Imperialism in Early New Kingdom Egypt

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The mechanics of imperialism passed through three distinct phases during the 120 years from 1570 BC when Ahmose became pharaoh, until 1450 BC, when Tuthmos III died. Over this 120 year span, six different pharaohs reigned and each reign was marked by great achievements, whether militaristic, architectural or social. In 1570 BC Ahmose was primarily concerned with expelling the hekaw hasut (lit: ‘rulers of foreign lands’) or Hyksos invaders from Egypt and regaining control of the areas of Nubia that were once under Egyptian control, namely the region of Kush. He was also concerned with destroying Egyptian rebels. By 1450 BC, though, Tuthmos III was concentrating on quieting any rebellions from Retjenu (Syria-Palestine), administering the vast regions of the Middle East that were under Egypt’s rule and securing the gold mines of Nubia from desert raiders. In between these two ‘extremes’ of imperialism was an aggressive, pro-active, expansionist period encompassed mostly within the reign of Tuthmos I, where the pharaoh was intent upon expanding the borders of Egypt far beyond what they had ever been. So the mechanics of imperialism changed from securing Egypt in her entirety, to expanding Egypt and then finally to securing the new land empire Egypt had won for herself.

The pharaoh that had started Egypt on her road to imperialism was Ahmose, the first pharaoh of New Kingdom Egypt. He was the founder of the 18th Dynasty, the first of the New Kingdom. His father Seqenenre Tao II and brother Kamose had actively campaigned against the Hyksos, but it was Ahmose who finally expelled them from Egypt. Ahmose came to the throne as a boy after his older brother and father had been killed in battles with the Hyksos and, because of this, his mother Ahhotep probably co-ruled with him as regent. Ahmose even suggests that the liberation of Egypt was a mother and son effort: “[Ahhotep] is … one who cares for Egypt, she has looked after her soldiers, she has guarded … [Egypt], she has brought back her fugitives and collected her deserters. She has pacified Upper and Lower Egypt and expelled her rebels”.¹

The actions of Ahmose are detailed in the account of a soldier in his army, Ahmose son of Ebana. Although the account of the son of Ebana is one-sided and biased, there is little other written evidence of the campaigns of the pharaohs of the early New Kingdom. The first city that Ahmose attacked was the Hyksos capital, Avaris. The son of Ebana described the siege of Avaris: “When the town of Avaris was besieged … I was appointed to the ship ‘Khaemmennefer’ … there was fighting on the water in ‘P’a-djedku’ of Avaris … there was fighting in Egypt to the south of this town … Then Avaris was despoiled”.² After Avaris fell, the Hyksos presumably fled to their capital in Negeb, Sharuhen. In the first example of the New Kingdom’s outward-looking militaristic view of the world, Ahmose decided to follow the Hyksos out of Egypt and into Asia, and besieged them at Sharuhen. The son of Ebana

¹ From the Stela of Ahmose, Temple of Karnak; translated by J. H. Breasted.
² From the Autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ebana; translated by J. H. Breasted, hereafter cited as AAE.
witnessed the siege of Sharuhen, as well as its ultimate downfall: “Sharuhen was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it”. This attack on Sharuhen, though, was not an imperialistic action. Rather it was one of necessity – Ahmose must have realised that if he did not take the centre of Hyksos power in Retjenu, the Hyksos could possibly rise up again. He obviously did not wish to see his life’s work and the death of his brother and father in vain, so had little choice but to destroy Sharuhen, if Egypt was to retain its present integrity for the future.

During the Second Intermediate Period, there were two major threats to the ascendancy of Egypt. The first was the Hyksos, who occupied Lower Egypt and the Delta areas, as well as parts of Negeb. The second threat was the Nubians, who were to the south of Egypt, but during the Second Intermediate Period, had moved north, and encroached upon lands that were previously Egyptian, like Kush and Wawat, as far as the First Cataract. This left the pharaohs of the 17th Dynasty with only the parts of Egypt between Abydos and Elephantine. During the reign of Seqenenre Tao II, the Hyksos and Nubians allegedly formed an alliance designed to crush Egypt from the north and the south simultaneously and divide the spoils between themselves. This precipitated the actions of Seqenenre Tao II against the Hyksos. After Ahmose had driven the Hyksos out of Egypt, and had even destroyed their capital in Negeb, Sharuhen, he turned to the Nubians in the south of Egypt.

Nubia had always been vitally important to Egypt because of the rich gold mines there. Nubian gold could be easily and cheaply mined by slaves and forced labourers, and was of vital importance in paying the army and funding expeditions and campaigns. In later times Nubian gold was useful in ensuring loyalty from other Near Eastern ‘superpowers’. It was this need for gold that caused Ahmose to turn back from Retjenu and proceed to the south of Egypt, to recapture Nubia. Again, the son of Ebana was present: “… when his majesty had slain the nomads of Asia, he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer, to destroy the Nubian Bowmen. His majesty made a great slaughter among them …”. After securing Nubia, Ahmose returned to Egypt: “His majesty journeyed north, his heart rejoicing in valour and victory. He had

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3 AAE

4 *The Kamose Stela mentions a letter captured by Kamose from Apepi II, the Hyksos ruler at that time, to the Nubian king of Kush. In it, Apepi II suggests joint action against Egypt. The fact that Apepi II calls the Nubian king “son”, coupled with the presence of Hyksos scarabs in Kushite tombs, has lead T. G. H. James (‘Egypt: From the Expulsion of the Hyksos to the Death of Amenophis I’, Cambridge Ancient History, Volume II, Part 1; p 297) to conclude that there was an element of vassalage involved between Kush and the Hyksos.

5 This is the most traditional motive for Ahmose’s conquest of Nubia, and is held by W. C. Hayes (‘Egypt: Internal Affairs from Tutmosis I to the Death of Amenophis I’, Cambridge Ancient History, Volume II, Part 2; p 346.). This view, though is disputed by W. Eddleston (‘The Strategic Aims of the Egyptian Eighteenth Dynasty and Factors Promoting Empire Building’, Edubba, Volume XVII; p 13.). He claims that “If pure exploitation were the prime motive, then the country of Nubia would simply have been administered by soldiers … Instead, Egypt established an administrative structure … similar in all respects to the nomes of Egypt”. This is the view, also of both B. J. Kemp (‘Imperialism and Empire in New Kingdom Egypt’, Imperialism in the Ancient World; p 26-37.) and P. J. Fransden (‘Egyptian Imperialism’, Power and Propaganda; p 171.), whom Eddleston cites.

