



# Women of Power: Revealed

Volume I

# Women of Power: Revealed

## Volume I

Bringing to light the courageous, influential, bold, innovative women who are rarely included in our history books, and who have been obscured from us for far too long.



I hope this *Women of Power Series* inspires you to start living your deepest heart's desire in a much bigger way than you have ever done before.

Even if no one seems to know about you, even if the attempt seems futile, even if your dream seems ridiculous to the people around you...and even if your dream is forbidden in your culture—please, take a stand for the spirit running through you, take heart and do it anyway! We're with you and we love you and your spirit!

compiled by Angela Treat Lyon

[AngelaTreatLyon.com](http://AngelaTreatLyon.com)

Cover image: Seated Statue of Hatshepsut  
from the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art:  
[metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/544450](http://metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/544450)



**Gudridur Thorbjarnardottir** (ca. 1004)

True Grit in woman form.

(images & information compiled from [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org) & [2.skagafjordur.is/displayer.asp?cat\\_id=1116](https://2.skagafjordur.is/displayer.asp?cat_id=1116))

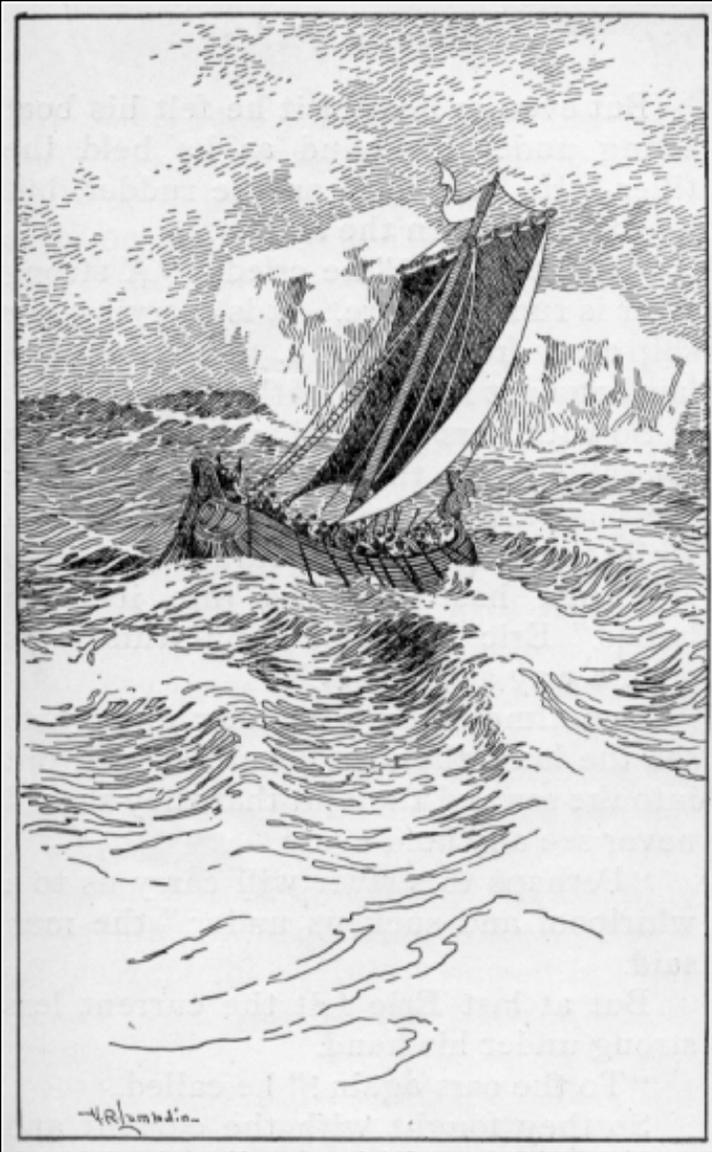


**Gudridur Thorbjarnardottir** is considered today to be one of the most traveled women of her time. Now, that might not seem like a big deal, but consider that she had to travel on foot, by horseback, or on boats like the one above, over treacherous seas through crazy unpredictable weather!

