

The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut:
Immortalizing the Legacy of the “Mistress of the Two Lands,” King Hatshepsut

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Hatshepsut is a name that has been preserved by history, yet history has failed to accurately represent the woman as she truly lived. Hatshepsut, born a princess and descendent of Pharaoh Ahmose, founder of Ancient Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, reigned power unprecedented in Egypt's recorded history. Although her position of authority was unprecedented, Hatshepsut's reign was a continuation of the return to tradition that began under the reign of her father Thutmose I. Hatshepsut has become a symbol of feminism and has been projected as a gender defying leader, however, these assessments fail to truly represent the woman who ruled as king. Although it may seem Hatshepsut attempted to change her position by changing her gender, projecting herself as a male king allowed Hatshepsut to rule in a highly illiterate patriarchal society that recognized the king by image. The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut (Appendix A, Figure 1) stands as a physical representation of the symbolic meaning of Hatshepsut's fluid gender representation and power she exercised. Among the colonnades and porticos that adorn the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut are reminders of the power wielded by Hatshepsut as pharaoh, such as implied associations with gods and other pharaohs through depictions and titles that exalt Hatshepsut as her father's heir and rightful king, the king's military forays featured on her temple's porticos through depictions of expedition and conquest, and the evidence of the attempts of her successors to erase Hatshepsut's legacy. The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut transcends its physical representation and embodies the fiercely powerful woman who ruled Egypt as "Mistress of the Two Lands," the "Female Horus," King Hatshepsut.

The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, unique and reminiscent of Greek architecture (Appendix A, Figure 2), is a physical representation of the power Hatshepsut exercised as Pharaoh of Egypt. Edouard Naville (1895: 1-6), who excavated the temple in the late nineteenth

century, stated that what was visible at the time, astounding as it was, did not do justice to the splendor that once had been. The temple is comparable to designs made by the architect Imhotep more than a millennium earlier (Magi 1990: 70), and is comparable to the design of the Mortuary Temple of Mentuhotep II, which flanks Hatshepsut's (Bard 2007: 217). Echoing the aesthetic of Mentuhotep II perhaps allowed Hatshepsut to echo the grandiosity of previous pharaohs. The design of the temple is, however, rather unique in more than appearance and is a deviation from standard designs as most temple complexes were completely enclosed by walls, however, Hatshepsut chose to surround her temple with colonnades. This vulnerability may be an architectural representation of the fearlessness projected in depictions of Hatshepsut (Roehrig et al. 2005: 135-37). Despite its unique architecture, the temple's construction was part of a greater effort to return to traditional values and practices.

The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut was constructed during a period of a return to tradition that began with Hatshepsut's father, Thutmose I, who pursued major construction projects, such as those restoring the temples at Karnak and Abydos, following a long period neglect and a lack of royal construction (Manuelian and Loeben 1993:26). Monumental architecture commissioned by Hatshepsut, such as the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, was located throughout Egypt, Nubia, and Sinai but was concentrated around Thebes. Hatshepsut emphasized the restoration of tradition by rebuilding temples in disrepair, recalibrating the festival calendars, as well as the reinstitution of cultic and festival celebrations (Roehrig et al. 2005: 97). Hatshepsut's tombs, located at KV20 and KV42, are further evidence of the pharaoh's attempts to return to tradition as they are located in the Valley of the Kings, they traditional resting place of the Pharaohs (Booth 2009: 88, 98). Tradition was important to Hatshepsut and

her emphasis on returning to a traditional rule is reinforced through symbolism found throughout the mortuary temple; symbolism that suggest more about Hatshepsut than her adherence to tradition.