6 AAE
conquered southerners, northerners”. Now that Egypt had been liberated, and its borders extended, Ahmose swiftly moved to establish a strong centralised government based in Thebes. Any rebels within Egypt had to be silenced, and the son of Ebana witnessed the fate of two such rebels, Aata, the Nubian, and Tetian, the Egyptian: “Then Aata came to the south. His fate brought on his doom. The gods of Upper Egypt grasped him. He was found by his majesty at Tent-taa. His majesty carried him off as a living captive, and all his people as booty … Then came that foe named Tetian. He had gathered the malcontents to himself. His majesty slew him; his troop was wiped out”.8

The Autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ebana suggests the beginnings of a professional army and navy, which worked in concert for their mutual benefit. This had begun with Ahmose’s brother Kamose, who utilised both ships and land troops to capture Nefrusi, an important Hyksos city. As most major cities in Egypt were on or near the Nile, an army could be quickly transported by ship to any city, while more ships could carry supplies and goods directly to the army. Ships on the Nile could travel south using sails and the prevailing winds, and north using the natural downstream flow of the river, negating the need for bulky ships with rows of oars. The army of the New Kingdom had also changed dramatically since the Second Intermediate Period, now using chariots, and other advanced tools of war, such as javelins, the composite bow, sickle swords (khepesh), and shields, most of which were borrowed from the Hyksos. This advanced weaponry allowed Ahmose, by Year 22 of his reign, to have recaptured Nubia as far south as the 2nd Cataract, and to have advanced into the Negeb region of Retjenu. Arguably, it was this new weaponry that allowed the imperialism of Egypt to occur. Finally the Egyptian army was on an equal or greater level to other Near Eastern powers with its bronze (rather than copper) weapons, light chariots and advanced weapons. While Ahmose utilised these new technologies, it was his son who was the first to see their potential in extending Egypt’s borders.

Ahmose, like his brother before him, attributed his victories to the power of Amun9, the creator god of Thebes: “I went north because I was strong [enough] to attack the Asiatics through the command of Amun …”.10 Because of this importance placed on Amun, his temple at Karnak in Thebes would become the centre of the Egyptian state religion, with pharaoh acting as priest, warrior, builder and ruler. Amun was combined with the sun-god Re to form Amun-Re. The cult of Amun-Re is an important factor in the course and mechanics of imperialism. The priests obviously had much to gain from the imperial policy of Egypt; large amounts of plunder and booty were dedicated to their temples. For the priests, “it was important that the domination of the foreigners of Egypt be pushed at all times”.11 It was this constant state of warfare that the priests thrived on, and any pacific pharaohs were seen as an abnormality. Hatshepsut had to justify her reign with an expedition to Punt simply to keep Amun-Re on side, as she engaged in no major campaigns that we know of.

7 AAE
8 AAE
9 Amun was previously just an agricultural god, known as ‘The Hidden One’.
10 From the Kamose Inscription; translated by J. H. Breasted. My italics.
11 J. A. Wilson. The Culture of Ancient Egypt; p 186.
It was expected that every pharaoh would seek to actively better his ancestors’ military prowess with further military campaigns in Retjenu or Nubia. As time progressed from 1570 BC to 1450 BC, the priests of Amun-Re had more and more power to influence the pharaoh with. The pharaoh would always consult with Amun-Re before embarking upon any military campaigns. The control that the priests of Amun-Re had over the god’s oracles could be regarded as the priesthood manipulating the pharaohs for their own personal interests through religion. It was considered the norm for every pharaoh to add to the temple of Karnak, and every one did, from Ahmose to Tuthmose III. This is another major change in the mechanics of imperialism from 1570 B.C. to 1450 B.C.

The first phase of imperialism was over. The Hyksos had been expelled from Egypt, Nubia was again firmly under Egyptian control, and two separate internal rebellions, lead by Aata and Tetian, had both been crushed. The mechanics of imperialism had not yet become the aggressive, militaristic imperialism of expansion, it was still the xenophobic aggression against foreigners in Egypt. Ahmose had concentrated on setting up a strong central government in Egypt, eliminating any dissenters within Egypt and securing the Nubian gold mines which allowed later pharaohs to pursue their policy of expansion. The first phase of Egyptian imperialism had ended, while the second was about to begin. The first pharaoh to embark on the imperialistic policy of expansion was Amenhotep I, son of Ahmose.

Amenhotep I, like his father, reached the throne as a boy king, so his mother, Ahmose-Nefertari, probably co-ruled with him. Amenhotep I was the founder of the village Deir el-Medina, and was subsequently worshipped there as a god for many centuries. This suggests firstly a strong central government and also internal peace and prosperity. Rather than previous pharaohs who had their tombs constructed hastily after death, Amenhotep I could campaign in Retjenu safe in the belief that, in Egypt, his tomb was being built. This gave the people of Egypt more security because it was not good if the pharaoh died without a tomb. Amenhotep I was the first pharaoh to actively expand the borders of Egypt, as his Horus name suggests: ‘The Bull Who Conquers The Lands’.

Amenhotep began his reign by recapturing oases to the north and north-west of Egypt, converting them into defensive outposts against nomads from Libya or Tjehenu, and to protect Egyptian turquoise and copper mining in the Sinai Peninsular from Bedouins or Shasu. There is little evidence for these campaigns in the north, except for a fragmentary comment by an Egyptian soldier, Ahmose Pen Nekhbet: “I captured for him on the north … 3 hands” He conducted further campaigns in Nubia: “… [Amenhotep I] … sailed south to Kush, to enlarge the borders of Egypt”. This is the first evidence we have of a New Kingdom pharaoh actively campaigning to make Egypt bigger, to extend her borders beyond what they had

12 Technically, the pharaoh owned all of Egypt, though soon after the empire of Egypt was established, the priesthood of Amun-Re was given sizeable portions of the best agricultural lands through land grants. By the 11th Century B.C., the priesthood of Amun-Re owned virtually one-third of Egypt, and after the collapse of the Ramesside Dynasty, the high-priest of Amun-Re became pharaoh of Upper Egypt. As the priesthood was hereditary, it was largely out of the pharaoh’s power to control.
14 AAE. My italics.
been in the past and to subjugate foreign people for economic gain. Amenhotep I was successful: “His majesty smote the Nubian Bowman in the midst of his army. They were carried off in fetters, none missing, the fleeing destroyed as if they had never been”.15

Amenhotep I had no son16 so when he died, the reigns of power were passed to his general, Tuthmose I, who had married Ahmose, the daughter of Ahmose and Ahmose-Nefertari, and the sister of Amenhotep I. In his short six year reign, Tuthmose I expanded Egypt’s borders to their furthest extent: “I made the boundaries of Egypt as far as that which the sun encircles … I repelled evil from them. I made Egypt the superior of every land”.17 Tuthmose I fought in both Nubia and Retjenu. There is still some debate as to where Tuthmose I campaigned first.18 In Year 2 of his reign, Tuthmose I crushed a renewed rebellion in Nubia, and extended Egyptian control further south. As he advanced south he erected three important stelae at Sehel, Aswan and at Tombos, which marked the southern most border of Egypt and gives a catalogue of all of his military campaigns, including the Nubian one: “… [Tuthmose I] has overthrown the chief of the Nubians, the negro is [helpless] in his grasp … among the curly-haired who have come to attack [the king] there is not a single survivor among them”.19 Tuthmose I founded colonies and built forts for Egyptian soldiers as he travelled south, to discourage any future rebellions: “… The lords of the palace have built a fortress for his army called ‘None-Faces-Him-Among-The-Nine-Bows-Together’.20 As Nubia was becoming more and more vital to Egypt’s prosperity, a new governmental position was created, called ‘The Governor of the South Lands, King’s son of Kush’ and was traditionally filled by the heir-apparent. This position was first documented on Tuthmose I’s Coronation Stela.