Having crossed the Pacific in a 31' boat, I can tell you first hand how scary it can be once you lose sight of the land—there's not one thing there but you, your crew, the sea and the sky. You get to feeling pretty insignificant pretty fast!

But Gudridur sailed to Greenland, Iceland, Laugarbrekka, the Iceland Glaciers and Fjords in Greenland, and many other places; including making her way through Italy later on to see the pope.

Gudrid Thorbjarnardóttir (Icelandic: Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir) also known as Vidforla or "the Far-Traveler" was a Norse woman born around the year 980 in Laugarbrekka, Iceland. She is best



known for her appearances in "The Saga of Eirik the Red" and "The Saga of the Greenlanders," known collectively as "The Vinland Sagas."

Gudrid was the daughter of chief Thorbjorn of Laugarbrekka, with whom she voyaged to Greenland, accompanying Eirik the Red in his explorations.

She was described (of course!) as stunningly beautiful, gracious in manners, and well liked by everyone.

Their voyage to Greenland ran into poor weather, and illness plagued the group. Half of the company died. Despite these failures, Gudrid and her father landed safely in Greenland in the winter. That winter, Thorir, the man she did marry, died of illness. Gudrid then married Thorstein Eiriksson, Leif Eiriksson's younger brother and Eirik the Red's son.

According to the Saga of the Greenlanders, Gudrid then accompanied her husband on his quest to Vinland, with the hope that he could retrieve the body of his brother Thorvald at L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, Canada. They spent the winter

in Lysufjord with a man by the name of Thorstein the Black and his wife Grimhild, but illness soon struck the group and both Grimhild and Gudrid's husband Thorstein died.

If they were living in houses like the one below, which is a modern replica of the ones they built there, it's no wonder they took sick so much!



According to one account, Thorstein temporarily rises from the dead to tell Gudrid that she will be married to an Icelander, and that they will have a long life together with many descendants. She would leave Greenland to go to Norway and Iceland, and after a pilgrimage south, return to Iceland, where a church would be built near her farm!

After his death, Gudrid moved back to Brattahlíð, married merchant Thorfinn Karlsefni. Together they led an attempt to settle Vínland accompanied by 60 men, 5 women, and a cargo of various livestock.



Imagine making your home in a place like this—cold, smoky, stuffy and dirty! Didn't they believe in tables?

The lines of piled stone indicate some of the ruins, below.





Imagine using tools (albeit beautifully made) like the ones above to hunt game and provide for your family. Maybe you might feel a bit more fortunate in this modern day and age?

In Vínland, they had a son named Snorri Thorfinnsson, who was known as the first European reported to be born in the Western Hemisphere (thus the statue commemorating such).

Shortly after Snorri was born, they traveled back to Greenland, had another son named Thorbjorn. Thorfin died, leaving Gudrid to live as a widow.



Gudrid later converted to Christianity and, when Snorri married, went on a pilgrimage to Rome.

While she was away, Snorri built a church near the estate, which fulfilled

the prediction that Thorstein had made. When she came back from Rome, she became a nun and lived in the church as a hermit (image above: ruins of the church in its beautiful, chilly pristine environment).



Gudrid Thorbjarnardóttir is an Icelandic name. Thorbjarnardóttir is a patronymic, not a family name. She is properly referred to by the given name Gudrid.

The sculpture, by Ásmundur Sveinsson, shows Gudrid and her son.

She's a fierce one!





**Lady Murasaki**, c. 978 - 1031, Japan, the author of *The Tale of Genji*, one of the earliest epic novels in recorded history.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lady\\_Murasaki\\_at\\_her\\_desk.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lady_Murasaki_at_her_desk.png)



## Lady Murasaki, Tale of Genji Author

*The Tale of Genji* is probably the oldest novel that is still, today, recognized today as a masterpiece. Its author was a woman whose work ranks high in Japanese literature and culture as do the Homeric epic series, the work of Shakespeare, and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*..

