Spring 5-2021

Female Pharaohs and Divine Advocacy

Stephanie Jost
Lindenwood University

FEMALE PHARAOHS AND DIVINE ADVOCACY

by

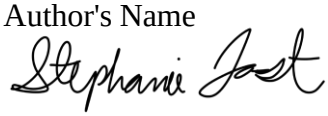
Stephanie Marie Jost

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts in

Art History and Visual Culture
at

Lindenwood University

Stephanie Jost	5/7/21
Author's Name	Date



Author's Signature

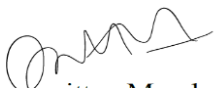
James Hutson	5/7/21
Committee Chair	Date

Committee Chair Signature

Sarah Cantor	5/11/21
Committee Member	Date

Committee Member Signature

Jeanette Nicewinter	5/11/21
Committee Member	Date



FEMALE PHAROAHS AND DIVINE ADVOCACY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Arts, Media, and Communications
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master in Art History
at
Lindenwood University

By

Stephanie Jost

Saint Charles, Missouri

May, 2021

Abstract

Female Pharaohs and Divine Advocacy

Stephanie Jost, Masters of Art History, 2021

Thesis Directed by: Dr. James Hutson, PhD

This analysis is addressing a form of divine advocacy by looking at the role of the goddess Hathor in the political/religious context of Egypt. Traditionally, pharaohs have used Hathor in Egyptian canonical imagery to convey messages of power- reiterating their own role as the incarnation of the God Horus. Here, we will focus on the role of traditional role of Hathor juxtaposing Royal Women in power during the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom. The two female pharaohs, Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut, used their traditional roles as incarnations of Hathor to establish a power base before becoming a "female Horus". An iconographic analysis of the religious reveals the reasons why Hatshepsut and Sobekneferu were required to change their female imagery to a male oriented image while maintaining their traditional roles of protectors of the divine kingship of incarnations of Hathor.

Dedication

A dream cannot be achieved without a family. Thank you to my family, blood or not. The greatest respect and thanks to my committee, who have been with me through it all.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In Ancient Egypt, women held more power than their ancient contemporary counterparts, such as Ancient Greece or Republican Period Rome. Egypt's culture and religion created a different socio-political environment. Understanding Egyptian art requires questioning the way the artistic style was created. Pharaohs were one of the main patrons of artistic development and concepts. At least two women came to power as female Pharaohs, namely Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut, leaving behind dual-gendered iconography that is explored with the methodologies of formalistic, semiotics, and cross culture. These female pharaohs adopted imagery related to the goddess Hathor. Hathor was a gender fluid deity described as two thirds male and one third female.[1] Permeating all levels of Egyptian society— a power behind the throne that gave women the right to rule in a society that functioned as a religious-nation in coalition with a state-nation. The cultural framing of Hathor's polysemic nature grounds her as a nonphysical authority that female rulers could use to sanctify their own authority over the Egyptian empire at various times and, thus, become rulers in their own right in the patriarchal parameters of Egyptian culture.[2]

The Pharaohs of Egypt expressed their power on earth and in the afterlife through religious artistic creations. Symbolism is prevalent in Egyptian society. The Egyptians had a pictorial fixed language, and each sign could have multiple meanings, but it was the sign itself

[1] Gary Robins "Gender and Sexuality," in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. Melinda K. Hartwig (United Kingdom: Wiley, 2014), 130.

[2] Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 106.

that was inspired by a real object. In Egyptian Hieroglyphs, gods and goddesses, everyday people, and extremities became silent images and were translated into a spoken language.[3] To the Ancient Egyptians, language and order held a religious context based on their mythology. In Egyptian Mythology of the first things that happened after creation out of the primordial waters of chaos was the gods and goddesses who then created the Ancient Egyptian people.[4] The depictions of such scenes and the work of an artist was, therefore, tied to a religious function often commissioned by the highest personages in the land of Pharaohs. Their work took on a double standard: to create a work of art while appeasing Egyptian traditional rules of art and pleasing the respective pharaoh, the gods, and personal use for others.[5]

The Egyptians used a whole host of gods in imagery in their everyday objects from offerings to mirrors. From these everyday objects, a common pattern emerged in mirrors, jewelry, and architecture. [6] Many of these images featured the goddess Hathor in their designs, not just for aesthetics but also for protection, as a way to invoke of aspects of the goddess in everyday life. (Figure 1,2,3) She was a very significant deity as one of Egypt's highest goddesses because she was the representative of the divine feminine. Her significance rises and falls with different dynasties, used for political powers, and shifted in mythology in accordance with different dynasties and popularity.

---

[3]Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture,* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 9.

[4]Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt,* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2010), 15.

[5] Dimitri Laboury, "Portrait Versus Ideal Image," *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2010. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9370v0rz, 3-4.

[6] Richard Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, (New York: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1994), 20, 32, 42-41.

The changes in art reflected the wellbeing of the Egyptian state and religious functions. According to Egyptian mythology, the world began in a watery abyss. These two elements exemplify two anxieties of Egypt: darkness and primordial water. These dual elements were lifegiving and volatile- synonymous in outlining the rise and fall of the Egyptian state. The creation legend highlights four pillars of Egyptian society and kingship. Emerging from the waters were the first gods who brought order, writing, creativity, and divine kingship, with arguably the greatest being divine kingship.[7]

A common pattern in the religion of Ancient Egypt is the symbolic relationship between a female mother goddess and an encompassing father deity. Hathor was Ancient Egypt's most enduring goddess, on par and coalescing with other sects belonging to Isis, Mut, and many others. Observations of her semiotic affiliations with other deities were complicated. Influenced by era, literature, cultural context, the common people, and religiously and politically astute—Hathor was the feminine exaltation of universal authority and wealth.

The relationship between Hathor and the ruling body of Egypt is a critical point of study. By leaning more about the religious relationship between the Gods of Ancient Egypt and the duties of the Pharaoh, there is a way to examine the actions of rulers and their later or current efforts to build their own form of artistic propaganda. The country was established as an absolute monarchy, with kings called Pharaohs as the apexes of political-religious power. Transitions of this power often are uncertain, and steps were often taken to preserve the lineages of the ruling class and Egypt itself. Therefore, it was instrumental that Egyptian culture required a clear system to legitimize sovereignty of rule.[8] Royal Women functioned in important roles in royal

[7] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, xxxiii.

[8] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, 25.

life by supporting the Pharaoh's legitimacy in the roles of wife, sister, daughter, or mother and mirroring a goddess's protection.

Introduction to Egyptian Culture & the Middle Kingdom (2010-1630 BCE)

The periods of focus are the culture and role of royal women in the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. Focusing on these two eras flush out the political landscape that allowed the two female Pharaohs, Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut, to succeed to power. Their images they produced of themselves reflect their relationship with the dynastic religious/ political background of their era's. Sobekneferu was the last ruler of the Middle Kingdom, a time where the entire political structure of Egypt was being reworked after the fall of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period.

Administrations and government of the early Middle Kingdom was decentralized with two main hubs of power located in Abydos and Thebes and the Memphis Fayum region.[9] Immigrants living in areas in the Near East were settling in Egypt in notable quantities and were enough to make an impact on populations and were caused to speculate its connection to the later Intermediate Period and foreign rule. Royal power and influence were questionable, with governors attaining grander tombs and titular authority. The number of officials in the Middle Kingdom progressed, reaching its apex in the latter 13th century, the largest collection of scarabs naming titles of officials can be dated to this period.[10]

---

[9]Wolfram Grajetzki, "Late Middle Kingdom," Willeke Wendrich (ed.), (*UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles. 2013), 1.

[10] Grajetzki, "Late Middle Kingdom," 3.

Pharaoh Senwosret III ruled during the middle of the Middle Kingdom era (1887-1848 BCE). Cultural and political changes during this period were well documented.[11] Royal figures were no longer shown in idealized, youthful form. Instead, the statues of elites portrayed faces weathered with age, imposing, and realistic. (Figure 9) Both men and women were presented as such, becoming one of the most notable genres of art in Egyptian history.[12]

In the Egyptian tradition, there were several positions in the royal family that were synonymous with religious roles. A Pharaoh or "King" was at the pinnacle of this theocratic society with a polytheistic religion as its foundation. Other roles in royal life were gendered and predetermined by birth or marriage. A "King" needed a "Queen" for the power and protection of his land. A coinciding trend with women in power was that they used former power bases and predisposed roles as emulations of Hathor, using a similar religious base to transpose themselves into Horus and "King". Egypt was a patriarchal society. Government was run by male courtiers and a few women, although they held legal liberties unknown to their contemporaries in the Ancient world, they were still expected to be passive to their husbands' directives.[13] The legal liberties of women and royal women fluctuated through the different periods, making it possible to track their periods of influence.

Egypt was divided into three different periods of political prosperity called "Kingdoms." Each was followed by an Intermediary Period that was a period of civil unrest and decline. The Kingdom that emerged after an Intermediary Period was a revitalized entity in their political and religious composition. The Old Kingdom was an era that relied on divine authority and where the

[11]Wolfram Grajetzk, 3.

[12] Grajetzki, "Late Middle Kingdom," 3.

[13] Tyldesley, 45.

"cult of kings" was established, from this template the other pharaohs of the preceding dynasties would emulate to create the notion of a continuous pharaoh.[14]

The previous Old Kingdom declined; the era that followed was called the First Intermediary period. Over the span of over one hundred years, Ancient Egypt underwent changes in its artistic direction and canonical imagery. The first pharaoh to wrest control over the regions of Egypt was a Theban king named Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II (2055-2004 BCE).[15] As the founder of the Middle Kingdom, he consolidated power in Egypt, and during his reign, he set off a resurgence of all artistic genres.[16]

Pharaoh Mentuhotep II (Mentuhotep Nebhepetre) (2010-1960 BCE) was the credited founder of Dynasty 11. After the First Intermediary period, the lineage of the last pharaohs of the Old Kingdom are unknown. Mentuhotep was known to have ruled the region surrounding the city of Thebes, making him a ruler, but one that may not have had any royal blood.[17] What little information we have points to him uniting Egypt after several civil wars. Accumulating in the assimilation of the Heraklepolis region, its leader, Merykara, was the governor of the Northern region of Egypt. After this victory, the new Pharaoh, Mentuhotep II, sought to legitimize his rule in a way that harkened back to the Old Kingdom, over one hundred years prior.[18] This demonstrated the stability in his rule and complied with the laws of Ma'at. By accomplishing a set of propaganda projects reflecting actions he undertook in his reign, he demonstrated

---

[14] Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (United Kingdom, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 11-12.

[15] Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*,11-12.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient*, 138.

[18] Ibid, 139.

unwavering legitimacy. As pharaoh, he moved the capital to Thebes in Upper Egypt. [19] The goddess Hathor played an integral part of his propaganda plan.[20]

Menutuhotep II was a Middle Kingdom pharaoh who needed to consolidate his power after reunifying Egypt. He was one of the first Pharaohs who chose to identify himself as a "Harsomtus, the son of Hathor, and the goddess is shown suckling the king," using this connection with Hathor to legitimize his claim.[21] Wall reliefs from his mortuary temple show Hathor as a form of advocacy. By associating himself with Hathor, Menuatuhotep II was giving himself legitimacy to rule the dominion over all of Egypt.[22] Menutuhotep II also sought a physical association with Hathor, perhaps married to or having a "special relationship" with almost eight women who held the title of Priestess of Hathor. Intriguingly, Hatshepsut, a female pharaoh, who ruled in Dynasty Eighteen (1473-1458 BCE) of the New Kingdom, drew a line of legitimacy to Menutuhotep II, building her own mortuary temple in nearly the exact style as his at Dier-el-Bahari right next to his. He, like other kings, made political statements of stability and power using the goddess and the women of his family as a supporting component.[23]

The last ruler of the turbulent 12th dynasty was the Pharaoh Sobekneferu (or Neferusobek), an uncommon woman in ability and notoriety. She was one of the few female Pharaohs of Egypt to be mentioned in official documents in later time periods by chroniclers (The Turin Canon).[24] Little else is known about this remarkable woman who took power only for

---

[19] Ibid, 141.