The son of Ebana was also present for the pharaoh’s campaign in Nubia: “Then I conveyed [Tuthmose I], the justified, when he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer, to crush rebellion throughout the lands, to repel the intruders from the desert region”.21 The Egyptian army had to proceed through the numerous Cataracts of the Nile, which were impassable to ships. The son of Ebana was promoted for his skill in navigating his ship, and for his bravery: “I was brave in the presence of bad water, in the towing of my ship over the cataract. Thereupon I was made crew commander. Then his majesty [was informed that the Nubian] … At this his majesty became enraged like a leopard. His majesty shot, and his first arrow pierced the chest of that

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15 AAE
16 His only legitimate son, Amenemhet, had died while still a child.
17 From the Great Abydos Stela of Tuthmose I; translated by J. H. Breasted.
18 According to AAE, Tuthmose I fought in Nubia, then Retjenu, but the Tombos Stela depicts Tuthmose I campaigning in Retjenu then Nubia. The Tombos Stela is also perceived by some as inaccurate, as it intimates that Tuthmose I reached both the Euphrates River and Tombos (800 km south of Thebes) in little over a year. This has lead to the conclusion that some of this expansion occurred under the reign of Amenhotep I; his “enlarging of the borders of Kush” may perhaps be more than we realise.
19 From the Tombos Stela; translated by J. H. Breasted, hereafter cited as TS.
20 TS
21 These “intruders from the desert region” might have been more Libyan nomads from Tjehenu; the “Sand-Dwellers” mentioned in TS would concur with this conclusion: “… [Tuthmose I] who lives forever, the mighty one … The Sand-Dwellers, chiefs of their tribes … to him bowing down; the inferior peoples send to his majesty, doing obeisance to that which is on his crown”.

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foe. Then those [enemies turned to flee], helpless before his Uraeus. A slaughter was made among them; their dependents were carried off as living captives. His majesty journeyed north, all foreign lands in his grasp, and that wretched Nubian Bowman head downward at the bow of his majesty’s ship ‘Falcon’. They landed at Ipet-sut’.22

After subjugating Nubia, Tuthmose I felt that it was necessary to re-establish Egyptian control of Retjenu. He used the navy to transport him to Byblos, on the coast of Retjenu, and marched with the army north to the Euphrates River, and the neighbouring kingdom of Naharin, whom he defeated. This expedition north is also detailed by the son of Ebana: “… [His majesty] proceeded to Retjenu, to vent his wrath throughout the lands. When his majesty reached Naharin, his majesty found that foe marshalling troops. Then his majesty made a great slaughter of them. Countless were the living captives which his majesty brought back from his victories”.23

The borders of Egypt had been extended so far, so quickly24, and to places that no Egyptian had ever seen before, in fact from Tombos to the Euphrates River: “[Tuthmose I] brought the ends of the Earth into his domain; he trod its two extremities with his mighty sword, seeking battle; but he found no one who faced him. He penetrated valleys which the royal ancestors knew not, which the wearers of the double crown had not seen. His Southern boundary is as far as the frontier of this land [Nubia; i.e. Tombos], his Northern, as far as that inverted river that goes down stream ingoing up stream [the Euphrates River].25 The like has not happened to other kings; his name has reached as far as the circuit of heaven, it has penetrated the Two Lands as far as the nether world; the oath is taken by [his name] in all lands, because of the greatness of the fame of his majesty”.26 This was the zenith of the 18th Dynasty, where Egyptian power was extended far beyond where it had ever been before. This also proved to be the end of the second phase of Egyptian imperialism – the imperialism characterised by rapid growth and expansion, military aggression. The sole raison d’être of imperialism during this time (the reigns of Amenhotep I and Tuthmose I) was to expand Egypt’s borders. The second phase of imperialism had ended, and the third was about to begin. After this period of intense, rapid growth in her empire, the imperialism of Egypt became concerned more with administering the vast empire it had acquired, rather than expanding it further.

The son of Tuthmose I and Mutnofret (a lesser wife or concubine) was Tuthmose II. His reign was a very short one, and is often ignored because of Hatshepsut’s vigorous campaign to erase him from memory. Tuthmose II, though performed his function as a warrior pharaoh no less than other pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty. He had three major campaigns, of which we have only fragmentary evi-

22 AAE. “Ipet-sut” is at Karnak.
23 AAE
24 Within the lifetime of a single person (e.g. Ahmose, son of Ebana) Egypt had gone from being a petty fiefdom on the edge of destruction between two great kingdoms, to being the sole ‘superpower’ of the Near East, eclipsing the Hyksos, the Nubians, the Mitanni, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Hatti in size and power.
25 The Euphrates River flowed south to the Persian Gulf. To an Egyptian, a river that flowed south was ‘wrong’, as the Nile flows north, as does the Orontes River in Retjenu.
26 TS
The first was in Retjenu: “Gifts were brought to the fame of the king … from his victories [in the land] of Niy [in Retjenu]”.27 The second campaign was in Nubia: “Year 1 coronation day … One came to inform his majesty [that] the wretched Kush has begun to rebel … His majesty was furious like a panther when he heard it … His majesty dispatched a numerous army into Nubia … They did not leave anyone alive among their males … except one of those children of the chief of the wretched Kush who was taken away as a living prisoner … to his majesty. This land was made subject to his majesty as formerly”.28 This rebellion was especially serious because it was lead by a coalition of five tribes and threatened Egyptian property, forts, colonists and cattle in Kush. The last campaign by Tuthmose II was against the Bedouin of Arabia and the Sinai Peninsular: “I followed [Tuthmose II]; there were bought off for me in Shasu very many living prisoners”.29

The reign and campaigns of Tuthmose II alone show that no military conquest or empire building of the Egyptians would last forever; always there would be new enemies and new rebellions. This more defensive attitude of the Egyptians, as opposed to their earlier more aggressive one, typified the third and final phase of imperialism, in which the army and the pharaoh concentrated on merely keeping hold of their newly won empire, rather than actively seeking to expand it. This attitude was prevalent throughout the reigns of both Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III.

