

From Amazon to Pharaoh – Following a Trail from Hypsicratea to Cleopatra VII

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“History belongs to the victors, legends to the people, fantasy to literature. Only death is certain.” Péter Esterházy

Introduction

In this article, we construct a trail, albeit faint at times, from Hypsicratea, the ‘Amazon,’ to Cleopatra VII, the ‘Pharaoh.’ The trail is based partially on anecdotes such as (1) “Zopyros, a pharmacologist and surgeon, advised [Cleopatra’s father] Ptolemy XII about antidotes to poison and was also connected to another court interested in medicine, that of Mithridates VI of Pontus [Hypsicratea’s husband]...”¹ and (2) Cleopatra VII’s ambitious plans with Marc Anthony for conquering the East were much like those of Mithridates VI.² However, most of the trail is based on established information.

Cleopatra VII is known as the last pharaoh of Egypt.³ Through her father, Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra VII was heir to the intermarrying descendants of the Macedonian ‘Diadokhoi,’ who divided Alexander the Great’s kingdom amongst themselves after his death in 323 BCE. However, Cleopatra VII’s maternal heritage is uncertain because her mother has been unknown.⁴ We propose that on the maternal side, (1) Hypsicratea, the concubine and then sixth wife of Mithridates VI, was Cleopatra VII’s grandmother and/or (2) either Mithridatis or Nyssa, two daughters of Mithridates VI and Hypsicratea or a different concubine, was Cleopatra VII’s mother since one of the daughters was betrothed to Cleopatra’s father, Ptolemy XII.⁵ Cleopatra VII was already related to the Mithridatic line through Cleopatra I, the Seleucid dynasty wife of Ptolemy V,⁶ since Cleopatra I’s mother, Laodice III, was a daughter of Mithridates II, the second king of Pontus. Reuniting Cleopatra VII’s Mithridatic line through Hypsicratea and Mithridates VI would thus augment her existing Persian heritage while adding an Amazon heritage.

The Caucasus Region, Pontus and the Amazons

Ancient historians generally place the Amazons in the Caucasus region⁷ or ancient Pontus.⁸ Herodotus

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¹Roller, Duane W. *Cleopatra*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010, p. 44. Like Alexandria, Sinope (modern Sinop), the Pontic kingdom capital and birthplace of Mithridates VI (c. 134 BCE to 63 BCE), was a bastion of Hellenistic thought. See McGing, Brian C. *Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysos*. *Encyclopedia Iranica, online edition*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithradates-vi-eupator-dionysos> (accessed July 15, 2009). When Rome defeated Mithridates VI in 63 BCE, many scholars from his court, including Zopyros, moved to Alexandria.

²Roller, Cleopatra, p. 49. According to Appian, Mithridates VI was “the sixteenth in descent from Darius...” *Roman History: Book XII Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVI, §112. Available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>. His mother was a descendant of Seleucus, one of Alexander the Great’s generals.

³Technically, Ptolemy XV, also known as Caesarion, was the last pharaoh as he survived his mother, Cleopatra VII, by 11 days. See, however, Footnote 43 regarding the Roman Emperors’ adoption of the title ‘pharaoh’ in Egypt after it was annexed by Rome in 30 BCE.

⁴Fletcher, Joann. *Cleopatra the Great*, London: Harper Perennial, 2012, p. 69; Schiff, Stacy, *Cleopatra*, New York: Little, Brown & Co. 2010, p. 26; Roller, *Cleopatra*, p. 19.

⁵The other daughter was betrothed to Ptolemy XII’s brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus.

⁶Ptolemy V was Cleopatra VII’s great, great grandfather. When Ptolemy V died, Cleopatra I became the second Ptolemaic female king of Egypt (with her son, Ptolemy VI). Arsinoe II, a daughter of Ptolemy I, likely was the first Ptolemaic female king. See Footnotes 44 and 45.

⁷The Caucasus region is the area surrounding the Caucasus Mountains, which run southeast from present day Sochi, Russia on the Black Sea, almost as far present day Baku, Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea.

(484 BCE to 424 BCE) said that the Amazons landed in Scythia (the Crimea and the area around the north shore of the Black Sea and the Sea Azov) after escaping from their Greek captors.⁹ Diodorus Siculus (90 BCE to 21 BCE) places them in Pontus along the southeast shore of the Black Sea.¹⁰ Strabo (64 BCE to 23 CE), Hypsicrates (birth and death unknown),¹¹ Plutarch (circa 45 CE to 125 CE) and Appian (95 CE to 165 CE)¹² place them in the Caucasus region east of the Black Sea. These areas partially overlap the kingdom of Mithridates VI¹³ which, together with the eastern region of the Armenian kingdom of Tigranes the Great,¹⁴ perhaps best describes the land of the original Amazons.

⁸Xenophon (430 BCE to 354 BCE) describes Pontus as the area along the southern shore of the Black Sea (called the 'Euxeinos Pontos' by the Greeks). His use of 'Pontus' in The Persian Expedition (also known as the Anabasis) is thought to be the oldest known written reference to the region by that name. Book V.I, Par. 3; available at <http://www.gutenberg.org>. Some translations (e.g., the Penguin Classics edition) substitute 'Euxine' for 'Pontus.' It has been suggested that Alexander the Great used the Anabasis as a reference.

⁹Herodotus says "The Amazons ... were taken captive by the Greeks [when the Amazons lost the mythical Attic War, begun as an attempt to rescue an Amazon kidnapped by Theseus] and put on board a ship where they murdered the crew. However, the Amazons didn't know how to sail so they floundered until they landed by the cliffs of the Scythians." Histories, Book 4, 113, London: The Penguin Group, 1972, p. 307. Substantiating Herodotus, see Mayor, Adrienne. The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 63: "More than a thousand tombs of ancient Scythians... have been excavated across the Eurasian steppes... in some cemetery populations... armed females represent as many as 37 percent of the burials." See also, e.g., Anthony, David. The Horse, the Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 329: "About 20% of Scythian-Sarmatian 'warrior graves' on the lower Don and lower Volga contained females dressed for battle as if they were men, a phenomenon that probably inspired the Greek tales about the Amazons."

¹⁰Diodorus says the Amazons lived near the mouth of the Thermodon River (modern Terme River). Bibliotheca Historica. Book III. Available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>. The river empties into the Black Sea approximately 30 miles east of Sinope. The Amazons' capital, Themiscyra, was on the Thermodon River.

