

# THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM'S HATSHEPSUT EXHIBIT IS MISLEADING

March 2006 by *Manu Ampim*



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A major exhibit, "Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh," was on display at the newly-renovated de Young Museum in San Francisco from October 15, 2005 to February 5, 2006. This important exhibit housed over 300 artifacts from over a dozen museums during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut (1500 BCE), who ruled Egypt during the 18th dynasty. Hatshepsut was the 4th of five women that ruled Egypt during the dynastic period, and records indicate that she may have been the most powerful of these African women.

In response to this important exhibit, I led 7 groups of mainly African Americans (totaling about 250 people) through the collection to give them insight from my primary research on classical African artifacts in countries around the world. The de Young Museum did a very good job of organizing the displays, but the museum's descriptions and explanations were often misleading and completely wrong.

For example, the de Young completely misleads the public with two false assertions that are directly contradicted by the first-hand evidence. First, the museum tries to make a color and racial distinction between Kushites/Nubians on the one hand, and ancient Egyptians on the other. There are numerous tomb reliefs that clearly show each of these groups depicted with various shades of black and brown skin tones. However, the museum presents false information that the darker skin images are only from the southern areas of Nubia and that the Egyptians were "always" shown with a lighter color.

The second unsupported myth is that Hatshepsut was the "only" female pharaoh and that her "unprecedented" step of becoming a female ruler led Thutmose III to destroy all of her images as a king. Contrary to the de Young's misinformation, there are many well-preserved images of Hatshepsut either being crowned as a king, or presented as a ruling king side by side with Thutmose III, as they perform rituals together. The mainstream eurocentric Egyptologists have no answer as to why Thutmose would leave so many images of Hatshepsut if he was supposedly on a campaign to erase all evidence of her kingship. These Egyptologists simply ignore the evidence and hope that they are not confronted with their contradictions.

The real issue is that classical Africans developed a balanced social system thousands of years ago, which included women in the highest office in the country. Whereas, Europeans and Euro-Americans in this modern era still disrespect and disregard the value of women. For instance, women in America were only given the right to vote in 1920, they still lag behind men in salaries, and there has never been a female president or vice president. It is too difficult for many white historians and Egyptologists to admit the obvious fact that Black people are several thousand years ahead of them in terms of creating an equitable society, with male and female balance.

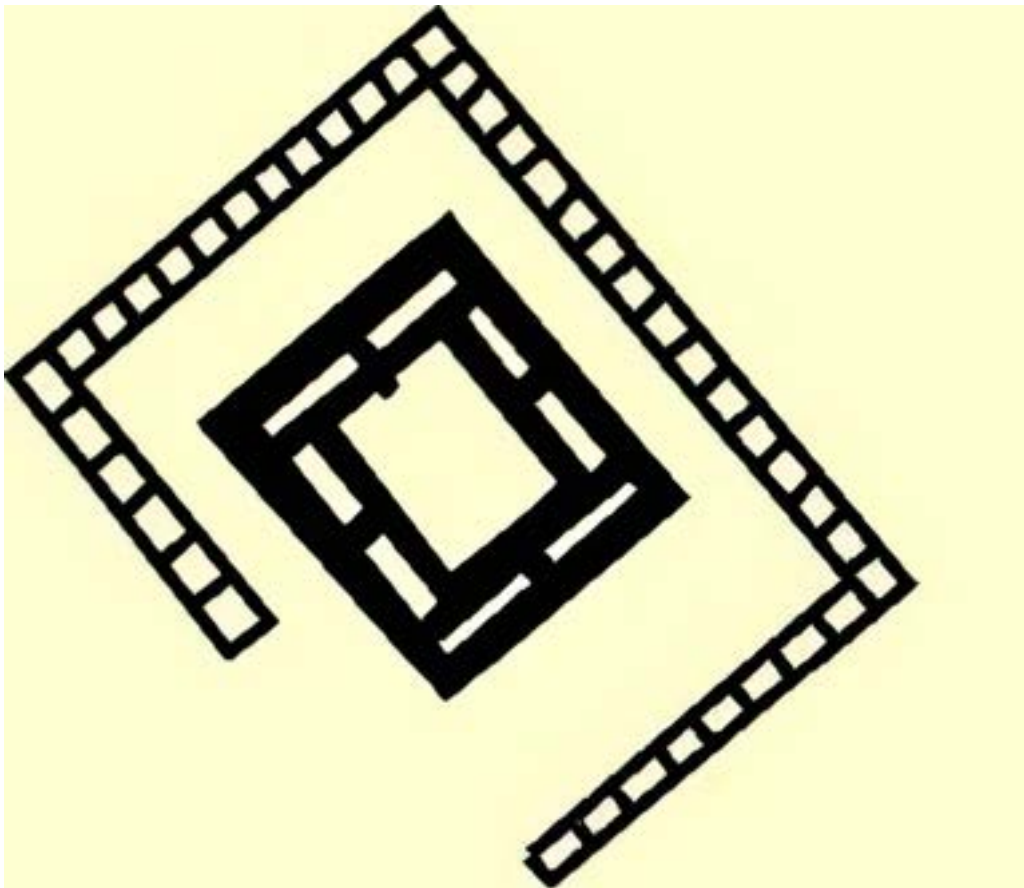
Lastly, Queen Hatshepsut is the 4th of five females that ruled Kemet (Egypt). Here is the list:

1. **Queen Mer-Neith – Dynasty 1.**  
Ruled when her son Den was too young to rule. (c. 3000 BCE)
2. **Queen Netjertiti (Nitocris) – Dynasty 6.**  
Ruled at end of the Old Kingdom (last ruler of this era). (c. 2200 BCE)

3. **Queen Sobek-Neferu – Dynasty 12.**  
Ruled at the end of the Middle Kingdom (last ruler of this era). (c. 1800 BCE)
4. **Queen Hatshepsut – Dynasty 18.**  
Ruled when Djehuti-mes III (Thutmose III) was too young to rule. (c. 1500 BCE)
5. **Queen Tawosret – Dynasty 19.**  
Ruled when Siptah was too young to rule. (c. 1200 BCE)

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Picture 1: The royal tomb of Mer-Neith is in the middle of the 1st-2nd dynasty king's tombs and is surrounded by 41 burials.



Picture 2: The name of Queen Sobekneferu on a cylinder seal inside a royal shenu ("cartouche"), which was reserved for ruling kings.



Picture 3: Queen Tawosret with name in a royal shenu.



Picture 4: Queen Hatshepsut



Picture 5: Temple of Hatshepsut (called Djoser-Djeseru = "holy of holy")

