

## **Women on the Pharaoh's Throne**

On October 27, 2018, the Human Foundation hosted a lecture by Dr. Mamdouh Eldamaty: "Women on the Pharaoh's Throne".

### **Dr. Aliaa Rafea started by the following words:**

Today we will talk about: "Women on the Pharaoh's Throne". In this occasion, I would like to say something about women, as I feel that the future will be in their hands. I don't mean by that females as a gender. Rather, I refer to the female spirit reflecting motherhood, compassion and giving. However, many women don't follow such model, as they don't reflect the female spirit in their lives. In both; history and contemporary life, there have been many female leaders who were even more tough and harsh than males. While they intend to imitate men, they overlook their original compassionate nature.

In Islam, we say in the Name of Allah, the most merciful, because mercy is a divine character of the Divine. Compassion is a basic characteristic that is definitely required in the present-day. One of the current leadership approaches is based on a kind of management that reflects the feminine aspect.

However, I currently co-author a book under the title: "The Rising of the Feminine" with a group of women, and one young man. Throughout the book, we discuss several current issues, mainly the climate change, which is Dr. Adel El Beltagy's field of specialization. When we talk about our potential relationship with nature, we have to remove the barriers between the part and the whole. We are inseparable part of both; Mother Earth and the sky. This resembles an old Egyptian vision that we need to recall, which regarded man as a part of a whole. We will learn now about women on the Pharaoh's throne. We are looking forward to know their role in history, and we hope to hear that they were able to represent the feminine values, and not just reflect the masculine image.

### **Then, Dr. Mamdouh Eldamaty started his lecture:**

Today, we will talk about "Women on the Pharaoh's throne". So, who were these women?

They were queens who ruled Egypt, and ascended the Pharaoh's throne. Some of them had played a significant role, serving the interest of the country. Before we talk about these women, we need first to learn about the general context in Egypt at that time, which has enabled women to reach such positions. Kagemni was a wise man who has lived 4400 years ago, at the time of the old kingdom. His advice was to educate women, so that

men and people in general would be educated. This means that even since that time; girls were treated respectfully at school, just like boys. Thus, women were able to reach the highest ranks and positions in the Egyptian society. A good wife was seen as a gift granted by God to those who deserve it by taking care of their wives. That's why Egyptian men were encouraged to get married.

Ptahhotep had advised his son to be wise and establish a family, and take care of the wife that he has chosen before God. Men have been advised to love their wives and take care of their houses; as their wives were considered to be their twin souls. A happy family was regarded as the country's base.

The mother was also described as a gift granted by God. By serving her; the son would be entitled to the divine blessings. She carries the secret of existence within her, as she preserves the continuity of humanity.

Women have been able to reach the highest positions in Ancient Egypt. A female judge was found 4300 years ago, at the time of the sixth dynasty. Moreover, there have been female doctors from the third dynasty, 4700 years ago, and a chief doctor from the fourth dynasty. Women have also reached the position of Sem priestesses, and have supervised the process of mummification. Women also worked in the palace and temples, as well as in accounting, trade, business and warehouse management. In such context, they could easily reach power, and the Ancient Egyptian people would have simply accepted that.

So, how many women have ruled Egypt? Merneith; an Ancient Egyptian queen, was the first woman to ascend the throne in the history of mankind. This has happened five thousand years ago, at the time of the first dynasty. She has ruled the country as a regent, until her son; king Den was old enough to Rule. She has trained him to be the king, and once he was ready, she kept herself out of sight on the political level. That's why she wasn't only a great ruling queen, but also a perfect mother. The end of the fourth, sixth and twelfth dynasties witnessed queens on the throne. So, is there any connection between having those women on the throne, and the fall of the state and these dynasties?

The answer is no, as each of them has become a queen due to the non-availability of a male successor to the throne. This allowed them to lead transitional periods, enabling a smooth transfer from one dynasty to another. We will talk here about two queens; Hatshepsut and Nefertiti:

In Ancient Egypt, five divine priestesses have reached the highest position of priesthood. Throughout 200 years; they have ruled Upper Egypt, where each of them was regarded as the divine wife of Amun-Ra. A holder of such title would enjoy an amount of power similar to a king.