¹¹Strabo and Hypsicrates were from Pontus. Strabo was born in Amaseia (modern Amasya). Hypsicrates may have been born in Amisus (modern Samsun) as he is sometimes referred to as Hypsicrates of Amisus. However, Julius Caesar freed his slave, Hypsicrates, at Amisus in 47 BCE. Thus, 'Amisus' may be an adopted name and he may have been born elsewhere. See Footnote 18, *infra*. The works of Hypsicrates are known today only through references, including those by Strabo. For example, regarding the Amazons, Strabo says "Metrodorus ... and Hypsicrates, who were also familiar with these regions, wrote that the Amazons lived near the border with Gagarians in the northern promontories of the Caucasus." Geography. Book XI, Chapter 5, §5. Available at <http://www.penelope.uchicago.edu>. See Footnotes 41, 95 and 96, *infra*, for other examples.

¹²Plutarch also places the Amazons in the Caucasus mountains. He says that in the third Mithridatic War, the Amazons and the Albanians fought together against Pompey. However, "When the Romans were despoiling the Barbarians after the battle, they came upon Amazonian shields and buskins; but no body of a woman was seen." The Parallel Lives: The Life of Pompey, Chap. 35.4. Available at <http://www.penelope.uchicago.edu>. Appian says of the same event that "Many women who had suffered wounds as bad as those of the men were found among Pompey's prisoners." Appian adds that the women were called Amazons by the locals, but he was not sure whether that meant they were a nation or the locals called their warlike women Amazons. Mithr. Wars, Chap. XV, §103.

¹³During his reign, Mithridates VI gained control of the Black Sea/Sea of Azov coastal areas from Taurica (the Crimea) and Colchis (the southern Caucasus region and eastern shore of the Black Sea) in the north and east to Bithynia (the Asian side of Turkey) in the southwest as well as inland to Cappadocia (comprising parts of modern Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine). A map of the Pontic Kingdom at the height of Mithridates VI's reign appears on the penultimate page of this article. The Romans defeated Mithridates VI in 63 BCE; the Kingdom of Pontus then was divided into the Roman provinces of Bithynia and Pontus. After Julius Caesar was murdered (44 BCE), the Second Triumvirate (Marc Antony, Lepidus and Octavian) divided governance of the Roman Republic among themselves; Marc Antony received Egypt, Bithynia and Pontus.

¹⁴Tigranes the Great (140 BCE to 55 BCE) was the son-in-law of Mithridates VI (his daughter, Cleopatra of Pontus, was married to Tigranes). For many decades, Tigranes was a strong ally who controlled the region then known as Armenia, which at its height, stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caspian Sea.

Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates

As indicated in the Introduction, Hypsicratea (birth and death dates unknown),¹⁵ the ‘Amazon’¹⁶ of this Article’s title, was the concubine and then sixth wife of King Mithridates VI.¹⁷ She likely was born somewhere in the Pontus/Caucasus region.¹⁸ As the wife of Mithridates VI, she had substantial exposure to Hellenistic learning as Mithridates VI’s court was a center for philosophers, poets and historians.¹⁹ However, she accompanied Mithridates VI as he fought the Romans over a period of 25 years in the three Mithridatic Wars (88 BCE to 63 BCE).²⁰ According to Plutarch, Hypsicratea “always displayed a right

¹⁵If Adrienne Mayor is correct that Hypsicratea was 30 to 40 years younger than Mithridates VI [Mayor, Adrienne. The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithridates Rome’s Deadliest Enemy. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010, p. 304], then she would have been born between 100 and 90 BCE. As further discussed *infra*, Mayor also believes that Hypsicratea is the same person as Hypsicrates of Amisus, the historian. Amazons, pp. 350-351; Poison King, p. 367. Mayor is credited with making this connection between Hypsicratea and Hypsicrates. Lucian (125 CE to c. 180 CE) says that Hypsicrates lived to be 92. “*Long Lives*” (Macrob. 22. Available at <http://www.attalus.org/translate/macrobii.html>). Thus, Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates would have lived until the end of, or shortly after, the 1st century BCE.

¹⁶Mithridates VI “met an Amazon [Hypsicratea] who became his companion in love and in battle.” Mayor, Amazons, p. 339.

¹⁷Plutarch says that Hypsicratea first cared for Mithridates VI’s horses and then became his concubine. Pompey, Vol. VI, Chap. 32.8. However, in 2013 at an underwater site in Phanagoria, Russian archaeologists found a statue base with the inscription, “Hypsikrates, Wife of King Mithridates Eupator Dionysus, Farewell.” Mayor changes ‘Farewell’ to ‘Love and Respect.’ Amazons p. 351. Vladimir Putin deemed the site so important that he participated in some of the dives. The inscription confirms that Hypsicratea was commonly known as Hypsicrates. Although Hypsicratea likely was a concubine at some time, the inscription also recognizes her as the [sixth] wife of Mithridates VI. Mayor (Poison King, p. 369) suggests that the statue was erected during the reign of Mithridates VI’s granddaughter, Dynamis. She was the daughter of an unnamed Sarmatian princess (the Sarmatians being descendants of the Scythians and the Amazons) and Mithridates VI’s son, Pharnaces II. Dynamis and her husband, Asander, assumed the monarchy of Bosphoran Kingdom after Pharnaces II’s unsuccessful uprising against the Romans in 47 BCE.

¹⁸Mayor says that Mithridates VI recruited many of his warriors, including Hypsicratea, from the Caucasus region. Amazons, p. 335. Mayor also says that Hypsicratea’s name means “Mountain Strength” and that she was from the Caucasus region. Poison King, p. 304. If so, Mayor’s belief that Hypsicratea and Hypsicrates of Amisus are one and the same, supports the argument that ‘Amisus’ refers only to the place where Hypsicrates’ manumission occurred in 47 BCE (see Footnote 11, *supra*). Of course, “Mountain Strength” would reflect a birthplace in Amisus or the Caucasus region since the Pontic Mountains rise south of Amisus and the Caucasus Mountains define the Caucasus region. In any event, Amisus was just east of Sinope, but still in the region attributed to the Amazons. See Alakbarli, Farid. Legends in History Fearless Women Warriors in Life and Lore, Azerbaijan International, Spring 2005 (13.1), pp. 74-77. However, Alfred Duggan calls her a Greek concubine, but gives no support for his statement. See He Died Old. London: Faber and Faber, 1958, p. 174. See also Christine de Pizan (1364 CE to 1430) who quotes Boccaccio favorably when describing Hypsicratea as being used to the finer things in life, but having transformed herself into a warrior to be with her husband. The Book of the City of Ladies. London: Penguin Books, 1999, pp. 110-112.

