

Transcript of *What'sHerName* Episode 46: [THE PHARAOH Tawosret](#)

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[Opening music plays]

Olivia Meikle: Hi Katie!

Katie Nelson: Hi Olivia!

OM: So today, we are going to my very favorite place, (KN: Ooh!) and my very favorite time, in the history of the world!

KN: [Laughing] That's exciting!

OM: Can you guess where we're going?

KN: Okay. So are we talking about your very favorite place since childhood? Since, like...

OM: Yes! Ever!

KN: ...posters on your wall and books on your shelf when you were twelve years old?

OM: ...in the history of ever!

HN: Okay! [Laughing] Ancient... **Egypt!**

OM: [Cheering] Yay! Yes. And we are going to talk about one of the only women to rule ancient Egypt as a pharaoh.

KN: Ooh! Nefertiti? Wait, no. She's too famous.

OM: Yeah no, not [Nefertiti](#).

KN: Okay... Hatshepsut.

OM: No, good guess.

KN: Okay... I got nothin'. [Laughing]

OM: We are gonna talk about Tawosret!

KN: Uh, say that again? [Laughing]

OM: The wildly famous...

KN: [laughs] yes

OM: ...female pharaoh Tawosret!

KN: Wait, no, actually say it again; I can't hear those phonemes.

OM: Ta-wo-sret.

KN: Tawosret?

OM: Or, people who know this, may have seen it as Tausret, Twosret... Because in hieroglyphs, of course, they do not write the vowels.

KN: Right, yeah!

OM: So, we actually have no idea what any Egyptian words sounded like or what vowels they used. And we kind of change our minds every few decades about how we're going to pronounce things.

KN: That's awesome!

OM: But I like "Tawosret." So, that's what we're doing.

KN: Tawosret?

OM: T. A. W. O. S. R. E. T.

KN: Okay, Tawosret. Never heard of her.

OM: You are not alone. [Laughter] Most people have never heard of her. Those people who have heard of her? It's very likely because of a woman named [Kara Cooney](#). She's a wildly popular Egyptologist with a huge social media following (KN: Really?) who wrote a book called *When Women Ruled The World*, and Tawosret is in that book.

So, I gave her a call.

KN: [Laughs] As you do.

OM: As you do. This is me being **extremely cool**, and not at all fangirling over my favorite Egyptologist. I just want everyone to be clear.

Kara Cooney: My name is Kara Cooney, I'm an Egyptologist at UCLA.

ON: Kara Cooney is also the author of a fantastic book on [Hatshepsut](#) called *The Woman Who Would Be King*.

KN: Cool!

OM: Tawosret is one of the most neglected stories from ancient Egypt and, to me, she's one of the most fascinating ones. Her story **might be** a story of ambition and regicide and deeply flawed strategic thinking. Or it might be one of an obscure woman used as a puppet by a powerful man. Or it might be both! (KN: Ha!) So, in this episode we're gonna dig into the possibilities.

KN: Cool.

[theme music plays]

OM: I'm Olivia Meikle.

KN: And I'm Katie Nelson

OM: And this is *What'sHerName*.

KN: Fascinating women you've never heard of.

[music]

OM: So, we're going back to 1100 BCE.

KN: Okay, so that's New Kingdom Egypt?

OM: Yep, this is the [Ramesside Period](#). So, Ramses. What a lot of people think of as a sort of Golden Age of Egypt. [Ramses the Great](#), all of this. So, first we need to explain that stories of anyone from ancient Egypt are very hard to tell. Egypt kept its secrets very close to the vest and they did not make any public references to anything that might tarnish the shine of the court of the Pharaoh, of the king.

Kara Cooney: If you let out the kind of *realpolitik* that's happening behind the scenes, it would get you nothing but dead, or threaten your entire family, and so you don't write it down. It's not going to help you. You may verbalize it, you may talk about it, and that's why we end up having to tell this history through circumstantial argument of who was erased from this temple, and who was put in their place, whose name was added over the [cartouche](#), whose tomb was changed, and it all becomes an exercise of trying to remove the veils of the perfected story that the Egyptians are telling us.

00:05:07 - 00:10:03

OM: You are not going to allow any hint that there is drama behind the scenes

KN: No, yeah.

