

Queen of Egypt

Cleopatra





Ptolemaic Dynasty



- Greek origins -- Ptolemy I related to Alexander the Great, close compatriot gifted Egypt area in Alexander's will, Egypt is old even by 'current' Roman standards.
- Ebb/flow of land areas, economic and political success -- Cleopatra's grandfather and father left some *serious* debts to Roman/Grecian officials, had lost segments of land
- Ended with Cleopatra VII's death in 30 BC
- Father, Ptolemy XII, was married to Cleopatra VI
 - Likely not Cleopatra VII's mother, rather a Priestess or other highly regarded woman in the Ptah tribe/ethnic grouping.
 - Affairs common
 - Incest *far* too common to preserve bloodlines/not let power leave the family however possible (a daughter-wife & several brother-husbands mentioned here alone)





Education and Qualifications

Cleopatra VII Philopator

Last ruler of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt

Read/wrote/spoke in 7 languages (proven)

Siblings: (threats eliminated fairly quickly)

Parents' backgrounds (prestige both sides)

lineage/line of succession

ascended at young age of 18



Ptolemy XIII

Cleopatra's younger brother, who became her co-ruler/spouse in name, civil war for sole power, gained troops in Syria + friendship with Caesar solved war.

Ascending the Throne

Arsinoe IV

Cleopatra's younger sister, also wanted power, attempted foreign marriages for additional power, 'taken care of' by Antony.

Ptolemy XIV

Another younger brother, became her co-ruler/spouse after the death of Ptolemy XIII -- then 'removed from matters' so Cleopatra's son could be her co-ruler in name.



Tryphaena

Cleopatra's older sister, was married to Ptolemy XII before Cleopatra became queen, disappeared around 69 BC -- nothing proven, but given that the rest were killed....

Diplomatic Ambitions

Attempted to maintain good relations with Rome
Immediately upon being queen, drafted laws/gave out royally owned grains during famines and low tide (Nile), created coinage depicting her across lands, visited locations and participated in crucial local religious rituals (first in dynastic line to do so)



Securing Sole Rule

After too many skirmishes, Greco-Roman alliances, and gaining troops from regions tied to her mother's (presumed) family background, Cleopatra ultimately emerged victorious as (finally) the sole ruler of Egypt. Her attention to diplomacy, alliances, and strategy laid the groundwork for the rest of her reign, which restored lands and prosperity unattainable for previous Ptolemys.



Civil War and Caesar

51 BC:

Cleopatra co-rules with Ptolemy XIII

49 BC:

Caesar marches on Rome

Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey's son) asks Egypt to repay debt with supplies

Pompey supports Ptolemy XIII as sole ruler

48 BC:

Cleopatra flees

Pompey seeks refuge in Egypt

Caesar pursues

47 BC:

Ptolemy XIII dies in battle

Ptolemy XV Philopator Caesar is born



Relationship with Caesar

A Complex Union

Cleopatra's relationship with Caesar was both personal and political. She is reportedly 'in town' when Caesar is killed, but no records connect her to the plot on either side, and she left for Egypt with her son soon after. It also placed her in danger after Caesar's death.

Birth of Caesarion

In 47 BCE, Cleopatra gave birth to Ptolemy XV, known as Caesarion, meaning "little Caesar." This solidified her bond with Caesar and enhanced her status. While he never formally claimed him in life or in his will, Cleopatra was adamant he was Caesar's son and heir, putting her directly in Octavian's way.

Criticisms

The portrayal and reality of Cleopatra and her rule contrasted sharply with the Roman values of proper womanhood, so that added to Roman critics in Italy stirring the pot against her. Her 'seducing' Caesar away from his proper but barren wife is a crime according to Roman citizens.



Rule After Caesar's Death

Political instability and uncertainty in Rome threatened Egypt's stability and interests

Cleopatra aligned self with a powerful Roman leader (Mark Antony of the Second Triumvirate, with Octavian and Lepidus) for survival of kingdom and self

Recognizing Antony's potential as a strong ally, Cleopatra sought the alliance to protect Egypt amid Rome's struggles and expand Egypt into its former areas.

She consolidated her power, prioritizing the economy and military

She implemented policies aimed at stabilizing and expanding Egypt's economic resources and securing borders, ensuring that her kingdom remained prosperous and capable of defending itself against external threats.

Amidst the political upheavals in Rome, her leadership and strategic acumen were instrumental in maintaining Egypt's sovereignty and reinforcing her position as a influential world leader.

Civil War and Antony



41 BC

Cleopatra and Antony meet at Tarsus, Cilicia
Antony captivated by charm and intelligence
Soon begin political alliance and love affair

40 BC

Twins Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene

36 BC

Ptolemy Philadelphus born



Propaganda

Creating the seductress
Emphasis on the foreigner and
woman
“Why I am better”

Dispute with Octavian

Civil War

The tensions culminated in a
civil war between Octavian
and Antony, two of the
Triumvirate



Battle of Actium

Weak Octavian uses Marcus
Agrippa
Naval battle in 31 BC
Octavian's victory
Avoidance of triumph

Depictions of Cleopatra



Cleopatra's Death



Consequences

Family

End of the Ptolemaic Dynasty

Caesarion executed 30 BC

Alexander Helios, Cleopatra Selene, and Ptolemy

Philadelphus sent to live with Octavia

Politics

Egypt is annexed by Octavian

Octavian to Augustus

Roman Empire is born

Conquest

An Empire

Show of power, of triumph

Building a great Rome

Horologium and gnomon

The Seductive Myth



Poet Horace

(65-8 BC)

Heroic and patriotic deaths

VS.

Dangerous passion

Virgil

(70-19 BC)

The brave Augustus

VS.

The failures of Cleopatra

Plutarch

(46-119 CE)

The manipulator

VS.

Her victims

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