EARLY in the reign of Thutmose III, whilst still queen, Hatshepsut:¹

... appeared in scenes drawn from the iconography of kings, and used titles modelled on those used by kings, which described her position as ruler. Officials used titles and phrases which would normally contain a title or phrase referring to the king, but now contained the title god’s wife or lady of the Two Lands.²

In her major study of queenship, Troy suggested that it would be a short step from here ‘to the reign of a female monarch’.³

However, in her valuable article on ‘god’s wives’, Robins assumed that Hatshepsut’s kingly iconography was a retrospective response to her de facto assumption of kingly authority as regent, and that her accession as king resulted from a refusal to surrender power at the king’s majority.⁴ In particular, she suggests that the title ‘god’s wife’ may have become ‘a base from which to achieve her own ambitions to the detriment of the king’.⁵ Dodson similarly dismissed Troy’s suggestion because ‘there seems to be a failure to distinguish between the realities behind the situation of a queen-mother acting as regent for her (step-)son, and those

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1. By ‘queen’ I am following typical practice by referring principally to women titled hmt nsw, and especially to those titled hmt nsw wrt, where wrt refers, not to the king, but to the queen’s status relative to other wives of the king. Since the following discussion is based on the monuments of a king, the subjects raised are necessarily seen from the perspective of the kingship.
4. Robins, op. cit. 74-5.
5. Robins, op. cit. 75-6. However, she also notes, op. cit. 70, that this title ‘had nothing to do with the myth of the king’s divine birth’, which subsequently became the dominant mythic model legitimating Hatshepsut’s accession in the Theban context.
concomitant with a woman’s physical assumption of the crown’.6

In support of Troy’s suggestion, we might point to the later 18th Dynasty, when the representation of the principal queen as an active counterpart of the king reached its fullest and most distinctive development in iconography during the reigns of Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV. In particular, Tiye and Nefertiti were sometimes depicted worshiping the gods, and slaughtering enemies, so effectively blurring traditional distinctions between king and queen. Indeed, Morkot has documented violent images of queens from as early as the reign of Thutmose IV to as late as that of Ramesses II, and concluded that ‘from the reign of Amenhotep III a duality in the ideology of rulership is apparent in which the female principal, if not equal, is given greater prominence’.7 Such images, as is well known, may be understood to presage the accession of queen Nefertiti as king Nefernefruaten.

Here I would like to consider some analogous, but much earlier, textual images of the queens Ahhotep II and Ahmose-Nefertiry during the reign of Ahmose I. I would suggest that these images foreshadow the accession of Hatshepsut as king in such a way that it can be seen as an event consistent with the developing ‘ideology of rulership’ during the early New Kingdom, rather than as an isolated phenomenon explicable mainly in terms of putative dynastic politics.

Both queens belonged to the 17th Dynasty royal family at Thebes, which unified the kingship of Upper Egypt and Wawat at the beginning of the New Kingdom. Although there may have been several queens named Ahhotep at this period,8 a major queen, usually styled Ahhotep II, can be identified on the basis of the coincidence of her titles on an enormous coffin from the royal cache at Deir el-Bahri,9 and on a stele of Ahmose I from Karnak. On the stele she is titled hmt nsw ‘king’s wife’, snt ity ‘sovereign’s sister’, s3t nsy ‘king’s daughter’, and mwt nsw ‘king’s mother’.10 This queen was probably the first to be married to her own brother, if her titles are understood as referring to (a) a brother-husband,11 (b) a father, and (c) a son. Such consanguineous marriage apparently then became the norm for the king and his principal wife until the marriage of Hatshepsut to her brother, Thutmose II.

The stele in question is the largest known of Ahmose I.12 Doubtless it originally held a privileged position near the sanctuary of the temple of Amun-Ra, although it was subsequently buried to facilitate the development of the north-south processional axis. Its text is an elaborate eulogy of the king and his prodigious endowments for the cult of Amun-Ra, but incorporates a well-known passage about Ahhotep:

(1) CG 34001, 24-6:

\[\text{imm hnw n nbt t3} \]
\[\text{hnwt idbw h3w nb(w)t} \]
\[k3t rn hr h3st nbt} \]
\[irt shr 3§t} \]
\[hmt nsw snt ity s3t nsw mwt nsw} \]
\[\text{spst rlt lt} \]
\[nwt kmt} \]
\[\text{3w1.n.s mnfyt} \]

