

Nefertiti and the reception history of her bust

The queen from the Amarna of the 18th dynasty was the wife of Pharaoh Akhenaton, who was responsible for numerous political and religious upheavals in the history of Egypt. Material visual evidence of her rule are, besides various, partly fragmented small sculptures, above all relief depictions, which show the royal couple in private family scenes, a novelty in the representation of rulers at the time.

In 1912, under the direction of the German archaeologists James Simon and Ludwig Borchardt (*Deutsche Orientgesellschaft*), the bust of Nefertiti was excavated in the ruins of the workshop of the sculptor Thutmose in Amarna, among other objects, which, for example, showed similar portrait works in different stages of processing.

1882 -1914 Egypt stood under the so-called protectorate of Great Britain, research trips and excavations had mostly been financed and conducted from European countries. The responsibility for the antiquities of Egypt, however, was still subordinated to the Service des *Antiquités* and thus based on French ruling (Tyldesley 2018). With the concept of *Fundteilung* (the distribution of finds; *partage*), a first paternalistic approach to a kind of protection of cultural heritage had been incorporated into the law. It said that although financiers of archaeological excavations could be compensated with ancient objects instead of money, special objects - tangible goods in the sense of unique or materially valuable - were not allowed to leave the country (Tyldesley 2018). Under the supervision of the French authorities, Nefertiti left the country unnoticed in 1913, following such an agreement.

In the following first Berlin exhibition of the bust among other artifacts in the same year, the bust was only briefly shown, fearing the reaction of the Service des Antiquités to the unique object (Tyldesley 2018). First replicas of the bust were made at about the same time for the German emperor, among others. The replicas were produced by the *Gipsformerei* (plaster mould workshop) of the *Neues Museum Berlin*, using contemporary methods and technologies. These kind of copies were sold and loaned to other cultural institutions with the nobilitating label "*Berlin Original*", yet certain copies were alienated and adapted to the aesthetic ideals of the time - for example, the originally lost left glass eye of Nefertiti was supplemented in some replicas. James Simon bequeathed the original to the Prussian state, whose property in turn passed to the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) in 1957. Adolf Hitler prevented an already promised repatriation of the bust before the Second World War; new demands for restitution of Nefertiti came up since the end of the war (Tyldesley 2018).

-Niklas Wolf