

Women and Military Leadership in Pharaonic Egypt

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IN NONE of the dominant cultures of the ancient world did women regularly perform military service, but in a number of cultures royal women did occasionally play a leadership role in military enterprises.¹ Some royal women in Egypt in pharaonic times reigned or co-reigned, and even non-reigning royal women had an institutionalized role in the public presentation of monarchy.² As the position of royal women was much more prominent in Egypt than in other ancient monarchies, it comes as no great surprise that this prominence sometimes involved some aspect of military leadership.³ This study is dedicated to John Oates in affectionate memory of his many years as teacher and mentor.

The paper examines the role of women in pharaonic times in

¹The following will be cited by authors' names alone: C. ALDRED, *Jewels of the Pharaohs: Egyptian Jewelry of the Dynastic Period* (New York 1971); W. VON BISSING, *Ein thebanischer Grabfund aus dem Anfang des neuen Reiches* (Berlin 1900); G. CALLENDER, "A Critical Examination of the Reign of Hatshetsup," *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 18 (1988) 86–102; R. MORRIS, "Violent Images of Queenship and the Royal Cult," *Wepwawet* 2 (1986) 1–9; D. B. REDFORD, *The History and Chronology of the Egyptian Eighteenth Dynasty: Seven Studies* (Toronto 1968); G. ROBINS, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1993); M. SALEH and H. SOUROUZIAN, *Official Catalogue: The Egyptian Museum, Cairo* (Mainz 1987); C. VANDERSLEYEN, *Les guerres d'Amosis: Fondateur de la XVIII^e dynastie* (Brussels 1971)

²See Robins 21–55 for an overview of the role of Egyptian royal women and a brief survey of the most prominent ones.

³Female military action, symbolic or real, was comparatively rare. It is significant that the "Instruction of King Amenemhet I for his son Sesostris I," dating from the reign of Sesostris I in the Middle Kingdom, treats female military leadership as unprecedented: "Had women ever marshaled troops?" (transl. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I* [Berkeley 1975] 137).

three categories of military leadership: participation and command in battle itself; administrative leadership (command of campaigns); and symbolic leadership (appearances with armies, near battles but not actual involvement in combat, or depictions or conceptualizations of women in the guise of military leaders). Having established the parameters of female military leadership, the paper will then consider its figurative nature, its cultural meaning and context, particularly in terms of monarchy. A brief comparison with royal Macedonian women will accentuate the distinctive nature of Egyptian royal female involvement in military action and ideology.

During the second intermediate period, when the 17th dynasty organized the effort to drive the Hyksos from Egypt, and the New Kingdom, when Egypt dominated much of Nubia and Syria-Palestine, the military gained unprecedented importance in Egyptian life, and also royal women achieved new prominence.⁴ Not surprisingly, it is in this militaristic era that we find three possible examples of women who entered combat and exercised battlefield command. Some might doubt that the evidence demonstrates that they actually led armies in battle, but it would be difficult to maintain that these women were not, at least administratively, in charge of military operations.

Ahhotep was the mother of Ahmose, who defeated the Nubians, expelled the Hyksos, and re-established national monarchy, thus creating the 18th dynasty. Evidence suggests that Ahhotep led the Egyptian army. An inscription from Ahmose's great stele at Karnak describes her as one who makes important decisions. It asserts that she was a daughter of a king and mother of a king and refers to her as "one who cares for Egypt.

⁴Robins 42–55; B. M. Bryan, "In women good and bad fortune are on earth: Status and Roles of Women in Egyptian Culture," in A. K. Capel and G. E. Markoe, ed., *Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt* (New York 1996) 25–36.

She has looked after her (i.e. Egypt's) soldiers;⁵ she has guarded her; she has brought back her fugitives, and collected together her deserters; she has pacified Upper Egypt, and expelled her rebels."⁶ It would appear that in the absence of an adult male of the dynasty, Ahhotep, acting like a regent, unified Egypt and suppressed rebellion. Callender concluded that she either "conducted or organised" military engagements in Upper Egypt.⁷ The historical and chronological context of her actions is unclear:⁸ some have assumed that she took these actions after her husband was dead and while her son was still a minor and thus unable to command himself;⁹ others have concluded that she exercised this military command after her son was of age but while he was absent on campaign.¹⁰ The Karnak stele, erected by her son Ahmose at the temple of Amon, not only acknowledges but praises her unusual role. Thus it seems clear that the mother of the founder of the 18th dynasty certainly took administrative leadership of a military campaign to deal with insurrection, and may have led the army in combat against rebels in Upper Egypt.

The content of the tomb of a royal woman named Ahhotep, who may or may not have been identical with the mother of Ahmose (see below), found in the Dra Abu'l-Naga area of the Theban necropolis, near the burial site of Kamose, suggests that

⁵As Vandersleyen 177 notes, the word here, *mnfyt*, has generally been translated "soldiers," as James does (next note), but K. Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reichs IV* (Leipzig 1933) 21, understood them to be merely notables.

⁶T. G. H. James, "Egypt: From the Expulsion of the Hyksos to Amenophis I," *CAH II.1* (1973) 306.

⁷Callender 90. Similar interpretations appear in Robins 42–43; J. Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut* (London 1996) 57–58. Vandersleyen, however, implausibly argues (190–191) that though she acted to unify the country she did not involve herself in military action but waited for her son to return and use force.

⁸See discussion of dating problems in Vandersleyen 131–133, though not necessarily his conclusions.

⁹Typically this view is taken on the assumption that the Ahhotep mentioned in the inscription is the wife of Sekenenre Tao II.

¹⁰Vandersleyen 131–133, 190–195.

the occupant of the tomb played a military role of some sort. The circumstances of the discovery of this tomb, made in the very early days of Egyptian archaeology, lead to uncertainty about interpreting what it contained.¹¹ The tomb was discovered in 1859 by employees of Mariette, who had been appointed the first Director of Egyptian Monuments only the year before. An associate of his reported the find to Mariette, but the entire collection of grave goods was removed to Qena. The local governor, having rifled the mummy and destroyed it in the process, then sent a considerable quantity of gold jewelry and other funerary objects to Said Pasha. Mariette, fearing that the burial goods would not be kept intact, in effect highjacked the collection and thus preserved it.

The tomb's contents included a wooden coffin inscribed with the name of Ahhotep, the lid of which (the lower section is lost), heavily covered with gold leaf, had a partially destroyed uraeus on the forehead, and the eyes set in gold.¹² While some objects seem conventional for a female burial or common in both male

¹¹H. E. Winlock, "The Tombs of the Kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty at Thebes," *JEA* 10 (1924) 252–254, gives an account of what is known about the initial discovery, the problems of the records, and the early adventures of the burial goods, much of it based on a March 22, 1859, letter of Dévéria, an associate of Mariette. According to the letter, Mariette was sent a list of the grave goods by one of his employees and the governor sent another list to the viceroy; these lists were said by Dévéria to agree. Winlock (254) casts doubt on subsequent claims by Dévéria and others that any of the jewelry was lost or removed.

¹²Von Bissing pls. 11–12. As M. Eaton-Krauss, "The Coffins of Queen Ahhotep, Consort of Seqeni-en-Re and mother of Amose," *ChrEg* 65 (1990) 195–205, notes (195), the inscription on the coffin gives her only the titles of a royal wife and does not term her King's mother. Winlock (*supra* n.11) 251 first pointed to the similarities between this coffin and that of Sekenenre Tao II (Winlock pl. 16 shows the two together), followed by C. Blankenberg-van Delden, "A Genealogical Reconstruction of the Kings and Queens of the Late 17th and Early 18th Dynasties," *GöttingMisz* 54 (1982) 35; Eaton-Krauss 200–203. Blankenberg-van Delden extends the point to include two other very large coffins: those of Sekhemre-Wepmaat Intef and Nubkheperre Intef. She points to the similarities: interior painted with bitumen, lids gilded, bodies painted greenish blue, eyes of hard stone in metal frame.

and female burials (a pair of bead bracelets,¹³ a pectoral,¹⁴ a falcon collar,¹⁵ a scarab pendant on a chain,¹⁶ a gold bracelet with lapis lazuli inlay¹⁷), others have a distinctly military aspect not otherwise encountered in female burials.¹⁸ A gold necklace with three very large golden flies¹⁹ was found suspended from the neck of the mummy (two smaller electrum flies were also among the burial goods).²⁰ The “Order of the Golden Fly” first appeared in the early New Kingdom (probably Asian, Canaanite, in origin like so many innovations of the period) and was

¹³ Von Bissing pl. 5; Aldred 198–199, pl. 49; Saleh/Sourouzzian 125. The end pieces show names and titles of Ahmose.

¹⁴ Aldred 200, pl. 50, is similar in technique to those of the Middle Kingdom, but Aldred calls it “less accomplished”; it is inscribed with the names and titles of Ahmose. Aldred suggests that it was made for the coronation of Ahmose as it shows Ahmose being lustrated, a ritual that was part of coronation. N. Reeves, *Ancient Egypt: The Great Discoveries: A year-by-year Chronicle* (New York 2002) 51, similarly considers the item to demonstrate “clumsiness of workmanship.”

¹⁵ Aldred 202–203, pl. 55: a complex reconstruction. Aldred notes design motifs that are not only Egyptian but Aegean.

¹⁶ Von Bissing pls. 6–7; Aldred 203, pl. 56, who sees it as fine workmanship and therefore dates it late in the reign of Ahmose; Saleh/Sourouzzian 126. It too is inscribed with the name of Ahmose.

¹⁷ Aldred 203, pl. 57, which shows Ahmose’s crowning and recognition as descendant of divine pharaohs; Aldred suggests that, like the pectoral, it was part of his coronation regalia; Saleh/Sourouzzian 124.

¹⁸ Callender 90 terms the collection “unique among female burials.”

¹⁹ Von Bissing pl. 6, who says (10) that each golden fly was 9.3 cm. long. Aldred 201, pl. 53, comments that these three “are the largest and best versions of such an award which, in view of the amount of gold that went into their making, was of great intrinsic value.” His comments suggest that not only the size but the workmanship of these flies (for instance, stripes on the simulated thorax give the impression as the wearer moves of the “iridescence of the natural insect”) is considerably greater than that shown in the fly necklace of the wife of Thutmose III (see below and Aldred 215, pl. 86). This is particularly striking since, whichever Ahhotep’s burial this is, the other grave goods suggest simpler work done late in the second intermediate period or very early in the New Kingdom. Aldred 199 says of the jewels found in her burial that the workmanship was “generally much cruder than that of the Middle Kingdom craftsmen,” but cites exceptions where he sees Memphite and Asian influence as well as Helladic; Reeves (*supra* n.14) 50 describes the vulture armlet from the burial as “delightfully naive.”

²⁰ Reeves (*supra* n.14) 51–52. Von Bissing 10 says that the electrum flies were 4.5 cm. long.

awarded as a military decoration for bravery.²¹ The grave goods contained other military items including three gold and bronze daggers,²² a number of axes,²³ a hinged armlet in the form of the vulture Nekhbet,²⁴ and an armlet in the form of an archer's bracer.²⁵ A number of these items were inscribed with the name and titles of Ahmose and a smaller number with those of his predecessor Kamose.²⁶ Even though many of these items were made of precious materials and doubtless had only ceremonial and not practical purpose, the burial collection suggests that this royal woman, closely associated with Ahmose and Kamose, was being commemorated for her military role,

²¹ Aldred 19, who cites as an example the soldier Ah-mose-pen-Nekheb, who fought under the early rulers of the 18th dynasty and boasted that he got six flies from Thutmose I (J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* II [Chicago 1906] 23). Aldred assumes that Ahhotep's flies were a military award, believing that she is mother of Ahmose who helped in the unification struggles. He also cites a necklace with golden flies (Aldred 215, pl. 86) that was buried with one of the wives of Thutmose III. This necklace, now in the Metropolitan Museum, had thirty-three much smaller flies, each 1.4 cm. long. But he notes (187) that burial goods of a Middle Kingdom royal woman named Khnumet contained a necklace with twelve "stylized flies or bees," adding that the bee motif was found in Egypt and the Aegean in that period but that the fly appeared later, citing the example of the necklace of Thutmose's wife.

²² Von Bissing pl. 2; Saleh/Sourouzian 122 is a dagger of gold, electrum, enamel, and semi-precious stones; the name and epithets of Ahmose are inscribed on both faces of the gold handle.

²³ Von Bissing pl. 1; Saleh/Sourouzian 121, for instance, is a ceremonial axe of gold, electrum, copper, precious stones, and wood, with inscriptions giving the name and titles of Ahmose. They understand some scenes to depict the liberation of Egypt from the Hyksos.

²⁴ Von Bissing pl. 5; Aldred 201–202, pl. 54, sees the design and techniques as a decline from the standards of the Middle kingdom with a "somewhat rustic character" more typical of provincial work; he suggests a date in the reign of Kamose; it shows damage from use.

²⁵ Aldred 200–201, pls. 51–52. The object was, according to Mariette, found on the mummy's head in her hair, but its diameter indicates it was worn on the upper arm (Winlock [*supra* n.11] 254–255). Aldred suggests that its diameter (11 cm.), greater than that of other armlets found in Ahhotep's burial, implies that it belonged not to her but to Ahmose himself, in his earlier years. Reeves (*supra* n.14) 51 considers that the vertical projection of the armlet means that it took the form of an archer's bracer, protecting the inner wrist from the bow-string as it was released.

²⁶ Winlock (*supra* n.11) 254 makes the point that the greater preponderance of goods bore the name of Ahmose and that these were the more skillfully and luxuriously made.

possibly for her participation in actual battle. It is difficult to deny that the burial associates her with military action and, much like Ahmose's stele, implies that this role was admired and singled out for remembrance.

Uncertainty and controversy have long surrounded the identity and genealogy of the males and females of the 17th and early 18th dynasties. Much discussion has focused on the "Ahhotep problem,"²⁷ that is, consideration of how many royal women named Ahhotep there were in this period and whose wives, mothers, and daughters they may have been.²⁸ What most concerns us here is whether the woman commemorated by the Karnak stele is the woman buried at Dra Abu'l-Naga. It is possible that she was, but it is also possible that two different royal women named Ahhotep in this period of critical military effort were honored for their military endeavors. No scholarly consensus exists on this topic and scarcity of evidence may mean that none will emerge. Robins justifiably concludes that no secure reconstruction of the genealogy of the royal family of the 17th and early 18th dynasty is currently possible.²⁹ So if the Ahhotep buried at Dra Abu'l-Naga is the mother of Ahmose, then the burial would thoroughly confirm the military role that the Karnak stele suggests; if she is not, then two royal women closely associated with Ahmose were commemorated for their military roles.

²⁷Eaton-Krauss (*supra* n.12: 195) so terms it.

²⁸E. Thomas, *The Royal Necropoleis of Thebes* (Princeton 1966) 38, 70; Vandersleyen 187–195; A. M. Roth, "Ahhotep I and Ahhotep II," *Serapis* 4 (1977–78) 31–40; B. Schmitz, "Untersuchungen zu zwei Königinnen der frühen 18. Dynastie, Ahhotep and Ahmose," *ChrEg* 53 (1978) 207–221; L. Troy, "Ahhotep—A Source Evaluation," *GöttingMisz* 35 (1979) 81–91, and "One Merytamun Too Many. An Exercise in Critical Method," *GöttingMisz* 50 (1981) 81–96; C. Vandersleyen, "Les deux Ahhotep," *SAK* 8 (1980) 237–241; G. Robins, "Ahhotpe I, II and III" *GöttingMisz* 56 (1982) 71–77; Blankenberg-van Delden (*supra* n.12); M. Gitton, *Les divines épouses de la 18^e dynastie* (Paris 1984); Eaton-Krauss (*supra* n.12); C. Bennett, "King Senakhtenre," *GM* 145 (1995) 37–44, and "The Structure of the Seventeenth Dynasty," *GöttingMisz* 149 (1995) 25–32.

²⁹Robins (*supra* n.28) 77.

Despite the continuing tradition in non-scholarly literature that Hatshepsut pursued an isolationist and pacifist policy,³⁰ military campaigns occurred during her reign.³¹ She seems to have been present at some of these and may have commanded troops in battle.³² Egyptian evidence must be used cautiously because many military images of kings (*e.g.* the king as sphinx trampling enemies or the king smiting enemies) are simply re-assertions of the idea of the king as restorer of *maat* by destroying the chaos of foreign enemies, and should not be assumed to refer to specific events. While some inscriptions simply confirm military activity during the reign of Hatshepsut, much of it possibly the work of her young co-ruler Thutmose III,³³ two inscriptions set up by different individuals provide strong evidence that Hatshepsut personally led troops in at least one Nubian campaign and possibly a second. The inscription of Ty, treasurer of Lower Egypt, found on Sehel island, at Aswan, records that he followed an Egyptian king with Hatshepsut's praenomen³⁴ and that he saw the ruler "overthrowing the (Nubian) nomads, their chiefs being brought to him³⁵ as prisoners. I saw him destroying the land of Nubia, while I was in the following of his majesty."³⁶ Another inscription, at the

³⁰This view was once common in scholarly literature (*e.g.* J. A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt* [Chicago 1951] 174) but is no longer. Callender 93–95 gives examples of the continuation of the "peaceful" Hatshepsut theme in popular works and textbooks.

³¹L. Habachi, "Two Graffiti at Sehel from the Reign of Queen Hatshepsut," *JNES* 16 (1957) 88–104; Redford 57–87, followed by Callender 92–95; Tyldesley (*supra* n.7) 137–144.

³²Callender 93 thinks that she may have herself led the army in two of the five campaigns with which Callender credits her reign.

³³See discussion and references in Callender 93–94.

³⁴Habachi (*supra* n.31) 101 reads her praenomen in the erasure within the cartouche. As he notes, there was no reason to erase the name of Thutmose III whereas many of Hatshepsut's inscriptions have been erased.

³⁵As Callender 94 observes, documents generated by Hatshepsut sometimes refer to her as "him" and sometimes not; she assumes that the military nature of this document explains its masculine usage.

³⁶Text and translation: Habachi (*supra* n.31) 99–100.

grave of Djehuty at Dra Abu'l-Naga, insists that he "saw the collection of booty by this mighty ruler from the vile Kush, who are deemed cowards. The female sovereign, given life, prosperity and health forever."³⁷ The female king Hatshepsut commanded troops; her participation in battle seems likely, but the two inscriptions at least make it virtually impossible to deny that she exercised administrative control over at least one Nubian campaign and was present on the scene to do so.

The long history of Egyptian monarchy generated many symbols of royal power and rule. Early on, royal women were sometimes shown with some of these symbols, implying some understanding of their rule or at least shared rule. Images of royal women pictured as military leaders, with the attributes of a king as warrior and general, are much more rare, but there are a number of examples, from the New Kingdom period. They use two important symbols of royal military power and order: the smiting scene, in which the king holds aloft a weapon with one hand and grasps the hair of an enemy with his other,³⁸ and the king as a sphinx, trampling enemies. Variations on these themes show the ruler standing or sitting with his feet on enemies.

An inscription from the reign of Thutmose IV shows a queen, carrying a club, following a king who has seized a group of captives by the hair and is about to smite them with his own club.³⁹ Though royal women were occasionally shown as sphinxes, Hatshepsut is the first to be depicted as a sphinx trampling enemies, an explicitly military image.⁴⁰ She of course was a female king, so this scene is less exceptional than it seems. In the tomb of Kheruef, dating from her husband's reign, Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV), is

³⁷Sethe (*supra* n.5) 438, transl. Callender 94.

³⁸See the survey in E. S. Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites His Enemies: A Comparative Study* (Berlin 1986).

³⁹See references in Morkot 5 n.61.

⁴⁰Redford 58, from Hatshepsut's funerary temple at Deir el Bahri.

shown seated on a throne similar to that of kings of the period, but with unusual variations. In a scene between the chair legs, she has female captives. On the side panel, as a female sphinx, she tramples the usual Nubian and Asiatic captives underfoot, but they are female captives.⁴¹ Another Theban tomb, that of Surer, depicts Amenhotep III receiving statues of himself and of Tiye: the image is badly damaged and has been heavily restored but appears to depict Tiye standing upon a prostrate enemy. Since similar images of Amenhotep and other rulers exist, it seems likely that there were once such statues of Tiye.⁴²

This assimilation of a royal wife to masculine royal images of military conquest continues in the reign of Akhenaten. Nefertiti,⁴³ sometimes accompanied by one of her daughters, appears behind her husband in scenes of enemy-smiting.⁴⁴ Like her mother-in-law Tiye, she appears as female sphinx trampling enemies and has female captives decorating her throne, but she also appears by herself, smiting enemies with a scimitar, wearing a kilt and bare-breasted, on the cabin of her royal barge.⁴⁵ Nefertiti's assimilation of the king's role as sole smiter is one of a number of pieces of evidence that have led to the controversial theory that Nefertiti co-ruled with her husband and perhaps ruled on her own after his death.⁴⁶

⁴¹Morkot 1 nn.8–11; Robins 33, fig. 5.

⁴²Morkot 2.

⁴³See J. Tyldesley, *Nefertiti, Egypt's Sun Queen* (New York 1999) 64 n.26, for discussion of the possibility that Nefertiti's unique flat-topped blue crown was a "female version" of the blue war-helmet crown worn by New Kingdom rulers. See also G. B. Johnson, "Seeking Queen Nefertiti's Tall Blue Crown," *Amarna Letters* 1 (1991) 50–61.

⁴⁴See references in Morkot 2 n.24.

⁴⁵Nefertiti as sphinx: R. W. Smith and D. B. Redford, *The Akhenaten Temple Project I* (Warminster 1976) pl. 23.2; Nefertiti smiting: J. D. Cooney, *Amarna Reliefs from Hermopolis in American Collections* (Brooklyn 1965) 82–85 no. 51; Morkot 2 n.17.

⁴⁶J. Samson, *Amarna, City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Nefertiti as Pharaoh* (Warminster 1978); J. R. Harris, "Nefertiti Rediva," *Acta Orientalia* 35 (1973) 5–13, and "Nefernefruaten," *Göttinger Misz* 4 (1973) 15–17, and general discussion in Robins 53–55.

After the unusual reign of Akhenaten, royal women are not shown in such an overtly and independently military scene as those of Nefertiti smiting, but they are sometimes shown in association with royal military symbols. Nefertiti's daughter, Ankhesenamun, like her mother, appears standing behind her husband Tutankhamun as he smites enemies,⁴⁷ as does Nefertari, wife of Ramesses II.⁴⁸ A sketch from the Ramessid period may show a queen riding into a battle in a chariot shooting arrows and confronting a male opponent in another chariot.⁴⁹

What is the figurative, the cultural meaning of these incidents of royal female participation in or at least leadership of battle and of the assimilation of some New Kingdom women to military images once exclusively male? Whether one or two Ahhoteps were militarily active in the transitional period at the beginning of New Kingdom, it seems clear that this participation occurred primarily because of a scarcity (due to death or absence) of adult royal males in a period of internal and external military crisis. In this situation, the royal women were literally dynastic reserve troops. Secondarily, this happened because these women were members of the royal dynasty not just by marriage but by birth. Though it may never be possible to determine the exact blood relationships of men and women of the 17th and early 18th dynasties, most were clearly part of the royal family.⁵⁰ Thus, for instance, the Ahhotep commemorated on the

⁴⁷The image appears on a tiny piece of gold foil found in KV 58; Morkot 2 n.25; C. Desroches-Noblecourt, *Tutankhamen: Life and Death of a Pharaoh* (Harmondsworth 1963) 202, fig. 12.

⁴⁸See Morkot 2 n.25 for references.

⁴⁹References in Morkot 2 n.26. He warns that the ostrakon drawing could depict a goddess, a legend, or could even constitute a parody.

⁵⁰Bryan (*supra* n.4) 26–27, while agreeing with G. Robins ("A Critical Examination of the Theory that the Right to the Throne of Ancient Egypt passed through the Female Line in the 18th Dynasty," *GöttingMisz* 62 [1983] 67–77) that the "heiress theory" is incorrect, points out that there is a marked ten-

Karnak stele is called not only the mother of the king, but a king's daughter. One need not accept the "heiress theory" of Egyptian royal succession⁵¹ to believe that the ability of at least one of these women to take over a military role with apparent success derived from the understanding that she was born to it.

The example of Hatshepsut suggests something different, though not entirely so. Whatever combination of circumstances enabled her to transform herself from mere regent to co-king may never be quite clear, but her assertion that her father Thutmose I chose her as his successor⁵² obviously speaks to the importance of her membership in the dynasty; she too is a king's daughter, not just a king's wife. In her case, however, another factor seems relevant to her actual military leadership. New Kingdom monarchy was, to a much greater degree than earlier, a military monarchy. The rulers of the 17th dynasty transformed themselves into national kings by leading their armies into successful battles against foreign and domestic enemies. They fought from the newly arrived war chariots and wore a blue war-helmet crown.⁵³ Whatever her ideological justification for rule, in practice she had to demonstrate that she was able to lead the armies of Egypt to victory. Later in her reign, when her co-ruler Thutmose III was old enough to lead armies himself, he apparently did so, like younger co-rulers in previous periods, but early in Hatshepsut's reign, when Thutmose probably was

dency, even in the 18th dynasty, for kings to marry royal family members though they were not always a king's daughter and comments that "kingship at least was intended to belong to a dynastic family," arguing that there was "a preference, when possible, for dynastic purity."

⁵¹Robins (*supra* n.50) effectively argued against this once dominant theory.

⁵²Sethe (*supra* n.5) 255–260. Callender 92 suggests that its diction purposefully echoes the earlier Ahhotep text from Karnak.

⁵³D. D. Redford, "The Concept of Kingship during the Eighteenth Dynasty," in D. O'Connor and D. P. Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (Leiden 1995) 161, 166–169; C. Aldred, *The Egyptians*³ (London/New York 1998) 150, 188–189.

too young to go into battle, Hatshepsut had to demonstrate her ability to command and thus, in part, her legitimacy.⁵⁴

The depiction of various royal women of the 18th and 19th dynasties in images of symbolic military leadership, the scenes of smiting and of sphinxes trampling enemies, has complex cultural significance. From the Old Kingdom on, female members of dynasties had tended to assimilate some symbolic aspects of royal power (*e.g.* the cartouche, the uraeus). Kingship was in some aspects divine⁵⁵ and so was queenship.⁵⁶ The reasons for this pattern were various. Certainly the fact that these women were typically born members of royal dynasties, not infrequently the sisters of kings as well as wives or daughters, tended to lead to their association with symbols of royal authority, just as it did to their occasional actual rule and/or military leadership.

The inclination of Egyptian culture to duality in understanding power also is relevant. We have seen the development of a pattern in which a royal woman as sphinx or smiter deals out violence to female captives whereas royal men deal only (visually only, of course) with male captives:⁵⁷ so, though royal power was certainly understood and pictured mainly in masculine terms, a female conceptualization of royal power tended to develop to balance the male.⁵⁸ Images of kings smiting or

⁵⁴Redford 64 and Tyldesley (*supra* n.7) 141, 144, point out that Hatshepsut's military activity is fairly typical of many Egyptian kings, greater than that of her predecessor Thutmose II or Akhenaten, and suffers only by comparison with the great conquering pharaohs like Thutmose I or III.

⁵⁵Egyptian kingship combined human and divine elements; recent scholarship has tended to stress the human element; on this complex topic, see all the essays in O'Connor/Silverman (*supra* n.53), but especially Silverman, "The Nature of Egyptian Kingship," 49–94.

⁵⁶Robins 23–25; Morkot 1, 3.

⁵⁷Morkot 1 makes this point.

⁵⁸Robins 5; this "duality in rulership" grows more important from Amenhotep III on (Morkot 2). Robins connects it to the general emphasis on the cult of queenship which increased in the course of the 18th dynasty; she suggests (52) that both the non-royal origins of wives in the later 18th dynasty and the desire to emphasize the divinity of the king led to emphasis on the divinity of the queen. Morkot 3–4 puts more stress on the latter.

trampling enemies, though specifically military, are important primarily because they show the ruler establishing or re-establishing order against the disorder or chaos signified by foreign enemies. Thus kings like Amenhotep III or IV who never campaigned might be shown as smiters or trampers. The smiter or trampler was, until the early 18th dynasty, male chiefly because kings were male, not because they all were warriors. Thus, the appearance of female smiters and trampers (or assistants in such action) primarily invokes the role of these women as rulers or co-rulers and thus as sources of order, like kings, and only secondarily relates to any possible military role they played or were understood to retain. The image of Nefertiti smiting enemies is shocking not because a woman is shown in combat but because a woman is shown as only male rulers had previously been.

As the development of greater prominence for royal women and the militarization of Egyptian monarchy happen at the same time, it is not easy to sort out which is the more important reason for the militarization of the image of some royal women and the actual military action of others. Perhaps it is more helpful to understand the phenomenon as part of the somewhat paradoxical nature of the evolution of Egyptian monarchy in the New Kingdom period: on the one hand, a number of rulers emphasized the divinity of the king, his role as symbolic source of order present, past, and future, because so many forces threatened to compromise the older understanding of royal power; but on the other hand, New Kingdom rulers had to be or at least appear to be warrior kings, human leaders of human armies against human foes.⁵⁹ Simply put, the role and image of royal women changed because that of the monarchy as a whole changed.

⁵⁹Redford (*supra* n.53) 161–162, 173–175.

A comparison with royal Macedonian women in the fourth century B.C. can help illuminate what is distinctive about the real and figurative military role of pharaonic women in the New Kingdom. In Macedonia, as in Egypt, a scarcity of adult males had much to do with the probable participation of two royal women in combat and command and a third in leadership of a campaign; but two of the three, though members of the royal family by birth as well as marriage like so many Egyptian royal women, also partook of an alien, non-Macedonian royal tradition of Illyrian warrior women.⁶⁰ Their individual military roles, though admired to some degree by Macedonians, were never integrated into any changed understanding of what had been and to some degree remained a fairly simple warrior monarchy.

Certainly there was no understanding in Macedonia of individual women as rulers, and it remains unclear that any royal women were ever in any formal sense regents, though two seem to have functioned as such for a brief period.⁶¹ They were part of *basileia* not because they ruled but because they were part of the royal *oikos* and could justify military action in defense of the *oikos*.⁶²

The biggest difference between Macedonian and Egyptian royal women lies in the area of symbolic military leadership. Macedonian women did occasionally exercise a kind of symbolic military leadership in that they appeared in or near battles or armies and, by so doing, might move armies to change sides

⁶⁰My paper "Macedonian Women and Military Leadership" (given at the American Philological Association 2002) addresses this. The three women were Cynane, daughter of Philip II by his Illyrian wife Audata, her daughter Adea (later Eurydice), and Cratesipolis. On Cynane and Adea-Eurydice, see E. D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman 2000) 69–70, 129–137; on Cratesipolis, G. H. Macurdy, "The Political Activities and the Name of Cratesipolis," *AJP* 50 (1929) 273–278.

⁶¹On Adea-Eurydice, see Carney (*supra* n.60) 135 (Diod. 19.11.1, Just. 14.5.2–3); for Olympias, 138–139. In "Women and *Basileia*: Legitimacy and Female Political Action in Macedonia," *CJ* 90 (1995) 371–375, I argue that the Macedonians, being not inclined in the Argead period to see kingship as an office, lacked a clear concept of substitute kingship.

⁶²Carney (*supra* n.60) 367–391.

or favor their cause.⁶³ But they were never assimilated into any kind of royal iconography because Macedonian monarchy lacked the rich symbolic conceptualization that pharaonic monarchy had developed over thousands of years. A few images were associated, though none too clearly, with Macedonian royal authority,⁶⁴ but the main monarchic ideology was the rule of the Argead dynasty—it rather than an individual ruler was the source of social order—while the pharaonic ideology in essence imagined all kings as one. Thus, the end of the Argead dynasty necessitated a real change in the nature of Macedonian monarchy (and the role of women in it) in which the importance of dynasty was somewhat de-emphasized in order to focus on the office of kingship;⁶⁵ Egyptian monarchy by contrast endured through numerous dynasties, and even the end of native Egyptian pharaohs did not end all aspects of pharaonic monarchy. Its symbolism remained an important source of order and continuity for many more centuries.

The military role of Macedonian royal women was narrowly tied to an understanding of monarchy as the rule of the founding dynasty and virtually disappeared with the collapse of that dynasty. The military role of Egyptian royal women, though likewise partly tied to the dynastic nature of monarchic rule, was also connected in a fundamental way to a symbolic ideology of monarchy in which the ruler was the source of social order, endlessly reasserted, and so survived the demise of

⁶³ Thus Olympias' appearance at the battle of Euia led the Macedonian army to change sides in her favor (Diod. 19.11.1–3, Just. 14.5.8–10) and Cynane's murder in the vicinity of Macedonian troops led to their forcing Polyperchon to arrange her daughter's marriage as she had wished (Polyaen. 8.60, Arr. *FGrHist* 156 F 9.23).

⁶⁴ For instance, the mounted rider seen on generations of royal coins (M. Price, *The Coins of the Macedonians* [London 1974] 18) and, far less consistently, the star or sunburst seen in various media in many Macedonian tombs but best known for its appearance on the lids of the male and female burials in *larnakes* in Tomb II at Vergina, widely considered a royal tomb (see E. D. Carney, "The Female Burial in the Antechamber of Tomb II at Vergina," *AncW* 22.2 [1991] 21 n.28 for references).

⁶⁵ Carney (*supra* n.60) 197–202.

native rule and continued to contribute to the re-creation, particularly in the later Ptolemaic period, of a monarchy in which women co-ruled and sometimes played a symbolic military leadership role and perhaps one in campaigns as well.⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ See for instance J. Quaegebeur, "Reines ptolémaïques et traditions égyptiennes," in H. Maehler and V. M. Strocka, edd., *Das ptolemäische Ägypten* (Mainz 1978) 245–262.