Royal Women, Gender Performance, and Power Struggles during the Ancient Egyptian New Kingdom

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Stephanie Armstrong

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Senior Project Board:

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Amelia Carr

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Richard Schindler

Pledge:

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Stephanie Armstrong

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Introduction

Reflecting upon past events leads one to observe large patterns that occur throughout history. There are many times when history repeats itself. This repeating of certain events or traits begins to develop into a pattern, and one pattern that stands out specifically is one that many times can be overlooked—not because it is not common, or is unknown, but because it is something that is almost taken for granted. This pattern is of women who are royal, but do not have any ruling power. Men were typically the primary rulers in the past. Women were most of the time simply there to produce heirs. That is why, when it comes to the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt (1570-1070 BCE), it is quite surprising that this is not the case. As Herodotus explains at the end of the dynastic period in Egypt:

> …the Egyptians themselves, in most of their manners and customs, exactly reverse the common practices of mankind. For example, the women attend the markets and trade, while the men sit at home and weave at the loom… The women likewise carry burdens upon their shoulders while the men carry them upon their heads… Sons need not support their parents unless they chose, but daughters must, whether they chose to or not.[1]
>
> Herodotus The Histories: Book Two

This uncommon practice of women taking more liberties, of men sharing in domestic responsibilities and of women taking on more responsibilities when it came to other family members, is what shocked Herodotus so thoroughly. But these practices that came so naturally to the Egyptians were not something that simply came about during the dynastic period. It was a movement that had been happening in Egypt for years. Women in Egypt

[1] This excerpt was taken from Joyce Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt,* (London: Penguin Book, 1994), 1, but is originally from Herodotus' History Book Two.

were given liberties not available in other countries, but these liberties did not come about freely. They came about after many years of royal women fighting for the chance to rule.

This paper will cover the main reasons that women were treated with more respect and given more responsibilities in Ancient Egypt than in other ancient societies and cultures in place during the Egyptian New Kingdom period. There are reasons that Egyptian women had such different liberties during the dynastic period, which falls after the New Kingdom period, from those in their surrounding world. The women before them had forged a way through a world typically ruled and governed by men, to show that women were competent, reliable, and trustworthy, and should be treated as such. Royal women stick out as women who changed women's rights in the ancient world because the records of their deeds are more easily accessible and readily available. Not all woman's movements and histories are recorded from the Ancient Egyptian world and even fewer exist today. There is one place, however, that one can find multitudes of information pertaining to women and their statuses in Ancient Egypt, the official records of kings. Detailed accounts of every pharaoh's rule were kept diligently over time in Egypt. Records exist through the evidence of murals, statues, tombs, and hieroglyphics give detailed accounts of how each ruler's reign panned out; many times when their partner particularly stood out there is just as much recorded about them. Thus the reason that royal women will be credited with paving the way for women to have more responsibilities and respect in Ancient Egypt is because there are more records pertaining to their certain deeds.

When referencing the official records this paper is referring to the official works of art, murals, paintings, hieroglyphics, and statues, which were created during the New Kingdom and survive today. Many of these objects and items are impossible to date to a

specific year within a certain ruler's reign, because carbon dating is not reliable for dating items within hundreds of years. In each chapter it will be explained how the chronology of each major queen was established through the research that was conducted for this paper. There will not be specific dates for each piece of work presented, but the development of the art styles and of the historical events shown through the works will be used to lay out a logical timeline.

There are two particular women who pushed what was expected of them from others during the New Kingdom as women, took their fates into their own hands, and tried to assert their authority. They were Pharaoh Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti. These two women will be discussed in great detail later and it will be explained how these women came to power, who they were, how they came to power and what happened to them afterwards. These women impacted the way that women were viewed and treated in Egypt in subsequent years; they made a path for women to be seen as competent rulers. How they came to be able to forge this unknown path and the tools that they used will be of special interest to this paper.

Hatshepsut and Nefertiti did not simply come to power like any other typical man would do during the New Kingdom. Their husbands and people did not freely give power to them, but instead they had to act and display themselves in ways that would make them reliable candidates to be given power by their people and their husbands. They had to manipulate themselves and their images to show that they could rule in a way that would be seen as fit. Here the theory of gender performance, developed by Judith Butler in the 1980s, comes into play. Butler's theory sets forth that people are born with a certain sex, but that

they choose what gender to follow, and that gender can change and form anew over time.[2] These women unknowingly formed themselves into a new type of female, one that took after a man, in order to rule.

In order to see that what these women did was individual and unique for the New Kingdom, one must also understand what a typical woman was like during the New Kingdom. There are many examples of what was expected of a typical royal woman, but Queen Tiy, wife to Amenhotep III, stands out as an excellent prototype. There is a great deal of information known about Tiy, other than just the fact that she was married to Amenhotep III, that her son was Akhenaten, or that she was Queen of Egypt. Most royal women during this time popped up either from nowhere or from nobility. Some were replaced when they could not produce a male heir and many did nothing else but sit idly by their husbands, watching them rule Egypt. Most are not remembered well or do not have very much information about them because there is nothing to remember about them. Tiy is different because she does not come from nobility; she supports her husband during his reign without taking over or over-reaching her place, and her history continues to be recorded after her husband passes away. She is therefore the best example of a typical royal woman, and will be thus explained in this paper in order to show how radically different Nefertiti and Hatshepsut were for their time period.

Once it is understood what was expected of a typical women and a royal woman, Hatshepsut and Nefertiti can be identified as atypical for the New Kingdom. Becoming more than just typical royal women took drive, determination and a bit of manipulation of

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[2] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4, (1998): 522, http://www.jstor.org.

circumstances. These women did something that was not put down into print for thousands of more years. They changed themselves to play a part, to win the power.

The marked difference between Hatshepsut, Nefertiti and Tiy is that Hatshepsut and Nefertiti changed their gender, to a certain degree, in order to be seen as authority, while Tiy did not. This changing of gender, this performance factor that goes into obtaining more power is a theory that was first developed by Judith Butler in her 1988 article about gender performance, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." As stated above, these women decided that to be seen as a pharaoh, to obtain that level of power, they needed to display themselves in a way that their people would in the end have them be seen as authority. So they began to display themselves as pharaohs, and since all successful pharaohs had been men, they ended up displaying themselves, in images, as men. This performance of gender leads Hatshepsut and Nefertiti to be able to take more power during their rule, and the way in which Tiy does not display herself as a man, lends her to not take as much power, but to instead be a support system to her husband.

Butler's theory therefore articulates how in order for royal women to obtain power during the New Kingdom, they had to perform a certain gender in order to be seen as a pharaoh. Gender becomes more than a marker of what sex a person is, but it becomes a part that is done well or not done well by man or woman. To a modern audience these images becoming confusing. Images of men typically indicate that a person is a male, but in Hatshepsut and Nefertiti's case, it is not so. These women use gender instead to indicate power and authority. Hatshepsut and Nefertiti will be used to show that ruling power was not just limited to the male sex during the New Kingdom, while Tiy will be used to show what was typically expected from the female sex.

With Butler's theory, and strong examples from both ends of the spectrum, this paper intends to show the progression of women's rights that were developed over the years leading up to the dynastic period. If someone did not forge the pathway to better equality between men and women or male and female, then Herodotus would not have had anything so remarkable to write about when he visited Egypt. Discovering why these women succeeded in the positions that they held will be examined closely while applying Butler's theory. These women accomplished something that had not been set forth before them. It was something unique and original; they discovered a new way to negotiate their level of power through their gender and ultimately won over the population's confidence by displaying said gender through images.

Chapter 1

Typical Women in New Kingdom

Ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom was a booming empire. It set itself apart from many other ancient empires by being one of the dominating forces in trade, war, education, and prosperity. It also stood out as one of the only empires that gave its women unconventional liberties and responsibilities in society. The freedom and tasks that were so unconventionally attached the female sex for this time period led women to take more power in their society and have greater importance in their culture. Power, responsibility, freedom and authority were all given out freely, but in order to obtain power above what was given, women had to display qualities that were seldom shown by their sex. To assert their authority and ruling power over Egypt they had to perform tasks that males typically did. Females had to display themselves in a way that would allow fellow Egyptians to trust them with power that was typically held by men.

Ancient Egyptian women are remembered for the unique roles they held in their civilization. Everyday women could own property, attend markets and trade, and they, instead of their brothers, had to support their parents throughout life. This also meant that some women could attend to the family business and give orders to the workers they and their families employed. The ability to own property, attend markets and trade, having the responsibility to support their parents, and having a part in family businesses were quite unique responsibilities for their time period. In other ancient civilizations, such as in the ancient city of Athens, women did not enjoy such liberties. Women from this city were property to their husbands, or male head figure of the household. Once they were married, if their husband died they had to go and live with their father or a brother, for they were not

allowed to live alone. In many cases the head of the household, the head male, had complete control over his wife's and children life and death. Women from Athens were not considered legally persons in their own right. Athenian women were also not expected to work outside the home, and were rarely seen in a working place outside of their domestic duties.[3] With other women in the world heavily restricted, Egypt's distinctive approach to how women were treated led to women being able to take more power in other ways.

The assumption should not be made, however, that women in Ancient Egypt were fully free to do as they pleased. Women still did not have the full liberties that most modern women in America have today. For instance, after women were no longer considered children they were expected to marry; there was no alternate path for them to take. Their husbands would be chosen for them, after which they were expected to have children, raise their children inside the home, and subsequently, if they had daughters, teach their daughters how to be Egyptian housewives. This is a fairly typical path that everyday women in Egypt took.[4]

Even though tasks such as managing the house or raising the children may seem to be the typical housewife duties, non-royal Egyptian women were always respected and considered important assets to successful working Egyptian household. In other ancient civilizations respect for the female sex was not always shown. In Rome, a household was only expected to let its firstborn daughter live and after that, under law, could let the other female children die after birth, only keeping the male babies. In Egypt, however, this was not the case. Female children were always kept, no matter if there was a male child born to the

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[3] Bella (Zweig) Vivante, *Women's Roles in Ancient Civilizations,* ed. Bella Vivante (London: Greednwood Press, 1999), 239-241.
[4] Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis,* 1, 45-46.

family or not.[5] The tasks and duties of a woman in Ancient Egypt were not looked down upon or thought of as lesser responsibilities than those of a man. There were simply different tasks for different sets of people one task did not take precedence over the other.

Well-educated women of the time would hold grand banquets, acquiring the best wine, or serving their own brewed beer. The women of the household were given full credit for the elaborate parties and had full control over the household. The head women of the household were not treated as glorified servants; they partook in the festivities that they had planned, and could drink as much beer or wine as they pleased. Some interesting images and hieroglyphics from the period are of women being served at their events, instead of doing all of the serving, and of women vomiting after drinking too much at their parties. Rich women were able to enjoy lavish parties, drink and eat as they pleased and be in control of servants instead of being treated as one.[6] These rich non-royal women were in charge of keeping the stability of the house.

The stability of Egypt, possibly to any civilization throughout history, is well sought after. Having enough food and water for citizens while maintaining an upper hand when it comes to warfare, or ensuring the safety of those within Egypt were some of their main concerns. For these basic necessities the Egyptians looked to their gods. Since the stability of the house was a woman's responsibility it is only logical that the entire stability of Egypt also fall to a female goddess. On par with the sun god Ra, Ma'at, was one of the most important deities of the New Kingdom. She was the goddess of the stability of Egypt. If Ma'at was not honored then as the Egyptians believed, all of Egypt would fall. Other highly important goddess included Hathor, daughter of Ra, goddess of fertility and childbirth, and Isis and

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[5] Stacy Schiff, *Cleopatra,* 2010 (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010), 24.
[6] Tyldesly, *Daughters of Isis,* 101-113

Nephthys, the powerful funerary deities.[7] The Egyptians respected and honored their goddesses; they had to be appeased by their people in order to perform their important tasks. The Egyptian people did not pawn off the less desirable and evil or typically female characteristics on their female goddesses like destruction and chaos or of love and lust. Instead they were the goddesses of the underworld and of birth and life, of the very stability of Egypt, all of which are things that were highly important to the Ancient Egyptian society.

There was a great emphasis during the New Kingdom on couples. This importance was placed upon Pharaoh's to obtain wives that would produce heirs, but that they also loved and respected has its base in the gods and goddesses of the time. Some of the most famous festivals of the time were that of the gods and goddesses having conjugal visits. The Festival of the Sacred Marriage celebrated Hathor, goddess of love and beauty, and her husband, Horus, the god of Edfu, is one of the most famous. During these festivals the statue of one deity would be carried from their temple to that of their partners. In this way they could spend time together. Most of the time it was the god who moved and not the goddess. There were many of these festivals, seeing as almost every god or goddess had a partner that they were coupled with.[8] This ideal of the power couple that ruled different spheres of the universe and that had different obligations comes to play when looking at mortal couples as well. Each man found it important to take a wife that would be able to be beside him and take care of the things that she should. Each had their own responsibilities, one not being more important than the other, just different.