¹⁹McGing, Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI, pp. 88-108.

²⁰The primary sources for Mithridates VI and the Mithridatic Wars are Roman historians such as Appian, Cassius Dio, and Plutarch. As such, they may be biased as Mithridates VI was one of Rome’s most successful enemies. He fought several Roman generals from the late Roman Republic. Lucius Cornelius Sulla commanded the Romans in the first of three Mithridatic Wars (88 BCE to 85 BCE). It ended with the Treaty of Dardanos in 85 BCE. Lucius Licinius Murena commanded the Romans in the second war (84 BCE to 81 BCE). That war ended inconclusively with a Roman retreat. Lucius Licinius Lucullus began the third war against Mithridates VI (73 BCE to 63 BCE). He was replaced by Gnaeus Pompey Magnus (Pompey the Great) who finally claimed victory with the death of Mithridates VI in 63 BCE.

manly spirit and extravagant daring (for which reason the king was wont to call her Hypsicrates), and at this time, mounted and accoutred like a Persian warrior always manly and extremely bold.”²¹

Mithridates VI's last major victory came in 67 BCE at Zela where he routed Lucullus and his army. Twenty years later, Julius Caesar, possibly accompanied by his historian, Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates (see Footnotes 15 and 22, defeated Mithridates' son, Pharnaces II,²² at Zela. However, by 66 BCE, Mithridates VI was in retreat after a major victory by Pompey at Dasteira in Lesser Armenia. Mithridates VI and 800 of his horsemen escaped, but, according to Plutarch, with the exception of his concubine, Hypsicratea, and two others, they all abandoned him.²³ They headed for Panticapaeum (modern Kerch), the capital of the Kingdom of Bosporus in the Crimea, where Mithridates' son, Machares, reigned. On the way, he gave his companions, including Hypsicratea, vials of poison to use if they were captured. When told that his father was nearing Panticapaeum, Machares fled to Chersonesus and committed suicide.²⁴ Mithridates assumed rule of Machares' Kingdom and took up residence at Panticapaeum.

²¹*Pompey*. Vol. VI, Chap. 32.8. As with Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates, references to Cleopatra VII as a male occurred throughout her reign. Examples given by Roller include: (1) the 'Bucheum stele' dating to 51 BCE in which she is first called 'King' using the masculine gender and then again using the feminine gender; and (2) at her death in 30 BCE, when "her maid Charmion used the masculine gender to call her a 'descendant of many kings.'" *Cleopatra*, p. 177. A simple reading suggests that she was referring to the Ptolemaic line, but it could refer to other kings as well. In footnote 40 to his p. 177 statement about Cleopatra VII, Roller says that Hypsicratea would have considered it a badge of honor for Mithridates VI to call her 'Hypsicrates,' inferring that references to Cleopatra VII in the masculine gender would be an honor as well. Roller argues that the Cleopatra 'male' references are stronger statements than, e.g., female pharaohs such as Hatshepsut wearing the 'false beard.' See for example, the limestone stele at the Louvre captioned "Queen Cleopatra making an Offering to the Goddess Isis" on which she is shown as a male sans false beard. See also, Fletcher, *Cleopatra*, p. 63 "Cleopatra's presentation of herself on equal terms with a male King" Fletcher also says that Cleopatra III often was seen in traditional male attire. Perhaps this was a Ptolemaic or Mithridatic familial tradition.

²²As indicated in Footnote 15, *supra*, and discussed later in the text, Mayor believes that Hypsicratea outlived Mithridates VI and reinvented herself as Hypsicrates of Amisus, one of Caesar's historians. *Amazons*, pp. 350-351. Pharnaces II was a son of Mithridates VI's first wife and sister, Queen Laodicea, whom he married when she was 16. Mithridates VI poisoned Laodicea in 90 BCE when he learned that she was plotting to kill him after he discovered that she had been unfaithful while he was away.

²³Plutarch, *Pompey*. Vol. VI Chap. 32.7 and 8. Appian (*Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVI, §111) says that Mithridates VI's daughters, Mithridatis and Nyssa, committed suicide with him in 63 BCE at Panticapaeum. Their whereabouts are unknown after 80 BCE when they were betrothed to Ptolemy XII and his brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus, and 63 BCE when they died with their father, Mithridates VI. Thus, it's possible they were Plutarch's "two others." Although Mayor (see Footnote 88, *infra*) suggests that Mithridatis and Nyssa were already at Panticapaeum, it seems questionable, since Machares had become a 'friend' of the Romans. Some argue that one of the "two others" had to be Mithridates VI's bodyguard, Bituitus, who never left his side. However, an argument can be made that since "[Mithridates] considered that even while he was wandering in adversity he was always at home because Hypsicratea was in exile with him" (Valerius Maximus [c. 20 BCE to c. 50 CE] *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX*), the reference to Mithridates VI, Hypsicratea and two others, could be a reference to the close family of Mithridates, Hypsicratea, Mithridatis and Nyssa, even though non-family members were traveling with them as well.

²⁴Mithridates VI killed his mother, his brother, three sons and three daughters. Appian, *Mithr. Wars*, Book XII, Chap. XVI, §112. Machares thus had good reason to fear his father. Mayor found names of 23 children of Mithridates VI. *Poison King* p. 114. If she is correct, then at least 17 children outlived Mithridates VI. Machares likely was still alive as his father approached because Lucullus had been protecting him as a "friend and ally of the Roman people." See, Hingson, Jesse and Aidan Sheerin, *Anti-Roman Insurgency and the Significance of Popular Support during the Mithridatic Wars, 88-63 BCE*. http://www.ju.edu/JRAD/Documents/Adian_The_Mithridatic_Wars.pdf. Cassius Dio says that some of Mithridates' sons were kidnapped and conveyed to Pompey. Appian says five sons. Artaphernes, Cyrus, Oxathres, Darius, and

The end, at least for Mithridates VI, came in 63 BCE at Panticapaeum when his son, Pharnaces II, convinced Mithridates VI's troops to revolt and align with the Romans. Whether there is sufficient evidence to show that Hypsicratea outlived him is not essential to our argument that a daughter of Hypsicratea and Mithridates VI was the mother of Cleopatra VII, since both candidate daughters (Mithridatis and Nyssa) were alive for more than a decade before Cleopatra's birth in 70-69 BCE. We reference Mayor's belief that she may have survived as Hypsicrates, the historian, because it supports our premise that members of the Mithridatic court had ties to the Ptolemies even after 63 BCE.²⁵

