution and is thought by some to have adhered to the new cult of the sun god Aton even after the king began to compromise with the upholders of the old order .

Nefertiti is best known for her portrait bust, found at Tell el-Amarna (ancient Akhetaton), the king's new capital . Her parentage is uncertain , but some scholars believe she was an Asian princess from Mitanni . She appears prominently at her husband's side in reliefs found at Tell el-Amarna , and she was a faithful follower of his new cult. Nefertiti had six daughters , two of whom became queens of Egypt. In the 12th year of Akhenaton's reign , or possibly later , Nefertiti either retired after losing favour with the king or , less probably , died. Objects belonging to her have been found at the northern palace in Amarna , suggesting that she may have retired there .

# Nefertiti

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Nefertiti** was the Great Royal Wife (or chief consort/wife) of the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (later Akhenaten), and mother-in-law of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun. She may have also ruled in her own right under the name Neferneferuaten briefly after her husband's death and before the accession of Tutankhamun. Her name roughly translates to "the beautiful (or perfect) woman has come". She also shares her name with a type of elongated gold bead, called *nefer*, that she was often portrayed as wearing. She was made famous by her bust, now in Berlin's Altes Museum, shown to the right. The bust is one of the most copied works of ancient Egypt. It was attributed to the sculptor Thutmose, and was found in his workshop. The bust itself is notable for exemplifying the understanding Ancient Egyptians had regarding realistic facial proportions.

She had inscriptions that read *Heiress, Great of Favour, Possessed of Charm, Exuding Happiness, Mistress of Sweetness, beloved one, soothing the king's heart in his house, soft-spoken in all, Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt, Great King's Wife, whom he loves, Lady of the Two Lands, Nefertiti*.

*See also* : Eighteenth dynasty of Egypt Family Tree

Nefertiti's parentage is not known with certainty, but it is now generally believed that she was the daughter of Ay, later to be pharaoh.<sup>[1]</sup> This would make her daughter Akhesunamun, who later was Aye's queen, his own granddaughter. Another theory that gained some support identified Nefertiti with the Mitanni princess Tadukhipa. The name Nimerithin has been mentioned in older scrolls, as an alternative name, but this has not yet been officially confirmed. It has also been suggested that Nefertiti was a daughter or relative of Amenhotep III, or of the high Theban nobility.

Depending on which reconstruction of the genealogy of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs is followed, her husband Akhenaten may have been the father or half-brother of the Pharaoh Tutankhaten (later called Tutankhamun).

The exact dates of when Nefertiti was married to Amenhotep IV and later, promoted to his Queen are uncertain. However, the couple had six known daughters. This is a list with suggested years of birth:

- Meritaten: year 2 (1348 BC).
- Meketaten: year 3 (1347 BC).
- Ankhesenpaaten, later queen of Tutankhamun: year 4 (1346 BC).
- Neferneferuaten Tasherit year 6 (1344 BC).
- Neferneferure: year 9 (1341 BC).
- Setepenre: year 11 (1339 BC).



Bust of Nefertiti from Berlin's Altes Museum.



portrait bust in the Ägyptisches Museum Berlin

In year 4 of his reign (1346 BC) Amenhotep IV started his worship of Aten. The king led a religious revolution, in which Nefertiti played a prominent role. This year is also believed to mark the beginning of his construction of a new capital, Akhetaten, at what is known today as Amarna. In year 5 of his reign (1345 BC), Amenhotep IV officially changed his name to Akhenaten as evidence of his new worship. The date given for the event has been estimated to fall around January 2 of that year. In year 7 of his reign (1343 BC) the capital was moved from Thebes to Amarna, though construction of the city seems to have continued for two more years (till 1341 BC). The new city was dedicated to the royal couple's new religion. Nefertiti's famous bust is also thought to have been created around this year.

In an inscription estimated to November 21 of year 12 of the reign (approx. 1338 BC), her daughter Meketaten is mentioned for the last time; she is thought to have died shortly after that date. A relief in Akhenaten's tomb in the Royal Wadi at Amarna appears to show her funeral.

During Akhenaten's reign (and perhaps after) Nefertiti enjoyed unprecedented power, and was perhaps the most powerful woman on earth. Some time during the reign she was made co-regent: the pharaoh's equal. She was depicted on temple walls the same size as the king, signifying her importance, and shown worshipping the Aten alone. Perhaps most impressively, Nefertiti is shown on a relief from the temple at Amarna which is now in the MFA in Boston, smiting a foreign enemy with a mace before the Aten. Such depictions are reserved for the pharaoh alone, and yet Nefertiti was depicted as such.