10. Apart from the specific ordering of the titles, the main difference is that the stele has snt ity and hmt nsw, whereas the coffin has snt nsw and hmt nsw wrt nsw nfr hdt. For the epithet hmt nfr hdt, see G. Robins, GM 56 (1982), 82-3; M. Gitton & J. Leclant, LÄII, 795.
11. The identity of this king is uncertain, although common sense dictates that it is one of the immediate predecessors of Ahmose I, i.e. Kamose or Taa.
12. Cairo CG 34001. Dimensions: height 2.36 m, width 1.05 m. For text, see Urk IV 14/1-23/16.
Give praise to the lady of the land, mistress of the banks of the $h₃w$ nbwt, exalted of name over every hill-country, who counsels the multitude, king’s wife, sovereign’s sister, king’s daughter, king’s mother, the noble lady who understands matters, and united Black Land, having taken hold of the bureaucracy, and secured it, having collected those who fled her, whilst surrounding those who deserted her, having pacified Upper Egypt, whilst obliterating those who defied her, the king’s wife, Ahhotep, living.\textsuperscript{13}

The prominence accorded to the queen by this passage has led some scholars to conclude that it refers to specific historical events, which happened at Thebes early in the king’s reign\textsuperscript{14} although the imagery is drawn from the typical phraseology of kingship. An enigmatic phrase has been $\textit{lnw}ṭ$ idbw $h₃w$ nbwt ‘mistress of the banks of the $h₃w$ nbwt’, since this might be understood to incorporate a reference to a specific location. Meyer long ago concluded that nbwt referred to Crete and the Aegean islands, indicating an alliance between the Egyptian royal family and rulers of Minoan Crete.\textsuperscript{15} The same idea has been mooted more recently by Jánosi and Bietak.\textsuperscript{16} Vandersleyen, on the other hand, suggested that $h₃w$ nbwt in this text referred to peoples of the coasts of the $t₃w$ fnhw, and accordingly speculated that Ahmose I had conquered the coast of Palestine.\textsuperscript{17} More recently Seipel has also concluded that:

\begin{quote}
$\textit{lnw}ṭ$ idbw $h₃w$ nbwt ‘ist nicht als Ausdruck einer kretisch-ägyptisch Allianz zu verstehen, sondern bezieht sich auf die erfolgreichen Feldzüge ihres Sohnes Ahmose gegen Vorderasien’.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Nevertheless there is no compelling evidence in favour of the conclusion that Ahmose I ever conquered the coast of Palestine,\textsuperscript{19} still less that this title embodies a specific reference to such an event.

Other scholars have objected that such a precise rendering of $h₃w$ nbwt is not possible. Edel concluded that nbwt simply refers to ‘eine geographischer Form der Erdoberfläche deren Umgebung bewohnbar ist’.\textsuperscript{20} For W. S. Smith $h₃w$ nbwt ‘belongs to a series of generalised appellations with little specific meaning, apparently referring to the far-off Asiatic shores of the eastern Mediterranean’.\textsuperscript{21} Iversen argued that nbwt is a synonym of iw $₃w$ ‘islands’, hence that $h₃w$ nbwt denotes any peoples living overseas from Egypt.\textsuperscript{22} These three arguments can be reconciled by concluding that $h₃w$ nbwt refers, not to people in a particular location, but to people living on a particular kind of land –and virtually or completely out at sea. If so, $h₃w$ nbwt might of the Hyksos. Recent Excavations at Tell ed-Daba (London, 1996), 80.

19. The inscriptions of Neferperet at Tura apparently refer to cattle brought from the $t₃w$ fnhw, see Urk IV 25/12. However, there is no reason to assume that the cattle were brought to Egypt by conquest rather than as tribute or the result of raiding.

13. This and the following translations have been divided with obvious reference to syntax, but without attempting to emulate any putative metrical structure.
refer to the inhabitants of the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, the Aegean—indeed of any islands or estuaries, including perhaps the fringes of the Nile delta. This observation is the key to understanding the passage about the queen, who, ahead of her queenly titles, is said to have authority over three qualitatively distinct types of land: t3 ‘flat land’, h3st ‘hill country’, and nbwt. Since these would constitute the only types of land known to the ancient Egyptians, Ahhotep is thereby said to have authority in any place people live, hence the summary epithet irt shrf s3ft ‘who counsels the multitude’.