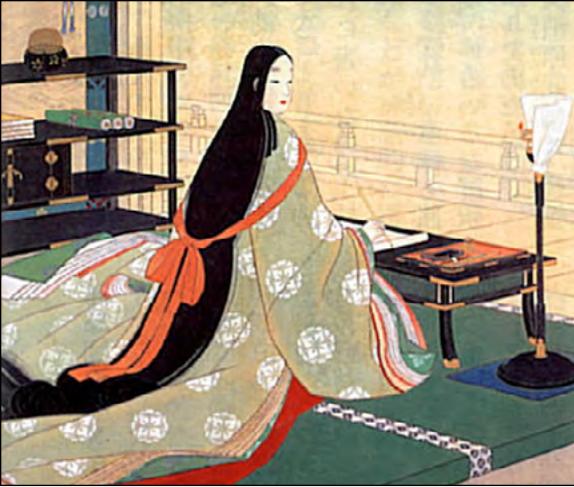
Within a few decades of its completion in the early 11th century, *The Tales of Genji* was deemed a classic, and writings on and about it multiplied over the centuries since.

The great poet Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114-1204) even declared study of it to be indispensable for anyone to compose poetry, and his own works were respected and long remembered. An amazing honor to be so recognized by a great male poet.

*The Tale of Genji's* popularity also invited many motifs from it perennially prominent in Japanese painting.

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Murasaki\\_Shikibu](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Murasaki_Shikibu)

Murasaki Shikibu was not just lady-in-waiting in the imperial



court at the height of the Heian period (795–1185), she was the famed author of the *Genji monogatari*, *The Tale of Genji*, all about the life of the charismatic Prince Genji and his descendants.

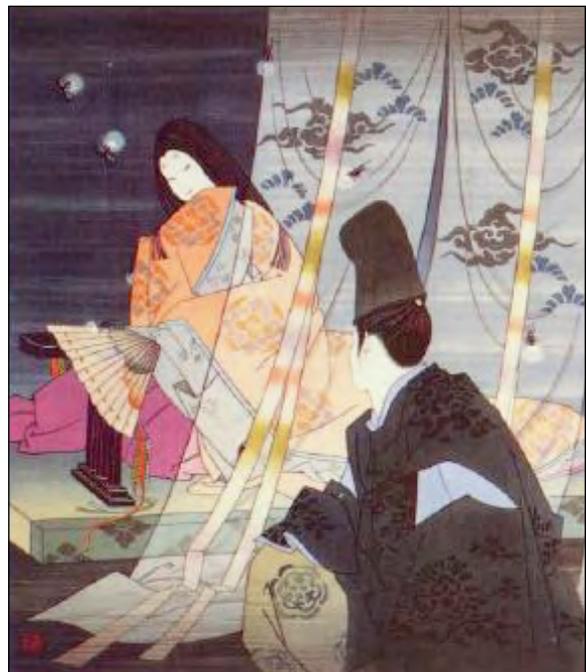
*The Tale of Genji* conveyed the complex society of the time in a subtle and thorough manner. It comprises 54 chapters with over 400 characters, is twice the length of *War and Peace*, and was originally intended to be read aloud.

(more in-depth stories about her Murasaki Shikibu here: [sites.google.com/site/onthetaleofgenji/home/murasaki-shikibu-the-tale-of-genji-translated-by-royall-tyler-2003](https://sites.google.com/site/onthetaleofgenji/home/murasaki-shikibu-the-tale-of-genji-translated-by-royall-tyler-2003))

Despite its length, the various and several story lines in the novel are remarkably consistent, following the many amorous involvements and the court intrigues surrounding Prince Genji, and ending with a very gloomy (and astute) psychological analysis of the horrors of unrequited love.

Murasaki is thought to have started writing the novel around 1003, and it may have been incomplete at her death.