Symbolism abounds in Hatshepsut's mortuary temple; symbols that suggest Hatshepsut is had a divine right to rule. The temple is not only home to the mortuary shrine dedicated to Hatshepsut, but also includes sanctuaries dedicated to the gods Anubis, Hathor, a local incarnation of Amun, Re, and Hatshepsut's father Thutmose I. Hatshepsut honored the god Amun by placing his shrine in the central position of the temple rather than her own, as was normal for pharaohs. By including a shrine to the god Hathor, Hatshepsut symbolically revitalized the tradition of monumental architecture that began in the pyramid building era, which typically included shrines honoring Hathor (Roehrig et al. 2005: 135-37). Although the temple itself represents the authority of Hatshepsut as king and echos the power of pyramid building pharaohs that ruled many centuries before, it also contains symbolism that further reinforces the image of Hatshepsut as a powerful ruler. Throughout the temple, Hatshepsut is depicted as a king accompanied by texts that record historic events that further promote the power of Hatshepsut, such as the depiction of the ruler as a sphinx trampling her enemies. The colonnaded porticos, ramps, and terraces are reminiscent of the golden age of architecture in Ancient Egypt and its proximity to Mentuhotep II's temple allows Hatshepsut to associate with with the divinity of her predecessor (Hilliard and Wurtzel 2009: 27). Hatshepsut's temple is not only a physical representation of her association with prior pharaohs, but also with the gods.

There are many features found in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut that elicit images of Hatshepsut as a powerful king, but the divine associations inferred by the architectural layout of

the temple, and ceremonial processions that occurred within, speak volumes on the female king's authority. Hatshepsut's reign was cast in the light of legitimacy by installing the resting place for Amun's ceremonial procession within her mortuary temple (Roehrig et al. 2005: 97-147).

Although the mortuary temple was an important location for ceremonial uses by the cult of Amun, it also honored other gods. The choice to honor Amun and Re was natural for an Egyptian king, however, including Hathor and Anubis likely had a more deliberate motive. Worship of Hathor dates back to the Old Kingdom and Hathor was queen of Horus and daughter of Re. Including Hathor would have supported the propaganda of her divine conception and birth. The name of Anubis, *jnpw*, was used for the prince designated to inherit the throne. Including a shrine to Anubis further supported her claims to being her father's heir. The proximity of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple and tomb (KV20) (Appendix A, Figure 3) may also be further symbolism of her connection with the gods. Egyptian Pharaoh's tombs were not connected to their mortuary temples and the position of Hatshepsut's tomb may be further symbolism that differentiates her from her male cohorts (Roehrig et al. 2005: 135-49, 185). The actions Hatshepsut took and the ways she projected herself suggests very calculated efforts with deliberated outcomes.

Throughout the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut there are many depictions of the pharaoh and her many titles that contribute to the image she chose to project: an image of divine and masculine authority. Although contemporary researchers cannot assume Ancient Egyptians upheld similar ideas of binary gender roles, Egyptians did feminize enemies such as the Libyans, while kings, as protectors of Egypt, were depicted as hyper-masculine. Egyptians did not likely seek to be hyper-masculine as it has negative associations, for example, the god Seth is hyper-masculine but infertile while the gods Osiris and Isis have both female and male sexual traits yet

are parents to Horus (Sweeney 2011: 2). Egyptian society expected women to be the feminine counterpart to their husband's masculinity and were not expected to reign. To bypass this tradition, Hatshepsut painted herself as the "Female Horus," god and son of Osiris and Isis who was, by Egyptian tradition, reincarnated as the living king. At the beginning of her co-reign with Thutmose III, Hatshepsut used queenly titles, such as "Principle Wife" or "God's Wife" until two years into the tenure when she began to use the title "Mistress of the Two Lands" and adopted *Maatkare* as her throne name, an act unprecedented for a queen. Seven years into her co-reign, she began to use only titles reserved for kings (Booth 2009: 85-92). The king's mother was considered an earthly embodiment of Hathor and was therefore important so titles for female royalty often relayed their connection to the king, such as *hmt nswt* and *mwt nswt* for wife of the king and mother of the king respectively. The title "Great King's Wife" was common in the eighteenth dynasty, which saw an increase in female power that decreased after the fall of the Ahmoside Dynasty. Hatshepsut herself, however, used the five-fold kingly title and bore the kingly insignia (Roth 2009: 1-5). Even Hatshepsut's kingly title, translated as "Foremost Noble Woman United with Amun," served as propaganda to remind her subjects of her power and divine authority (Diamond 2020: 178). Although titles are only one method Hatshepsut used to legitimize her efforts to seize and maintain power, the various depictions of the queen are far more influential in a society that was highly illiterate.