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[7] Gay Robbins, *Women's Roles in Ancient Civilizations,* ed. Bella Vivante (London: Greednwood Press, 1999), 158-162.
[8] Rosalie Davie, *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 196-197.

Ancient Egyptians did not see their goddesses as lesser deities with less powerful abilities because they were goddesses instead of gods. Both sexes were powerful and had the influence to control certain aspects of a typical day and life. Yet, just like in everyday life, in the deity realm, Ra the male sun god oversaw everything, was more powerful, and was more highly respected than the other female deities. In everyday life women in Ancient Egypt did not have much political power or sway and mostly stayed around the household, land and family businesses working while men did the traveling. While men were more powerful when it came to politics in everyday society, women were still highly respected for the work that they did and did have control over a great percentage of their personal and daily lives.

Royal Women

Royal women are identified as the current pharaoh's mother, wives, sisters, or daughters. Like non-royal women, servant women, and goddesses they fall into their own category. The most important benefit that royal women had was their direct line of contact to the pharaoh, the highest authority in the land. It is not fully clear how much political power royal women held, but it is safe to say that these royal women did at least have one the most direct lines to the highest authority. Some royal women show up more often in official documents than others. A royal woman is remembered clearly or not for many different reasons. Some royal women may have taken an active role in their partner's reign, others not. Some women played roles that were atypical to what was expected of them so they stuck out more while others may have played their role perfectly, exactly to what was expected of a royal woman, thus being honored, respected and talked about by their partners. Either having

a royal woman who helps to rule or that rules on her own seem to be the main reasons for why royal women are remembered and seen vividly in the records from the New Kingdom.[9]

There are royal women in the New Kingdom period (1570-1070 BCE) that made a large impact on the way in which Egypt was run. Tiy (1389-1351 BCE), Hatshepsut (1479-1425 BCE), Nefertiti (1351-1337 BCE), and Nefertari (1279-1213 BCE) are just a few queens who have made a big enough impact during their time that much is recorded about them, thus rendering them remembered well. Others, such as Tiaa (1425-1399 BC) or Ankhesenamen (1334-1325 BCE) are more obscure names because they did nothing of great significance, but nonetheless are still recorded along with whom they married, thus they are acknowledged.[10] Ancient Egypt kept diligent records, many that still survive today, so while almost every pharaoh and pharaoh's wife is recorded, for royal women to be known outside of being a certain pharaoh's wife, to be painted into official art like murals and to have statues created in their likeness, they had to assert themselves more forcefully.

The rest of this paper will focus heavily on royal women. It was important to lay out what was expected of woman during this time period in order to have a comparison group. If one did not understand what women normally did in day-to-day life, then there would be no way to comprehend how important what women like Nefertiti and Hatshepsut did. Furthermore, it was important to point out how other cultures treated their women, so that once again it can be reiterated how impressive it is that royal women, like Hatshepsut and Nefertiti, obtained the level of power and authority that they did. The rest of this paper will focus solely on royal women, the impact they made on Egypt, and how they negotiated their levels of power.

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[9] Robbins, *Women's Roles in Ancient Civilizations,* 172-173.
[10] Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis*, 207.

Queen Tiy: A Royal Woman Who Played her Part Well

Many royal women are not remembered as clearly as Nefertiti or Hatshepsut are. These two royal women stood out from others because they made themselves stand out. They created new personas that demanded attention, hence they are known today. To be remembered as just a royal woman, not one with immense amounts of power, however, seems to be a bigger obstacle. When an entire tomb is dedicated to a woman, like it was with Nefertari, Ramses II primary wife, it does become easier for that person to be found out. Even then, not much outside of Nefertari's painted tomb is known about her. That is why Tiy is such a remarkable example of what royal women, that did not try and take more power than that which was given or that did not go above and beyond her political needs, were like. There is probably a great deal known about Tiy, because she was married to a pharaoh at a uniquely pivotal point in the history of Ancient Egypt. She was the Great Wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhenaten.[11]

The reigns of monarchs are often recorded as one-man shows. The person who is the pharaoh usually dominates them; the other members of the royal family usually only play extra parts, and are hardly remembered. This is not the case with Amenhotep III and his wife Tiy. From the very beginning this reign was different from others recorded because Tiy did not just play an extra part in the circle of family members, but a supporting role. She was there every step of the way for him. She played an important role in the government and had an abundance of influence on the court.[12] She was born from a somewhat obscure background and she was commoner born. Her father's name was Yuya and her mother

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[11] Joyce Tyldesley. *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt.* (Thames and Hudson: London, 2006), 115.
[12] Wilkinson, Toby. *Live of the Ancient Egyptians*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 178.

Thuyu. With Amenhotep she bore two sons, Thutmose and Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and five daughters, Sitaamun, Henuttaneb, Isis, Nevetah, and Baketaten.

Tiy's official titles many given to her by Amenhotep III and they were: King's Great Wife, Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mistress of the Two Lands, Lady of the Two Lands, and King's Mother. Even though she was not of royal birth she was Amenhotep III's principal wife by his regnal Year 2. From the very beginning Tiy is paraded around as the royal wife, through commemorative scarabs that were designed to spread the new of their marriage. This was not normally done, and their marriage was probably stressed so that everyone in the empire would know that she was in fact his primary wife, even though she was not of royal blood, and that all of their children should be seen as the true heirs to the Egyptian throne.

While Tiy was not of royal blood, her background was by no means humble. Her parents were a part of a well-established elite. Their bloodline and dynasties went back just as far as those of the royal people that they served. Her father was a wealthy landowner, and titles included Overseer of the King's Horses and God's Father (or King's Father-in-law). Her mother, Thuyu, was quite active in many religious cults and held the titles of Singer of Hathor, Singer of Amun, and Chief of the Entertainers of both Amun and Min. Tiy's brother, Anen, served as Second Prophet of Amun. It is also rumored that they might have had a second son, Ay, who later would grow up to rule for a short period of time. Ay's parentage was never formally ascertained, so these might have been his parents, but that theory is not one hundred percent positive.[13]

[13] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 115-116.

Through Tiy's reign as the Great Wife, she immensely enjoyed the luxury that went along with it. She always had the newest fashion piece at her disposal; however, she was no mere amateur, only dabbling in the art of fashion, but with her husband's encouragement she began to involve herself in affairs of the state. She would send letters on her own to foreign rulers and helped to contribute an upsurge in diplomatic correspondence during Amenhotep III's reign. That was about as far as her political involvement went during Amenhotep III's reign. On a more domestic plane she fulfilled all of the roles that were necessary to complement her husband's preferred model of divine kingship. She was more of a protector of the pharaoh, than a co-regent. She did her job and presented herself in a way that was strong, but so that her husband would be seen as strong, not so that she could assert her own views and opinions on the people of Egypt.

When Amenhotep III died, shortly after his third jubilee festival, Tiy did not try to take control of the throne. She moved her household to the palace at Gurob to live out the rest of her life with her faithful female servants. To please her son, Akhenaten, and support his move to Amarna, she also maintained a place of living in his new city, but she was rarely there and the steward Huya oversaw it. Since Akhenaten did not have his father around to help guide him on his journey into a new city and religion, he relied heavily on Tiy during his first years in charge; after all she was the only one who understood Amenhotep III's policies in great detail. After surviving her husband it is rumored that she died in her early sixties. She was thought to have been buried with her son in the royal tomb at Amarna, but after some examination and the discovery of two *shabti*-figurines, referring to her as the King's Mother in Amenhotep III's tomb at Thebes, suggests that she may in fact have been

laid to rest next to her husband. It is undeniable that she would have preferred this place of rest, next to her beloved.[14]

Tiy stands as a royal woman, who is not all that typical because she is remembered with such great detail, but still not as monumental as Hatshepsut or Nefertiti because she played out her life as a typical woman. She played by the rules, not trying to force her way into her husband or son's rule. She supported the men in her life, through hard work and care. She will be remembered as a caring mother, a wife, a correspondent, and as a great woman. Not though, as a woman who changed much during her life, not as a woman who took charge, or as anything more than a woman doing her royal duties. She was respected by her family members, by her people and continues to attract people today to her story. She is the perfect example of what women during the New Kingdom were expected to act and be like. She was humble and she played her part, but she played it well. Her supporting role helped her husband be respected in power, it did not further her own agenda, if she had one.

How Royal Women used Gender to become Atypical

The theoretical articulation of the idea of performing a certain type of gender in order to be seen as having a certain attribute, like authority or ruling power, does not come about until the 20th century. Judith Butler in her 1988 essay develops the idea of performing acts in the constitution of gender. One of the first points she makes is that gender is not a fixed definition. Gender is defined through time, it is something that is ever changing and that the public at large sees as being fixed because a definition over time has been created. Since this definition has been created over time, and not set down abruptly, it is taken as law instead of something that can and will be changed. Sex, being a male or female does not have the same

[14] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 179-181.

implications that having a certain gender, woman or man, does. Gender brings to mind different and specific connotations for each end of the spectrum, man or woman. There are biological factors that mark one as a female or male that stays the same, but there are social constructs that define gender that are ever changing. To claim a gender, and then to perform it, means to latch onto a historical tradition and follow it. It means to speak, walk, dress, and emote a certain stereotype, that of what the cultural defines are of a man or that of a woman. It ensures that a culture will survive. Supposedly if every male acts as this specific type of a man and every female as a certain type of woman, traditions will be upheld and that society will not die out. For example this is why in some cultures it is acceptable for women to wear pants and in others it is not.

The way in which someone acts sets forth how that person will be perceived. How they are perceived, normal or abnormal, sets forth how they will be treated. Where they act out these traits also is a main factor in how they are treated. Butler sets forth a perfect example for how people are treated when they are acting out gender by what setting they find themselves in.

> Indeed, the sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence. The conventions which mediate proximity and identification in these two instances are clearly quite different.[15]

When the actor is onstage he or she can quickly jump off the stage and claim that everything was an act, a ploy for a laugh, meant to entertain. On the bus in reality, however, nothing can be de-realized. On the bus, everything is real life and the sight of the transvestite is atypical,

[15] Butler, "Performative Acts and gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", 527.

abnormal and something that is frowned upon in our society because it does not hold up to the conventions of what is a man or woman. Conventions and traditions are what make people feel safe in life, and when those are taken away, situations can become dangerous.

Gender is something that is defined by what culture it is contained within and what time period it is presented in. Gender is not stable, and gender is not a fact. Various actions create gender and without these acts, gender would not be. Gender is something that is collectively agreed upon by the mass culture.[16] Thus the way in which every royal woman acted in her time depends on what was expected of her gender. The reason that some women are remembered more clearly than others is because they acted in a way that was atypical for their gender. Acting in an atypical way set them apart from their fellow women and they ended up creating a legacy for themselves.

For example Hatshepsut is many times featured in attire typically worn by men in her statues. Kilts, the nemes-headcloth, and false beards show up quite often in her depictions. Her slender waist was replaced with a more muscular stomach, her breasts with larger pectoral muscles and her small feline facial features with square, harder jaw lines. Just because she dressed as a man, though, did indicate that she thought she was a man; there was no evidence that she actually dressed and walked around in men's attire. These markings simply identified herself as royalty. The kilt, beard, and headdress were all signs of royalty and of a pharaoh, and since she was trying to reign as pharaoh she depicted herself as one.[17]

There were not many women pharaohs before Hatshepsut's time. Even yet, all of the women wo ruled before her had been unsuccessful, ending in a period of civil unrest for the county and an inevitable downfall of a family's ruling. Therefore Hatshepsut had to revamp

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[16] Butler, "Performative Acts and gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", 519-527.
[17] Barbara Watterson, *Women in Ancient Egypt,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 140.

the way in which women pharaohs ruled. She had to take on the characteristics of what successful pharaohs presented, which meant to display her self with male characteristics. Her people, as Butler explains, accepted her because she was performing a male's gender, she presented herself as a man to be respected and to be seen as a competent ruler.