In year 14 of Akhenaten's reign (1336 BC), Nefertiti herself vanishes from the historical record, and there is no word of her after that date. Theories include a sudden death by a plague that was sweeping through the city, and had killed one of Nefertiti's daughters, or a fall from favor and subsequent replacement that led to it being politically incorrect to discuss her. Regardless, the verifiable knowledge of this episode has been completely lost to history.

Her disappearance coincides with the rise of co-ruler Smenkhkare to the throne. Smenkhkare is thought to have been married to her daughter Meritaten. However, Smenkhkare is depicted in many of the same ways as Nefertiti was, and his regnal name, Nefernefruaten, is quite similar to that of Nefertiti. He is sometimes depicted as looking very feminine, and even his name was sometimes written with a feminine ending. This has led some scholars to believe that Smenkhkare was in fact another name for Nefertiti, and instead of falling from grace or dying, Nefertiti actually rose in power, taking the throne for herself after the death of her husband. Akhenaten died after seventeen years of reign. Smenkhkare had been his co-ruler for four years.

In keeping with the theory above, Nefertiti is perhaps responsible for abandoning the Aten religion, and moving the capital back to Thebes. This would have been the only way to please both the people and the powerful priests of Amun. Nefertiti would have prepared for her death and for the succession of her daughter, now named Ankhasunamun, and her stepson, Tutankhamun. They would have been educated in the traditional way, worshipping the old gods. Nefernefruaten dies after two years of kingship.

She was succeeded by Tutankhaten, who is thought to have been a son of either Amenhotep III or Akhenaten. He married Nefertiti's daughter Ankhesenpaaten. The royal couple were young and inexperienced, by any estimation of their age, and Ankhesenpaaten bore two stillborn (and pre-mature) daughters whose mummies were found by Howard Carter in Tutankhamun's tomb. Some theories believe that Nefertiti was still alive and had an influence on them. If this is the case, her influence and presumably her own life would have ended by year 3 of Tutankhaten's reign (1331 BC). In that year, Tutankhaten changed his name to Tutankhamun, as evidence of his worship of Amun, and abandoned Amarna to return the capital to Thebes.

As can be seen by the suggested identifications between Tadukhipa, Nefertiti, Smenkhkare and Kiya, the records of their time and their lives are largely incomplete, and the findings of both archaeologists and historians may develop new theories vis-à-vis Nefertiti and her precipitous exit from the public stage.

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## The mummy discovered?

As Nefertiti's tomb was never completed and was found in the valley of the kings, the location of Nefertiti's body has long been a subject of curiosity and speculation.

### Joann Fletcher, 2003

On June 9, 2003, archaeologist Joann Fletcher, a specialist in ancient hair from the University of York in England, announced that Nefertiti's mummy may have been one of the anonymous mummies stored in tomb KV35 in the Valley of the Kings known as "the Younger Lady". However, an independent scholar in the field of Egyptology, Marianne Luban, had already made the same speculation as early as 1999 in an article posted on the Internet, entitled "Do We Have the Mummy of Nefertiti?" Luban's points upholding the identification are the same as those of Joann Fletcher. Furthermore, Fletcher suggested that Nefertiti was in fact the Pharaoh Smenkhkare. Dr. Fletcher led an expedition funded by the Discovery Channel that examined what they believed to have been Nefertiti's mummy.

The team claimed that the mummy they examined was damaged in a way suggesting the body had been deliberately desecrated in antiquity. Mummification techniques, such as the use of embalming fluid and the presence of an intact brain, suggested an eighteenth dynasty royal mummy. Other features the team used to support their claims were the age of the body, the presence of embedded nefer beads, and a wig of a rare style worn by Nefertiti. They further claimed that the mummy's arm was originally bent in the position reserved for pharaohs, but was later snapped off and replaced with another arm in a normal position.

However most Egyptologists, among them Kent Weeks, Peter Locavara and Jimmy Dunn, generally dismiss Fletcher's claims as unsubstantiated. They claim that ancient mummies are almost impossible to identify with a particular person without DNA; and as bodies of Nefertiti's parents or children have never been identified, her conclusive identification is impossible. Any circumstantial evidence, such as hairstyle and arm position, is not reliable enough to pinpoint a single, specific historical persona. The cause of damage to the mummy can only be speculated upon, and the alleged revenge is an unsubstantiated theory. Bent arms, contrary to Fletcher's claims, were not reserved exclusively to pharaohs; this was also used for other members of the royal family. The wig found near to the mummy is of unknown origin, and cannot be

conclusively linked to that specific body. Finally, the 18th dynasty was one of the largest and most prosperous dynasties of ancient Egypt, and a female royal mummy could be any of a hundred royal wives or daughters from 18th dynasty's more than 200 years on the throne.

