

# THE ICONOGRAPHY OF CO-RULE AT DEIR EL-BAHARI: HATSHEPSUT AND TUTHMOSIS III IN THE STATUE ROOM OF THE MAIN SANCTUARY OF AMUN

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Independent

**Abstract:** Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III were represented as seemingly equal kings on the side walls of the Second Room of the Main Sanctuary of Amun in the Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari. Iconographic analysis reveals the relationship between the two rulers, demonstrating the different and discreet ways in which Hatshepsut emphasized her dominant position and Tuthmosis's secondary one during their co-rule. The quality of the representations is just as crucial as their number for understanding their relationship. Hatshepsut used among others the symbolism of the cardinal points, orientation of figures and the hierarchy of attributes to emphasize the difference in their positions. The four scenes in question are the most representative examples of these fixed rules in the Deir el-Bahari temple.

**Keywords:** Deir el-Bahari, Hatshepsut, Tuthmosis III, royal iconography, mutual relations, Main Sanctuary of Amun

Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III are seen represented as seemingly equal kings on the lateral walls of the second room (so-called Statue Room) of the Main Sanctuary of Amun, which is one of the most important places in the *Djeser-djeseru* [Figs 1–2]. The significance of the Sanctuary is emphasized by its central location within the Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari.

The first room, the Bark Hall, housed the sacred bark of Amun during its stay at the temple. Beside this event, symbolized by the kings making offerings in front of the bark, the decoration of the Bark Hall

was devoted to the royal cult and the Daily Ritual. On the back walls of the six niches in the south and north walls of the Bark Hall, Hatshepsut was represented alone, facing Amun in the subsequent episodes of the temple ritual.

This theme was continued in the second room of the sanctuary and some rituals were repeated. Although it is often called the 'Statue Room' or 'room with an offering table', it was actually not the last part of the sanctuary. A niche had been located originally in the west wall and was later replaced by a Ptolemaic sanctuary



*Fig. 1. Eastern pair of co-rulers; left: Hatshepsut on the south wall; right Tubmosis III on the north wall  
(All images M. Jawornicki)*





Fig. 2. Western pair of co-rulers; left: Hatshepsut on the south wall; right Tutmosis III on the north wall

(Barwik 2010). This was the main place of cult in Hatshepsut's times, housing a statue of the god placed in an ebony naos. There were also two lateral niches (on the south and north sides) devoted to the cult of the Ennead and the royal *ka*. All four scenes on the side walls of the Statue Room illustrated various episodes of the Daily Ritual, but here Tuthmosis III was present in the decoration in addition to Hatshepsut. Each of the kings was depicted twice, Hatshepsut on the south and Tuthmosis III on the north wall. In the eastern scene, Hatshepsut offered incense to Amun and in the western one she purified the god. Respectively, Tuthmosis III held up his arms holding natron in the first scene and purified Amun in the second one. Both rulers were shown with bare torsos and with skirts featuring the triangular aprons, wearing on their heads one of the two royal kerchiefs.

At first glance there can be no doubt that the presence of Tuthmosis III was fully accepted in ritual actions performed by Hatshepsut in this part of her temple. However, upon closer examination of the iconography of these and other scenes from the relief decoration of the temple, the relationship between the two rulers is revealed. One may conclude that Hatshepsut availed herself of complex and discreet ways, such as the symbolism of the cardinal points, orientation of figures and hierarchy of attributes, to show hierarchy and the nature of her co-rule with Tuthmosis III.<sup>1</sup>

It is widely recognized that Hatshepsut was shown more often than Tuthmosis III in the relief decoration of her monuments and that her position was privileged in

relation to his: she always stands in front of him (e.g., Naville 1894: 9; Keller 2005: 96). This is obviously a very general statement. It was Hatshepsut's decision where and how and how often Tuthmosis III would be represented (Redford 1967: 62, 76). Their iconography at Deir el-Bahari certainly does not show the hostility in their relationship so readily assumed by some scholars (e.g., Hayes 1959: 82; Grimal 1988: 249–250). Tuthmosis III was not excluded by Hatshepsut, but his place in her ideology, clearly secondary, was well defined and consistently pre-sented. Contrary to recent suggestions (Davies 2004), Hatshepsut's dominant role in the decorative program of the temple is highlighted beyond all doubt and Tuthmosis III was never shown as a ruler of equal power or status during her reign.

