

A TALE OF TWO DEITIES

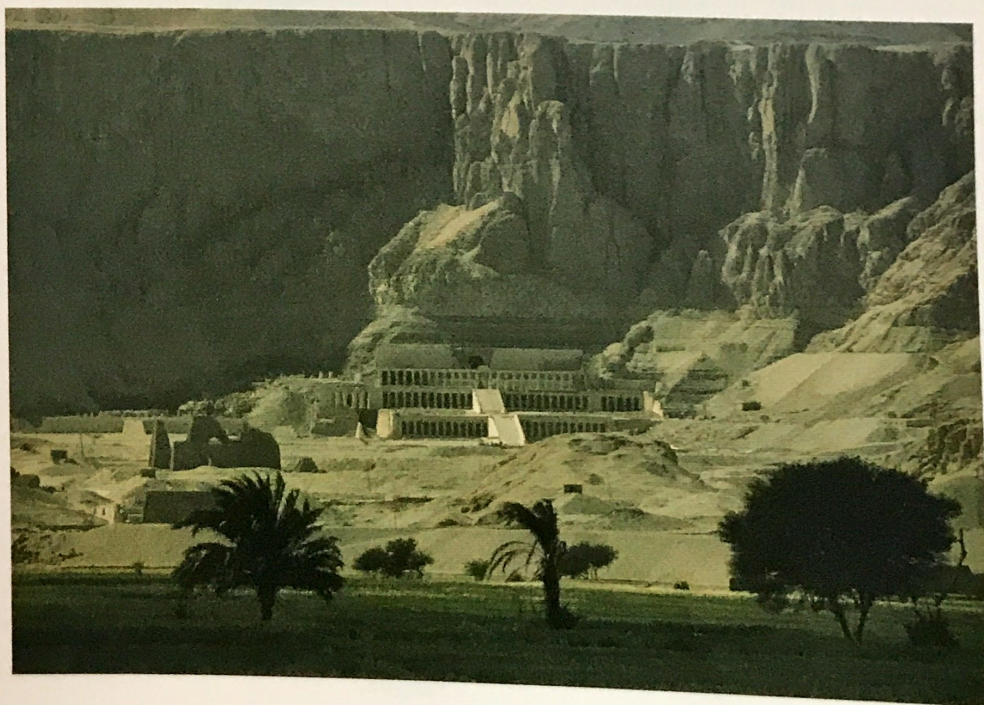
HATSHEPSUT AND THUTMOSE III

When families get together for holidays and special occasions—after the latest news has been exchanged, and a good meal eaten, and the day has grown long—the old stories come out. Each story is told as if it were the first time, even though everyone has heard it a hundred times before, and can anticipate the next line before it is said out loud. Why are these worn family histories shared again and again? Partly because they hold the character of the people who are in them—they can show us grandma's fierce independence, grandpa's stubborn streak, cousin's temper, and great aunt's love of animals. They hold a hint of who we are and how we hope to be remembered (and some things that we wish had been forgotten). It is the same with the ancient Egyptian stories told on tomb and temple walls and the tales that circle the columns in the colonnades. Through the millennia, the stories pass down to us keys to unlock the mystery of the people who lived so long ago.

Nearly 3,500 years ago Queen Hatshepsut—or as she would have called herself, *King Hatshepsut*—chose the stories she wanted remembered. Some are true, and others she made up to justify a woman ruling Egypt. How does a queen become a king? How does a king transform into a god? Sometimes it's all in the story you choose to tell.

“ GOVERNMENT RECORDS, HATSHEPSUT'S TOMB INSCRIPTIONS, TOMB INSCRIPTION OF AN ARMY SCRIBE, AND INSCRIPTIONS AT KARNAK

Queen Hatshepsut's terraced mortuary temple was carved out of the rock cliffs at Deir el-Bahri. Hidden in a secret tomb south of her temple were the coffins of some of the greatest kings from the New Kingdom, including Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, II and III, Sety I, and Ramesses I and II.