The name “Lady Murasaki” is a bit of a clever twist,



The name “Lady Murasaki” is a bit of a clever twist, referring both to the heroine of the *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*), and the author herself, Murasaki Shikibu. In both cases the name is a pseudonym—the real names are unknown!

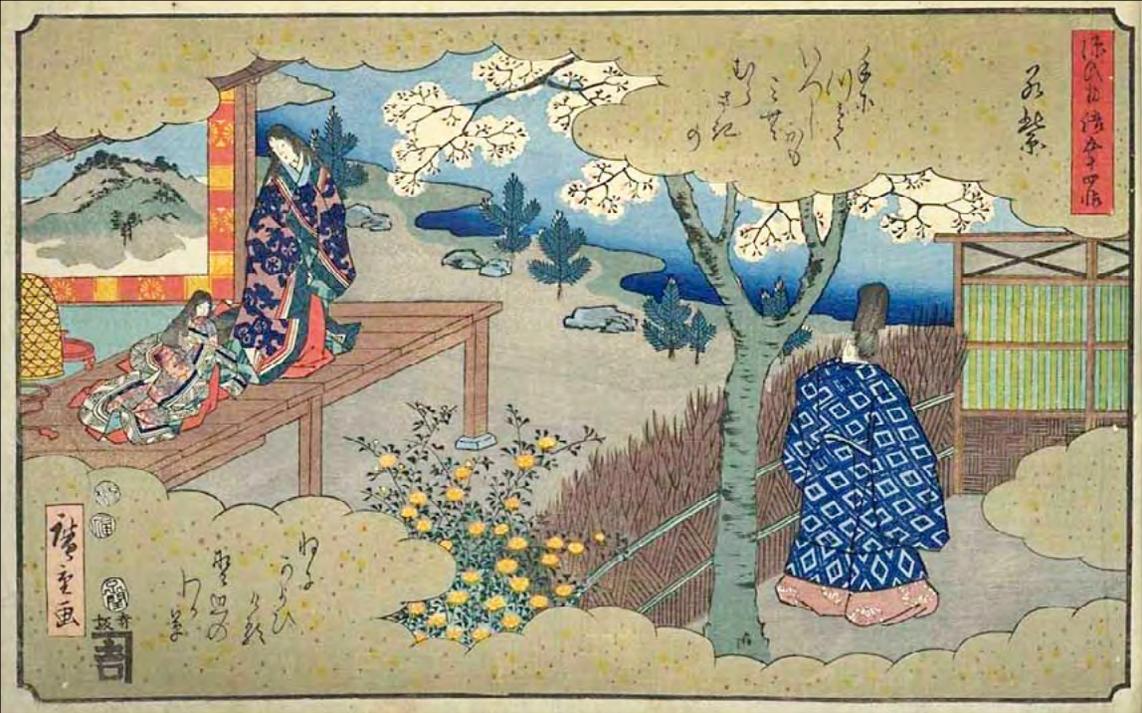


You see, in court manners of the Heian Period, it was considered disrespectful and unacceptably familiar to address people by their personal names. Throughout the *Tale of Genji*, characters are often designated by the color of the robes they wear, rather than by their personal names.

The real name of the author of *The Tale of Genji* is unknown, so she is referred to by the nickname which she gave to the heroine she invented. The fictional character of Murasaki was the daughter of Prince Hyobu, and was taken at a young age from relative obscurity in the countryside to live with Hikaru Genji, the main character of the novel.

This is cool: the name Murasaki was inspired by a poem the character himself, Genji, composed when contemplating his first meeting with her. Later in life Murasaki was tormented by the malevolent and jealous spirit of Genji’s former lover, Lady Rokujo. In the novel, Murasaki raised the Empress Akashi. During the later part of her life, Murasaki decided to become a nun, but Genji never allowed this wish to be fulfilled.