This imagery is, as noted above, typical of the symbolism of kingship in the early 18th Dynasty. In the same stele, the king’s authority is described in similar terms:

(2) CG 34001, 9-13:

hr w3h mrt
iw n.f rsw mlhtw h3btw inntw
iw.f mn m nb
smn t3wy fy
it n.f iwT wtt sw
t3wy tm hmw n.f
di.n n.f st tf spsy
iw hfs.n.f hnmnt
3mn.n.f rhyt
iw pT di.sn n.f h3w
hr nb hr nb.n pw
h3w nb(w)t hr $ms.n im.f
t3w hr wnn.n n.f

Horus, ‘enduring of loving’,
to whom come southerners and northerners,
estoners and westerners.  
He is established as the lord,
who has established his twin lands,
who has seized for himself the inheritance of
the one who sired him,
–the entire twin lands, which cowered because
of him,
after his noble father gave them to him.
He has grasped the privy court,
and seized the people.
The élite, they gave him praise,
everyone saying, ‘He is our lord’,
the HAw nbwt saying, ‘We will follow him’,
the flat lands saying, ‘We belong to him’.
For he is a king whom Ra caused to rule,
whom Amun made great,
that they might give him the banks and flat
lands in a single moment
– that upon which the sun shines.
The peoples of hill-countries form a single
crowd, standing outside his hall.

In this passage there are at least two groups of
terms invoking the peoples of the whole
earth.24 First, peoples from the four cardinal
directions of the earth: rsw ‘southerners’,
mHtw ‘northerners’, iAbtw ‘easterners’, and
imntw ‘westerners’. Secondly, peoples from
the three types of land quoted in the passage
about the queen: h3tw nbwt, tAw, and h3staw. On
the other hand, this passage, and the stele more
generally, is devoid of specific history: there
are no references to the campaigns against the
kingdom of Kush, against the Hyksos kings of
Egypt, and against the rebel ni3twn, which were
the dominant events of Ahmose’s reign. Instead
his authority is eulogised in politically
transcendent terms.

The stele of Thutmose I at Tombos in Nubia
announces:

3) Tombos, 2:

|h3t.f m hry-tp t3wy r h3y 5nt.n itn |

His appearing as the commander of the twin
lands so as to rule what the sun-disc has
encircled.

Then follows a description of the peoples of the
earth subject to the king’s dominion,
including hrw-s’y ‘sand-dwellers’, h3staw ‘peo-
ple of hill countries’, bwytw ntr ‘those at
whom the god revolts’, h3tw nbwt, rsw, and
mHtw. Later the boundaries of his dominion
are expressed in a celebrated passage:

(4) Tombos, 13-14:

t38.f r sy n hnty t3 pn
mhty r mw pf kd
hddy m hnty

his southern boundary being at the edge of this
land,
the northern one being at that inverted water,
which goes downstream in going upstream.

Conventionally, this passage has been taken
as referring to the king’s activity in Syria and
his establishment of a stele beside the
Euphrates in Mittani,25 which flows in the

24. Undoubtedly another important group invoking the
population of the whole earth, well known from
royal and religious iconography, is that of the three
social strata of mankind, hnmmt, St and rhyt.
However, the interpretation and translation of these
terms is a complex issue, and it would serve no
purpose to pursue the problem within the confines of
the present paper.

25. The present translation is close to the influential
rendering in J. H. Breasted, Ancient Records of
Egypt. II (Chicago, 1906), 68. The most radical
alternative is the translation of Goedicke, who
renders mwy pf kd lddy m lnty as ‘that water which
turned the one who wished to go north into one who
rather went south’, H. Goedicke, GM 10 (1974), 14-
15. For our present purposes, this would not affect
the implication of this passage.
opposite direction to the Nile. Bradbury and Spalinger suggest that it refers to a campaign by Thutmose I in Kush. It might be better explained as a symbolic rather than politically specific statement, in which the ‘inverted’ river has become an evocation of the far reaches of the earth. A slightly later passage clearly is symbolic:

(5) Tombos, 16:

\[ \text{ti hmf m hrw} \]
\[ \text{itw m nstyf nt hh m rnp(w)t} \]
\[ \text{gnh n.f iw w sn-wr} \]
\[ \text{t3 r-drf hr tbyt.fy} \]

Now, his person is Horus, who has seized by his kingship of millions of years, so the islands of the Great Ocean serve him, and the whole earth is under his sandals.

Regarding the text of this stele, Bradbury has commented:

There is not a single word about Mittani, Hurrians, the Phr wr, theMarshes of Asia, the Hittites, Naharin, any Syrian city-state, Byblos, God’s Land, Kdm-Kdn, the Fenku-lands, Asiatic peoples, Upper and Lower Retenu, or any Palestine city-state or peoples.

