

# Striking Facts About Akhenaton, the Most Remarkable of The Pharaohs

Continued from Page One

He allowed himself to be represented in all manner of poses; he is perhaps the first Pharaoh of whom we have a true likeness, although his earliest pictures are of the conventional type.

On his pictorial representations, he is depicted as playing with his daughters, resting in his garden, eating a roasted pigeon, or putting his teeth into the neatly trimmed meat adhering to a large bone, which he holds in his hand. Of jewels he wore none, and as to his crown, he wore that only on state occasions.

In all of these things, unheard of in other Pharaohs, he attempted to teach naturalness. Truth, to him, was the daily facts of life.

#### Mother, Coal-black Woman

He also encouraged respect for women by setting the example. He had himself painted in many affectionate poses with his wife, the beautiful Queen Nefertiti. Although she presented him with seven daughters and he longed for a son, he did not take another wife as was the custom. He loved his family and never seemed tired of posing with its members for his artists. As to his mother, the great Queen Tiye, a coal-black woman, his affection for her stands out as one of the great examples of history.

His religion being one of happiness and joy, he loved the good things of life, the flowers, beautiful gardens, the charms of music, the tonic of a good bowl of wine or a well cooked meal. Hating cruelty, he abolished the use of the lash. The inscriptions of his time show no slaves loaded with chains.

Intoxicated with the artistic passion that burned within, his mind was ever at work. "His brain," says Weigall, "was so active that he could not submit to be idle, and even when he reclined amidst the flowers in his gardens, his whole soul was straining upwards in the attempt to pierce the barrier which lay between him and the God which caused the flower to bloom."

#### Only Fourteen when Crowned

But alas! the young Dreamer-King—he was only fourteen when he came to the throne—was to learn, like all others who try to create perfection, that mankind is not ready for it. The soldiers, who had fought under his mighty father, in Lebanon, Tyre, Sidon, and Ethiopia, conquering city after city, and returning laden with loot and wives, were chafing with inaction. The commander-in-chief of his army, the great Horemheb, was urging him to action. The people, too, wanted to see the stolen wealth from other nations flowing into the empire, as of yore.

Discontent and troubles multiplied. The priests of Amen, seeing the wealth that formerly came to them going to the worship of the new God, began to conspire against him. But Akhenaton, who up to now had been tolerant, showed the weight of his hand. He repressed them and ordered the name of Amen to be hammered out of every monument in his empire, and that of the new God inscribed in its place. He even went so far as to have it removed from the tomb of his father, and to banish the word "gods" from the vocabulary.

#### Died at Thirty-one

As to the subject nations, he endeavored to impress upon them, also, his gospel of love; but designing leaders sneered at it, threw insults at him, and rebelled. But he consistently refused to attack them, and ignored all pleas of his faithful followers to send an army to their aid. He held that these nations had been brought into his empire by force, and were now free to go or to remain, as they chose.

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As the vassal nations dropped away, so dropped away the tribute they used to bring in. Egypt, from a mighty nation, was falling to the rank of a petty state. But Akhenaton held firmly to his principles, amid all trials, till his death at the age of thirty-one.

He left his throne to his chief disciple, Smenkara, who had married his eldest daughter, but two of his sons-in-law, Horemheb, and Tut-Ankh-Amen, quickly overthrew him. They made war on the rebels, restored all the old injustices, and brought back prosperity to the nation.

As to the infuriated priests, they closed over his new religion as restrained waters over a dry river bed.

They tore down his temples, obliterated his name, and thereafter referred to him as "the criminal."

Akhenaton's conduct has been denounced as obstinate and fanatical by some historians. It was certainly an excess of zeal that caused him to enter even his father's tomb and strike the "Amen" from his name, but it was the custom of the time to disfigure the monuments of a predecessor whose teachings were considered undesirable.

#### "Most Remarkable of Pharaohs"

Several of the leading Egyptologists have spoken in highest praise of him, however. Breasted calls him "the most remarkable of the Pharaohs," with whom "there died a spirit such as the world had never seen before . . . a brave soul undauntedly facing the momentum of immemorial tradition, and thereby

stepping out from the long line of conventional and colorless Pharaohs that he might disseminate ideas far beyond and above the capacity of his age to understand . . . the modern world has yet adequately to value or even acquaint itself with this man who in an age so remote and conditions so remote became the world's first idealist."

"No such grand theology had ever before appeared in the world so far as we know," says Petrie.

Arthur Weigall says:

"When the world reverberated with the noise of war he preached the first known doctrine of peace; when the glory of martial power swelled the hearts of his subjects, he deliberately turned his back upon heroics. He was the first man to preach simplicity, honesty, frankness, and sin-

cerity, and he preached it from a throne."

"He was the first Pharaoh to be a humanitarian, the first man in whose heart there was no trace of barbarism. He has given us an example three thousand years ago that might be followed at the present day—an example of what a husband and father should be; of what an honest man should be; of what a poet should feel; of what a preacher should teach; of what a scientist should believe; of what a philosopher should think."

"Like all other great teachers, he sacrificed all to his principles and his life plainly shows, alas! the impracticability of his doctrine; yet there can be no question that his ideals will hold good 'till the swan turns black, and the crow turns white, till the hills rise up to travel, and the deeps rush into the sea."

Continued on Page Four

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