The reports of Mithridates' death and who died with him at Panticapaeum vary. Cassius Dio (155–235 CE) and Appian say Mithridates VI tried to poison himself. Cassius Dio says he first removed his wives and remaining children by poison so that they wouldn't be taken captive and displayed in Pompey's triumph and then tried to poison himself. When that failed, his son, Pharnaces II's men "hastened his end with their swords and spears."²⁶ Appian says that the two daughters were with him at Panticapaeum and took poison with their father. It "took effect on them at once; but not upon Mithridates [as there wasn't enough left]" Mithridates VI then had his trusted body guard, Bituitus, kill him.²⁷ Although some suggest that Hypsicratea also was there at the end,²⁸ she is not mentioned by Appian or Cassius Dio. Mayor suggests that if Hypsicratea also drank the vial of poison given her by Mithridates VI, she may have been strong enough to survive it.²⁹ However, as none of the historians who recounted the death of Mithridates VI would have been present, there is a question as to the source of the details. Two possibilities would be (1) Bituitus, the bodyguard; and/or (2) Hypsicratea, if indeed she was with him and his daughters at the end.

Mayor suggests that Hypsicratea may have been taken prisoner while using her masculine name, Hypsicrates.³⁰ Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates thus could be the slave of Julius Caesar, Hypsicrates of Amisus, who ultimately became one of his personal historians.³¹ Mayor also reminds us that Strabo says that this Hypsicrates accompanied Julius Caesar on his campaigns as an expert on "military fortifications of the Bosporan Kingdom" and the Caucasian Amazons.³² As previously indicated, Hypsicratea would have spent many years at the Mithridatic court and received substantial exposure to Hellenistic learning from

Xerxes, and two daughters, Orsabaris and Eupatra, were paraded in Pompey's triumph in 61 BCE (*Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVII, §117). Pharnaces II likely survived until 47 BCE by siding with the Romans as his brother, Machares, had. Appian, *Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XV, §102.

²⁵"This Hypsicrates, serving as an historian while accompanying Caesar on his campaigns ... was known as an authority on ... fortifications of the Bosporan Kingdom and the Amazons of the Caucasus region." Mayor, *Amazons* p. 350

²⁶For Cassius Dio's version, see Loeb Classical Library, Vol. III, Book 37.

²⁷For Appian's version with the bodyguard, whose fate is not mentioned, see *Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVI, §111), but see Mayor (*Poison King* p. 347) suggesting that the bodyguard was the only witness and may not have survived.

²⁸Mayor, *Poison King* p. 356. An illustration taken from Boccaccio's *On Famous Women* showing Mithridates, Hypsicratea, the two daughters and Bituitus drinking the poison from a chalice is also on p. 356. In the edition of *On Famous Women* referenced for this article (Boccaccio, Giovanni, *On Famous Women*, New York: Italica Press, 1961, p. 172), Mithridates VI simply poisoned Hypsicratea along with his other wives, concubines and children.

²⁹There are many scenarios in which Hypsicratea could have escaped death at Panticapaeum or elsewhere. See Mayor, *Poison King* pp. 356-357 and Mayor, *Amazons*, p. 350 for some of these scenarios. See also Mayor, *Poison King* pp. 360-361, regarding speculation that Mithridates VI and some of his family escaped north perhaps with the assent of Pharnaces II.

³⁰ Mayor, *Amazons*, p. 350. Mayor also says "A prisoner of war by this name [Hypsicrates] was freed by Julius Caesar in Amisum, Pontus in 47 BC.

³¹Mayor, *Poison King*, p. 366-369.

³² Mayor, *Poison King* p. 366.

its resident philosophers, poets and historians.³³ Mayor's proposal that Hypsicratea is also Hypsicrates, the historian, is reasonable. Thus, Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates may have been a historical source for the descriptions of Mithridates VI's death.

Pharnaces II shipped his father's body, the bodies of members of the royal family who died, and all of his hostages to Pompey in Sinope and took over the Kingdom of Bosphorus as a client of the Romans.³⁴ When Mithridates' body arrived, it had decayed to the point of being unrecognizable.³⁵ Pompey refused to look upon the body; he ordered that Mithridates VI be buried in the royal necropolis of his forbearers "because he admired his [Mithridates' VI's] great deeds and considered him the best of the kings of his time."³⁶

With Mithridates VI dead, Pompey finally claimed victory. According to Appian,³⁷ Pompey's third triumphal procession, which was held in 61 BCE, was his most magnificent. It even included what was said to be the cloak of Alexander the Great, which had been in Mithridates' possession. More importantly, defeated generals, pirates, royal families, and hostages were led in defeat through Rome; the names of those who had been killed were carried in the possession as well. Appian says that five sons and two daughters of Mithridates were paraded in the Triumph.³⁸ Because of the prestige that captives brought to a triumph, especially those known by their names or deeds, it would seem that, if Hypsicratea had been among them, she would have been mentioned. However, no known source mentions Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates as being in the triumph – dead or alive. Thus, "whether Hypsicrates finally swallowed the fatal potion, or by what death she passed from the world, historians have not told us."³⁹

As for Mayor's belief that Hypsicratea became Hypsicrates,⁴⁰ they did have had much in common. They were more or less the same age and were from the same general region. Having fought at Mithridates' side during the third Mithridatic War, Hypsicratea certainly had the background to write as the historian, Hypsicrates, on the Pontic region, and, if indeed she was that historian, her years with Mithridates VI should have made it easy to endure travel with Caesar and his army even to Egypt in 48 BCE. As

³³See McGing, *Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI* pp. 88-108.

³⁴After years of peace, in 49 BCE, Pharnaces II took advantage of civil war between Caesar and Pompey, and began to overrun neighboring countries. In 48 BCE Pharnaces II defeated the Roman army sent to protect the region and overran Pontus. See additional discussion in the next section.

³⁵Plutarch says that Pharnaces II sent "many dead bodies of the royal family including the body of Mithridates himself. The body was not easy to recognize by the face...." *Pompey*. Vol. VI, Chap. 42.2. According to Appian, Pharnaces II sent not only his father's body to Sinope, but also "all the numerous hostages" As mentioned elsewhere herein, there is no mention of Hypsicratea as being among the bodies or hostages sent to Sinope. Additionally, there is no mention of her, or representations of her, being paraded in Pompey's Triumph in 61 BCE. Mayor says that Mithridatis and Nyssa were among the dead sent to Sinope. *Poison King*, p. 352.