The Ptolemaic era has witnessed many queens, including Cleopatra the seventh, who was the greatest queen in history. The Islamic era also has witnessed a great queen; Shajar al Dorr. She was able to save Egypt from the crusade invasion, although she has only ruled the country for three months.

Hatshepsut was a very strong, smart, ambitious and self-confident woman. She was able to make use of the surrounding circumstances to gain power. Although she was depicted in a female form -as we can find in her statue- but this has changed later.

Being the daughter of king Thutmose I and Queen Ahmose; Hatshepsut was exclusively the legitimate royal daughter. The king had a Chief wife and other secondary wives, but only his son from the Chief wife would be the successor to the throne. If the king only had a daughter from his Chief wife, and a son from one of his secondary wives; then they should marry. Thus, the son would be the successor to the throne. When her father passed away, Hatshepsut was his only remaining daughter from his Chief wife, after all her brothers and her only sister, have already been dead. However, her father had a son from a secondary wife. Hatshepsut married her half-brother; Thutmose II, who has become a weak and an unlucky king. He died leaving Hatshepsut with one daughter, but he had a son from a secondary wife. Later, this son has become Thutmose III, one of the greatest kings in the history of Egypt.

When Thutmose III was nine years old, his father arranged a prophecy with the priests, so as to make sure that he would be his successor to the throne. The father died in the same year and Thutmose III became the king. Kemeny; A famous and powerful architect who has supervised building the tomb of "Thutmose I", wrote about that on the walls of his own tomb. He described the death of Thutmose II. He also described Thutmose III becoming the successor to the throne and the royal queen, Hatshepsut, becoming the regent.

While Hatshepsut was the regent, Thutmose III had to marry her daughter Neferure, who was a child as well, in order to be the king. At that time Hatshepsut enjoyed many royal titles, but not the "Queen of Egypt". However, her ambition was awakened later for such title. Kemeny referred to her then as: "Her Majesty", and said she was very generous and kind to him. This means that she was the real person in power, and not the child king.

Senenmut was an ambitious man who knew how to seize opportunities and reach his goals. He has served Hatshepsut since the death of Thutmose II. There are statues depicting him carrying Neferure as a child. Later he became her educator and land manager, as well as Hatshepsut's property manager. He was also Amun's Property Manager, which almost made him a ruler of the whole country.

Senenmut started to be very greedy, and built a tomb for himself in the Valley of the Kings. Then he got even more avid and wrote his name behind the doors at Deir el-

Bahari, something that ordinary people were completely prohibited from. Later, Senenmut vanished and his remains were completely demolished by Hatshepsut, after 14 or 16 years of her rule. Her kindness and awards shouldn't have led him to think and act as the real ruler of the country. She has erased his name and remnants, as a sign of severe hostility; as such a punishment would deprive him from the hereafter.

Senenmut and others stood by Hatshepsut against the priests of Amun, but she got rid of him after his mission was accomplished. She has spent the first two years of her rule as a regent, and then inaugurated herself as the queen. Hence, she was entitled to the five royal male titles, which only a crowned king would deserve. After that, she started to be depicted in a male form, as noted in her statues.

This has happened in compliance with the Egyptian traditions. Whoever ascends the throne should be a male king representing Horus, or reflecting his image on earth. That's why Hatshepsut kept confirming that she also represents Horus. No other queen has ever depicted herself in a male figure with a fake beard, except Cleopatra, who had only one picture in that form. But this didn't provide Hatshepsut with the power she has desired, as she still had to face some opposition. When she was building Deir el-Bahri temple (the architect was Senenmut), she depicted herself as the daughter of Amun, so as to be entitled to rule Egypt.

Hatshepsut ruled the country for twenty years. Throughout these years; she started construction works all over Egypt, in Karnak, as well as Upper and Lower Egypt. She has also extracted turquoise from Sinai, and was able to put down disobediences in Nubia and Sinai, with the help of Tutmoshe III, her partner in ruling the country.