This gender reversal is also seen in Nefertiti's rule when she dressed in typical pharaoh male attire to take over foreigners. It has always been a lingering question in the world of Ancient Egypt of whether or not Nefertiti was in co-regency with her husband Akhenaten. This question pops up often because normally in the official art of the period, which most royal women are not pictured in, she is pictured as the same height as Akhenaten. Many times she is shown in warrior or pharaoh stances acting in a man-oriented fashion. Once again, this woman is remembered throughout time because she stuck out, she acted and is seen in an atypical light.[18]

Nefertiti's and her husband's aim for a co-regency does not stop at just her dressing in stereotypically male clothing, but it also stems into a changing in the type of art that was being developed in Egypt. At one point it becomes hard to tell the body types of her and her husbands apart, they even wear similar garments. Her figure, in art, develops a square jaw, prominent cheekbones and straighter lips and her body takes on a less feminine shape. All of these gender-changing attributes point to Nefertiti taking more power during Akhenaten's reign. The more she was seen as a male, the more she was viewed and respect as a main power source in Egypt.[19]

Women in Egypt were respected for what they did. They were not placed aside or given less authority like in other countries, because of their sex or gender. Women were able

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[18] Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt,* 53.
[19] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 127.

to rise to great power and hold a lot of authority in Egypt that was not typically seen in this period. They did so by performing a gender that was not typically performed by a female, but they did so with confidence, rendering them successful. Royal women found that levels of authority are not about being a certain sex, but a certain gender. These females played the role of man thus pharaoh in order to come to power, thus they are remembered today.

Chapter 2

Hatshepsut: The Female who became Pharaoh

Two pieces will be examined and analyzed closely in the course of this chapter. The two are compared to one another in order to show the progression of Hatshepsut's evolution from woman to man. The first is an earlier statue of Hatshepsut, Senenmut, *Statue of Hatshepsut, Seated*. c. 1473-1458 BCE. Indurated limestone, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, NY, [Figure 1]. The second being a later statue, Senenmut, *Large Kneeling Statue of Hatshepsut*, c. 1473-1458 BCE, granite, 261.5 cm x 80 cm x 137 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, NY, [Figure 2]. Both statues of Hatshepsut are currently owned and being displayed by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, New York. Hatshepsut kneeling was from a group of similar figures that were probably originally placed the second court of the Deir el-Bahri temple, in Thebes, Egypt. This temple was under the control of Senemut, and was built in Upper Egypt. The figures were probably aligned on the northern side of the processional way in the temple's second court. The museum came into possession of the piece from the Rogers Fund in 1929. They are on display in their Egypt section.[20]

Senenmut, to whom is attributed all of Hatshepsut's monuments, was the Steward of the Estates of Amen during the New Kingdom Ancient Egyptian period, while Hatshepsut had ruling power. This gave him full access to the riches from the temple of Karnak: he also was the Overseer of all Royal Works, and Tutor to the Royal Heiress, Hatshepsut's only daughter, Neferure.[21] He came from an upper-middle class family and worked his way to

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[20] The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Collection Database. http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database.
[21] Tyldesley, Joyce. *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*. (Penguin Books: New York, 1998), 177.

power through the ranks of the military. He became a civil servant fairly early on in his career, quickly aligned himself with Hatshepsut, and did everything he could to ensure that she would be ruler of Egypt after Tuthmosis II. This way he would be greatly rewarded once she did succeed and have control over Egypt.

Senenmut had no formal training in workshops, and in reality probably had no hand at all in the actual physical creation of the statue. He was simply the overseer of the temple of Amen and the Overseer of all Royal Works, thus the statue fell under his jurisdiction.[22] He was the person who made sure that all of Hatshepsut's wishes came to fruition and for that reason is given credit for the plan and creation of all of Hatshepsut's works. There is probably no one artist to any of Hatshepsut's commissioned works that could be named or pointed out. Instead there were slaves that were made to move, create and procure the statue. The royal artists that directly oversaw and designed all of the projects, while Senenmut made sure that the pieces that Hatshepsut wanted were created and was ultimately given credit for all of the works produced during her time.

Hatshepsut kneeling is an image of Hatshepsut dressed as a man in the typical beard, headdress and kilt. She is shown kneeling, without breasts, broad shouldered and holding two small pots in her hands. The statue is made from granite and larger than life-sized. The second statue of Hatshepsut that will be compared to the first is one in which shows her in a more feminine light. The breasts are visible, the waist smaller, the facial features more softly delicate, and she wears a full dress. She does, however, retain the traditional headdress in both images. The first image mentioned, in this chapter, will be known to be created before the second image that is mentioned in the above statement. Even though the specific dates for

[22] Tyldesley, *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*, 178-183.

these statues cannot be directly identified the conclusion that Hatshepsut had the more feminine statues created before the masculine will be taken as the chronology for this thesis. As later detailed when Hatshepsut's tomb was being excavated all of the characters that described the masculine images of Hatshepsut were in the feminine form. Thus since Deir el-Bahari was the culmination and pinnacle of her commissioned works, and since it contains masculine images with feminine characters one can safely assume that by the end of her career she was still using masculine images to represent herself. Hence, the statue with Hatshepsut seated must come before the statue of Hatshepsut kneeling. She evolved her images towards that of a male figure and she would not have gone back. It was an evolution and if she had gone back it would have just confused her people.

The Beginning of Hatshepsut's Evolution

In the 19th-century, Egyptologists had a difficult time deciphering who Hatshepsut exactly was. Tuthmosis III had tried his hardest to erase every single thing that had to do with Hatshepsut after her death. So it took some time for Egyptologists to know that she even existed. The excavation at Deir el-Bahari, a burial temple that Hatshepsut had built, led the Egyptologists to uncover the missing pharaoh, but with their discovery came much confusion. As Jean-François Champollion explains:

> …still more astonished was I to find on reading the inscriptions that wherever they referred to this bearded king in the usual dress of the Pharaohs, nouns and verbs were in the feminine, as though a queen were in question. I found the same peculiarity everywhere…[23]

[23] Joyce Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt*, 109.

Thus was discovered Hatshepsut, Egypt's most successful female pharaoh, a woman serving in what was typically a man's place; recognized as a female, but seen as a man.

Hatshepsut was the daughter of the pharaoh Thutmose I and his second wife Ahmose. Even though Ahmose was Thutmose I's second wife, she did hold the title of his Royal Wife. She was not his second wife in the sense that she was one of his secondary wives, a woman that lived in his harem, but in the sense that his first wife had died so he took Ahmose as his next primary wife. Ahmose is rarely mentioned in association with the rule of Thutmose I, because she was his second wife. She took a backseat in much of Thutmose I's reign, but played a prominent role in the story of how Hatshepsut was born from the gods when Hatshepsut was pharaoh.

Along with Hatshepsut, Ahmose and Thutmose I had another daughter Neferubity, or Akhbetneferu, but not much is known about her and she is assumed to have died young. The only place she is featured is in Deir el-Bahari in the context of Hatshepsut. There must have not been much to tell; hence, it is assumed that she died young. Thus, the immediate royal family of Hatshepsut was limited. In order to secure that the throne would kept within the family, Thutmose I had Hatshepsut married to one of his other wives' sons Thutmose II. In this way the family bloodline would pass through Hatshepsut and would be strengthened by her marriage to another one of Thutmose I's children.

Hatshepsut only had one daughter by Thutmose II, Neferure, and no sons. Since she had no son, once again it was a challenge to pick a suitable successor. Thutmose II decided upon Thutmose III, a son from one of his harem-girls, Isis, but he did not promise a marriage to Neferure. A marriage to Neferure would have made Thutmose III's claim to the throne more secure. Possibly Thutmose II did not deem it necessary for Thutmose III to take a wife

right away because of his age and because Hatshepsut was ruling alongside him. This co-regency seemed like a good enough way to secure the throne for his son until he was ready to rule. Thutmose II did not see, however, that this would just make it easier for Hatshepsut to take over. Instead of having to battle both a son and wife, or possibly her own beloved daughter, for the throne, she only had to deal with Thutmose II. He did not seem to give her much of problem; the young child of a harem-girl was easily pacified. She began by producing a great number of propagandist works in Year Two of her and her stepson's co-regency in order to undermine her nephew and stepson's place of power.[24]

Hatshepsut took the throne, officially, for fifteen years. She was crowned king of Egypt during the seventh year of her co-regency with her stepson. All together she ruled for twenty-two years, an impressive feat during the 18th dynasty. The boy king that she ruled for, Thutmose III, was never forgotten about, always being acknowledged as a co-ruler, but she certainly did rule for a longer period of time then was expected of her. Hatshepsut was simply the stronger ruler, the dominant player in the ruling of Egypt until the last few years, in which one can assume that she became old and had more difficulty ruling.[25]

In Year Seven of Hatshepsut's co-regency with Tuthmosis III she was crowned king of Egypt. More than just being king she took on the official five royal names: Hours, Powerful-of-*Kas*; Two Ladies, Flourishing-of-Years; Female Horus of Fine Gold, Divine-of-Diadems; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Maatkare (Truth is the Soul of Re); Daughter of Re, Khenmet-Amun Hatshepsut (the One who is joined with Amun, the Foremost of Women). This was a drastic change from her more straight-forward titles when she was not

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[24] Clayton, Peter B. *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 102-104.
[25] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 92-95.

king. They were the King's Daughter, King's Sister and King's Great Wife Hatshepsut.[26] This change in title marked that she was no longer just a woman in co-regency waiting for a man to take over the throne for her. She was now the ruler of Egypt, its people and she had begun performing a role that the female sex did not typically play. Therefore she had to change the way in which females performed this role, no longer as a woman, but as a man.

The people of Egypt did not see Hatshepsut as a male, nor did she. She was performing a gender to receive the authority and power that she wanted or needed to rule Egypt as a female and to rule it successfully. The pharaohs that had come directly before Hatshepsut had been warriors. As a human of the female sex she could not compete with them physically. Instead she focused on peace. She concentrated on peace by creating more monuments to honor Amun, by having other monuments redone and erecting obelisks to honor the gods and herself.[27] Hatshepsut focused on Egypt and her people. She took care of her land and her people. She proved that she could be a great king of Egypt without having a male sex, but by performing the gender of a man.

In order for Hatshepsut to have the full confidence from Egypt in her ruling style she had to give them an embodiment of authority that would be recognizable. Something that they could cling onto, that they could understand, and a woman on the throne of Egypt was something that they had not come across. Thus, Hatshepsut had two tasks. One, she had to prove to the Egyptian people that she had the right to rule and two, she had to then assert her power over Egypt. She chose the power of images to prove these two points. Her first ploy

[26] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 94-95.
[27] Watterson, *Women in Ancient Egypt,* 139-140.

was to erect obelisks right around the time that she was crowned king.[28] These obelisks defended her right to rule they explained that she had descended from gods:

> Amen, Lord of Thrones of the Two Lands caused me to rule the The Land and the Black Land as a reward. No one rebels against me in all my lands… I am his daughter in very truth, she who serves him and knows what he ordains. My reward from my father is life-stability-dominion on the Horus-throne of all the living, like Re forever.
>
> Obelisk inscription of Queen Hatshepsut [Fig. 3] [29]

Erected next to Hatshepsut's obelisks are the obelisks from her father Tuthmosis I's rule. The obelisk, which lies in the heart of the temple, is today surrounded by ruins from the ancient site, giant blocks of stone and the monuments that are huddled closely around the obelisk in disarray. Palm trees stand against the desert sky, dwarfed by the monolith. Only the richest and most privileged kings could erect such monuments of power, and Hatshepsut was ready to give all that she could to exert her power.[30]

After taking in the sheer mass of Hatshepsut's obelisk, one starts to notice the large hieroglyphics that decorate the sides. All of these inscriptions could be read by anyone who could enter the temple of Amun. This meant while peasants could probably not see these inscrptions all of the royal and upper-class people of Egypt could, and their approval was all that matter at this time. Inscribed on the obelisk are not only the stories of how Hatshepsut was born, but also the details behind the obelisk. Each obelisk was believed to be alive once built; thus, its "birth" story and name was written upon it as public record. The descriptions

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[28] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 95.
[29] Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis,* 220-221.
[30] Tyldesley, Joyce. *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*, 154.

on the obelisk include Hatshepsut's birth, her claim to the throne and some original details about the commission of the obelisk:[31]

> I was sitting in the palace and I remembered the One who created me; my heart directed me to make for him two obelisks of electrum [a natural alloy of gold and silver], that their pyramidions might mingle with the sky amid the august pillared hall between the great pylons of [Tuthmosis I].... My Majesty began to work on them in the year 15, the second month of Winter, 1st day, continuing until Year 16, fourth month of Summer, 30th day, spending 7 months in cutting it from the mountain." Lest anyone doubt her sincerity, Hatshepsut went on to say, "I acted for him with a straightforward heart, as a king does for any god... Let not anyone who hears this say it is boasting which I have said, but rather say, "How like her it is, she who is truthful to her father." The god knows it in me [namely] Amun, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands.... I am his daughter in very truth, who glorifies him.

Senenmut recorded this story, which seems to have come to him in a vision that was set upon his "heart." The inscriptions lay out Hatshepsut's relationship with the earth as well as with the heavens, for Hatshepsut was born from a mortal mother and heavenly father. Tuthmosis I was simply her father on earth that had raised her. This is why, as a woman, she can lay claim to the throne of power in Egypt, for she has a god as a biological father.

