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Androgyny in the Ancient World: The Intersection of Politics, Religion and Gender in the Art of Hatshepsut

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Abstract

The Pharaoh Hatshepsut is one of the most well-known rulers of ancient Egypt and she has fascinated historians for decades. She ruled Egypt during the 15th century BCE, coming to power after the death of her husband, Thutmose II. Hatshepsut is particularly interesting to historians due to how she was portrayed in her art. Due to how far in the past she ruled, not many pieces of her art have survived; however, in the objects that we do have she is often shown very androgynously or even in came cases distinctly masculine. My research focuses on the many theories as to why she chose to do this including: that it was politically motivated; that it was an expression of her gender identity as well as society's view on gender; or that it was a product of their religion. The most likely answer to this question was that it was a combination of all three. Egyptians did not believe in the gender binary mainly due to their religion and the existence of an androgynous god, Amun. Hatshepsut felt very connected to Amun and even claimed that Amun had designated her as the next ruler of Egypt. Most Pharaohs connected themselves to a god for political reasons, and Hatshepsut was no different. While there was definitely a religious aspect to her connection with Amun, she also used it for political reasons and to increase her legitimacy as a ruler. Hatshepsut chose to portray herself androgynously to further connection of Amun and show herself as a strong legitimate leader.

Keywords

Hatshepsut, Ancient Egypt, Gender, Politics, Religion

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Comments

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Androgyny in the Ancient World: The Intersection of Politics, Religion and Gender in the Art of Hatshepsut

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Else

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The Pharaoh Maatkare Hatshepsut has captured the interest of historians for many years mainly due to her art. In the 1920s a cache of her statues was found during excavations of the temples at Deir-el Bahri by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The statues were found buried in a natural depression in the earth that had been filled in order to create an area for the temple of her successor Thutmose III. It seems that they were purposefully buried to destroy her memory and remove evidence of her reign; however, the burial of the statues allowed for their survival and the preservation of her memory. Hatshepsut has one of the largest surviving collations of statues due to the cache discovered at Deir-el Bahri.[1] These statues have taught historians a lot about her and Ancient Egypt, but they have also raised quite a few questions mainly due to how she is portrayed in them. She is often portrayed androgynously or even distinctly masculine and that makes historians question what her motivations are for being shown this way. There are many different theories including: that it was politically motivated; that it was an expression of her gender identity as well as society's view on gender; or that it was a product of their religion. In this paper I argue that Hatshepsut used symbols and attributes in her art to reflect her many positions of power regardless of those symbol's traditionally assigned genders in order to show herself as a strong legitimate leader and connect herself to the creator god Amun.

Hatshepsut was born in the last decade of the sixteenth century BCE to the Pharaoh Thutmose I and his Great Wife, Ahmose. Unlike later western rulers, who would have one wife and would take many mistresses, Egyptian rulers could take multiple wives which resulted in a less distinct hierarchy and more ambiguity in the line of succession. There was still a hierarchy, but it was less defined. The "Great Wife" of the King was the most important of the wives as the great wife had to have royal lineage. Due to the need for royal lineage and the importance of

[1] Wall Text, Statues of the Female King Hatshepsut, Gallery 115, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York.

royal legitimacy, the Great Wife tended to be the sister or another female relative of the King. The children of the Great Wife were given priority to the throne as they were seen as more legitimate. Despite the need for legitimacy, gender played a significant role in the line of succession. In fact, gender was seen as more important than royal legitimacy. If a Great Wife did not give birth to a son then the line of succession would move to the son of a lesser wife. The lack of hierarchy amongst the lesser wives made the line of succession confusing as multiple sons could vie for power.[2]

Hatshepsut was born to her father's Great Wife, but as she was a female, she would not be able to take power. Instead, her younger half-brother, Thutmose II, took the throne after their father passed in ca. 1492 BCE. Thutmose II and Hatshepsut married in order to reaffirm his legitimacy to rule as he was born to a "lesser" wife. However, not too long after ascending to the throne, Thutmose II grew ill and died in ca. 1479 BCE. Hatshepsut had only had one child with Thutmose, their daughter Neferure, so the throne once again passed to the son of a lesser wife, Thutmose III. This is usually where Hatshepsut's story would have ended as she had no connection to the new king. She is not his wife nor his mother. She should have lost all her power, however, that is not what happened. Thutmose II was fairly young when he passed which meant that all of his children were incredibly young. Even his heir Thutmose III was under ten years old when his father passed. Despite taking the throne, Thutmose III was unable to rule due to his age, so Hatshepsut took over as regent.[3]

Hatshepsut was an exceptionally good leader as she had been taught and trained from an early age on how to conduct herself in public and in a position of power. This training was the

[2] Kara Cooney, *The Woman Who would be King* (United States: Crown Publishers, 2014), 54-5.
[3] Joyce E. Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 148-9.

result of her taking the position of the God's Wife of Amun before the age of ten.[4] The God's Wife was the title of a priestess. In the beginning of the eighteenth dynasty, under the rule of Ahmose I (ca. 1550-1525 BCE), the title began to be associated with the god Amun in order to strengthen the god's cult and reinforce Ahmose's power over the newly unified country. The position of the God's Wife of Amun became an incredibly important one as the priestess would be involved in ceremonies and rituals that asserted Amun's universal power. Ahmose also gave the position an endowment allowing the priestess to have money for ceremonies and other things related to the office. This economic independence and its religious authority made the position have incredible political influence. Due to the power of the position, it began to be held by royal women, typically the daughter of the king. As the priestess was a royal woman, the influence of the position would in turn bolster the influence and legitimacy of the king.[5]

Due to the importance of the position of the God's Wife of Amun, Hatshepsut would have been extensively trained in order to control the resources of the office and maintain its influence. This training made her more educated and more confident in her abilities to rule than her husband Thutmose II allowing her to exercise her influence over him and giving herself a greater role in politics. As the King's Great Wife, she already held a certain position in the court; however, her ability to command an audience and knowledge of how to conduct herself gave her even more power than her position traditionally entailed. This allowed her to obtain the position of regent over her stepson and retain that power she held.[6]

Approximately seven years after the death of her husband and the coronation of her stepson, Hatshepsut made a wild, yet calculated claim that the gods demanded her to rule. She

[4] Cooney, *The Woman Who would be King*, 57.
[5] Mariam F. Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Servant: The God's Wife of Amun (C. 740-525 BC)*, 3-6.
[6] Cooney, *The Woman Who would be King*, 57.