³⁶Appian, *Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVI, §113. He also says Mithridates VI was buried in the royal tombs of Sinope. However, Plutarch says he was buried in the traditional necropolis at Amisus. *Pompey*, Chap. 42.2. See also Hojte, Jakob M. *The Death and Burial of Mithridates VI*. <http://pontos.dk/publications/books/bss-9-files/bss-9-07-hojte-2>.

³⁷*Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVII, §116. See also Temelini, Mark, *Pompey's Politics and the Presentation of his Theatre-Temple Complex*, 61–52 BCE. *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia*, Vol. 7.A.4 2006. <http://www.Ut.Ee/Klassik/Sht/>

³⁸See Footnote 24, *supra*, for a list of names given by Appian, who also says that female rulers of the Scythians were in the procession. Plutarch says "besides the chief pirates, were the son of Tigranes the Armenian with his wife and daughter, Zosime, a wife of King Tigranes himself, Aristobulus, king of the Jews, a sister and five children of Mithridates, Scythian women, and hostages given by the Iberians, by the Albanians, and by the king of Commagene." *Pompey*, Chap 45.5.

³⁹ See Clayton, Ellen. *Female Warriors, Memorials of Female Valour and Heroism, From the Mythological Ages to the Present Era*. London; Tinsley Brothers, 1879. Vol. I, p. 50 (also available at <http://www.gutenberg.org>).

⁴⁰ See Footnote 15, *supra*.

mentioned previously, no works of Hypsicrates survive. However, there are numerous references to those works.⁴¹

Cleopatra VII – The Pharaoh; Part 1

Cleopatra Thea Philopator or Cleopatra VII was born in late 70 BCE or early 69 BCE.⁴² She was the last pharaoh of Egypt⁴³ and the last ruler of the Macedonian dynasty in Egypt.⁴⁴ The name Cleopatra comes from the Greek ‘kleo,’ meaning glory, and ‘pater,’ meaning father.⁴⁵ Hence, Cleopatra is the ‘glory of her father’ or ‘glory of the father land.’⁴⁶ Her father was Ptolemy Theos Philopator Philadelphos Neos Dionysos.⁴⁷ He was also known as ‘Auletes’⁴⁸ or Ptolemy XII. Before dying in 51 BCE, he appointed Cleopatra VII and her eldest brother, Ptolemy XIII as co-regents of Egypt. Except for a hiatus in 49 BCE and 48 BCE when Rome recognized Ptolemy XIII as sole ruler, Cleopatra VII ruled Egypt from 51 BCE until her death on August 12, 30 BCE.

⁴¹See, e.g., Strabo, “Asander, who, according to Hypsicrates, walled off the isthmus of the Chersonesus...” *Geography*, Vol. III, Book VII, Ch. 4. See also Footnote 11, *supra*, and Footnotes 95 and 96, *infra*.

⁴²Grant p. 3.

⁴³As indicated in Footnote 3, *supra*, technically, Caesarion, Cleopatra VII’s son by Julius Caesar, was the last Pharaoh of Egypt. He was strangled on Octavian’s orders on August 23, 30 BCE, thus living for 11 days after his mother’s death on August 12, 30 BCE. He was 17 when he died. After Egypt was annexed to the Roman Republic on August 1, 30 BCE, Octavian and subsequent Roman emperors also were called pharaohs of Egypt, even though many of them never travelled to Egypt.

⁴⁴Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 BCE. He founded Alexandria to serve as a nexus between Upper Egypt and Macedonia. He left Egypt for further conquests, dying in Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian palace in 323 BCE. His general, Ptolemy, hijacked Alexander’s casket near Damascus and took it back to Egypt. He ruled as satrap of Egypt until 305 BCE, when he took the title of Ptolemy I ‘Soter’ (‘savior’). The Ptolemaic Dynasty, designated as Egypt’s 31st Dynasty, ruled Egypt for 275 years, ending with Octavian’s defeat of Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE. As mentioned in Footnote 77, *infra*, Ptolemy I may have been Alexander’s half brother.

⁴⁵Bevan, E. R. *The House of Ptolemy*. London: Methuen Publishing, 1927, p. 271. Also available at <http://www.gutenberg.org>. The first Cleopatra (Cleopatra I) to enter the Ptolemaic line was a daughter of Antiochus III, the sixth the ruler of the Syrian House of Seleucus. Cleopatra I married Ptolemy V in 193 BCE/192 BCE. Bevan adds that “The most usual name for queens and princesses in the house of Seleucus was Laodice, but that name had already been given to Antiochus’ elder daughter Cleopatra ... has not before now been met with in the house of Seleucus. But there had been ... a Cleopatra of great note in the Greek world, the sister of Alexander the Great [his only full sister by their parents, Phillip II and Olympias] In all probability it was the association of the name with the family of the great Alexander which led ... Antiochus III to give the name to one of his daughters.” ‘Cleopatra’ appears to have become a popular name among the Mithridatic, Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties because of their relation with Alexander the Great. Bevan incorrectly says that Cleopatra I’s mother, Laodice III, was the daughter of Mithridates I, the founder of the Kingdom of Pontus, but she actually was the daughter of Mithridates II and Laodice II, and the sister of Mithridatis III.

⁴⁶An alternative meaning is ‘She who comes from a glorious father.’ The ‘Thea Philopater’ part of Cleopatra VII’s name essentially means ‘Father-loving Goddess.’

⁴⁷According to Bennett and others, Ptolemy XII is first Ptolemy known to use the name ‘Neos Dionysus’ around 64/3 BCE. See http://www.tyndalehouse.com/egypt/ptolemies/ptolemy_xii. As this date generally coincides with the death of Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysus, one can argue that Ptolemy XII saw himself as Mithridates VI’s successor. Almost 30 years later, Marc Antony took the Hellenistic title of New Dionysus and Cleopatra took the title of Isis. See Goldsworthy, Adrian. *Antony and Cleopatra*. New Haven: Yale University Press 2010, pp. 298-299. See also Footnote 99.

⁴⁸Ptolemy XII was the first of the Macedonian rulers to include ‘Theos’ or ‘God’ in his name. The nickname, Auletes, means the ‘Piper’ or ‘Flute Player’ as Ptolemy XII reputedly played a flute. See also, Fletcher, *Cleopatra*, p. 68, who indicates that ‘Auletes’ is an honorific title in a cult of Dionysus. He added Dionysus to his name about the time that Mithridates VI died. See also e.g., Bevan who indicates that there also are references to him as ‘Bastard’ or ‘Nothos’ as well because his mother is unknown.