When Tuthmose II died, he had no sons by his official wife, Hatshepsut, his half-sister and the daughter of Tuthmose I and Ahmose. His only son, Tuthmose III was by the concubine Isis, and still a child. Hatshepsut viewed Tuthmose II to be illegitimate, because he was the son of Tuthmose I’s concubine, while Hatshepsut was the daughter of Tuthmose I’s legitimate wife. She also saw Tuthmose III as illegitimate, as he was the son of Tuthmose II’s concubine. The throne passed to the young Tuthmose III, and Hatshepsut became regent and probably co-ruled with him for a couple of years. The nobleman Ineni explained the situation in his tomb: “… [Tuthmose III] stood … as king … His sister, the divine consort Hatshepsut, settled the affairs of the Two Lands … Egypt was made to labour with bowed head for her …”.30 This was a normal arrangement for a pharaoh too young to rule. Yet in the next few years, Hatshepsut had become the sole ruler of Egypt.

Hatshepsut not only viewed Tuthmose II and III as illegitimate, she also saw herself as the true heir to the throne. While women in Egypt were regarded highly,31 it was unthinkable that a woman would ever become pharaoh. Within two years of Tuthmose III’s rule, though, Hatshepsut had gone from being the queen regnant, to the pharaoh. To legitimise her reign, Hatshepsut introduced a policy of propaganda. Most of the surviving images of Hatshepsut’s reign and the story of her life is found in the Mortuary Temple of Deir el-Bahri. The propaganda was widely used to stress the relationship between her and her father, Tuthmose I, and illustrate that she was ‘more royal’ than Tuthmose II and Tuthmose III. To do this she used the cult of Amun-Re to support her cause.

27 From a badly damaged inscription: Temple of Deir el-Bahri; translated by J. H. Breasted.
28 From an inscription at Aswan; translated by J. H. Breasted.
29 From the Autobiography of Ahmose Pen Nekhbet; translated by J. H. Breasted
30 From the Tomb of Ineni; translated by J. H. Breasted.
31 One of the pharaoh’s official titles was nebty or ‘The Two Ladies’.
As previously discussed, the priests of Amun-Re were becoming more and more powerful, and had a vested interest in the furtherance of Egypt’s imperialism. In Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri, she gives a version of her coronation and legitimacy. In it, she ignores the reign of Tuthmose II and Tuthmose III, and pretends that when she was conceived, Tuthmose I was really Amun-Re: “… [Amun-Re] made his form like the majesty of this husband, [Tuthmose I]”.32 This is because, in Hatshepsut’s eyes, Tuthmose I, II and III were all illegitimate, while Ahmose, wife of Tuthmose I, was not. Also being the daughter of Amun-Re helped ensure that she had the support of the priesthood of Amun-Re, as well as reinforcing her legitimacy over Tuthmose III. This was important, as he was the rightful heir to the throne. Hatshepsut had to prove that she was more legitimate than him.

Hatshepsut did not stop at making herself the daughter of Amun-Re; she made it known, through her propaganda, that both Amun-Re and Tuthmose I had intended that she be pharaoh. After ‘conceiving’ Hatshepsut, Amun-Re made a pronouncement concerning her right to rule: “Hatshepsut shall be the name of this my daughter, whom I have placed in thy body, this saying which comes out of thy mouth. She shall exercise the excellent kingship in this whole land. My soul is hers, my bounty is hers, my crown is hers, that she may rule the Two Lands, that she may lead all the living … ”.33

Tuthmose I is shown to have displayed Hatshepsut to the images of the gods in the Temple of Karnak: “[The gods] said ‘welcome daughter of Amun-Re, thou hast seen thy administration in the land, thou shalt set it in order, thou shalt restore that which has gone to its ruin,”34 thou shalt make the monuments in this house, thou shalt victual the offering tables of him who begat thee, thou shalt pass through the land and thou shalt embrace many countries”.35 The image of Tuthmose I taking Hatshepsut to visit the gods is clearly setting her up as the heir to his throne, with no mention of Tuthmose II or III. Furthermore, Hatshepsut is actually crowned pharaoh of Egypt by her father Tuthmose I: “‘Come O Glorious one … receive … your double crown … This is my daughter … Hatshepsut … I have appointed [her] as my successor upon the throne … Obey her words, unite yourselves at her command’ … The royal nobles … and leaders … leaped for joy … They repeatedly proclaimed the name of her majesty as king [for] they realised that she was indeed the daughter of a god …”.36 This pre-ordainment is also stressed by Amun-Re: “… a very great oracle, in the presence of this good god, proclaiming me the kingship of the Two Lands …”.37

By now Hatshepsut was safe from any rival claimants to the throne, and had the support of the priests of Amun-Re as well. Hatshepsut was now being portrayed in sculpture and art, as a male pharaoh, with male titles. Her daughter, Neferure, had

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32 From the Birth Relief Text of Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri; translated by J. H. Breasted, hereafter cited as BRT.
33 BRT
34 i.e. the temples destroyed by the Hyksos.
35 BRT
36 BRT
37 From the dismantled block #287 from Hatshepsut’s Red Chapel in the Temple of Karnak; translated by J. H. Breasted. It has been dated to Year 2 of Tuthmose III’s reign. The term “a very great oracle” means Amun-Re, or his oracle, and “good god” is an honorific title for an unnamed pharaoh. It could refer to Tuthmose III or Tuthmose I.
been given the title of *hemet weret nesut*, or ‘The King’s Great Wife’. Hatshepsut may have possibly been going to make Neferure her heir, but Neferure is not mentioned after Year 11 of Hatshepsut’s rule. To keep the support of the priests of Amun-Re and appease the gods, Hatshepsut needed to construct temples. She not only built new temples, but repaired existing ones, still derelict from the Second Intermediate Period: ‘I have made strong what was decayed. I raised up what was dismantled, even from the … time when the Armu were in Avaris … overthowing that which had been made …’.