Whilst this is certainly true, it is puzzling for her to conclude that it therefore refers to Kush, since neither is there any word about Nubian sites or peoples. Clearly the description of the king’s dominion is a statement of politically transcendent authority, in which the peoples mentioned are archetypal foreigners, characterised as being from the ends of the earth (rsw, mnhw), from countries completely unlike Egypt (hrw-sfy, h3stw), or enemies of the gods (bwytw nfr).

The Mahatta stele of Thutmose II paints yet another picture of the transcendent dominion of the king:

(6) Mahatta, 3-5:

\[ \text{st hmf m h.f} \]
\[ \text{h3w sfm(w)} \]
\[ \text{snrf h t3} \]
\[ \text{sfh.f m idbw h3w nb(wt)} \]
\[ \text{pssty nbwy hr st-hrf} \]
\[ \text{pstd pdt dmd hr tbyt.f} \]
\[ \text{iw n.f mntw hr inw} \]
\[ \text{iwnf(w)-st hr g(3)w} \]
\[ \text{t3 sf rsy r wp(f) t3} \]
\[ \text{mhty r ph(w)} \]
\[ \text{stt m ndt nt nb t3wy} \]

Now his person was in the palace, with his power dominating, with fear of him throughout the earth, and dread of him in the banks of the h3w nbwt, with the twin portions of the twin lords under his care, and the entire nine bows beneath his sandals, with the nomads coming to him bearing tribute, and the Nubian tent-dwellers bearing gifts, with his southern boundary at the horns of the land, and the northern one at the rumps, with Asia as the personal property of the lord of the twin lands.

In this passage, the situation of the idbw h3w nbwt (filled with sfh.f ‘dread of him’) is associated with that of t3 (filled with snrf ‘fear of him’). An obviously symbolic reference then invokes the earth as the pssty nbwy ‘the twin portions of the twin lords’ (presumably Horus and Seth), and its population as the pstd ‘the nine bows’, i.e. the traditional enemies of the king. The particular peoples mentioned bearing tribute for the king –mntw ‘nomads’


26. For example, Vandersleyen, Les guerres d’Amosis, 121-5.
Figure 2: Stela Cairo CG 34002
and *iwntw-sti* ‘Nubian tent-dwellers’– may be understood as archetypes of the *h3stw* and/or *hrw*S³y mentioned in the stele of Ahmose I and Thutmose I. Finally, the king’s dominion is shown to stretch to the ends of the earth by employing the holistic symbol of the horns (*wpt*) and rump (*phw*) of a bull.²⁹

These various statements of the king’s transcendent dominion couched in symbolic terms indicate that the language of example (1) regarding queen Ahhotep cannot be understood in isolation. Her authority is presented in the same terms as that of the kings. In a political sense, the words would be vague and untrue, since Ahhotep probably had no authority outside Upper Egypt and Wawat. But as a statement of her political transcendence, the words are absolutely truthful: the queen was the female counterpart of the king, and so held authority over every land.

Ahmose-Nefertiry inherited the role of Ahhotep II as principal queen of Ahmose I. Robins has suggested that she may have regarded the title *hmt nfr* ‘god’s wife’ as even more important to her position than her queenly titles. Given the prominence of the principal queens at this period, it seems unlikely her authority was solely based a title which was entirely sacerdotal in significance,³⁰ and wholly Theban in scope.³¹ Moreover, Robins overstates the political importance of that office by assuming it is associated with the considerable donations of land and goods set out in the so-called ‘Karnak donation stele’ (fig 1),³² whereas the office at issue there is clearly that of *hm-nfr 2-nw n imn*.³³ However, the full titles and epithets of Ahmose-Nefertiry on that monument are very revealing. She is almost as closely related to the king as her predecessor, being titled *s3t nsw* ‘king’s daughter’, *snt nsw* ‘king’s sister’, *hmt nfr* ‘god’s wife’, and *hmt nsw wrt* ‘great king’s wife’. In addition, her epithets express her authority in the language of kingship, styling her as *ddt ht nb(t) irt.n.s* ‘one who says everything she has done’, and *hrt-tp šm‘ mhi* ‘chief of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt’. The first recalls the traditional phraseology of royal stele in which the king is said to ‘speak’ and so ‘act’.³⁴ It also echoes the royal title *nb ir ht* ‘lord of action’. The significance of the second epithet is self-evident, and recalls the kingly title *hry-tp tAwy* ‘chief of the twin lands’ in example (3), as well as her own titles, attested elsewhere, *nbt tAwy* ‘lady of the twin lands’, and *hnwt tAwy* ‘mistress of the twin lands’.³⁵