Depictions of Hatshepsut as king were powerful propaganda found throughout the mortuary temple that contribute to the construction's physical representation of her power. Through her calculated depictions, Hatshepsut created a new pharaonic identity. Hatshepsut was not the only woman to rule Egypt, both Neferusobek and Tawosret reigned before her, however,

neither ruled as co-regnant for a living king but rather ruled after the death of the pharaoh she served as regnant for (Matić 2016: 814, 820). Within her mortuary temple, Hatshepsut's divine status is suggested by depicting her mother Ahmose being impregnated by the god Amun-Re in disguise as Thutmose I. To further establish her inherent right to rule as her father's heir, Hatshepsut depicted Thutmose I making her co-ruler while he was living (Booth 2009: 88-97). Although female pharaohs were uncommon, women were not as limited as they were in other societies and, although they are not depicted in many roles, records suggest they had a high degree of liberty (Sweeney 2011: 3,7). The gendered images of Hatshepsut serve as propaganda and show a progression in representation that began as female, became dual gendered, and finally as a male king (Hilliard and Wurtzel 2009: 27). Being depicted as a male allowed Hatshepsut to navigate the social rules that limited how she could be depicted due to social constraints placed on her gender (Matić 2016: 817-24). The depictions of Hatshepsut served to create a lens through which the king wanted to be viewed but also had a pragmatic function in Hatshepsut's society of limited literacy.

The depictions of Hatshepsut as a male king are not unusual when the standard depictions of kings at the time are scrutinized. Ancient Egyptians recognized their pharaoh from depictions based on his regalia, which would have made it necessary for Hatshepsut to be depicted in men's clothing and a false beard (Booth 2009: 92). It was normal at the time for kings to be rendered as being in the prime of their lives regardless of their true physical shape and age, such as depictions of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, her stepson and co-regnant, being very similar despite the latter being an infant at the time (Roehrig et al. 2005: 9). Being depicted as both male and female allowed Hatshepsut to symbolize the mother and father of Egypt, roles the king and

queen normally would have filled (Hilliard and Wurtzel 2009: 27). This androgynous representation was not unusual in Hatshepsut's society for many reasons. Kings were meant to represent a dual nature and women experienced gender fluidity in the funerary rites. Creator deities in the Egyptian cosmology were often hermaphroditic and described as partially male or female. Akhenaten and Nefertiti, who followed Hatshepsut, displayed nonbinary gender traits (Diamond 2020: 168). The various depictions of Hatshepsut and renderings of her many royal titles that serve to legitimize Hatshepsut's claims to be heir to her father's throne, but also document the king's military prowess and expeditions.

Porticos located within the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut provide evidence that Hatshepsut was a military leader who expanded Egypt's borders. Throughout her mortuary temple, many texts praise the female pharaoh for the fear she struck into the hearts of her enemies. There is evidence Hatshepsut organized five military expeditions into Punt and possibly another campaign into Asia. Although there is no historical evidence for war against Libya, the Libyans are among those depicted as being trampled by the Hatshepsut-sphinx on the southern wall of the Northern Lower Portico (Taterka 2017: 92-99). This stands contrary to popularized interpretations of Hatshepsut as a pacifist ruler (Taterka 2017: 91). The primary motivation for the expeditions into Punt was to acquire incense and other luxury goods for the cult of Amun-Re at Karnak (Roehrig et al. 2005: 96). It is possible, however, the expeditions into Punt took place for more calculated reasons. At the time, Thutmose III was in military training and his inclusion in the military possibly created the threat of a coup to challenge Hatshepsut's authority. An expedition into Punt would have kept the military occupied and secured Hatshepsut's position on the throne (Booth 2009: 95-96). Hatshepsut's mortuary temple contains a plethora of examples

that reinforce the idea of the woman as a mighty king to be feared and the actions of her successors stemmed from fear of the female king.