Murasaki is the Japanese word for the color purple. Other translations include Lavender, as used by E. Seidensticker in his



English version of the Genji Monogatari; Violet; and Violet Root, which in Japanese poetry denotes constancy. In his poem, Genji names the murasaki or violet flower, because its color resembles that of wisteria, or Japanese fuji, a reference to Fujitsubo, “the Lady of the Wisteria Court,” a woman with whom he is passionately in love for the first part of the novel. Fujitsubo is Murasaki’s aunt. In a play on words characteristic of Japanese poetry, the similarity between the two colors leads to the name Murasaki.

Illustrations: Ando Hiroshige, Tales of Genji in 54 Chapters

[hiroshige.org.uk/hiroshige/historical\\_subjects/tales\\_genji/tales\\_genji.htm](http://hiroshige.org.uk/hiroshige/historical_subjects/tales_genji/tales_genji.htm)



古今姫鑿

紫式部々越前守藤原の爲時侍  
 女々々幼より頼敏子とて才智シク  
 兄惟親を父とて請はば侍奉し  
 諸論一文字と違ふ其教才敏く  
 成長て藤原の宣孝と嫁さ不幸にして  
 厚く宣孝も後多事なる所成りて  
 再嫁さむ侍堂の關白式部と俊成と  
 嫁奉りて其む堅く其持  
 依りて有りて其自分の口元は元なり當時  
 道長の位關白なり在延治知ら勝以其  
 門に成む式部宣孝婦とて權知は侍  
 富貴と入りて其む其其其其其其其其  
 安藤式部女七人あり侍奉する其文字好  
 知教と欲りて其其其其其其其其其其  
 書讀まじりて上東門院侍合公奉りて  
 源氏物語五十余巻と著る其其其其其其  
 古人也其其其其其其其其其其其其其  
 云々一被衣の作者大貳三位式部女あり  
 其其其其其其其其其其其其其其其其  
 有實無備一方に其其其其其其其其其

後白河院 月岡米次郎画作  
 日本書紀 大倉孫兵衛出版



萬葉集  
 日本書紀  
 大倉孫兵衛

In a time when women were considered 'less-than,' Murasaki was able to not only produce a huge, highly significant opus, but remain safe, secret and mysterious, her power safe and intact!



**Agnodice**, Athenian physician, midwife, and gynecologist, ca. 330 B.C., practiced medicine illegally in ancient Greece. (After you read the article, you'll understand why she doesn't have the conventional long hair of her time, and the reason she is making a purposeful display of her breasts!)

**Agnodice** wanted to be a doctor.

But women's rights to participate in the workplace were cut off in Greece around 650 BCE, when the Senate of Athens passed laws forbidding women to attend medical school or to practice any medicine.



Highly respected Plato and Aristotle bolstered the idea of rejecting all 'rational faculties in female nature,' thus making it next to impossible for women to be able to help anyone medically.

Aristotle had even gone so far as saying that women were nothing but "mutilated males." Since men had such an intensely hostile attitude about women and the female body, many women simply refused to allow male physicians to examine or treat them, even if their lives were at stake.

"Women of the day were extremely uncomfortable with even the most basic physical examinations performed by the male doctors, let alone having men assist with labour and delivery. When male doctors tried to co-opt the midwife's role, women patients shunned them completely. As a result, since women were not being taken care of, the death rate of both mothers and children during childbirth began to rise.

"So when young Agnodice decided she wanted to help women through the painful yet miraculous process of childbirth, she found her efforts thwarted.

“Not long before Agnodice’s time, women were permitted to study and practise medicine. Socrates’ most famous contemporary, Hippocrates (460-380 BC), the father of modern medicine and the first to practise the science as separate from religious superstition, was of course quite forward thinking.

“Though he wouldn’t admit women to his primary medical school on his home island of Cos, he did allow them to study obstetrical and gynecological topics in his other teaching facility.



Upon Hippocrates’ death, Athenian authorities revoked this right after they discovered that some women performed abortions and were teaching contraceptive techniques. The men feared informed women would be able to use their knowledge about sex, reproduction, and, supposedly, gender determination, to sabotage the production of heirs.