Nevertheless, the most striking witness to the authority of Ahmose-Nefertiry is the stele of Ahmose I from the funerary chapel of queen Tetishery at Abydos (fig. 2).³⁶ The stele is surmounted by balanced scenes of the king offering to Tetishery, employing the typical iconography of the tomb-based offering cult. The text, however, is quite exceptional because it takes the form of a dialogue between the king and the living queen about how he should

30. Gitton & Leclant, op. cit. 792.
31. Robins, op. cit. 66.
32. Robins, op. cit. 70-1. For text, see E. Drioton, *BSFE* 12 (1953), 20-5; I. Harari, *ASAE* 56 (1959), pl. II.
33. The text is so difficult to interpret, it is unclear even whether Ahmose-Nefertiry is relinquishing or receiving the office. Compare, for example, the contradictory conclusions of C. Vandersleyen, *LÄI*, 100, and of Gitton & Leclant, op. cit. 793.
34. The most important examples of this phraseology prior to the 18th Dynasty occur in the texts of the boundary stele of Senusret I at Semneh and Uronarti, e.g. Semneh, 3, *ink nsw ḏdw irrw*, ‘I am a king who speaks and acts’. For text, see C. Obsomer, *Les campagnes de Sésostris dans Hérodot*, Essai d’interprétation du texte grec à la lumière des réalités égyptiennes (Bruxelles, 1989), fig. 24.
35. For example, in the inscriptions of Neferperet at Tura, see *Urk IV* 25/4-5.
36. Cairo CG 34002, see also PM V, 92. For text, see *Urk IV* 26/1-29/5; E. R. Ayton, C. T. Currelly & A. E. P. Weigall, *Abydos*, 3 (London, 1904), pl. 50-52.
properly observe the cult of his great female ancestor. Although Ahmose plays the leading role, the observations on proper conduct are not simply stated by him, as might be expected, but emerge instead out of the dialogue. The setting, which heads the text before even the royal titulary, presents the king relaxing in the dAdw-hall. This intimacy, together with the family context of a king and queen who also happen to be brother and sister, and relatives of the late queen, is strongly reminiscent of art from the Amarna period, when kings and queens are characteristically shown enjoying each other’s familiar company. On the other hand, their familiarity can be contrasted starkly with near contemporary images of the king in the company of others, such as the antagonistic meeting between the king, his dAd3t-council and council of elders in the First Stele of Kamose. Much of the repertoire of textual images used by kings of the New Kingdom was being formulated at this time, and, as Spalinger has noted, various images were subsequently rejected. The image of the king and queen relaxing as equals and intimates was one which did not gain a hold in royal stele of the early 18th dynasty, but apparently did reemerge nearly two centuries later in the art of the Amarna period.

A key problem in understanding the career of Ahmose-Nefertiry has been her adoption of the title mwt nsw during the lifetime of her husband, although there is no compelling evidence that Ahmose was ever coregent with any son of hers. Perhaps, in taking over the role of principal queen, she was simply able to assume any of the titles of her predecessor. This suggestion leads to an explanation of the remarkable titles held by Ahhotep II and Ahmose-Nefertiry derived from the mythology of kingship. The king was Horus, son of the dead king, Osiris, but also father of his own eventual successor. Therefore, there were three potential generations: king’s father, king, and king’s son. Correspondingly, there were three generations of queens: mwt nsw, snt-Hmt nsw, and sAt nsw. In life these queens would normally be different women. However, in mythology the female counterpart of the king was embodied in a single figure, Isis. Hence we might suggest that first Ahhotep II and her brother, and subsequently Ahmose I and Ahmose-Nefertiry, were brought together in a divinely modelled consanguineous marriage. Such a marriage may have been symbolic and ritualistic, unless the divine model sanctioned a genuinely incestuous relationship that would otherwise have been abhorrent to ancient Egyptian culture.

At the accession of her own brother-husband, Thutmose II, Hatshepsut became principal queen and adopted familiar titles, including sAt nsw, snt nsw, Hmt nTr, and Hmt.
Given a cultural context in which king and queen had been drawn closely together within the imagery of kingship, was her subsequent accession as king simply political opportunism, or was it a consequence of the presence of the queen as the active female counterpart of the king? Undoubtedly the stele of Ahmose I present Ahhotep II and Ahmose-Nefertiry as queens whose authority foreshadowed Hatshepsut as queen regnant, and thereafter may have resonated throughout their dynasty.
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