[20] Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor Women in Ancient Egypt*, 27.

[21] Carolyn Graves-Brown, 135.

[22] Graves-Brown, 152.

[23] Graves-Brown, 152.

[24] Wolfram Grajetzki, 3

three years, ten months, and twenty-four days (according to the papyrus). The Dynasty following her (the 13th dynasty) holds a reputation for a 150-year period with roughly 50 rulers.[25] At least four of the rulers from this era were given the name Sobekhotep. Either referencing the Egyptian god, Sobek, or perhaps taking legitimacy from the Pharaonic dynastic lineage connecting directly to Sobekneferu— an interesting collation can be made between these later rulers and the queen who marked the end of a dynasty and period of stability.[26] She was the first woman to be called a female Pharaoh, a position that marked her change from representative of the goddess Hathor (as queen) to incarnation of the god Horus. This is exemplified in the recently discovered statue of her, which is now at the Boston Fine Art Museum. The combination of Hathoric and Pharonic style in this statue lays the ground for a solid claim to this theory. Sobekneferu was the first woman to successfully transition from the role of queen and incarnation of Hathor to the role of Pharaoh and the incarnation of Horus.

Literature Review

Exploring Hathor's role in Ancient Egypt requires the evaluation of previous scholarship and the changing of perceptions of Egyptian culture. For the purpose of this thesis will only cover the time periods of the Old, Middle, and early New Kingdom. During these periods of prosperity in Ancient Egypt the social/ religious foundation was turned over to create a slightly different society. Hathor fluctuated as a source of divine legitimacy. The role of Royal Women functioning as incarnation of Hathor gave a few women a power base to become a Female

[25] Wolfram Grajetzki, 3
.

[26] Wolfram Grajetzki, 3.

Pharaoh- in this case Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut. This argument is built off previous scholarship stretching far back to another century and with far more theories.

An example is a previous theory called their Heiress Theory. This theory claims that the throne would pass through the female line. Through the matrilineal line, it was theorized that the highest-ranking female— with that closest relation to the previous pharaoh as a daughter or sister— was to be married to the future pharaoh. This theory is considered debunked since the 1950s.[27] However, it is a curious thought. Royal women were considered important once they were depicted alongside a royal male relative. Other theories about the role of Hathor in conjunction with royal women's roles require reevaluation on Hathor's origins and the reasons why she was considered important in different dynasties. Yet, it was the Dynasties after the female Pharaoh Hatshepsut that there are a number of Pharaohs marrying royal women.[28]

Renewed interest created in a new avenue for scholars to reevaluate royal women's roles and the role of the female Pharaoh's.[29] An example of past evaluations from previous methodologies is from Kurt Sethe, an influential German Egyptologist. In 1896, Sethe conducted a scrupulous study of cartouches from Dynasty Eighteen with the assumption that the defacement of monuments came from personal hatred and dynastic power struggles.[30] This theory was based on the known history coming from Roman sources and the well-known Ptolemaic Dynasty, which was marked by constant infighting and power struggles. This examination was out of context for the time period and was flawed. However, the results of

---

[27] Graves- Brown, 134

[28] Graves-Brown, 138.

[29] Peter F. Dorman, "Hatshepsut: Wicked Stepmother of Joan of Arc?" *The Oriental Institute News and Notes,* no. 168 (2001): 1.

[30] Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut, (*London: Penguin Books, 1998), 78.

Sethe's comprehensive study of cartouches were later revaluated. Present-day scholar, Joyce Tyldesley, clarifies the reexamination of Sethe's work in her book, *Hatchepsut* when she states "and on the erroneous assumption the defaced cartouches must have been re-carved by the monarch whose name replaced the original."[31] The chronological conclusions from Sethe's study are listed below, noted from Tyldesley's book, *Hatchepsut*:[32]

1. Tuthmosis. Deposed by-
2. Tuthmosis III
3. Hatchepsut and Tuthmosis III co-regents, Hatchepsut the senior king. Hatchepsut deposed by-
4. Tuthmosis III
5. Tuthmosis II and Thuthmosis I co-regents until Hatchepsut's death
6. Tuthmosis II. Reigning until his death
7. Tuthmosis III and Hatchepsut co-regents until Hatchepsut's death
8. Tuthmosis III

This confusing timeline, developed by the destruction and rewriting of pharaonic names, was accepted by scholars as viable evidence of a family power struggle, something familiar to the classical stories of infighting from the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The mystifying succession of names gave birth to the myth of the female Pharaohs, like Hatshepsut, as the "wicked stepmother." This was the popular and fantastical theory that held on into the 1960s.[33]

From an objective point of view, this timeline could have both confused and ignited the public imagination of that time. In looking at the list, the first thing that stands out is family conflict, which is an idea that possibly paralleled with the famous Ptolemaic Dynasty and its famous Queen Cleopatra, who killed her own brothers and sisters to hold onto power.[34] This idea

[31] Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut,* (London: Penguin Books, 1998),78

[32] Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut,* 78.

[33] Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut,* 78.

[34] Tyldesley, 78-79.

permeated Sethe's extensive work and was further flawed by his use of a single source: the cartouches

His theory immediately attracted opponents. Around that time, a fellow Egyptologist from Switzerland, Édouard Naville, challenged Sethe on the conclusions of his study, and the debate continued between the two until Sethe's theory was renounced by a streamlined eighteenth dynastic succession developed by Herbert Winlock and Eduard Meyer in the 1930s.[35] Drawing a clear success between Thutmose I, Thutmose II, to Thutmose III, Hatshepsut was inserted at the beginning of Thutmose II's rule. The newly developed line of succession brokered against any theory of dynastic struggle between the Thutmoses', theorized by noted scholars during the early 1900s.[36] However, by that time, Hatshepsut's character as the "evil stepmother" was cemented into public and scholarly opinion. Combined with the clear evidence of systematic attack on her monument, the stigma against her lingered for decades.[37]

The evidence currently available about these attacks were under revision for over fifty years. As a symbol of female Pharaonic power, her scholarly interpretations as a "wicked stepmother" were challenged by Egyptologist Charles F. Nims in 1966, concluding that acts of defacement, believed to have been applied by Thutmose III, took place around twenty years after Hatshepsuts' death, in the year 42 of Thutmose III's reign, calling the common myth into question.[38]

---

[35] Tyldesley, 79.

[36] Tyldesley,79.

[37] Tyldesley, 80.

[38] Ann Macy Roth, "Erasing a Reign," in *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh,* ed. Catharine H Roehring, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 280-281.

Interest in the topic revitalized scholarship that amalgamated past conclusions with new discoveries, not only about Hatshepsut but also about female pharaohs, female power, and the roles of goddess's in Egypt. The questioning of female pharaohs' power and imagery is further annotated in the works by Carolyn Graves-Brown and prompted by the added scholarship of Egyptologists William A. Ward (1986) and S. Allam (1963). Igniting interest in the scholarly community, asking what was the realistic perceptions of women in power in Egypt? Charles F. Nims' article rejects the theory of Hatshepsut as a usurper to Thutmose III, disputing the previous arguments for the theory supported by works by scholars Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaoh's* (1961), John A. Wilson, *Signs and Wonders Upon the Pharaohs* (1964), and in Hayes's *Cambridge Ancient History.*[39]

After this discovery, scholarship pertaining to female authority and the contrasts of Female Pharoahs and Queens in Egyptian culture still did not become a primary focus until the 1980s.[40] Noted by the author Silke Roth, female Kings and Queens were considered by some scholars to be separate studies all together.[41] Noted by scholar Silke Roth, elite women and Queens from the Old Kingdom were noted to have various titles that corelated themselves to the goddess Hathor.[42] In imagery, the Queen, "chief wife" of the pharaoh, would play a ceremonial role, vis-a-vis the pharaoh before the deity they conjointly addressed. The role of Pharaoh itself was a gendered position. They were considered the incarnation of the God Horus and women

[39] Nim's, Charles F, "The Date of The Dishonoring of Hatshepsut", *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 93, 1-2: 1966 doi:https://doi.org/10.1524/zaes.1966.93.12.97, 97.

[40] Silke Roth, "Queen," ed. Elizabeth Frood, Willeke Wendrich, (*UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology,* 2009), 8.

[41] Silke Roth, "Queen." 8.

[42] Roth, "Queen," 6.

who took on the role depicted themselves as a combination of male and female physiognomy, choosing to depict themselves independently before a deity or (as the was the case with Hatshepsut and her stepson) be shown in conjunction with a co-ruler.[43] The contrast between these two positions should be noted as different fields; however, the transition of power from Hathor to Horus must be made in order for women to successful hold onto power and it must be in the right time and era.

The study of female authority in relation to Hathor is one of the most recent studies to have taken place in the twentieth century. *Dancing for Hathor,* by Carolyn Graves-Brown, offers a new perspective of how women of all classes held more authority in Egyptian society than previously thought. The proposal is continuing off her main body of work and focusing on the iconographic evidence. The two female pharaohs, Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut, held the title of "Queen" before coming to the throne as a "King". As previously mentioned, the titular of "Queen" meant "chief wife". The title and role had no association, religious or political, with the title of "King." Becoming "King" required both women to metamorphoses from their previous incarnations and roles in symbolic unification with Hathor as "Queens" into female pharaohs or "Kings," the incarnation of Horus. The use of this role they both Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut previously held was the first step for their rise to power.

The differences and requirement for royal women to hold power as female pharaohs is further discussed in Egyptologist Kara Cooney's books; *The Woman Who Would Be King: Hatshepsut's Rise to Power in Ancient Egypt,* and *When Women Ruled the World.* Her work on analyzing Hatshepsut is one of the most recent comprehensive additions to Egyptology on the

[43] Roth, "Queen," 6.

reign of Hatshepsut. In *The Woman Who Would Be King,* Cooney compiles an impressive array of detailed sources to craft a bibliography of Hatshepsut's life and reign. Her second book explores the religious-political infrastructure that surrounds six female rulers in Egypt from the first to last Dynasty. In this book, we have one of the first attempted biographical summaries of the lesser well know female pharaoh Sobekneferu. She was the only woman, up until that time, to be included among the Saqqara Kings List. A feat that Hatshepsut, despite her long and successful reign, was never allowed the honor of being included.[44] *When Women Ruled the World* in 2018 is a comprehensive collection of six female rulers of Egypt by, Kara Cooney. In her work, she explores the ideological and modern assumptions of women in power in comparison with ancient counterparts. Drawing on her previous work, *The Woman Who Would Be King* in 2014, Cooney examines the success, downfalls, and plausible motivations behind each women's political, religious and economic actions.

The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt, by Toby Wilkinson, published in 2010, is a recent comprehensive analysis of Egypt's long history. From beliefs, art, political structure and culture, he connects all his opinions and ideas around a cornerstone referred to as "Pharaonic Civilization". Wilkinson notes that "writings and kingship were the twin cornerstones of pharaonic civilization; the defining characteristics that set it apart from other cultures."[45] These "twins" are a planetary relationship between Egyptian art and political culture. Each has its own gravity and weight, pushing and pulling, creating influence on one another and creating seasons of change in times of destruction and abundance. When one fell, the other was not far behind,

[44] Margaret Bunson, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, (New York, NY, Facts on File, 2002*)*, 138.

