

Kara Cooney. *The Woman Who Would Be King: Hatshepsut's Rise to Power in Ancient Egypt*. New York: Broadway Books, 2014. Pp. 289. Paper. \$12.30.

Kara Cooney, Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Language and Cultures at UCLA, examines Hatshepsut's reign as King of Egypt and how she was able to hold the position until her death. Cooney speculates about what Hatshepsut and those around her would have felt about her rule, allowing readers to understand how unusual and revolutionary Hatshepsut's rule was. Hatshepsut had a strong will long before her reign and had learned early on how to rule effectively from her father, Thutmose I. As a religious leader, she was able to understand what was needed to be a strong and competent ruler. Hatshepsut used her status as God's Wife of Amen to solidify her rule early on.

The patriarchal nature of Ancient Egypt made Hatshepsut's rule unprecedented. Hatshepsut was depicted as a woman in monuments during her early years but later she chose to portray herself as a man. This change allowed her to maintain her rule and keep her nephew below her as co-regent as he came of age. He was a threat to her rule as the legitimate heir to her deceased husband.

While some may criticize Cooney for speculation into Hatshepsut's decisions, readers can appreciate her efforts to humanize rulers who lived at a time so different from our own. Hatshepsut was a woman who ruled over a culture that had a long-established patriarchal power structure. Before her, women were restricted to being the regent for their sons, but through her political and religious maneuvering she was able to rule in her own right. This must have been an emotional and anxiety producing experience. Cooney's expertise as an Egyptologist keeps her speculations grounded and she is straightforward with her hypothesis. Without Hatshepsut's leadership the Eighteenth Dynasty might have fallen, which likely would have led to social unrest. As a female ruler she broke the norm of the ancient world. This is a must-read for Ancient Historians.

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