One of the most significant accomplishments of Hatshepsut's era was the well-known trade journey to the land of Punt. Some historians assume that it was located in the current region of Somalia, while others think it might be located in Yemen and Eritrea. However, most probably it was located in the region currently known as Djibouti and Eritrea. While the Chief Priest and the Treasury Director have supervised the entire preparations during the journey; the Treasury Director led the campaign. When they arrived to the land of Punt, they have been welcomed in significant generosity by the local people. The Egyptians clarified that they came in peace, and presented all the precious presents they have brought from the Palace in Egypt, which were mostly made from gold. Egyptian ships came back to Egypt with products like ebony, ivory, monkeys, leopard skin, perfumes and incenses. No other king or queen has ever gained such winnings; it was only Hatshepsut who had such privilege.

Hatshepsut has built the Karnak as well as the red chapel, which has been assembled in the year 1997. The Opet festival that has started in her time used to be celebrated in this chapel. Similar ceremonies can be found today in Moulid Abu el-Haggag. Hatshepsut

was depicted sitting in front of Amun during her coronation. However, starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> year of her rule; we find paintings depicting both kings; Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. She was a legislator, and has described herself as a strong enforcer of law. She ruled through the legitimacy of Maat, which she has implemented in the land of Egypt. Her rule was a period of strength and prosperity, as she has protected the Egyptian borders and empire.

Hatshepsut left a scripture showing her renovation of the antiquities demolished by Hyksos. This is an indication that until that date; there were Egyptian antiquities that the Hyksos weren't interested in. Thus, Hatshepsut has put them back into their original state.

When this great queen died, she was buried in the Valley of the Kings beside her father, in her own tomb (no. 20). By the end of the twentieth year; a robbery occurred in Valley of the Kings. Later, the priest kings of the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty came and started to rescue the royal mummies of Deir el-Bahari, as well as the tomb of Amenhotep II. As for Hatshepsut, the only thing left from her body was her intestines, which were kept in a very small box in Deir el-Bahari. There was a coffin and a mummy found in another place, but there are doubts that they belong to her. In 2007, the mummy and the intestines' box that carry the name of Hatshepsut were examined through CT scan. The results came to confirm that, most probably, the mummy belongs to her.

Nefertiti was a beautiful, smart and ambitious young lady. She was full of love for her husband and her family, and has known how to make use of that love to serve her ambitions. While she paved her way to Akhenaten's heart, he overwhelmed her with his love and care. She had many titles, including: Hereditary Princess, Great of Praises, Lady of Grace, Lady of The Two Lands, Great King's Wife, Lady of all Women, Lady of South & North, etc.

The art of Nefertiti's time proves that she was one of the greatest Women of Ancient Egypt. There is a piece depicting her in the Egyptian museum. Although it is incomplete, yet it still reflects beauty, tenderness and aristocracy. Her love to her husband was reflected in a new unprecedented art style. Before Akhenaten; showing public affection between a man and wife was not allowed.

One of the paintings shows Nefertiti wearing the hprs-crown. Only a ruling king would wear it. She was acting as a king with her husband, without holding a royal title. Another unprecedented painting shows Akhenaten on a Chariot kissing his wife, while exiting the temple. He married Nefertiti in Thebes when they were only twelve or thirteen years old.

Nefertiti's name means "a beautiful woman has come", Some believe she was a Mitanni princess who was called Nefertiti after coming to Egypt. Nevertheless, this was against Egyptian traditions, especially in the time of Amenhotep III. Egyptians would marry

foreign women, but would never allow them to reach such a rank as the Great King's Wife. That's why we don't agree with such opinion.

Amenhotep III had multiple wives. His Chief wife was Queen Tiye; mother of Akhenaten. He also had many secondary wives from the Ancient Near East. On the other hand; Amenhotep refused to allow the prince of Babylon to marry his daughter or any other Egyptian princess. Since Akhenaten was the son of Amenhotep; we cannot assume that he got married to a foreign princess and allowed her to reach that rank. She was probably a member of the royal family, without being entitled to hold the title of the king's daughter. Maybe this has happened because her mother was one of the mistresses. Some people have also assumed that she was the daughter of the Lector Priest. However, Nefertiti's ancestry remains unknown for us today, but most probably she belongs to the family of Amenhotep III.