[45] Toby Wilkinson, xxxiii.

amalgamating in these twin planets of knowledges, being absorbed into the dust of Egypt's deserts.

Methodology: Iconography & Gender

Building on the recent theories and new discoveries, I propose that it was the iconography and role as incarnations of Hathor that allowed the royal women to successfully rise to power as female pharaohs. They, like male pharaohs, would use the divine role to reinforce their power. Sobekneferu's newly discovered statue with the "Hathor like" headdress, iconography similar to Queen Nofret. provides a clue not only for the role of female pharaoh that Sobekneferu took but also the path of power that Hatshepsut would later undertake At the beginning of Dynasty Eighteen, "Archaism, the emulation or imitation of works from earlier periods, was an important component of ancient Egypt's conservative culture, particularly at the beginning of a new dynasty," and can but used to ichnographically identify legitimizing factors in works of Egyptian art.[46]

Iconography is a subset of semiotics the focus of this paper, and it will be from the perspective of iconographic analysis. That is attempting to understand the symbolic meaning of images in the culture they originated from. While some formalistic interpretation will be alongside my interpretations of iconographic analysis, it will not be enough to dedicate its own section because they are so closely intertwined. The use of formalistic analysis will be using in

---

[46] Edna R. Russman,"The Rise of The Eighteenth Dynasty and the Thutmoside Style in Sculpture and Relief," in *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*, edited by C. H. Roehrig (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2005), 23.

the analysis of facial features of pharaohs. However, features of pharaohs are often idealized to portray an idea, association, or political/ religious message, hence- they cannot be called true formalistic "portraits." Gender analysis is from a cross- cultural perspective pertaining only to the role royal women have in what is called "The Cult of Kings," where women play an active role as a semi-divine being alongside the Pharaoh, a "man" considered to be the incarnation of the god Horus.[47]

There were nine forms of symbolism in Egyptian Art. There was: form, locations, size (isocephalic equality), material, color, number, hieroglyph, actions, and gestures (actions demonstrating respect).[48] Using these forms of observation, the imagery of Hathor can be conceptualized into the lives of two female ruler's, Sobekneferu, and Hatshepsut; the symbolic associations of Hathor with these women will be explored through her association with the pharaohs in positions of transitional power.

Hathor's semiotic affiliations with other deities are complex. Influenced by era, literature, cultural-context, common people, and religious/political astute, Hathor was the feminine exaltation of universal authority and wealth in the Egyptian Pantheon. Using the formalistic elements in Egyptian art to outline the protocol of imagery within royal religious imagery as my base of study, I examine the perspective from an iconographic relationship. Hathor's role in Egyptian society is reflected symbolically in all eras, impelling female rulers to take the same symbolic role that she held, becoming the embodiment of the concepts she personified. The paper draws on evidence set in religious imagery and culture, to provide the evidence that the

[47] Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut,* 10.

[48] Richard Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, 212.

feminine cosmic was an established form of power that royal women could draw from to legitimize their rule.

Drawing on clues set in the iconography of the Ancient Egyptian religion, roles for women were structured in art. There were ideals and symbolic elements, such as stature or gestures, headdresses, and ornamentation. The focus on royal women allows us to look at the idealization of women in the role of queen, contrasting the new idealism that was created by female pharaohs. The key points from these iconographic analysis exposes the pitfalls and triumphs of a collaboration of images Hatshepsut and Sobekneferu used to declare a power base. The evidence from this analysis is that the feminine cosmic was an established form of power that royal women could draw from to legitimize their rule.

Royal women were not only adornments or minor political players. They were strategic parts of the cult of Kings. They provided a form of authority on their own, reinforcing bloodlines and representing the role of Hathor in the Egyptian pantheon alongside the living embodiment of Horus, the pharaoh. The role their gender played cannot be explored in modern feminism for the simple reason that it is not applicable.

Deconstructing the feminism of these women is complex as we have no personal accounts of their lives. The terms and methods of feminism are a modern construct, so imposing them on past civilizations does not make sense for the content of this thesis. Correlating the images left behind from their reigns leaves equivocal evidence to culturally research this material with known evidence and images. Examining a credendum using the relief carvings and surviving statues of two of the most influential women to rule Egypt, Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut, one can see the continued apex of feminine power from Hatshepsut. Looking at the relationship between imagery through the context and symbiosis of Hathor's polysemic nature

and how Female Rulers used these religious connections in temple imagery to exploit her nonphysical authority.

Discussion: Introduction to the Goddess Hathor

The Egyptians used a whole host of gods in imagery in their everyday objects from offerings to mirrors. From these everyday objects, a common pattern emerged in mirrors, jewelry, and architecture. These images were of Hathor. She was one of Egypt's highest goddesses because she was the representative of the divine feminine. She had more temples built for her than any other goddess. Her significance rises and falls with different dynasties, and more importantly, her image was used for political purposes and shifted in mythology in accordance with different dynasties, used for various factions. The imagery of Hathor shifted in mythology in accordance with popularity. [49]

A common pattern in the cultic religion of Ancient Egypt is the symbolic relationship between a female mother goddess and an encompassing father deity. Hathor was Ancient Egypt's most enduring goddess, on par and coalescing with other sects belonging to Isis, Mut, and many others. Observations of her semiotic affiliations with other deities were complicated. Influenced by era, literature, cultural context, the common people, and religiously and politically astute, Hathor was the feminine exaltation of universal authority and wealth. [50]

---

[49] Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt, (*London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 139.

[50] Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt*, 139.

Present theories on Hathor's origins date to the predynastic periods.[51] From this point, scholars have been delving into a complicated figure complex with multiple iconographic and semiotic meanings. In her visceral form, she is an imposing image as a bovine figure referred to as the "Divine Cow." Many depictions of her in the Middle and New Kingdom show her as a provider of divine milk and protection for a ruler.[52] Many pharaohs, including the famous female ruler Hatshepsut, used this symbolic connection to affirm their own divine status.[53]

The Egyptian Patheon of Gods was also formed in a hierarchy with a King of the gods (usually Amun-Re) at its apex. This trickled down into a family structure with "father, "mother," and "son" triads. Hathor was represented as the mother goddess in many of these triads.[54] Her association with these other goddesses often relates to the concept itself of Egyptian nationality and the divine nature of Kings from the earliest days of Ancient Egypt.

In 1992, Fekri Hassan argued that a goddess in cow form (possibly Hathor) was a Predynastic idea going back to 7000 BCE.[55] The evidence could be supported by the 1947 writings of Elise Baumgartel, when she cited cow figures in pottery and researched 'cow amulets'.[56] The idea of a Predynastic goddess is argued by Graves-Brown to be widespread across Egyptology. While this may be the case, its previous assumptions about goddess roles in ancient societies are still under revision. The key link of a goddess patronage and continued

---

[51] Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt*, 139.

[52] Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt*, 140.

[53] Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt,* 14.

[54] Richard H Wilkinson, "Anthropomorphic Deities," Jacco Dieleman and Willeke Wendrich (eds.), (*UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles. 2008), 5.

[55] Graves-Brown, 14.

[56] Ibid.

survival in a society is perpetuated by an economy that would support it. This perspective is also shared by Hassan (1998), who looks at the desert of Egypt, a base desolate place that would need life to sustain it. Fertility cults were common in Egypt, and water, milk, and the fertility of women for procreation (and as mothers) would be seen as necessary for survival.[57]

Symbolically, the cow and other bovine goddess existed alongside Hathor. There are a few Predynastic depiction of bovine heads attributed to a singular goddess and another with stars and a bovine head symbol that is theorized to be a sky goddess reflected in ceremonial objects. [58] An example would be the *Gerza Pallete*, (Figure 4) from the Naqada II period (3650-3500 BCE).[59] The makeup palette is adorned with stars and a bovine head symbol that is theorized to be a sky goddess reflected in ceremonial objects.[60] Egyptian Old Kingdom Religious texts glean some clues; a collection of religious texts called the *Pyramid Texts* were used in royal burial practices on tombs and sarcophagi "describe a celestial goddess as the 'Great Wild Cow' who dwells in Nekheb." [61] Some of the earliest examples we have of the goddess Hathor in Pharaonic imagery are from the Fourth Dynasty, represented in a series of triads depicting King Menkaure with Hathor and another bovine goddess, Bat, in human form. Bat was a minor goddess, representing the seventh nome (territory) of Egypt. [62] Her facial characteristics were later combined into the Hathoric imagery in the form of sistrum, (an instrument used in temple ritual

---

[57] Graves-Brown, 14.

[58] Ibid., 15.

[59] Graves-Brown, Carolyn, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt.(* London: Bloomsbury, 2010).no page number. Also, why is this a the long citation?

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

and ceremony) and Hathoric columns (columns with the iconographic images of Hathor's face carved at the top) .[63] Another theory proposed by Zahi Hawass in *Silent Images: Women of Pharonic Egypt*, draws attention to the hieroglyphic form of Hathor's name.[64] Represented by a falcon surrounded by a square, representative of a palace, the name of Hathor *hwt-hre* means "house of Horus."[65] Hawass' theory closely relates Hathor to Horus, claiming that "she must have originally been a personification of the shrine which protected the falcon-god. As the king was a manifestation on earth of Horus, so the queen was intimately associated with Hathor."[66] Hathor is then the symbolic form of protection for the pharaoh himself.

Hathor's role as a wife (to Horus) associates her with the prestige of the royal family. Egyptian religion was polytheistic, meaning there were hundreds of deities, each with their own function and place in the world. Hathor's role to Horus reflected the Queen's role to Pharaohs. Pharaohs, or Kings, were the living embodiment of the spirt of Horus. This established a ruler's dual divine nature, and Hathor's association with the royal women became of particular importance due to her nature as a protector goddess.[67]

Hathor's power was concentrated on her symbolic relations with Horus and her father, Ra. Her symbolic association with both Uraeus and the crown of Egypt became apparent with the depictions of Hathor and symbolic references by Hatshepsut in her Temple of Deir el Bahari. Her

---

[63] Maria Carmela Betro, *Hieroglyphics: The Writings of Ancient Egypt*,(New York: Abbeville Press Publishers,1995), 204.

[64] Zahi Hawass, *Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, (New York, NY: Harry N. Adrams Inc, 2000), 164.

[65] Maria Carmela Betro, *Hieroglyphics: The Writings of Ancient Egypt*, 74.

[66] Hawass, *Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 164.

[67] Graves-Brown, 167

more common symbolic qualities come from the crown of horns atop her head with the sun cradled between them. This is the most universal symbol for Hathor and was often used as a symbol on its own.[68] Images of Isis could also be depicted with this same imagery as in *The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*.[69] Hathor's headdress as an image was therefore a conveyor of power, possibly one that is older than the goddess Isis.

Exploring Hathor permeates the rich symbolic nature that was evident in Egyptian life.[70] Hathor's very name means "Residence of Horus." The spelling of her name is unusual because it does not contain any "feminine semantic value." [71] The iconic imagery of Hathor's name in square with a falcon inside, and another smaller square in a corner.[72] The square surrounding the falcon is a shrine and the iconography of this name may be shifted to reflect other aspects of Hathor. A cobra in the center of square with the falcon changes the name to "Mistress of Turquoise."[73] As a "House of Horus" directly implies that Hathor is a protector or symbolic guardian of his temple. Temples where considered places for the Egyptians that transcended time and space.[74] If this is the case, then it is through her that female authority could be used in the male sphere of influence.

---

[68] Bernard V. Bothmer, "Notes on The Mycerinus Triad," in *Egyptian Art: Selected Writings of Bernard V. Bothmer*, edited by Madeleine E. Cody, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14.