The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut serves to memorialize the reign of a powerful female who struggled to establish her right to rule and maintain that authority, however, the attempts of her stepson and his heir to alter her temple and censure the female king's legacy show the threat Hatshepsut was to the traditional patriarchy (Appendix A, Figure 4). Many historians today echo the propaganda spread by Thutmose III, that Hatshepsut was not a strong leader and she held no military campaigns (Bard 2007: 39, 211). Usurpation of monuments was common for Egyptian kings, whether to promote themselves or for *damnatio memoriae* and it is clear there were attempts to usurp Hatshepsut's mortuary temple as her cartouche is visible throughout the mortuary temple beneath ones later added (Brand 2010: 1-3). Attempts to discredit Hatshepsut and erase her name from history began nearly twenty years after her reign ended. *Damnatio memoriae* and usurpation were not the only methods attempted but rumors spread insinuating she had an inappropriate relationship with Senenmut, the likely architect of her mortuary temple; rumors that still appear in scholarly work today (Booth 2009: 92-101). Destruction of her mortuary temple and erasure of her name from history would have served to discredit the female king and may have stemmed from a need to eliminate competition. Hatshepsut was daughter of Ahmose, named from her grandfather Pharaoh Ahmose I, who ruled before Thutmose I and founded Egypt's eighteenth dynasty. Hatshepsut's daughters were more closely related to the royal dynasty than Thutmose III or his son and heir Amenhotep II. Discrediting and delegitimizing Hatshepsut's reign eliminated the competition for another successor to the throne and ensured Amenhotep II became pharaoh. This theory is supported by the fact that attempts to

destroy Hatshepsut's depictions and mortuary temple, and attempts to erase her from history ended when Amenhotep II assumed the throne (Roehrig et al. 2005: 267-81). There can be no question of whether Hatshepsut was powerful when the evidence is examined, including the attempts to usurp her mortuary temple and destroy her legacy.

The Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut was a calculated project with the intention of affirming the king's divine right to rule Egypt through its symbolic connection to pyramid building traditions of antiquity, depictions of military expansion under Hatshepsut's reign, various depictions of Hatshepsut as king along side kingly titles, architectural design that associates the king with the gods, ritual processions that occurred within the temple, and the attempts of her successors to condemn her legacy. Contemporary researchers examine Hatshepsut as a gender defying inspiration for feminist power, however, this description deceives the calculated efforts Hatshepsut took to establish her right to rule and maintain her grasp on authority and implies that ancient peoples constructed gender concepts similar to their own. Hatshepsut was depicted exactly as she wanted to be: a fierce and powerful king who had the support and authority of the gods. She was projected in the image that her people would have recognized as king, despite mass illiteracy. Hatshepsut, one of Egypt's most powerful women, reigned enough power that her memory was a threat to the long history of patriarchal power, and led her successors to attempt to discredit her tenure. Despite the efforts to censure and delegitimize her reputation and erase her name from history, Hatshepsut's power is immortalized in the stone used to construct her mortuary temple, carve her image and name, and strike fear into the hearts of her enemies and the enemies of Egypt.

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Appendix A

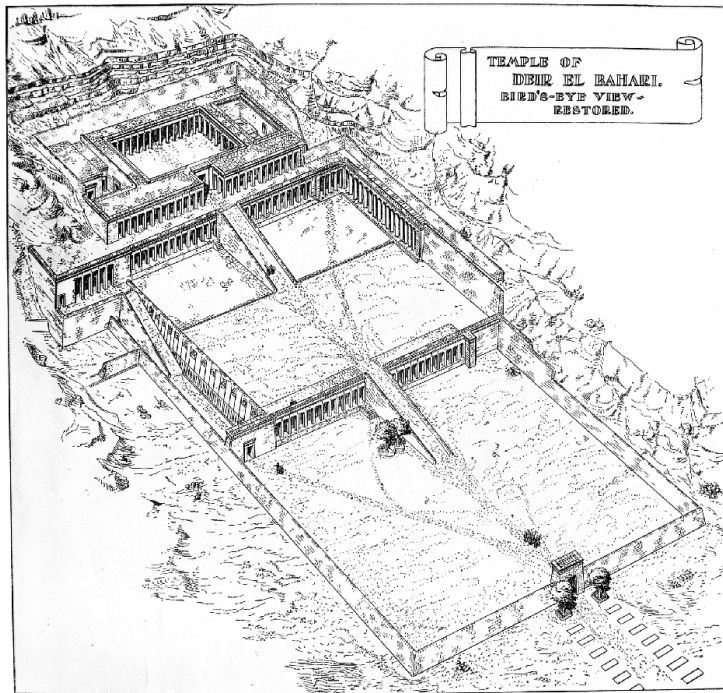


Figure 1 (top left) - A bird's-eye-view of the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut (*Birds-Eye View of Restored Temple of Deir-El-Bahari. n.d.*)

