

Foremost of Noble Ladies "Hatshepsut"



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Hatshepsut (or Hatchepsut) meaning, Foremost of Noble Ladies, was the fifth pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty of Ancient Egypt. She is generally regarded by Egyptologists as one of the most successful pharaohs, reigning longer than any other woman of an indigenous Egyptian dynasty.

Hatshepsut was considered one of the greatest rulers, male or female of her time. Born during Egypt's 18th dynasty, she was able to rise from princess to queen to pharaoh. Her rise to the throne, though against ideals of the time, might have inspired others, such as Cleopatra. During this time she was able to expand trade, watch the Egyptian economy grow and improve, and build and restore temples of Egypt. Hatshepsut did this by claiming right of male, being in the image of the Sphinx. She strapped a golden beard to her chin and often dressed in male clothing.

As noted by Wells (1969), Hatshepsut, sometime before 1500 BCE, was supposedly born a beautiful child to the pharaoh Thutmose I and his queen, Amose. Although, Hatshepsut, as a girl, was not heir to the pharaoh, she held much authority as a young child. This is primarily due to the rule of her father and the high expectations, which had been set for her since birth. Being the daughter of a powerful pharaoh, Hatshepsut was given no choice of what her adulthood would consist of.

Hatshepsut had a sister, Princess Neterukheh, and two brothers, Wadjmose and Amenmose; who both died young. Hatshepsut also had a half brother who later became her husband, Thutmose II. As a child, the royal scribe taught Hatshepsut how to read and write hieroglyphics. As documented by Sadat (1987) Hatshepsut questioned her need for education since she thought she would never become

pharaoh. Hatshepsut was raised believing that all good came from the god Amon and that the trinity of power consisted of the king, queen, and Amon. Wells (1969) states that Hatshepsut was taught the importance of the Nile River as a source of goods and food to the people of Egypt and her family.

Hatshepsut acquired many titles during her rise to power. From Queen Tetisheri she received the title, "God's wife of Amon." This title was then passed to Hatshepsut's daughter, Neferure. As noted in Save-Soderbergh (1961) Hatshepsut was often dressed as a boy, who led her to be titled the "Crown Prince of Egypt." Her greatest accomplishment and title came in 1473 BCE when she crowned herself, not only queen, but also the king of Upper and Lower Egypt. Before he died, her father Thutmose I, named his son, Thutmose III, of a minor wife, heir to the throne. Since Thutmose III was still a young child, Hatshepsut believed he could not run both Upper and Lower Egypt alone, and soon crowned herself co-pharaoh. At the time Thutmose III did not seem to mind his joint reign with Hatshepsut. It was not until he grew into adulthood that Thutmose III decided he wanted full rights to the throne.

As the fifth ruler of the 18th dynasty, Hatshepsut accomplished many things in her kingdom. Although many queens had ruled before her, never had a female ruler taken on the title of king, as stated by Breasted (1909). It is believed that Hatshepsut posed as a man while out on expeditions or while visible to her kingdom. Nonetheless, Hatshepsut began a line of strong female Egyptian rulers going as far forward as Cleopatra. Montet (1964) stated the possibility that Hatshepsut staged the beginning struggles for women's rights and set the stage for many to follow her. Another accomplishment of Hatshepsut was the birth of her child, Princess Neferure. Being queen, pharaoh, and mother took much patience, talent, and devotion. Also, the fact that Hatshepsut was faced with raising a



daughter in Egypt, forced her once again with the same problems of her childhood. Still, Hatshepsut was a strong woman and accomplished much.

Having the title of God's wife of Amon, Hatshepsut was able to influence and receive the support of the priests of the temple. Hatshepsut also built a magnificent temple in Thebes, Deir el Bahri, showing she believed she was of divine birth. Hatshepsut sent many ships on voyages to bring back other country's goods. After an expedition to Punt, a crew brought back exotic goods like ivory, myrrh, wood, monkeys, and gold. Hatshepsut was able to open and increase trade expansion, keep a country at peace for the length of her rule, and begin to perfect domestic advancement. Cottrell (1960) believed Hatshepsut was loved by many due to the thousands that worked for and supported her every day of her rule. However it is not understood what happened to the powerful Hatshepsut. Some think she was either poisoned by Thutmose III or left the country.

Hatshepsut expanded territory and maintained religious, social, and political order, just as her father and husband had done. Hatshepsut's reign was similar to that of her father's. As did Thutmose I, Hatshepsut continued to expand trade and the Egyptian trade. Hatshepsut was also able to maintain the order of her father's legacy. Both were taught by the same scribe, making them of equal in education and knowledge. Their only difference was gender, something which Hatshepsut had.



Thutmose II, her husband and half brother, differed from Hatshepsut in that he centered most of his time and work on continuing the

control of the Egyptian army. Also, Thutmose II moved away from Thutmose I's strategies and looked to use his strong army as a weapon to small nation which Egypt saw as conquerable. Hand in hand, Thutmose II's military activity co-existed with Hatshepsut's expansion of the Egyptian territory. After Thutmose II's death, the crown was passed to his son of a minor wife, Thutmose III, who eventually ruled after Hatshepsut. Millmore(1998) claims Thutmose III was the Napoleon of his time. Thutmose III was able to continue the traditions of his stepmother, father, and grandfather. Though, as stated by Montet (1964) Thutmose III seemed more concerned with the popularity of his name and achievements, rather than those of all of Egypt.