[69] Mariam Ayad, *Gods Wife, God's Servant*, (New York: Touteladge, 2009), 45.

[70] Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt*, 140.

[71] Orly Goldwasser, "Canaanites Reading Hieroglyphs: Horus is Hathor? -The Invention of the Alphabet in Sinai," *Agypten and Levant/ Egypt and the Levant*, Vol 16, (2006), 124.

[72] Orly Goldwasser, "Canaanites Reading Hieroglyphs: Horus is Hathor? -The Invention of the Alphabet in Sinai," *Agypten and Levant/ Egypt and the Levant*, Vol 16, (2006), 124.

[73] Goldwasser, "Canaanites Reading Hieroglyphs: Horus is Hathor? -The Invention of the Alphabet in Sinai," 126.

[74]RichardWilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddess's of Ancient Egypt*, 140.

As a woman, she is dressed in a tight dress with her most common headdress, two bull horns enclosing a sun disk on two sides. Her anthropomorphic image shows a woman with elongated cow-like ears. This image would change over eras with the image of Hathor's ears showing various degrees of alterations based on the style of the time and architectural necessity (Hathoric columns).[75] Later on, her role would interchange from a daughter to wife of Ra or later Amun-Ra with regularity. These theories come from conflicting mythologies and religious literature from different periods.[76]

Hathor was a universal deity. Exploring this concept helps to understand her, not just as a central figure, but as the possible all-encompassing mother of Egypt. Hathor has many incarnations from a goddess of the afterlife, to one of song and dance, protections, and she is shown as a listener to both the living and the dead.[77] That divides her influence to three realms: the living, the dead, and more interesting, the outside world, arguably the same functions as a temple. [78] She was revered at sites considered sacred to her: Dendera, Deir el- Bahari, Memphis, and other sites. Significantly, her incarnation as the Seven Hathors' are deities enabling her to see across time.[79]

Egyptians had numerous gods and the aspects of individual gods were often merged with other gods (that were gaining popularity) or were meant to take on multiple. Hathor, in iconography, was often confused with other goddesses; the most popular one was Isis. Isis would

---

[75] Geraldine Pinch, "Offerings to Hathor." *Folklore* 93, no. 2 (1982): 139.

[76] Pinch, "Offerings to Hathor." 140.

[77] Graves-Brown, 167.

[78] Graves-Brown, 166.

[79] Graves-Brown, 167

be shown on occasion with the ram and sun headdress associated with Hathor with only the name to differentiate the two. Titular terms and epithets were also traded between deities, giving fluidity not only between the two goddesses mentioned before but applicable to all the Egyptian Pantheon with similar roles.[80] These similarities make the identification of some deities difficult because their identities cannot be assigned purely to a single iconographic representation or an anthropomorphic image.

The Egyptian Patheon of Gods was also formed in a hierarchy with a King of the gods (usually Amun-Re) at its apex. This trickled down into a family structure with "father, "mother," and "son" triads. Hathor was represented as the mother goddess in many of these triads.[81] Her association with these other goddesses often relates to the concept itself of Egyptian nationality and the divine nature of Kings from the earliest days of Ancient Egypt. A commonly held theory portrays her as a minor goddess during the Old Kingdom, but she is later elevated to the top of the Ancient Egyptian pantheon alongside Horus and various interpretations of the god Amun, Re, Amun- Re, Atum ect.[82] Horus' name, along with her associations with other celestial deities, permeates her divine nature.

Some scholars accept that Hathor was a pinnacle deity dating to the beginning of the history of Egypt. It can be agreed that the ruling theory on her role in Egyptian kingship was her pivotal connection to the ruling king as both mother and wife.[83] As the king's mother and wife, the woman who held that title would, in essence, become an incarnation of Hathor herself. The

[80] Richard H. Wilkinson, "Anthropomorphic Deities, 5.

[81] Richard H. Wilkinson, "Anthropomorphic Deities, 5.

[82] Graves-Brown,140-141.

[83] Peter Jánosi, "Montuhotep- Nebtawyre and Amenemhat I: Observations on the Early Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt," (*Metropolitan Museum Journal Vol* 45 2010), 12.

Royal women who attained such titles had a path to power that other women did not have access to.

Discussion: Hathor in Ancient Egyptian Art

The concepts and principles upon which Egyptian art was built stretches as far back as its first dynasty. From the *Palette of Narmer* to the end of the Egyptian empire, a horned goddess has repetitively been represented in iconography. (Figure 5) Egyptian art had a well-established canonical system of art. The afore mentioned goddess would become one of the tools of pharaonic power that would be appropriated by female pharaohs in their own constructed legitimacy. This system that the Egyptians developed represented a universal code of ethics and representation that was then able to be carried out in a systematic fashion. Religious views were promoted through pictorial representations, using a grid system as the basis for images drawn, painted, carved into an image, or plastered onto walls.[84] The purpose of this examination is to look into the reshaping of the Egyptian code of ethics and pharaonic power.

The pharaoh in this work was Narmer, the first pharaoh who united upper and lower Egypt. To understand the iconography used later with the female pharaoh's Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut, it is important to see the symbolism previously establish that they would later use in their own reigns. The importance of Hathor here is to show how far back her influence was in the Cult of Kings. By establishing it in the very first Dynasty, the belief that Hathor was a conveyor of divine authority was critical.

One of the first examples of a Hathor-like figure in iconography is the *Narmer Palatte.* (Figure 5) This is a ceremonial item from Hierakonpolis; at the upper left and right corners are two frontal composite bovine figures that can be interpreted as the Goddesses' Bat or Hathor.

[84]Toby Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt,* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 6.

One of the first examples we have of a bovine goddess directly aligned with the divine monarchy of Egypt.

Focusing on the frontal portion of the palette is the belt that Pharaoh Narmer wears. A close examination of the belt reveals four bovine heads that could be interpreted as further authority and symbols of protection. The number four is significant in Egyptian art. It is perhaps the most repeated ritual number, symbolizing completeness, the cardinal points, and used in temple rituals to ensure protection. Words and images are even repeated in a ceremonial setting such as a Pharaohs' coronations and jubilees where "words were recited four times."[85] The symbolic bovine heads with human features could be identified as the Goddess Bat. She is a female protective deity whose bovine head was assumed into the inventory of iconographic symbolism for Hathor.[86] Bat was later supplanted by Hathor in popularity. In the region of Hu, Hathor replaced Bat as a local deity. The symbolism of both are bovine mother figures. Bat's name means "soul" in the feminine form, called the 'great wild cow,' though even this would later be attributed to Hathor. The duality of both Bat and Hathor can be interpreted with dual representations and power. In *The Pyramid Texts*, Utterance 506 (§1095), "the King identifies himself with 'Bat with her two faces'."[87] While Utterance 335 (§546) says that the pharaoh as a part of his journey to the afterlife has, "his apron on him like Hathor."[88] This utterance has led

[85] Richard Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art,* 134.

[86] Toby Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt.* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 244.

[87] Toby Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt.* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2002) 245, quoted in Samuel A. B. Mercer (trans), *The Pyramid Texts,* (United Kingdom: Longmans, Green, 1952), 1588

[88] Samuel A. B. Mercer, Trans, *The Pyramid Texts*, (United Kingdom: Longmans, Green, 1952), 1588.

several scholars (including Lana Troy, 1986) to believe that the emblems on Narmer's belt are clear iconographic image of Hathor.[89]

Narmer was recorded as the founding pharaoh of the first dynasty uniting the Kingdom in 2950 BCE. This system of dynasties that we use today was first developed by an ancient Egyptian historian and priest, Manetho.[90] Narmer most likely commissioned this palette and placed it inside of a shrine in the ancient city of Hierakonpolis (modern day Kom el-Ahmar); this shrine had been dedicated to the reverence of Egyptian kingship god worshipped at this location was the Falcon God Nekhan Horus.[91] The *Narmer Palette* displays the pharaoh as a god-like figure with divine authority over his enemies. Every image would have been carefully picked and carved with canonically images. Trade and exchange of ideas of authority are present in the back of the palette with a pair of Mesopotamian "leopards with serpentine necks" called "serpopards."[92] This is debatably the earliest image of pharaoh authority and the creation of the nation state of Egypt.[93] Hathor would become one of the principle communications of divine authority in this vast empire.

Some of the finest examples of Hathor in her human form are from the royal workshops of the Old Kingdom. Identified by name as Hathor, her imagery underwent an evolution in the progression of the Ancient Egyptian religion, monarchy, and artistry. The set of canonical images were established by the time of the *Palette of Narmer*. The more formalistic images of

---

[89] Toby Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 245.

[90] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egyp*t, 26.

[91] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, 6.

[92] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, 28.

[93] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, 28.

Hathor in human form were depicted in the Mycerinus Triads (portraying the Pharaoh Menkaura) from the Old Kingdom. (Figure 6)[94] Formalistic is another term used in scholarship to convey ideas of idealism. Idealism is a concept that juxtaposes metaphysical "reality," within the Egyptian context. [95] It is argued by scholars, most recently Dimitry Laboury, that the philosophy and thinking of Egypt must be applied to iconography and semiotic interpretations. The Mycerinus Triads either come from one or two different workshops, depending on varying theories.[96] The workshop's significance speaks to the artists and or the master leading the workshop in relation to the Mycerinus Triads' consistent physiognomy, natural and facial models' relation to the pharaoh depicted, [97] Consistency in facial features extend to the Nome images of Menkaura and Hathor. These triads come from Dynasty 4. It was around this period where we have the first formal mention of Hathor's name.[98]

Menakaura most likely commissioned this statue. It was carved in greywacke, a sturdy tough stone, requiring great experience and skill to carve with accuracy. All three figures are carved with ideal, youthful bodies. The emphasis is~~n~~ on the subtleties in the statue of the pharaoh and the figure of Hathor on his right. He is shown in detail as an ideal young man with his body striding forward; unusually, the figure of Hathor also is depicted striding forward, slightly behind the pharaoh almost as if she is flanking him. The clues to significance of the formation of this

[94] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, xiv.

[95] Dimitri Laboury, "Portrait Versus Ideal Image," *IN UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology,* edited by Wendrich Willeke, Jacob Dieleman, Elizabeth Frood, John Baines, Los Angeles: 2010. 82,83.

[96] Wendy Wood, "A Reconstruction of the Triads of King Mycerinus," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 60 (1974): 82-93, accessed October 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/3856174. 87; Dimitri Laboury, "Portrait versus Ideal Image," 5

[97]Dimitri Laboury, 5.

[98]Graves-Brown, 16.

triad may lie in the Egyptian tradition of numbers equating to spiritual meaning.[99] In the Egyptian Hieroglyphic language, the later scripts had three pictorial representations of orthographic strokes to indicate plurality of a subject.[100] The meaning of three to the Ancient Egyptian mind could connotate plurality in a singular format. Three could be seen as the representative of a "one." An example would be the Egyptian creation story "the primordial god Atum gave birth to Shu and Tefnut 'when he was one and became three;'" triads of a divine nature could also connotate a family, the familiar father, mother and son (Osiris, Isis, and Horus).[101] Hathor in this example draws upon the role of a mother figure.[102] Menakaura is drawing divinity in his own image by intertwining himself with the figures and the divine authority of Hathor. Further exemplifying this argument is the sheer amount of sculpture of similarly categorized figures from his mortuary temple. There are theoretically no less than eight triad statues that were uncovered by Professor G. A. Reisner.[103]

This sculpture differs from the *Palette of Narmer* in its function, and it is similar as an example of iconographic evolution. The symbolism for the "Hathor-like" figures has adapted to the later Old Kingdom era. By comparing the *Palette of Narmer* to the Mycenean triad, we can note the stark transition of Canonical images from the Dynasty 1 to the Dynasty 4. Both works of art are made of the same medium greywacke. This is significant because of the region it comes from which is sacred to Hathor or possibly Dendera. Also, its religious qualities add to its

[99] Richard Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, 131.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Richard Wilkinson,. *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, 132.