OM: So most of what we have to go off of is just this very strict propaganda public narrative that is posted on monuments, that is posted on temples...

Kara Cooney: I'm not sure how to tell you how shocked I was when I had finished my PhD, when I realized that I was studying an authoritarian, almost totalitarian-type regime and that I had to look at them with that jaundiced of an eye. Before that period I had really drunk the Egyptological kool-aid, celebrating my people and these beautiful things and all that they had created. Now, I look with much more of a side eye [laughter] as I try to figure out what's going on. And it's opened up the history for me in a new way, and it's astounding to me to read the Egyptologists who just believe the State Narrative.

OM: So, Egyptologists have two choices, they can accept that public narrative and just go with what is written. Or we can speculate with the info that we do have. That's more fun! So we're going to speculate.

KN: Yay! [Laughter]

OM: The public record of Tawosret's story is so limited that we don't even know where she came from or when she enters. Her husband was the Pharaoh [Seti II](#). He became the Pharaoh when he was very old. His father just refused to die, and carried on until Seti was quite elderly when he finally became the Pharaoh.

Kara Cooney: Tawosret's story is really tough to tell because you don't even know when she first shows up, except that she's queen of Seti II, but Seti II has another queen. And by Queen, I mean Great Royal Wife, which is a very particular Egyptian title which connotes the first queen in the harem if you like. Like being, I dunno, first cello in the orchestra. She's the one that gets to rule everything, and to have two great royal wives is abhorrent. It's strange, so that already speaks to something going on.

OM: He's supposed to make more kids after he becomes the Pharaoh because those kids are more likely to carry on. So, presumably Seti's wife is also quite old, so Seti takes a second Great Royal Wife and this is where Tawosret enters. She is this new young wife who is brought into the court. She seems to be a nobody. She's not a daughter or a sister of the king. She's not a daughter or a sister of the previous king.

KN: Right, yeah. The Pharaohs are today renowned for sometimes marrying their sisters and daughters, right?

OM: Yes. **Mostly** marrying their sisters and daughters. (KN: Ugh) Yes, for a long period of time. It's actually a really clever way to consolidate power within the family. That you're not marrying

out. You're not allying yourself to other families, and increasing their power and prestige. (KN: Right.) But, of course there are problems with that.

KN: Uh-huh!

Kara Cooney: It's a tricky balance because in Dynasty Eighteen when you have so much female power you also have incest. Which weakens the dynasty because the more power you give to a king's daughter or a king's sister the more they're marrying the king and the more they're having children with the king then the more those offspring are chosen to be the next king. And then you have [Tutankhamun](#) who's the product of incest. You have Hatshepsut herself who's probably the product of incest, but her daughter [Neferure](#) was certainly the product of incest, and while this keeps power within the family very securely it creates a long term problem for that family in terms of genetic health, right? And the Ancient Egyptians knew this. Everybody knew this! Everyone helped animals procreate. People knew what it meant to breed with one's own relative and what the problems would be. The Ramesside Period, you don't have that kind of inbreeding in the family, but then you lose the king's greatest protector. The king's greatest protector is in many ways a strong and powerful female. All of her agenda is wrapped up with his agenda, and she can't take power as king very easily, so it's less of a threat to him. So, in some ways when the Ramesses push that female power away they're pushing their greatest protector away. Maybe then it's fitting that at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty in the middle of that civil war, you see female power cropping up again. When Egypt's crisis is the greatest is often when you see the female power coming to the fore.

00:10:04 - 00:15:26

OM: But this time period, this Ramesside Period. They really start to reject that idea. They're wary of female power. It reduces the problems with, of course, inbreeding, (KN: Uh-huh) but it also creates a huge problem politically for the pharaohs and for their families because suddenly all of these other outside people have access to power (KN: Yeah) in ways that they haven't before. Ramses also makes the mistake of allowing his sons, his 'extra' sons who aren't the heir, to announce who they are. To sort of be out in society and announcing, "I am the king's son, I am very big and important!" That's never happened before. Extra sons are just, sort of, blended into society and they don't get a role, and they don't get to announce their identity and be seen as important. So, suddenly you have all of these 'princes,' for lack of a better term, who are out there competing with one another and vying for power and vying for authority and prestige in society. That's hugely dangerous for the people who actually hold the power at the time. So, this time period is marked by wild infighting, scandals, drama behind the scenes.

