

Image-Removing Campaign

At some indeterminable time after Hatshepsut's death, a serious attempt was made to obliterate all record of her from history. Many inscribed cartouches of her were erased, while her busts were smashed or shattered, perhaps by gangs of workmen dispatched to various sites throughout Egypt. In some cases, the culprits carefully and completely hacked out the silhouette of her image from carvings, often leaving a distinct, Hatshepsut-shaped lacuna in the middle of a scene, often as a preliminary step to replacing it with a different image or royal cartouche, usually that of Thutmose I or II. At Karnak, her obelisks were walled-up and incorporated into the vestibule in front of Pylon V, while at Djeser-Djeseru her statues and sphinxes were removed, smashed, and cast into trash dumps.

According to most Egyptologists, this massive effort to destroy all record of Hatshepsut's existence was launched by Thutmose III, with a predictable motive: out of sexist pride, he attempted to eliminate every trace of this dreaded female pharaoh's rule, intending to rewrite Egyptian history to portray a smooth succession of male rulers from Thutmose I to himself. However, as Douglas Petrovich has demonstrated in his article entitled, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus Pharaoh," Thutmose III cannot be considered a viable candidate for the human force behind this effort to eliminate every reference to Hatshepsut. Unfortunately, no Egyptologist has answered satisfactorily the nagging question of who was responsible then for the widespread campaign to obliterate Hatshepsut's image from Egypt's annals, or what possible motive there could be for such a severe act of rage.

Since the responsible person carried out the act only after Year 42 of Thutmose III, the desecration occurred no earlier than ca. 1464 BC. It is also difficult to envision that the culprit lived long after both Hatshepsut and her memory disappeared from the earth, since the movement of time and the existence of motive are inversely proportionate. For this and a number of other reasons, which are listed and explained in Petrovich's article, Amenhotep II—the exodus pharaoh—may be the best possible candidate. The photos of her hacked-out images are viewed from left to right and from above to below, with corresponding captions provided underneath. Click on an image to see a larger view of it.

{gallery}HatshepsutHacked{/gallery}

PHOTO #1: This statue of Inebni (51.5 cm in height), from the reign of Hatshepsut, displays a hieroglyphic text below the head. On the top register of the inscription, the cartouche of Hatshepsut's praenomen is seen to have been carved out carefully, so carefully—in fact—that no damage whatsoever was done to any other part of the text or statue.

PHOTO #2: In the second photo, Hatshepsut's praenomen and nomen cartouches were carved out at the top of the relief. Another cartouche of her praenomen was etched out to the right. Red rectangles mark out both of these vandalized depictions. In the red oval, the pharaonic depiction of Hatshepsut was etched out so carefully that the original depiction of her is clearly seen in silhouetted form.

PHOTO #3: This relief features a wholesale hacking-out of Hatshepsut's cartouche, above (outlined by a red rectangle), as well as her image below (outlined by a red square).