

Notes on Quiz #6: Female Pharaohs of Egypt

1. What are some of the ways Hatshepsut used imagery, titles, and other representations to establish her legitimacy?

In her regency, Hatshepsut commissioned images of herself in the traditional garb of queens and with the insignia of the God's Wife of Amun. She adopted the additional name Maatkare, signifying the pharaoh's responsibilities of *ma'at* (harmony and justice), and some images showed both kingly and queenly attributes, including one with a woman's dress and a man's long stride. During the co-reign with Thutmose III, the two were presented on some monuments as twin male rulers, with Hatshepsut shown first as the eldest, while other statues showed her in female form. In general she increased the "male" iconography over time while never hiding her female essence.

Once she asserted her preeminence a mythology of predestination was developed, citing a miraculous birth, and emphasis was placed on her royal blood deriving from Thutmose I and Ahmose (deemphasizing Thutmose II and his son, Thutmose III, whose royal blood was not at pure).

2. What happened to Hatshepsut's legacy after she died? What are the possible explanations for this?

Some time after Hatshepsut died and Thutmose III had been ruling alone, he attempted to remove her reign from history in a process called *damnatio memoriae*. Her sculptures and monuments were removed, most of them deposited in a pit, and her wall inscriptions were walled up or chiseled off.

An older theory has long held that Thutmose III did this out of personal resentment, desiring to assert his independent rule after years of being in Hatshepsut's shadow. But the reading argues against this theory, noting that many years elapsed after Hatshepsut's death before this took place; for most of Thutmose III's reign he was content to have the people and nobles remember the peace and prosperity of Hatshepsut's rule. The timing therefore suggests that the concern was over Thutmose III's imminent succession: inherently conservative, the Egyptians were uncomfortable with the innovation of female succession after thousands of years of male rule, and wanted to remove the precedent of Hatshepsut's rule in order to prevent a recurrence of succession by a strong, well-blooded princess or queen.

EC1. All of the following are true of Hatshepsut and her co-ruler Thutmose III... EXCEPT:

- (a) They sponsored an expedition to Punt to obtain exotic materials
- (b) They ruled jointly together for about 15 years
- (c) On some monuments they are depicted as twin male rulers
- ✓ (d) They were half-siblings [*Thutmose III was her nephew*]

EC2. What are the main reasons why Hatshepsut was accepted as a "female king" and was able to rule for so long?

There are several possible reasons for this. The most important one may be that Hatshepsut was royal on both sides, and Thutmose II and Thutmose III were not. Also, Thutmose II's death left an infant on the throne; Hatshepsut's time as a princess and her royal blood made her the obvious candidate for regency, and during her regency she showed herself to be strong and capable as a leader, preparing the way for her to claim full kingship alongside her nephew.

Other factors include the fact that in some ways Egypt was more gender-egalitarian than other ancient societies, and in the New Kingdom women in the imperial family were more active and visible than ever; so visible involvement in royal affairs by a princess. Finally, like any pharaoh Hatshepsut showed her suitability through just rule, manifesting the nurturing of the gods through the ensuring of *ma'at*, peace, and prosperity.