Princess Neferuptah may have been originally buried alongside her father Amenemhat III within his pyramid at Hawara, and then reburied in her own small, mudbrick pyramid about two kilometers to the southeast.

On her sarcophagus, she is described as ‘a member of the elite, great one of the hetes-scepter [a symbol of royalty], great of honor, beloved king’s daughter of his body.’ On the sarcophagus, and on three silver vessels from the tomb, her name appears in a cartouche like that of a king, and it has been suggested that, in the absence of a son, Amenemhat intended Neferuptah to rule as a female king. It seems, however, that she predeceased her father—her sister, Sobekneferu (1799–1795 BC), eventually succeeding a few years after their father’s death.

Among the items recovered from the burial was this magnificent broad collar (wesekh) that consists of three rows of blue-green feldspar and three rows of carnelian cylinder beads, separated by eight rows of small gold ring beads—all hung vertically. At the bottom is a fifteenth row of gold drops that are inlaid with carnelian, feldspar, and glass paste. The ends of the collar are formed by gold falcon-head terminals (or finials).

The matching counterpoise (mankhet) has another gold falcon’s head, above three rows of carnelian and three rows of feldspar cylinder beads, separated by seven gold bead spacers. When the collar was worn the counterpoise would lie on the back between the shoulders, balancing the weight of the collar, and keeping it in place. Similar collars used solely for funerary purposes do not often have counterpoises, for obvious reasons.

Neferuptah’s Collar

Materials: Gold, carnelian, feldspar, glass paste
Dimensions: (l) 36.8 cm (14.49”), (h) 10 cm (3.94”)
Current location: Egyptian Museum, Cairo
Original location: Pyramid of Neferuptah, Hawara-South, Faiyum (excavated by Farag and Iskander in 1956)
Dynasty: 12th, 1855–1795 BC, Middle Kingdom
 Reign: Amenemhat III (1855–1808 BC)
Owner: Princess Neferuptah, daughter of Amenemhat III
Museum entry: JE 90199
The name of Amenemhat III appears in the cartouches at the center of this pectoral, and between the cartouches he is called ‘good god, Lord of the Two Lands and Lord of all Foreign Lands.’

The king himself appears on either side in a stance familiar to anyone who has visited an ancient Egyptian temple, and which appears from the beginning of the history of Egypt. One of the king’s hands, brandishing a mace, is raised as he prepares to smite the enemies of Egypt—in this case ‘Asiatics’ from the northeastern borders of Egypt. In his other hand, he holds the hair of an unfortunate tribesman who, pathetically, defends himself with a throwing stick and a dagger. The eastern origin of the tribes is described in hieroglyphs beside the submissive figures and between the legs of the king.

In the middle of his heroic action in defending Egypt, a living ankh sign is fanning the king.

Meanwhile, the wings of the vulture goddess Nekhbet stretch protectively across the whole scene at the top, and she is identified above her wings as ‘Lady of Heaven’ and below as ‘Mistress of the Two Lands.’ The goddess clutches a combined ankh and djed symbol above the head of the king.

Shortly after the death of Amenemhat III, the Twelfth Dynasty ended and Egypt descended into a long period of disarray characterized by a very long list of kings who mostly ruled for only a few years, and who seem to have seldom had extended family connections.

By around 1650 BC, at the end of the succeeding Thirteenth Dynasty (1795–1650 BC), Egypt had broken down into smaller political units. This disunity allowed a group of foreign princes of Palestinian origin (known as the Hyksos) to carve out a large part of northern Egypt for themselves centered on the city of Avaris within the Nile Delta. Thus began the period known to historians as the Second Intermediate Period (1650–1550 BC).
The damage inflicted on the psyche of the ancient Egyptians by the presence of the Hyksos in the north of the country is not easy to overestimate, and the kings of the rump state centered on Thebes (modern Luxor) dedicated themselves to removing them, while simultaneously defending themselves from a defiant Nubian state to the south.

The Hyksos were not going to go quietly, however, as can be seen from the injuries inflicted on the mummy of King Taa of Thebes, the husband of Queen Ahhotep. The Theban king Kamose (1555–1550 BC) succeeded in pushing the Hyksos further north, but also died young, and it was left to Ahmose I (1550–1525 BC) to finally expel the Hyksos, when he was old enough to take command of the Egyptian army.

Ahmose I also regained lost territory in Nubia, thus establishing the foundations of the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BC).

An inscription at Karnak indicates that Queen Ahhotep greatly assisted her son by taking up arms herself, for which she may have been awarded this necklace of golden flies—a traditional reward for valor on the battlefield.

The wings of the flies are made from sheet gold upon which a second piece—hammered into a mold to represent the head and eyes—has been soldered. Slots were then cut along the back to represent the body of the fly. These are said to flash as the wearer moves, capturing the iridescence of the living insect.

The flies attach to the loop-in-loop chain by means of a small loop soldered between the eyes of each fly. The necklace closes by a clasp in the form of a simple hook and eye fastener.

Materials: Gold, silver, bronze
Dimensions: Chain—(l) 59 cm (23.23”), (wt) 249 g (8.78 oz); pendants—(l) 9 cm (3.54”), (w) 6.7 cm (2.64”)
Current location: Luxor Museum, Luxor
Original location: Tomb of Queen Ahhotep, Dra Abu-Naga, Thebes/Luxor (excavated by Mariette in 1859)

Dynasty: 18th, 1550–1295 BC, New Kingdom
Reign: Kings Taa (around 1560 BC), Kamose (1555–1550 BC), and Ahmose I (1550–1525 BC)
Owner: Queen Ahhotep, wife of King Taa of Thebes and mother of Ahmose I
Museum entry: JE 4694, CG 5267, Luxor J. 854