“Thereafter, any woman found practising either medicine or midwifery was subject to the death penalty.”

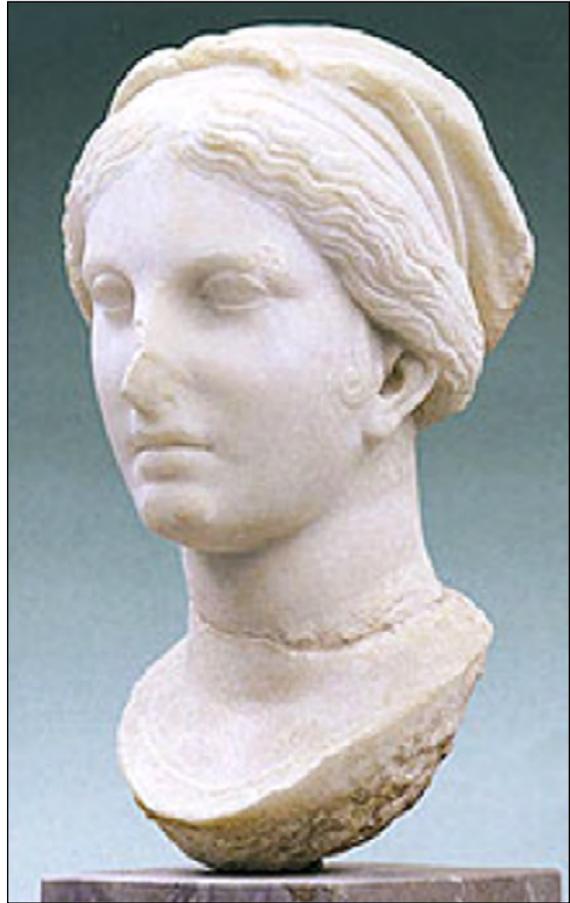
[doctorsreview.com/history/apr05\\_history/](http://doctorsreview.com/history/apr05_history/)

Agnodice decided to cut her hair and started dressing “like a man.” She became a pupil of Herophilus (335-280 BCE) [the first to use the pulse for diagnostic purposes], and was later praised as “a scholar of...the most learned physician of the time.”

Agnodice developed a large clientele among the women of Athens. Even though she was disguised as a man, she would secretly show these pregnant ladies her breasts, showing that she too was a woman, thus allowing them to make up their own minds about who would treat them.

Male doctors couldn't figure out why women kept choosing her, and started accusing her of false charges like rape and seduction, trying to bring her down. Some of her patients were even accused of faking illness in order to be “treated” by the rogue doctor. Why else would all these formerly unwilling women be eager to let a male doctor treat them?

“Left with no choice but to defend her honour and prove the alleged indiscretions impossible, Agnodice pulled her skirt over





her head and revealed her big secret." The crime of rape was nothing in comparison to that of being a woman doctor, so she was arrested, charged and a date was set for her execution.

"Once her grateful patients learned of Agnodice's imprisonment and the plans to kill her, they were outraged. An angry mob of wealthy Athenian women whom Agnodice had helped — even some wives of the doctors and politicians originally determined to bring her down — stormed the legislature and demanded her release. Without her, they claimed, many of them would be dead or would surely die in the future.

"According to Roman author Hyginus (64 BC-17 AD), the mob



of Agnodice' supporters shouted: "You men are not spouses but enemies, since you are condemning her who discovered health for us."

"If Agnodice were executed, they argued, "Then we shall all die with her." The enlightened Greek men heard the women's pleas—or feared their wives would divorce them—and freed Agnodice.

"Not only that, but they rescinded the law that banned women

from practising medicine, as long as they only treated female patients. Instead of executing Agnodice...her medical and legal contemporaries agreed that she was, indeed, worthy of practising medicine. It was a right guaranteed to women until the fall of the Roman Empire.

"Other women followed in Agnodice's gender-bending footsteps, like Dr. James Barry (1795-1865), the renowned Scottish army surgeon who spent 45 years practising medicine in the Queen's army."