told of an encounter that she had with the god Amun. During the Opet Festival, also known as the Beautiful Festival of the Residence, the statue of Amun was carried in a processional from his temple in Karnak to his temple in Luxor.[7] In Luxor, Amun would possess the statue in order to communicate with the people. However, according to Hatshepsut, this is not what happened on one occasion. Instead, the god controlled the priests carrying his statue and made them move to the gates of the royal palace. Once there he spoke directly to Hatshepsut telling her that she was destined to rule. She then began to disseminate the story of the festival and her experience all over the empire, and even later had it memorialized on objects and in her funerary temple in order to prove her legitimacy to rule.[8] This story is fascinating to historians as it positions Hatshepsut's power grab not as political ambition, but as a commitment to the god Amun. However, it is unclear if Hatshepsut actually believed the story or if it was simply a calculated move to create legitimacy for her rule. Religion played a key role in Ancient Egyptian society especially in the structure of power, so the story would have appealed to the Egyptian people Whether she believed the story or not, Hatshepsut used the story to take power and name herself King.

Hatshepsut was a highly successful ruler. Her twenty-two-year reign was marked by incredible economic prosperity, monumental building projects and numerous military victories. However, today she is best known for her depiction in art. As mentioned before, Hatshepsut has one of the largest surviving collections of statues. This large group of pieces allows historians to gain an insight into both her and the eighteenth dynasty as a whole. One of the more well-known and studied depictions of Hatshepsut comes from the cache found in Deir-el Bahri and is now

[7] James P. Allen, "The Role of Amun," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 83.
[8] Cooney, The Woman Who would be King, 71-73.

housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The piece is the seated statue entitled *Hatshepsut as King* (ca. 1479-1458 BCE) [fig. 1], and it shows her dressed in the traditional costume of a King but retains distinct feminine features showing that the figure depicted is a woman. She is shown with broader shoulders but longer and slenderer torso and limbs. Long and slender limbs are more commonly seen with female subjects, but the broad shoulders are more masculine in nature. She has a rounded heart-shaped face with a small, pointed chin, high cheekbones, almond-shaped eyes, and a small mouth. Her nose has largely been destroyed, but it most likely would have been slender but prominent. Her features are highly idealized and create a soft, slightly feminine look. The combination of these features with the broader shoulders creates a very androgynous look in the statue.

Her androgynous look has become the source of discussion amongst those who study her. Some of the main questions that are often raised are 'why is she shown androgynously?,' and 'why is she shown with traditionally masculine attributes?' There are many theories that have been posited over the years to explain her choices. One of the theories is that it was politically motivated. Female rulers were not common as Egyptian society believed in the idea of male primogeniture. While she was not the first woman to rule, there had not been a female ruler in a long time. There were quite a few women who ruled as regents including Hatshepsut's own mother, but the last true female ruler that we know of was Sobekneferu who ruled during the twelfth dynasty from ca. 1806 – 1802 BCE. Ancient Egyptian society believed that women had a place in the structure of power, but not as leaders themselves. It would have been a significant change to have a female as King especially since there had not been a true female ruler in over three hundred years.

Dr. Kelly-Anne Diamond, an Egyptologist, and Assistant Professor of History at Villanova University, believes that Hatshepsut chose to portray herself more masculinely in order to make the transition to a female ruler not as jarring to her subjects. Diamond argues, "Hatshepsut's public representations were intelligible to ancient Egyptians and even a deliberate attempt to appeal to their sensibilities and provide them with solace in her rule"[9] The Egyptians believed that men, and not women, should rule. In order to appeal to them and convince them that she would be a good ruler Hatshepsut showed herself more masculinely as to not break too much from the artistic traditions that the people were familiar with. Her public image was propaganda to show that she was just as capable of a leader as any previous Pharaoh.

Propaganda through art was a common practice and can be seen in many of her pieces, especially *Hatshepsut as King*. The seated pose of the statue is a fairly traditional pose that was done by others before her. One example of this is *Khafre Enthroned* (ca. 2520-2494 BCE) [fig. 2], a seated statue of the Pharaoh Khafre who ruled during the fourth dynasty from ca. 2520-2494 BCE. Khafre is best known for being the builder of the second largest Pyramid at Giza. The statue was found in the Valley Temple of Khafre in Giza and is now in the Egyptian museum in Cairo. It depicts Khafre sitting on a throne that rests on a tall base. The sides of the throne are carved to look like lions whose paws rest at the foot of the statue and heads protrude from the seat. The two side panels of the throne have the *sema-tawy,* the symbol of the unity between upper and lower Egypt. It represents Khafre's control and reign over both halves of the land. On the back of the throne, a falcon is perched just behind the pharaoh with its wings extended on either side of the pharaoh's head. The falcon is a symbol of the god Horus, and its wing position

[9] Kelly-Anne Diamond, "Hatshepsut: Transcending Gender in Ancient Egypt," *Gender & History* 32, no. 1 (2020), 168.

represents the god's protection over the Pharaoh.[10] Khafre is depicted with very broad shoulders and bulging muscles showing him in the prime of his life. These physical characteristics and the other attributes such as the falcon and the inscriptions, represent his strength and ability to rule as well as his legitimacy as a King. Hatshepsut is looking at great pharaohs of the past trying to connect herself to their ideas and their legacy through using similar attributes that they used in their art. Showing herself with broader, more masculine shoulders in *Hatshepsut as King* is representing her strength and power as a leader. She is showing that she can be just as good of a leader as the pharaohs of the past.

Like Khafre, Hatshepsut also uses material attributes to further this propaganda. In *Hatshepsut as King*, Hatshepsut is wearing a pleated *shendyt* kilt and a beaded belt which were traditional clothing for men. She is also wearing a pendant of a bull's tail around her neck which is traditionally worn by male royalty. Similar to past male statues, she is not wearing a shirt. It is unclear if the small, rounded bumps on her chest are meant to be breasts or if they are supposed to be her pectoral muscles. Either is a possibility; however, it is also possible that the chest was made purposefully ambiguous in order to further the androgynous nature of the statue. On her head is a royal *nemes*, a striped cloth that was worn by all pharaohs. The cloth covered the whole head and the nape of the neck. It also had two large flaps that would extend out on either side of the head behind the ears and would hang down in front of each shoulder. In the center of the forehead would have been a rearing *uraeus*, a stylized Egyptian cobra that represents the supreme power of ancient Egyptian deities and pharaohs, that unfortunately has been

[10] Rosanna Pirelli, "Statue of Khafre," in *Egyptian Treasures from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo*, ed. Francesco Tiradritti and Araldo De Luca (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1999), 69.; "Khafre Statue." , https://egymonuments.gov.eg/collections/khafra-statue-2/

destroyed.[11] The inclusion of the *nemes* is a reminder of Hatshepsut's position as not just the leader of Egypt, but as the King and Pharaoh. The *uraeus* shows her divinity and connections to the gods as well as represents her divine right to rule as appointed by Amun.