Hatshepsut became the forerunner for many other rulers including Cleopatra. Cleopatra also ruled Egypt alone during the first century AD. She used similar techniques such as expanding Egypt and its trade. Both females ruled for a considerable time, although their reasons for ruling were different. Hatshepsut, as we know, ruled because it was her destiny and was what she had been taught to do. Dressing as a man, Hatshepsut tried to hide the fact that she was a woman. Cleopatra, on the other hand, dressed flamboyantly as a woman, in all the styles of the time. Plus, Cleopatra it seemed, ruled only to rule. She enjoyed the benefits of being queen and looked to her role to better herself. In addition, unlike Hatshepsut, Cleopatra relied on men for assistance during her reign.

The position of women in Egypt was a unique one. Women were allowed many of the same economic and legal rights as men. Callender (1997) stated that women's place was based primarily on society and the common custom.

Hatshepsut, queen and pharaoh during the 18th Dynasty, was able to jump these social hurdles and become an excellent ruler based on many unheard of achievements, such as trading expeditions and the construction of beautiful temples.

DEIR EL-BAHRI (MORTUARY TEMPLE OF Hatshepsut)

The mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut is one of the most dramatically situated in the world. The queen's architect, Senenmut, designed it and set it at the head of a valley overshadowed by the Peak of the Thebes, the "Lover of Silence," where lived the goddess who presided over the necropolis. A tree lined avenue

of sphinxes led up to the temple, and ramps led from terrace to terrace. The porticoes on the lowest terrace are out of proportion and coloring with the rest of the building. They were restored in 1906 to protect the celebrated reliefs depicting the transport of obelisks by barge to Karnak and the miraculous birth of Queen Hatshepsut. Reliefs on the south side of the middle terrace show the queen's expedition by way of the Red Sea to Punt, the land of incense. Along the front of the upper terrace, a line of large, gently smiling Osirid statues of the queen looked out over the valley. In the shade of the colonnade behind, brightly painted reliefs decorated the walls. Throughout the temple, statues and sphinxes of the queen proliferated. Many of them have been reconstructed, with patience and ingenuity, from the thousands of smashed fragments found by the excavators; some are now in the Cairo Museum, and others the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Lower Court



Although the majority of the scenes here have been destroyed, some do still survive - most notably a scene of Tuthmosis III dancing before the god Min, and also a scene showing the journey of two obelisks down the Nile (see were erected at the temple of Karnak).

Anubis Chapel Any scenes of Hatshepsut have been destroyed, but scenes showing Tuthmosis III still survive (he is shown worshipping Seker). The chapel also has figures of many gods - Anubis, Nekheh, Uaset, Amen-Ra, Harmachis, Osiris (but Anubis occurs the most - in one scene Hatshepsut (now erased) makes offer offerings to him).

Anubis Chapel

Birth Colonnade These scenes are a repetition of scenes carved on the walls of the temple at Karnak and show Hatshepsut's divine birth (these scenes are now much damaged,

mostly due to a vengeful Tuthmosis III, but also to Akhenaten who had the images of Amun-Re erased as part of his religious crusade).

The scenes start with Amen-Ra and an astral version of the unborn Hatshepsut, the gods decide that Queen Ahmose (wife of Tuthmosis I) would be a perfect mother for this unborn child. Once this has been decided Amun-Re comes down to Earth and enters Ahmose's chamber after assuming the form of Tuthmosis I (Amun-Re at first finds Ahmose asleep but his godly presence wakes her), using his divine breath he impregnates Ahmose. Before he leaves, Amun-Re reveals his true nature to Ahmose and then that she will give birth to a daughter who will live to rule Egypt. Amun-Re then visits the god Khnum and tells him to fashion a human body for the unborn Hatshepsut.

Punt Colonnade



These scenes show the famous expedition to Punt during Hatshepsut's reign. The story begins with the Egyptian expedition (in two boats) arriving at the mysterious land of Punt, the sailors are rowing as the boats reach their destination.

"Arriving at the goodly way into God's Land, journeying in peace to the land of Punt".

Once the Egyptians land, a force of soldiers carrying spears, axes and shields are made ready in case of attack. The Egyptians have also brought with them some items to trade (strings of beads, an axe, a dagger, some bracelets and a wooden chest. The people of Punt welcome the Egyptians warmly, the Chief of Punt - Parahu - steps forward to meet the Egyptian officer (Parahu's wife is shown behind him, many different explanations have been offered to explain her strange appearance ranging from suffering from a disease to being overweight), two sons and a servant drive along a donkey which the queen, Parahu's wife, sometimes rides.



The Upper Court

The name of Hatshepsut in this upper level has in most places been replaced by that of Tuthmosis III. The Upper Court consists of niches in the wall, in the middle is a doorway which leads to the inner sanctuary. The decoration inside consists of scenes of gods (Harmachis (there is also a limestone altar to Harmachis - any other gods near to this altar were destroyed by Akhenaten - Harmachis was as a form of the Aten) , Amun-Re, Min), once more any figures of Hatshepsut have been destroyed. There are also scenes of Tuthmosis I and Queen Senseneb (Tuthmosis I's possible mother - if he was a son of Amenhotep I) making offerings to Anubis.



The Mortuary Temple after Hatshepsut

After Hatshepsut's death, Tuthmosis III replaced her image with his own - or erased her image completely as detailed above. Akhenaten then attacked the image of Amun-Re during his religious 'crusade' against the old gods, some additions to the temple were made by Ramesses II, Merneptah inscribed his name on the walls, in the Ptolemaic Period made some repairs to the temple (and mistook the temple to be in honour of Imhotep and Amenhotep son of Hap). Finally a Christian Monastery was built upon the ruins which left little of original temple visible.



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