Four scenes from the Statue Room in the Main Sanctuary of Amun are the most representative examples of these fixed iconographic rules in force in the decoration of the Deir el-Bahari temple. The portraits in question have been published repeatedly to show their exceptional state of preservation and the unusual shade of the color on the body of Hatshepsut (Gilbert 1953: Figs 17, 18; Ćwiek 2007: 24, Figs 7–10). Not only are they from one of the most important places, the walls of the last room in the main sanctuary, but they also reveal a number of subtle ways in which the hierarchical relation between Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III was depicted.

Location is the first distinguishing feature. Hatshepsut was represented twice on the south wall, while images of

<sup>1</sup> The complex relations of the two co-rulers as reflected in the iconography of the decoration of the temple at Deir el-Bahari were analyzed by the author in her doctoral dissertation (Sankiewicz 2014).

her nephew appeared on the north wall. South was the most important cardinal point for the ancient Egyptians; north was secondary. South was where the sun zenithed and the direction from which the Nile flowed. More importantly, it was from the southern Upper Egyptian Naqada culture that the impulse for the unification of the two parts of Egypt emerged (Posener 1965; Kessler 1977). The south–north opposition is evident in other contexts in the Deir el-Bahari temple and is thus an easy way to evaluate images of co-rulers. There is no doubt that in the Statue Room Hatshepsut was depicted on the dominant wall and Tuthmosis III on the less important one.

The second difference between the representations of Hatshepsut and her nephew derives from the first in part. Royal figures were depicted generally moving from outside to inside the temple. With the rulers represented on the opposite walls of the room, it was only natural that Hatshepsut (on the south wall) received a rightward orientation and Tuthmosis III (on the north wall) a leftward one. Right was dominant in writing as well as in art (Fischer 1977: 6–8; 1984) and the right side was considered to be more prestigious than the left; the latter had mostly negative connotations (Grieshammer 1984). Thus, Hatshepsut's position was the more important of the two.

The third characteristic is the god's presence in these scenes. All four were connected with rituals performed in front of Amun-Ra, but on the south wall he was shown in both scenes facing Hatshepsut. On the north wall, he appeared only once in front of Tuthmosis III; in the

eastern scene, the king was shown alone, presenting offerings into emptiness.<sup>2</sup> The same situation occurred in the case of two scenes representing Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III entering the Main Sanctuary of Amun. Her figure, appearing on the south wall of the Bark Hall, was shown facing the god; Tuthmosis III on the north wall was depicted entering alone. These scenes highlighted the continued movement of the kings between rooms. Thus, in the Statue Room, Hatshepsut's importance was underlined by the presence of the god in both cases and that of Tuthmosis III was diminished: since Amun received his offerings in person only one time (in the western scene), the king could not expect anything from Amun in return in the eastern scene (Englund 2001: 565).

The fourth difference showing the internal hierarchy of the co-rulers is their different iconography. Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III were depicted in these scenes wearing alternately the *nemes* and *khat* headdresses. Both were complementary, with the dominant *nemes* (Collier 1996: 85–92) which had solar symbolism, its colors: blue, yellow and red, being associated with the sun and the sky. The white of the *khat* headdress emphasized its lunar connection. Another possible opposition is young and old, living king and his *ka* (Ćwiek 2011: 52). Beside solar east and lunar west, the two kerchiefs were also connected with the south and north respectively. For example Hatshepsut's sphinxes on the south side of the processional route had a *nemes* headdress, while those placed on the north one wore a *khat* (Smilgin 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Although the changed width of the entrance to the niche located in the middle of this wall, which was made wider for some reason, could be the cause for the missing figure of Amun in the eastern scene of the north wall.



