

Models of Female Authority in the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period:

A Case Study of Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I

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This case study seeks to explore how ancient Egyptian royal women legitimized their authority during the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Periods. Specifically, the study is designed to understand how the legitimization strategies compared between time periods, as well as how they compared to the strategies of Kings during similar eras. In order to answer these questions, this study analyzes relationships with the divine through the lens of mortuary scene reliefs. Egyptian kings and royal women were consistently portrayed interacting with gods within their funerary monuments, though most of the time royal women did not build on the same scale, nor did they always showcase the same relationship to the divine. By exploring these differences in divine interaction, this study aims to understand gendered differences in royal power. Mortuary scene reliefs also underwent changes over time and social strata. The analysis of how two royal women of two different time periods represented divine interaction will identify if there is any temporal change in how female power was modeled.

Hatshepsut of the New Kingdom and Amenirdis I of the Third Intermediate Period serve as the female comparatives for this study of royal women. Both women held prominent positions of power during their respective periods. Hatshepsut adopted multiple titles during her life, including God's Wife of Amun and, more famously, the title of King. Amenirdis I also served as God's Wife of Amun, but at a time when the position held more power than it ever had before. Hatshepsut's male counterpart, Thutmose III, as well as Amenirdis I's contemporary, Taharqa, provide male comparatives for this study in order to identify gendered differences in authority. The analyses from this case study suggest that Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I's choices in mortuary decoration were based on the political offices they held rather than gendered ideas of power.

Historical Background

The historical context of Hatshepsut's rise to power cannot be ignored in an analysis of how she modeled her authority. She came to power during the New Kingdom and was a part of the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1479-1458 B.C.). She was the daughter of the King Thutmose I and had connections to previous pharaohs through her mother's line.¹ Hatshepsut would go on to act as a principal wife to her half-brother Thutmose II, as well as a stepmother and co-regent to his son Thutmose III.² Familial connections to the pharaoh were a source of status throughout Egyptian history and the closer the relationship was to the king, the easier it was for an individual to legitimize their own authority. For example, the direct connection Hatshepsut had to previous kings served to bolster her husband's claim to the throne.³ Hatshepsut held many titles during this period, famously holding the title of King despite the fact she was a woman. Before becoming king, however, she held the important title of God's Wife of Amun. This office gave her a prominent religious role as well as power independent to that of the pharaoh.⁴ This is especially important because royal women derived their power and status largely from their connections to the king.⁵ God's Wives were still connected to the king as he often appointed them to the position, and the women who held the office were often a king's wife or daughter.⁶ What was significant about the office of God's Wife was that the women did not rely solely upon

¹ David P. Silverman, "The New Kingdom," In *The Pharaohs*, Edited by Christiane Ziegler (Venice, Italy: Bompiani Arte), 2002, 56.

² Ann Macy Roth, "Models of Authority: Hatshepsut's Predecessors in Power," In *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, Edited by Catharine H. Roehrig, Renée Dreyfus & Cathleen A. Keller, M.H. De Young Memorial Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press), 2005, 9.

³ Silverman, "The New Kingdom," 56.

⁴ Salima Ikram, "A Fragment from a Lost Monument of Amenirdis I in the Gayer Museum, Cairo," In *Servant of Mut: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Fazzini*. Edited by Sue D'Auria, (Boston: Brill, 2008), p.126

⁵ T. G. Wilfong, "Gender and Sexuality," In *The Egyptian World*, Edited by Toby Wilkinson (London, New York: Routledge), 2007, 206.

⁶ Aidan Dodson, "The Monarchy," In *The Egyptian World*, Edited by Toby Wilkinson (London, New York: Routledge), 2007, 82.

the power of the king to legitimize their own authority because their title emphasized their connection to the god Amun and their role in sexually stimulating the god so that he could continue cycles of creation and renewal.⁷ Their ritual role also involved entertaining the gods by dancing, playing music, and offering various provisions.⁸

Hatshepsut did not keep her title of God's Wife for long and before Thutmose III came to the throne, she adopted the title of King. This was perhaps in an effort to safeguard Thutmose III's throne following the death of his mother and Hatshepsut's mother.⁹ As King's Mother and King's Wife, these women held the closest connections to the previous pharaohs and therefore the clearest paths to legitimacy for both Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Following their deaths, Hatshepsut needed a new way to bolster their collective claim to power and taking the title of king achieved that. According to the Egyptian ideology of kingship, once Hatshepsut took the title of King, she could never relinquish it. In the Egyptian worldview, Kings were Kings for eternity and it was impossible for them to transform to a "not" king or vice versa.¹⁰ Since Hatshepsut could not step down from the title upon Thutmose III coming of age and becoming king himself, she instead chose to act as his co-regent.¹¹

Amenirdis I's rise to power also needs to be historically contextualized. She came to power at the beginning of the 25th Dynasty, which falls at the end of the Third Intermediate Period and the beginning of the Late Period (770-657 B.C.). The 25th Dynasty was made up of Kushite kings from Nubia. They first invaded Egypt from the South and took control of Thebes

⁷ Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Continuum), 2010, 87.

⁸ Mariam F. Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand* (New York: Routledge), 2009, 51-57.

⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰ Gay Robins, "Problems Concerning Queens and Queenship in Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt," *NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity* 3, no. 1 (2002): 25-31.29.

¹¹ Roehrig, Dreyfus, Keller, *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, 10-11.

before moving north and establishing Memphis their capital.¹² The Kushites, whose homeland of Nubia had been colonized by Egypt and incorporated as an important trade partner throughout the Pharaonic period, believed themselves to be the restorers of order in Egypt and the true embodiment of Egyptian culture.¹³ This sentiment followed a period of decentralization characterized by tribal rivalries and feudalistic politics. Another characterization of this period was the significant power of the Priesthood of Amun in Thebes and the rising prominence of the God's Wife of Amun. Even before Amenirdis I was installed as God's Wife by her father King Kashta, the office had taken on even more importance than it had in the New Kingdom, with their role in the cult of Amun often paralleling the king's.¹⁴ The importance of the God's Wives during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods is directly related to the political landscape of Thebes during this period.

Understanding the politics of Theban region during this time is essential in understanding how the office of God's Wife rose to prominence. The end of Rameses III reign, the accompanying economic recession and the breakdown of a centralized sovereign state as a result of weaker kings are all events associated with the start of the Third Intermediate Period (1069-664 B.C.). Additionally, it was at the end of the New Kingdom that the priesthood of Amun in Thebes became increasingly powerful and was occupied by only a few elite families who had begun to operate the region as if it were an autonomous state, which likely did not help the collapse of the unified nation.¹⁵ By the start of the Third Intermediate Period, offices such as the High Priest of Amun had political and religious control over the Theban region.

¹² Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2008, 210.

¹³ Mamduh el-Damaty and Isabelle Franco, "The Third Intermediate Period," In *The Pharaohs*, Edited by Christiane Ziegler (Venice, Italy: Bompiani Arte), 2002, 83.

¹⁴ Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 213.

¹⁵ el-Damaty and Franco, "The Third Intermediate Period," 69.

When the Libyans of the 23rd and 24th dynasties (818-715 B.C.) invaded Egypt from the Western desert, they installed one of their own royal family to the office of High Priest of Amun, Takeloth III.¹⁶ However, when Takeloth III rose to power as king, instead of installing one of the royal men to the priesthood position who could potentially start his own dynasty, he revived the title of God's Wife of Amun and installed the princess Shepenwepet I.¹⁷ In this capacity, the office of God's Wife took on the same importance and influence of the High Priest position. Additionally, Shepenwepet I and those who came after her were not able to have children.¹⁸ This ensured that the political and religious power of God's Wife could not be passed down through a lineage but instead remained a power only the King had the right to bestow upon a royal woman.

Years later, when the Nubians of the 25th Dynasty (747-656 B.C) invaded the south, they quickly understood the power behind the office and the value of installing a Nubian princess as God's Wife of Amun.¹⁹ It would allow the king to remain in Lower Egypt while still wielding influence over the largely autonomous state of Thebes through his connection to the God's Wife of Amun. With this idea in mind, Amenirdis I, likely only a child at the time, was adopted by Shepenwepet I and took office as God's Wife of Amun.²⁰ Due to the fact that she took the office so young, Amenirdis I would be God's Wife of Amun through the reign of both her brother Piy and his brother Shabaqo. Piy was responsible for establishing Kushite control over Thebes and part of bolstering his power involved naming Amenirdis I as God's Wife of Amun.²¹ The politically unstable nature of the Third Intermediate Period meant that there was a continual power struggle between the Libyans and the Kushites. The importance of maintaining control of

¹⁶ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 16.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ el-Damaty and Franco, "The Third Intermediate Period," 83.