[102]Richard Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, 132.

[103] Wendy Wood. "A Reconstruction of the Triads of King Mycerinus," 9.

significance. Here, Hathor is shown in relation with the Pharaoh as a companion and a source of divine authority.[104] We know for sure that the colors green and black not only connotate fertility and then richness of the earth but also to the God Osiris of the underworld.

Both works are examples of the influence of the female goddess in a protective role in the Cult of Kings alongside the pharaoh. Female members of the royal family would be seen as incarnation of the goddess Hathor; therefore, these women were able to shift their role from protector to legitimate ruler. It was Hathor's divine authority that was able to bring legitimacy to a Pharaoh's reign and, thus, she was a form of divine authority that female pharaohs would later use.

One of Hathor's' many titles refers to her as "Lady of the West." This title reflects this as well as her place in the afterlife. The King and people looked to Hathor for guidance, seeking protection during the daily life and the afterlife. Her festivals are marked in wall reliefs with jubilant celebrations, worshiping her aspects of drunkenness and dancing. On the counterbalance, she could change at a given moment and become a goddess of destruction and capable of scouring the whole of Egypt.[105] During the day, she was associated with multiple aspects of sexuality, childbirth, and protection. As a guardian of the afterlife, she would be evoked to conduct the soul safely through the afterlife.

Carried over from ancient times, Hathor at the end of the Old Kingdom is shown as a large woman with the headdress with two bovine horns with the disc of Ra between it. This image would become the accepted norm of Hathor throughout the rest of Egypt. However, with all Egyptian symbolism, the iconography can be switched unless designated by name; it can be

---

[104] Wood, 87.

[105] Pinch, "Offerings to Hathor,"139.

difficult to know which goddess is which. Isis, for example, was sometimes depicted with the horns of Hathor, and we can see them again in Hatshepsut's Mortuary temple later in Dynasty Eighteen and in reliefs showing the cobra with the symbolic horns of Hathor on top of it.

Discussion – Female Pharaohs

For the purpose of this paper the discussion of female power and rulership begins in the Middle Kingdom with the first woman to take the title of female pharaoh, Sobeckneferu (or Neferusobek) to the great Female Pharaoh of the later New Kingdom, Hatshepsut. Beginning with the influence of the period between the Twelfth and Thirteenth dynasties of Ancient Egypt, Pharaoh Senusret III ruled during the mid-point of the Middle Kingdom (1887-1848 BCE). Cultural and political changes during this period were well documented.[106] Royal figures were no longer shown in idealized youthful form in the middle and later periods of the Middle Kingdom. Instead, the statues of elites portrayed faces weathered with age, and realistic features. Both men and sometimes women were presented as such, becoming one of the most notable genres of art in Egyptian history.[107] The later New Kingdom style of sculpture and art would return to an idealistic form, but they took elements from the Middle Kingdom, incorporating the ideology and a political structure that would influence the administration of female Pharaohs Hatshepsut and Sobekneferu.

---

[106]Wolfram Grajetzki, "Late Middle Kingdom," Willeke Wendrich (ed.), (*UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology,* Los Angeles. 2013), 3.

[107] Grajetzki, "Late Middle Kingdom," 3.

The Middle Kingdom government and its administrators was decentralized with two main hubs of power located one in Abydos and another in the Memphis Fayum region[108]. The founder of the Middle Kingdom, Pharoah Monuhotep and his descendants, united Egypt and the imagery of the later Amenemhet III and Senwosret III would become two of the most debated cases of royal portraiture to date.[109] Their facial features display a proud weathered face with large ears and an body that was iconographic idealistic. These Pharaohs also wore an enigmatic necklace that would later be worn by imagery by Sobekneferu and (debatably) Hatshepsut. Sobekneferu used this precedence of power and imagery as an iconographic base for her own imagery. The most recently discovered statue of Sobekneferu presents the same facial ideology that will be discussed later.

The last ruler of the turbulent Twelfth Dynasty was he female Pharaoh Sobekneferu, an uncommon woman in ability and notoriety. She was one of the few female queens of Egypt to be mentioned in official documents in later time periods by chroniclers (The Turin Canon). Little else is known about this remarkable woman who took power only for three years, ten months, and twenty-four days (according to the papyrus). The Dynasty following her (Dynasty 13) holds a reputation for a 150-year period with roughly 50 rulers.[110] At least four of the rulers from this era were given the name Sobekhotep. Either referencing the Egyptian god, Sobek, or perhaps attempting to take on legitimacy from the Pharaohs of Dynasty Twelve linked to its final pharaoh

[108] Grajetzki,1.

[109] Laboury, "Portrait Versus Ideal Image," 5.

[110] Grajetzki, 3.

Sobekneferu. This is an interesting collation between these later rulers, Dynasty 13 rulers, and the female pharaoh who marked the end of a dynasty and period of stability.[111]

There is very little evidence of Sobekneferu's rule but the changes she made in Pharaonic titular tradition and imagery was a cornerstone of power. Sobekneferu began a transfer of power between epithets, a practice which Hatshepsut later emulates. Mutually, they both chose to be called by several unique female epithets of power and the exclusively male *nb irt-ht* (Lord of doing things).[112] Hatshepsut, in theory, could have known of her existence or was influenced by her father Thutmose III, predecessors Senusret III and Menutuhotep II to form an iconographic image of herself would be apparent in what little imagery we have and from the titles both female pharaohs chose to utilize. They both used form of male pharaonic symbolism to transfer their power from the female deity of Hathor to the masculine Horus (or in Hatshepsut's case Amun). Completing this transfer of power and position of "King" to "Queen" is examined from a cross cultural perspective and has been explored in scholarships through the lens of pharaonic tradition.

In the Egyptian tradition, there were several positions in the royal family that were synonymous with religious roles. A Pharaoh or "King" was at the pinnacle of this theocratic society with a polytheistic religion as its foundation. Other roles in royal life were gendered and predetermined by birth or marriage. A "King" needed a "Queen" for the power and protection of his land. A coinciding trend with women in power was that they used former power bases and predisposed roles as emulations of Hathor, using a similar religious base to transpose themselves into Horus and "King". Sobekneferu, Hatshepsut, and Nefertiti are three women who used the

---

[111] Grajetzki, 3.

[112] Graves-Brown, 145.

religious culture of Egypt to hold onto power. The greatest of these "Kings" was Hatshepsut. She is curious because she can be represented as the stereotypical western ideology of a woman who takes power, and that is the role of an "evil stepmother." Her imagery also caused confusion to scholars who first discovered her due to her male iconography as a pharaoh.

As the years passed, theories around Hatshepsut and her role as a usurper continued to press on. While questions were raised, different theories proliferated in the field of Egyptology. The known pilloried facts precluded a further examination of how her reign could have been skewed by modern 19th and 20th century perceptions of ancient female rulers.[113] Hatshepsut's female gender is the cause for a myriad of questions concerning her legitimacy as a pharaoh since Egypt was a patriarchal society. Government was run by male courtiers and women, although the women held legal liberties unknown to their contemporaries in the Ancient world – they were expected to be passive to their husbands' directives.[114]

How then did she employ the options available to her in her position as a former queen and Wife of Amun to successfully ruling Egypt as Pharaoh, "King"? 'In the Eighteenth century there was a new wave of religious adoration. Amun (or Amun-Ra) was King of the gods in the Egyptian pantheon, considered a state god along with Khonsu the moon god, and his mother, Mut. The temple and worship of Amun dominated all levels of society. Both institutions, of monarchy and religion, were indubitably intertwined as the key holders of wealth and power. A part of the temple's many functions was to support the Pharaoh, and then have that support

[113] Ibid.

[114] Tyldesley, 45.

reciprocated.[115] A context to successfully explore this topic lays within the religious and political culture of Ancient Egypt itself:

> Imagery of Hathor in association with royal women is the main topic of focus for this argument. During the Middle Kingdom the role of 'Priestess of Hathor' had all but disappeared. The role royal women played in the "Cult of Kings" was directly associated with Hathor was directly int this era. Taking examples of political clout using Hathor as a form of legitimacy. Exploring the titular semiotic evidence alongside the cross cultural/ political era, objects and statues from a similar time period. The line between royal authority from Hathor to Horus can be seen in Sobekneferu by in the using the evidence from her predecessors.[116]

The role of the female pharaoh was established in this period. Sobekneferu began to change the system of pharaonic power by using newly formed titulars to establish herself as a female ruler. These changes in doctrine were essential because they could have been grounds for legitimacy that Hatshepsut would later draw from. What was important was that this restructuring of imagery and epithets was done in such a way it would be acceptable to the religious and ruling class.

Analysis: Hathor & Sobekneferu

The Female Pharaoh Sobekneferu was the granddaughter of Senwosret III, daughter of Amenemhet III, and possible co-ruler with her father and later the wife of her brother Amenemhet IV.[117] Her grandfather, Senwosret III, was the warrior pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom, crowned as the leader of the Golden Age of that dynasty. In the Middle Kingdom, there was a long-standing legacy of the main ruling pharaoh taking an heir and anointing him as

---

[115] Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, 224-226.

[116] Robyn A. Gillam, "Priestess of Hathor: Their Function, Decline and Disappearance." *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 32* (1995), 216-217

[117] Bunson, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 46.

a co-ruler, effectively staving off any questions of legitimacy or negating harem politics. [118] The Middle Kingdom also saw the decline of the role of Priestess of Hathor until the ideological role of Hathor was exclusively predicated to women of the royal family. This is the crux of the theory of the role of Hathor being a steppingstone for legitimacy first used by Pharaohs and a reasonable way for royal women to come to power, validated by the iconography of a limited control group.[119]

Some evidence has shown that Sobekneferu's father, Amenemhet III, took her as his co-ruler before he passed. Whether or not this is propaganda is uncertain— what is known, is that temple historians recorded her name in both the Turin canon and the Saqqara Kings List, two important documents recording the long tradition of a divine unbroken line of Kings.[120] She only ruled for four years, so it is contestable if she was popular, or her reign was too short for it to become contested, or even if she may have been killed. In contrast to this achievement, the future female pharaoh Hatshepsut was struck off this list; however, she achieved more in her twenty-year reign. Sobekneferu herself is not without her own mysteries. Very few statues of her survive, and her reign is listed on the Kings List, as lasting only four years. [121] As a female pharaoh, her legitimacy may have been in question; however, the steps she took were in the tradition of Middle Kingdom Pharaonic legitimacy. Sobekneferu not only may have served as a co-ruler to her father but used a religious context that had never been seen in history to cement her very short reign.

---

[118] Bunson, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. 129.

[119] Graves- Brown, 27.

[120] Bunson, 380.

[121] Graves Brown, 145.

This reign was marked the creation of imagery for a female pharaoh. What statues we have left perhaps give us a few clues to her methods and techniques she implemented to mark her legitimacy. Her name means "Beauty of Sobek;" Sobek was a Nile god sacred to the Memphite-Fayum region the seat of royal authority and the site of the pyramids of this dynasty where constructed. One of the key records surviving from that time periods record the water levels at Semna, eluding to a chance of high floods that may have caused crop failure or famine.[122] The pharaoh was meant to be the central intercessor to the gods maintaining cosmic order called *ma'at*.