Another aspect that portrays propaganda on art is inscriptions. Under her feet on the *Hatshepsut as King* statue is a glyph representing the Nine Bows, the ancient Egyptian term for outsiders and more specifically the enemies of Egypt. This glyph became very popular in the art of the pharaohs and was typically placed under the feet of the pharaoh as seen here in order to show the pharaohs', and more generally Egypt's, dominance over foreign threats.[12] By including the Nine Bows glyph in this piece, Hatshepsut is showing that she is just as capable of protecting Egypt from their enemies and outside influence as any of the previous pharaohs. She is also harkening back to previous great pharaohs who also used the glyph in their art.

The sculpture also has inscriptions running down either side of her legs. These glyphs are the traditional royal titles given to pharaohs. Along her proper left leg reads "The perfect goddess, Lady of the two lands, Maatkare, beloved of Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, may she live forever!" and along her proper right leg it says, "The bodily daughter of Re, Khenemet-Amun-Hatshepsut, beloved of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, may she live forever!".[13] Maatkare is Hatshepsut's official royal name and what she would have been called while on the throne whereas Hatshepsut was her private name and the name she was given at birth. This practice is similar to modern monarchs and popes who are able to take a new official name when they are crowned. Amun-Re, also written as Amun-Ra, is the name of the god Amun after he was combined with the Sun God Ra. They were originally worshiped as two separate gods but were

[11] Cathleen A. Keller, "Hatshepsut as King," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005a), 171-2.
[12] Ibid, 171-2.
[13] Ibid, 171-2.

eventually combined and worshiped as one.[14] Titles such as these were commonly seen on art and on building projects from many different pharaohs, but what makes these particular ones stand out is their use of the feminine forms of the titles. It reads "Lady of the two lands" and "may she live forever" rather than using 'Lord' and 'he.'

The inclusion of these feminized titles has been used as evidence in favor of the political motive theory. In the article, "The Names of Hatshepsut as King," author Dr. Gay Robins, an art historian and professor at Emory University, believes inscriptions and her choice of names prove her identity as a woman because they use feminine indicators. Robins goes on to argue that the reason that Hatshepsut is portrayed with masculine attributes is that she was playing a role for the public. She writes, "She was playing a male gender role and for the role to be recognized, it had to be given its traditional male form."[15] She goes on to argue that written text was different because, "the change in texts from masculine to feminine grammatical gender was far less radical than the replacement of the typical male image of a king by an image with female dress and physique, especially as more aware of the visual impact of the images than would have occasion to read the texts even if literate."[16]. Robins believes that Hatshepsut had to show herself "as a man" in art because the people would find it too radical of a change to see a female leader, but that she was able to identify as a woman in writing as most people were illiterate. I disagree with Robins' argument as in my opinion the visual objects are more important than the written script *because* the majority of the population was illiterate. The people would have seen these objects, and even those who were illiterate would be able to understand who she was and what

[14] Allen, "The Role of Amun,", 83.
[15] Gay Robins, "The Names of Hatshepsut as King," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 85 (1999), 112, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3822429.
[16] Ibid, 112.

she stood for based on the art. These objects reveal what Hatshepsut wanted the public to see, what the public believed was important, and what they looked for in a leader.

Hatshepsut as King perfectly encapsulates Hatshepsut's public image. The combination of masculine and feminine characteristics creates an androgynous look that connects her the god Amun. The addition of the *uraeus* on the headdress furthers her connection with the gods and shows her succeeding in the King's duty of good relationships with the gods. Her clothing, the *nemes* and the hieroglyph under her feet connect her with the past successes of previous pharaohs showing her ability to rule and to protect the kingdom. The piece would have been placed within her temple at Deir-el Bahri in an area accessible to the public, so it would make sense that this piece reflects how she wanted to be viewed and remembered.

While no one can dispute Hatshepsut's strength as a leader and her political prowess, there are other theories for her choice of androgyny including that it was a reflection of her gender identity. In the book *Transgender: A Reference Book*, authors Aaron Devor, a sociologist and professor at the University of Victoria, and Ardel Haefele-Thomas, the Chair of the LGBTQ+ Studies department at City College of San Francisco, discuss the evolution of Hatshepsut's image. They write, "Over the course of twenty years, the changing colors in the statues of Hatshepsut show a full transition across the gender binary."[17] In Egyptian art different colors would be used to signify different genders. Yellow was the traditional color for women and red was used for men. Over the course of her reign, she transitioned from yellow to an orange, a signifier of androgyny, and finally to red in the later pieces.[18] Devor and Haefele-Thomas argue that this shift represents her shift from female to male. Popular sites such as

[17] Aaron H. Devor and Ardel Haefele-Thomas, *Transgender: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2019), 163.
[18] Ibid, 163.

Advocate, and Cherwell agree with this idea and even go as far as to identify her as transgender.[19]

Other sites such as Making Queer History believe that she fall on the queer spectrum, but they do not necessarily give her a label. In the article "Hatshepsut" from Making Queer History, the author, Kim Armstrong argues against the other possible theories to Hatshepsut's androgyny saying, "Cisheterosexual historians have considered everything from a military crisis to a "divine injunction" from Amun himself as the catalyst for Hatshepsut's transformation, and yet they continue to dance around the possibility of her queerness because they don't understand it. So desperate are they to claim her as another straight, cisgender woman just like them, that they ignore the writing quite literally on the walls."[20] Armstrong believes that historians would rather look for any other explanation for Hatshepsut's androgynous look than queerness because they do not understand queerness. She argues that historians would rather just keep her more like them, cisgender and straight, because that is what they understand and can identify with.