In the scenes under discussion, the kings were wearing a yellow *nemes* with thin red painted lines, a variation of a headdress employed fairly often in the decoration of the *Djeser-djeseru*. This kerchief is on the head of Hatshepsut in the western scene, whereas Tuthmosis III had it in the eastern one. The *khat* is worn by Hatshepsut in the eastern scene on the south wall, and by Tuthmosis III in the western scene on the north wall. Therefore, in the case of Hatshepsut, the dominant headgear is present in the most important eastern scene: in the closest proximity of the god's statue from the niche. Her nephew wears it in the scene from which Amun is absent, and in front of the god and nearness of his statue in the central niche he wears "only" a *khat*.

The attire of the rulers also offers some distinctive features. In all four scenes they seem to have the same dress: a skirt with triangular apron and a uraeus pendant on a bare torso.<sup>3</sup> The *sj3t*-amulet can be seen beneath the pendant on the skirt of Tuthmosis III in both scenes [Fig. 3]. The bird with a sun disk on its back is a symbol connected with Lower Egyptian costume

(Patch 1995: 95). In spite of the absence of other elements of such dress and the different than customary orientation of the amulet, Tuthmosis III's attire denotes Lower Egyptian connotations, and thus the dress connected with the Delta is in its proper place on the north wall. There are no Upper Egyptian symbols on the skirt of Hatshepsut, however, although the attire would not have been as easy to define as the northern counterpart. A dagger may have served this purpose, but it hardly ever appears with a skirt having a triangular apron. As a matter of fact, a bird amulet started to be carved below the pendant of Hatshepsut in the western scene, but was abandoned presumably once the sculptor understood his mistake [Fig. 4]. Therefore, as far as dress is concerned, Hatshepsut's attire was not the dominant one, but even so that of Tuthmosis III was of secondary importance.

One more detail distinguished the iconography of Hatshepsut from that of Tuthmosis III in the eastern scenes. The Queen was depicted holding a vessel with incense in her left hand and an *ankh*-sign in her right, which was lowered alongside



Fig. 3. Bird amulet from the image of Tuthmosis III in the western scene on the north wall



Fig. 4. Bird amulet from the image of Hatshepsut in the western scene on the south wall

<sup>3</sup> Different body proportions of the two rulers are evident: Hatshepsut is much slimmer than Tuthmosis III and has a more pronounced breast. She also lacks the strip on her false beard.

her body. In the case of Tuthmosis III, he is holding an offering in both hands, thus there is a place for one column of hieroglyphs behind his figure. The *ankh*-sign is a symbol of higher status and kings do not hold it too often, hence it is meaningful that Hatshepsut was holding it, while her nephew was not.

The kings participated also in different episodes of the Daily Ritual. In the eastern scenes Hatshepsut is offering one ball of incense, while Tuthmosis III respectively five balls of Upper and five of Lower Egyptian natron. In the western scenes illustrating the ritual of purification, Hatshepsut is using the Upper Egyptian *nmst*-vase, while Tuthmosis III the *dsrt*-vase connected with Lower Egypt. Both of them were performing the rituals according to the hierarchy: she involved in the southern rite, he in the northern one. Thus, these scenes are also a logical continuation of the episodes of the Daily Ritual represented in the niches of the Bark Hall.

Other features of these four scenes do not seem to be of any great importance

as regards a hierarchical differentiation. Protective birds above the kings are represented according to the cardinal points (Nekhbet on the south wall and Behdeti and Wadjyt on the north); they always grasp *shen*-signs in their claws. The titles and names used, in spite of some differences, are generally comparable.

A similar analysis of the features discussed above with regard to two complementary pairs of images of the co-rulers may be applied to almost all their joint representations on the walls of the *Djeser-djeseru*. Hatshepsut generally used the rules of symmetry and some simple measures to emphasize her position with regard to Tuthmosis III. The number of differentiating features showing the co-rulers mutual position in the hierarchy was much higher in the Statue Room of the Main Sanctuary of Amun because of the significance of this part of the temple. It was much more important there to show the dominant position of Hatshepsut and the secondary role played by Tuthmosis III.

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