Quoted sections from article: *The Art and Artifice of Agnodice* by Jackie Rosenhek, [doctorsreview.com/history/apr05\\_history/](https://doctorsreview.com/history/apr05_history/)

Think women have it bad now? Go here to read this interesting article by Gleigh: [the8words.com/?p=307](https://the8words.com/?p=307)



## **Queen Hatshepsut of Ancient Egypt**

Reign: 1479-1458 BC

**Hatshepsut** was a very cool dudette. She was the 5th pharaoh of the 18th dynasty of Egypt for 20+ years, purportedly one of the most peaceful reigns. At the time, women could own property, seek employment outside the home, and even adopt children.

Women rulers ruled Egypt on and off for centuries. But when Hatshepsut ascended to the throne, she didn't settle for just being a queen—she declared herself pharaoh, the king of Egypt and a divine being.

Because she took the title “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” there has been confusion as to whether she was male or female—was she a king or a queen? In ‘official’ art, she had herself portrayed in all the trappings of the kings, including a false beard. The artisans doing inscriptions didn't know how to depict her using their convention of symbols. Within the same inscription she is often referred to as king and later as queen.



Hatshepsut was business savvy enough to increase trade with countries along her borders, increasing Egypt's prosperity. For 20 years she ruled one of the most advanced and powerful empires in history.

Hatshepsut left behind more monuments and works of art than any Egyptian queen to come. (yeah! you know I love that part! click on the link and read <http://hatshepsut.bediz.com/story.html> it's really good reading.)

Hatshepsut is thought of as one of the most successful pharaohs, reigning longer than any other woman of an Egyptian dynasty.



Wall relief of Queen Hatshepsut from Deir el-Bahri, Egypt

According to Egyptologist James Henry Breasted, she is also known as “the first great woman in history of whom we are informed.” [note the ‘of whom....’ Isn’t it amazing how we just don’t know much—or anything at all—about influential women?!?]

Now, here comes the royal incest. Hatshepsut was the daughter of King Tutmosis I and his primary wife Queen Ahmose.

Hatshepsut’s husband, Thutmose II, was the son of Thutmose I (her father) and a secondary wife named Mutneferet, who carried the title King’s Daughter and was likely a child of Ahmose I. So Hatshepsut married her half-brother.

Hatshepsut and Thutmose II had a daughter named Neferure.

Thutmose II fathered Thutmose III with Iset, a secondary wife.

So Thutmose III was actually Hatshepsut’s step-son.

(<http://wysinger.homestead.com/hatshepsut.html>)



Wall relief of Queen Hatshepsut from Deir el-Bahri, Egypt



Before he died in his early 30s, Thutmose II declared this son (Thutmose III) his successor. When Thutmose III inherited the throne he was still a child so his step-mother/aunt acted as his regent.

About 20 years after Hatshepsut's death, her stepson Tuthmosis III undertook to eliminate all trace of her, smashing statues and effacing inscriptions, presumably in order to assure his own rise to pharaoh, and then, to claim many of her accomplishments as his own. Nice guy.



above

Hatshepsut: Indurated limestone  
© Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC  
[arttattler.com/archivehatshepsut.html](http://arttattler.com/archivehatshepsut.html)

right:

Hatshepsut Sphinx  
© Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC  
[upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Sphinx\\_of\\_Hatshepsut\\_c.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Sphinx_of_Hatshepsut_c.jpg)



Hatshepsut, an Egyptian sculpture at the Technical University of Berlin - some think it is a fake since it's made from stone not usually carved in Egypt at the time.  
[topnews.in/university-denies-test-egyptian-bust-berlin-2191220](http://topnews.in/university-denies-test-egyptian-bust-berlin-2191220)



**Hatshepsut** was an example of our ability as women to come into great power and create immense peace, prosperity and beauty in the realm.

Thank you for being my wonderful reader!

I hope you have enjoyed this first edition  
of the Women of Power Series.

Pass it on!