For Hatshepsut this obelisk served many purposes. Her power and ability was shown through the construction and transportation of the piece, for only rulers who were the most important could manage to transport such a heavy and awkward object.[32] She honored the

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[31] Tyldesley, *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*, 158, 160.
[32] Curran, Brian A., Grafton, Anthony, Long, Pamela O., and Weiss, Benjamin. *Obelisk: A History*. (Burndy Library: Massachuetts, 2009), 7.

Gods with it, thus pleasing her people with the dedication. Overall, though, she staked her claim on the throne of Egypt. She explained where her heavenly entitlement to the throne came from, thus insuring that her reign may not be broken in the near future and that she would not be forgotten in years to come.

In her pursuit to become King or Pharaoh of Egypt she rewrote her and Tuthmosis I's history. First she claimed that Tuthmosis I was not a sole ruler during his reign, but in fact she was in co-regency with her father during this time. She disregarded that fact that she was only stepping in for Tuthmosis III until he was old enough to rule, and instead took on the role of Pharaoh for herself. Second she created a story about how she was born from a heavenly father who was actually Amen. She placed this story in both her funerary temple and on the obelisk in the temple of Amun.[33]

Staking claim to the throne of Egypt was one task that Hatshepsut did slyly over time and with careful planned-out moves, but keeping that seat was a completely different obstacle to overcome. Every successful ruler before her had been a male. The way in which they depicted themselves had been in a very gender orientated fashion. They wore costume pieces that females never wore and vice versa. With their garments came certain stances and actions that these men would do in order to assert their ruling power over Egypt, so that Egypt would have confidence in them. Many times their works were propaganda. A statue, hieroglyph, or a mural can never be trusted if seen in Ancient Egyptian works. Just because a pharaoh is seen slaying thousands of foreigners does not mean that he actually did. It just means that that pharaoh wanted his people to think that he could. Hatshepsut took ruling examples from these past pharaohs and constructed her own way of depicting her power and

[33] Tyldesley, *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*, 101-103.

authority. She did this so well that she successfully ruled for longer than any other woman in Ancient Egypt.

In the beginning she depicted herself like any typical royal woman would. In *Statue of Hatshepsut, Seated* [Fig. 1], she had feline, small, and soft facial features. Her body is slim, without muscle. Her breasts are visible. It is easy to see that she is a woman, a royal woman; there is no questioning that. What is curious about this statue though is that she is experimenting with her image. While her body and face points to her being a female, she wears the traditional regalia of and Egyptian king. The short kilt, the necklace, and the pharaoh's headdress all point to Hatshepsut having ruling power.[34] Possibly this statue was made before Hatshepsut decided to depict herself as the main king of Egypt and when she still went along with the co-regency with Tuthmosis III.

One of the pieces that Hatshepsut had created that points directly to her displaying herself as man in order to stake her claim to Egypt's throne is *Large Kneeling Statue of Hatshepsut* [Fig. 2]. Here her transformation is complete, along with the kilt and traditional headdress of the pharaoh's she adds the false beard, more masculine facial features, and a masculine body. Her breasts are gone, her slim figure is replaced with more muscle, and her face is no longer as narrow as it had been. When the statues that depict Hatshepsut as a man were found it was confusing to understand who she was. A female dressed as a man, but always being described with feminine nouns and verbs, can be confusing to anyone who may have stumbled across her image without knowing about her life beforehand.

The statues that Hatshepsut had made represented her power and might. She was showing the people of Egypt that she had the power and money to rule the Kingdom. All she

[34] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 97.

needed to do was to obtain the title of Pharaoh. It was not everyone in Egypt that she was trying to convince of this, but only the upper class. To Hatshepsut it was the pieces that depicted her as man that would let her gain the title that she was seeking, King and Pharaoh. She had enough money to create them and to have them commissioned the way that she wanted, with her as a man, and with her in the traditional garb of the pharaohs.[35]

Even after Hatshepsut was discovered, many times when she is talked about in academic books she is described as a "female king."[36] She is not simply described as king, or queen, and not using the word woman, but using the words female king. A female is a sex, a woman is a gender, and by performing the role of pharaoh she was not performing the gender of a woman but the gender of a man, because that is how pharaohs always were, depicted as men. Thus combining female with king means that she is being identified as a female sex being a man, because the word king is typically associated with the male sex. As mentioned before, it was not that her people saw her as a male. They knew that she was a female, but in order to show her people, to have them understand that she was a pharaoh, she needed all of the markers of a pharaoh.[37] These markers had only ever been worn by males, so in order for Hatshepsut to fully step into the position of pharaoh and for her people to have absolute faith in her, she had to show them that she could do what the male sex could. She could perform pharaoh, thus performed man.

In actuality a great portion of Hatshepsut's rule and personal energy went into avoiding thought that there was a man behind her rule. She wanted everyone to know that she could be a pharaoh without the help of a male. It was important to Hatshepsut to become

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[35] Minor, Vernon Hyde. *Art History's History*. (Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 2001), 140-149.
[36] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 109.
[37] Watterson, *Women in Ancient Egypt,* 140.

King, instead of Queen of Egypt because of what King meant in Ancient Egypt. Queen was already a title that was held by other predecessors of King's wives, they held certain duties that a King did not, and vise versa. A King held certain privileges and performed certain roles that Hatshepsut wanted. So King and Queen did not exactly denote gender in Egypt, but rank, status, and responsibilities.[38] To overcome the notion that she could not rule Egypt because she was a woman would take determination.

In Egypt a son was to follow his father as Pharaoh, this posed a problem for Hatshepsut, for she was not a son. She therefore had to take certain steps in order for the people to see her as a viable heir, such as strengthening her ties with her father, by erecting obelisks and making sure that his monuments were taken care of. She wanted Egypt to see her as a Pharaoh, not as a woman in a man's role. As Naville puts it:

> The Egyptians were averse to the throne being occupied by a woman, otherwise Hatchepsut would not have been obliged to assume the garb of a man; she would not have disguised her sex under male attire, not omitting the beard…. How strong this feeling was in Hatchepsut's own time is shown by the fact that she never dared to disregard it in her sculptures, where she never appears as a woman.[39]

The problem that she ended up running into, though, was that the only people that had ever been a Pharaoh were men. This gave her a template that might have been able to help her appear as a Pharaoh, but consequently also as a man.

At first Hatshepsut did little things through her monuments to give off the appearance of being a Pharaoh. When depicted in statues she wore a Pharaoh's headdress and kilt. She erected obelisks, had a fabulous funerary temple built, and made decisions that normally

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[38] Tyldesley, *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*, 118, 130.
[39] Naville, E. *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari Part 3*. (London, 1989).

Pharaohs would make. She tried to emulate what previous Pharaohs had done in hopes of becoming a great ruler like them and being respected by her people as well. She had already spent fifteen years shadowing her mother as Queen, so figuring out what the "right" things were, to do as a Pharaoh was not hard for her to do after all of her practice.

Hatshepsut became almost obsessed with gender performance from her coronation onwards. She was constantly trying to display herself as a Pharaoh, which had only been performed by a man before.[40] Her statues changed from just wearing the garments that a Pharaoh would, to looking like a man, or Pharaoh, would. Her body became more masculine in later statues, her facial features rounder and less feminine, thicker not as thin, and she even dons the Pharaoh beard. She not only wears the clothes of the Pharaoh but is also depicted in stances that are typical of a man. She sacrificed certain qualities about herself in order to make the people of Egypt feel safe. What was said was that Hatshepsut would have a full-length mirror around her at all times so she could look at herself.[41] In one instance she describes herself before turning over to look like a male:

> To look upon her was more beautiful than anything; her splendor and her form were divine; she was a maiden, beautiful and blooming.[42]

It is sad to think that her people felt safer under a man's rule than a woman's, but it is astonishing to think of all of the pains that Hatshepsut went through to make them feel safe. Even if that meant surrendering the way she would actually like to depict herself to instead be viewed as a man. One wonders if she did not have to focus so much on being trusted and

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[40] Butler, Judith. *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,* 360.
[41] Tyldesly, *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*. 118, 130, 131, 127.
[42] Winlock, H.E. "The Egyptian Expedition 1925-1927." (*Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,* New York 23.2: 1928), 47.

looking like a man and Pharaoh, if she would have been able to accomplish more in her lifetime for Egypt.

One thing Hatshepsut did seem to help instill within the culture and tradition of Egypt was an affinity for the sun god Amen. Akhenaten is famously known for being the main Pharaoh of sun worship. During his reign he moved to Karnak, to be able to worship at the Temple of Amen, the temple of the sun. He had a strong connection with the Aten and focused not on ruling Egypt, but to paying homage to the sun. While Akhenaten was the first Pharaoh to study the Aten so closely, to worship it so religiously, he was not the first to reverence the sun.[43] Hatshepsut has an interesting history with the sun as well. After two years of looking after the Kingdom until Tuthmosis III was old enough to rule, Hatshepsut visited the temple of Karnak where Amen told her that he, not Tuthmosis I, was her father.

With all of Hatshepsut's work and propagandist ideals underway she was easily able to secure and maintain the throne of Egypt. She focused on pleasing her people through peace and by keeping their land's gods happy. She convinced Egypt that she was a competent and capable ruler by displaying that she could rule and play the role just was well as a man could. Her plan took time and careful execution. She did something that was not of her time, to play a different gender role than she was brought up playing. She took playing her role to the extreme, she took a gamble, and it paid off. She successfully ruled as pharaoh for twenty-two years and her people were happy during her reign; she was a successful pharaoh.

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[43] El Mahdy, Christine. *Tutankhamen: The Life and Death of the Boy-King*. (St. Martin's Press, 1999), 84, 192.

Chapter 3

Nefertiti and the Question of Co-Regency

This chapter will give evidence of Nefertiti being the co-ruler of Egypt during Akhenaten, her husband's reign. The main image that will be used to solidify the argument that she was in fact a co-ruler is the asexual colossus of Akhenaten/Neferiti, c. 1350-1334, sandstone, 13 ft 1in, Egyptian Museum, Cairo [Figure 4]. The colossus of Akhenaten/Nefertiti is currently owned and displayed by the Cairo Museum in Egypt. It is one of a series of architectural sculptures that was excavated in 1925 by Henri Chevrier at Karnak. A similar statue was found alongside the Akhenaten/Nefertiti statue. The other statue has small differences, including a traditional pleated kilt with a low waist to show Akhenaten's swollen belly. While the second statue is clearly Akhenaten, the Akhenaten/Nefertiti statue was not as clearly defined. Both statues were erected at Karnak, resting against pillars in the courtyard of the temple built by Akhenaten, right next to the Amun-Ra temple. They were carved during the earlier part of his reign before he moved his capital from Thebes to Tell el-Amarna.[44] It was assumed by Chevrier that all of the statues in this series were of Akhenaten, but more recently the theory that this particular sculpture represents both Nefertiti and Akhenaten has come about.[45]

A progression of images that will show Nefertiti's rise to fame and co-regency during the New Kingdom will also be given throughout the chapter. This progression will be formed under the assumption that Nefertiti first appears in images as under her husband with no hand in ruling Egypt. These will be determined by looking at images that show her in typical roles

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[44] "Colossal of Akhenaten." *The Global Egyptian Museum*. 6 April 2011. http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/default.aspx.

[45] Nicholas Reeves, *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 164.

for royal primary wives who were seen often in official royal art. Then by examining images in which Nefertiti takes on larger more aggressive roles and poses that were reserved for pharaohs that displayed her power. However it was Akhenaten who let her receive so much power so the central image that will be used to show that Akhenaten did in fact view his wife as a co-ruler, is the colossal Akhenaten/Nefertiti statue discovered at Karnak. The sandstone mammoth statue stands at thirteen feet tall and is missing its crown. It holds the crook and flail and seems to have at one point have had a beard attached which was broken off. Akhenaten's name is written upon it, but it is clearly missing its genitalia, has wide hips, and a narrow waist, which is typical of female statues. Who and what this statue actually represents will be discussed at great length so that the argument that Nefertiti was in fact a co-regent can be defended.