While I understand the desire for queer representation in history, scholars and historians need to be incredibly careful with what they say and publish as they do not want to engage with presentism, the practice of looking at and judging the past based on our modern ideas and modern sense of morality. Presentism can be very harmful as it can skew our view of the past. In this instance, viewing Hatshepsut as transgender or queer overlooks her other possible motives for showing herself masculinely. Dr. Uroš Matić, an archeologist and Egyptologist at the Austrian Archaeological Institute, discusses this use of modern terms saying the terms, "did not exist as identity categories in Ancient Egypt, and thus, we cannot refer to ancient genders with

[19] Jacob Ogles, "15 LGBT Egyptian Gods," , https://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/2016/9/20/15-lgbt-egyptian-gods?pg=8; Ezra Jackson, "Cis-Piscion and the Difficulties of 'identifying' Ancient Transgender Figures," , https://cherwell.org/2021/11/21/cis-piscion-and-the-difficulties-of-identifying-ancient-transgender-figures/
[20] Kim Armstrong, "Hatshepsut," , https://www.makingqueerhistory.com/articles/2017/8/31/hatshepsut

heavily laden terms"[21] Our modern gender terms have a lot of meaning attached to them based on the views of society and their place in our society. Ancient civilizations including Ancient Egypt did not have the same societal views as us including views on gender. Ancient Egyptians did not view gender in the same way we do, so it is unfair to fit ancient individuals like Hatshepsut into boxes based on our modern ideas.

While the views of these popular sources can be somewhat problematic, some historians agree that Hatshepsut's view of her gender identity and Egypt's view of gender in general should be considered when discussing her use of masculine attributes and features in her art. In her article, "A Royal Queer: Hatshepsut and Gender Construction in Ancient Egypt," Dr. Kristen Gaylord, an art historian and curator at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, argues that viewing Hatshepsut as a female who dresses as a man or pretends to be a man is "reductive clumsiness." She believes that Egypt's view of gender was much more complex due to their religion. Religion plays a particularly important part in their views on gender as well as their views on power and positions of power.[22]

The ancient Egyptian religion is centered around the creator god Amun, sometimes spelled Amen or Atum. Amun was an androgynous being who was responsible for the creation of the world and all of the other gods. It is said that Amun swallowed their own semen and gave birth to Shu, the god of the air, and Tefnut, the goddess of moisture. By swallowing their own semen, Amun played both parts in the process of procreation adding to their androgynous identity. From Shu and Tefnut comes Geb, god of the Earth, and Nut, goddess of the sky, and

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[21] Uroš Matić, "(De)Queering Hatshepsut: Binary Bind in Archaeology of Egypt and Kingship Beyond the Corporeal," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 23, no. 3 (2016), 816, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43967042.

[22] Kristen Gaylord, "A Royal Queer: Hatshepsut and Gender Construction in Ancient Egypt," *Shift*, no. Issue 8: Space, Alterity, Memory (2015), 52-56, http://shiftjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/4_Gaylord.pdf.

from that pair comes Osiris, the god of fertility; Iris, the goddess of healing and magic; Set, god of war and chaos; and Nephthys, goddess of the air.[23] Despite most of the gods being considered one gender or another, the existence of an androgynous god shows that the Egyptian did not complete believe in a gender binary. This gives credence to the idea that Hatshepsut believed that she did not completely fit into the gender binary especially given the connection that she created and believed that she had with Amun. It is possible Hatshepsut chose to be shown more androgynously in order to further connect herself with the god.

The masculine attributes used by Hatshepsut could also show her move to controlling the King aspects of power. In Egypt, the position of power was believed to have two parts. The King maintained *maat*, the idea of truth and order, through rituals, administration and the military. He was also in charge of preserving the relationship with gods. The other half of power was controlled by the royal women. This group included the king's mother, the Great Wife, the other queens, the princesses, and the king's Harem. The royal women were in charge of protecting his health and power as well as ensuring his legitimacy and the continuation of the royal line through having children. While women were a step lower in the royal and social hierarchy, they were still incredibly important and essential for the stability of the kingdom. It was believed that without a female counterpart, the king would collapse, and Egypt would fall into *isfet*, or the ever-present chaos of the world.[24]

This idea of the dual-role power comes from Egyptian mythology. One of the best-known stories in Egyptian mythology revolves around the rivalry between brothers Osiris and Set. In the story Set kills and dismembers Osiris because he is jealous of his brother's power as King and

[23] Ibid, 52
[24] Ibid, 52

angry that Osiris had a child, Anubis, with his wife Nephthys. Isis and Nephthys are able to recover and restore Osiris' body allowing him to impregnate Isis, who gives birth to their son and the next king Horus. Without Isis, Osiris would have remained dead, and the kingdom would have fallen to *isfet* represented by Set. The royal women, especially the Great Wife are to their King what Isis was to Osiris, the one in charge of caring for him and ensuring the continuation of his lineage.[25]

When Hatshepsut named herself King, she was indicating that she would be taking responsibility for the King's part of the power position and moving away from the queen part that she had been in charge of for many years. It is possible that the masculine features and attributes were used to show her transition to the king's duties, and her move away from the royal women aspects of power. This was furthered by the fact that she had no children after the death of her husband, and soon after taking power she gave the title of the God's Wife of Amun to her daughter. This was following the tradition of the title being given to the eldest daughter of the King.[26]

Whether the choice of androgyny was based on her connection to Amun or based on the perception of power roles, it is clear at least to Gaylord that religion and its views on gender played a significant role in Hatshepsut's decisions. Gaylord writes, "Clearly the king did not see her options of gender representation as limited to one of two categories. Instead, she deployed creative alternatives, combining attributes and paraphernalia to reflect her roles as former queen, current king, and divine protector of Egypt." The perception of gender in Ancient Egypt, based on their religion, is that gender does not fall on a spectrum. Gaylord is arguing that Hatshepsut

[25] Ibid, 52
[26] Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Servant: The God's Wife of Amun (C. 740-525 BC)*, 3-6.

chose certain attributes because to her they were representations of power and position rather than of gender as we would prescribe to them today.

This can be seen in works such as *The Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut* [fig. 3] (ca. 1479-1458), another piece from the Deir-el Bahri cache that is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is very similar to *Hatshepsut as King* and the two are often compared. Both statues have almost identical seated poses, but there are some differences in the features of Hatshepsut. In, *The Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut* she has the same almond-shaped eyes and high cheekbones as *Hatshepsut as King*. However, the face is more rounded with a less pointed chin, and she has fuller lips. These differences give her an even softer look making her look more feminine. She is wearing a long sleeveless sheath dress, a broad collar and small bracelets and anklets. The jewelry and dress are very understated but are fairly standard for depictions of royal women. The most interesting thing, however, is the *nemes* headdress with an *uraeus*. As mentioned before, both of these are symbols of the pharaoh. Their inclusion in this piece reveals that Hatshepsut was already crowned King when it was created. The more feminine features shows that the piece most likely represents her transition from her position as regent to king, and her taking responsibility for the king's duties and leaving behind the responsibilities of the royal women.

