

Cleopatra

Hollywood

If you speak to many people of our era or vintage about Cleopatra, the first thing they think about is Elizabeth Taylor.

Film made in 1963, very expensive, fantastic sets and Liz Taylor was absolutely fabulous in every shot. Warning: film is 4hrs 11mins long, I admit to skipping some of it.

Cleopatra (1963)



Coinage

It does help to have an image and have a good idea what she looked like. Often this is seen in the coinage. presumably sanctioned as a likeness to what she looked like. The first coinage minted when she was about 18, next in Antioch about 32, lastly minted in Alexandria (not that old she died at the age of 39). Not the Hollywood beauty that we imagine.



Cleopatra Busts

a) Granite bust currently on display in the Gallery of Ancient Egypt at the Ontario Museum. It is believed to have been discovered in Alexandria, in Egypt at the site of Cleopatra's sunken palace on the island of Antirrhodos.

b) Marble bust dated between 40-30 BC during her lifetime Experts believe it is the most credible likeness, known as the Berlin Cleopatra because it is in Berlin's Altes Museum. Believed to have come from Aricca or Genzano, south of Rome. Very Greek Romanesque looking opposed to the granite bust.

c) The Vatican Cleopatra, similar to Berlin one, also dated 30-40 BC, found at a private villa on the Appian Way, nose missing but closely resembles portrait on coins. When it was first discovered, head was put on the wrong body, and someone decided to add a nose.



Family Background

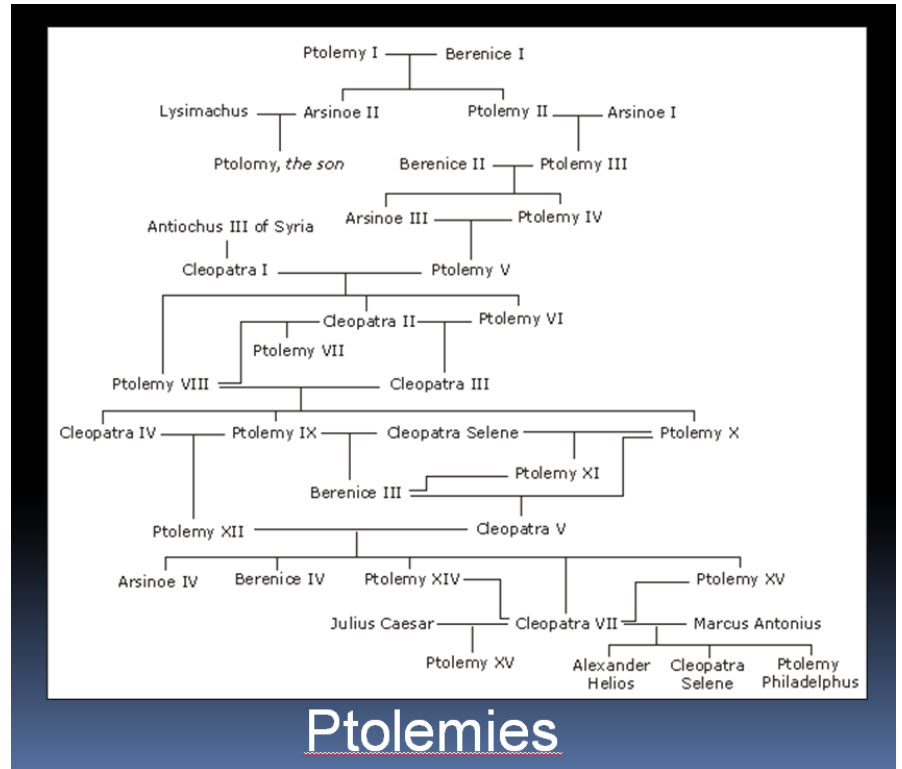
Cleopatra's family had ruled Egypt for about 300 years. They were the Ptolemy dynasty that had been established by the Greek ruler Alexander the Great. The first Ptolemy was a general in Alexander's army.

Cleopatra was descended from Greeks which is why she had a Greek name Cleopatra which means 'Famous like her Father'.

Family tree, little bit confusing in that there are so many people using same names and the tree consistently folds in on itself.

Cleopatra was number seven and her father was Ptolemy twelve. In order to keep the royal blood pure, the Ptolemies married their siblings (Apparently, of the 15 family marriages, 10 were brother and sisters and two were nieces or cousins).

