

HIDDEN HARMONIES: REDISCOVERING THE EGYPTIAN FOUNDATIONS OF THE ROSICRUCIAN PATH

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Traditional histories of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC usually begin with the description of the creation of a unified mystical body by the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III during the Eighteenth Dynasty of New Kingdom Egypt. As H. Spencer Lewis put it in 1929, it “was Thutmose III who organized the present physical form followed by the present secret Brotherhood and outlined many of its rules and regulations.”¹ The text goes on to caution that it “must not be construed that the word Rosicrucian, or any variation of it, was used by, or applied to this ancient brotherhood, . . . rather that the modern manifestation of this ancient tradition is found in the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, which derives its principles and objectives from it.”²



The Enchanted Garden, by William Thornton, F.R.C.

Recent research has rediscovered another aspect of this foundational event which has gone, if not completely unknown, then unremarked upon for a very long time, and which sheds new light on a significant feature of the Rosicrucian tradition.

In the archives of the Rosicrucian Research Library in San José, the Order has a copy of the venerable records of ancient Egypt as compiled by James H. Breasted in 1906. In

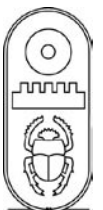
this collection of documents, there is mention of a historical appointment of an individual to be the head of the united priesthoods of Egypt during that time. That much is not surprising. However, the details reveal something unexpected.

Houses of Life Carried on the Mystical Work of the Temples

As we know, the priesthoods of Egypt were not only concerned with external Temple duties. Attached to most of the Temples was a “House of Life” (*Per Ankh*) where documents were kept, and seekers were trained in the Mysteries, including medicine, dreams, and other practices.³ Hermetic historian Garth Fowden points out that the “sacred books of the ancient Egyptian priests were copied out in the ‘Houses of Life,’ which served, subordinate to their primary cultic purposes, as temple scriptoria or libraries. . . .”⁴

In many cases, among these volumes were the forty-two volumes attributed to Thoth (later known as Hermes Trismegistus). The Christian Gnostic and teacher Clement of Alexandria testifies to having seen a procession carrying books from such a collection (around 200 CE) containing works on the gods, astrology, hieroglyphs, hymns, prayers, spiritual training, and medicine: “then forty-two books of Hermes indispensably necessary; of which the six-and-thirty containing the whole philosophy of the Egyptians . . . and the other six, which are medical. . . .”⁵

Much of the literature and teachings from the Houses of Life are probably those we have received today in Hellenized form as the practical (or technical) and philosophical *Hermetica*, including the *Corpus Hermeticum*.⁶ The Houses of Life were much more than a



priestly apprenticeship. They were the true mystical heart of each priesthood.

The Unified Priesthood Included both Exoteric and Esoteric Work

The appointment of an individual to be the head of all of the Egyptian priesthoods unified not only the priestly orders in their external manifestation, but also brought into harmony and union the mystical component as well—the esoteric work which centered around the *Per Ankhbu*. In this way, the traditional Rosicrucian statement of the unifying of these into one Mystical Order is consistent with external historical facts as well as inner spiritual truths.

New Facts Uncovered about the Unification of the Mystical Orders

What is fascinating, and apparently unremarked upon at least in recent times in connection with Rosicrucian history, is that this historic appointment and unification was not the sole work of Thutmose III. The unification appears to have taken place during the joint reign of the co-Pharaohs Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, roughly 1479–1458 BCE. Further, it was Hatshepsut's own trusted vizier and supporter, Hapuseneb, the most important man in Pharaoh Hatshepsut's entourage, who was appointed as "Chief of the Prophets of North and South," which title is found on his statue in the Louvre.⁷

As Breasted explains, "The formation of the priesthood of the whole land into a coherent organization, with a single individual at its head, appears here for the first time. This new and great organization was thus, through Hapuseneb, enlisted on the side of Hatshepsut."⁸

