

## **Tutankhamun's Wife**

Tutankhaten and Ankhesenpaaten were married in a royal wedding and, as their first step in returning balance to Egypt, changed their names to Tutankhamun and Ankhsenamun; he was eight or nine years old at the time and she was thirteen or fourteen. In many of the depictions and descriptions of the royal couple, it clearly shows a deep affection between the two. But they only had ten years together before Tutankhamun's sudden death at the age of 19.

### **What happened to her after Tut's death?**

When Tutankhamun died, Ankhsenamun was left alone as a 21 year old royal widow. King Tut's two advisors, Horemheb and Ay, both began fighting for power, as Tutankhamun had no rightful heirs.

Horemheb, as commander-in-chief of the army, was campaigning against the Hittites in the north when Tutankhamun died and so Ay assumed the traditional role of successor in burying the dead king. For his role to be recognized, the king's widow would have to be ceremonially engaged to him for the funeral service and it seems this is what happened.

Ay and Ankhsenamun officiated at the burial of the king together, but do not seem to have been actually married. It was assumed, however, that Ay, as successor, would take Ankhsenamun for his royal bride to legitimize his rule.

Ankhsenamun, apparently wanting to avoid this marriage, reached out to an unlikely person: she wrote to the Hittite king, a ruler of a country traditionally an enemy to Egypt.

In her letter, she wrote:

*My husband has died and I have no sons. They say about you that you have many sons. You might give me one of your sons to become my husband. Never shall I pick out a subject of mine and make him my husband.*

Since no Egyptian queen had ever married an outsider, this was a bold move. After a few letters back and forth, the Hittite king agreed to send one of his sons, Zananza, to marry Ankhsenamun. But as Zananza got close to the border, he was killed. There is no concrete proof of who killed him, but many suspect general Horemheb's forces.

Shortly after this incident, Ay took the throne of Egypt, and Ankhsenamun disappeared from all historical record.