Another way of keeping the royal blood pure is to kill other family members who could become rivals to the throne. In John's talk about the Ptolemy's he said 'too sordid to go into in detail, with incestuous marriages, dynastic rivalries and murders'.



At the time of Cleopatra all the power was with the Romans and Egypt was heavily in debt to Rome. Ptolemy X (Cleopatra's grandfather) practically gave Egypt to the Romans as collateral for their support. Cleopatra's father Ptolemy XII, paid vast sums of money to the Romans for their support.

Triumvirate

The Roman Republic, ruled by a senate (group of legislators mainly elite families), setting policy for the two elected consuls (limited period, one year but stretched). If the republic was under threat a dictator could or would take over if there was imminent danger to the republic, with emergency powers expected to step down when danger passed.

Around time of Cleopatra's birth there was a triumvirate (triple Alliance) between Caesar, Crassus & Pompey. Mary Beard calls them 'the gang of three'. Initially secret, to get favourable decisions and policies. Heavy weights all commanded roman armies. All three had spells as one of the consuls, don't think they were friends or mates, purely business and power related, extremely shaky. Pompey was married to Crassus son's widow Mucia Tercia for about 20 years, but divorced her to marry Julius Caesar's daughter Julia.



Two things happened very close to each other Julia died in 54 BC breaking the link between Caesar and Pompey, then Crassus was killed in battle fighting in Turkey (53BC).

Partnership between Caesar and Pompey continued for a short time, before open rebellion and civil war.

Alexandria

Cleopatra was born and lived in Alexandria. One of the greatest cities in the ancient world, founded by Alexander the Great. Location of the Pharos (lighthouse) of Alexandria, a huge library, magnificent temples and palaces.

On 21 August 365AD, a massive tsunami hit Alexandria, estimated to have killed 50,000 people in the city. Massive floods, then earthquakes resulted in rising sea levels and reshaping of the coastline.

In 1993 Alexandria was being redeveloped. A dyke was to be built/breakwater on the supposed site of the Pharos (lighthouse).



The Great Harbour Alexandria

Sonar

Emergency dive was made by French Archaeologist Jean-Yves Empereur and a team of about 30 divers and some excavations were made. They were astonished at what they found under water.

By 1996, diving excavations had discovered remains of ancient Alexandria, including 5,000 architectural blocks some weighing up to 75 tons, columns, capitals, huge broken statues, a dozen sphinxes, the indisputable remains of the lighthouse, gigantic statues that stood next to the lighthouse. Then more discoveries were found on opposite side of the harbour.



The Great Harbour Alexandria

Another French Underwater Archaeologist Franck Goddio effectively rival to Empereur discovered, columns, statues and sphinxes associated with what was claimed to be the palace of Cleopatra. Thousands of artefacts were lying untouched on the seabed, covered with thick layers of sand and sediment. Using sonar he produced a map of the extent of the old harbour.

Most of the artefacts are still on the floor of the harbour, at risk of damage or thieves, protection order. Talk of an underwater museum, still under consideration.

A travelling exhibition entitled 'Cleopatra: Search for the last Queen of Egypt'.



'Cleopatra: Search for the last Queen of Egypt'



Sphinx made out of black granite face is believed to represent Ptolemy XII father of Cleopatra

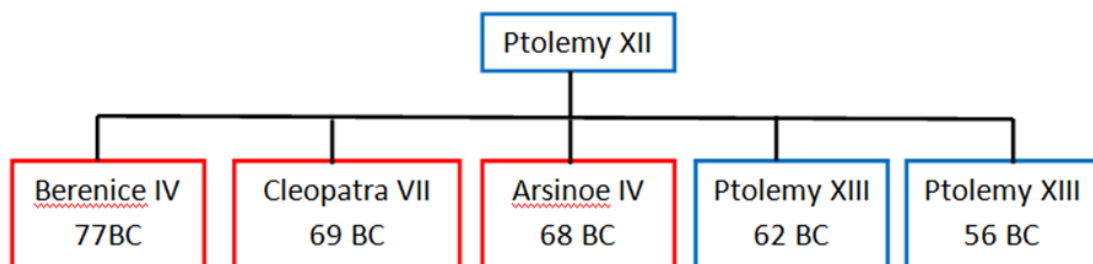


Giant stone head of Caesarion, the son of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar,

Much of Cleopatra's life story is told by Greek philosopher/historian Plutarch (c45-120) in his manuscripts 'Life of Julius Caesar' and 'Life of Antony'. He was writing 100 years after her death and may have exaggerated some things and biased them towards Rome, but he had many reliable sources and it is about the best we have. She is also included in Lucius Cassius Dio's Roman History (c155-235) and by Appian of Alexandria the Greek historian. Cicero Roman (c106BC to 43BC) and Appian of Alexandria Greek (c95-165). No Egyptian historian to tells of own history.

Family group

Cleopatra was born a princess of Egypt in 69BC, she was Macedonian (Greek). The middle of three daughters, and two younger brothers. Dates are of birth



Cleopatra and siblings - all had a share on the throne

Alexandria was a rich cultural city with world's greatest library and tutors. She had the best education available and spoke at least seven languages.

Plutach said of Cleopatra

It was a pleasure merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which, like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another; so that there were few of the barbarian

nations that she answered by an interpreter; to most of them she spoke herself, as to the Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews Arabians, Syrians, Medes, Parthians, and many others, whose language she had learnt; which was all the more surprising because most of the kings, her predecessors, scarcely gave themselves the trouble to acquire the Egyptian tongue, and several of them quite abandoned the Macedonian.

Notice she was the only ruler Ptolemy ruler to speak Egyptian, she also spoke Troglodyte (an Ethiopian language, which Herodotus, said 'sounds like the screeching of bats').

Early Dates (all BC)

70/69 Cleopatra Born

60 Ptolemy XII (father) kingship of Egypt recognised by Rome

58 – 55 Ptolemy XII exiled, ex wife and daughter rulers in Egypt

55 Ptolemy XII returned to power

51 Ptolemy XII dies, Cleopatra and brother Ptolemy XIII become rulers

49 Cleopatra flees Egypt

48 Sept, Roman general Pompey assassinated

In 60 BC when she was a child her father Ptolemy XII went to Rome met with the Triumvirate (Pompey, Caesar and Crassus), paid massive fee to have his Kingship of Egypt recognised.

When Cleopatra was young her father Ptolemy XII, taxed the Egyptians so highly to pay the Romans that there was a revolt. He escaped to Rome with 11 year old Cleopatra, whilst his ex wife and daughter Bernice took the throne (coup).

Pompey and Caesar (Roman generals) decided to restore him as king, so they could get their money. He returned, daughter Berenice (eldest sister) was executed. Ptolemy XII fell ill a few years later and died, stipulating in his will that his daughter Cleopatra VII and son Ptolemy XIII should reign.

She came to power in 51 BC, at the age of seventeen/eighteen, and was married to her ten-year old brother Ptolemy XIII, and were to rule Egypt as co-rulers. As she was much older, Cleopatra quickly took control as the main ruler of Egypt for about 18 months. However, as her brother grew older (about 13) he began to want more power. Pothinos, a eunuch acted as a regent/teacher for Ptolemy stirring up trouble which would result in a civil war. Ptolemy attempted to murder Cleopatra and seize power for himself but she escaped to Syria and later returned with an army to fight a civil war. Neither Cleopatra or Ptolemy could gain a decisive advantage, although Ptolemy XIII held Alexandria

Cleopatra and Ptolemy's struggle for power coincided with the Roman generals Pompey and Caesar's own rivalry and, after his defeat at the decisive battle of Pharsalus, Pompey fled to Egypt hoping to seek sanctuary.

Pompey was betrayed by Pothinus the eunuch, (Pompey tricked and stabbed to death); he hoped to please Caesar by having Pompey beheaded, with the embalmed head being presented by Ptolemy as a gift to Caesar, but Caesar was sickened by the dishonourable manner of Pompey's death.

Caesar's small garrison were stationed in Egypt, and he was living in the palace. Suspicious also very vulnerable

Cleopatra was unable to get into the palace to plead her case with Caesar. A key part of her Hollywood story is told of how she was smuggled into the palace, hidden in a Persian carpet which was brought into Caesar's presence. It is presented as a gift, the carpet is unrolled to reveal a half-naked Elizabeth Taylor or Claudette Colbert. A visually great introduction, how could Caesar fail to be impressed.

The historical record written by Plutarch, is quite different in that she was smuggled into the palace inside bedding.



Claudette Colbert in 'Cleopatra' (1937)

Plutarch tells the story

'She took a small boat, and one only of her confidants, Apollodorus, the Sicilian, along with her, and in the dusk of the evening landed near the palace. She was at a loss how to get in undiscovered, till she thought of putting herself into the coverlet of a bed and lying at length, whilst Apollodorus tied up the bedding and carried it on his back through the gates to Caesar's apartment. Caesar was first captivated by this proof of Cleopatra's bold wit, and was afterwards so overcome by the charm of her society that he made a reconciliation between her and her brother, on the condition that she should rule as his colleague in the kingdom.' (Plutarch -Life of Julius Caesar)

DIO tells the story

Dio tells a similar but different account of what happened, in this account she requests an audience with Caesar, and when granted she put on her make-up and dresses to stun.

"For she was a woman of surpassing beauty, and at that time, when she was in the prime of her youth, she was most striking; she also possessed a most charming voice and a knowledge of how to make herself agreeable to everyone. Being brilliant to look upon and to listen to, with the power to subjugate everyone, even a love-sated man already past his prime, she thought that it would be in keeping with her role to meet Caesar, and she reposed in her beauty all her claims to the throne. She asked therefore for admission to his presence, and on obtaining permission adorned and beautified herself so as to appear before him in the most majestic and at the same time pity-inspiring guise. When she had perfected her schemes she entered the city (for she had been living outside of it), and by night without Ptolemy's knowledge went into the palace." Dio, Roman History (XLII.34.4-6)

Julius Caesar would have been 52 and Cleopatra was 21. He was the most powerful man in the world, she may have been the richest woman in the world (although heavily indebted to Rome). She was also highly intelligent, pretty, cultured, young and made herself available to Caesar.

Cleopatra and Caesar

Caesar tried to get Cleopatra and Ptolemy back as joint rulers of Egypt as stated in Father's will, sister Arsinoe IV and youngest brother Ptolemy XIV given Cyprus to rule.

Cleopatra and Ptolemy XIII soon fell out, especially after her affair with Caesar.

Ptolemy was furious and attacked Caesar and the small Roman garrison on the Island of Pharos, intending to drive Caesar out of Egypt. After a plot to kill Caesar the eunuch Ponthinus is executed.

A huge Egyptian army led by Cleopatra's younger sister Arsinoe IV comes to Alexandria to attack Caesar and Cleopatra, although surrounded and under siege they hold out. They escape from the palace and move to the Isle of Pharos Besieged, extremely tough time, dig for water on island after water supply cut off. Caesar sets fire to the Egyptian fleet in the harbour, the flames spread to the city and the great library, which held over a million unique books, the largest collection in the ancient world was destroyed. Caesar escapes in disguise.

Cleopatra's sister Arsinoe proclaims herself Queen of Egypt with her brother Ptolemy XIII (Cleopatra's husband). Short reign because re-enforcements arrive for Caesar, Egyptian army backs off to the Nile, where the final battle (Battle of the Nile) takes place in 47BC. Ptolemy flees by an overloaded boat, he drowns when the boat sinks.

Caesar reinstates Cleopatra as Queen, but a condition was that she rule with her 12 year old brother Ptolemy XIV. Cleopatra is married to youngest brother. The affair with Caesar is still ongoing, and Cleopatra takes Caesar on a cruise down the Nile.

Caesar Returns to Rome

In April 47 BC as the conqueror of Egypt, he returns to Rome with prizes of war including Cleopatra's sister Arsinoe IV. Parade into Rome, Arsinoe is captive behind a burning effigy of the Pharos of Alexandria. Doesn't quite have the effect Caesar hoped, crowds have sympathy for her (late teens). Instead of being ceremonially killed she receives sanctuary at the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus.



Caesar returns to Rome

On the 23 June 47 BC Cleopatra gave birth to Caesar's son he was named "Pharaoh Caesar" nicknamed Caesarion. Caesar always remained quiet about the child, maybe because he was married to Calpurnia who was the daughter of Lucius Cornelius Cinna at that time the most powerful man in Rome. Calpurnia was childless. Likely to have been his plan to leave Egypt before his son was born. Cleopatra on the other hand told everyone, often naming Caesar as the father.

Cleopatra visited Rome and stayed at one of Caesar's country houses. Despite her romance with Caesar, Cleopatra wanted Egypt to remain independent of Rome. She built up the Egyptian economy, establishing trade with many Arab nations. She was a popular ruler among the people of Egypt both because she embraced the Egyptian culture and religion, furthermore because the country was prosperous during her rule.

Caesars Assassination

Caesar returned to Rome as the most powerful man in the world. The Senate made him dictator for life. He put his own supporters in the senate, made lots of changes, reforms,

building work, changed to Julian calendar, more than anything he made lots of enemies who thought he was too powerful, and that the existing republic would come to an end.

Group of conspirators led by Cassius and Brutus plotted to kill him. On 15 Feb 44 BC (Ides of March) as he entered the Senate, he was attacked, stabbed 23 times and killed.

Cleopatra stayed in Rome for a few weeks hoping that her son Caesarion would be recognised as his heir, but Caesar named his grand nephew Octavian as his heir and Cleopatra returned to Egypt with Caesarion. Shortly after Cleopatra had her brother/husband Ptolemy XIV poisoned and she elevated her son Caesarion to joint ruler of Egypt.



Stela

Stela, showing Cleopatra dressed as a pharaoh (right) giving gift to goddess Isis, nursing a baby. Note two snakes hanging above. Dated 51BC. As soon as she became Queen.

Cleopatras name is on second row. In the louvre



Wall Reliefs

Ptolemy XV Caesar (right, youngest brother) and his mother, Cleopatra VII wearing the double crown headdress, relief in the temple of Hathor, Dandarah, Egypt

Relief of Cleopatra as a goddess c69-30 BC Temple of Hathor, Dandarah, Egypt

Wall Reliefs

Cleopatra carving at the temple of horus at Idfu Egypt, dressed as goddess Isis



Second Triumvirate

Marc Antony had been Caesar's right hand man for many years and when Caesar was made dictator Antony was named as the second in command. When Caesar was assassinated Antony took charge of all his money, affairs and papers

In Rome, Second Triumvirate of three generals, was set up after Caesar's death in 43BC. In agreement to kill the assassins of Julius Caesar (Brutus and Cassius). Mark Antony and Octavian joined forces together to fight the leaders of Julius Caesar's assassination Brutus and Cassius. Lepidus remained in Italy



In 42 BC, at the Battle of Philippi, Caesar's assassins were routed and the Roman Empire was divided between Mark Antony and Caesar's great-nephew Octavian. Octavian ruled in the West (pink) and Mark Antony took charge of the Eastern Empire (Green) and Lepidus parts of N Africa (Brown).

Octavian was the legal heir of Julius Caesar, but Cleopatra wanted her son, Caesarion, to be Caesar's heir. She hoped that Marc Antony could help her achieve this goal. As the power struggle continued Lepidus became excluded (least competent, weak and indecisive).



Power struggle between Antony and Octavian.

Mark Antony planned an invasion of Persia, but he needed money for this venture and saw the wealth of Egypt as the key to his success so he sent a message for Cleopatra to meet him at the city of Tarsus in Asia Minor.

Barge

She was delighted because here was a second chance to achieve her ambition of making Egypt a great power again. She had first met Mark Antony when he'd been a young staff officer in Egypt and she was a teenager. (BC 55 Mark Antony with Gabinius successfully restored Cleopatra's father to the throne)

Cleopatra at age of twenty eight, was completely confident in her powers, Mark Antony was in early 40s. She delayed her departure, took her time, then sailed into Tarsus in a great golden barge and entered the city in an extravagant show of style loaded with gifts (BC 41).

Plutarch - Life of Mark Antony

She was to meet Antony in the time of life when women's beauty is most splendid, and their intellects are in full maturity. She made great preparation for her journey, of money, gifts, and ornaments of

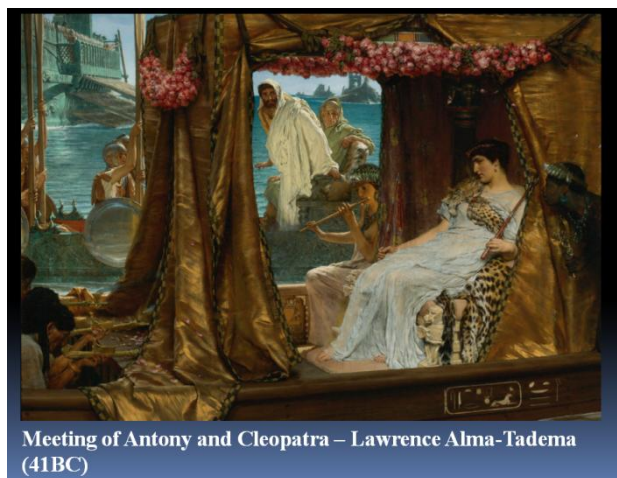
value, such as so wealthy a kingdom might afford, but she brought with her surest hopes in her own magic arts and charms.

She received several letters, both from Antony and from his friends, to summon her, but she took no account of these orders; and at last, as if in mockery of them, she came sailing up the river Cydnus, in a barge with gilded stern and outspread sails of purple, while oars of silver beat time to the music of flutes and fifes and harps. She herself lay all along under a canopy of cloth of gold, dressed as Venus in a picture, and beautiful young boys, like painted Cupids, stood on each side to fan her. Her maids were dressed like sea nymphs and graces, some steering at the rudder, some working at the ropes. The perfumes diffused themselves from the vessel to the shore, which was covered with multitudes, part following the galley up the river on either bank, part running out of the city to see the sight. For her actual beauty, it is said, was not in itself 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, if you lived with her, was irresistible; the attraction of her person joining with the charm of her conversation, and the character that attended all she said or did, was something bewitching.

Antony was so captivated by her that he decided to put off his Parthian campaign; he returned to Alexandria with Cleopatra, where he lived a life of pleasure.

In 40 BC when he return to Italy, Relationship between Octavian and Antony was fractious, but civil war avoided when Antony married Octavian's sister Octavia.

About the same time as Antony was getting married Cleopatra was having Mark Antony's twins Alexander Helios (Sun) and Cleopatra Selene (Moon). And the year after that they had a son Ptolemy Philadelphus.

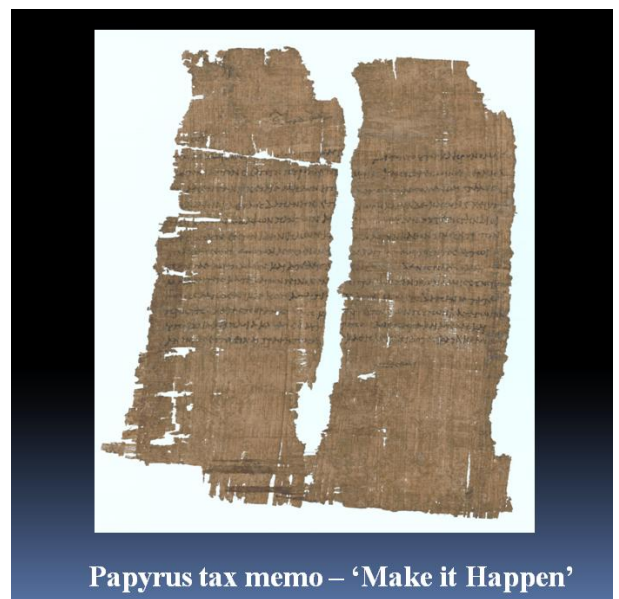


Meeting of Antony and Cleopatra – Lawrence Alma-Tadema (41BC)

Parchment

Cleopatra played an active role in the administration of Egypt. A papyrus document was discovered, it had been written in Greek to Cleopatra to give a tax break on sales of imported wine to a high ranking official Paul Canidius who was a friend of Mark Antony. Although it doesn't contain her signature it includes the words 'Make it happen', which is attributed to Cleopatra.

In 36BC Mark Antony once again took up his postponed Parthian campaign and needed money so he returned to Cleopatra to get finance for the campaign, which ultimately ended in failure. He hoped for support from the Armenians which didn't come, they were attacked in the desert, ambushed, didn't have sufficient food or fresh water. Supply lines cut off and he lost 80,000 men half his splendid army. More than once he considered suicide



Papyrus tax memo – 'Make it Happen'

To make things worse his rival Octavian was very successful. Instead of returning home to his wife Octavia in Rome Antony went to Alexandria with Cleopatra.

Cleopatra's sister Arsinoe IV was still living in the temple of Ephesus, but Cleopatra saw her as a threat and convinced Antony to have her executed. She was killed in the sanctuary of the Temple of Artemis which caused a great scandal in Rome

Two years later (34 BC) Antony invaded Armenia again, the king had let him down and betrayed him, this time he was successful.

Antony celebrated his great triumph in Alexandria. The crowds saw Antony and Cleopatra seated on golden thrones with their own three children and Julius Caesar's son, Caesarion. Antony and Cleopatra's son was made ruler of Armenia, Cleopatra was given Cyprus and he granted her the title 'Queen of Kings'. Antony was carried away giving titles and promising countries to his children.

Antony proclaimed Caesarion to be Caesar's son, thus diminishing Octavian's status as Caesar's adopted heir.

Octavian regarded Antony and his Egyptian power base as a threat to Rome's dominance of the Mediterranean world and he waged a propaganda campaign against Antony for giving part of the Roman territories to Cleopatra and her children.

Octavian took Antony's will from the temple of the Vestal Virgins in Rome, to whom it had been entrusted. He then leaked its contents to the Roman people, who were outraged at Antony's plans to bequeath his Roman possessions to this foreign woman and to transfer the capital from Rome to Alexandria.

Herod

In 39 BC Cleopatra hosted Herod who was a Governor in Judea after an invasion by the Parthians. He escaped to Masada and then on to Egypt. After a long stay Cleopatra wanted him to go and gave him a galley to take him back to Judea, but as the weather was bad he was shipwrecked off the coast of Cyprus before he eventually arrived home. With the help of Mark Antony there was a siege of Jerusalem and he was re-instated and named King of Judea.

A few years later Herod was visited by Cleopatra, he was despotic in his dealing with the Jews, his family and any rivals. (Herod murdered his own wife and children and was responsible for the 'Slaughter of the Innocents'). There was a dispute over Jericho which was held by Cleopatra given by Mark Antony.

Herod and Antony were old friends but Cleopatra made an enemy of Herod, interfering in his family problem's



Herod and Cleopatra
(1937 film)

Antony then made what was to prove a fatal step; divorced Octavia and he married Cleopatra. The union was an insult to his wife Octavia and her brother Octavian, but even worse, the marriage united all of Rome against him.

Poisons

Plutarch - Life of Mark Antony

Cleopatra was busied in making a collection of all varieties of poisonous drugs, and, in order to see which of them were the least painful in the operation, she had them tried upon prisoners condemned to die. But, finding that the quick poisons always worked with sharp pains, and that the less painful were slow. She next tried venomous animals, and watching with her own eyes whilst they were applied, one creature to the body of another. This was her daily practice, and she pretty well satisfied herself that nothing was comparable to the bite of the asp



Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners – Alexander Cabanel (1887), Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

Battle of Actium

The Roman Senate finally declared war against Cleopatra

There were an number of skirmishes between Antony/Cleopatra against Octavian. They had a bigger fleet but not as well trained in battle. Antony and Cleopatra expected allies from the area to join them, but an earthquake in Judea gave Herod an opportunity to sit it out, Malichus I the Nabataean also had a land dispute with Cleopatra and didn't help, Antony's long time companion Quintus Dellius defected, taking Antony's battle plans with him. Much of Antony's army deserted him or changed sides. After a long blockade on September 2, 31 BC, at the naval Battle of Actium, Octavian defeated the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra.



Battle of Actium – Laureys a Castro (31BC)
National Maritime Museum, London

It was a furious battle in close quarters, when Cleopatra fled with Egyptian galley. Antony followed her with few ships leaving his main army leaderless. They may have expected the fleet to retreat to Egypt, but they stayed to fight. Cleopatra returned to Egypt and Antony went to Libya where 4 legions were posted, to find out that they had already surrendered to Octavian.

Herod went to meet Octavian pledging his loyalty, and coming out of the situation very well without having to fight.

Antony was effectively a fugitive in North Africa, sad and dejected considering suicide but two friends bring him to Alexandria.

Eventually Octavian came to Egypt, Antony withstood the army, but when Roman galley's sailed into harbour, Egyptian fleet went to meet them and instead of fighting escorted them into Alexandria, not sure if Cleopatra had double crossed him or if it was futility to fight.

Cleopatra retreated to her mausoleum and had a message sent to Antony saying she was dead, (If you are reading this letter I am already dead). He was so devastated that he didn't want to live any longer. It had already been agreed that Antony's servant Eros would kill him when asked, but Eros turned away and killed himself. Antony attempted suicide by falling on his sword but only succeeded in mortally wounding himself. When he found out that Cleopatra was still alive, his friends brought him to Cleopatra's mausoleum and get him in through an upper window where he died in her arms.

Octavian eventually entered Egypt, extracted Cleopatra from the mausoleum. She was allowed time to prepare Antony for burial. She tried to take her life but was threatened with awful things happening to her children.

Cleopatra tried once again to captivate the most important Roman but Octavian was not moved. She begs for mercy, she offers the treasures of Egypt, and asks that she might be buried with Antony. Octavian wanted to embellish his triumph by having her and her children dragged through the streets of Rome in chains. When she found out that he was returning to Rome in three days she decided to commit suicide.

Cleopatra Suicide

After one last visit to Antony's grave, she bathed and prepared for a meal, and was brought a basket of figs by one of her servants and committed suicide by allowing a snake to bite her. Lying dead on her golden bed, one handmaiden Iras dead at her feet and the other Charmiion on the point of death. Look carefully just see snakes tail next to the pillar.



Cleopatra – Juan Luna (30 BC, Prada, Madrid)

Death of Cleopatra according to Plutarch

The death of Cleopatra is shrouded with mystery and romance.

Some relate that an asp was brought in amongst those figs and covered with the leaves, and that Cleopatra had arranged that it might settle on her before she knew, but, when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said, "So here it is," and held out her bare arm to be bitten. Others say that it was kept in a vase, and that she vexed and pricked it with a golden spindle till it seized her arm. But what really took place is known to no one, since it was also said that she carried poison in a hollow bodkin, about which she wound her hair; yet there was not so much as a spot found, or any symptom of poison upon her body, nor was the asp seen within the monument; only something like the trail of it was said to have been noticed on the sand by the sea, on the part towards which the building faced and where the windows were. Some relate that two faint puncture-marks were found on Cleopatra's arm (Plutarch - Life of Mark Antony)

Some have said it would not be a snake but more likely a drink of poison, even Plutach says 'no-one knows'

With Cleopatra's death, Octavian took control of Egypt and it became part of the Roman Empire. Cleopatra was buried with Mark Antony

Caesarion (Cleopatra and Caesars son was executed as was Mark Antony's son, Marcus Antonius Antyllus) Her death brought an end to the Ptolemy dynasty in Egypt. Octavian returned to Rome and became the first Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus (arguably the greatest Roman Emperor)

Strangely, Octavia Cleopatra's love rival Mark Antony's ex-wife, raised Cleopatra's three surviving children

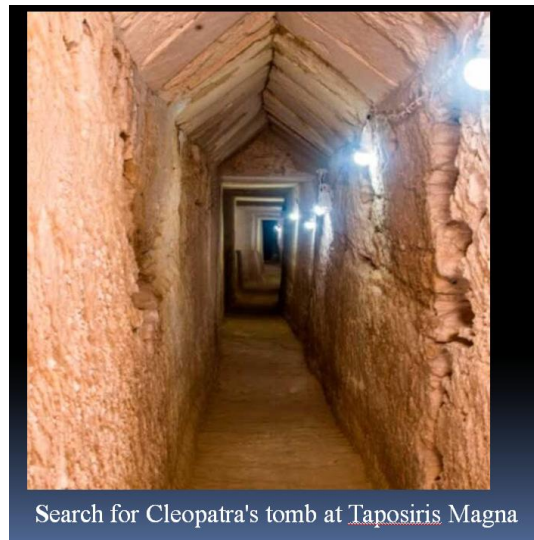
Cambridge University Professor Mary Beard doubts their ending matched the legends that soon sprung up of how Cleopatra's Antony and Cleopatra ended their own lives, "Suicide by snake bite is a hard feat to pull off," Prof. Beard notes in her history of the Roman Empire SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome (Liveright Publishing, New York: 2015). She believes it's more likely that Octavian killed Cleopatra.

Taposiris Magna

Ms Martinez, who has been working in Taposiris Magna (30/40 miles from Alexandria) since 2004 in search of the lost tomb of Cleopatra VII, believes that the geometric tunnel could be a promising lead. The tunnel 13m down, stretches for 1,300 m (4,265 ft). Part of the tunnel is collapsed, still underwater and yet to be excavated. Excavations have found 22 coins bearing her image and artifacts. It is a water tunnel



Search for Cleopatra's tomb at Taposiris Magna, ancient ruins outside Alexandria, Egypt



Search for Cleopatra's tomb at Taposiris Magna

In an interview with National Geographic, Ms Martinez expressed her conviction that the tunnel might guide her to the tomb of Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen, and her lover Mark Antony. The Dominican archaeologist acknowledged that the likelihood of this happening is just one percent, but insisted that it would still be "the most important discovery" of the century.

Excavations have found 22 coins bearing her image and a statue head.

If they do find her tomb with Mark Antony remember you heard it here first!

Andy Timms