A full list of all the temples that Hatshepsut repaired is given on the walls of the Speos Artemidos. It includes temples from Lower Egypt, such as Cusae and Beni Hasan; Upper Egypt, such as Medinet Habu, Karnak, Gebel el-Silsile, Kom Ombo and Elephantine; and Nubia, such as Buhen, Faras, Quasir Ibrim and Semna. She also extended existing temples, such as the Temple of Karnak. There she built two ‘resting stations’ where the processional barque of Amun could rest during the Ipet Festival; the 8th Pylon, thereby creating the first massive gateway at the south of the Great Temple complex; a formal route for religious processions by linking her 8th Pylon at the Temple of Amun with the entrance to the temple of the goddess Mut to the south; the colonnade between the 4th and 5th Pylons at Karnak; the ‘Red Chapel’ to house the processional barque of Amun; and five obelisks. Two of the obelisks, which were built in Year 2 of her reign and placed at the west entrance of the Temple of Amun no longer exist. Two, which were built in Year 16 of her reign and placed at the east entrance of the Temple of Amun still exist. One of these is still standing, and is the tallest obelisk in Egypt; the other has fallen over. At Luxor, she added a barque sanctuary for Amun-Re.

Hatshepsut also undertook the construction of a tomb for her burial. Hatshepsut, though, already had a tomb. It was hidden high in the cliffs near Deir el-Bahri, and was built for her when she was just the queen regnant. This was abandoned, as Hatshepsut needed a new tomb, now that she was a pharaoh. Her royal tomb (KV 20), was built in the Valley of the Kings, and was built to ensure her ‘transformation’ from pharaoh to god. Hatshepsut’s tomb is the deepest and longest in the Valley of the Kings, and is a peculiar semi-circle shape. This is because of the poor quality of the rock it was excavated from. Hatshepsut’s mummy was not found in KV 20, although it might be the unidentified mummy found in KV 60, the tomb directly beneath Hatshepsut’s. Near the Valley of the Kings, Hatshepsut built her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri, called *Djeser Djeseru* or ‘The Holy of Holies’. This temple is the main source of information we have regarding Hatshepsut’s reign; it depicts scenes from her coronation and divine birth, as well as her expedition to *Punt* and her military exploits. Overseeing the work on the temple was Senenmut, ‘Controller of the Works in *Djeser Djeseru*’ and Djehuty, who claims “[I] acted as chief … I led the craftsmen to work in the works of *Djeser Djeseru*”.

38 From the Speos Artemidos; translated by J. H. Breasted, hereafter cited as SA.
39 Senenmut also acted as Chief Architect and Overseer of Works, Chief Steward of Amun, Steward of the barque ‘Amen-Userhet’, Overseer of the Granaries of Amun, Overseer of the Cattle of Amun, Overseer of the Fields of Amun, Overseer of the Gardens of Amun, and Overseer of the Weavers of Amun.
40 From the Tomb of Djehuty; translated by J. H. Breasted.
As a New Kingdom pharaoh, Hatshepsut was expected to engage in military campaigns. Even though Hatshepsut belonged to the final phase of Egyptian imperialism, she still had to keep a careful watch on both Nubia and Retjenu for signs of rebellion. The fact that there were no major rebellions during Hatshepsut’s reign is important evidence for possible military actions. A later pharaoh, Akhenaten, ignored the Egyptian vassal-states in Retjenu, and they subsequently seceded from Egypt. This did not happen during Hatshepsut’s reign. Also, the princes of Retjenu waited until the beginning of Tuthmose III’s reign to rebel. This not only shows their unwillingness to rebel against Hatshepsut, but also that Egypt must have had a strong, well-trained army during Hatshepsut’s reign, so that Tuthmose III could immediately march out against the Armu. Even so, some historians still believe that Hatshepsut did not conduct any military campaigns at all. J. H. Breasted says Hatshepsut “was a woman in an age when warfare was impossible for her sex and great achievements could only be hers in the arts and enterprises of peace”.41 J. A. Wilson claims that “Hatshepsut … records no military campaigns …”.42 L. Cotteral infers that “She was not interested in warfare. Perhaps she had enough of the warlike atmosphere of the Theban court …”.43

Hatshepsut herself claims that she conducted military campaigns. First she campaigned successfully among the Nubians: “The Asiatics are in fear … Nubia is in submission …”.44 She was even compared to Tuthmose I: “As was done by her victorious father … A slaughter was made among them … the number of [the dead] unknown … She has destroyed the Southern Lands”.45 She then turned to Retjenu: “Her arrow is among the Northerners”.46 As further evidence of Hatshepsut’s upkeep of the army is another inscription: “The uraeus upon my brow tranquillises for me all lands … My army which was unequipped, has become possessed of riches since I arose as king”.47 It is unlikely that Hatshepsut would have personally lead her troops into battle, or even travelled with them outside of Egypt – she was occupied with the construction of her tomb, Mortuary Temple, the renovation of more temples, and the expedition to Punt.

The army was possibly lead by Tuthmose III, once he had come of age, in the name of Hatshepsut: “[Tuthmose III] is follower of his lord in the foreign land of …”.48 Seven years later Tuthmose III again leads Hatshepsut’s army into battle: “[Tuthmose III] the good god who overthrows him who has attacked him … Amun … [is] one who gives victory”.49 Furthermore, independent accounts from contemporary courtiers concur that Hatshepsut conducted military campaigns. The graffito

42 From J. A. Wilson, The Culture of Ancient Egypt, p 163.
43 From L. Cotteral, Warrior Pharaohs, cited by M. Demovic, New Kingdom Egypt, p 37.
44 From a broken block, Temple of Karnak; translated by J. H. Breasted.
45 From the First Colonnade: Mortuary Temple; translated by J. H. Breasted. This description is located near an image of Hatshepsut as sphinx trampling enemies. Nearby stands the god Dedwen presenting her with Nubian prisoners.
46 ibid.
47 SA
48 From the Sinai Stela (Year 13); translated by J. H. Breasted. “his lord” probably is Hatshepsut.
49 From the Tombos Inscription (Year 20); translated by J. H. Breasted.
of Tiy, a treasurer, states that: “… I followed the good god, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, [Hatshepsut], may she live! I saw when he overthrew the Nubian bowmen, and when their chiefs were brought to him as living captives. I saw when he razed Nubia, I being in his majesty’s following …”.50 Another account of Hatshepsut’s campaigns in Nubia is the scribe Djehuty: “I saw the collection of booty by this mighty ruler [the female sovereign] from the vile Kush …”.51 So there is much evidence, although fragmentary, which leads to the conclusion that Hatshepsut did conduct military expeditions to both Retjenu and Nubia. Like her husband, Tuthmos II, Hatshepsut conducted primarily defensive campaigns to the north and south of Egypt. If we can assume that her reign encompassed many military exploits, none extended the borders of Egypt, and none were decisive. This is probably why she is not remembered as a warrior pharaoh; she fought no decisive battles, she did not extend the borders of Egypt, and she probably did not even lead her troops into battle. Soon after she died, a coalition of Retjenu princes, lead by the Prince of Kadesh, rebelled against Egypt. Obviously Hatshepsut had not quelled the rebellions of Nubia and Retjenu permanently. This is typical of Egypt’s third phase of imperialism, where the pharaohs campaign merely to keep control of their empire, rather than extend it. While still militarily aggressive, the emphasis had clearly changed. After her husband, Hatshepsut is the second pharaoh of this phase.

