

## ANCIENT HISTORY: *HATSHEPSUT*

**With reference to the quotation, describe H's relationship with the Amun priesthood.**

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Quote: "Amun took the form of the noble King Thutmose and found the queen sleeping in her room ... He gave her his heart and showed himself in his godlike splendour."

Due to the foundations of how the New Kingdom was created, Egypt's state became one that did not and could not separate the political from the religious. For this reason, Hatshepsut made many gains with her involvement with the Amun priesthood, and vice versa. Although each king in the 18th Dynasty did this as tribute to the gods who created and maintained ma'at, it was unusual in that it became a key feature of her rule.

Hatshepsut's time as queen granted her the prestigious title 'God's Wife of Amun'. This meant that even before her bid for power she had already begun to gain support. As the god's wife, she was present for many religious rituals and for this reason would be 'approved' in a sense because of her displays of dedication to their god. On one stela at Karnak, she is depicted with her then husband Thutmose II and her mother worshipping the god.

During the early stages of her rule, the need to legitimise her position was essential due to the unconventional circumstances. Not unlike other successful pharaohs before and after her, Hatshepsut created an elaborate story that depicted her divine birth, claiming Amun-Re as her father, "he gave her his heart and showed himself in his godlike splendour". This idea was an innovation which was replicated by later pharaohs, and was highly emphasised throughout her reign as in her temple in Deir-el-Bahri. Additionally, she proclaimed in the north half of the Middle Colonnade in her mortuary temple that she was also presented by Amun as king to the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt. The lack of opposition to such stories can be used to make the assumption that the priesthood was indeed supportive.

When Hatshepsut had successfully settled down as 'rightful' pharaoh of Egypt, her continued focus on the cult of Amun through extensive building programs (particularly at Karnak) meant that both sides made considerable gains. Senenmut details the construction of two obelisks designed to pay tribute to Amun and stand as physical testament to her reign. In the inscription at Karnak, she states this was done as a gift to Amun, further strengthening her connection to him and the priesthood. By elevating the status of Amun, the priesthood was then able to enjoy many economic benefits such as receiving the 'lion's share' of booty and trade. The priesthood also then received a large influence over the running of Egypt as it truly became the official state cult. The creation of the First Prophet of Amun is evidence of this, as it was never before seen that a single person headed all the cults. This title created even more influential employment opportunities as the titles Second and Third Prophet of Amun were also created.

The growth in wealth was so great that the priesthood, during Hatshepsut's time, became the single largest employer in all of Egypt. They had control over an extensive amount of land for grain, as well as a large treasury within the Temple of Karnak as a result of all the tribute received.

In addition, the priesthood and the Amun cult allowed her to secure popularity from the general populace, as her introduction of the Opet and Valley Festivals provided annual national holidays and established a closer relationship between the people and herself. She constructed the 8th Pylon at Karnak to allow festive processions to acknowledge her as well as Amun, further aligning her with the god and establishing a closer relationship with the priesthood. She also introduced a number of funerary texts which would be used by the people and priests for years to come.

Gains were not one-sided. As Hatshepsut continued her reign, the lack of opposition to her rule is evidential that the people accepted the fact that the Amun priesthood had sanctioned her actions – even her divine birth scenes and slow metamorphosis into a male in reliefs and inscriptions.

The relationship between Hatshepsut and the Amun priesthood proved to be advantageous for both sides as the cult had peaked during the reign and Hatshepsut had been allowed to rule for a relatively long time.