KN: Yeah, I kind of think of it as, traditionally, or in the grand scheme of things, this is the time period when Egypt starts to fall apart. Is that right?

OM: Yeah, the idea of these very long dynasties where you have hundreds and hundreds of years of one family ruling. That stops here. This is the, sort of the last long dynasty and everything starts to fall apart. And Tawosret sees out this dynasty, she is the last one. And this often happens, that a woman is the last one who, depending on your perspective, destroys a dynasty or

gets the crisis dumped on her and then blamed for it. (KN: Oh! Huh.) Because it's only when you are just truly deep in crisis, that you'll accept a woman ruler.

KN: Right, yeah.

OM: So, this rejection of female authority and power this time makes it even more unusual that Tawosret will end up in power. But how does she get there? Well, she is a wife. She's in the background. She doesn't seem to produce any children, or at least any children that live, and so when Seti II dies she should just fade away. Somehow, she ends up standing as Regent, essentially, for the next king, who is a young boy named [Siptah](#) who is no relation to her at all. She's not his mother. She's not his sister. She's nobody. So, how does she get here?

KN: Right!

Kara Cooney: Then you see Tawosret acting alongside the next king. She's not his queen. She's not his mother, but she is labeled as the Mistress of the Two Lands alongside this boy king, Siptah! Siptah, whose mummy we have found, seems to have been a sickly king. He actually dies just a few years later. His body shows that he was quite young at the age of his death which means that he was quite young during his kingship and so it seems that Tawosret was there as his regent.

OM: Fairly quickly after we start seeing Tawosret and Siptah together on monuments as the rulers, we have the addition of a random strange man named [Bay](#). B. A. Y. So, it looks like Bay but you pronounce it "Bye." (KN: Okay.) Who is a chancellor.

Kara Cooney: His origins are very murky. It's not clear, he may have been Syrian and not Egyptian. His name actually has a Semitic tone and origin to it, and there's much Egyptological discussion on that score. Bay starts showing himself on full scale with Tawosret and with Siptah. So, you actually have this weird triumvirate of power. Two of the people with informal power, one of them with formal power. But the king with formal power is a child who doesn't seem to be exercising much actual power. And then all of a sudden this chancellor dude, this Bay, is depicted all over the place in a way that shows that he has great power on equal footing with the king, equal size and stature as the king in all of these reliefs. Something is going on.

00:15:26 - 00:20:30

OM: Siptah, the Pharaoh, is young, he is sickly, he seems to possibly have cerebral palsy, he has a club foot, and so you can see why this boy may have needed a Regent. But the selection of Tawosret for this is bizarre. And there's no explanation given because this is a public monument. The general belief now is that Bay, this chancellor, is deeply ambitious and trying to place himself in power and using Tawosret to get himself there. That she is the puppet; he can use her as a royal female, where Bay has no standing whatsoever to be in charge.

KN: Yeah, but wouldn't it make sense, if he was choosing a puppet wouldn't he choose a more... a less controversial puppet?

OM: It's so hard to know, right? Because we just, we have no records. We have no information at all about what was going inside. She may have been deeply popular.

KN: Maybe she was suuuuuuper smart.

OM: We don't know!

KN: Maybe they were in love!

OM: Maybe she was suuuuuuper easily manipulated and he decided, "Hey that one will be easy," and places her in power.

[music]

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[music]

OM: So the only hint that we have about the people's feelings, about this chancellor stepping in and putting himself on the same level, is from a village called [Deir el-Medina](#).

Kara Cooney: There's a place called Deir el-Medina, which is an artisans village out in Western Thebes. And it housed the workmen, the artisans, and their families, of the men who built and decorated the tombs in the Valley of the Kings and in the Valley of the Queens. And these men were literate, and they wrote down all kinds of things about their daily lives. We have divorce documents, we have receipts. We have all kinds of information about them, and I've actually devoted a huge part of my career to this village of Deir el-Medina, a Nineteenth- Twentieth Dynasty village. It's out in the middle of the desert, so everything survives. It's like a perfect preservation of all of these texts. And from this place, one text just recently discovered in the last fifteen years says that, "the enemy has been killed" -- that Siptah, the king, has killed Bay! And he's named, and he's named as being removed from power. So we see that Bay was thought of as transgressive, as abhorrent in his own power grab, and that the king had to remove him from power.