Because of her lack of major military exploits, the amount of booty reaching the Temple of Karnak probably decreased. Since Hatshepsut’s reign was founded and legitimised by the priests of Amun-Re, Hatshepsut had to find another way to appease them. Rather than battle to gain booty, she decided to make a trading expedition to the almost mystical land of Punt. Punt had allegedly been a major trading partner of Egypt in the Old Kingdom, but since those times had receded into myth and legend. Hatshepsut decided to send a fleet of trading ships to Punt, primarily to resupply the coffers of the temples with incense, which could only be obtained from myrrh trees from Punt. The expedition served a secondary purpose to simply collect exotic goods to dedicate to Amun-Re. The expedition was commanded by Chancellor Nehesy under the protection of the army in Year 9 of Hatshepsut’s reign.

The details of the expedition are found carved in Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple: “… The loading of the cargo-boats with great quantities of marvels of the land of Punt, with all the good woods of the divine land, heaps of gum of anti, and trees of green anti, with ebony, with pure ivory, with pure gold of the land of Amu, with cinnamon wood, khesir wood, with balsam, resin, antimony, with cynocephali, monkeys, greyhounds, with skins of panthers of the south, with inhabitants of the country and their children. Never were brought such things to any king since the world was”.52 The fleet arrived safely in Thebes: “The navigation, the arrival in peace, the landing at Thebes with joy by the soldiers of the king; with them are the chiefs of this land, they bring such things as never were brought to any king, products of the land of Punt through the great power of this venerable god Amun-Re, the lord of the

50 From a temple of Hatshepsut at Sehel; translated by J. H. Breasted.
51 From the Tomb of Djehuty, at Dra Abu el-Naga; translated by J. H. Breasted.
52 From Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri; translated by J. H. Breasted. “gum of anti” is probably myrrh resin; “trees of green anti” is probably fresh myrrh trees; “khesir wood” is probably incense.
This appeased the priests of Amun-Re, as Hatshepsut still received their favour, and ruled for 22 long years. This shows another change in the mechanics of imperialism from Ahmose to Tuthmose III. Unlike her grandfather, Hatshepsut’s military exploits and expedition to Punt were solely to appease Amun-Re and fill his temples with gold and riches. This could perhaps be because of Hatshepsut’s unique and precarious position in the early 18th Dynasty, but by Tuthmose III’s reign, it was too late to ignore the demands of the priesthood of Amun-Re; they had already become more powerful than Ahmose expected when he turned Amun into the state god of Egypt. During the first phase of imperialism, the priests of Amun-Re were listened to and heeded, but by the third phase of imperialism the priests of Amun-Re dictated. This control was probably not flagrant; the priests used oracles and the ‘word of Amun-Re’ to control pharaohs, but the control was obvious by the time of Akhenaten, who abolished the priesthood of Amun-Re to restore the pharaoh’s religious supremacy.

Hatshepsut died without any heirs to the throne except Tuthmose III, ‘coregent’ for the last twenty-two years. Both J. A. Wilson and A. Gardiner claim that Tuthmose III hated Hatshepsut, the woman who had barred him from the throne for a generation, and desecrated her monuments because of this. This, though, ignores the fact that Tuthmose III had been honoured for twenty-two years; he was given a royal education from the Temple of Karnak, and was taught how to write as a scribe and perform the functions of a priest. When he came of age, he was given the command of Hatshepsut’s army and conducted campaigns in Nubia and Retjenu for her. In royal sculpture, Tuthmose III is shown with Hatshepsut, bearing kingly titles. They are shown together in Hatshepsut’s Red Chapel at Karnak, her Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri, on obelisks, and in the Temple of Hathor at Sinai. Tuthmose III even built his Mortuary Temple, Djeser Akhet, or ‘Holy of the Horizon’, next to Hatshepsut’s at Deir el-Bahri. All this shows is that Tuthmose III might not have hated Hatshepsut as much as some scholars think.

Although he did eventually desecrate Hatshepsut’s inscriptions twenty years after her death, this was not done completely or uniformly. He dismantled Hatshepsut’s Red Chapel, and damage was inflicted upon her Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri. Both her obelisks had a wall built around them, which ironically preserved them for many millennia. Her Speos Artemidos temple was vandalised by Seti I, almost 100 years later in the 19th Dynasty. This dynasty deliberately removed her name from official King Lists. This vandalism, though, was not a rare thing in ancient Egypt. Both Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III defaced, altered and reused the constructions of earlier pharaohs. Tuthmose III replaced Amenhotep I’s gateway at Karnak with a pylon. Hatshepsut placed her obelisks within her father’s Hypostyle Hall, used Tuthmose II’s blocks in her obelisk foundations and dismantled a sanctuary of Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari, which stood in the way of her Mortuary Temple. So there is no evidence for claiming that Tuthmose III hated Hatshepsut.

53 From Hatshepsut’s Mortuary Temple at Deir el-Bahri; translated by J. H. Breasted.
54 J. A. Wilson, The Culture of Ancient Egypt.
55 A. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs: an Introduction.
56 A rarity, even for pharaohs, who could usually only write their name, and dictated to scribes.
Before Tuthmose III decided to destroy Hatshepsut’s inscriptions, though, he had to prove his legitimacy to the throne similarly as Hatshepsut did. Although Tuthmose III was the legitimate heir to the throne, Hatshepsut had reigned for the last twenty-two years, and Tuthmose III needed to prove that he was fit to rule. To do this he invoked Amun-Re to coronate him, again illustrating the power that the priests of Amun-Re had over pharaohs: “… I was standing in the southern hypostyle [hall] … [The god] made the circuit of the hypostyle on both sides of it … while he searched for [me] in every place. On recognising me behold, he halted! … Re himself established me. I was dignified with the diadems which were upon his head, his serpent-diadem rested upon [my forehead] … I was filled with the counsels of the gods, like Horus; when he counted his body at the house of my father, Amun-Re. I was [present]ed with the dignitaries of a god, with … my diadems”.57

Within a year of his coronation, 330 princes of Retjenu had formed a coalition under the powerful Prince of Kadesh and rebelled against Egypt. This was an immense danger to Egypt, as the princes were fighting as a unified group, and would stop the flow of wealth from Retjenu into Egypt. In the Annals of Karnak, Tuthmose III describes his campaign in great detail, and begins with the usual invocation to the gods: “… who a god stationed his majesty as the Horus of the Earth, in order to Overthrow the Asiatics. I am the Mighty Bull, Appearing in Thebes, Son of Atum, beloved of Montu, fighting for his army himself, that the Two Lands may see it; it is no lie. I came forth from the house of my father, the king of gods, Amun, who decrees victory for me”.58 He marched out of Egypt into Retjenu, first to Tharu, intent “on the first victorious expedition to extend the boundaries of Egypt with might …”.59 While wishing to extend the borders of Egypt, like his grandfather, Tuthmose I did, Tuthmose III was lucky to simply crush this planned rebellion, let alone extend Egypt’s borders. He soon arrived in Gaza, a safe city “which was his possession”.60 From Gaza he set out north to Yehem.