There was a belief in ritual order, "a concept called "*ma'at"* meaning "truth," "order," or "justice" was simply the way things were meant to function when a good king was in power, making effective, well-reasoned, fair decisions, everyone knew their place, how to behave, and what was expected of them."[123] A Pharaoh would receive this divine status at his coronation.[124] His actions and adherence to the system of *ma'at* would determine if his rule was divinely sanctioned or condemned. If a Pharaoh performed his duties flawlessly and appeased the gods (his/her divine father), then Egypt would prosper. Despite this, Sobekneferu needed to show herself in pharaonic iconography, transcending to the place as the incarnation of the God Horus. Her statue in the Louvre Museum (Figure 7) is one of the most (and only) compelling examples of how she tried to achieve this amalgamation.

---

[122] Barbra Bell, "Climate and the History of Egypt: The Middle Kingdom," *American Journal of Archaeology* 79, no. 3 (1975) accessed November 14, 2020 doi:10.2307/50348, 260; Wolfram Grajetzki, "Late Middle Kingdom," 229.

[123] Cooney, *The Woman Who Would Be King,* (London: Oneworld Publications), 2015, 16-17.

[124] Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut*, 134.

This statue only displays the torso of the female Pharaoh Sobekneferu. Her title is carved into the King's kilt that she wears over her iconic feminine dress. Her Horus name is inscribed along with her epithet "Mistress of the South and North." Tapering at the waist widens into feminine hips and chest, displaying breasts. Her head is covered with the traditional nemes headdress of worn by the pharaoh. This red sandstone statue was most likely brightly polychromed. There was a total of three statues of Sobekneferu that originated in the Fayum region. [125] It is a stunning creation and one can imagine that that figure must have been impressive but elusive. It was not a breaking of iconographic tradition but an amalgamation of ideals, that Sobekneferu was experimenting with.

The artistic aesthetic of the Middle Kingdom that Sobekneferu drew from resulted in some interesting interpretations and ways for power to be portrayed in pharaonic statuary. However, a statue may seem to be carved with religious context in mind the political symbol that it imposed was just as important. Monuments were used to proclaim a pharaoh's deeds and reinforced their political decisions to the "elite" and, in a roundabout way, to the public. Large royal statues of pharaohs where more commonly placed flanking the entrances to a palace or a sacred space (such as a temple).[126] One of the best examples of change in statuary is in the Statue of Senwosret III. An older, hardened face with puffed eyebrows and a straight firm mouth surrounded by high sunken cheek bones with wide ears in the signature face of Senwosret. Yet, his body is depicted as youthful with a greater attention to musculature than seen before possibly

[125] Joyce Tyldesley, "Queens of the Middle Kingdom and the Hidden Queens, *"Ancient Egypt Magazine, vol 15 (4)* 201, 51.

[126] Adela Oppenheim, Dieter Arnold, Dorothea Arnold, Kei Yamamoto, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom* (United Kingdom, London: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 69.

alluding to the idealism of the used by Middle Kingdom rulers inspired by fourth Dynasty pharaoh Menkaure.

Her grandfather, Senwosret, known for his own imagery, can also be identified with a unique ornament in the form a dual pendant necklace with tubular beads. The Sobekneferu statue at the Louve displays this same pendant displaying a unique iconographic alignment with her lineage. This type of pendant is also present on the many statues of her father Amenhotep III and Senwosret II (Figure 8,9), but research surrounding these pendants have been inconclusive.

Legitimacy was the key way for rulers to hold onto power; Sobekneferu was not an exception. The lineage and traditions developed during the Middle Kingdom shaped her own use of imagery. In the Middle Kingdom, the title of Priestess of Hathor was being reserved exclusively to the royal family to further the pharaonic power. In the role of Hathor, royal women associated themselves with the goddess, representing stability, fertility, and pharaohs' power.[127]

Hathor is referred to as the most important deity of the eleventh dynasty, becoming appoint of legitimacy for Pharaoh's who would come to power with questionable legitimacy.[128] The pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom (2055- 1650) gave their daughters names and titles to evoke this mystical connection to Hathor. An important by part of this connection in the Middle Kingdom was related directly to the "great wife" or Queens. They began to wear their hair in a style known today as "Hathor Curls." Before this period, Hathor was shown ichnographically with a wig but not one that had had curls at the end of it. During this time, the goddess bat was

[127] Graves- Brown, 27.

[128] Peter Jánosi, "Montuhotep- Nebtawyre and Amenemhat I: Observations on the Early Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt," 10.

incorporated with Hathor creating a new iconography for the goddess. [129] These "Hathoric Curls" would feature heavily in the newly discovered statue of Sobekneferu.

At the end of the Middle Kingdom it was the power of the first female pharaoh Sobekneferu who rose from that role, creating herself the title of the "female Horus" for the first time in Egyptian History. The artistic development from Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom also reflected the changing views that created space for women to theoretically take the mantel of pharaoh. The title of the Priestess of Hathor "ḥmt ntr (meaning 'servant of the gods or more loosely, 'priestess') was a common title for elite women in the Old Kingdom. The title was often used for Princesses in the Old Kingdom or of women of the court.[130] As Egypt fell into the First Intermediate Period, the role of 'Priestess of Hathor' would continue with women from various social backgrounds taking the title. This position would involve a paid stipend for the women of the cult, and, often, it was not an inherited title, making this position of women in the priesthood a unique part of Egyptian culture. By allowing women to play a very active independent role in the Ancient Egyptian religion, they had a great amount of influence in temple life, sometimes serving administrative roles to the cult of Hathor.[131] The aftermath of the First Intermediate Period nearly dissolved the position and the role of women the priesthood (especially common women).[132]

During the reign of Mentuhotep II and the latter Middle Kingdom, the records show the dissolving of Priestess of Hathor. Instead, their roles would be taken by men. Women who

---

[129] Hélène Bouillon, " A New Perspective on So- Called "Hathoric Curles," (*Ägypten Und Levante / Egypt and the Levant* 24, 2014), 209-210.

[130] Graves-Brown, 25.

[131] Graves-Brown, 26.

[132]Graves-Brown, 25.

continued to hold this title were exclusively royal women. Mentuhotep II married several women with the title of Priestess of Hathor to add legitimacy to his reign. Royal women would be tied closely to the religious association and their roles thus associated with the cult of kingship. Mentuhotep II used the religious ties to Hathor in the cult of kingship to bring legitimacy, as is found in the reliefs in his mortuary temple.

The image of Mentuhotep II is in a raised relief painting created for his mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri, a site said to be sacred to Hathor and the place that Hatshepsut, the later female Pharaoh from Dynasty Eighteen, would also use to build her own grand mortuary temple. There is some sparse evidence that the site was once a cult center for Hathor. (Figure 9) Mentuhotep II's efforts in relating himself to Hathor must have been successful. Noted by Egyptologist Labib Habachi, Mentuhotep II was the only pharaoh with the title of "unifier of Egypt" after Narmer to be deified in his own lifetime.[133]

The first thing to be noted about the style of this relief is the subtle changes in the features of Mentuhotep II in comparison with the earlier works of his reign. Juxtaposed with the timeline of the building of his Mortuary temple, this relief was found in arguably one of the latest additions to the Mortuary temple before his death. The style of this image is canonically back to the Old Kingdom's standards. Viewers of the relief would see reduced lips, finer lines in the face, a trimmer torso, and less prominent ears then earlier sculptural rendition of Mentuhotep II. This jaw appears to be reduced, creating a visage of an intimidating firm set line in the mouth, similar in style to his statues.[134] This change in style could also be seen as in effort of further

[133] Arnold Oppenheim and Arnold Yamamoto, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, 40.?

[134] Oppenheim, Arnold, Arnold, Yamamoto, eds, 47.

legitimacy, a calling back to the old Kingdom and the Pharaohs who were considered the divine incarnations of Horus.

To the Egyptian mind, the Old Kingdom irrefutably represented the ideals of the divine kingship, ideals, female pharaohs used to emulate their own authority. This included the role of Hathor in that imagery if not even more as a form of legitimacy. In this image, Hathor is bestowing a blessing upon the pharaoh in his mortuary temple; he shows his legitimacy in the later part of his reign. Hathor's image was destroyed during the reign of Akhenaten and later restored in Dynasty 19. The sun disk that adorned her head was untouched, as it symbolled the sun god Re.[135] Hathor addresses the Pharaoh in the imagery saying: "I have United for thee the Two Lands according to the command of the Spirits."[136] This this was not a singular instance; there are several other images attaching the relationship of mother, son, wife, and husband between the pharaoh and Hathor. He refers to himself as "Somtus (the unifier)," one of the sons of Hathor and a part of the triad of Dendera (Hathor, Harakhti and Harsomtus) as Harsomtas. [137]

The ties to Hathor would continue to be embedded in the Cult of Kings as time would progress. Going back to the triad of Pharaoh Menkaure, Hathor, and the Nome deity, it has been suggested by scholars that the Queen or "chief wife" of that pharaoh was considered a divine companion to Horus. The Pharaoh was considered the incarnation of Horus on earth. Other titles for royal women were 'Follower of Horus', and 'Companion of Horus'. This is not shown clearly until the period after the 11th Dynasty, well into the Middle Kingdom. Hathoric fashion was notably in "style" at this time. It was popular for royal women to wear their hair in Hathor

---

[135] Oppenheim, Arnold, Arnold, Yamamoto, eds, 47.

[136] William Christopher Hayes, "The Scepter of Egypt: A Background from the Study of the Egyptian Antiques in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," Volume, 1. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 1990, 158.

[137] Oppenheim, Arnold, Arnold, Yamamoto, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, 40.

plaits, and the names of royal princesses were linked with the goddess, such as “Set Hathor (daughter of Hathor) and Sat Hathor -Iunet (daughter of Hathor of Dendera). [138]

Another way Sat-Hathor-Iunet has been spelled in the English language is Sithathoryunet. A royal woman and a princess deduced from her title “daughter of the King.” [139] She lived during the reign of Pharaoh Senwosret II of Dynasty Twelve, who ruled over a hundred years after Mentuhotep II. Sithhathoryunet was a royal princess, possibly the daughter of Senwosret II, though this is unconfirmed. Her collection of jewelry reinforced the connection of royal women in the symbolic role of Hathor in cult of kingship. One of the most stunning pieces to bolster this view is the Pectoral of Princess Sithahtoryunet (Figure 11).[140]

All pectorals in Ancient Egypt had an iconographical function. They are rare and sometimes are carved into royal statues. They are a unique form of jewelry. While other pieces of Hathoric jewelry and even votive offering can be attributed to different classes and era’s, pectorals with cartouches encircling a pharaohs name have been found to have been made only in the royal workshops.[141]

Iconography in the royal workshops were also derivative for a canon that intertwined with the same principles as Egyptian reliefs and statuary previously discussed. Hathor was known in some cannon as the “distant Goddess” or “Lady of Turquoise.” Turquoise was mined from the Sinai Desert, a far distance for the Egyptians to travel. As the “distant Goddess” she also presided over incense and gold. [142] Gold was considered one of the most sacred metals to the

---

[138]Graves-Brown, 132.

[139] Oppenheim, Arnold, Arnold, Yamamoto, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, 113.

[140] Ibid., 115.

[141] Ibid., 112.

[142] Geraldine Pinch,” Offerings to Hathor,”. 139-140.