KN: Wow!

OM: So this is a very exciting turn of events. The king has killed the chancellor. But there's a problem.

Kara Cooney: Now, we also know we have the mummy of Siptah. We know how old he was when he died. We know what it means to be a young king, and I have a nine year old son myself, and let's imagine that, I invite all of your listeners who have fourteen year old sons in the house to think how strategic they're able to be and if they would be able to put together a coup against their puppet master pulling their strings. I'm not so sure they'd be able to do it alone. And I think they would need help and it seems that Tawosret (this is all circumstantial argument, this is all working from just the tiniest little fragments, the tiniest little pieces of the puzzle when we only have ten percent of the pieces) but it seems teams that Tawosret must've been involved.

OM: And she's definitely the one who benefits. Because now she is alone in charge with this young pharaoh.

KN: Ah, so she's got the means and the motive.

00:20:30 - 00:25:02

OM: Exactly. [laughs] Again, this is all speculation, but it's informed speculation, and it's the best we can do! So, maybe Tawosret has grown tired of being a puppet and decided to take over.

KN: I like it!

OM: Maybe she was never a puppet at all!

KN: Yeah. Maybe he was her puppet.

OM: And was always the one in charge. Maybe he was her puppet!

KN: Yeah!

OM: We can't know! And that's the fun part for me.

KN: Exactly!

OM: But, whatever her plan may have been, something goes wrong. Just a couple of years after Bay is killed-slash-removed from power, the pharaoh dies.

Kara Cooney: We don't know how. We don't know the details of this, but just a couple of years later, Siptah is gone himself. And guess who is king after this? Tawosret! She takes the reins of Egypt into her hands, she names herself as, not queen, but King! [Nsyrt](#)! A tomb in the Valley of the Kings, that was started for her as the Great Royal Wife and the [God's Wife of Amun](#), she has this redone for her as king!

OM: Now, whether she killed him or not...

KN: Right!

OM: ...everyone believes that she killed him.

KN: Oh boy!

OM: It's very, very easy for the people at this point to decide that clearly Tawosret was responsible for this.

KN: Right! [pause] He **was** sickly.

OM: He was sickly! It's very possible that he just died!

KN: Yeah, it could have been, like, a disaster for her...

OM: Exactly!

KN: ...if she was planning on being his Regent.

OM: Right! She may have overstepped in her ambition and gotten tired of having to deal with this teenage boy, and taken him out. Or! She may have been utterly horrified when he died and left her in the position to take the blame.

KN: And since females are never allowed to be pharaohs, that would take some serious outside the box thinking if she's gonna kill him to try to take over herself.

OM: Exactly.

KN: Because that had never happened.

Kara Cooney: Women know that they have to rule differently! I'm Chair of my department at UCLA, the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and I know that I can't go around and just tell people what to do in a particular way. I know that I have to couch it a certain way. I know that I can't push it too far. I know I have to do it with a smile. And I'm not trying to oversimplify. I just know how I am perceived, and I know that my gender colors so much of what I do, and Tawosret must've known the same! So, for her to just go out and have Siptah murdered seems rather foolhardy when she's the one that's probably pulling all of the strings anyway!

OM: She has to know that the people are not going to put up with this!

KN: Yeah.

OM: And, of course... they don't. So, she declares herself Pharaoh and starts putting her name as Pharaoh on monuments. Which might be a point in favor of her getting ambitious, and deciding

to remove Siptah. But it might also be a sign that she just is scrambling to try to figure out what to do because there's nobody left. This is the end of the dynasty (KN: Oh!) and she suddenly has dropped in her lap the responsibility to keep things together when the whole world is falling apart. Because all of Europe at this point is falling apart! Huge mass migrations of people are coming from all of the neighboring areas to Northern Africa trying to survive. This completely destabilizes Egypt. There are tens of thousands of people pouring in that this country has no idea how to receive and contain and integrate.