From Yehem, though, there were three routes to Megiddo, the city where all the rebellious princes had assembled. The first route went north to Zefthi before turning south toward Megiddo. The second route goes east to Taanach, before turning north to Megiddo. The third passes straight through the hills between Yehem and Megiddo, and is shorter than the other routes, but the path is narrow and the Egyptian army would be open to ambush if it took this Aruna Pass. Tuthmose III stopped at Yehem and debated with his generals about which route to take. They argued: “‘Why should we go by this road, which becomes so narrow? It is reported that the enemy is there, waiting at the other side, and gaining in numbers. Will the horses not have to go single file, and the men likewise? Shall we risk having our advance guard fighting while our rearguard is still standing yonder at Aruna, unable to join the battle? … Let our victorious lord proceed upon any road he wishes; but do not make us go by that difficult road’ ”.61

57 From the Coronation of Tuthmose III; translated by J. H. Breasted.
58 From the Annals of Karnak, on the walls of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak; translated by J. H. Breasted, hereafter cited as AK.
59 AK
60 AK
61 AK
Tuthmose III decided to take the short, dangerous Aruna Pass, and it paid off. When he arrived, at the head of his army, at Megiddo, the rebel army was guarding the two easy roads to Megiddo. The Egyptian army arrived at Megiddo without molestation, and Tuthmose III pitched camp to wait for the rest of his army to arrive. Meanwhile the Retjenu princes had retreated back into Megiddo. The next day, the Battle of Megiddo was fought on the large plain surrounding the city: “… Then his majesty prevailed against the enemy at the head of his army. When they saw that his majesty was prevailing against them they fled headlong to Megiddo in fear, abandoning their horses and their chariots of gold and silver. The people hauled them up, pulling them up into the city by their clothing, for they had closed the gates of the city, and lowered clothing to pull them up into the city”. Unfortunately, the sight of abandoned “chariots of gold and silver” distracted the men from their duty of killing Asiatics: “Now, if only the army of his majesty had not given their hearts to plundering the possessions of the enemy, they would have captured Megiddo at this moment …”. Tuthmose III had almost won the Battle of Megiddo, but it was his soldiers’ incompetence that had snatched away victory. This illustrates an interesting point about pharaonic depictions of battles. If the battle is won, it is because of the greatness of Amun-Re; if it is lost, then it is the soldiers’ fault.

The frightened princes hid in Megiddo while the victorious Egyptian army collected all the weapons and booty abandoned by the Armu. Tuthmose III reprimanded his army, saying: “ ‘If you had captured this city, I would have given … Re this day; because every prince of every country that has revolted is within it: the capture of Megiddo is the capture of a thousand cities. Capture it …’ ”. With more tactical brilliance, he ordered restraint on the Egyptian army, and settled in for a long siege, rather than have men needlessly killed in trying to storm the city. To ensure a complete siege, the city, which was surrounded by a moat and a wall of “fresh timber from all their pleasant trees”, had a wall built around it, stopping any food or water from entering. The wall was named “… ‘[Tuthmose III]-is-the-Surrounder-of-the-Asiatics’. People were stationed to watch over the tent of his majesty, and they were told: ‘Be steadfast, be vigilant!’ His majesty commanded, saying: ‘Let no-one come out past the wall except to knock on the door of the fortification’ “…

Eventually the siege ended and the princes of Retjenu surrendered to Tuthmose III. The princes brought many gifts with them: “… silver, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, bringing clean grain, wine, large herd animals, and small animals … for the army of his majesty. One gang of them bore the tribute southward. Then his majesty appointed new princes for every town …”. The total amount of booty that the army took back to Egypt was staggering. As well as some of the royal families of Retjenu

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62 ‘The Plain of Megiddo’ is, biblically, Armegiddo, from which comes the word ‘Armageddon’. This is because that Plain of Megiddo is so flat and perfect for a chariot battle that it was deemed fit for the final battle.
63 AK
64 AK
65 AK. My italics.
66 AK
67 AK. “to knock on the door” meant to surrender.
68 AK
as hostages, they also took “340 living prisoners; 83 hands; 2041 mares; 191 foals; 6 stallions; … young colts; a chariot wrought with gold, its pole of gold belonging to that foe; a fine chariot wrought with gold, belonging to the prince of Megiddo; … 892 chariots of his wretched enemy, a fine suit of bronze armour belonging to the prince of Megiddo; … 200 suits of armour belonging to his wretched army, 502 bows, and 7 silver-worked tent-poles belonging to that enemy. Behold the army of his majesty took … 387 … 1929 cows, 2000 goats, 20500 sheep …”.

Although Tuthmose III fought a major battle in Retjenu, and severely weakened the people of Retjenu by taking large amounts of booty, taking princes as hostages, instating friendly princes in the cities of Retjenu and dividing the land into fields, which were given out to inspectors of the palace, this was not enough to stop the northern lands from rebelling again. This is typical of a reign during the third phase of imperialism. Tuthmose III fought harder than most of his predecessors, yet Retjenu kept revolting. It took all the pharaoh’s efforts to simply stop the empire from dissolving let alone extending the boundaries of it. Tuthmose III fought another four campaigns in Retjenu, slowly advancing up the coast, capturing harbours and establishing naval bases so that his army could be transported by sea, avoiding the long overland march into Retjenu. In Year 30 of his reign, he embarked on a campaign against Kadesh. While it appears that he devastated the countryside, the city seems to have resisted his attack.

Tuthmose III decided then to attack Naharin, the kingdom on the north bank of the Euphrates River, to guard against them stirring up revolt in Retjenu. In Year 33, he started a campaign against them, dragging prefabricated boats across the desert to ferry his troops across the Euphrates. The Naharin leader fled, Tuthmose III devastated the countryside and set up a stela marking his achievements. Once back in Egypt, he celebrated with the traditional Hed Seb festival at Karnak. Despite all, Tuthmose III faced constant rebellion from Retjenu and finally in Year 42, he captured Kadesh: “… His majesty sent forth every valiant man of his army, in order to breach the new wall which Kadesh had made. I was the one who breached it, being the first of all the valiant; no other did it before me …”. Tuthmose III did not conduct any major campaigns in Nubia, although he did found an important trading centre called Napata, as well as clearing the 4th Cataract to increase trade.

