

# ANCIENT HISTORY

## Hatshepsut deserves to be known as a Warrior Pharaoh. Discuss.

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In discussing whether or not Hatshepsut deserves to be known as a warrior pharaoh, it is vital to examine the differentiating opinions and views of historians and how historical sources have been interpreted by such historians in order to determine the truth. Evidence highlighting certain military campaigns throughout Hatshepsut's reign, such as raids into Nubia or expeditions into Syria-Palestine, heavily suggest the prominent leader 'deserves' to be known as a Warrior Pharaoh, despite the fact that some Historians continue to dispute this view. This essay will evaluate and discuss such campaigns and determine whether such exercises attribute to her image as a 'Warrior Pharaoh', and whether there is valid evidence to support such a claim.

There has been a vast amount of evidence to suggest that Hatshepsut maintained numerous military campaigns throughout her reign as Pharaoh. Historian DB Redford writes *'the evidence for foreign campaigns is more plentiful than is sometimes thought'*, evidence which, many Historians believe, prove Hatshepsut to be a Warrior Pharaoh. For one, Hatshepsut can be seen depicted in numerous sources as a sphinx, an honour only given to Pharaohs of military expeditions. As well as this, Redford claims that there could have been four or more campaigns waged during Hatshepsut's reign, including a campaign against Nubia and the capture of Gaza. These claims are based on a number of fragmentary inscriptions and are enough for historians, such as Redford, to conclude that Hatshepsut was a powerful military leader and therefore should be known as a Warrior Pharaoh.

On the other hand; Sir Alan Gardiner, British Egyptologist and Historian, firmly believes Hatshepsut maintained little or no military activities during her reign, stating *'the reign of Hatshepsut had been barren of any military enterprise except an unimportant raid into Nubia.'* This idea evolves from the belief that Hatshepsut would have been less aggressive and physically unable of leading an army in comparison to a male pharaoh, and therefore should not be known as a Warrior Pharaoh. Wilson, another historian, agrees with Gardiner and states *'her pride was in the internal development of Egypt and in commercial enterprise'*, in place of imperial expansion like her predecessors. He attributes this idea to the fact that there seems to be scarce or lacking sources depicting Hatshepsut as a military character. Historians such as Gardiner and Wilson represent the changing interpretations of Hatshepsut's reign, both agreeing that Hatshepsut was either incapable or had no interest in military expansion.

However, historian Joyce Tyldesley disagrees with such views, maintaining that there *'is nothing in Hatshepsut's character to suggest that she would be frightened of taking the military initiative as and when is necessary'*. Comparing Hatshepsut to other prominent female leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, Tyldesley rejects Gardiner's belief of Hatshepsut being physically unable and therefore less aggressive than a male Pharaoh and argues *'woman's ability to create life is often seen as incompatible with the wish to order the death of another human being'*. She specifically mentions the fact that old-fashioned Egyptologists, such as Gardiner, too often assume that *'a woman's natural sensitivity, physical frailty and ability to generate life would lead her to naturally shy away from bloodshed.'* Instead, Tyldesley firmly believes that Hatshepsut chose to not only reinvent herself as King, but as a traditional warrior King.

Tyldesley also argues with Wilson's view that little evidence remains to credit Hatshepsut as a Warrior Pharaoh. She claims *'so many of Hatshepsut's texts were defaced, amended or erased after her death, it is entirely possible that her war record is incomplete'*. Besides from this, she also suggests that the Deir el-Bahri mortuary temple provides evidence for defensive military activity during Hatshepsut's reign in the form of reference to battles. This claim is based on the research of historian Naville, who concluded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that inscriptions found in the mortuary temple reference the fact that Hatshepsut embarked on a series of campaigns against her vassals to the south and east. *'The fragments and inscriptions found in the course of the excavations at Deir*

*el-Bahri show that during Hatchepsut's reign wars were raged against the Ethiopians, and also probably against the Asiatics'. This evidence is vital in Tyldesley's argument that Hatshepsut was a Warrior Pharaoh, as it is clear evidence collected from the temple that Hat built herself, providing a basis for claims of other expeditions under Hatshepsut's reign.*

Nevertheless, other historians still seem to disagree with Tyldesley and believe that Hatshepsut was primarily involved in other areas of her power, such as building and architecture. Historian Murray disagrees with Gardiner's view that Hatshepsut's reign had been 'barren' and instead believes she had many triumphs; however he believes that her achievements lay elsewhere. *'Though no wars or conquest are recorded in her reign, her triumphs were as great of those of the warrior kings of Egypt... This was no conqueror, joying in the lusts of battle, but a strong-souled noble-hearted woman, ruling her country wisely and well.'* Murray's view of Hatshepsut is made very clear here – he supports her and believes she had numerous triumphs throughout her reign, however he believes that none of these triumphs lay in the area of Military achievements.

In contrast to Murray's beliefs, historian Jennifer Lawless believes that there is enough evidence to point towards several of Hatshepsut's military campaigns. *'This is not the language of a pacifist Queen who has shown no interest in military procedures...'* says Lawless. Much evidence has prompted Lawless to conclude that Hatshepsut was a warrior Pharaoh, such as a stela by the nobleman Djehuty claims that he saw the queen on the battle field collecting booty. This and other evidence proves that Hatshepsut actually participated on the battlefield, and that she does, in fact, deserve to be referred to as a Warrior Pharaoh. Furthermore, Lawless explains that that in the Speos Artemidos inscription, Hat emphasizes her role by referring to upgrading the army and by portraying herself as the traditional warrior-pharaoh sphinx. The amount of evidence in which lawless has gathered differs largely to the opinion stated by Murray – who strongly believes that Hat had no military achievements.

When weighing the differences, one can see that the evidence supporting Hatshepsut's status as a warrior Pharaoh largely outweighs the numerous views that her reign was 'barren' of any achievements. As well as this, the fact that Hat has been depicted as a sphinx – symbolizing a military leader- clearly indicates her status as a warrior Pharaoh. It is for these reasons that Hatshepsut deserves to be known as a warrior Pharaoh. There is no doubt among many historians that Hat was one of Ancient Egypt's greatest leaders, not just for her femininity, but for her great military campaigns which further progressed new Kingdom Egypt into the affluent society it was.