“ Ineni, government records, about 1500 BCE

When King Thutmose II died in 1504 BCE, his son, Thutmose III, was too young to rule Egypt. Although his exact age is unknown, it is possible that he was just a young child. So, as was custom, the widowed queen took over until the young king was old enough to rule by himself. The records tell us: “Having ascended into heaven Thutmose II became united with the gods. . . . Hatshepsut governed Egypt, and the Two Lands were under her control. People worked for her, and Egypt bowed her head.”

As a queen, Hatshepsut’s powers were limited. When a king took the throne, he became a god and the middleman (or middlegod?) between the heavenly gods and the people. One of his most important jobs was to please the gods. That guaranteed the desired balance known as *ma’at*. Egypt could then flourish. No king meant no *ma’at*, which meant no flourishing. Egyptians would be doomed to the chaos of the Intermediate Periods. If Hatshepsut hoped to maintain *ma’at*, she must first become a king. She needed to show the people that the gods were pleased with her as the ruler, that the gods recognized her as king, and that she herself was indeed divine. What better way to prove her divinity than to claim that it was the gods’ idea in the first place? Who would question a choice made by the gods?

Hatshepsut set out to show Egypt that she was no mere mortal, but the daughter of the great god Amun, who personally chose her to be king. To justify her kingship, Hatshepsut made up a story of her birth and commissioned



Thutmose III wears royal accessories. The headcloth was usually made from striped cloth, pulled tightly across the forehead and tied behind the head with two flaps hanging over the shoulders. A cobra on the brow protected the king. A formal fake beard is fastened with loops around the ears.

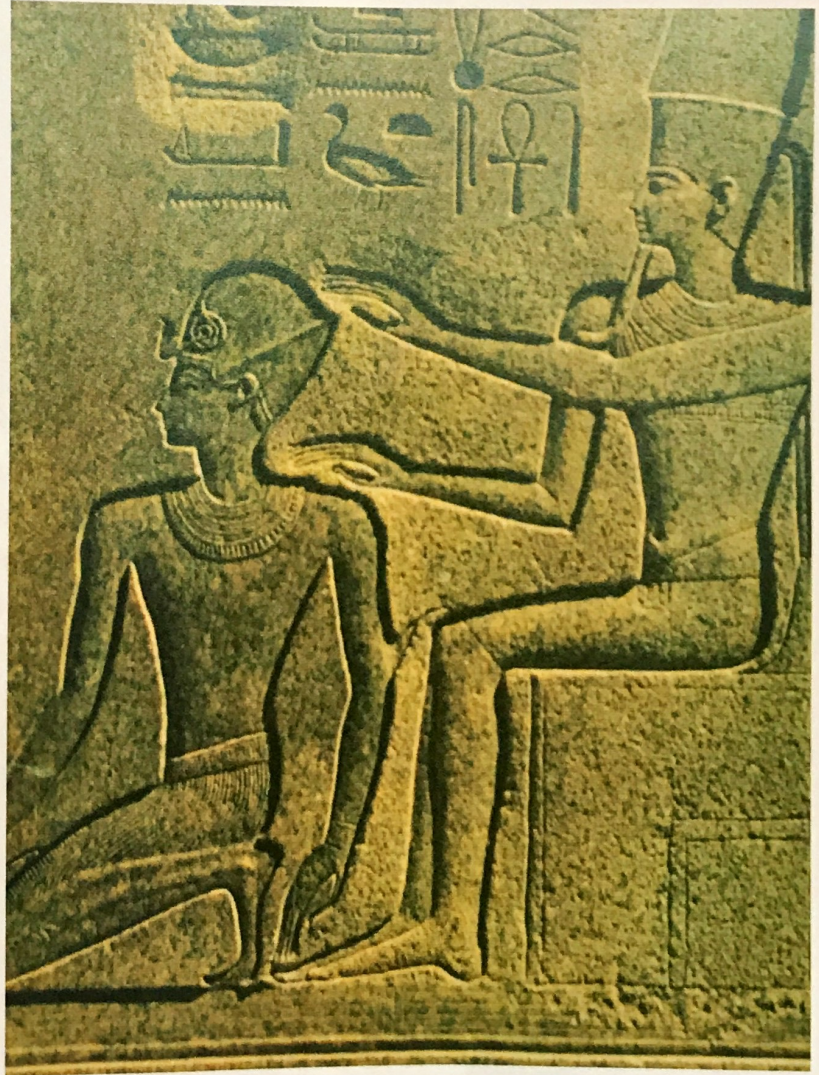
artists to illustrate it. In the final scene Hatshepsut is presented to all the gods, who recognize her as king. To be sure there was no doubt about her destiny, Hatshepsut included in the text these words, supposedly from Amun himself, “This daughter of mine . . . I have appointed successor upon my throne. . . . It is she who will lead you. Obey her words and unite yourselves at her command.”