After marrying Nefertiti, Akhenaten co-ruled the country with his father. In the beginning, he was known as Amenhotep IV, before changing his name to Akhenaten. After the fourth year, the royal couple thought to move to a new place; a new capital that they have decided to call "Akhetaton", or: "Horizon of the Aton". They chose such name because of their newly founded religion that was based on worshipping the God "Aton". Some people might get confused and think that it was a monotheistic religion based on worshipping God, while in fact it was about worshipping the sun. Akhetaton and Nefertiti had six daughters.

There were royal crowns to be used by the ruling king. Although Nefertiti wasn't a crowned queen, but her husband, the king, was totally in love with her. That's why she started to appear in an equal form wearing royal crowns, including the hprs crown, which was inclusively masculine, and was also used within various military activities.

Another painting depicts Nefertiti wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. Paintings were found depicting her triumph over the enemies, taking into consideration that since the time of king Narmer, only a ruling king would be depicted in such form. She was also painted in a Godly form, and was painted on Akhenaten's Coffin in the form of a protector queen, just like Isis. The coffin proves that Nefertiti might have lived after the death of Akhenaten (maybe for one year). She ruled independently and gained royal titles. She chose the name: Smenkhkare, which is known historically to be Akhenaten's younger brother who has ruled the country after him. A mummy was found in the Valley of the Kings, and some believe it belongs to him.

The latest opinions find that Nefertiti is actually Smenkhkare. She ascended the throne and gave herself the personal name: NeferNeferu Aten, while her royal name was Smenkhkare. She has moved to Thebes, and then transported her husband's body to be buried in tomb no. 55, in the Valley of the Kings. The mummy that is thought to be of

Smenkhkare, is in fact of Akhenaten, according to these opinions. More evidences will appear through time to confirm that Nefertiti has ascended the throne and ruled. Nevertheless, her mummy has never been found.

A radar scan was made last year to know whether Nefertiti was buried in Valley of the Kings or Thebes. The scan process still needs to be completed. A researcher called Nicholas Reeves published his research: "The Burial of Nefertiti". He believed that Tutankhamun's tomb is a part of Nefertiti's complete tomb. When King Tut died suddenly in a young age, they had to take this part off the queen's tomb.

The researcher thought there is a room entrance that is currently hidden beneath the painting of Osiris. He also thought that the mummy belongs to Nefertiti, due the resemblance. He published his research in 2015, but the research was ridiculed. Then he was invited to Egypt, where he had joined a team that we have formed to discuss the research. I personally believe that Nefertiti was buried at Amarna, not in Thebes. I also believe that Smenkhkare and Meritaten were transferred to Thebes. Thus, maybe the tomb belongs to them.

We brought Japanese radar and tested it twice to confirm its accuracy, and we started working with Reeves and his assistant. We examined what's behind the walls that we need to explore, and found a room behind one of these walls. In fact, what we have found isn't necessarily a complete hall. We also used infrared, but unfortunately I had to quit working as a Minister, before finishing our work. Later, I have reviewed the report issued by the committee which continued our work. It confirmed that there are two openings around the tomb. Few days ago I had obtained a new approval enabling us to continue the project, and hopefully we would reach new results.

There have been other women who have played great roles in the history of Egypt, without ascending the throne as ruling queens. For example; Ahhotep, the mother of Ahmose, has encouraged the commanders and soldiers of the Egyptian army to liberate Egypt from the Hyksos.

Generally speaking, Life in Ancient Egypt reflected the values of Maat, the Goddess of truth, justice, order and morals.

At the end of the lecture, Dr. Aliaa Rafea explained that the goals of the Human Foundation comply with Maat: "We believe that through the Human Foundation's activities, we plant the seed for an upcoming renaissance. No matter how modest and little this seed might seem to be; we truly believe that our positive actions would serve the Egyptian renaissance. Thus, we understand and relate to the past, for the sake of future. This is our vision, as human beings are the base of civilization. That's why we take all human capacities into consideration, whether on the scientific, spiritual or moral levels. All our projects are integrated and serve such goal. In fact, I believe in the

Egyptian peoples' capabilities and high morals. They just need to find a suitable environment that would allow their original authentic identity and true potentials to be manifested in their lives”.