Based on the pose, both this statue and *Hatshepsut as King* were created to be cult statues. They would have been placed in her temple at Deir el-Bahri to receive offerings from the public.[27] Deir el-Bahri is an area situated on the west bank of the Nile near the city of Luxor. At the base of the desert cliffs sits *Djeser-Djeseru*, Hatshepsut's mortuary temple. The temple was

[27] "Seated Statue of Hatshepsut." , https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544450?ft=hatshepsut&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=2

created to be the site of the cult that would honor and worship her after her death.[28] Both *Hatshepsut as King* and *The Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut* are cult statues that would have been worshiped by the people and they would have been placed somewhere in the temple to allow people to worship and honor her by leaving her offerings. Some believe that statues like these two would have been placed in less public areas like the upper terrace or in a chapel.[29] However, these statues were created to be the idealized image of her as a new young king. It seems unlikely that they would have been created to be as idealized and with all the symbolism that both, but especially *Hatshepsut as King*, have if they were not meant for public consumption.

These cult statues were incredibly important to the Egyptian religion as they believed the pharaohs were living gods that needed to be worshiped especially after their death. Their status as living gods made the pharaohs conduits between the gods and the mortal Egyptians and made it their responsibility to maintain good relations with the gods. This was done through rituals, festivals, and everyday worship. *Djeser-Djeseru* was not just created to honor her, but the gods as well. The temple plays a major part in many rituals including the incredibly important Beautiful Festival of the Valley. The festival was marked by an annual procession which included the King, priests and the people of Thebes that brought the divine barque of Amun-Ra from its home in the temple of Amun in Karnak to Hatshepsut's temple in Deir el-Bahri. The route would take the ship through the cemeteries on the west bank of the Nile allowing the people to honor their ancestors. The ship would have been brought into the temple's central shrine which was dedicated to Amun.[30]

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[28] Ann M. Roth, "Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple at Deir El-Bahir," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 147-51.

[29] "Seated Statue of Hatshepsut."

[30] Roth, "Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple at Deir El-Bahir,", 147-51.

The central shrine being dedicated to Amun rather than Hatshepsut herself shows her reverence to the god and emphasizes their bond. Hatshepsut's temple is still dedicated to her, but many parts are also dedicated to Amun further strengthening their connection. The temple and the central shrine were most likely created to accommodate the festival. This idea is furthered by the positioning of the temple. The temple was built to face the temple of Amun which makes the procession easier and symbolically connects the two temples. The temple also contained quite a few statues throughout, many of which were dedicated to Amun and show Hatshepsut worshiping to Amun.

One of these pieces is *Hatshepsut in a Devotional Attitude* (1479-1458 BCE) [fig. 4]. The statue shows Hatshepsut in the Egyptian striding pose. She is wearing a traditional *nemes* headdress with an *uraeus* and a triangular apron that projects away from the body. Her face is similar to the statue *Hatshepsut as King* with the heart-shaped face and pointed chin; however, she also has a long beard coming down from the chin. Her shoulders and arms are also broader with more musculature. While the piece has some feminine elements especially in the face, it had more masculine features making it look less androgynous and more on the masculine side than the other statues. This might be because the statue is intended to show Hatshepsut more as a king than as a god. *Hatshepsut as King* and *The Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut* are more androgynous as they show her as not just a king, but also as a god. These statues were cult statues dedicated to her as a god, so they would show her more closely connected to Amun. However, *Hatshepsut in a Devotional Attitude* shows her in her role as king worshiping the gods. Hatshepsut would have adopted more masculine elements to fit with the traditionally masculine role of the king. It also shows her below Amun as the position of king is a step below god in the hierarchy of power, and she would have shown herself lower than the gods in reverence to them. Her veneration of the

gods was further shown in the pose of the statue. Hatshepsut is standing up with one foot in front of the other in the striding pose and her arms are extended with the palms facing downward resting on the projected apron. This stance, specifically the positioning of the hands, is the traditional pose to express great respect towards a deity.[31] *Hatshepsut in a Devotional Attitude* is incredibly important as only two of this type of statues still exist and both statues were discovered together in *Djeser-Djeseru*. Their close proximity and poses indicate that the statues would have been used to flank an important entrance in the temple, possibly a shrine. Hatshepsut often used statues of herself to flank important passageways especially if the passageways would be used the festival processional.

Another example of this being *Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun* (1479-1458 BCE) [fig. 5] and *Hatshepsut Wearing the White Crown* (1479-1458 BCE) [fig. 6]. Both of these massive sculptures show Hatshepsut in a kneeling position giving *maat* to Amun. The statues are thought to have flanked the entrance to the central sanctuary on the upper terrace of *Djeser-Djeseru*. The shrine was dedicated to Amun, and it played a key role in the yearly Beautiful Festival of the Valley as it was where the procession ended and Amun's boat was placed. In *Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun* she is wearing a *shendyt* kilt and beaded belt as well as a *nemes* on her head. She also is depicted with a beard similar to *Hatshepsut in a Devotional Attitude*. Her face has some similar features to the other sculptures discussed such as high arched eyebrows, thin nose, and small mouth, but overall, it is less individualized than the others. *Hatshepsut Wearing the White Crown* looks very similar as she is wearing a simple *shendyt* kilt and beaded belt and has a beard

[31] Cathleen A. Keller, "Hatshepsut in a Devotional Attitude," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005b), 170.

on her face. Her facial features are even less individualized than *Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun*.[32]

The defining characteristic of this piece is her crown. She is wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt which is a symbol for the ruler of Upper Egypt, the southern part of the country. Upper and Lower Egypt were unified in 3100 BCE, but pharaohs were often depicted with both the White Crown of Upper Egypt and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt to denote their power and show the lands they rule. Often the pharaoh would be shown with the White Crown on the southern wall and the Red Crown on the northern wall of a sanctuary.[33] In this case, it is possible this statue was placed on the southern side of the entrance to the shrine or that it represents her control over the area that temple is in as Deir-el Bahri is located in Upper Egypt.