Egyptian people. The skin of all Egyptian gods was said to have been made of gold, and the very substance itself conferred a divine nature, believed to transmogrify it divine nature to the wearer. The gold covering of a mummy was meant to ensure that the body would be reborn in the afterlife, achieving eternal life.[143]

Turquoise was expensive, a substitute was found in the form of "a glazed composition known as Egyptian faience."[144] It was not the stone itself but the color that was supposed to endear the objects made from this electric blue composition, to Hathor. The color itself was more of a religious contextual element than the stone itself. Votive offering to the goddess included a vast amount of eye, ear and sistrum representations made in faience. There were more symbolic association with Hathor in jewelry including shells and carved figures of cows.[145] At Hatshepsut's mortuary temple, there was also temple to Hathor that was visited by many including the common people. Many of these votive offerings were left at the temple and used after Hatshepsut's passing. In the Egyptian text called "The Book of the Divine Cow," Hathor is called the Eye of Re. She is sent to destroy mankind until the God Re, moved by humanities plight, stops Hathor by giving her seven thousand jars of blood dyed beer to placate her.[146] At Hatshepsut's mortuary temple, there was also temple to Hathor that was visited by many including the common people. Many of these votive offerings were left at the temple and used after Hatshepsut s passing. Just like the dual nature of Hathor as both protector and harbinger of

---

[143] Maria Carmela Betro, *Hieroglyphics: The Writings of Ancient Egypt,* (NY: New York, Abbeville Press, 1996), 176.

[144] Pinch, 139.

[145] Pinch, 139.

[146] Pinch, 143.

destruction, the Ancient Egyptians had dual natures assigned to almost all modes of adornment. Shape, color, medium, and design were all genres of amuletic value.

The pectoral of Sithathoryunet falls into the category of a royal pectoral, not just because of its incorporation of the name of a pharaoh, but also because of its craftsmanship. Pectorals were meant to function as an amulet of protection of the Egyptian world. This was done by using pairs of royal animals of protection— falcons, or vultures, are just a few of these examples. *Wedjat* eyes, sung disks, and *ankhs* images are also common components in their design. This pendent is an exquisite example of Egyptian cloisonne inlay techniques, the balance of composition in this design is formed around a trapezoid, with one side the mirror of the other.[147] This piece was inlaid with 372 expertly carved pieces of stone. The two falcons flanking each side of the pendant grasp the hieroglyph's meaning "encircles." In the middle, the two snakes represent Udjo and Nekhbet, two goddesses that protect the pharaoh. The god Heh grasps two palm ribs that curve upward and around in a semi-circle. Altogether, this image translates as, "The God of the Rising sun grants life and dominion over all that the sun encircles for one million one hundred thousand year to King Khakhaperra [Senwosret II]."[148]

These types of pectorals where possibly commissioned by the pharaoh for a royal woman to wear. Evidence from Dynasty Twelve suggests that pectorals of this type were owned by women with the epithet "daughter of the King" or by the daughters of a nomarch competing for power. Egyptian scholar Wolfram Grajetizki theorized that the pectorals were also Hathoric in nature due to the persons who owned then and by the royal women who were buried with

[147]Arnold Oppenheim, Yamamoto Arnold, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, 112.

[148] "Pectoral and Necklace of Sithathoryunet with the Name of Senwosret II ca. 1887–1878 B.C." The Metropolitan Museum of Art. accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544232

ceremony in the same tomb as the pharaoh. By the virtue of this Sithathoryunet's death, she mirrored her role in the Cult of Kings and was reflected in the very ornamentation she wore.[149] From this, we can theorize that Sobekneferu possibly held a similar role or symbolic nature Sithathoryunet. She was also a daughter of a pharaoh and may have owned pendants or pectorals before becoming pharaoh herself, to express her connection to the pharaoh in a similar way to Sithathoryunet.

The statue of the female pharaoh Sobekneferu, recently discovered, offers a rare glimpse into her own transfer of power to become pharaoh. Her statue, previously discussed, has strong features resembling her grandfather Senwosret III. This comparison is of her headdress with the Hathoric plaited headdress of Queen Nofret II (Figure 12), one of the sister-wives of Senwosret II. The statue of Queen Nofret II sports a shallowly carved pectoral (similar to Sithathoryunet's) that bring details that contrast the fully flushed form with her dress, bracelets, and headdress. The headdress is what we call an Egyptian art iconography "Hathoric Curls,"[150] a vital clue that directly links Hathor with Sobekneferu and strangely Nofret herself. The dress is the same that Sobekneferu is wearing in both of her statues. The latter is a newly discovered diorite statue, a new source of information for scholars to analyze the iconographic transition of female pharaoh's power through imagery.

Finding information about Sobekneferu has been difficult. There are very few statues of her in existence today; one is at the Louvre while another compelling example is currently under a reconstruction project currently in progress at the Boston Museum of Fine Art (Figure 13). As

---

[149] Arnold Oppenheim, Yamamoto Arnold, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, 113.

[150] Hélène Bouillon, "A New Perspective on So- Called 'Hathoric Curles,"(*Ägypten Und Levante / Egypt and the Levant* 24, 2014): 209-210

the daughter of Amenemhat III, she followed a unique form of statuary tradition perpetrated by her immediate predecessors. Twelfth Dynasty sculpture is known as some of the most expressive work in the Egyptian repertoire, highlighted by weathered faces of powerful Kings with strong heads and youthful bodies. Rita Freed and Simon Connor are two scholars who have documented the technicalities of these statues.[151] Freed is also one of the scholars as part of the current *Neferusobeck Project: Part I,* the current project headed by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, using the plaster cast of the head of Sobekneferu statue created by the Gipsgormerei of the now destroyed Königliche Museen Berlin (now the Atles Museum) and the surviving base of the greywacke statue at the BFAM, along with Biri Fay, Thomas Schelper, and Friederike Seyfried. The article detailing the particulars of the project's progress is short, but the facial features are some of the strongest ever seen on a female figure, clearly resembling Senwosret III, her grandfather.[152] The choice of headdress is a clear relational image to the Goddess Hathor and her own role as a previous incarnation of Hathor transitioning to Horus. Her name even references this role and plausible relation to Queen Nofret. It has been observed that one of the titular's of Pharaoh Sobekneferu was the designation the "beloved one," this particular title formed one of the many titles of Queen Nofret herself. Following a pattern in middle Kingdom imagery by having "a woman be 'beloved of a deity' when she is the principle figure in a scene."[153]

---

[151] Simon Connor, "The Statue of the Steward Nemtyhotep (Berlin AM 15700) and some Considerations about Royal and Private Portrait under Amenemhat III," in *The World of Middle Kingdom (2000-1550 BC): Contributions on Archeology, Art, Religion and Written sources, Volume I,* edited by Gianluca Miniaci, and Wolfram Grajetzki, London:Golden House Publishing, 2015, 58.
.

[152] Biri Fay, Ritta E. Freed, Thomas Schelper, and Friederike Seyfried. *Neferusobek Project: Part I,* Volume I: *The Work of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000-1550 BC),* edited by Gianluca Miniaci and Wolfram Grajetzk, (London: Golden House Publications, 2018), 89.

[153] Ronold J. Leprohon, "The programmatic Use of the Royal Titulary in the twelfth Dynasty," (*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 33,* 1996) 165-171, 170.

The Louvre's statue of Sobekneferu differs from this new version; it has the apron and belt of a pharaoh over a dress. While the black granodiorite statue of Queen Nofret sports a full queen's garb in a seated posture and a headdress resembling Sobekneferu's in an abstract form. Sobeneferu's is missing the large ceremonial "Hathoric Curls" wig that would drape right below the shoulder. However, the gatherings from the crown, the nemes headdress, remains on that statue are similarly spaced shoulder to shoulder. This might be an attribution to the royal workshop that would have a similar iconographic value to follow. This comparison is completely new to the field and may be one of the missing links between the evolution of iconographic imagery pertaining to the last pharaoh of the Twelfth Dynasty, Sobekneferu.

At the end of the Dynasty Twelve, a political shift emerged in Ancient Egypt. A people known as the Hyksos were rapidly gaining control of Lower Egypt, leading to a downfall of unity between upper and lower Egypt and ending the Middle Kingdom and the start of the Second Intermediate Period.[154] The social and cultural developments in religion, art, and political power, that had been stabilized in the Middle Kingdom, served as the foundation of the latter New Kingdom. The female pharaoh Sobekneferu was the last of this dynasty, setting the stage for The New Kingdom Pharaoh Hatshepsut to call herself the "female Horus."[155] Dynasty Twelve marked an era where the role of Hathor was specific to only royal women. Here this transfer from the role of Hathor to Horus become a reality with Sobekneferu. The end of this period passed on its traditions of religion and culture to the next inspiring a new generation and a new Female Pharaoh.

---

[154] Bunson, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 383.

[155] Zahi Hawass, *Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, (New York, NY: Harry N. Adrams Inc, 2000), 32.

Analysis: Comparison of Sobekneferu & Hatshepsut

There is little evidence left behind to mark Sobekneferu's rule. The primary changes in titular tradition and imagery mark she began a transfer of power between epithets, which Hatshepsut later emulates. Mutually, they both chose to be called by several unique female epithets of power and the exclusively male *nb irt-ht* (Lord of doing things).[156] Her unique epithets of "The Female Horus" is argued by scholars such as Zahi Hawas to have no mythological basis. That being the case it's possible that this epithet was created by Sobekneferu to cement her power and was the first to successfully use it.[157] Hatshepsut, in theory, could have known of Sobekneferu's existence (she used the title of "Female Horus" as well). Or, Hatshepsut was influenced by her father Thutmose III, and the tradition of co-regency established by predecessors including Senusret III and Menutuhotep II to form an iconographic image of herself with the combined male and female imagery and epithets using an aspect of Egyptian religion that may not be fully understood yet. This theory is supported by what little imagery we have and from the titles they chose to utilize.

These women come at a time where the state of pharaonic power is jeopardized. Sobekneferu comes to power at the end of Dynasty twelve. Hatshepsut took the throne at the beginning of the beginning of Dynasty Eighteen. They both used form of male pharaonic symbolism to transfer their power from the female deity of Hathor to the masculine Horus (or in Hatshepsut's case Amun). Completing this transfer of power and position of "King" to "Queen" is examined from a cross cultural perspective and has been explored in scholarships through the

[156] Graves-Brown, 145.

[157] Hawass, *Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 32.

lens of pharaonic tradition. The iconographic evidence revealed by the newly discoved statue of the Female Pharaoh Sobekneferu established an evolution of canonical imagery in the genre of a female pharaoh. Her uses of titular's and the combined masculine and feminine values in both her statues establishes a pattern, later followed by Hatshepsut. First, they were both first considered incarnation of the goddess Hathor with ties to religious power and (assumed) property, second, both used the artistic values of each's time period to create their image (Sobekneferu with a more weathered face and Hatshepsut a Thutmoside statuesque appearance), and the third they both changed their appearance to reflect their transmogrification of roles into statues and imagery of the gender fused bodies. Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut took the throne and created a way for each of them to be recognized as legitimate rulers but using imagery they were establishing a political foothold in a time of crisis.

Conclusion

The political climate of Ancient Egypt allowed for both the Female Pharaohs Sobekneferu and Hatshepsut function as rulers in their own right. Sobekneferu's newly confirmed statue is proof of this Hathor transition of power. Her modified Hathoric headdress is the indicator of how she took her role as Hathor from the Middle Kingdom tradition as transmogrified it for her own power. This headdress could possibly be the combination of a nemes headdress and the traditional hathoric wig that was worm by Middle Kingdom women. Her titles do not hide that she is a woman but arguably conferred legitimacy by invoking Hathor as a form of authority.