In just seven years Hatshepsut transformed herself from a dutiful co-ruler into a deity. She wore a king’s crown and clothing. She carried the king’s staff. She even hung the king’s ceremonial hair-piece, a braided beard, from her ears with string.

But perhaps the story that Hatshepsut would most want us to know is about the trade expedition to Punt. The story is drawn in detail on the walls of the temple where she was worshipped after death. The story shows how Hatshepsut added to Egypt’s wealth by focusing her reign on trade and exploration. It shows that with Hatshepsut as king, there was a whole lot of flourishing going on in Egypt. There was *ma’at*. A series of pictures and captions tell the story of the journey to Punt.

Five sailing ships manned with soldiers, officials, and rowers leave Egypt. When they arrive off foreign shores they anchor and all climb into small boats loaded with trinkets for trade. While making their way through the jungle of ebony and palm trees, the Egyptian traders come across a village. Beehive-shaped huts made from woven palm fronds sit up on stilts so far above the ground that the only way to get inside is to climb ladders leading from the ground up to the doorways.

“Inscription at Hatshepsut’s mortuary temple, Deir el-Bahari, about 1500 BCE



The great god Amun sits supportively behind King Hatshepsut. She chooses to be shown as a man in king’s clothing (with Amun’s approval) to make it clear to everyone that she is in charge.

Egyptian sailors familiar with travel along the Nile were unaccustomed to the dangers of the open sea. The long trip to the mysterious land of Punt would be similar to today's adventurers taking off for the moon. Hey, you up front—look where you're going!



The exact location of Punt is not known, but the animals in the scenes are clearly African. There are leopards, rhinoceros, and giraffes. The carvings show trees full of monkeys. Scholars believe that the expedition took place in the spring because the birds in the pictures are nesting.

The village chief greets the Egyptian traders with the question: “How have you arrived at this land unknown to the men of Egypt? Have you come down from the roads of the Heavens?” The chief’s wife and children accompany him. The Egyptians give the natives gifts of beads and bracelets. The native guides lead the Egyptian traders into the heart of Punt, where they all work together collecting ebony and incense to bring home to Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut brags on her temple walls about all the wonderful things Egypt will enjoy because of her leadership:

The loading of the ships very heavily with marvels of the country of Punt; all goodly fragrant woods . . . with ebony and pure ivory, with . . . eye-cosmetics, with apes, monkeys, dogs and with skins of the

66 Inscription at Hatshepsut’s mortuary temple, Deir el-Bahari, about 1500 BCE

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southern panther, with natives and their children. Never was brought the like of this for any king who has been since the beginning.

Once back in Egypt the sailors unload. They wrestle with full-grown trees that have been transplanted into baskets and slung over poles for transport. Others shoulder pots and some herd animals. Hatshepsut accepts it all as her due, in the name of Egypt and her godly father Amun. A small figure in the background of one of the last scenes offers incense to the great god Amun. It is Thutmose III. But Thutmose III would not stay in the background forever. His turn on the throne was coming.