Kara Cooney: Time periods of migration and massive social change bring up the worst in people. The most fear, the most dehumanisation of the other. The most cruelty, to keep people out.

KN: Mmm, the [Bronze Age Collapse](#)! It used to be just, you know, isolated scholars seeing these crises in different places, but not connecting them all together and it's still really controversial. They might be all connected. It might be coincidence. We don't really know what caused it. Still working out what on Earth happened.

00:25:02 - 00:30:49

KN: We see that the Mycenaeans abandoned their cities. But that's all we know! We don't know where they went. We can't find the evidence of where they ended up. They could've died, it could have been the eruption of a volcano, like, we just don't know! And even sometimes these [Sea Peoples](#) that get mentioned in records? We have no idea who they are, or where they came from. It's awesome! It's, like, this huge mystery that caused the collapse of every civilization in Eurasia and we don't know what triggered all of it! It's crazy! It's bonkers!

OM: So, whoever they are, and wherever they're from we have this massive influx of people flooding into Egypt during this nineteenth dynasty. And Egypt is not equipped to handle this. Especially, the Ramesside rulers are not equipped to handle this. Which is hilarious because the Ramesside rulers are not Egyptian.

Kara Cooney: And you could even say that the Ramesside Family itself owes itself to the Bronze Age Collapse. The Ramessides, and this is coming from an article that I'm writing right now and worked with one of my graduate students, Danielle Candelora, who planted this idea in my mind. The Ramessides are like [Hyksos](#) Part Two! If you know anything about the Hyksos, these are people of the [Levant](#) who took over Egypt as foreign kings - the [Delta](#), at least, during the [Second Intermediate Period](#) around 1700 BCE; Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth dynasties. And we've talked about them as these foreign Levantine kings who had very different tribal structures of rule, et cetera, et cetera. Well, [Ramses I](#) was probably a mercenary whose family came from [Canaan](#). He's an Eastern Delta guy, and they're essentially a bunch of foreign mercenary immigrants. These men come into Egypt as mercenaries as immigrants on the back foot, but they're scrappy, and they work their way forward, and they settle in the Delta, this family. And eventually that military power in this time period of upheaval, and invasion from the Sea Peoples, and constant migrations of "what are we gonna do now?" and the military gets stronger, and the mercenaries take the power. And so, the family from the Levant settled in the Eastern Delta, takes power.

OM: So, again in the middle of all this military competition, it's the most unexpected time for a woman to be put in power.

KN: Yeah!

OM: So, probably, she is a puppet. But if she's a puppet, who's puppet? And who takes over? Does she kick Bay out? Is someone else pulling the strings of everyone behind the scenes? We have no idea, we just can't know! And it's so fascinating.

KN: Ooh! There's a different puppet master who killed Bay and who killed the Boy Pharaoh.

OM: And there could be! Someone who, just, is smart enough not to put themselves on monuments. [laughs]

KN: Ooh!

OM: Or, is Bay's ingrained sexism, and unwillingness to see her as a worthy adversary, what brings him down? That he sees her as this disposable, manipulatable puppet, and cannot see her moving behind the scenes to remove him.

KN: Cool.

OM: It's completely possible that he puts her in as a placeholder, and then she finds a way to push back.

KN: I like that version. I choose that version.

OM: Me too.

KN: I choose the version, she starts out as a totally innocent, clueless puppet, and then she steps into her power, and she outs the Evil Bay, and she's all set to rule with this Boy King, and then he dies.

OM: And then he **dies!**

KN: Yeah.

OM: And now, what does she do?

KN: Right.

Kara Cooney: But, I don't want to remove ambition as a possibility from the female just because she's a female. I don't want to oversimplify the gender to such an extreme.

OM: So, whether she did or not, it doesn't really matter!

KN: Yeah!

OM: Because society thought she had, and this is the perfect excuse to remove her from power. This is especially important because Egypt **really** dislikes removing pharaohs from power! They will put up with a **lot** of chaos from a pharaoh. Because of this really deeply held belief that the Gods have decided who is in charge. The most famous example being [Akhenaten](#). That, the Pharaoh Akhenaten, the Heretic King...

KN: Yeah.