Nefertiti's Rise from Obscurity to Fame

First known as Nefertiti "A Beautiful Woman has Come" and later, after the acceptance of the Aten, as Neferneruaten-Nefertiti "Beautiful are the Beauties of Aten, A Beautiful Woman has Come", Nefertiti left her mark in Egyptian history as more than just a pharaoh's wife. She is known as an icon of ancient beauty, intelligence, ambition, and ruthlessness during the time of her husband's radical revival of Egypt's religion, culture, and government.[46] Nefertiti stands out amongst the other ruling women of her time because of the way in which she was portrayed through images. Not only was she depicted differently because of the new style of Amarna art, which was influenced by the new religion that her

[46] Toby Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 196.

husband Akhenaten introduced to Egypt, but also because of the actions that she portrayed in the official art.[47]

To understand the importance of Nefertiti's transformation from a royal woman who served under her pharaoh husband to a status of almost co-regency with her husband, it is important to understand the transformation that Egypt went through during Nefertiti's husband Akhenaten's reign. Born with the birth name Amenhotep IV, he was never destined to become ruler of Egypt, but was forced into the role after his older brother Thutmose died prematurely. At the beginning Amenhotep IV ruled with his father in co-regency, in order to make the transition from son to pharaoh easier for himself. Amenhotep IV watched as his father held his large jubilee celebration at Thebes, and by the time he was able to rule on his own, he was ready to outshine his father in every way.[48]

Amenhotep IV wanted to do something more than be just a pharaoh of Egypt; he wanted to leave a mark. He wanted to pursue his own agendas and in the end pressed his personal beliefs on his country at an unprecedented extent.[49] At first Amenhotep IV seemed no different from his predecessors. He was crowned at Karnak, which is where the temple of Amun is held, and married a woman of non-royal blood, Nefertiti, just as his father had. By choosing Nefertiti he passed on all of his sisters and half-sisters, which were customary at the time to marry. He instead picked a woman that was outside of the immediate royal family. Not being directly connected to the king, as a daughter, mother, or wife, meant that a woman's history was not recorded in the official documents. This is why Nefertiti seems to pop up from nowhere; she could have been a princess of some sort, but there is no way of

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[47] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 126-129, 231-232.
[48] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 192.
[49] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 192.

knowing because her life only becomes important enough to record once she married Amenhotep IV. The fact that Tiy's parentage had been stressed, as described in chapter one, by Amenhotep III (Amenhotep IV's father), through scarabs and royal documents was quite unusual. Amenhotep IV transformation was very much influenced by his father. He wanted to emulate his father by taking a bride of the same kind, non-royal, and also wanted to continue his father's work.[50] One of the first and the most important thing that Amenhotep IV started with was the priesthood in Egypt. Amenhotep III realized that there was a growing power in the priesthood of the Amun and had tried to curb it. He aimed to not let priests have so much power, but Amenhotep IV took it one step further.

Amenhotep IV introduced a new object to worship: the Aten [Fig. 5]. The Aten was not a new concept; Akhenaten just added his own twist to it. Akhenaten decided to worship the Aten in its own right and only the Aten. The Aten became the ultimate deity and the highest power. Amenhotep IV had simply given the symbol more power, so that in exchange he could give himself more power. The only way to the Aten was through Akhenaten; therefore, he destroyed any need for priesthood in Egypt.[51] If there was no priesthood then there was no need to worry about a rise of powers that might kill him in the end. To ensure that he would be the only person with ultimate power he had to ensure that he was the only way to the new object of worship, which was the Aten. Amenhotop IV thus had to change his name quickly. He chose Akhenaten in order to honor the sun disc, Aten, instead of having a name that honored the sun god, Amen. He moved his kingdom to a new location and he also introduced a new style of art or of representation. The art style moved away from harsh lines

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[50] Joyce Tyldesley, *Nefertiti,* (New York, Viking, 1998), 40-41.
[51] Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 120-122.

and ridged characters. The Amarna style is characterized mainly by the physical exaggeration of the human figure, elongated and attenuated limbs, protruding bellies and broad hips with egg-shaped heads, Akhenaten's take on how the human figure should look brought about a revival in the art world.[52] This new style of representation was so different from what the Ancient Egyptian sculptures had that this dramatic change must have had Akhenaten's influence and command. Akhenaten was trying to make a clear break from the past, from when the priesthood was taking hold and from when his father ruled. What better way to do it, than through visual propaganda?

This new style of art could be a better form of realism for this time period. It breaks away from the rigid formality of earlier official art and could be giving a more accurate picture of what people from this era looked like.[53] The main argument for why the style of art changed, other than Akhenaten wanting to make a clean break from the past, is that Akhenaten had a physical ailment, Marfan's Syndrome [Fig. 6]. Since it is assumed that he had this physical aliment, he was depicted in a different way, and everyone else's images were created to emulate his. Thus the Amarna style was born out of a genetic disease. Marfan's causes no mental or reproductive impairments, but does have specific physical makers. These markers include tall stature, slender bones, long face, elongated extremities, slender fingers and toes, wide pelvic girdle, and an abnormally elongated skull. This syndrome may have caused him to have these elongated features, with wide hips and a protruding belly. So many of the markers of Marfan's Syndrome are included in depictions of Akhenaten that it is almost thought of as impossible that he would be depicted in this way

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[10] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 192.
[53] Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 123-124.

without having Marfan's Syndrome.[54] Having Marfan's Syndrome, which changed his body drastically from those around him, may be the reason that he had the art style changed. To give him more confidence and have everyone else emulate him, as pharaoh. Possibly also the artists were for once being encouraged to represent everything as they saw it.[55]

This new style of art thought does present a problem. It makes it unclear what Akhenaten and Nefertiti specifically did. When viewing the Akhenaten/Nefertiti statue one cannot make a definite claim to whom the statue actually represents. It could be a statue that was made to show Akhenaten exactly how he looked in reality, or Nefertiti's feminine features could be confused for the makers of Marfan's Syndrome. The way in which women and men dressed and what specific physical features they held in images explain what roles they played during their reign. The crown is typically the perfect marker of who a certain image represents but on this statue it is missing. Could it be that there was one statue of Akhenaten, which can be clearly identified and on the opposite side one of Nefertiti that cannot be as definitely identified because of its missing pieces and ambiguous art style. If one statue represents Akhenaten and the other Nefertiti then they would have been represented next to each other at the same height. Height difference is how researchers can tell who was more important than others in Ancient Egypt, but with the statues at the same height, could it be that Nefertiti and Akhenaten are equals.[56]

Other instances of Akhenaten and Nefertiti being on the same footing are in images of the two in hieroglyphics. Nefertiti's height becomes closer to that of matching her husband's height over time. At first she is shown as almost as large as her husband, but still serving him

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[54] Reeves, *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet,* 150-151.
[55] On a stele that Berlin's Ancient Museum now displays, Bek, one of Akhenaten's sculptors, states that His Majesty, taught him along with the other court sculptors, to represent exactly what they saw.
[56] "Colossal of Akhenaten." *The Global Egyptian Museum*. 6 April 2011. http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/default.aspx.

a drink in an image from *The Rock Tombs of el-Amarna* [Fig. 7]. In an image from later on in their lives[57], but still from *The Rock Tombs of el-Amarna,* both husband and wife are sitting down worshiping the Aten [Fig. 8]. More than that Nefertiti's Hathor horns and sun disc crown actually dwarf the height of Akhenaten's crown. This does not mean that she is more powerful than him, his seat still sits higher than hers, but it could suggest co-regency. A co-regency in which one partner takes more power in different ways than the other, instead of a sole ruler. The new art style comes along with different conventions for showing power.

Akhenaten not only took the time to create a new style of art and focus Egypt on a new religion, but he also completely moved the entire Egyptian culture to a new geographical site. He built his new city on virgin land that had, before, been unoccupied. The modern site is called Amarna, it lies in the center of the country, on the eastern bank of the Nile and here is where the Aten and its highest priest would be able to reign unchallenged by any other god. This dramatic switch of domain had never been seen before. Many today believe that Akhenaten was a maniac, a religious mad man and this type of shift would not be seen again until two thousand years later when the Japanese imperial court made the same type of move. What Akhenaten did was not common; it was a difficult move and impressive that he could pull it off during his reign without having a complete revolution on his hands.[58]

Akhenaten had taken a new object of worship, the Aten, and made it the front-runner of his campaign to rule Egypt. In this way he would no longer have to compete with the prior priesthood of Egypt that followed the Amen and he would be the only one able to reach and communicate with the Aten, making him the only power in Egypt. This shift is seen in the

[57] It can be assumed that this image comes after the serving image because there are more children represented in the image where Akhenaten and Nefertiti are seated. Typically the artists try and represent all of the children who are born during a certain time the reign, and it helps viewers today to create a timeline.
[58] Reeves, *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet,* 103-106, 113.

images from this time. In Ancient Egypt religion from its earliest times displayed the arrangement of gods in groupings of threes or "triads." These triads were worshiped in their own right as a collective godhead, as in the Osiris-Isis-Horus combination or the Amun-Mut-Khonsu triad that many people worshiped at Thebes. The triad of Aten, Akhenaten and Nefertiti, showed a new approach to the divine family. The Aten was the creator-god Amen, Akhenaten was equated to Atum's asexually created child Shu and Nefertiti was explained as the goddess Tefnut, who was Shu's female twin and theologically equal and equivalent. Thus this triad explained the Heliopolitan myth, with each member playing a primary role.[59] This is where the argument that the Akhenaten/Nefertiti statue is not just Akhenaten or Nefertiti, but instead it represents both of them. This statue is a combination of Tefnut and Shu, representing two-thirds of the triad. If the statue had been created to represent both of them, then the argument that they were in co-regency only gets stronger. They are literally the same being, with the same amount of power.

The images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti becoming equals continues and strengthens over time. While there is no textual archives that directly state that Nefertiti is in a co-regnecy with Akhenaten during their period in Thebes, the images tell a different story. Gaston Maspero was the first to propose the idea that Nefertiti became regnant queen by the time they moved to Amarna. Julia Samson, in writing about Theban images [Fig. 9][60] of Nefertiti expresses it nicely:

> Here was not a goddess but a Regnant Queen. The determined and powerful purpose is obvious being the numerous carvings, and they spell aloud that Akhenaten wanted

[59] Reeves, *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet,* 146.
[60] *Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and the Royal Princesses*. Limestone, c. 1350 BCE. Aegiptisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

> no mistake made! He was writing and displaying in the various carved scenes the new social and religious development as well as showing to his people his wife's equality at his side. In Thebes this policy was pictured many years before their co-rule was actually recorded at Amarna…[61]

Once Akhenaten and Nefertiti take Amarna as their new home, it becomes clear that she is in co-regency with her husband. When Samson mentions that the *Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and the Royal Princesses* relief is a good example of a Regent Queen she is not simply citing the fact that Nefertiti and Akheaten are the same size, although Akhenaten is still taller, but the stools that they sit upon. Akhenaten's figure may be taller and holding the eldest daughter Meritaten, signifying greater importance, but Nefertiti sits upon the stool with the symbol of the Two Lands carved into it. While it could be an error of the artist it could also signify that Nefertiti holds greater political power than her husband.[62] There is even a positive sighting of her in a tomb in the Amarna tomb of Panehesy, where she is shown wearing a *khat* head-cloth topped by an *atef* crown [Fig. 10]. The king stands in front of her with an even more elaborate atef crown. The atef crown is always associated with kings and with the cult of Osiris. So, while the artist does depict her in the crown, he does not give her the correspondingly kingly titles and Akhenaten's crown is still larger and more ornate than hers. The only other woman who had ever been pictured in such a headdress, normally worn by men, was Hatshepsut, during her reign as female pharaoh. Nefertiti was undeniably a powerful figure in Egypt. She may not have had the equal amount of power as Akhenaten

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[61] Tyldesley, *Nefertiti*, 140-141.
[62] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 132.

did, but with so many images of her in powerful positions, one can only conclude that she had some type of ruling power.[63]

They may not have been in an equal co-regency with one another, but Neferiti was important enough to be pictured on the same level as Akhenaten, wearing a typical king's crown, and to be the third part to a divine family triad. She was important to Akhenaten's rule, and it is clear that on some level she was quite powerful.[64] Akhenaten was chiefly consumed with his religion and with creating an image for himself. He let the style of art, and the worship of a new object overcome his responsibilities to Egypt. Akhenaten's rule was not the smoothest in the history of reigns. Many of the problems stemmed from the debates that surrounded the change in religion, which was high among the topics to talk about in the upper class of the time.[65] This is why it is not out of the realm of possibility that Nefertiti and he were in co-regency together. Theoretically, together, they would be able to keep hold of Egypt, or if Akhenaten did not deem ruling as important as worshiping the Aten and the promotion of himself as a divine being he could have handed over more responsibility to Nefertiti than was normally given to a royal wife. Whatever the reasons are there is evidence that Nefertiti was more than just a royal woman of Egypt who sat idly by her husband. She was a woman who took control, began to display herself as a ruler, a man, and as someone who would not be forgotten.