In addition, there is controversy about both the age and gender of the mummy. On June 12, 2003, Zahi Hawass, head of Egypt's Supreme Council for Antiquities, also dismissed the claim, citing insufficient evidence. On August 30, 2003, Reuters further quoted Dr. Hawass as saying, "I'm sure that this mummy is not a female", and "Dr Fletcher has broken the rules and therefore, at least until we have reviewed the situation with her university, she must be banned from working in Egypt."<sup>[2]</sup> Hawass has claimed that the mummy is female and male on different occasions.<sup>[3]</sup>

## 2006

More in hope than expectation, when a new tomb with sarcophagi was found near the entrance to Tutankhamun's tomb in February 2006, the UK papers jumped on the possibility that one of them might contain the mummy of Nefertiti.<sup>[4]</sup> The coffins were discovered to be empty.

## Immortality

Nefertiti's place as an icon in popular culture is secure. She has become a celebrity; after Cleopatra she is the second most famous "Queen" of Egypt in the European imagination and influenced through photographs the changed standards of feminine beauty of the 20th century.

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- ↑ [2] ([http://www.zahihawass.com/wc\\_no\\_discrimination.htm](http://www.zahihawass.com/wc_no_discrimination.htm)) . Hawass comments
- ↑ [3] ([http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2099-1610673\\_1,00.htm](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2099-1610673_1,00.htm)) . Times Online article
- ↑ [4] ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4700032.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4700032.stm)) , BBC article

### Notable Ancient Egyptians

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**Early Dynastic Rulers:** Narmer | Hor-Aha

**Old Kingdom Rulers:** Djoser | Sneferu | Khufu | Khafra | Menkaura | Pepi II

**Middle Kingdom Rulers:** Mentuhotep II | Mentuhotep IV | Senusret III | Amenemhat III | Sobekneferu

**New Kingdom Rulers:** Hatshepsut | Thutmose III | Amenhotep III | Akhenaten | Tutankhamun | Ramesses I | Seti I | Ramesses II

**Other Rulers:** Shoshenq I | Piye | Taharqa | Psammetichus I | Ptolemy I | Cleopatra VII

**Consorts:** Tetisheri | Ahmose-Nefertari | Ahmose | Tiy | **Nefertiti** | Ankhesenpaaten | Nefertari | Mark Antony

**Court officials:** Imhotep | Weni | Ahmose, son of Ebana | Ineni | Senemut | Rekhmire | Yuya | Maya | Yuny | Manetho | Pothinus

## Further reading

- Cyril Aldred, *Akhenaten: King of Egypt* (Thames and Hudson, 1988) contains much material on her
- Rita E. Freed, Yvonne J. Markowitz, Sue H. D'Auria, *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten – Nefertiti – Tutankhamen* (Museum of Fine Arts, 1999)
- Joyce Tyldesley, *Nefertiti: Egypt's Sun Queen* (Viking, 1999)
- Donald Redford *Akhenaten : The Heretic King*, Princeton, 1984

## External links

- Do We Have the Mummy of Nefertiti? ([http://www.geocities.com/scribelist/do\\_we\\_have\\_.htm](http://www.geocities.com/scribelist/do_we_have_.htm)) by Marianne Luban, 1999 (predates Joann Fletcher's work).
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- Tracking Nefertiti (<http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/nefertiti/story/story.htm>) | Discovery article on Joann Fletcher's work.
- King Tut tut tut ([http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2099-1610673\\_1,00.htm](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2099-1610673_1,00.htm)) | The Sunday Times on Joann Fletcher's work.
- A Critical Analysis of the Discovery Channel's "Nefertiti Revealed" (<http://touregypt.net/featurestories/dcnefertiti.htm>)
- Spinning Nefertiti (<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/653/eg8.htm>)
- Discussion on the *Nefertiti found?* program (<http://www.thehallofmaat.com/maat/read.php?f=1&i=144802&t=144802>)
- A more detailed profile of Nefertiti (<http://touregypt.net/featurestories/nefertiti.htm>)
- The Encyclopedia of El Amarna, examining her time and connection (<http://www.specialtyinterests.net/eae.htm>)
- *Nefertiti*, a musical based on the Egyptian queen. (<http://www.nefertitithemusical.com>)
- Altes Museum, Berlin (<http://www.smb.spk-berlin.de/smb/de/standorte/index.php?n=2&r=2&objID=24&p=2>)
- St. Mary's Canossian College Drama 05-06 *Nefertiti* (<http://www.smcc-canossian.org/%7Ewp/drama06>)
- "Queen Nefertiti, Images & History" (<http://www.homestead.com/wysinger/nefertiti.htm>)



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