Just as Hatshepsut had a favorite story that showed us the character of her time in power, so did Thutmose III. His was the battle of Megiddo. Thutmose III's military victories were inscribed on the inner walls of the sanctuary at Karnak. The stories come from the journal entries of an army scribe. The scribe tells us, "I recorded the victories the king won in every land, putting them in writing according to the facts."

While waiting to come of age and take his rightful place as the king of Egypt, Thutmose III trained with the army. When Hatshepsut's 22-year reign ended in 1483 BCE he came to the throne a skilled and daring general. His military abilities were put to the test immediately. Expecting Egypt to be weak with a new and unproven king in charge, rebels took control of the city of Megiddo. Whoever controlled Megiddo controlled one of the most important trade routes in the world. Megiddo is located in what is today called the Jezreel Valley in modern Israel. The city, towering nearly a hundred feet above the valley, controlled

Five shiploads of Egyptian marines forced the Puntites into an uneven trade. In exchange for a few beads and blades, the Egyptians brought home gold, ivory, animal skins, resins to make incense, trees, and exotic animals.

MISSING MUMMY

What happened to King Hatshepsut? She simply disappears from history. Some say an impatient Thutmose III murdered her, but there is no evidence to support that theory. It is more likely that Hatshepsut died a natural death and then Thutmose III took his place as king of Egypt. Up until this point we are in the dark—there are no tales told.