Nefertiti comes onto the scene of the New Kingdom and leaves in the same way, abruptly. In year 12, Meketaten, the eldest daughter of six to Akhenaten and Nefertiti, dies. Meketaten was laid to rest within her father's tomb until her own burial chamber, which

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[63] Tyldesley, *Nefertiti*, 143-144.
[64] Tyldesley, *Nefertiti,* 143-145, 150.
[65] Montserrat, Dominic. *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient Egypt,* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 41.

would never be finished, would be built in the Amarna cliffs. Here in the unfinished royal tomb in the cliffs of Amarna is where the first hint of what might have happened to Nefertiti lies. The main corridors and principal burial chamber have been started and in the burial chamber lies two subsidiary suites, one of which was certainly made for Nefertiti. At this time many of the royal family begins to die because of a plague that came from the Near East. Nefertiti vanishes from the political scene after the death of her beloved daughter Menketaten. It is confirmed, through the Amarna letters that Nefertiti's daughter dies from the plague that was running rampant through the Near East. Therefore, an easy explanation is that Nefertiti too succumbed to the plague that claimed many of the lives of her family members. If, however, this plague also claimed the life of Akhenaten's beloved wife, why would he not have it recorded as he had Meketaten's death recorded? He would not simply ignore her death, but all evidence of her vanishes after Meketaten's death.[66] Akhenaten loved his wife dearly, he even gave her the name:

> …great in the palace, fair of face, beautiful in the double plumes, the mistress of joy, at the hearing of whose voice one rejoices, possessor of graciousness, great of love, whose arrangements please the Lord of the Two Lands.

A love like this, one that spoke of greater equality, care, and adoration would not be thrown aside so easily. Reliefs show Nefertiti at the pharaoh's side almost constantly, their relationship was more than just for them, it became a central part to the religion of Egypt. Many times the couple were pictured glancing at each other while watching over their

[66] Tyldesley, *Nefertiti,* 150-151.

children, or during ceremonies. Akhenaten's passion for his wife was so great while they were together, that it is baffling that she simply drops out of site so quickly.[67]

There are some theories for her sudden disappearance. Some historians suggest dramatic stories and believe that she may have committed a wicked crime and was banished from her kingdom. Another suggestion is that Akhenaten was anxious for the birth of a son, and after Nefertiti gave him six daughters he wed his daughter Meritaten in order to secure a male heir.[68] More interesting yet is the theory that she took her new role in co-regency to a new level, disappearing so that she may only reappear as Smenkhakara, the next pharaoh of Egypt. She had been slowly working her way up in the official images of her and her husband. Becoming larger, surpassing his height with her crown, and even being pictured in a male warrior stance smiting a female enemy [Fig. 11]. Her final transformation would be to change her name and image in order to rule as a pharaoh. To do this she would have to lessen her role in the reign of Akhenaten in order to focus more on herself, in order to make her full transformation from woman to pharaoh.[69]

While there is no textual evidence that Neferiti did transform into the next pharaoh Smenkhakara, through careful research it does not seem outside of the realm of possibility. Taking this theory, the transformation for Nefertiti from woman to pharaoh was not a quick one. At the start of Akhenaten's rule there are many murals and statues that show Nefertiti as being under Akhenaten. She is pictured as a royal woman, as queen of Egypt, not as a co-ruler. Once the new religion and the Aten are presented, however, she starts to become more. She takes on the third part of the triad of worship; she is pictured as on par as her husband

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[67] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 198.
[68] Tyldesley, *Nefertiti,* 152.
[69] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 199.

and in traditional pharaoh garb. Which leads one back to the Akhenaten/Nefertiti statue. This statue and what it truly stands for is still an enigma to viewers today.

This statue has been nicknamed by Tyldesley as the 'sexless colossus', and for good reason. Its stature is tall and it commands the space that it occupies. The crown is missing, which is why it is difficult to determine who this statue is for sure. The crown many times is what differentiates Nefertiti from Akhenaten and with it missing the question of who it is becomes hazy. The eyes, nose and mouth are missing, maybe broken off deliberately or eroded away over time. The neck and face are long just like prior statues of Akhenaten, but also of Nefertiti. The arms and legs mimic the face and neck in the same way. Slender and long, skinny and almost spider-like, all of the limbs imitate the markers of Marfan's Syndrome, which Akhenaten is rumored to have had. While Akhenaten is almost assumed to have had Marfan's Syndrome for sure, Nefertiti has none of the specific markers that Akhenaten's images have, thus she is assumed to not have the genetic disorder. While Nefertiti's images are created to mimic that of Marfan's Syndrome, she does not appear to have such specific markers, mainly the protruding belly, in many of her images.

Other characteristics that point to a different person and sex are such attributes as the wide hips, the fact that one cannot determine for certain if the statue has breasts or not, and that the genitalia is missing. Since this statue was originally found in a series devoted to Akhenaten, it was first assumed that the statue was telling a horrifying and terrible truth that pharaoh had no genitalia. This assumption was made because when the statue was dug up in the 1920s and it was not yet discovered how big of a role Nefertiti played during Akhenaten's reign, and they thought, instead of this being a combination of Akhenaten and Nefertiti that it was actually Akhenaten without genitalia because he simply had none. Maybe

he was a eunuch or maybe he had suffered from an illness that had made his genitalia wither away to nothing.[70]

New theories however connect the statue with Nefertiti, Akenaten and Aten. It becomes a visual combination of the triad in a new and innovative way. In this statue it is as though Akhenaten is displaying the combination of the male and female elements of the god Shu and the goddess Tefnut, who are both in human form Akhenaten and Nefertiti.[71] All of these theories lead to questions about whom this statue actually represents and what its function is. The idea that this might be Akhenaten without genitalia can be quickly thrown out. Akhenaten had many children, and there are no records of him having any sexual problems. The theory that this is a combination of two earthly powers is much more appealing.

If this is simply a statue of Nefertiti then there should have been clearer markers: the breasts might have been accentuated more clearly with the shoulders not so broad, the name of Akhenaten taken off, and the face not so clearly taken from other statues that are marked as Akhenaten. If it is simply Akhenaten then there should also be clearer markers, such as visible genitalia. It does make more sense however to think of this statue as a combination of genders, or gods and goddesses together making two-thirds of the holy triad. With the combination of Shu, or Akhenaten, and the goddess Tefnut, or Nefertiti in one statue strengthens the theory that these two were in co-regency. The statue signifies these two people combining their powers to look over Egypt, to protect it and to be worshiped by it together.

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[70] Reeves, *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet,* 165-166.
[71] Tyldesley, *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 126.

Combining two gods into one and representing them in a series of statues dedicated to Akhenaten may appear as Akhenaten trying to show himself as all powerful. The assumption being that it he is powerful enough to be two gods in one then he must be powerful enough to run Egypt. There is, however, too much evidence that he was already using Nefertiti as Tefnut, so all of a sudden changing it so that he could represent two beings would be irrational. Akhenaten had changed an entire style of art, he had changed the meaning of the holy triad, he would not have done all of this to simply go back and try to take Nefertiti out of the picture in that way. To him the triad could only be completed by the Aten, Shu and Tefnut who were all different entites, just like the aten, he and Nefertiti were. If he wanted to replace Nefertiti he would have done it by taking on another wife, which he did later, instead of replacing her and her representation of Tefnut with himself. This statue does not represent Akhenaten alone nor does it represent Nefertiti acting alone. It represents both of them. It shows that both of them were powerful, they were the only way to the Aten, to the ruling power. Together they formed the ruling power, together, with the Aten, they ruled Egypt.

After ruling Egypt together for such a great length of time, after living in harmony with each other, and after forming a new city and religion together it seems almost impossible for Nefertiti to be able to drop out so silently. A love like theirs, with passion and energy, should have had an equal reaction to her absence.[72] In the past, with situations like Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, when one person had been scorned, in this case Thutmose III, that person took action. Erasing all remnants of the prior person. Removing names, faces and statues, it was typical to see current pharaoh's take out their aggression on a former ruler by defacing the images of the prior party. In this way that person, in this case Hatshepsut, would

[72] Wilkinson, *Lives of the Ancient Egyptians,* 198.

not be remembered in the present day, they would not live on, they would not have eternal life.[73]

Thus, if Nefertiti had done some error to Akhenaten, would we not see fewer images of her? Would not her name be erased from various sites, would not she be harder for us to get to know, to understand? This is where the theory, and controversy, about her and the pharaoh Smenkhkare comes into play. Since there is nothing recorded about what actually happened to Nefertiti one can only assume, one can only draw conclusions from the evidence given. That is why the Smenkhakare theory is so intriguing. If Nefertiti did not die and there is no record of her being banished, then maybe she evolved, turned into something completely new and different. Maybe she turned into a pharaoh.

There are many theories when it comes to trying to determine who Smenkhakare was. The first is that this pharaoh who followed after Akhenaten, might have been the younger brother of the king. He only reigned for two years, and in reality it was probably a co-regency in the beginning of Smenkharkare's rule or at the end of Akhenaten's life. In the second year of his reign he seems to start making new plans to return to the old orthodoxy. He then marries Merytaten, daughter of Akhenaten, but she soon dies. It is assumed that she predeceased him, thus Ankhesenpaaten becomes the only daughter of six to still be alive. She was married to Tutankhaten (later known as Tutankhamun) who was the heir, and soon took over.[74]

Another theory follows closely to the first, but with one main difference. Prince Smenkharkare is not a man, but a woman, and that woman is Nefertiti. This dramatic

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[73] Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-By-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 108.
[74] Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-By-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 126.

suggestion comes from the fact that Nefertiti disappears from the scene right as Smenkharkare appears, seemingly out of nowhere. This evidence by coupled by images that at first were interpreted as Akhenaten and Smenkharkare sitting together [Fig. 12], but were later identified as Akhenaten and Nefertiti sitting together. The style of art of this time period makes it difficult to differentiae genders, but it is curious that the two, to even scholars, could be confused. In order for Akhenaten to obtain Nefertiti as a co-regent did he feel as though he needed to turn her into a man first, in order for it to be a successful co-regency? The only other example of a female ruling as pharaoh was Hatshepsut, and she fully went into displaying herself as a man in order to rule successfully for such a long time.[75]

One likely scenario that seems both possible and outside the realm of fairy tales comes from Tyldesley's book *Nefertiti*. Here Tyldesley sets out different scenario's for who Smenkhakare could have been, maybe just Neferetiti, possibly just a male heir? Her most convincing argument, however, is one that combines both Nefertiti and Smenkharkare. Tyldesley sets forth that Akhenaten's intended successor was in fact Ankhkheperure Smenkhakare who married Princess Meritaten and was made co-regent, but died either before or soon after Akhenaten. This left the throne open to Tutankhamen, who was too young to rule, so Nefertiti took over as regent, claiming the name Smenkharkare. If she chose the name Smenkharkare maybe it was a way to have her subjects see her as the ultimate power, a pharaoh. Smenkharkare could much more easily take on the role of pharaoh than Nefertiti could, since he was already a man, and if Nefertiti took his name all she would have to do is keep up the appearance of a pharaoh.[76]

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[75] Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis,* 236-237.
[76] Tyldesley, *Nefertiti,*163-164.

What we know about Nefertiti's death and the life of Smenkhkare is so limited that the evidence that is presented can be twisted in many different scenarios. There is no hard evidence, nothing is written down, telling what the truth is. Even the somewhat hard evidence that was found in tomb 55 in the Valley of the Kings can be directed towards whatever one would want to believe. Here in KV 55 the body of Smenkhkare was supposedly discovered. Edward Ayrton excavated the tomb in 1907. Ayrton found a badly water damaged, unfinished tomb containing what seemed to be the body of someone important enough that all of their names had been hacked out of the wall after their death. At first he thought that it was the body of Tiy, because the damaged body had been identified as female. Then the body changed gender and was identified as Akhenaten, because the female characteristics of the body were misinterpreted as female instead of Akhenaten's feminine like body. Recent scientific examinations have found that the body was probably a brother, or half-brother to Tutankhaum, thus they link the discovery as being the body of Smenkhkare.

If this male body found in KV 55 is in fact the body of Smenkhkare a curious question comes about. Why was his coffin made for a female? All of the cartouches on the coffin had been hacked out, which would cause the deceased to have a hard time in the after life, with no name, and all of the ending to the appropriate words are feminine. This coffin had been made for a royal female.[77] The body of the royal young man has suffered both desecration and the trials of a bad excavation, which happened quite often in the early 1900s. Since Nefertiti's body has never been found and Smenkhkare's body only hesitatively

[77] Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-By-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 127.

identified the question of Nefertiti rising to power as a co-ruler will always be a puzzle to Egyptology.[78]

Nefertiti's rise to fame was a slow one. She had to be ruthless and understand that many of her people probably did not like her in the end, because she was not just changing her ideals but her people's as well. She, along with Akhenaten, took Egypt out of its comfort zone, they did something that many cannot, and they changed the way of an entire country. No one can say what the thoughts of people from the past were. No one knows if Akhenaten saw Nefertiti as an equal part to his ruling or if he just saw her as the piece that held the triad of the Aten religion together. Either way, she was important to him and her importance comes out in the images that he has created during his period. Nefertiti is shrouded in mystery, her beginning and end being the same, mysterious and unknown. While she is seen as a powerful woman of her time period, it is interesting to find out that when she needed to show her most powerful self, she, and her husband, did it through the guise of a man.