Breasted gives further translations of Hapuseneb's appointment from the inscription found on the Louvre statue. This appointment

was made during the joint reign, and we can assume that it was with the full consent of both rulers. The alternation of masculine and feminine may result from later alterations in the text, or it may indicate both rulers' actions: "Lo, *his* majesty was in *his* palace [. . .] of the king's house, Hapuseneb, whom *her* majesty [. . .] before millions; whom *she* magnified among the people because of the greatness of the excellence of. . ."⁹ (italics added)

Breasted himself, perhaps due to the presuppositions of his times, seems to have resisted or vacillated about the idea that Hatshepsut was involved with the appointment, later arguing against the evidence of the inscriptions: "Hapuseneb, the first High Priest of Amon who occupied the position at the head of the new sacerdotal organization, was grand vizier under queen Hatshepsut, but it is more likely that her husband, Thutmose III, effected this organization than that she should have done it."¹⁰

This opinion may well have influenced others in the early twentieth century.

The viewpoint excluding Hatshepsut from significant religious activity connected with Amun did not survive the twentieth century. By 1984, German Egyptologist Jan Assmann wrote of the joint religious work of the two Pharaohs: "Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III founded and propagated not a new religion, but a new form of Amun religion that was enhanced by the fourth dimension"¹¹ [of Divine spontaneity and action in the world and in devotees.—Ed.] He then goes on to connect this evolution with the Atenism of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, seeing more continuity than is often supposed.

In this, as in many other areas, Pharaoh Hatshepsut was prescient when she said, "Now my heart turns to and fro, in thinking what the people say, those who shall see my



Hatshepsut Bead. This small Egyptian Blue bead bears the cartouche of the controversial ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.

monument in after years, and shall speak of what I have done. . . .”¹² We continue today to recover the full significance of her reign.

Balance of Energies Revealed at the Heart of the Rosicrucian Tradition

H. Spencer Lewis’s description of the Order’s foundation was focused on other issues, and this joint aspect was not noted at that time; however, with this rediscovery, we have a notable confirmation of Rosicrucian history; further, this striking rediscovery of Hatshepsut’s role at the beginning of the Rosicrucian Path reveals a pattern in Rosicrucian history that may have gone previously unnoticed. The necessary balance of the feminine and masculine energies are present at the very creation of the mystical lineage we hold dear. The genesis of the united spiritual tradition that manifests today in the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC was a cooperation of the most powerful woman and man of the Two Lands, for the common good.

Once this pattern is recognized at the beginning of the unification of the ancient Egyptian Houses of Life, it can be seen to be replicated throughout Rosicrucian history. Within just about a century, Akhenaten and Nefertiti are represented over and over as jointly offering their work and worship to the Aten. The harmonious balance of the feminine and the masculine is a feature of the Amarna period, and may account for many of the changes in artistic style during the period. The tradition that Akhenaten had learned in the House of Life at the Temple of the Sun in Heliopolis (On or Annu) bore fruit in the Aten spirituality he shared with Nefertiti.¹³

The Origins of AMORC are also a Joint Work of May Banks-Stacey and H. S. Lewis

The same balance and harmony, which we have rediscovered at the foundations of

this Path, have been manifested time and time again, and most notably at the beginning of the current cycle of Rosicrucian work. Christian Rebisse reminds us that H. Spencer Lewis considered Mrs. May Banks-Stacey “cofounder of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae-Crucis.”¹⁴



May Banks-Stacey

During 1907–1908, when Lewis confided in her about some of his mystical experiences, she told him that “he had probably rediscovered the knowledge acquired in his past lives . . .” and “. . . that he had surely belonged to a mystical fraternity like the ‘Rosicrucians of Egypt,’”¹⁵ (one of the factors which led Lewis to his “Journey to the East” in Toulouse in 1909).