Similar to *Hatshepsut in a Devotional Attitude*, both *Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun* and *Hatshepsut Wearing the White Crown* are more masculine in nature. She is shown with broader shoulders and more musculature in both her arms and legs. The lack of individualized features on her face adds to the masculinity in both pieces as most of the femininity in her other statues comes from her facial features. It is likely that both of these pieces are shown more masculinely because she is shown as a king here and not as a god. One of the major duties of the king is to sustain the gods and it is believed that the gods live on *maat* which is often translated as "order," "truth" or "justice." It is thought to be the cosmic order of the universe, and it is seen as the ultimate offering to the gods. As it is the King's duty to maintain order in both the country

[32] Cathleen A. Keller, "Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005c), 168.; Cathleen A. Keller, "Hatshepsut Wearing the White Crown," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005d), 169.
[33] Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol & Magic in Egyptian Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994)., 66.

and in the universe, offering it to the gods is a symbol of a King's abilities and legitimacy as a ruler.[34]

The position of these statues at the entrance to the shrine shows their importance to Hatshepsut as they were not only a part of the festival by being along the processional path, but they would be seen by anyone that went into the sanctuary. They were in the perfect position to be propaganda pieces. The offerings of *maat* to Amun reinforced Hatshepsut's legitimacy as a ruler and shows that she is able to fulfill the duties of the king. These pieces also show her strength not just as a leader, but as a person as well. All the sculptures of her show her young and in the prime of her life, and these two are no exception. You can see this not just in the youthfulness of the face, but also in the positioning of the body. The kneeling pose is very difficult to maintain for extended periods of time which you can see in tensed leg muscles and the splayed toes on the feet that are depicted on both statues. By having both pieces positioned in this way, the pose becomes permanent symbolically showing that she could and is prepared to rule and fulfill the duties of the king forever.

Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun and *Hatshepsut Wearing the White Crown* were not the only pieces of propaganda that were placed along the processional path of the Beautiful Festival of the Valley. Another piece was the *Colossal Sphinx of Hatshepsut* (1479-1458 BCE) [fig. 7]. Sphinxes are mythical creatures with the head of a human, the body of a lion and the wings of a bird, typically a falcon. It was quite common in Egyptian art for kings to be depicted as a sphinx, although most of these depictions did not include the wings on the back. The most well-known sphinx is the Great Sphinx at Giza. The Great Sphinx sits within the Necropolis at Giza which holds the three Great Pyramids. Along with the pyramids there are mortuary temples to the

[34] Keller, "Hatshepsut Offers Maat to Amun,", 168.

fourth dynasty pharaohs of Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure which are placed right in front of their respective pyramids. From these temples are long walkways that go down to the original shore of the Nile river. These walkways would be used by the funerary processions to get from the boats on the Nile to the temples. The Great Sphinx sits right along the walkway up to the Funeral temple of Khafre, and it is believed to depict Khafre.[35] Due to the placement of free-standing sphinx statues, like the Great Sphinx, and relief carvings of Kings as sphinxes trampling their enemies on temple walls, it is believed that sphinxes were seen as the protectors of funerary complexes.[36]

The *Colossal Sphinx of Hatshepsut* is similar to other depictions of sphinxes as it shows her as a seated lion with her front legs stretched out in front of her. She also has the *nemes* headdress and a beard. This is one of six colossal sphinxes that were found in the cache at Deir-el Bahri, though unfortunately not all were found intact. It is believed that there would have originally been many more than the six that were found. The sphinxes' original location, although contested, was most likely in the lower terrace where they would have been arranged in two rows, flanking the sacred route of the Beautiful Festival of the Valley across the terrace. This positioning allowed their protection to cover both the temple itself and the religious processions that passed by them.[37] This protection was seen as very important and necessary by the Egyptian people. They believed that in a continued existence after death and thus their graves and tombs should be filled with objects and comforts for the person who passed to use in the afterlife. This

[35] Zahi Hawass and Mark Lehner, "The Sphinx: Who Built it, and Why?" *Archaeology* 47, no. 5 (1994), 32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41766473.
[36] Cathleen A. Keller, "Two Colossal Sphinxes of Hatshepsut," in *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, ed. Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005e), 164.
[37] Ibid, 164.

included objects to protect the person such as weapons or amulets.[38] Sphinxes were another form of protection as they served as guards for both the person and their possessions in the afterlife.

By showing herself as a sphinx and placing those statues in her mortuary temple, she is following tradition that was set by previous pharaohs. Following traditions would have promoted her legitimacy and ability to rule by connecting her to past successful pharaohs. It also would have shown the public that she does care about traditions, such as these funerary practices, which were very important to their society even though she was going against tradition by ruling as a king rather than as regent.

Her temple in Deir-el Bahri is not the only place where Hatshepsut showed her worship of Amun. His main temple in Thebes was on the east bank of the river in Karnak. The Egyptians believed that the temples of the gods were their homes. His temple in Karnak was believed to be his state home. His main place of residence and where he would interact with his subjects. Similar to Buckingham Palace for the current British monarchy. Amun also had another temple in Luxor which was known as his southern residence, and it was considered his private enclave. While his temple at Luxor was fairly simple and only meant to receive Amun's boat during the Beautiful Festival of the Residence, his complex at Karnak was much grander. It began during the middle kingdom and was added on to or renovated in some way by most of the following kings including by Hatshepsut.

Hatshepsut contributed two obelisks, a new sanctuary, and several small offering chapels in front of the existing temple and two more obelisks behind it.[39] These obelisks were incredibly significant as they reveal a lot about Hatshepsut and her connection to Amun. Based on

[38] A. R. David, *The Experience of Ancient Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2000), 9.
[39] Allen, "The Role of Amun,", 83.

inscriptions on the first two obelisks, they were commissioned just after the death of Thutmose II when Hatshepsut still went by the titles of The Great Wife and Regent. However, by the time that they were erected and dedicated, she had taken up the title of King. This brings up questions about her motives behind their creation. Did she have them created to honor her husband or did she know that she was going to assume the title of pharaoh and had them commissioned to commemorate her 'ascension' to godhood?[40]

While her motives for the creation of the first two are ambiguous, the other two were dedicated to her relationship with Amun. On the southern obelisk that has since fallen, there is a carving that shows their connection and furthers her claim that she was chosen to rule. The carving which is on the pyramidion (1479-1458 BCE) [fig. 8], the capstone, shows Amun on the left sitting on a simple low back throne. The god is wearing the typical flat crown with two tall feathers on top. He appears to be wearing a false beard that is attached by a strap around his head. He also has a garment over his chest and a broad collar around his neck. Behind him is the *shen* glyph which means eternity and signifies his divinity and offers protection. His left-hand rests on the shoulder of Hatshepsut, who is kneeling in front of him, in a comforting manner while his right-hand rests on her head crowning her as king. Hatshepsut is wearing the *khepresh*, the coronation crown, with an uraeus, a shendyt kilt and a broad collar.[41]