Cleopatra VII began a policy of attending ancient Egyptian ceremonies.⁴⁹ She was the first of the Ptolemies to speak Egyptian in addition to her native Greek and was proficient in several other languages which indicated “an unusual background to her education ...”⁵⁰ The only other famous polyglot in the first century BCE was Mithridates VI of Pontus, who, according to Pliny the Elder, “was king of twenty-two nations, administered their laws in as many languages, and could harangue each of them, without employing an interpreter.”⁵¹

Because Cleopatra VII likely began studying toxicology during her father’s lifetime,⁵² some argue that she ingested poison to kill herself on August 12, 30 BCE, rather than trusting the bite of an asp. This is substantiated in part by expert analysis of descriptions of her death. According to Dietrich Mebs, the symptoms occurring after an asp bite are very unpleasant, and include vomiting, diarrhea and respiratory failure.⁵³ However, no one reports this painful scenario. In fact, Cleopatra’s maid, Charmoin, is found arranging Cleopatra’s crown before she too dies.⁵⁴ Support for the argument that it was poison includes: (1) her father, Ptolemy XII, and her uncle, Ptolemy of Cyprus, were captured by Mithridates VI and lived in his court for almost a decade; (2) after Mithridates VI died, Zopyros, a toxicologist from his court ended up in Ptolemy XII’s court; (3) her uncle, Ptolemy of Cyprus, committed suicide by poison when he was defeated by Rome in 58 BCE; and (4) “Cleopatra reportedly carried out many toxicological experiments during her lifetime.”⁵⁵ Mebs and his colleague, Christoph Schäfer, thus believe that Cleopatra VII drank a ‘cocktail’ made of opium, aconitum (also known as wolfsbane) and hemlock, a highly poisonous plant from the parsley family that is believed to have been used to poison Socrates. Her use of poison, whether by snake bite or ingestion, was successful, while unfortunately, Mithridates VI, had to be helped with a sword.

Cleopatra VII – The Pharaoh; Part 2

Cleopatra VII’s father, Ptolemy XII, was born sometime after 117 BCE and before 95 BCE, possibly as an illegitimate son of Ptolemy IX. Around 103 BCE, Ptolemy XII and his brothers, Ptolemy of Cyprus, and Ptolemy XI Alexander II were sent to Cos for safety by their grandmother, Cleopatra III⁵⁶ as their

⁴⁹Roller (Cleopatra, p. 166) says that Cleopatra VII was the first Ptolemy to be recorded as having participated in an ancient Egyptian ceremony such as the one held at the Bucheum.

⁵⁰Plutarch says Cleopatra VII “could pass from one language to another; so that there were few of the barbarian nations that she answered by an interpreter ...” Antony 27.3-4. See also C. Bennett in http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Egypt/ptolemies/cleopatra_vii_fr.htm. Cleopatra VII’s education likely was at the Library of Alexandria and the Serapeum. See Fletcher, Cleopatra, p. 81, “Able to consult works in the Royal Library, which housed Alexander’s personal journals and books ... [and F]ollowing the family literary tradition, which included Ptolemy I’s biography of Alexander.” Her extensive travels must also have played a role. And see, <http://how-to-learn-any-language.com/e/polyglots/mithridates-and-cleopatra.html>.

⁵¹Natural History, VII, 24

⁵²Roller [Footnote 1, *supra*] says that Zopyros advised Ptolemy XII about antidotes to poison as he had done previously for Mithridates VI.

⁵³<http://knowledgera-theworld.blogspot.com/2010/07/cleopatra-killed-by-drug-cocktail.html>, Cf. Plutarch saying that Cleopatra’s experiments led her to conclude that an asp bite was preferable. Lives: Antony, Chap. 71.4.

⁵⁴See also, Cassius Dio, Roman History, Vol. VI, Book LI, 14.1. Loeb Classical Library, “No one knows clearly in what way she perished.” See also Strabo, Geography. XVII 10.

⁵⁵Mebs, Footnote 53, *supra*. There also is speculation that Berenike IV poisoned Cleopatra V.

⁵⁶See, Bevan, The House of Ptolemies, p. 357 “aged only 44 or 45” when he died in 51 BCE, making his birth date 95 or 96 BCE. Bennett offers A. Bouché-Leclercq, Histoire des Lagides, p. 357, for another source that says Ptolemy XII was born in the mid 90s. Bennett, however, believes that Ptolemy XII was more likely born (in Cyprus) in about 117 BCE. He bases this on the assumption that Ptolemy XII was one of the sons left behind in Egypt when his father, Ptolemy IX was expelled in 107 BCE. He then cites Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews at 13.13.1) for the argument that Ptolemy XII’s grandmother, Cleopatra III, sent him to Cos for safety in 103 BCE

father, Ptolemy IX, was threatening to retake Egypt. Nevertheless, in 88 BCE, all three were captured by Mithridates VI, who, as discussed *supra*, had begun his war with the Roman Republic. Mithridates VI took them to Pontus. Ptolemy XI Alexander II escaped to Rome in 84 BCE and returned to Egypt in 80 BCE, but was promptly killed by Alexandrians.⁵⁷ In 80 BCE, while still in Pontus, Ptolemy XII and Ptolemy of Cyprus were betrothed to Mithridates VI's daughters, Mithridatis and Nyssa.⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter, Ptolemy XII was invited back to Egypt in 80 BCE by the Alexandrians as they had killed Ptolemy XI Alexander II. Ptolemy XII married Cleopatra V Tryphaena⁵⁹ in 80 or 79 BCE and was crowned Pharaoh in 76 BCE.⁶⁰ At about the same time, his brother became king of Cyprus.

As indicated in the Introduction to this article, despite all that is known of Cleopatra VII's father, her mother has been unknown. Also, although most sources say that Cleopatra VII was born and raised in Alexandria,⁶¹ her birthplace is questionable because of the issue regarding her mother's identity.

We believe the list below provides possible candidates for the mother of Cleopatra VII.

Possible candidates for Cleopatra VII's Mother

1. Cleopatra V/Cleopatra VI (Likely the same person);
2. An unnamed Ptolemaic family member who was the daughter of Ptolemy X and Berenike III Philopator, but only if Cleopatra V Tryphaena was not the daughter of Ptolemy X and Berenike III;
3. An Egyptian, possibly from the family of the High Priests of Memphis;⁶² and
4. A daughter of Mithridates VI, being either Mithridatis or Nyssa.⁶³

when Ptolemy IX threatened to invade Egypt. Although Cos gave sanctuary to fugitives from Rome, they surrendered the young Ptolemies to Mithridates VI without resistance. See also, Fletcher, *Cleopatra*, p. 85 indicating that Ptolemy XII was in his mid-fifties when he died in 51 BCE. That would mean he was born in the period 104 BCE to 106 BCE, and was sent to Cos in 103 BCE.

⁵⁷Ptolemy XI Alexander II escaped to Sulla's camp during the first Mithridatic War. Sulla took him to Rome. As he was the only 'legitimate' heir to the Egyptian crown (the mother[s] of Ptolemy of Cyprus and his older brother, Ptolemy XII, being uncertain), Sulla sent him on to Egypt to become Pharaoh with his elderly cousin, Berenike III. However, Ptolemy XI Alexander II had Berenike III assassinated and, because she had been well liked by the Egyptians, the Egyptians killed him. See Bevan, E. R., *The House of Ptolemy*. London: Methuen Publishing, 1927, p 343. Also available at www.gutenberg.org.

⁵⁸See Matyszak, Philip, *Mithridates the Great*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military 2010 P. 97. See also C. Bennett in http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Egypt/ptolemies/cleopatra_vii_fr.htm and Appian, *Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XIV, §111. See also Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy*, at p 345, "if Ptolemy XI[I] and his brother had been brought up at the Pontic court with the royal children, it would be intelligible that Mithridates ... rather than see [Ptolemy] Alexander II, Rome's nominee, installed as king, should have seized the opportunity to dispatch the young men to Egypt to become kings in opposition to Rome. And he might very well have sought to bind them to his interests ... by arranging a marriage between the two young Ptolemies and two of his daughters If the young men proceeded from Pontus to Egypt by way of Syria [then controlled by Mithridates' ally, Tigranes], it would account for Cicero's statement, that Ptolemy XI[I] was in Syria ..." when Ptolemy XI Alexander II was killed by the Egyptians.

⁵⁹Cleopatra V Tryphaena was the sister, niece or cousin of Ptolemy XII. Although there are references to Cleopatra V Tryphaena and Cleopatra VI, they likely were the same person. See e.g. Schiff, *Cleopatra*, p. 8, Cleopatra VII "was actually the sixth Cleopatra." A minority argue that Cleopatra VI was the second daughter of Cleopatra V Tryphaena and Ptolemy XII, but she died as an infant and thus, Strabo discounted her when he said that Berenike IV was Ptolemy XII's only legitimate daughter. *Geography*. 17.1.11.

⁶⁰See C. Bennett in footnote 15 of http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Egypt/ptolemies/cleopatra_vii_fr.htm.

⁶¹Fletcher, *Cleopatra* p. 3.

⁶²Huss, Werner. *The Descent of Cleopatra Philopator*, Aegyptus 70, 1990, pp. 191–203. Huss suggested that Cleopatra VII's mother was an aristocratic Egyptian, possibly from the family of the High Priests of Memphis. By analogy, Pshereni-ptah II, High Priest of Memphis (the predecessor of Pshereni-ptah III on the British Museum stele referenced in Footnotes 70 and 71) married Berenike, a supposed daughter of Ptolemy VIII. See also Roller, *Cleopatra*, p. 165.

Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra V Tryphaena had a daughter, Berenike IV, between 80 and 75 BCE. Strabo's comment that only this eldest daughter, Berenike IV, was legitimate, suggests that her mother was Ptolemy XII's wife, Cleopatra V Tryphaena.⁶⁴ If Strabo was correct, Cleopatra VII, her younger sister, Arsinoe IV, and her brothers, Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV were not legitimate, and thus Cleopatra V Tryphaena was not their mother. Consistent with the forgoing, the mother(s) of Cleopatra VII and her younger sister and two brothers is not named.

Cleopatra V Tryphaena disappears from Egyptian documents shortly after Cleopatra VII's birth in late 70 BCE or early 69 BCE.⁶⁵ She may reappear briefly as a co-regent with her daughter, Berenike IV,⁶⁶ who usurped her father, Ptolemy XII, in 58 BCE.⁶⁷ Ptolemy XII escaped to Rome with his daughter, Cleopatra VII, to seek military assistance. If Cleopatra V Tryphaena were Cleopatra VII's mother, it is curious that Cleopatra VII would escape with her father rather than remaining behind with that 'mother' (Cleopatra V), as Berenike IV, the 'legitimate' daughter did. Also, there is no mention of the other children (Arsinoe IV, Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV) as being with either Ptolemy XII or Cleopatra V Tryphaena. In Rome, Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra VII lived at a villa provided by Pompey, while Ptolemy XII tried to convince Rome to restore his reign.⁶⁸ By 55 BCE, Ptolemy XII had convinced Rome to invade Egypt. The invading army was led by Gabinius, with Marc Antony leading the cavalry. Ptolemy XII was back in power and Berenike IV and Cleopatra V were dead. Bevan recites that "the girl Cleopatra, already on this

⁶³As previously mentioned, Mithridatis and Nyssa were betrothed to Ptolemy XII and his brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus, in 80 BCE. Where they were from then until 63 BCE when they committed suicide with their father, Mithridates VI, is unknown. Dezsó Bernath says that Ptolemy XII had to repudiate his marriage to Mithridatis "In order to avoid any suspicion of [Ptolemy XII's] connivance with Mithridates VI while Rome was at war with him." Cleopatra: her Life and Reign... London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1907. Royal Library History Series. If Bernath's statement is correct, then Ptolemy XII was married/betrothed to Mithridatis and Ptolemy of Cyprus was betrothed to Nyssa. For purposes of this article, we state only that Ptolemy XII and his brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus, were betrothed to Mithridatis and Nyssa, without further specificity.

⁶⁴Strabo says that Ptolemy XII was "deposed by the Alexandrines [in 58 BCE] and of his three daughters, one, the eldest [Berenike IV], who was legitimate, they proclaimed queen; but his two sons, who were infants, were absolutely excluded from the succession." Geography, 17.1.11. As discussed below, some sources suggest that Strabo confused Berenike IV with Berenike III and that Cleopatra V Tryphaena was the mother of all of the children. However, since Strabo traveled extensively and spent several years (c. 30 BCE to 25 BCE) at Alexandria and its library, it would seem that he would have access to facts necessary to avoid confusion. A simpler explanation would be that he meant a Roman type of legitimacy, whereas the Egyptians would accept multiple wives. See *infra* and Footnotes 73 to 75, *infra*.

⁶⁵C. Bennett says that Cleopatra V Tryphaena 'disappeared' about six months after Cleopatra VII was born, which would be sometime in 69 BCE. She is not seen again until possibly 58 BCE. According to Fletcher, Cleopatra V returned to replace her brother and former husband, Ptolemy XII, when Berenike IV usurped her father. Cleopatra p. 76. Fletcher's statement 'former husband' is, of course, based on circumstantial evidence.