Thebes through the God's Wife of Amun cannot be understated. The Kushite Kings presented themselves to be restorers of order to Egypt in the name of Amun, taking control of the previous Libyan dynasty.²² As an extension of the 25th Dynasty in Thebes, Amenirdis I would have had to also showcase her contrast with the previous rulers. When Amenirdis I's nephew Taharqa took the throne, the 25th dynasty had reached relative stability and he went on to rule for 25 years with Amenirdis I's successor, Shepenwepet II at his side.²³ His long reign and multiple building projects in Nubia made him the most memorable king of the 25th Dynasty.

As evidenced by the brief historical background, Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I were both seeking to prove their legitimacy during times of social upheaval and are linked by their shared title of God's Wife of Amun. These similarities in title as well as political climate make Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I ideal comparatives for this case study which aims to assess changes in the mortuary art of royal women overtime. The kings Thutmose III and Taharqa were chosen as gender comparatives because their authority and the authority of the two contemporaneous women were in many ways responsive and interactive with each other. From these subjects, comparisons can be made about female authority during the 18th and 25th Dynasties as well as about royal authority and gender within the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate and Late Periods.

Gender and Representation in Ancient Egypt

Women in ancient Egypt had more rights and freedoms than likely another group of women in the ancient world. That being said, the culture was still a patriarchy and inequality still existed. Women in ancient Egypt were valued but also expected to be passive and supportive to

²² el-Damaty and Franco, "The Third Intermediate Period," 83.

²³ Ibid.

the men in their lives or otherwise be considered dangerous.²⁴ Like most aspects of ancient Egyptian culture, ideas about gender and society were informed by their religious beliefs and the gods that they worshipped. Egyptian ideas regarding the makeup of the cosmos were rooted in their understanding of the world as a series of dualities.²⁵ Understanding women as the passive complement to powerful men fell in line with their ideas of balance and pairs.

However, there was also duality within women that can be seen in the dangerous feminine complement to passivity which was one of wrath, aggression and destruction. This duality of passivity and aggression extends and may even be informed by stories of the gods which contained aggressive goddesses such as the Eye of Re and the lioness goddess Sekhmet who almost destroyed humankind in a blind rage.²⁶ The destructive tendencies of these women reflect the larger Egyptian idea that women held both elements of peace and destruction within them. The duality of these elements is also expressed in the Egyptian cosmological understanding of chaos, or *isfet*, and order, *ma'at*. In both Egyptian myth and society, to control women who did not conform to the passive and supportive female role was to maintain order or *ma'at*. While ancient Egyptian society placed women and men into specifically gendered roles that furthered patriarchal ideas, this did not necessarily mean that women were without power of their own.

Gender was expressed through many different aspects of Egyptian culture and understanding how these expressions reflected social structures of the time is important when considering larger discussions of female power. One aspect of ancient Egyptian culture which

²⁴ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 34.

²⁵ Gay Robins, "Gender and Sexuality," In *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* edited by Melinda K. Hartwig (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell), 2015, 121.

²⁶ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 36-37.

was heavily gendered was the art. For example, royal women and men were depicted very differently in Egyptian art and most of the differences placed women in compositionally subordinate positions.²⁷ Gender was distinguished by skin color, proportions, relative size, pose, clothing and hairstyles. Women were shown shorter than men and with their feet close together, while men were shown not only larger but also posed with one leg forward, communicating agency and allowing the man to take up even more space compositionally.²⁸ At times women, along with children, were even shown on an almost miniature scale compared to men.²⁹

In order to legitimize her claim to kingship, Hatshepsut had to adopt the already established ideology, iconography and social conventions associated with kingship in Egypt.³⁰ Kings were always men, and so she had to depict herself with the recognizably male gendered art forms. This included not only the compositional features like pose and size, but also the dress and traditional royal regalia of a king, such as a kilt, false beard, bull's tail, crown, and uraeus.³¹ She was shown with no recognizably female secondary sex characteristics like breasts, but instead with the broad shoulders and limbs of a man. Despite the fact that kingship was gendered male so starkly, the art forms and motifs were formulaic enough for Hatshepsut to pick and choose to manipulate for the purpose of legitimizing her claim to a male office. Amenirdis I, on the other hand, was not stepping into a political role that was gendered male. If anything, her position as God's Wife of Amun was dependent on her expression of femininity and sexuality as a way to arouse and entertain the gods. In this way, her political office influenced how she presented herself in terms of gendered art forms and other iconographical choices she made.

²⁷ Robins, "Gender and Sexuality," 123.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 34.

³⁰ Roehrig, Dreyfus, Keller, *Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh*, 10-11.

³¹ Ibid., 9.

Titles and Status of Kings and God's Wives of Amun

Kingship in Egypt was a multidimensional concept that manifested in all areas of the Egyptian worldview. Egyptian mythology viewed the king as an incarnation of the god Horus and he served as an intermediary between the human world and the divine realm.³² Seen as a deity himself, the king was understood to have divine lineage and this is perpetuated in the many different divine mother and father figures the king is shown to have in the iconography. The central responsibility of the king was to maintain *ma'at*, the conceptual embodiment of order, justice, peace and tradition which complemented the *isfet* from which the Egyptians believed their world came into being.³³ The king could maintain *ma'at* through multiple different avenues. Instituting a centralized administration for state affairs as well as acting as the military leader and protecting the country's borders from dangerous foreign powers were both ways in which the king maintained *ma'at*.³⁴ The common goal throughout both of these mechanisms of order was to keep the country under the sovereign rule of the king by ensuring the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt.

While Kingship was understood as a male gendered power, the office was much more complex than that. The kingship was in fact a composite of male and female elements associated with the respective male and female attributes of creation.³⁵ Thinking back to the series of dualities with which Egyptians saw the world, creation and kingship were both aspects which could not just be male or female but had to balance the two and achieve some semblance of

³² Dodson, "The Monarchy," 75.

³³ Ann Macy Roth, "Representing the Other: Non-Egyptians in Pharaonic Iconography," In *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, Edited by Melinda K. Hartwig (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell), 2015, 156.

³⁴ Dodson, "The Monarchy," 77.

³⁵ Lana Troy, Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History. PhD Diss. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Boreas, Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations 14, 1986, 3

androgyny. The idea of androgyny was not really considered by the ancient Egyptians but there was blurring of gender boundaries when it came to creation, especially creation attributable to only one entity such as a primeval god or a king who wished to identify with a primeval god.³⁶ The position of royal women was as the feminine counterpart to the king. They embodied the female creative element that the king did not have.³⁷ In this way, Egyptian queenship was essential for the office of kingship to be presented as a worldly manifestation of the creator with the generative powers to match. Queenship was not the only role in which women could hold power in ancient Egypt, the office of God's Wife of Amun had a long history of powerful priestly positions.

The title of God's Wife of Amun changed throughout Egyptian history as did the status and authority that went along with it. For most of Egyptian history, women held priestly roles often involving the important task of providing music and dance to please and revive the gods as well as the deceased.³⁸ From the Old Kingdom through the Middle Kingdom, these priestesses were usually elite women and they were under the authority of other male priests.³⁹ When Ahmose, the founder of the 18th dynasty and the New Kingdom, placed his principal wife in the role of God's Wife, he also established that she and her successors would enjoy certain rights, as well as land and income.⁴⁰ The association with the monarchy and the independence found within the office of God's Wife during the 18th Dynasty indicates an elevation of authority and status from usual female priestly roles of previous periods.

³⁶ Graves-Brown, *Dancing with Hathor*, 104.

³⁷ Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 3.

³⁸ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁰ Ayad, *God's Wife God's Hand*, 6.

By the Third Intermediate Period, the status of God's Wife of Amun had grown to the point where the royal woman's power would have been second only to the king and she would have ruled the southern part of the country on her own.⁴¹ Though her power was independent of the king, the God's Wife of Amun and her authority to rule were still deviations from the social norm where men were the only ones to hold high-status cultic and administrative roles. The office of God's Wife would have been reliant of the support of the kingship in order to claim legitimate power in Thebes.⁴² In addition, the cultic role of the God's Wife of Amun was closely related to the role of the king.⁴³ The association with the kingship served to elevate the status of these women and bolster their political position. Another aspect of their office which bolstered their importance was in their religious role of sexually stimulating the creator god, Amun-Re, so that he could continually create life.⁴⁴ This role would place the God's Wife on the same level of the goddesses and queens who were understood to be Amun's consorts. It was an incredibly intimate position to be in and the closeness with the divine would have endowed the God's Wives with additional significance and authority.

Methodology: Scene Collection and Analysis

For the most part, this case study investigates how Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I expressed their power through the reliefs at their mortuary complexes in the Theban necropolis. Hatshepsut built a very large mortuary temple in the area of Deir el-Bahari, which was adjacent to where she would have been buried in the Valley of the Kings. Her rock cut mortuary temple is built into the mountain and has three levels with multiple ramps that allow one to go level to level. Amenirdis

⁴¹ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 87.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

I built a funerary chapel within the temple complex of Medinet Habu. This temple originally served as the mortuary temple of Rameses III but also had been added to over the years by different rulers and even has buildings which survive from earlier in the New Kingdom. Visual representations bolstered an individual's claim to authority because scenes from mortuary architecture were intended to immortalize the legacy of the royal individual as opposed to the cult of the divine.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the mortuary complexes of Thutmose III do not survive. Additionally, much of what Taharqa built during his reign is found in present-day Sudan and was therefore inaccessible. This lack of mortuary evidence in Thebes presents a problem in collecting sufficient data from a comparable context to use for gender comparisons. In order to find comparative data within the Theban region, the case study branches out and includes visual representations of Thutmose III and Taharqa from the Karnak Temple complex.

The data for this case study was collected in-person and through secondary literature. Photographs were taken at the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari and at the funerary chapel of Amenirdis I within the temple complex of Medinet Habu. Specific scenes were selected beforehand from the *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings: Volume II, Theban Temples* by Bertha Porter and Rosalind L.B. Moss.⁴⁶ This publication provided scene locations within the temple, as well as descriptions of the scene and the individuals depicted. The scenes selected to be photographed were assigned labels that corresponded to the wall it came from as labeled in the *Topographical*

⁴⁵ Penelope Wilson, "Temple Architecture and Decorative Systems," in *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, ed. Alan B. Lloyd (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 782.

⁴⁶ Bertha Porter and Rosalind LB Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings, Vol. II: Theban Temples*, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1972.

Bibliography. Once in the field, the timestamps from all photographs were recorded as well as the label for the section of wall that had been photographed.

For both Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple and Amenirdis' Funerary Chapel, there were areas that were not accessible for viewing or photographing. In situations like this, where a scene was not photographed, the *Topographical Bibliography* provided the bulk of the descriptive data. Epigraphic surveys such as Eduoard Naville's *Temple of Deir el-Bahari*⁴⁷ or Uvo Holscher's *The Excavation of Medinet Habu* were used to find drawings or photographs of scenes.⁴⁸ Still, there were some scenes described in the *Topographical Bibliography* that had no published visuals and the only data available for collection came from the text description provided by the *Topographical Bibliography*. Only scenes which included identifiable depictions of Hatshepsut or Amenirdis I were selected for the study (Table 1).

Scene Collection	Hatshepsut	Thutmose III	Amenirdis I	Taharqa
Number of Scenes Collected	117	34	42	19
Number of Scenes with Images	58	21	11	0

Table 1: Data regarding scene collection and image information

Each photograph was uploaded to an ArtStor database as a separate entry which included the location the photograph was taken, the time period the temple was built, the scene description from the *Topographical Bibliography* corresponding to the wall number of the photograph, and the deities depicted in the scene. ArtStor was chosen for the database because it was designed for photograph storage and allowed room for ample description. ArtStor also permitted the entry of "blank records" which is how all scenes without visuals were entered. The key benefit of using

⁴⁷ Edouard Naville, *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari, Vols. I-VI* (London: The Egypt Exploration Fund), 1897.

⁴⁸ Uvo Holscher, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu: Post-Ramessid Remains*, Edited by Elizabeth B. Hauser (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press) 1954.

ArtStor as a database was that it allowed for the export of the textual data onto an Excel file. This ability to incorporate Excel into the data processing allowed for a better understanding of the aggregate data and made comparison more efficient. Once in Excel, the scene data could be sorted by royal individual, scene type and deity. Using Excel, the data was broken down into two tables that detailed how many of each scene type and deity were present at each individual's mortuary complex.

The downside to working with material from the ancient world is that the material is thousands of years old and preservation is likely less than ideal. This often means that there are gaps in the amount of available evidence. This case study was limited to the Theban region, modern-day Luxor, so the evidence was already limited geographically and only became more limited due to preservation issues. As a result, there is a clear difference in the sample sizes of data between Hatshepsut, Amenirdis I, Thutmose III and Taharqa. This is especially true for Thutmose III and Taharqa whose sample sizes are small and had to be supplemented with evidence drawn outside of a mortuary context. The inconsistency in sample size makes comparison more difficult. As a consequence, the conclusions drawn from the comparisons are less strong than if there had been a wealth of mortuary material for all individuals in the case study. In the absence of a large sample size, this study works with parallels from other temple representations that can give clues as to what trends in scenes and deities were likely seen in a mortuary context.

Scene Types and Trends

As soon as the data was organized into tables and graphs, some very basic statistical analysis was conducted to assess the distributions of scene types and deity representations, as well as any trends and patterns within those distributions. Any trends, patterns, or irregular scene

types unique to one individual were determined from the table (Table 2) and pulled out of the aggregate data. A scene typology was established to organize and define the significant scene types.

The typology includes the broad category of scene types that show the deceased interacting with the divine (Type A). These types of scenes served to demonstrate that the power of the deceased was legitimate and had the support of the gods, especially in the case of a king.⁴⁹ This type of scene may represent the deceased in the presence of one or multiple gods. One subtype from this category of interaction is the scene showing the deceased “before a god” (A.1), in which the individual is standing in front of the deity and facing the deity. Another subtype is “with a god” (A.2), where the deceased is shown positioned beside the deity or between two deities. The type “embraced by a god” (A.3) is also included within the umbrella of divine interaction and depicts a deity wrapping their hands around an individual’s shoulders. Receiving of Life scenes (A.4) are also considered to be interactions with the divine and depict a deity offering an ankh to the mouth of the deceased. Suckling (A.5) and hand-licking scenes (A.5.i) are a particularly intimate form of divine interaction and usually are found in the context of kingship. They usually show the king suckling from the breast of a goddess but Hatshepsut also has additional scenes in which the goddess Hathor is shown licking the king’s hand. Other broad types include purification scenes (B.1), which depict the pouring of water over an individual to cleanse them and achieve a state of purity or the offering of natron. Consecration scenes (C.1 and C.2) depict the deceased holding a scepter (Q.42 Gardner’s Sign List) in front of offerings being made to a god or temple entrance. Opening of the Mouth Scenes (D) include the depiction of

⁴⁹ Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 60.

many different ritual activities all associated with the reanimation of a mummy or statue.⁵⁰

Another category includes Divine Birth scenes (E.) which showcase the divine lineage of a king and thus solidify his claim to the throne. Subjugation and Smiting (F.) scenes are also present in the corpus and depict the king trampling, hitting or otherwise placing enemies and foreigners in positions of submission and defeat. The last scene type, Offering Scenes (G.) are the most prevalent in all Egyptian art and show individuals offering food and other provisions to deceased ancestors or deities.

Analyzing the distribution of these types in Table 2 allowed me to see which scene type trends were present for all individuals. These included the types “before a god” (A.1) and “with a god” (A.2). The tabular data also clearly highlights the types present for only some of the individuals, such as, “embracing a god” (A.3), “suckling a god” (A.5) and “purifying a god” (B.1). Within each significant scene type, I determined which scenes I had adequate visuals of and therefore which ones could be visually analyzed. These exemplar scenes were then analyzed based on aspects such as body positioning, scale, and iconography to better understand what was being communicated about the individual’s relationship to the divine.

As previously discussed, the tabular data shows a more comprehensive understanding of the scene types within the corpus because it includes all of the scenes, not just the ones that have been photographed or sourced from an epigraphic survey or other primary archaeological source. Table 2 showcases which scene types are specific to certain individuals and which types are present for all. Beginning with the data points that indicate contrast, Table 2 indicates that the divine interaction scene types such as embracing a god (A.3), suckling a god (A.5), and purifying

⁵⁰ Ayad, *God’s Wife, God’s Hand*, 113.

a god (B.1) are all present in Hatshepsut's mortuary art but not in Amenirdis I's. However, these scene types are not exclusive to Hatshepsut's visual record, they are also found in one or both of the kings being used as gender comparatives in this study, Thutmose III and Taharqa. Based on where these scene types appear, the data suggests that the interactions Amenirdis I chooses not to incorporate into her decorative program are the same interactions that Hatshepsut shares with men who held the same title as she did. This suggests that because Amenirdis I was not a king, her access to the divine was inherently limited regardless of her proximity to the divine as God's Wife. The trend supports the idea that political office had a stronger influence upon the mortuary art of royal women than gender.

Type Description	Type code	Hatshepsut	Amenirdis I	Thutmose III	Taharqa
"Before" a god	A.1	30	4	5	2
"With" a god	A.2	12	3	1	0
"Embracing" a god	A.3	2	0	2	3
Receiving Life	A.4	3	1	1	1
Suckling	A.5	2	0	1	1
Handlicking	A.5.1	4	0	0	0
Purifying	B.1	4	0	1	0
Purified	B.2	2	1	0	1
Consecrating Offerings	C.1	1	1	1	2
Consecrating Temple	C.2	0	0	0	1
Opening of Mouth	D.	0	14	0	0
Divine Birth	E.	5	0	0	0
Subjugation	F.	3	0	0	1
Offering Scene	G.	49	18	22	7

Table 2: Distribution of Scene Types from Deir el-Bahari, Medinet Habu and Karnak

Table 3 showcases the distribution of deities among the different individuals' mortuary art. In the case of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III and Taharqa, Amun appears the most within their mortuary art. Amun was a god closely associated with kingship, creation, the sun, and he was also the primary god of state worship in Thebes during the 18th dynasty.⁵¹ Hathor is another

⁵¹ Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 92-94.

goddess who appears frequently in the mortuary art of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Hathor was the goddess of female sexuality, associated with motherhood and fertility.⁵² In contrast, Amenirdis I appears most frequently with the gods Anubis, Horus and Osiris. Anubis is linked to the funerary cult as the god who invented mummification and who is the guardian of cemeteries.⁵³ Likewise, Osiris was known as the ruler of the underworld and was connected to funerary contexts that way.⁵⁴ Due to their mythical connections to the afterlife, it makes sense for both Anubis and Osiris to appear frequently in Amenirdis I's funerary chapel. The appearance of Horus in connection to Amenirdis I is slightly less apparent as Horus was associated closely with the King and with Lower Egypt which is not where Amenirdis I's chapel is found.⁵⁵ The presence of Horus in her mortuary art might suggest Amenirdis I's wish to communicate her own position and power as being supported by the king and that she supported him in turn. As God's Wife of Amun, one might expect to see Amun play a larger role in Amenirdis I's mortuary art. Her interactions with Amun are in fact more prevalent at the Karnak Temple Complex which is largely dedicated to Amun and where Amenirdis I's ritual role as God's Wife would have been demonstrated more explicitly in scenes such as those depicting her shaking the sistrum before Amun.⁵⁶

The differences in the distribution of deities suggest that the individuals who hold the title of King have specific gods and goddesses with whom they are often shown in funerary art and who are less prevalent in the art of individuals who hold titles of lesser importance. For example, the prevalence of Hathor in the visual records of both Hatshepsut and Thutmose III may be tied

⁵² Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, xii

⁵³ Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2004, 35

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 203.

⁵⁶ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 130.

to the fact that during the New Kingdom, the king's legitimacy as well as creative power were reliant on his union with Hathor.⁵⁷

Deity	Hatshepsut	Amenirdis I	Thutmose III	Taharqa
Amun	45	4	19	7
Hathor	25	3	8	0
Anubis	19	7	1	0
Thoth	7	1	1	1
Re-Harakhti	4	1	0	0
Seshet	4	0	0	0
Horus	3	7	0	1
Khnum	3	0	0	0
Osiris	3	8	0	4
Atum	2	1	0	0
Haapi	2	0	0	0
Heket	2	0	0	0
Nekhet	2	1	0	1
Nile Gods	2	0	0	0
Ptah	2	0	4	0
Bes	1	0	0	0
Buto	1	0	0	1
Heh	1	0	0	0
Hesit	1	0	0	0
Iat	1	0	0	0
Khons	1	0	0	0
Maat	1	0	0	0
Meskhent	1	0	0	0
Mut	1	1	1	2
Seth	1	2	0	0
Sopt	1	0	0	0
Teuris	1	0	0	0
Theban Triad	1	0	1	2
Harsiesi	0	0	0	2
Inyt	0	0	1	0
Isis	0	3	0	1
Monthu	0	0	2	3
Nekhen	0	0	0	1
Nut	0	1	0	0
Shu	0	1	0	0
Sobek	0	1	0	0
Sokari	0	0	2	0

Table 3: Deity Distribution within the mortuary art at Deir el-Bahari, Medinet Habu and Karnak

⁵⁷ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 133.

Scene Analysis

Formal visual analysis of scene types elucidate why these particular programs may be reserved for a higher political office. One example of scene type A.3 in the context of Hatshepsut can be found at her Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahari, in the Shrine of Hathor on the north side of the temple (Plate 1). The scene shows Hatshepsut receiving life from Amun, the creator god associated with Thebes, while at the same time being embraced by Hathor, who is thought to be the divine consort of Amun and is associated with motherhood and fertility. Hathor is at the far right holding up both arms, one of which is wrapped around Hatshepsut's shoulder, while the other touches her crown. This posing indicates the embrace that is happening as well as the close relationship between the Hatshepsut and the goddess. The depiction goes beyond simple interaction by implying that Hatshepsut was important enough to be touched by gods. To be in the presence of the divine and interact with them so directly was to be on the receiving end of a tremendous amount of power. Hatshepsut's ability to handle that kind of power implies that her own power is significant. It also implies intimacy, as people do not embrace people they do not know and do not feel strongly for.

Hatshepsut stands in between Hathor and Amun holding an *ankh* in her right hand, which is normal for depictions of kings. The *ankh*-sign which symbolized life, was closely associated with divine kingship because life was thought to be given by the gods to the king as a demonstration and reiteration of his own divinity.⁵⁸ Her figure is in the form of a man, with broad shoulders and no secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts which would identify her as a woman in Egyptian art. Not only does she appear in the body of a man, she is also standing

⁵⁸ Robins, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, 43.

in the traditionally male pose with her left foot striding forward. This positioning takes her figure from static to dynamic by implying movement and agency. It is a pose that is meant to communicate power and authority. Hatshepsut is also shown dressed in the male regalia of a king. This includes a broad collar, kilt, a bull's tail, false beard, double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, and uraeus. These pieces of clothing were meant to reflect ideological elements of kingship. For example, the double crown communicated the king's sovereignty over a unified Egypt, demonstrated by symbols for the lands of Upper and Lower Egypt. In addition, the bull's tail attached to the kilt was symbolic of the powerful animal and its virility.⁵⁹ Portraying Hatshepsut in a powerful pose while wearing a crown symbolic of the scope of her sovereignty communicates to the viewer Hatshepsut's ability to fulfill the primary role of the king-maintaining order and control of the state.

Above the scene is an uraeus and sun disk bisecting two outstretched wings of a falcon. This winged solar disk symbolized the sun as it made its journey across the sky.⁶⁰ Above this, is the hieroglyph for "sky" and it is shown filled with stars. The "sky" stretches above all three figures, creating an iconographic geography which places them under the night sky. At the base of the tympanum above the main scene, there is an uraeus frieze in which hieroglyphs spelling out an iteration of Hatshepsut's name have been incorporated. The name was very important in ancient Egyptian ideology and understanding of the self. An individual's written name was as much a part of their person as their limbs. The uraeus was a symbol of Re's eye which was also his daughter.⁶¹ According to Egyptian myth, when Re's children Shu and Tefnut became lost in the chaotic darkness of the primeval ocean, he removed his eye which took the form of the

⁵⁹ Ann Macy Roth, "Representing the Other," 159.

⁶⁰ Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames & Hudson), 1994, 66.

⁶¹ Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 37.

uraeus. Re sent the serpent goddess in search of the children.⁶² Egyptian mythology associates the uraeus with feminine power as well as a ferocious protectiveness for the king. In addition to aggression, the Eye of Re symbolized in the uraeus is also linked to renewal and creativity.⁶³ By including her name in the uraeus frieze, Hatshepsut is communicating many messages. Firstly, she is associating herself and her authority with the feminine power embodied in the uraeus as well as the powerful creation powers of the god Re. Secondly, she is ensuring that her name is protected for eternity by the ferocious power of the snake goddess, just as the uraeus protected the children of Re. Lastly, its repetition above the scene allows Hatshepsut to symbolically surround the scene, as her name could symbolically stand in for her actual person.

At the top of the tympanum is Hatshepsut's cartouche is flanked at the top by two feathers and flanked at the bottom by two uraei. One of the cobras is wearing the white crown of upper Egypt and other is wearing the red crown of lower Egypt, reiterating her sovereignty over a united Egypt. The imagery and iconography of the uraeus alongside that of a united Egypt is linking Hatshepsut, through her name, to ideas of feminine power and protection, as well as kingship and supremacy over a united Egypt. The intimacy communicated by the embrace of goddess, reinforced by the symbols of kingship, differentiates this scene from other forms of divine interaction. Through the specific body positioning and iconography, this scene type has become a part of the king's tools of representing authority and these tools would have been unavailable for any other individual to use, because no other individual had access to the same power. The idea that representations of embracing the divine are exclusive to the office of the king is reinforced in Table 2 which shows the presence of this scene type in the visual records of

⁶² Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 37.

⁶³ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 106.

both Thutmose III and Taharqa but not Amenirdis I. Furthermore, the creative power of Re that is showcased in the scene would only be accessible to a king. Amenirdis I could not claim the same level of creative ability as the king, because women were not thought of as active creators but rather passive supporters of men as only the vessel of creation not the instrument.⁶⁴

Hatshepsut adopted male and kinglike iconography and also combined her name with the uraeus, a symbol of feminine power. In doing so, she was able to bridge that gap and be both the woman Hatshepsut as well as the king and creator.

Some scene types explicitly relate to the office of kingship and the ideology that surrounds it. These scene types include scenes of divine birth (Type E) and scenes showing the subjugation of enemies or foreigners (Type F). Using the tabular data, it is clear that, within the scope of this corpus, divine birth scenes are wholly unique to Hatshepsut (Table 2). While later kings, such as Amenhotep III, would go on to depict their own divine birth, Hatshepsut was the trailblazer who began the trend. The idea that the king was descended from the gods or that their mothers were impregnated by a deity was not new to the 18th Dynasty. The concept had been a part of Egyptian ideology since the beginning of the Pharaonic period and is evidenced in Middle Kingdom literature like the Westcar Papyrus which attests to the divine lineage of three Middle Kingdom kings.⁶⁵ What was unheard of before Hatshepsut, however, was the creation of a visual representation that showed the king being conceived by a god.⁶⁶

Hatshepsut depicts her divine conception by showing her mother Queen Ahmose seated across from the god Amun, facing him with their legs interlocked, as Amun gives her ‘life’ in the form of an ankh sign. This receiving of life is very different from other representations in the

⁶⁴ Graves Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 37.

⁶⁵ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 7.

⁶⁶ Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 126-128.

corpus, which will not be fully elaborated on here for the sake of time. Most receiving of life scenes do not involve the degree of close proximity that is seen in the divine conception. Amun and Ahmose are shown seated and with their hands outstretched towards each other, almost touching. This degree of intimacy is meant to communicate that Ahmose is not just receiving life from Amun, she is receiving his divine seed of creation which will ultimately result in Hatshepsut.⁶⁷ This is one of a series of scenes which depict Queen Ahmose giving birth to Hatshepsut with the help of other deities, suckling her, and presenting her to Amun. This scene type is the clearest and most explicit link a king could make to legitimize their divine lineage and their right to sovereignty. It fulfills an essential element of the office of divine kingship.

Another category of scenes explicitly reserved for Pharaohs are smiting or subjugation scenes (Type F) where the king is shown smiting or trampling enemies of Egypt. These scenes are perhaps the best-known scene type associated with the king as it has been present throughout all of Egyptian history and evidenced in famous works of art such as the Narmer Palette. This exclusivity is reflected in Table 2 which shows Hatshepsut, Thutmose III and Taharqa as having smiting scenes, even despite some limited samples. Subjugation and smiting scenes, like divine birth scenes, communicate important ideological concepts that are explicitly linked to the office of the king. The king's entire role boils down to his ability to maintain order, or *ma'at*. The king does this, in part, by maintaining a link to the gods so that they may continue to protect the Egyptian country and people. The other way that the King maintains *ma'at*, is by keeping Egypt unified and safe from foreign enemies which Egyptians associated with *isfet*, a concept meaning disorder and chaos. Subjugation and smiting scenes are a part of a multifaceted iconographic effort to keep the enemies of Egypt at bay. Whatever was drawn or written was real, according to

⁶⁷ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 7.

Egyptian thought. Therefore, if the king was shown subjugating the enemies of Egypt, the enemies of Egypt would not be able to invade. This scene type, like divine birth, is so closely tied to the office of kingship, that it would be very peculiar for someone other than the king to portray themselves in the same manner. This is likely why, despite the scope of her power in Thebes, Amenirdis I is not shown smiting Egypt's enemies and she is not deifying herself by suggesting she was conceived at the hand of Amun. Though other God's Wife of Amun incorporated iconography traditionally reserved for the king when Amenirdis I did not, this trend does not extend to smiting scenes indicating that the iconography was off-limits in a way that suckling scenes and coronation scenes were not.⁶⁸

It is important to address the iconography and scenes types of the other God's Wives of Amun during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods because there are significant differences in how they chose to portray themselves compared to Amenirdis I. Namely, both Shepenwepet I and Shepenwepet II depict themselves interacting with the divine in ways normally reserved for kings.⁶⁹ Specifically, Shepenwepet I is portrayed at Karnak suckling goddesses and crowned by Amun.⁷⁰ Shepenwepet II appropriates scenes of divine marriage to Amun, previously only showing Amun and his divine consort Mut.⁷¹ This evidence would seem to contradict the argument for the importance of political office and representations of divine interaction. That being said, while God's Wives of Amun incorporated iconography traditionally reserved for the king when Amenirdis I did not, this trend does not extend to smiting scenes.⁷² This indicates that such iconography was off-limits in a way that suckling scenes and coronation scenes were not.

⁶⁸ Ayad, *God's Hand, God's Wife*, 124-128.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 137.

⁷² Ibid., 124-128.

While Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I do have very distinctive decorative programs showing very different relationships with the gods, Table 2 indicates that there are representations of divine interactions that they share. These include the scene types showing an individual “before a god,” (A.1) and “with a god” (A.2), as well as the scene type showing the “receiving of life” by a god (A.4). The table shows that these types are also present in the visual record of Thutmose III (Table 2).⁷³ The presence of this scene type within the data of all the individuals in the case study suggests that the decorative motifs were not exclusive to a particular political office, nor were they reserved for a specific gender. Instead, the tabular data suggests that these scene types show divine interactions that were versatile enough to be adapted to legitimize a female religious leader as well as they could a king. Unfortunately, the tabular data cannot indicate what about these scene types that made them so versatile or how they varied visually from other divine interactions, if at all.

The distribution of deity representation shown in Table 3 may be an indication of one way in which these similar scene types differed between individuals. For example, Amenirdis I is shown most often in the company of either Anubis or Osiris, both of whom played important roles in funerary rituals.⁷⁴ Their presence in funerary art makes sense and suggests that the primary objective of Amenirdis I’s chapel was to showcase these rituals as opposed to deifying herself or legitimizing her claim to power like Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple seems to prioritize. Hatshepsut and the other two kings are most often found in scenes with Amun. Within mortuary art, the association of Amun with kingship and creation may reserve the use of his representations for kings. Interestingly, however, is the prevalence of Horus in representations of

⁷³ Due to the small sample sizes of Thutmose III and Taharqa’s data, if scene types were attested to in the records of at least one of the male comparatives, it was seen as indicative of a ubiquitous trend. This conclusion was made with the assumption that, had the sample size for Taharqa been larger, the scene type would have likely been present.

⁷⁴ Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, 35-36.

Amenirdis I. Horus is also a god closely associated with kingship⁷⁵ and therefore one would think that his presence in mortuary art was also reserved for the use of kings. Instead, he is present in the funerary chapel of a very powerful priestess. This may indicate that Amenirdis I was showcasing her relationship to the king which would have bolstered her own power. She may have also wanted to showcase that while her power was different than that of a king, it was similar enough to be associated with similar gods.

Of the three scene types shared by Hatshepsut, Amenirdis I and their male counterparts, the scene type showing an individual “before a god” (A.1), is the most ubiquitous in the corpus. However, the scene type “with a god” (A.2) has visual evidence for both Hatshepsut and Amenirdis, thus presenting the opportunity for more meaningful visual comparisons. The first example comes, once again, from Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahari. This relief comes from the Shrine of Anubis, which is located opposite the Hathor Shrine, on the south side of the mortuary temple (Plate 2). The scene shows Hatshepsut between the goddess Nekhbet and the god Re-Harakhty. Nekhbet is the goddess of queenship and Upper Egypt.⁷⁶ She is shown on the left of Hatshepsut whose figure is unfortunately completely destroyed. Nekhbet is sometimes depicted as a vulture, though she can also be shown in human form, with the vulture headdress.⁷⁷ Nekhbet, along with Wadjet were known as the Two Ladies and they were both mothers of the king as well as the creative and aggressive Eyes of Re.⁷⁸ In this relief, Nekhbet is shown holding an *ankh* in her left hand, symbolizing life and a *was*-scepter in her right, symbolizing dominion.⁷⁹ She is shown in a red sheath dress with decoration at the hem and underneath her breasts. The

⁷⁵ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 201.

⁷⁶ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 131.

⁷⁷ Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 213.

⁷⁸ Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor*, 131

⁷⁹ Robins, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, 43.

red color associates her with the sun and therefore Re, as well as the desert, or *desheret*, and ideas of *isfet*.⁸⁰ As a protector goddess, the color red that she wears symbolizes her wrathful power and serves an apotropaic purpose. She is also wearing a broad collar and the vulture-feathered headdress with the uraeus. Re-Harakhty stands opposite her in an identical pose, with the exception of his feet, which are posed in the traditional male stance of striding forward. Re-Harakhty was the iteration of the sun god Re who represented the morning sun and was associated with creation.⁸¹ His skin is painted red in the traditional male form as opposed to the yellow skin women are shown with, and is part of what identifies him as a man. He is dressed in royal regalia including a kilt, bull's tail, broad collar, and shirt. The incorporation of royal regalia with Re-Harakhty associated the god with the office of kingship and communicates that the dress of the king is also the dress of the gods. This reiteration of the king's divinity serves to bolster the king's claim to the throne, in this case Hatshepsut's claim to the throne. Re-Harakhty's resemblance to a human ends at his shoulders, as his head is that of a falcon which is also a symbol associated with kingship. His tripartite wig eases the transition from bird to human. He is wearing a sun disk headdress which helps to identify him.

Above Hatshepsut and the two gods is a vulture, doubly symbolizing the goddess Nekhbet as well as Upper Egypt. Though Hatshepsut's figure has been destroyed and we cannot tell which god she was facing, it is safe to assume that she was being presented with the *was*-scepters by the two gods. The *was*-scepter was a hieroglyph meaning 'dominion' which was frequently held by deities and symbolized the power and authority of kingship.⁸² When this symbol is presented by a god, the implication is that the gods have given Hatshepsut power and

⁸⁰ Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, 106.

⁸¹ Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 205-206

⁸² Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 41-43.

authority and thus support her rule as king. Along the top of the relief is an uraeus frieze, where once again, Hatshepsut has used hieroglyphs to incorporate her name into the artistic element. As before, she is relying on the magical element of Egyptian writing to allow her to symbolically surround the scene. As everything written and drawn was real, the presence of her name was just as powerful as a two-dimensional relief showing her person. Additionally, Hatshepsut employed iconography to invoke Egyptian mythology and associate herself and her authority with the feminine power of the uraeus, while at the same time using the goddess to protect her name for eternity.

The divine interaction in this scene reinforces the idea that Hatshepsut is related to the gods by her title of king. Nekhbet was associated with queenship and the southern part of Egypt, and she was identified with the White Crown of Upper Egypt which also linked her to the king.⁸³ The goddess's relationship to the king was understood to be that of a mother and protector figure.⁸⁴ Hatshepsut's position directly in front of the goddess marks her as the clear object of Nekhbet's attention and therefore protection. This would communicate to the viewer that in the context of cosmic lineages, Hatshepsut embodied the king, the recipient of Nekhbet's motherly protection and support. Similar logic applies to the relationship between Hatshepsut and Re-Harakhty also being advertised by the scene. Within Egyptian religious thought, Re-Harakhty is associated with the creator god Re, who is ultimately the father of the Heliopolitan Ennead, which would include the king as Horus.⁸⁵ Within this scene, we see Hatshepsut being given power over Egypt by multiple iterations of the creator god Re. No one but the king can claim this

⁸³ Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 214

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

same dominion and therefore the interaction depicted is still one related to the office of the king, regardless of the fact that the scene type could be used by non-kings.

An example of this same scene type comes from Amenirdis I's funerary chapel at Medinet Habu. The scene looks very different from Hatshepsut's scene, despite still showing Amenirdis with two deities. The relief comes from the forecourt of the chapel, along a side wall (Plate 3). Amenirdis is shown on the far-left side of the scene, standing directly behind Hathor, who in turn stands directly behind Anubis. Anubis is standing facing Shepenwept II, Amenirdis I's successor, who is on the far-right side of the scene. Beginning with Amenirdis I, the relief depicts her with her right arm crossed over her chest holding a flail, which was associated with Osiris and often found within the context of kingship and other royal individuals.⁸⁶ In her left hand, she holds an *ankh*. She is shown in a sheath dress, tripartite wig, vulture headdress, and double-plume headdress in addition to a headband with an uraeus attached. This is the costume of a 18th Dynasty queen that the Kushite royalty would have likely sourced from representations of Thutmose III's wife at nearby Deir el-Bahari.⁸⁷ The art of the 25th Dynasty demonstrates the incorporation of past artistic forms going back as far as the Old Kingdom.⁸⁸ This archaizing behavior served to ground the authority of the dynasty in past tradition, implying that their reign was timeless and eternal, that they had always been sovereign. This behavior in the context of Amenirdis I and Shepenwept II indicates that they sought to legitimize their role as God's Wives by referencing the earlier traditions of ancient Egypt. By appearing similar to New Kingdom God's Wives, Amenirdis I and her successor evoked ideas of the era of central state authority and stability. The idea that Amenirdis I and Shepenwept II sought to associate themselves with

⁸⁶ Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic*, 35.

⁸⁷ Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 214.

⁸⁸ Tiradritti, *Pharaonic Renaissance: Archaism and the Sense of History*, 102.

the rule of the 18th dynasty is also reflected by the location of the funerary chapels themselves. The structures were built directly across from a small temple dedicated to Amun that was built by Thutmose III and Hatshepsut during their joint reign.

To the right of Amenirdis I, Hathor is depicted in the same New Kingdom costume as Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II. The goddess is also portrayed with her traditional horned disk crown and headband with uraeus, as well as an *ankh* in her left hand. Like most headwear of Egyptian deities, her crown serves to identify her from other goddesses. Her other arm and hand are not preserved but it is likely she is holding the *was*-scepter which was commonly found in this context. Anubis is shown in his standard anthropomorphic appearance of human with jackal head. The god is depicted holding an *ankh* and *was*-scepter. Shepenwepet II is shown holding an *ankh* in her right hand but her left hand is not preserved well enough to see what she holds. She is dressed almost identically to Amenirdis. This may be a scene in which Anubis is offering Shepenwepet II the *was*-scepter as a symbol of transferring the authority of God's Wife of Amun from Amenirdis I to her successor. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Amenirdis I is also present in these scenes, depicted alongside the gods and on the same scale. This denotes her close relationship to the divine and significant power of her own as she oversees and perhaps sanctions the transfer of her power to Shepenwepet II. The involvement of Anubis in the transfer of power for a position relating to Amun is interesting because one would expect Amun to be involved in this ritual instead. This may suggest that the adoptive lineage of God's Wives of Amun played a larger role in the legitimacy of the office than divine determination and that it was only in death that the power was relinquished to the adoptive daughter of the previous God's Wife.

Both the scene at Hatshepsut's mortuary temple and the scene at Amenirdis' funerary chapel at Medinet Habu depict transfers of power with the aid of the divine. In Plate 2

Hatshepsut is endowed with power by Nekhbet and Re-Harakhty, both of whom have close ties to the king. In Plate 3 Amenirdis is shown standing alongside Anubis and Hathor while Anubis presents power to her successor, Shepenwept II. While Amenirdis is present for this “passing of the torch,” she is shown in the role of an onlooker as opposed to being directly involved. She is not the one handing the *was*-scepter to Shepenwept II, it is Anubis who is the figure with the agency in this scenario. Amenirdis I’s presence in the scene establishes both her approval of her successor as well as Shepenwept’s claim to the office. The scene with Amenirdis does not communicate the divinity associated with kingship. The divine interaction does not deify her, but still places her in a position of power by showing that she is able to be in the company of gods as her succession is secured. In the case of Hatshepsut and Amenirdis, this scene type communicates that their power comes directly from the gods. In the case of Hatshepsut, this power is eternal, as she will always be king in the understanding of ancient Egyptians. The dominion symbolized in the *was*-scepters she received is not being shared with Hatshepsut’s successor, as it is in the scene with Amenirdis I and Shepenwept II, because as king Hatshepsut will never relinquish her power. In the scene at Medinet Habu representing Amenirdis I (Plate 3), she no longer holds her power. The *was*-scepter is being given to her successor and the office and status that go along with it are transferred to Shepenwept II. Amenirdis I’s status is still communicated, however, in how she appears alongside other gods while overseeing her succession. It reinforces the idea that her choice and approval of adoptive daughter important to the legitimacy of the new God’s Wife which showcases her agency and power.

Scene types showing divine interaction are only part of the larger mortuary decorative program. Another important category of relief scenes are those depicting an individual either purifying a god (B.1) or being purified themselves (B.2). Of the two types of purification scenes,

the more informative representation is the one that depicts the deceased as the purifier (B.1).

Table 2 shows that this scene type is absent in Amenirdis I's and Taharqa's mortuary art.

Taharqa's lack of the scene is less meaningful because the sample available to the case study is so small. Amenirdis I's lack of this scene type, however, is a bit more meaningful because all of her mortuary art is attested to in the data. In the context of this corpus, when an individual acts as the purifier they are being shown purifying a god. In these representations, the king is shown either offering natron to the god or pouring water over them. The role of the 'purifier' has a sense of agency to it. This is because the individual is acting upon someone else as opposed to being the recipients of the action, which is more passive. This presentation of agency demonstrates the individual's power and status, especially because they are acting upon a god.

Scenes showing the purification of god's (B.1) are different in that they are no longer the party initiating contact, it is now the king. In the different scene types included in this corpus, the gods are dynamic individuals who are always initiating some sort of action or enabling something to happen. In these scenes the gods are receiving the action and the power dynamic between them and the king has changed as the deity is no longer the one to establish the relationship. The fact that this scene is exclusive to the visual records of Egyptian kings indicates that it is characteristic of a divine relationship unavailable to anyone but the king. Amenirdis I did not incorporate this scene type into her mortuary decorative program because as God's Wife of Amun, her agency in relation to the divine did not extend to the same degree as the pharaoh. Her role in relationship to the divine was to offer entertainment and food to the gods to keep them pacified.⁸⁹ In order to participate in any of the rituals of offering to the gods, Amenirdis would have needed to be purified as she would be entering a divine and sacred space.

⁸⁹ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 52.

Purification cleansed and was a way to maintain order.⁹⁰ It would have been beyond the scope of her power to maintain order in the realm of the divine. As the mediator between the physical world and the divine one, it was the king's job to do this.⁹¹

Though Hatshepsut and Thutmose III both have scenes in which they are shown purifying a god (B.1), this case study's corpus only includes a visual for Thutmose III. Still, this visual will provide some basis for what this scene type would have looked like with Hatshepsut as the purifier. The relief in question is found in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, within the sanctuary of the Shrine of Anubis (Plate 4). In this scene, Thutmose III is depicted purifying the god Sokari. The god Sokari is another falcon-headed god, like Re-Harakhty and Horus. The god is associated with the afterlife and the god Osiris, and it was during the New Kingdom when Sokari and his festival began to stress the continuity of royal mortuary cult.⁹² Sokari is shown with a falcon head, tripartite wig, kilt, broad collar, and bull's tail. He is shown holding an *ankh* in his left hand, the *was*-scepter in his right. Thutmose III is shown in this scene wearing a very different crown than what he is normally depicted in throughout this corpus. This crown was known as the 'blue crown' or the war crown and it was associated with military campaigns. Interestingly, he is also shown wearing a shirt, in addition to a broad collar, kilt with a uraei covered apron, and a bull's tail. Thutmose III is on the right side of Sokari, facing toward the god and pouring water out of a vessel and over the head of Sokari.

This scene demonstrates that the purification of a god was an important action that was likely limited to the king. Shown as the initiator of contact with the divine instead of a passive

⁹⁰ Lucia Gahlin, "Private Religion," In *The Egyptian World*, edited by Tony Wilkinson (London, New York: Routledge), 2007, 337

⁹¹ Dodson, "The Monarchy," 75.

⁹² Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 211.

participant in ritual, the scene communicates the power and agency of the purifier, as well as their close relationship with the divine. Amenirdis I had a significant priestly role in the cult of Amun and interacting directly with the divine was not outside the scope of her political office. However, the direct interactions available for her to portray mostly involved her offering directly to a god as a way to pacify the gods. Offering Scenes (Type G) were universal across social strata and that is reflected in the tabular data, where offering scenes are the most ubiquitous type of scene for all four individuals (Table. 2). The large quantity of offering scenes within the corpus of scene types is an understandable trend as making offerings to the gods in exchange for protection or wishes was a common practice in life.⁹³ As a priestess of Amun, the God's Wife would have made offerings to the gods as part of her ritual responsibilities.⁹⁴ However offering to the gods was likely the extent of her ritual role and this demonstrates her limited power.

As the visual and tabular data analyses have shown, the differences in the mortuary art of Amenirdis and Hatshepsut have little to do with their gender. If this were true, their representations would have been more similar. The disparity between the representations of these two women is largely the result of their different political offices. However, this is not to say that gender ceases to be part of the discussion. The nature of Hatshepsut's political office rendered her unable to show her femininity with the exception of her different names, which had feminine endings. The Egyptian worldview was greatly influenced and shaped by the mythical stories of the gods and as such Egyptian kings could not be represented as women because ideologically, they had to embody the god Horus, who was male.⁹⁵ It is important to remember however, that gender is a "set of social constructions relating to, arising from, and imposed upon biological

⁹³ Emily Teeter, "Temple Cults," *The Egyptian World* (London, New York: Routledge), 2007, 315.

⁹⁴ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 51-57.

⁹⁵ Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, PhD Diss. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. *Boreas, Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations* 14, 1986, 6.

sex.”⁹⁶ Egyptian society was highly gendered in that their texts, visual representations and even material culture were subject to complex gendered divisions.⁹⁷ However, these gendered norms could be easily manipulated in artistic representations and text. Clearly, Hatshepsut took advantage of the traditionally male gendered art forms in order to present herself in the necessary male role of kingship. Had she ruled under any other title associated with royal women, such as King’s Mother, her representations in the visual record would have looked drastically different simply because any other title would not have been gendered male.

Amenirdis I did not face the same challenges as Hatshepsut in that her political office did not demand a gendered makeover. Her office and the power along with it was already gendered female. The office of God’s Wife of Amun was one that had always been filled by women, specifically royal women, since the New Kingdom. Her gender did not detract from the power of her religious and political office due to the fact that it was a gendered female space. Royal women had always possessed a certain amount of power as they were associated with the mother-consort goddess Hathor and considered to be her mortal manifestation just as the king is Horus’.⁹⁸ The mythic role elevated their status and associated them with the feminine element of creation and therefore an essential component in the continual renewal of the kingship.⁹⁹ As a royal woman, Amenirdis I was already closely tied to the kingship, the cult of Hathor and power ideologies of creation. Her position as God’s Wife of Amun built upon this power and allowed her additional political influence within the Theban region.

⁹⁶ Wilfong, “Gender and Sexuality,” 205.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

The data analysis from this case study confirms that both Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I received their power from the gods. However, the differences in how this power is held and communicated show the nuanced nature of the political offices that these powerful women held. Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple features scenes of divine interactions which specifically emphasize the ideology of Egyptian kingship by highlighting her divinity and sovereignty over a unified Egypt. In contrast, Amenirdis I's funerary chapel depicts her interacting with the divine in ways that established her religious and ritual importance in the cult of Amun. Additionally, Amenirdis I's use of different iconography for her funerary art than her predecessor Shepenwepet I suggests an underlying political motivation to establish herself and therefore the 25th dynasty as being different from the political era of the previous dynasties. It mirrors the idea that the Kushite kings saw themselves as restoring order to Egypt.¹⁰⁰ The greater importance of political office to mortuary art is further exemplified by the fact that Hatshepsut shared more scene types with the kings Thutmose III and Taharqa, than with the God's Wife of Amun Amenirdis I. Despite the fact that Hatshepsut once held the title of God's Wife, her adopted title of king was more prevalent in her monumental architecture and thus her representations had to follow the traditional model established over millennia by previous kings establishing them as gods. Her biological sex clearly did not bar her from assuming traditional male and kingly iconography.

While the differences in their mortuary decoration showcase the importance of political office, the similarities between Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I's scene types indicate that the two

¹⁰⁰ el-Damaty and Franco, "The Third Intermediate Period," 83.

women had to communicate divine support of their authority. Hatshepsut, as the king, would have needed to establish her connection to the gods and their support of her sovereignty. Her divine interactions communicate this by showing the gods embracing and touching her intimately, as well as bestowing her with life and dominion. Amenirdis I was in power during the reign of many different kings, not all of whom she was related to. Her avenue to legitimacy was stronger through her connection to the cult of the gods than it was to a king who placed her in power when she was a child and who was no longer in power. This connection is what her divine interactions communicate when they show her alongside the divine in ritual capacities.

Whether the scene types between Hatshepsut and Amenirdis I differ greatly or less drastically, similar themes are communicated by the iconography. The scene types that Hatshepsut shared with Thutmose III and Taharqa are all centered around the office of kingship and function to reiterate the ideology tied to that office. In order to do so, the iconography within these scenes establish the kings as gods and associate them with ideas of unity, order, and the maintaining of *ma'at*.¹⁰¹ The scenes depicting the interactions with the divine that support this ideology cannot be applied to just any powerful political figure, because the scenes support a very specific model of ruler in Egypt. The scenes do not vary between the 18th and 25th Dynasty kings because part of the ideology of kingship in Egypt is the idea of timelessness. The king needed to appear as all the kings before him had, because the king never ceases to be king, he is king for eternity.¹⁰²

The model for the God's Wives of Amun is very different from that of a king. Amenirdis I would have modeled her authority after different previous royal women such as king's mothers

¹⁰¹ Roth, "Representing the Other: Non-Egyptians in Pharaonic Iconography," 156.

¹⁰² Robins, *Problems Concerning Queenship*, 29.

or daughters, while Hatshepsut would have modeled her authority after the kings who had come before her. This is why the visual expressions of their power look different. Amenirdis I could not show her authority as Hatshepsut had because her political office did not allow her to access the types of scenes only available to kings. Her mortuary art showcases a relationship with the divine that suggests her familiarity with the gods, but further intimacy or her own divinity was outside the realm of power she could claim.

Unlike the iconography of kingship which needed to remain unchanged and timeless to highlight the eternal nature of the pharaoh, the office of the God's Wife of Amun had more flexibility in art forms and symbolism. This flexibility allowed for changes in terms of titulary, epithets and iconography. Amenirdis I could choose to break from the precedent set by her predecessor and cease to represent certain interactions with the divine reserved for kings.¹⁰³ Though this choice was likely a political mechanism for establishing the Kushite kings as separate from their Libyan predecessors, her choice to diverge from the tradition of Shepenwepet I nevertheless demonstrates a sense of individuality in the office of the God's Wife during the 25th dynasty. This level of individuality also further demonstrates the influence of political office on mortuary decoration, because the office of kingship would not have been able to distinguish itself from previous dynasties by drastically changing the traditional iconography.

The differences in the scene types and iconography of Amenirdis I and other God's Wives of Amun during the Third Intermediate Period seems to contradict idea of political office having greater influence in representations of divine interaction. However, this case study was designed to compare the mortuary art of Amenirdis I and Hatshepsut as a way to understand how

¹⁰³ Ayad, *God's Wife, God's Hand*, 125-128.

these women's power was expressed in their funerary legacy. Incorporating the additional evidence from the funerary art of other God's Wives would be a great way to expand upon the work done in this study. It would give a deeper understanding to the individuality hinted at within Amenirdis I's mortuary art and the influence of political environment upon the office of God's Wife of Amun in the Third Intermediate and Late Periods.

This case-study was designed with the objective of ascertaining how two of ancient Egypt's most politically powerful women differed in how they represented themselves in their mortuary artwork. The original hypothesis was that, because of these two women's similarities, they would legitimize their power in similar ways through their visual representations. Both of these women were daughters of kings, they both held the title of God's Wife of Amun, and they were both attempting to exercise control over a country where men were traditionally the rulers. In actuality it appears that ancient Egyptian concepts of gender and power differ greatly from our modern Western understanding of what it means to be women in power within a patriarchy. A complex combination of mythology, royal titulary, political and religious organization, and gendered art forms created a unique environment in ancient Egypt which these two women were able to navigate in order to bolster and express power. The unique way that ancient Egyptians conceptualized gender allowed two very similar women to take very different paths to power and legitimize their claim to authority once there.

Images



Plate I: Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut; Shrine of Hathor; Heh between Uraei (above) Hatshepsut embraced by Hathor and given life by Amun; Illustration from Naville, *Temple of Deir el-Bahari*, Vol.4, pl.cxi.



Plate 2: Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut; Shrine of Anubis; Hatshepsut between Nekhbet and Re-Harakhty; Photograph taken by Jessica White.



Plate 3: Medinet Habu; Funerary Chapel of Amenirdis; Forecourt; Amenirdis I with Hathor and Anubis before Shepenwepet II; Photograph taken by Jessica White.

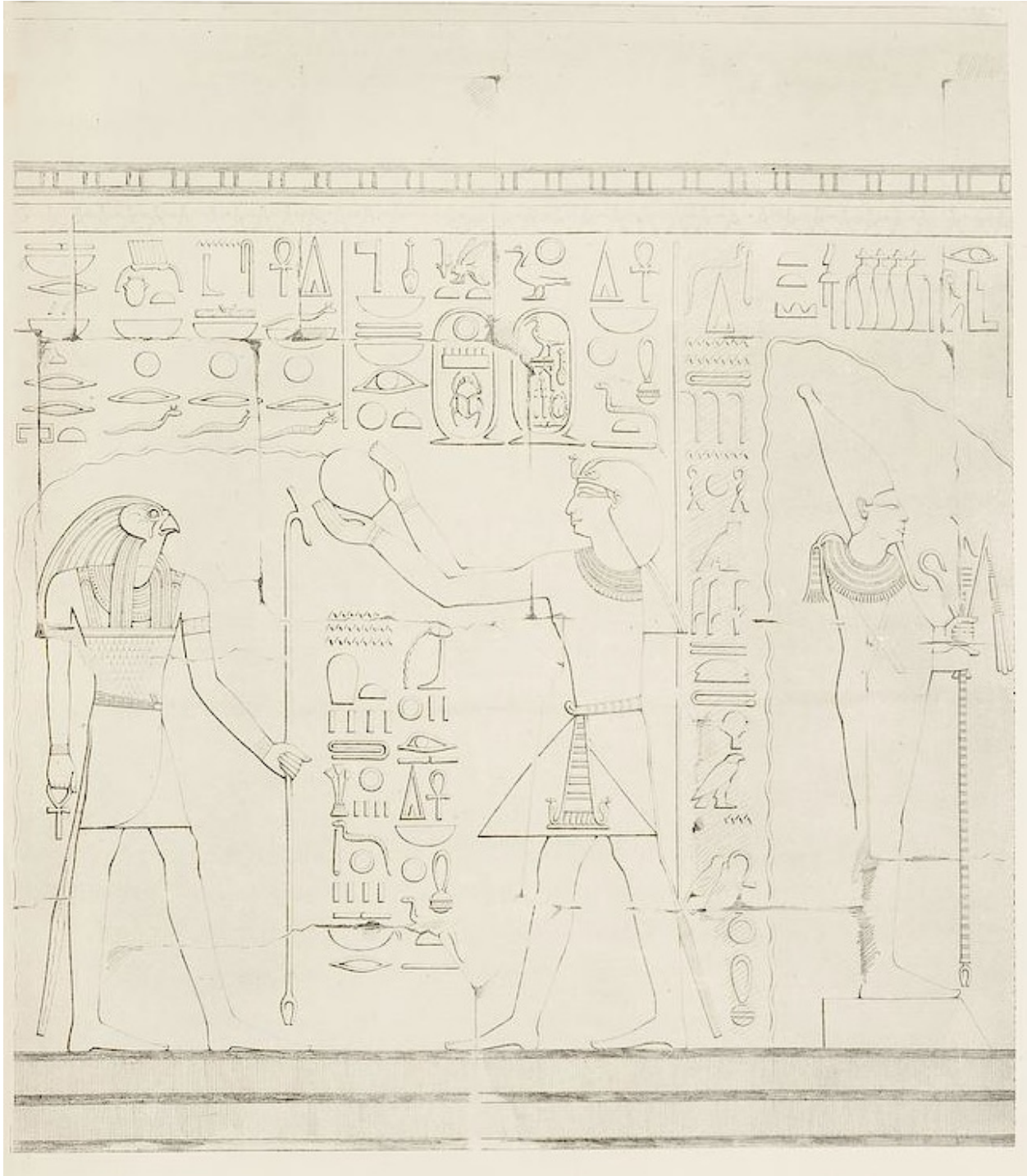


Plate 4: Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut; Shrine of Anubis-Sanctuary; Thutmose III purifying Sokari; Illustration from Naville, *Temple of Deir el-Bahari*, vol. 2, pl. xlv.

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