This piece is a representation of Hatshepsut's claim of Amun choosing her to be the next king as he is crowning her in the carving. She is shown masculinely here because she is in the guise of a king and not as a god. This status is furthered by the fact that she is shown smaller than him, which is a style of Egyptian art, known as the hierarchical style, which shows

[40] Elizabeth Blyth, *Karnak: Evolution of a Temple* (London ;: Routledge, 2006). 54.
[41] *Pyramidion of the South Obelisk of Hatshepsut*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.11652223.

importance by size. The more important something is, the larger they are in the piece. As Amun is a god, he is shown larger than Hatshepsut who is only a king. This piece also shows their connection as he is not just crowning her, but he is also comforting her. Not only did Hatshepsut claim that Amun chose her to rule, but she also said that Amun was her father. In inscriptions in her temple at Deir-el Bahri, it says that she was the result of a union between her mother and Amun-Ra who was in the incarnation of Thutmose I. This claim was most likely a way to further her legitimacy as a king and pharaoh. The act of placing that comforting hand on her conveys a sense of familiarity and closeness symbolically showing their connection as father and child.

Along with this image there is an inscription on one of the obelisks that dedicates the obelisk, and in some way all of her construction at Karnak, to her 'father' reinforcing their connection. It reads,

> I have made this with a loving heart for my father, Amun, having entered into his initiation of the First Occasion (i.e., having been given knowledge of Amun's role in the creation of the world) and having experienced his impressive efficacy. I have not been forgetful of any project he has decreed. For My Incarnation (i.e., Hatshepsut herself) knows he is divine, and I have done it by his command. He is the one who guides me. I could not have imagined the work without his acting: he is the one who gives me direction.
>
> Nor have I slept because of his temple. I do not stray from what he has commanded. My heart is perceptive on behalf of my father and I have access to his mind's knowledge. I have not turned my back on the town of the Lord to the Limit (an epithet of Amun-Re as the sun), but paid attention to it. For I know that Karnak is heaven on earth, the sacred elevation of the First Occasion, the Eye of the Lord to the Limit- his favorite place, which bears his perfection and gathers his followers.[42]

Through this inscription she is not only furthering her connection to Amun, but she is also showing her reverence for him by giving him credit for the creation of the building projects that she commissioned. From inscriptions like this and the art found all around Karnak, it seems like

[42] Allen, "The Role of Amun,", 83.

Hatshepsut saw these building projects not as something she had to do because of her position, but something she wanted to do because she wanted to honor Amun. It is unclear if she genuinely believes in their connection or if this is purely propaganda. To me it seems like she does believe in Amun and his power as well as their connection. Given how young she was when she became a priestess of him, due to taking the position of the God's Wife of Amun, it is likely that she believes very heavily in him just as she was taught when preparing for that role. However, I also believe that she was a very apt ruler who knew how to control her image in the eyes of the people.

The intent behind Hatshepsut's choices of androgyny and masculinity are very complicated and something that we will never know the truth behind. However, there is credibility to the different theories as there is evidence for each of them, and likely that the truth is a combination of them. I agree with Gaylord's idea that gender and religion plays a role in her choice as religion was a massive part of their society, especially for Hatshepsut who connected herself very strongly with Amun who was seen as androgynous due to his involvement in their creation story. However, I also agree with Diamond who argues that there was a political motive. She does not completely dismiss that gender and religion played a role in Hatshepsut's decisions, instead Diamond believes that historians who argue solely for the gender theory, "overlook [Hatshepsut's] savvy as a ruler by filtering her choice of masculinity too heavily through the lens of our current notions about why an individual might choose a fluid/trans identity"[43]

Hatshepsut was an amazing leader during her time as King. Her reign was filled not just with her building projects, but also economic prosperity and military victories. To ignore her leadership skills and political experience would be a disservice to her memory. Diamond goes on

[43] Diamond, "Hatshepsut: Transcending Gender in Ancient Egypt," , 169.

to say, "[I]t needs to be acknowledged that we are constrained by the evidence left to us about how Hatshepsut *wanted* to be perceived in her capacity as king of Egypt - her public image."[44] Diamond is arguing that we have no knowledge of Hatshepsut's personal feelings or her personal identity. We only know what she showed to the public through her artwork and like most leaders in history that identity would have been calculated to control public perception. Each of her pieces have some relation to or function in the Ancient Egyptian religion, whether it was their funerary practices or worship of the gods. However, each of them also showed how Hatshepsut wanted to be seen or what she wanted to convey to the public. She used different symbols and attributes in her art, regardless of their traditionally assigned gender, to show that she was able and willing to not only rule, but to be their King and Pharaoh.

[44] Ibid, 170.

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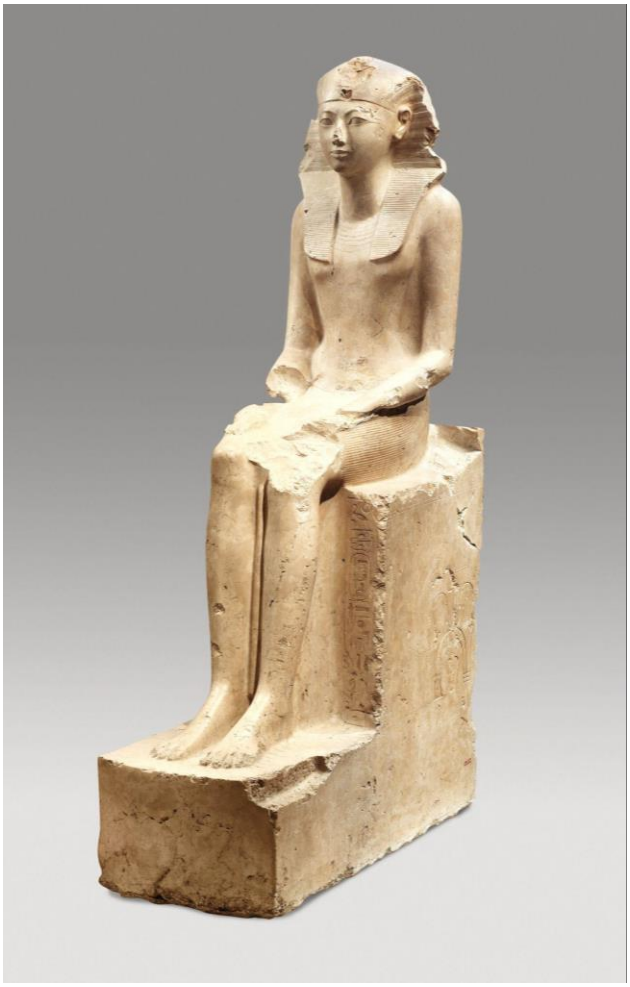
Figure 1:



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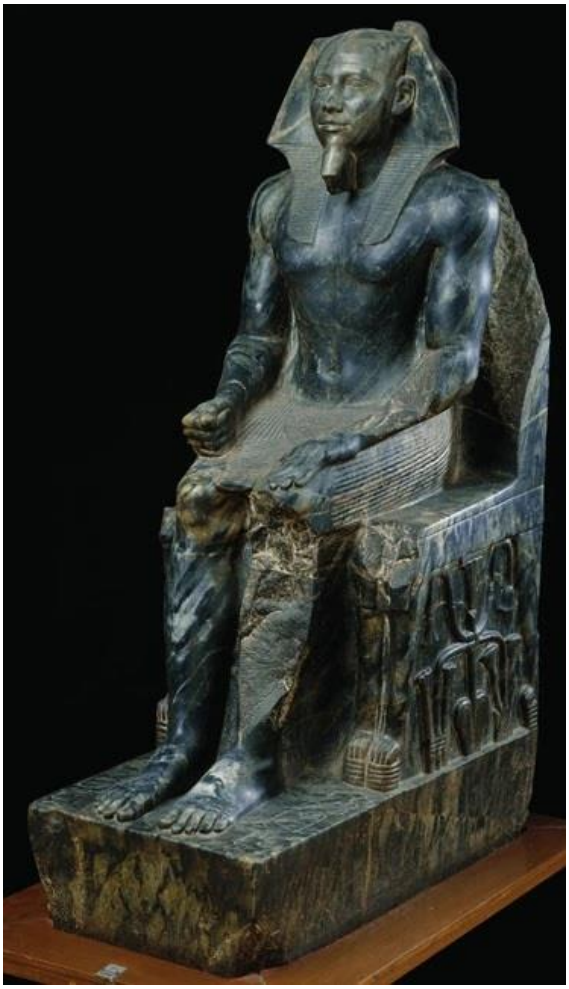

Figure 3:

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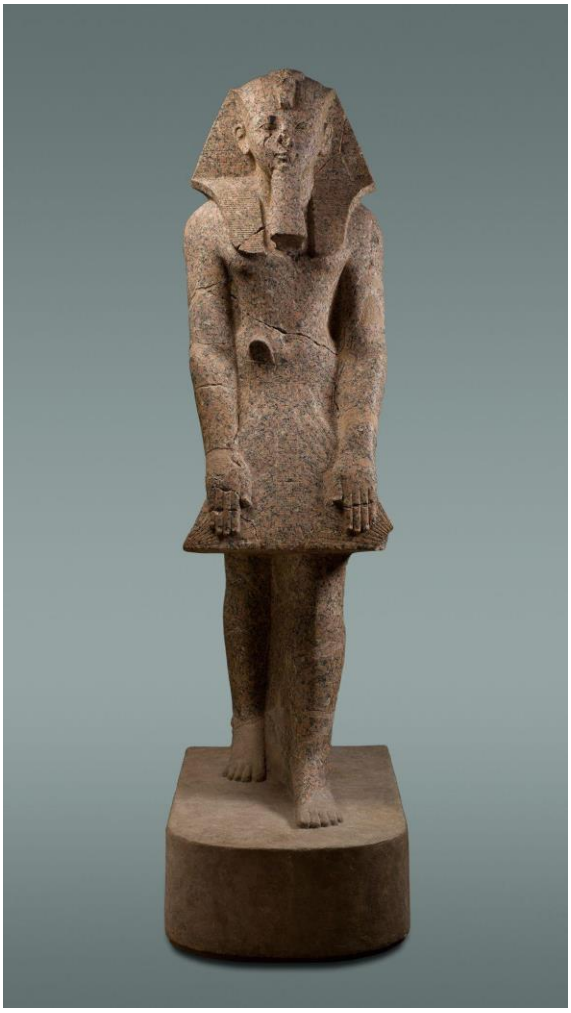

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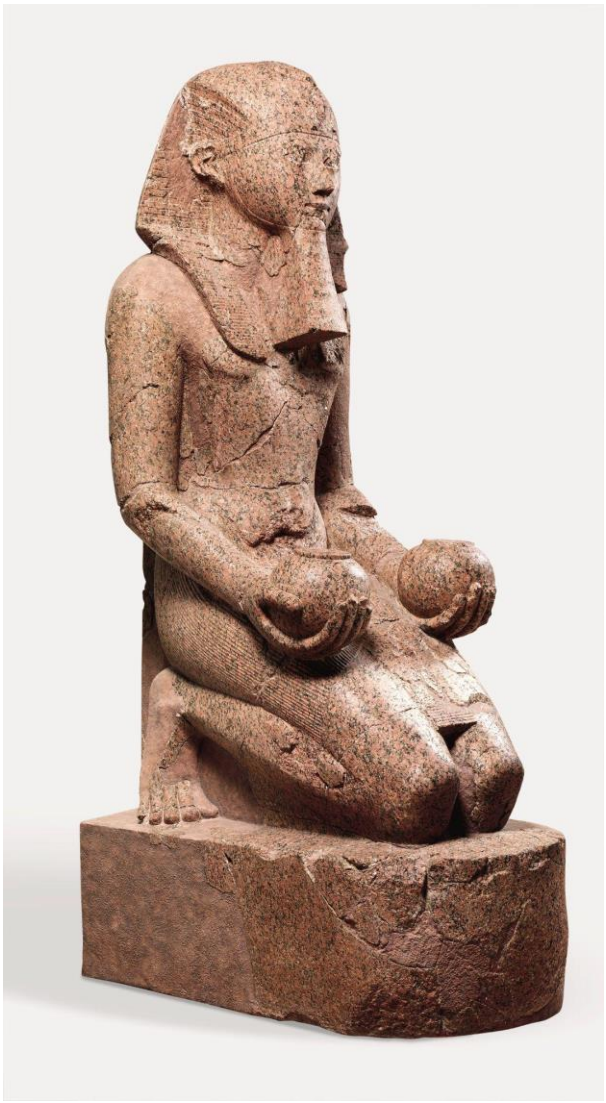

Figure 6:

Figure 7:

Figure 8: