

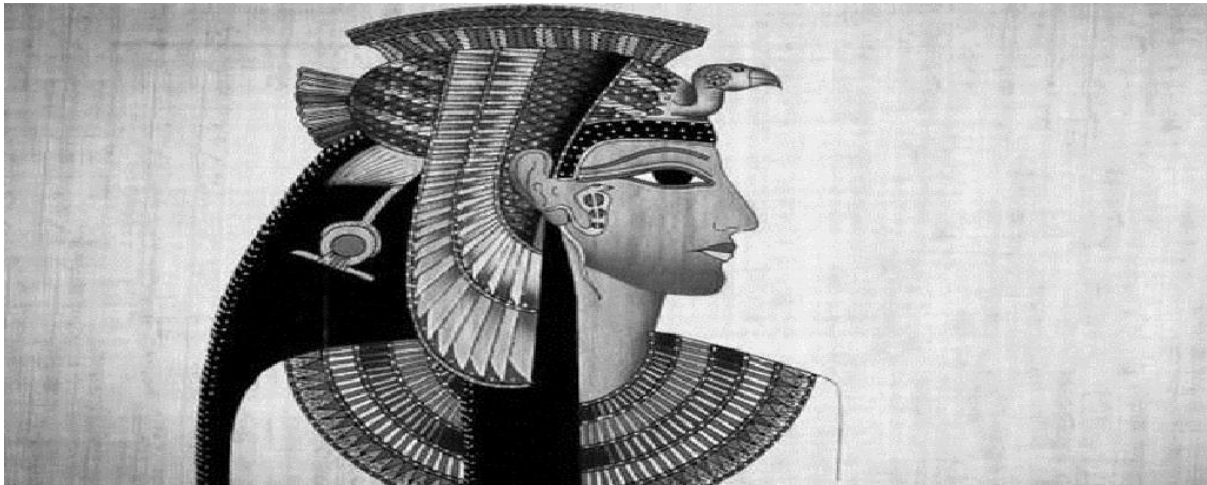


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CLEOPATRA WAS THE LAST PHARAOH OF EGYPT, AND THE LAST OF THE PTOLEMY DYNASTY OF EGYPTIAN RULERS



"I will not be triumphed over" Cleopatra VII

Background:

The Ptolemaic dynasty was a Macedonian Greek royal family, which ruled the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt during the Hellenistic period. Their rule lasted for 275 years, from 305 BC to 30 BC. They were the last dynasty of ancient Egypt. Ptolemy, one of the seven somatophylakes (bodyguards) who served as Alexander the Great's generals and deputies, was appointed governor of Egypt after Alexander's death in 323 BC. In 305 BC, he declared himself Ptolemy I. The Egyptians soon accepted the Ptolemy's as the successors to the pharaohs of independent Egypt. Ptolemy's family ruled Egypt until the Roman conquest of 30 BC.

The most famous member of the line was the last queen, Cleopatra VII.

The timeline of the life of Cleopatra VII:

Cleopatra VII was born in early 69 BC in Alexandria, Egypt. The name Cleopatra symbolises 'glory of the father'. She was one of the five children of Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra V of Egypt. There is no record of Cleopatra's mother after her birth, leaving her father to be her

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primary influence. Her sibling's names included Berenike IV, Arsinoe IV, Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV. In 58 BC, her father Ptolemy XII was expelled from Egypt and fled to Rome with Cleopatra VII. His other daughter Berenike IV seized the throne in his absence, but by 55 BC, Rome's leaders reinstated him, and executed Berenike IV, making Cleopatra VII the next in line for the throne.

In 51 BC, her father, Ptolemy XII died, leaving the throne to then eighteen year-old Cleopatra VII and her brother, the ten-year-old Ptolemy XIII. It is likely then that the two siblings married, as was customary at the time.

In 49 BC, Ptolemy XIII advisers instigated a revolt against Cleopatra VII rule and expelled her from Alexandria. Cleopatra VII fled to Syria, where she raised an army of mercenaries to defeat her brother in order to declare the throne for herself.

In 48 BC, Cleopatra VII returned to Egypt to face her brother at Pelusium, on Egypt's eastern border. Around this same time, the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey had spread out of Rome, and Caesar pursued Pompey who had fled to Egypt. However, Pompey was assassinated by Ptolemy XIII upon his arrival in Egypt.

In 47 BC, Cleopatra VII arranged to meet Caesar, who had arrived in Egypt, reportedly by smuggling herself in a carpet that was delivered to his bedchambers. According to Cassius Dio, in order to help her cause, the twenty-one year old Cleopatra VII 'reposed in her beauty all her claims to the throne'. At the time, Caesar was fifty-two years old. Early the next morning, Ptolemy XIII found them together, and joined forces with his youngest sister, Arsinoe IV, fearing Cleopatra VII would convince Caesar to eliminate him.

During the winter of 47 BC, Caesar's forces won a crushing victory against Ptolemy XIII, at the Battle of the Nile and banished Arsinoe IV to Rome. Caesar restored Cleopatra VII and her youngest brother Ptolemy XIV to the throne.

In 46 BC, Cleopatra VII gave birth to a son, Ptolemy Caesar. He was believed to be Caesar's child, and was known by the Egyptian people as Caesarion, or little Caesar.

In 45 BC, Cleopatra VII and Ptolemy XIV made their grand entrance with Caesarion into Rome. In Rome, Caesar held a triumphal celebration of his victories which included the parading of defeated enemy, Arsinoe IV. However, Caesar did not recognise Caesarion as his son and stated that his nephew, Octavian, would be his heir.

In March 44 BC, as Caesar was entering the Senate, he was assassinated by 23 daggers thrust into him by his some of his friends as well as his enemies. Devastated by Caesar's assassination, and surrounded by Roman hostility, Cleopatra VII went back to Egypt. Her brother Ptolemy XIV died soon after from poisoning, supposedly upon Cleopatra VII orders. In effect, Cleopatra VII appointed her son, Caesarion, co-regent with her as Ptolemy XV.

In 42 BC, Mark Antony, part of the Second Triumvirate that ruled Rome following the murder of Caesar, sent for Cleopatra VII so that she could answer questions about her allegiance to Caesar. Cleopatra VII agreed to his request and sailed to Tarsus in an elaborate ship, dressed in the robes of Isis to meet with Antony. Captivated by her beauty and

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personality, Antony fell in love with her. Cleopatra VII then returned to Egypt, followed by Antony, who abandoned his plans for the invasion of the Parthian Empire and also left behind his third wife, Fulvia, and their children in Rome.

During the winter of 41–40 BC, at Cleopatra's VII request, Antony sent orders for the execution of Cleopatra's VII younger sister, Arsinoe IV, in Rome. Her younger sister was a possible rival for the throne of Egypt.

In 40 BC, Cleopatra VII gave birth to twins, Alexander Helios (sun) and Cleopatra Selene (moon) by Antony. However, Antony left Alexandria for Rome, to conclude a treaty with Octavian. An agreement was reached and part of the arrangement was that Antony marries the sister of Octavian, Octavia.

In 37 BC, Antony again met with Cleopatra VII to obtain funds to resume his campaign against the Parthian Empire. In exchange, he agreed to return much of Egypt's eastern empire, including Cyprus, Crete, Libya, Jericho and large portions of Syria and Lebanon. Cleopatra VII joined Antony at Antioch, near Turkey where they got married. This was not only illegal under Roman law it was a betrayal of Octavia, his legal wife and the sister of Octavian.

In 36-35 BC, Cleopatra VII gave birth to another son, Ptolemy Philadelphus by Antony.

In 34 BC, Antony celebrated his gains from the Parthians in Alexandria. In the celebrations, known as the "Donations of Alexandria", Antony declared Caesarion as Caesar's son and rightful heir and awarded land to each of his children with Cleopatra VII. This began a war of propaganda between him and the Octavian, who claimed that Antony was under Cleopatra VII control and would abandon Rome for Egypt.

In late 32 BC, the Roman Senate stripped Antony of all his titles, and Octavian declared war on Cleopatra VII. At the time, Antony and Cleopatra VII lived together in Greece.

On September 2, 31 BC, Octavian's forces defeated those of Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, off Greece's west coast. Cleopatra's ships deserted the battle and fled to Egypt, and Antony soon managed to break away and followed her with a few ships.

In the summer of 30 BC, Octavian invaded Egypt and Antony took the extraordinary measure of volunteering to kill himself to spare Cleopatra VII life. However, Octavian wrote to Cleopatra VII stating that if she would get rid of Anthony, she could 'ask of him any favour'. Cleopatra VII realised she was not powerful enough to expel Antony from Egypt or assassinate him and as such conceived a plot where she sent a message to Antony saying that she had killed herself. Upon hearing his loved one was dead, Antony fell upon his sword.

After Antony's death, Cleopatra VII discovered that Octavian intentions were to take her and her children to Rome to be paraded in a victory triumph. Cleopatra VII sent Caesarion to hide in the east of Egypt near the Red Sea. After this, Cleopatra VII attempted to commit suicide by setting fire to the mausoleum however, Roman soldiers thwarted her plans and she was taken captive.

On August 12th, 30 BC, Cleopatra VII arranged for an asp (a poisonous snake) to be smuggled to her in a 'basket of figs' where she committed suicide by allowing the asp to bite her on her chest. She then arranged for her and Antony to be buried together. Octavian sent agents to hunt down Caesarion and kill him, ending the last member of the Ptolemy dynasty. Cleopatra VII was the last ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty, ruling Egypt from 51 BC - 30 BC.

What we can learn from Cleopatra VII life and achievements:

1. Patriotic

Unlike her predecessors, Cleopatra VII had an unusual interest in Egyptian culture. Through her servants, she mastered the fine arts of social grace and beauty for which Egyptian women were famous. She also respected and studied her people's ancient religion. She was the first of the Ptolemy to learn Egyptian, one of the nine languages she spoke fluently. She also commissioned portraits of herself in the traditional Egyptian style. In one papyrus dated to 35 BC, Cleopatra VII is called Philopatris, "she who loves her country." By identifying herself as a truly Egyptian pharaoh, Cleopatra VII earned loyalty from her people.

2. Determined

Cleopatra VII wanted her empire to prosper as it did in the times of Alexander the Great. She raised an army to challenge her brother after exile, which showed her determination to regain the throne and her self-confidence in that she was the rightful, more mature leader capable of making Egypt great.

3. Audacious

Cleopatra VII's plan of concealing herself in a rolled up carpet, and having herself smuggled into Caesar's bedchamber was an audacious plan by the then twenty-one year old Queen. According to Plutarch, "It was by this device of Cleopatra's, it is said, that Caesar was first captivated, for she showed herself to be a bold coquette." However, it is believed that the audacity of Cleopatra's VII ploy amused him, not her youth and beauty, as Caesar could have had many beautiful young women at the time.

4. Ruthless

Cleopatra VII set about ruling Egypt by eliminating her domestic threats when she felt she had to. She dispatched her brother/husband, Ptolemy XIII through Caesar. Her rebellious sister Arsinoe IV was exiled and then killed off and her youngest brother Ptolemy XIV was poisoned to prevent any challenges to her son's succession. Such ruthlessness was not only a common feature of Egyptian dynastic politics in Cleopatra VII's day, but it was also necessary to ensure her and her sons' survival, and solidify her grip on the throne.

5. Strategic

Even though ancient Egyptian culture allowed female pharaohs, male pharaohs had supreme power. As a female leader in Egypt, she was only as strong as the males associated with her. Cleopatra VII seduced two of the world's leading male leaders – Julius Caesar and Mark Antony to manoeuvre herself into power. She made an ally of Caesar, who helped her to establish her on the throne and also allied Egypt with Rome. By allying herself with Antony, Cleopatra VII hoped to keep Octavian, Caesar's heir and Antony's rival, from making Egypt a vassal to Rome.

6. Charismatic

According to Plutarch "Her actual beauty...was not so remarkable that none could be compared with her, or that no one could see her without being struck by it, but the contact of her presence...was irresistible... The character that attended all she said or did was something bewitching." Cleopatra VII beauty (or lack thereof) was irrelevant to the Romans who knew her and the Egyptian people she ruled. Cleopatra VII had charisma, and her sexiness stemmed from her intelligence—what Plutarch described as "the charm of her conversation".

7. Aspiring

In an age where power was held almost exclusively by men, Cleopatra VII became one of the most feared and effective rulers. To maintain a strong and successful Egypt, Cleopatra VII made sure that she, as an individual ruler was powerful. The people of Egypt held very strong belief in the Gods and their control over every situation on earth. As such, Cleopatra VII strongly identified herself with the Goddess Isis. Her Goddess-like status gave her a strong referent power among her philosophical subjects.

8. Humble

Cleopatra VII was considered divine in her kingdom and unlike previous pharaohs, she acknowledged her subjects. The history of distant pharaoh leadership made her seem superhuman, but her efforts to be relatable portrayed her as a benevolent Queen.

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