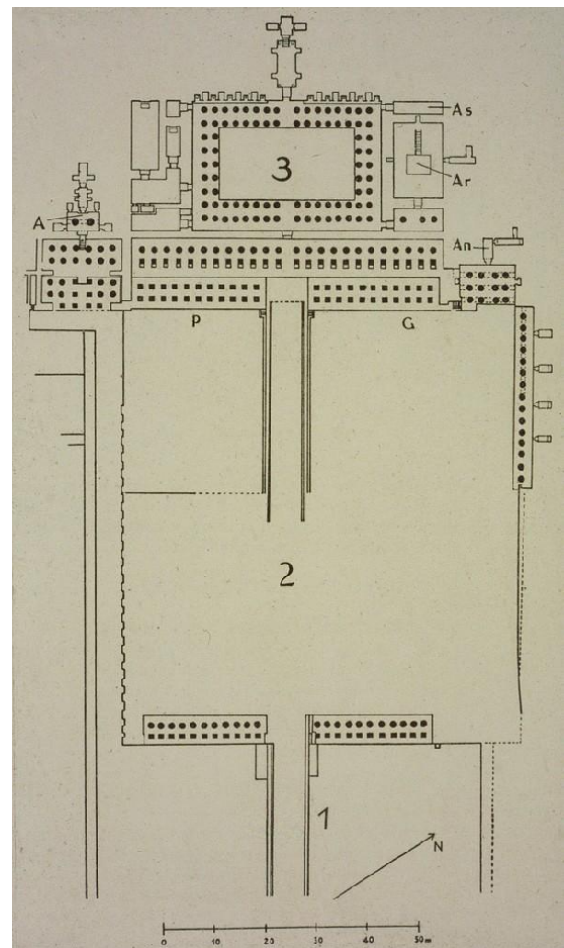


Figure 2 (bottom right) - A plan of the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut (*Deir El Bahari: Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut: Plan, 1520-1484 B.C., Dyn. XVIII. n.d.*)

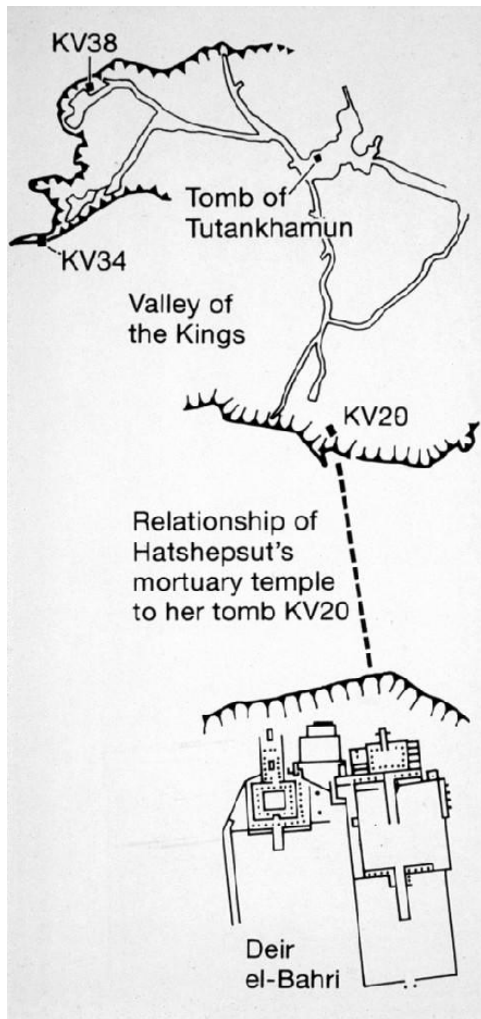


Figure 3 (top left) - A map showing the proximity of the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut to Hatshepsut's tomb (KV20) (*Deir El-Bahari. Thebes. Map- Relation of KV20 (Hatshepsut) to Deir El-Bahari. n.d.*)

Figure 4 (bottom right) - A depiction of Hatshepsut being ritually cleansed by the gods Thoth and Horus. Her image was destroyed by her successors. (*Hatshepsut Ritually Purified by Thoth and Horus. n.d.*)