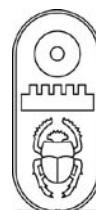
Mrs. Banks-Stacey was a mystic and an initiate of India and Egypt.¹⁶ During her journey to Egypt she was told that she would be instrumental in bringing the tradition back to North America. On November 25, 1914, she presented Lewis with a birthday present: “a magnificent red rose, a little chest, and some documents on which he recognized the same Rosicrucian symbols that he had seen in Toulouse in 1909.”¹⁷

They then “decided to pool their efforts, and so on December 20, 1914, they published an announcement in the *New York Sunday Herald* inviting people interested in Rosicrucianism to join them.” Mrs. Banks-Stacey, H. Spencer Lewis, and several others then formally inaugurated the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC on February 9, 1915, in Manhattan.

The Rosicrucian Masters were clearly insistent that the same balance from the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III be present at the founding



Akhenaten, by Danny Pyle, F.R.C.



of AMORC. Mrs. Banks-Stacey had been told when she was initiated into Rosicrucianism in India that, although she was named legate for America, the organization would not be founded until 1915, with a French lineage.¹⁸

In similar fashion, H. Spencer Lewis had held an introductory meeting in December 1913. Although twelve people attended, all declined to sign the charter that Lewis had created.¹⁹ With the information we have rediscovered about Hapuseneb and the first united mystical bodies, we can see that the Rosicrucian Masters were insistent: it was to be the joint mission of May Banks-Stacey and H. Spencer Lewis, fulfilling the ancient mandate from the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty—a dynamic and unmistakable symbol of Rosicrucian principles.

Balance of Feminine and Masculine Energies Necessary for Rosicrucian Work

The fullness of humanity, that is, the complementary balance of feminine and masculine energies, is necessary for harmony to

exist and for the Rosicrucian work to prosper. For thousands of years this has manifested in examples of cooperation such as: Stepmother and Son—Hatshepsut and Thutmose III—who established this form of the Tradition; through the loving work and worship of husband and wife—Akhenaten and Nefertiti; and in the cofounding of AMORC (1915) by spiritual friends and coworkers—May Banks-Stacey and H. Spencer Lewis; and in countless other examples.

With this rediscovered insight into our ancient cofounders, Pharaohs Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, we truly have the tools to manifest the goals enunciated in the Fourth Manifesto, the *Positio Fraternitatis*:

“Such openness encourages the coming of a Culture of Peace, founded upon integration and cooperation, to which the Rosicrucians have always devoted themselves. As humanity is one in essence, its happiness is only possible by promoting the welfare of all human beings without exception.”²⁰

Endnotes:

¹ H. Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers with Complete History of the Rosicrucian Order*, 1954 ed. (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929), 40.

² *Ibid.*, 44n.

³ University College London, “Ancient Egypt: Knowledge and Production—The House of Life,” Digital Egypt, <http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/museum/museum2.html>.

⁴ Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 57.

⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (Miscellanies), bk. 6, chap. 4, 35-37. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 2 (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885-96). www.earlychristianwritings.com/clement.html.

⁶ For the best study of the probability of this connection, see Garth Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*. See note 4.

⁷ Newberry, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 22:31-36.

⁸ James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Dynasty* (1906; repr., New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 160-162.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 161. While part of this gender switching may be later interpolated revisions, as the name of Thutmose II was inserted into the text, it may also indicate that this was the action of both Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.

¹⁰ James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912), 319n1. In *A History of Egypt* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1909), 272, Breasted mentions the fact that Hapuseneb was both Hatshepsut's

vizier and the head of the united priesthoods, placing this power on Hatshepsut's side, seemingly weakening his own argument for sole action by Thutmose III.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 195-244.

¹² Hatshepsut, quoted on her obelisk at Karnak, after translation in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 27.

¹³ From discussions in the online RCUI Course, “Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Ancient Mystery Schools,” facilitated by Grand Master Julie Scott (San Jose, CA: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, Inc., Fall 2006).

¹⁴ Christian Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries* (San Jose, CA: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc., 2005), 161.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁶ For the materials on May Banks-Stacey, see *Ibid.*, 159-163, 175-176, 217.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁰ Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient & Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, *Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*, (San Jose, CA: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc., 2005), 19, <http://www.rosicrucian.org/publications/positio.pdf>.