OM: ...completely turns Egyptian society upside-down! Kara Cooney points out that the best example for, you know, 'Western history' is probably [Henry VIII](#).

Kara Cooney: If we look to the most aberrant Egyptian male ruler before Tawosret, I think we could go back to Dynasty Eighteen and look at Akhenaten. A man who changed the religious system at its core. Kind of a Henry VIII of ancient Egypt (but probably with a lot more religious conviction) who closed temples, and diverted funds, and took treasures, and took all of the God's statues into his own hands and used them to fund his regime, right? The Egyptians called him a heretic after his death, but he ruled for seventeen years, and he was able to install his wife Nefertiti on the throne next to him, and it seems that Nefertiti was able to act as king after his death. So, it's an interesting comparison you make because this man was ripping Egypt apart at its core, and yet he was allowed to do it, and the fact that he was a man, I must believe, is a part of that story.

00:30:49 - 00:35:05

OM: The people let it happen!

KN: Because he's the Pharaoh.

OM: Because he's the Pharaoh! But, the fact that she's a woman, and the fact that they can say "she probably killed the Pharaoh"...

KN: Yeah.

OM: ...makes it much easier for the people to blame her.

Kara Cooney: [Cleopatra's](#) treated as if she did all kinds of horrible things and that's the Romans telling us this! It's really hard to accept the story when all the blame is placed on the female. Because it happened so much in history, and we know the female had nothing to do with it, or very little, or was in the wrong place at the wrong time! Or, like [Jezebel](#) and [Athalia](#), was just an easy mark! I have to be careful with Tawosret too. I don't know how far her ambition extended, and for all we know, I mean... Siptah was an inbred kid with a club foot! It's quite possible the kid just died an early death!

OM: So, at this point, once again, we know almost nothing about what is going on. But this new challenger to the throne appears in Southern Egypt. His name is [Setnakhte](#), and Setnakhte is challenging Tawosret's throne.

Kara Cooney: There are two texts that we work with, the [Harris Papyrus](#) being one of them. Written potentially after his death, so that makes it problematic as well (and I mean after the death of Setnakhte). Suggests that he took power and then pushed back against Tawosret. Maybe took power in the South, and then pushed back against her rule.

OM to KC: I mean, which seems to imply something more like a civil war than just a coup. That this is a drawn out process where people are having to take sides?

Kara Cooney: Yes! It could be a North versus South thing, it could be factions within the Ramesside family. One son's family versus another son's family.

OM: Maybe an actual civil war going on between these two rulers, Tawosret in the north and Setnakht in the south. He might be another brother of Siptah and Seti. He might be a cousin, or some relative who is using that to claim power. He might be a random military leader who has decided that he is going to be in charge. [pause] We don't know what happens!

KN: What?!

OM: Eventually Setnakht becomes the Pharaoh. And Tawosret is removed. We don't know if it's a war. We don't know if it's a coup. We don't know if it's an assassination. All we know is that he begins proclaiming himself Emperor in the South, and a few years later, Tawosret is gone.

KN: Woah! We don't even know if she's dead or not?

OM: No.

KN: Wow.

OM: She's no longer in power. We assume she's dead, but that's the end of her story. That's all we know.

KN: She just...disappears.

OM: So, Tawosret gets blamed for the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty. And she is the last ruler of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and from then on there's going to be tiny, short dynasties that are two or three generations. But, of course they never would have handed power to Tawosret if there was any other option!

KN: Yeah.

Kara Cooney: It's very easy to blame the female, and we still do this today, and this is one reason I like to make Egyptology as relevant to the modern day as I possibly can. Because I see these

things repeated. It's, I still haven't figured out why, in my mind, I still haven't cracked exactly why, but it is so much easier to blame a female for the crisis rather than look at the crisis and say "Oh, that's why there's a female in power at all." We'll say, "Oh, they have the crisis because she's emotional. She's weak. She's this. She's that!" They find cracks and chinks in the Female Armor. The female's in a no-win situation! If she tries to masculinize they say, "Oh, why are you wearing that pantsuit?" If she tries to lower her voice, you know, she gets in trouble for that. The more she tries to act like a man, the more problematic people find her leadership.