From the information presented and the research conducted it can be concluded that Nefertiti did in fact have a co-regency with her husband Akhenaten. Nefertiti slowly worked her way up, through images and art styles, from just a pharaoh's wife to power and equality in the reign of Akhenaten. The reality of her situation, whether she was a co-regent or not, may never be found written down, but it might not matter. Nefertiti is still today being questioned, she is still being brought up in conversations, and she is still remembered. Her tomb is still being searched for today, and she will surely not be forgotten about easily. She displayed herself in a way that helped her obtain power. She played with her gender role to

[78] Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis,* 237.

get what she wanted, and for that she can only be remembered and respected as a powerful royal woman.

Conclusion

The reasons that some royal women are better remembered and known than other royal women vary greatly. Nefertari was Ramses II favorite wife, his Great Royal Wife, and thus her funerary temple is expansive and beautifully painted. Her tomb provides a better idea of what she was like, her history, and what roles she played during her lifetime and her husband's reign.[79] Nefertiti was pictured quite prominently in the official art of Egypt during the reign of her husband Akhenaten, but being displayed in royal art was unusual for a royal woman. Her carved figure dominates the temple of Aten at Karnak. She even takes on a traditional warlike stance of the pharaohs [Fig. 13], picking up captives and killing them with a mace. These carvings do not only state that she took on a much larger role in Akhenaten's rule, but also that she would not be forgotten in the years to come.[80]

Tiy is another prominent royal woman because, like Nefertiti, she took on more responsibilities than that was expected of a royal wife. Tiy's ambition was to create a more divine Great Royal Wife, thus setting her down in history as the royal woman who emphasized the importance of the divinity of the royal wife. She instated the horns and disks for the primary wives to wear while being pictured on murals and also is many times pictured as large as her husband, suggesting that she was as just as important as he was.[81]

While Nefertari and Tiy were prominent royal women and are both remembered today, their success was secondary when compared to that of their partners. It is impossible to say whether, without their male counterparts, these women would be remembered at all.

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[79] Peter A. Clyaton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,*148.
[80] Clayton*, Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 124.
[81] Gay Robbins, *Women in Ancient Egypt,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 52.

Nefertari's husband built her a beautiful tomb and Tiy revamped her role as great royal wife to give herself more power. There are two royal women, however, who seem to be remembered because of who they were and for what they did, not just because their counterparts in ruling gave them the tools to do so. One was Hatshepsut, who came from just the status of a royal woman to ruling on her own for twenty-two years. The other was Nefertiti, who rose to an almost co-regency status with her husband, Akhenaten. Even though, after Hatshepsut's rule, Tuthmosis III ended up effacing her name from many of the temples, she is still remembered and stands out as a prominent figure in Egypt's past. She was not easily forgotten simply because of the sheer magnitude of the works she had produced of herself throughout her lifetime. From statues, obelisks and carvings to her temple at Deir el-Bahri, Hatshepsut produced too much work to just be forgotten or thrown into obscurity like some other royal women.[82]

Royal women like Tiaa or Ankhesenamen are easier to forget about, because there is not as much known about them. Tiaa has few to no images that have made it to modern times, probably because her husband Amenhotep II's tomb was raided, and she did nothing to mark herself as outstanding during her time in power.[83] On the other hand, Ankhesenamen is not only a little known royal woman, but also what is known about her is frustratingly vague and research on her quickly becomes futile. There is one chair made of gold [Fig. 14] that was found in her husband Tutankhamun's tomb. Whether it is her likeness created on the chair and not a chair taken from another tomb, with another royal woman pictured to decorate Tutankhamun's tomb, is constantly debated. She also writes a letter to the Hittite King asking for a son to marry so that after Tutankhamun's death Ay does not take over by

[82] Watterson, *Women in Ancient Egypt,*140.
[83] Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt,* 104-112.

marrying her. The Hittite prince, however, is killed and never reaches Ankesenamen. Soon after Ankesenamen falls into obscurity and is hardly heard of or seen again. Ankesenamen and Tiaa did hardly anything to set them apart; therefore we do not know much about them.[84]

The things that people do in their lifetime make some type impact. Small or large, they still leave their mark on the world. Whether this impact is remembered hundreds of years later depends on the record keeping of the time, the circumstances in which the person finds themselves and whether or not the person is given the resources to make a big enough impact in order for it to be remembered. Some royal women married powerful pharaohs, others married pharaohs that gave them extra liberties; one took control by herself, and still others married pharaohs, but had nothing remarkable about them, rendering them hardly remembered. A theme that seems to arise from looking at royal women in the New Kingdom period and how much they are remembered is what the male counterpart gave to the situation. The world has been male driven for many years and these women's lives being remembered seems to rely heavily on what happened to their male counterpart or on what the male did.

Every person throughout history has a part to play and how well and long they play it usually translates into how and how well they are remembered. Nefertari played the role of a beautiful, mindful and typical royal woman. Her husband found that pleasing, thus he gave her a beautifully painted tomb. Tiy and Nefertiti both had husbands that wanted to have a more group effort approach to ruling, thus they both had some level of co-regency. This type of co-regency shows through the images we have of them, where the partners are picture many times together, and sometimes alone with their own ruling power. Hatshepsut first

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[84] Tyldesley. *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt,* 137-138.

played the role of a Great Royal Wife, but then gradually as it was found that Egypt could not be ruled alone by her step-son, she took over, fulfilling the role of a pharaoh and ruling on her own.

The royal women that took over the throne were exceptional women, often leading during an unstable part of their countries history. Males were always picked over women to rule the country, even if that male had an elder sister that was better suited for the throne. It can be seen as unfair, but Egypt and its people accepted it. So, if these women were to rule Egypt it was atypical and the women had to perform tasks in an unfeminine manner. They were forced to act in a way that would display their authority to the people of Egypt, and since females did not often do rule, they only had male prototypes to take from.[85] Thus, successful women rulers, like Hatshepsut, performed and ruled like a man. This did not mean that these women wanted to transform into men because they thought that the male sex was the more powerful sex, but instead they knew that the more powerful gender was man, and that it what they strived for. Hatshepsut and Nefertiti manipulated the signifiers of their gender in order to be seen through the official royal images as men, because to be seen as men, they would be seen as the highest authority in the land.

[85] Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis,* 212.

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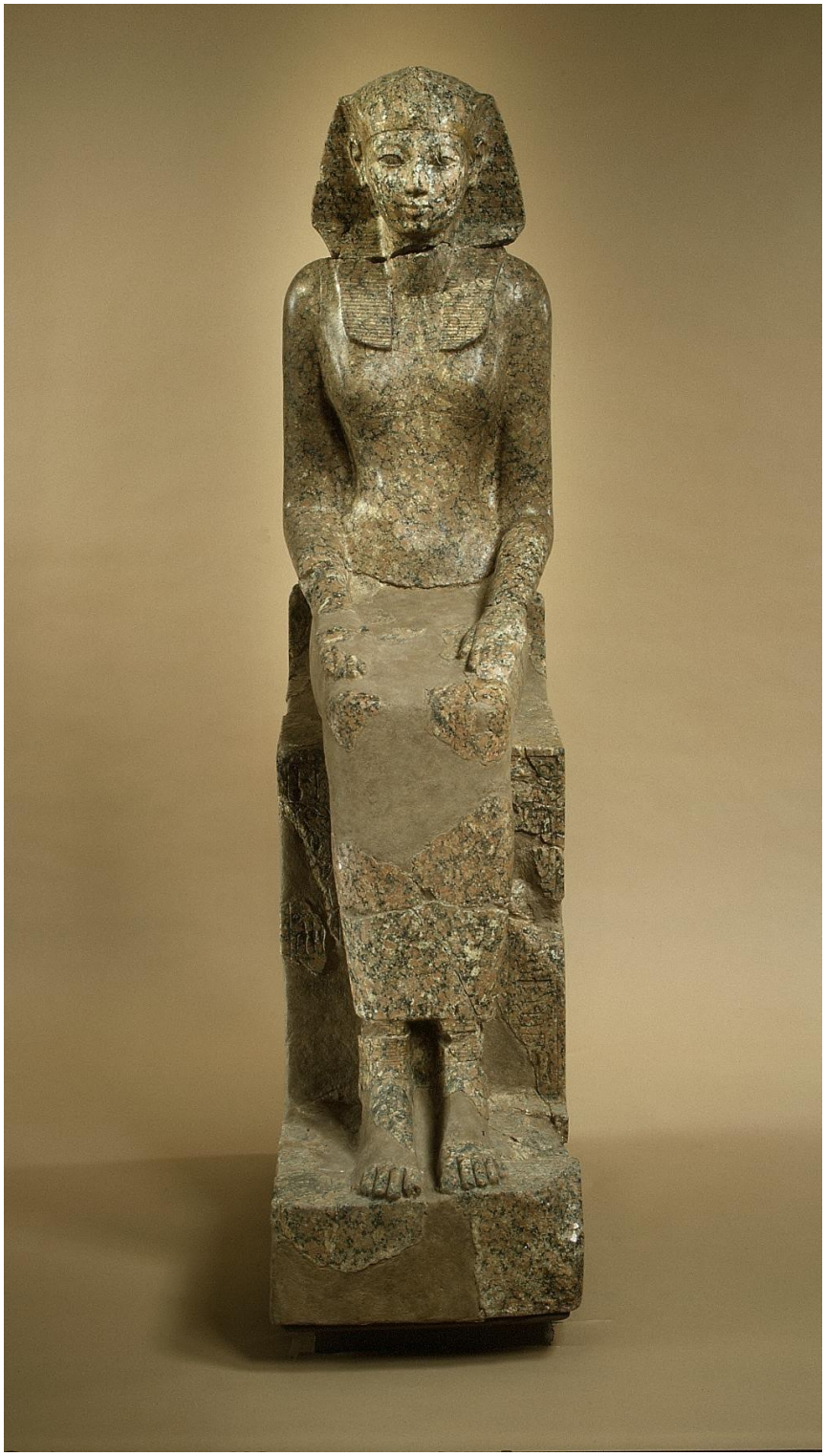
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[Figure 1]



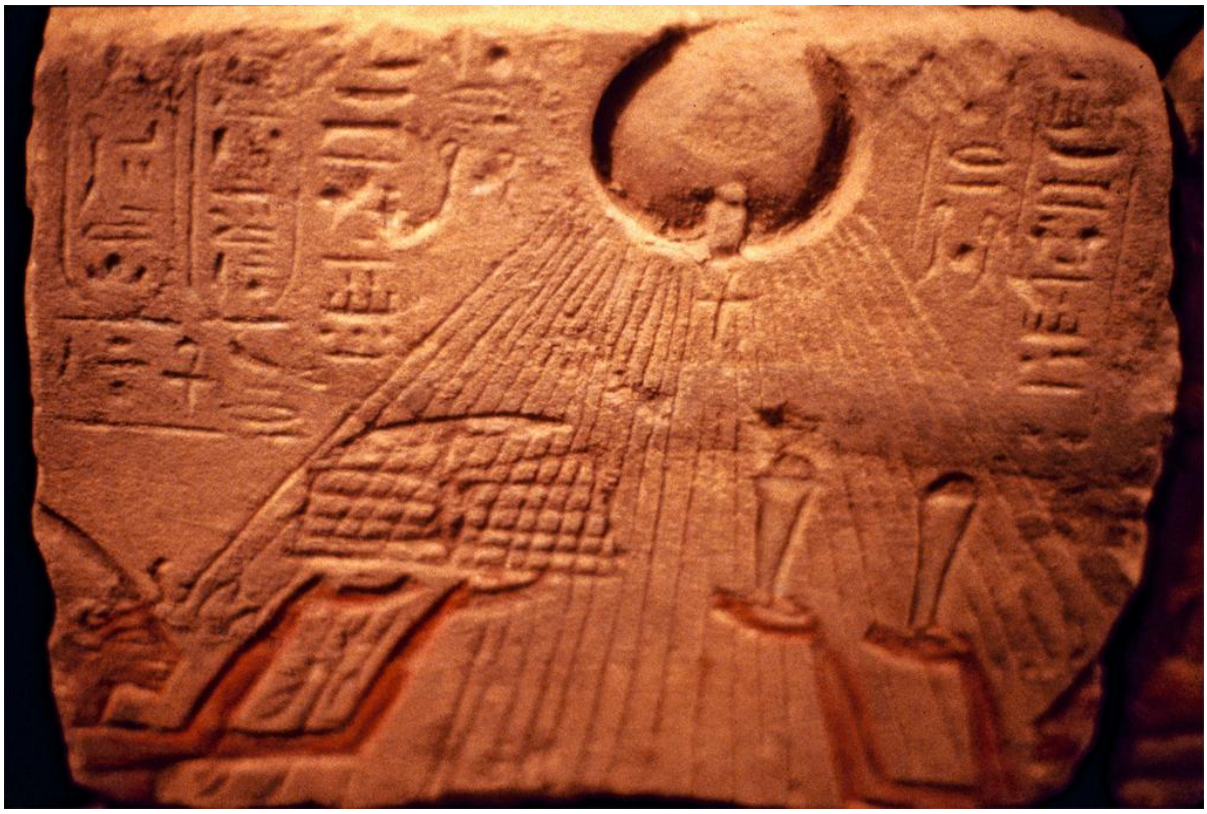
[Figure 2]