66 Tomb inscription of an army scribe, Deir el-Bahari, about 1479 BCE

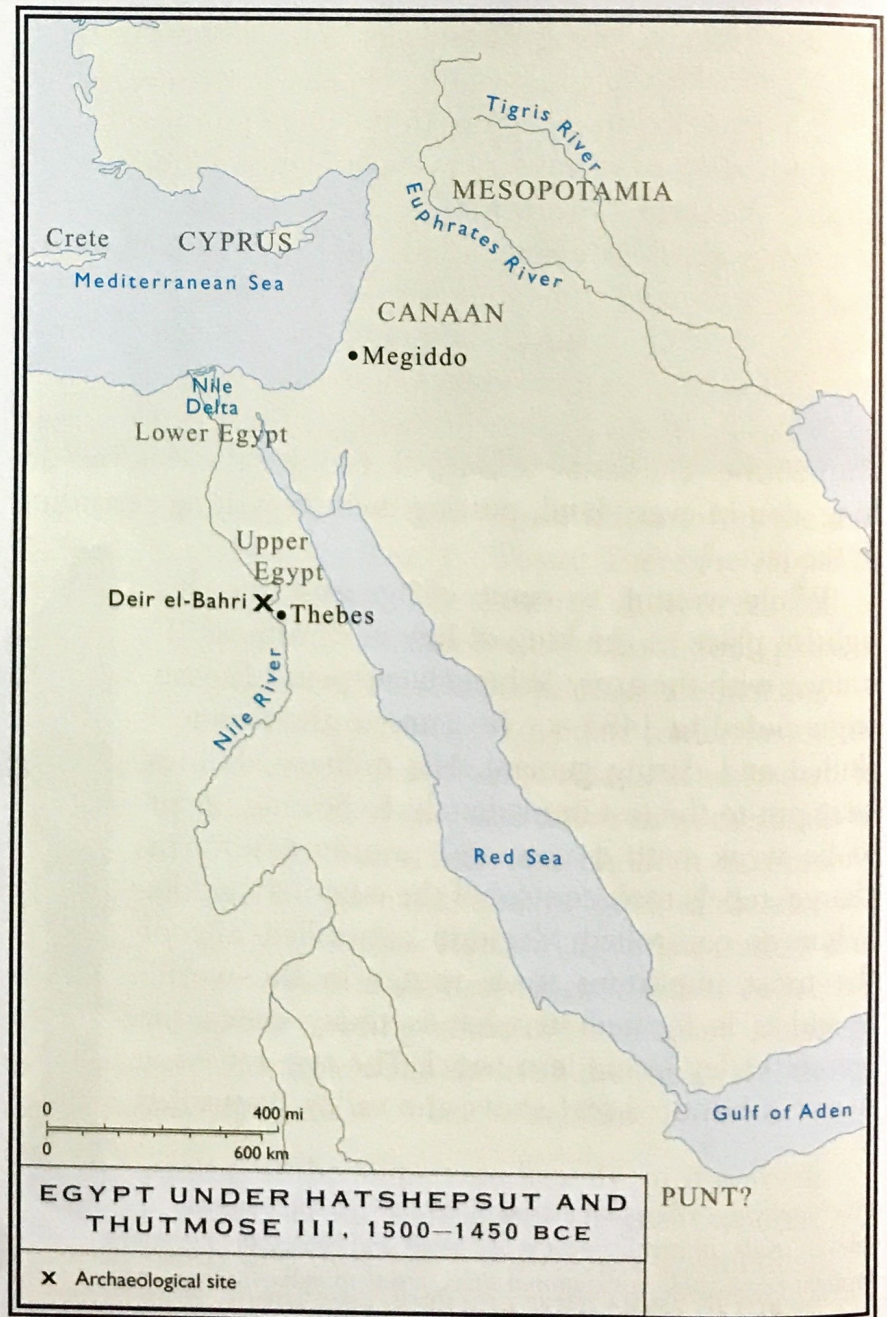


BIGGER AND BETTER

Karnak began during the Middle Kingdom as a shrine and was added onto for 2,000 years until the religious complex's temples, columns, and statues covered 250 acres. Hatshepsut and Thutmose III both built at Karnak, erecting obelisks and temples to hold their stories.

the “Via Maris” (the Way of the Sea), which was the most important road running between Egypt in the south, and all of the countries to the north. Thutmose III’s first military mission was to capture Megiddo.

Thutmose III joined his army at a fortress on Egypt’s border and marched at a frantic pace toward Megiddo. On their way to the city they came to a place where the road



divided in three. Here a decision had to be made. One road snaked north and east, ending miles away from Megiddo. One road meandered north and west, curving miles off course and also ending miles away from Megiddo. The third route was a direct route. It headed straight north, ending near the gates of the city. But there was a problem. The third route pinched through a narrow pass that would force the army to march single file. This left them vulnerable. What if they were ambushed while they were strung out in a long line that couldn't be defended? The rebels would pick them off one by one. From inscriptions at Karnak we know Thutmose III's war council begged him, "do not make us go on the difficult road!" But of course the bold Thutmose III did. "Then his majesty commanded the entire army to march upon the road which threatened to be narrow. He went forth at the head of his army himself, showing the way by his own footsteps; horse behind horse, his majesty being at the head of his army." Thutmose III led his troops through the dangerous pass.

The rebel forces never expected the Egyptian army to choose the dangerous direct road. They had divided the bulk of their army between the other two roads, leaving the central pass virtually unprotected. When the Egyptians attacked, the enemy retreated to the city gates of Megiddo, "they fled headlong to Megiddo with faces of fear. They abandoned their horses and chariots of gold and silver. . . ." Slow runners found the gates already slammed shut and had to be pulled over the walls by their friends inside, using ropes made from clothes tied together. Thutmose III's daring dash worked.

Because the Egyptians stopped to collect the loot abandoned by the fleeing soldiers, victory was not theirs that day. They were forced to wait outside the city walls for what, according to the records, was a seven-month siege. But the day's events sent a message to the ancient world. The throne of Egypt was in capable hands with the warrior king Thutmose III in control. Egypt would flourish under him. Its territory would be greatly expanded. *Ma'at* would be maintained. For Egypt it would be a golden age.

FIRST BATTLE

The battle of Megiddo, fought in 1479 BCE, is the first battle in history whose details were written down so that we can follow the action from beginning to end.

“ ” Inscription at Karnak temple, Luxor, about 1479 BCE

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