Tuthmose III spent most of his sole reign campaigning in Retjenu, and so left the administration of Egypt to his vizier, Rekhmire. Rekhmire was involved in checking on industries and workshops, storing produce in royal storehouses and distributing rations to workers, dispensing justice and inspecting tribute and taxes from the empire: “… It is he who dispatches any agent of the King’s House sent to mayors and to district governors; it is he who dispatches any courier and any expedition of the King’s House; it is he who appoints from the magistrates those who are administers of the North, the South … They should report to him whatever has happened through them at the beginning of each season, and they should bring the written accounts thereof [of what has happened] through them and their assessors … [It is he who should hear every petitioner] for every plea of the hall of judgement, whether

69 AK. Sheep and goats may simply mean herd animals generally.
70 All dates for Tuthmose III’s reign include the 22 years of his ‘co-regency’ with Hatshepsut.
71 From the Autobiography of Amenemheb; translated by J. H. Breasted.
he be mayor or district governor or common person; all their dues should be re-
ported to him by every overseer of land …”.72 He also supervised the building 
projects of the pharaoh.

Tuthmose III’s many constructions are listed on his Great Coronation Inscript-
ion. In Year 30 he celebrated his first Hed Seb festival by erecting two obelisks, and 
commissioned the building of the Festival Hall, or Hall of Annals. The Central Hall is 
supported by two rows of twenty columns down the centre, and thirty-two pillars 
around the sides. Attached rooms are decorated with colourful scenes, the most 
famous of which are those of the plants and animals that he gathered during his third 
campaign to Retjenu. In Year 42 of his reign, he began a major building program, 
which concentrated on the Temple of Karnak. He remodelled the court of Tuthmose 
I and restored the hall between the 4th and 5th Pylon. He built the 6th Pylon, and 
erected two granite pillars, one a lotus and the other a papyrus, close to the colon-
naded hall where The Annals of Karnak were inscribed. He enclosed the temple with 
new walls and a new chapel, in front of which he raised the largest obelisk ever 
erected. He built the 7th Pylon and erected in front of it a huge statue of himself. 
South of the temple he dug a lake for the priests to perform their daily rites of wash-
ings themselves. He also built a temple to the rear of the Karnak complex.

Tuthmose III also built widely in the empire. In Retjenu he maintained garri-
sions commanded by Egyptian officers in many cities, including Gaza and Sharuhen. 
He built a new one at Ullaza. Tuthmose III used his armies to keep the trade routes 
open, organise the collection of tribute and ensure the loyalty of the princes. This also 
facilitated further conquests. Unlike previous pharaohs, Tuthmose III used a system 
of oaths to keep the princes loyal, which is recorded in The Annals of Karnak and 
his Gebel Barkal stela. This was an effective way of controlling the area. Many of the 
vassal princes remained loyal to Egypt for years without the need for force. They 
supported and fed the Egyptian garrisons and regularly paid their tribute. Another 
method that Tuthmose III used to ensure the loyalty of these vassal princes was to 
take political hostages back to Egypt, either as prisoners or to be educated in the 
court so they would later return to their own cities as loyal rulers.

Tuthmose III was also the first pharaoh to marry foreign princesses as a way 
of strengthening agreements that he made with his vassals. The communal tomb of 
three Retjenu princesses, named Menhet, Menwi and Merti, was discovered at Deir 
el-Bahri. Each had been accorded the title of King’s Wife, and were probably minor 
members of the royal harem, as they wore headdresses with a gazelle’s head instead 
of the vulture reserved for senior queens. Tuthmose III also exchanged diplomatic 
gifts with other rulers which, together with his marriages and their valuable dowries, 
helped to secure his empire against other major powers. Tuthmose III also appointed 
an official named Djehuty as ‘Overseer of all Northern Lands’ to administer Retjenu 
from Gaza. He was the pharaoh’s representative, directly responsible for the delivery 
of the tribute to Egypt. This position was similar to the ‘King’s Son of Kush’ used to 
control Nubia. Tuthmose III did not alter the administrative structure of Nubia.

The actions of Tuthmose III were becoming increasingly controlled by the 
priests of Amun-Re. With every campaign in Retjenu, with every dedicated building,

72 From the Tomb of Rekhmire; translated by J. H. Breasted.
with every tax and tribute collected from the empire, the priesthood of Amun-Re grew steadily stronger. There is no evidence for direct control of Tuthmose III, but before every campaign he would seek an oracle of Amun-Re who would instruct him what to do. While his rule did not rely as much as Hatshepsut’s did on the favour of the priests of Amun-Re, they had too much power to be ignored. The interrelationship between the pharaoh, Amun, and the Egyptian state is best shown in a poem of victory by the influential priesthood: “I [Amun] make the countries of the ends of Asia come to you”. Another poem of Amun which illustrates the debt that the pharaohs owed to Amun is: “You have built my temple as a work of eternity … With its great gateway ‘[Tuthmose III]-Feasts-Amun-Re’ … I commanded you to make [my temples], I am satisfied with them; I have placed you on the Horus-throne of millions of years, That you may lead the living forever”.

The growth of the temples at Karnak is indicative of the god’s importance to the pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty. It has even been noted that the temple architecture mirrored Amun-Re’s new-found place at the head of a new militaristic dynasty. The walls enclosing the larger temples were made to “resemble fortresses, with towers and battlements also being central aspects of the design”. This all suggests that the priesthood of Amun-Re was an important force in the final phase of Egyptian imperialism, from Tuthmose II to Tuthmose III. This is a major change in the mechanics of imperialism, for in the first and second phases of Egyptian imperialism, from Ahmose to Tuthmose I, the priesthood of Amun-Re was not the important force it became after Hatshepsut’s reign. The other major change in the mechanics of imperialism is in the nature of the military campaigns. The first phase, during the reign of Ahmose, was simply the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt’s borders. During the second phase, encompassing the reigns of Amenhotep I and Tuthmose I, the emphasis was on extending the borders of Egypt far past what they had originally been and establishing a land empire to the north and south of Egypt. The third phase, from Tuthmose I to Tuthmose III, was the consolidation of this newly founded empire.

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73 *From a stela constructed during Tuthmose III’s reign; translated by J. H. Breasted. The poem is Amun speaking to Tuthmose III.*
74 *ibid. The poem of is Amun speaking to Tuthmose III.*
76 L. Pedavoli, ‘Campaigns of the 18th Dynasty Pharaohs’, *Edubba*, Volume XXXIV, p 82.
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