Hathor was the divine protector of Egypt used by male pharaohs of the past as a form of legitimacy and nonphysical authority. The use of this deity and her worship would later permeate into all levels of society after the fall of the Old Kingdom. As time passed into the Middle and

New Kingdoms, titles such as “priestess of Hathor” and “wife of Amun” began to fade. There are theories as to why the title declined; the main reason might have been a ruler wish to lessen another’s authority outside his own. “Wives of Amun” held land prestige and power that were usually kept in the hereditary line of the royal family as a way of consolidating power on temple lands.[158] The belief in the afterlife also shifted in the New Kingdom. For women to achieve their own afterlife, they needed to become male to complete the journey. They transformed after being fragmented like Osiris, after the journey is complete a person who had been female in life was reborn female in the afterlife by their own means.[159] This loose use of beliefs of the Egyptian mysteries of the afterlife gives us a final clue that the two female pharaohs, and former embodiments of Hathor, were able to inhabit the soul of Horus in the Egyptian religion. It was this belief in the ancient Egyptian afterlife that was able to be used by female pharaohs to confer that divine authority of Hathor which they already embodied into their own images that were reflections of their ideals, political message, and their souls.

[158] Graves Brown, 87.

[159] Graves Brown, 125.

List of Works

Figure 1. Hathor Jar.Egypt, probably Malqata, New Kingdom, late Dynasty 18, reigns of Amenhotep III-Akhenaten, 1391-1337. 1391-1337 BC. Decorative Arts and Utilitarian Objects, Vessels. Place: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust, Purchased from Mohammed Mohasseb and Son, Luxor, by Lucy Olcott Perkins through Henry W. Kent, May 14, 1913, 1914.640, http://www.clemusart.com/. https://library.artstor.org/asset/AMICO_CL_103798109.

Figure 2. Hathor fetish capital Dynasty 22, reign of Osorkon II, 874-712 B.C... Architecture. Place: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 89.555, http://www.mfa.org/.
https://library.artstor.org/asset/AMICO_BOSTON_103840732.

Figure 3. Mirror with Handle in the Form of a Hathor Emblem ca. 1479-1425 B.C. Mirror with a handle in the shape of the Hathor emblem (Bat), Thutmose III. Place. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS7731421_7731421_11518107.

Figure 4. Gerza Pallete

Figure 5. Palette of King Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E., slate, 2' 1" high (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Figure 6. King Menkaura, the Goddess Hathor , and the deified Hare nome
Egyptian, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 4, reign of Menkaura, 2490–2472 B.C.

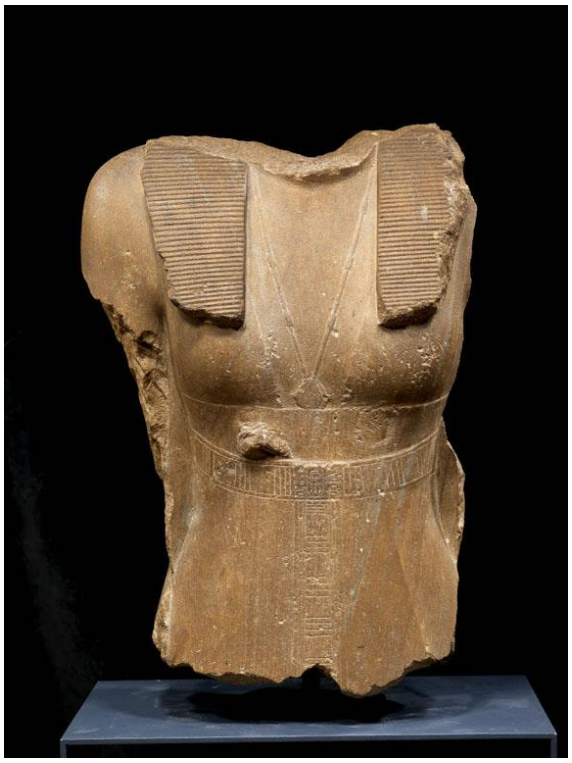


Figure 7. Torso of Sobekneferu, Middle Kingdom,1789-1786, Red Sandstone.

Figure 8. Upper part of Portrait Statuette of Pharoh Amenemhat III Wearing the Nemes, Egypt, Middle Kingdom, 1839-1792/ 1853- 1805 BCE, greenish ophicalcite.

Figure 9. King Senwosret III, ca. 1836-1818 B.C.E. Granite, 21 7/16 x 7 1/2 x 13 11/16 in. (54.5 x 19 x 34.7 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 52.1. Creative Commons-BY (Photo: Brooklyn Museum, 52.1_SL1.jpg)

Figure 10. Relief of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II and the Goddess Hathor, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 11, late reign of Mentuhotep II, ca. 2010–2000 B.C.

From Egypt, Upper Egypt, Thebes, Deir el-Bahri, Temple of Mentuhotep II, Egypt Exploration Fund excavations, 1907, Limestone, paint, Dimensions:H. 36 cm (14 3/16 in); W. 98 cm (38 9/16 in)

Figure 11. Pectoral and Necklace of Sithathoryunet with the Name of Senwosret II, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, reign of Senwosret II, 1887–1878 B.C.E., From Egypt, Fayum Entrance Area, Lahun, Tomb of Sithathoryunet (BSA Tomb 8), BSAE excavations 1914, Gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli, turquoise, garnet (pectoral)Gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli, turquoise, green feldspar (necklace) Dimensions:L. of necklace (b): 82 cm (32 5/16 in.); H. of pectoral (a): 4.5 cm (1 3/4 in.); W. 8.2 cm (3 1/4 in.)

Figure 12. Nofret II, Middle Kingdom 12th Dynasty (1897-1878).

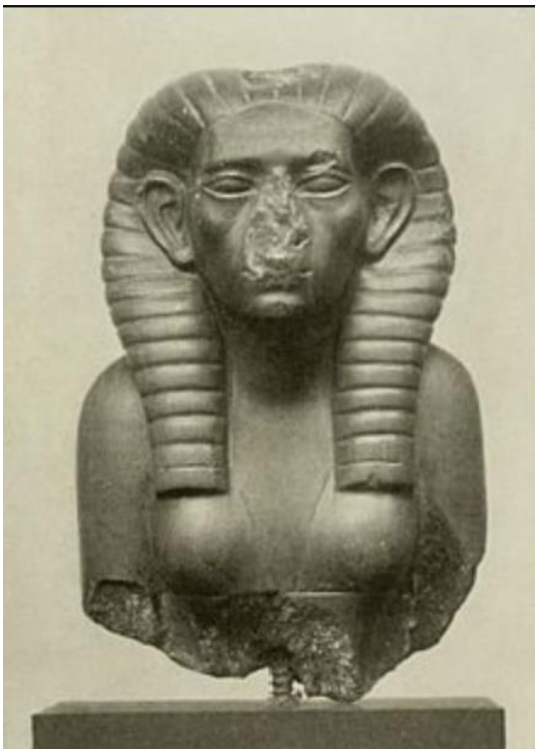


Figure 13. Bust of Sobekneferu, Berlin AM, 14475, lost during the Second World War. Photos taken prior to the Second World War, courtesy of the Saatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preuβischer Kulturbesitz, greywacke.

Bibliography

Ayad, Mariam. *Gods Wife, Gods Servant*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Bell, Barbra. "Climate and the History of Egypt: The Middle Kingdom." *American Journal of Archaeology* 79, no. 3, (1975): 223-269, accessed November 14, 2020 doi:10.2307/50348,

Betro, Maria Carmela. *Hieroglyphics: The Writings of Ancient Egypt*, NY: New York, Abbeville Press, 1996.

Bothmer, Bernard V. "Notes on The Mycerinus Triad." In *Egyptian Art: Selected Writings of Bernard V. Bothmer*, Edited by Madeleine E. Cody. NY: Oxford University Press, (2004),

Bunson, Margaret, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, New York, NY, Facts on File Inc, 2002.

Bouillon, Hélène. "A New Perspective on So- Called 'Hathoric Curles,'" *Ägypten Und Levante / Egypt and the Levant*, 24, (2014): 209-26.

Connor, Simon. "The Statue of the Steward Nemtyhotep (Berlin AM 15700) and some Considerations about Royal and Private Portrait under Amenemhat III." In *The World of Middle Kingdom (2000-1550 BC): Contributions on Archeology, Art, Religion and Written Sources, Volume I*, Edited by Gianluca Miniaci, and Wolfram Grajetzki, 57-80. London: Golden House Publishing, 2015.

Cooney, Kara. *The Woman Who Would Be King*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2015.

Cooney, Kara. *When Women Ruled the World.* Washington D.C: National Geographic, 2018.

Fay, Biri, Ritta E. Freed, Thomas Schelper, and Friederike Seyfried. *Neferusobek Project: Part I.* Volume I: *The Work of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000-1550 BC)*, Edited by Gianluca Miniaci and Wolfram Grajetzk, 89-100. London: Golden House Publications, 2015.

Graves-Brown, Carolyn. *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt*. London: Bloomsbury, 2010.

Gillam, Robyn A. "Priestess of Hathor: Their Function, Decline and Disappearance." *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 32* (1995): 211-232.

Goldwasser, Orly. "Canaanites Reading Hieroglyphs: Horus is Hathor? -The Invention of the Alphabet in Sinai." *Agypten and Levant/ Egypt and the Levant* 16, (2006), 121-160.

Grajetzki, Wolfram, “Late Middle Kingdom.” Willeke Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles. 2013.

Pinch, Geraldine. "Offerings to Hathor." *Folklore* 93, no. 2 (1982): 138-50. Accessed 10 2018. www.jstor.org/stable/1259934.

Hawass. Zahi. *Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt.* New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams Inc, 2000

Jánosi, Peter. “Montuhotep- Nebtawyre and Amenemhat I: Observations on the Early Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt.” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 45, (2010): 7-20.

Laboury Dimitri. “Tracking Ancient Egyptians Artist, A Problem of Methodology. The Case of the Painters of Private Tombs in the Theban Necropolis During the Eighteenth Dynasty,” In *Art and Society: Ancient and Modern Contexts of Egyptian Art,* Edited by Katalin Anna Kóthay, 199-208. Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts Budapest, 2012.

Laboury, Dimitri. “Portrait Versus Ideal Image.” *In UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology.* Edited by Wendrich Willeke, Jacob Dieleman, Elizabeth Frood, John Baines, Los Angeles: 2010. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9370v0rz.

Mercer, Samuel A. B., Trans, *The Pyramid Texts*, United Kingdom: Longmans, Green, 1952.

Nim’s, Charles F, "The Date of The Dishonoring of Hatshepsut", *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 93, 1-2: 1966 doi:https://doi.org/10.1524/zaes.1966.93.12.9

Oppenheim, Adela, Arnold, Dieter, Arnold, Dorothea, Yamamoto, Kei, eds, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*. United Kingdom, London: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.

Pinch, Geraldine. “Offerings to Hathor.” In *Folklore* 93, no. 2 (1982): 138-50.

Robins, Gary. “Gender and Sexuality.” in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, Edited by Melinda K. Hartwig, 120-140. United Kingdom: Wiley, 2014.

Roth, Silke. “Queen.” In *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology,* Edited by Elizabeth Frood, Willeke Wendrich, (2009):1-12.

Mercer, Samuel A. B., Trans. *The Pyramid Texts*, United Kingdom: Longmans, Green, 1952, 1588.

Shaw, Ian.ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. United Kingdom, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Tyldesley, Joyce. *Hatchepsut,* London: Penguin Books, 1998.

Wood, Wendy. "A Reconstruction of the Triads of King Mycerinus." *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 60 (1974): 82-93. Accessed September 24, 2020. doi:10.2307/3856174.

Wilkinson, Richard H. “Anthropomorphic Deities.” In Jacco Dieleman and Willeke Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles. 2008.1-9.

------. *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003.

------. *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture.* New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994.

------. *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art.* New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994.

Wilkinson, Toby. *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt.* New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2010.

------. *Writings from Ancient Egypt.* London*:* Penguin Publishing, 2016.