00:35:05 - 00:40:00

These are problems that, I think, we are dealing with more overtly than we ever have before. And these Egyptian women, women like Tawosret have a great deal to teach us on this score.

OM: They will accept her as long as she is ruling alongside Siptah, but as soon as she begins to show ambition, when she names herself Pharaoh, it's utterly intolerable.

KN: Yeah. That's when the guy from the south gains all his momentum.

OM: Yeah, and as Kara Cooney points out, this seems to be a recurring theme!

KN: Yeah.

OM: And there's so much sociological research on this too, which I find really fascinating. That we actually really like powerful women. Until the moment that they begin to show ambition. In 21st century US, you can watch the approval rates of women in power. And they will be very high until the moment they announced they're running for something or they try to 'upgrade' their position of power. And they instantly tank.

KN: Interesting.

OM: And we **hate** them when they show ambition! But as soon as they, for example, win that office, we like them again! Until they decide to run for something else. That we cannot cope with women showing ambition. It is so odd. It's baffling to me.

KN: Huh.

OM: She's not removed from monuments. Like Hatshepsut, famously, is chipped off of monuments after she died, she is erased. Egypt doesn't usually go to that extreme. What they will do is just stop talking about you. We have to, sort of, piece together these clues from people who don't want to use the name anymore, and so you'll have oblique references to Tawosret, but nowhere is an official explanation given of what happened. Setnakht creates monuments proclaiming that he has bravely rescued Egypt from false rulers.

Kara Cooney: He does not name Tawosret. He does not name Bay. Egyptians don't like to mention people they hate. I'm still like this about my ex-husband, actually, I don't like to mention him by name, it's true. [laughter] So, the Egyptians, use, like a code word for this guy.

Setnakht, the first king of [Dynasty Twenty](#) also talks about the ruler who was on the throne before in very vague terms, and how that ruler had to be removed.

OM: That must be Tawosret.

KN: Yeah.

OM: And maybe Bay.

KN: Yeah.

OM: But there's no way he would be referring to Siptah that way, for example. But the names are not given, and the stories, the details are not told.

KN: Yeah, you wouldn't want to legitimize them by referring to them by name.

OM: And, of course, famously, right? Having your name on your 'things,' on your mummy, on your tomb, is a really important part of how you maintain your immortality.

KN: Oh yeah!

OM: That your immortality is linked to your name surviving, not just your mummy surviving. You need to have your name on your stuff and on your body.

KN: So, take away their name, and...

OM: So, by removing their name you're removing their power.

[music]

OM: So, in the end, we don't really know who she was... or what she did... or why she did it... [Laughter]

KN: Or what happened to her in the end... [Laughter]

OM: Or what happened!

[music]

OM: And that's how Egypt does history. [Laughter]

[music]

OM: Huge thanks to Dr Kara Cooney. You can find her books anywhere books are sold, and find more about her work on her website at karacooney.squarespace.com or on her social media feeds, which are delightful, and which I highly recommend. If you'd like to learn more about

Tawosret and nineteenth dynasty Egypt, visit our website at whatshernamepodcast.com. Huge thanks also to our [Patreon](#) sponsors for this episode: Mandy, Rob and Virginia Boody and Chantelle Oliver. If you'd like to become a sponsor, visit our website at whatshernamepodcast.com and click [donate](#). You can help support the podcast for as little as a dollar a month and our patrons get lots of great prizes like [cross stitch patterns, trading cards, and more](#).

KN: You can also follow us on [instagram](#), [twitter](#), and [facebook](#) where we post lots of photos each week.

OM: [Music for this episode](#) was provided by Egyptian film composer [Remon Sakr](#) and ancient lyre specialist [Michael Levy](#) whose incredible work you can find at ancientlyre.com. We're always so grateful for our generous musical partners.

KN: Our theme song was composed and performed by [Daniel Foster Smith](#). *What'sHerName* is produced by Olivia Meikle and Katie Nelson, and this episode was edited by Olivia Meikle.

[music]

[Outtake] OM: So, if you want to be a queen, destabilize your society...

Kara Cooney: Or marry your brother.

OM: Or marry your brother. And then murder everyone [KC laughs] who's getting in the way of the line of succession...

[music]

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