[Figure 3]



[Figure 4]



[Figure 5]

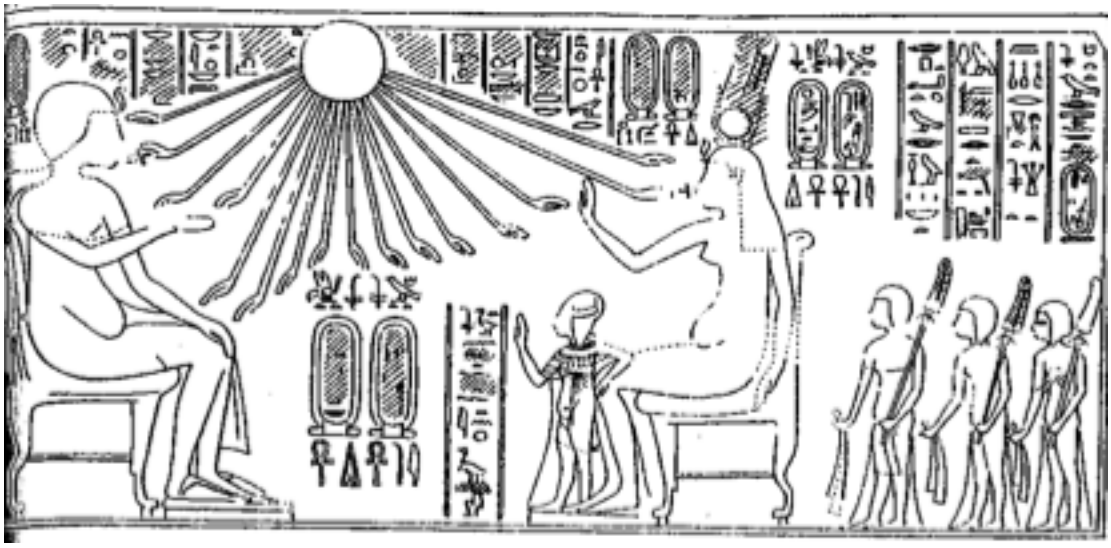


[Figure 6]



[Figure 7]

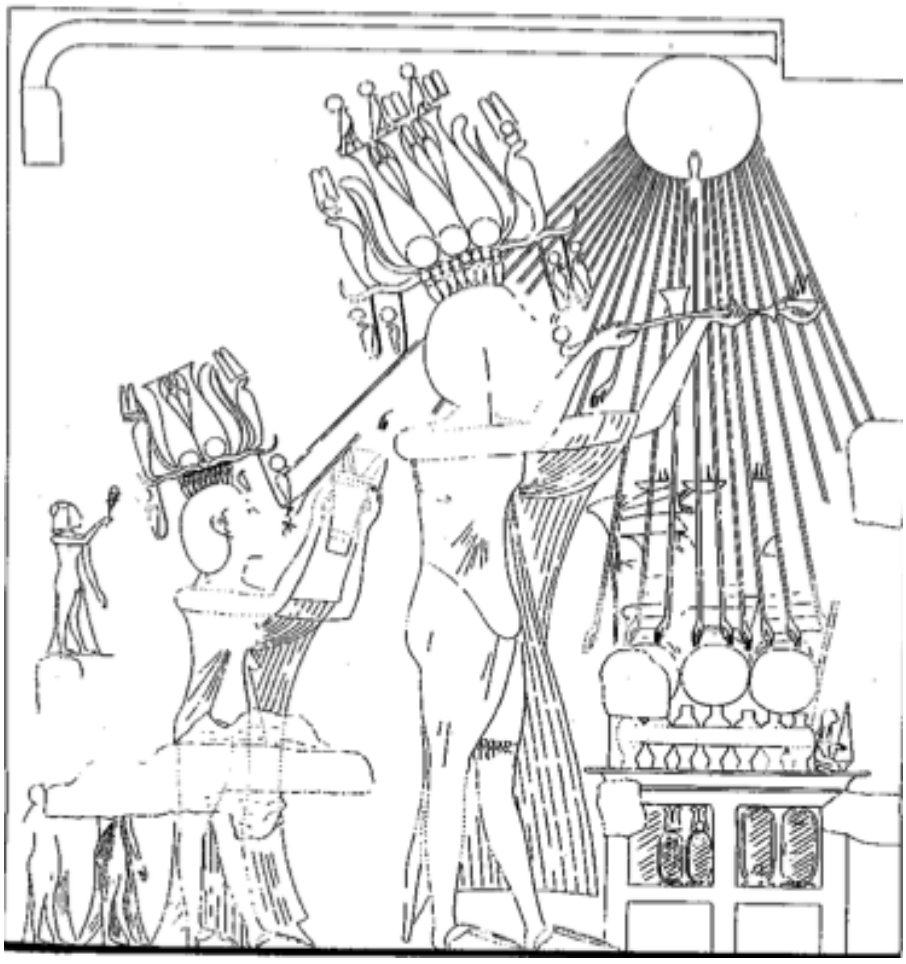




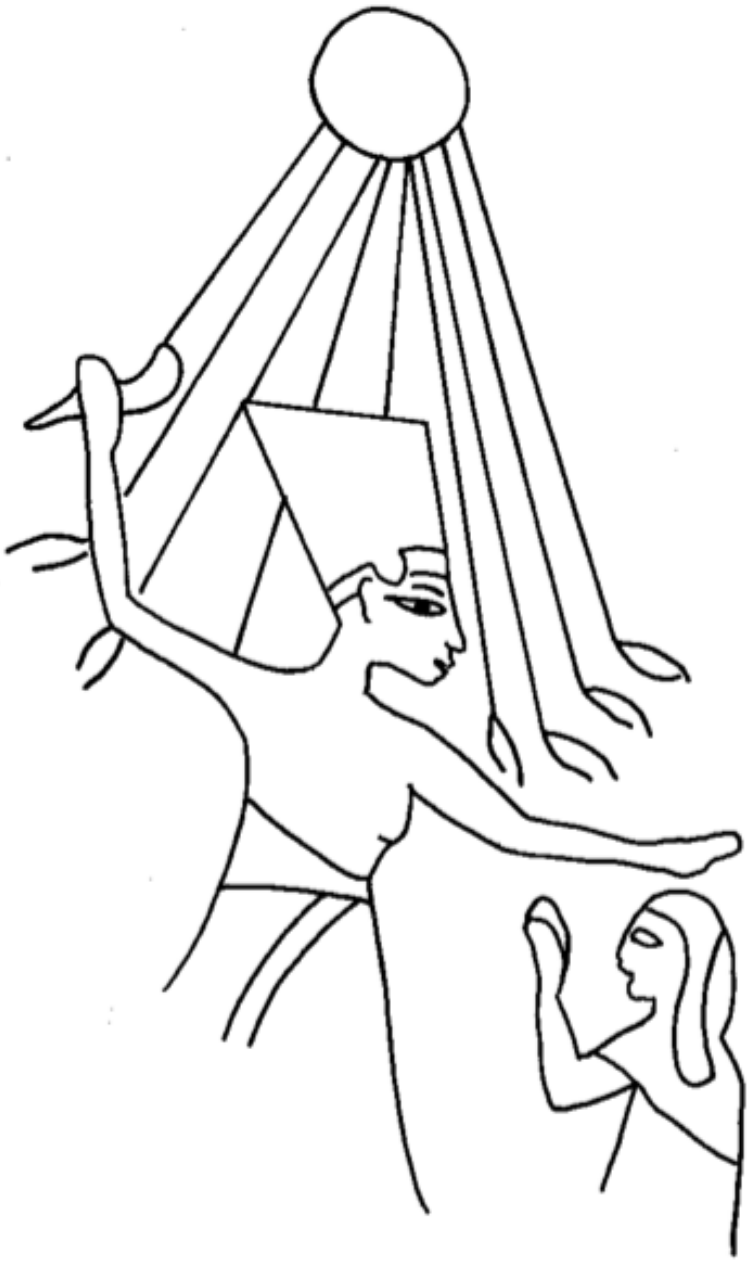
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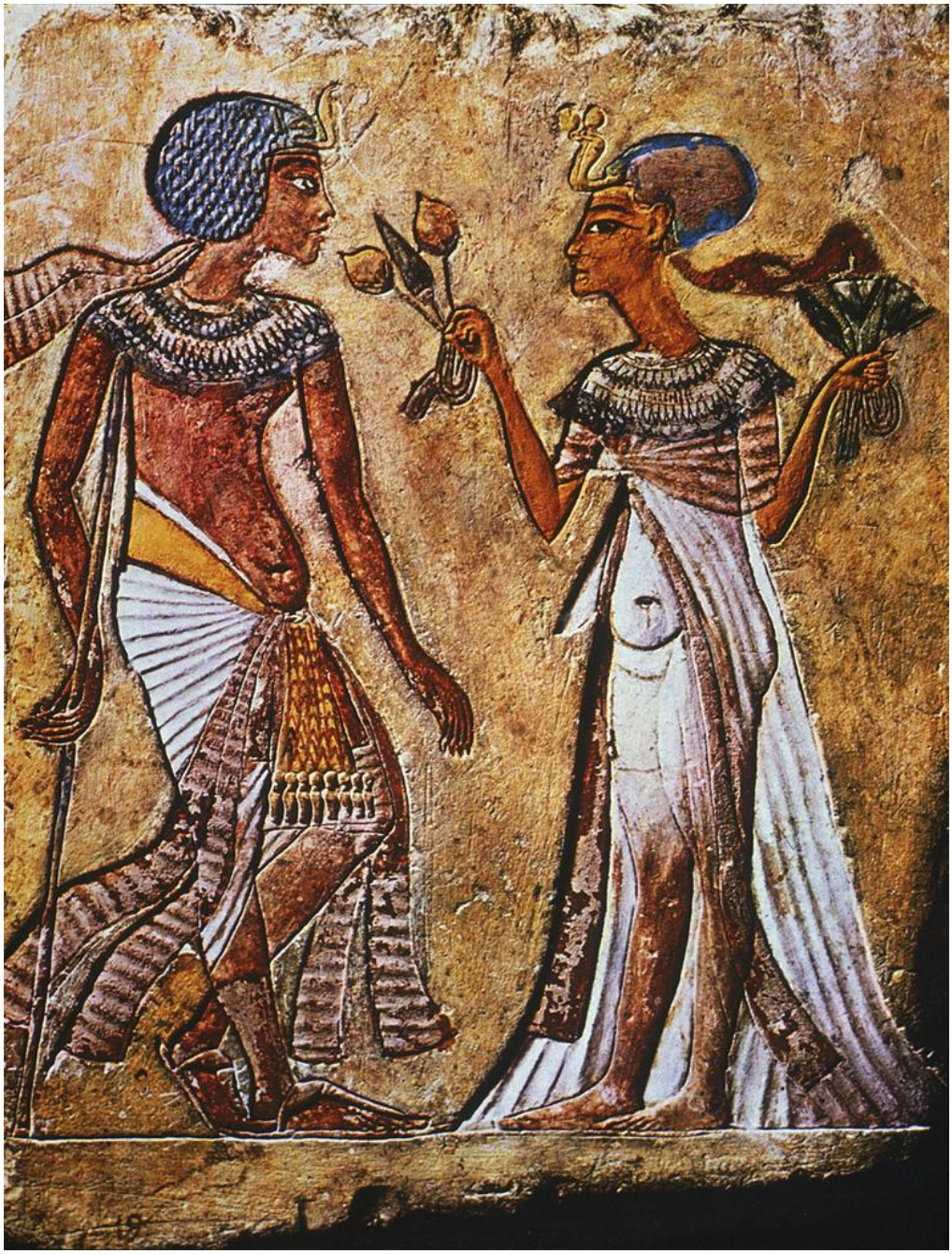
[Figure 9]



[Figure 10]



[Figure 11]



[Figure 12]



[Figure 13]



[Figure 14]