⁶⁶If Cleopatra V Tryphaena is the 'Cleopatra' who was co-regent with Berenike IV in 58 BCE (meaning that there is no separate Cleopatra VI), then Strabo says Cleopatra VII and her younger siblings are illegitimate. Cleopatra V/VI reigned briefly with Berenike IV when Berenike IV took control of Egypt in 58 BCE. Cleopatra V/Cleopatra VI disappears again a year later, possibly murdered by Berenike IV, who then became sole ruler. In 55 BCE, Berenike IV's father, Ptolemy XII, retook Egypt with help from the Romans. He had her beheaded. Fletcher says that Cleopatra V Tryphaena's image on the great pylon at Edfu, finished during the joint reign of Cleopatra V Tryphaena and Berenike IV, was covered over when Ptolemy XII returned to power in 55 BCE. Cleopatra, p. 74. See also Footnote 81, *infra*, regarding Berenike IV's second husband, Archaelus, who claimed to be a son of Mithridates VI.

⁶⁷Ptolemy XII was forced to leave Egypt after an uprising that occurred because, having his own issues with Rome, he ultimately had bribed Rome to grant him 'Friend of Rome' status in 59 BCE. He also failed to help his brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus, fend off Rome. Rather than being deposed, Ptolemy of Cyprus committed suicide, using poison.

⁶⁸Cleopatra's known travels included Greece, Asia Minor, Arabia and Italy as well as her famous trip to Tarsus in 41 BCE to visit Marc Antony.

first occasion of their meeting, made an impression upon the young Roman cavalry commander, Marc Antony.”⁶⁹

Although (1) Cleopatra V Tryphaena disappears from the record soon after Cleopatra VII’s birth; (2) only reappears briefly years later with her eldest (per Strabo, ‘legitimate’) daughter, Berenike IV, to drive Ptolemy XII and the young Cleopatra VII from Egypt; and (3) thereby becomes co-regent with Berenike IV, many sources still say that she must have been the only wife of Ptolemy XII. Hence, contrary to Strabo, she was the mother of all of Ptolemy XII’s children. Supporting Strabo, there is an inscription on the funeral stele of Pshereni-ptah III (c. 90 BCE to 41 BCE)⁷⁰ that says “The king [Ptolemy XII] ... passed up and down in his ship that he might behold both sides of the place. So soon as he landed ... he went into the temple escorted by his magnates and his wives and his royal children, with all the things prepared for the feast”⁷¹ This clearly suggests that Ptolemy XII had other wives.⁷² Some sources argue that those ‘wives’ were actually ‘ladies of the court’ and that native Egyptians misconstrued them as ‘wives.’

We believe that these sources did not fully consider Egyptian Dynastic and Ptolemaic (Macedonian) culture, neither of which would have expected monogamy. Consistently with Egyptian expectations, and contrary to the ‘ladies of the court’ theory, Fletcher says that Ptolemy XII, like his father Ptolemy IX (who married Cleopatra IV and then divorced her to marry Cleopatra Selene), likely had minor wives.⁷³ In Dynastic Egypt, there would be a ‘Great Royal Wife’ as well as minor wives.⁷⁴ The Macedonians were not much different: Phillip II, the father of Alexander the Great, had wives other than his mother, Olympias.⁷⁵ It would seem odd if the Macedonian tradition wasn’t continued in Egypt where it would be an expected custom. Thus, the possibility of Ptolemy XII having more than one wife, possible a ‘minor’ wife, shouldn’t be dismissed.

Another obvious argument would be that there was a mistress or two, which also is supported by Strabo’s assertion that Berenike IV is the only legitimate daughter. Some sources say that if Cleopatra VII were illegitimate, enemies of Caesar should have brought that up and, in fact, Strabo did mention it as a historical fact.⁷⁶ It also should be noted that Cleopatra VII’s father, Ptolemy XII, and her uncle, Ptolemy

⁶⁹Bevan, House of Ptolemies, at p 356.

⁷⁰The stele is now in the British Museum. Ptolemy XII had appointed Pshereni-ptah as high priest in 76 BCE, when, as he says on the stele, he was only 14.

⁷¹The translation can be found in several places. See, e.g., Bevan, House of Ptolemies, p. 348.

⁷²For the suggestion that these were “ladies of the court” or a royal entourage rather than wives and their children and that the clause was not directly translatable, see, e.g., C. Bennett citing Bevan p. 349 and Grant p. 4.

⁷³Fletcher says that Ptolemy IX (nicknamed ‘Chickpea’) may have had minor wives “usually termed ‘mistresses’ or ‘concubines’ by a monogamous culture like Rome.” Cleopatra p. 67. See also Bernath, Cleopatra, for support of her statement. There are examples even among the Romans – Marc Antony, while still married to his fifth wife Octavia, the sister of Octavian, possibly married Cleopatra VII under Egyptian law, but it would not have been valid under Roman law since Romans could not marry foreigners.

⁷⁴The minor wives and their children weren’t often recorded, but the children of such wives were educated at court. When there was no heir from the Great Royal Wife, a child from a minor wife could become the pharaoh, Tutmosis III being an example. Thus, Strabo’s comment about Berenike IV might simply mean that Cleopatra VII and her younger siblings were children of another wife. With Berenike IV dead, Cleopatra VII was the new ‘legitimate’ heir, even if her mother was a ‘minor wife.’

⁷⁵“Macedonians were polygamous, so marrying the female relatives of powerful opponents ... was a natural step for Philip.” [Internet]. 2015. The Biography.com website. <http://www.biography.com/people/philip-ii-of-macedon-21322787> [Accessed 22 Jun 2015].

⁷⁶Strabo was a contemporary of Cleopatra VII, so he may have been repeating information that was circulating in Rome during Caesar’s lifetime. It also is quite possible that he may not have been familiar enough with Egypt to understand the concept of ‘minor wives.’ Bennett references A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire des Lagides* II 145 n. 1,

of Cyprus, were illegitimate as were several other ancestors, including possibly Ptolemy I.⁷⁷ Also, Bennett says that if a mother “was of sufficient status...” illegitimacy might not be raised.⁷⁸ As previously suggested, children of a ‘minor wife’ might have that status. There also are examples of ‘divorce’ among the Ptolemies – Ptolemy IX divorced Cleopatra IV to marry Cleopatra Selene.⁷⁹

As mentioned previously, in 80 BCE, Mithridates VI betrothed his daughters, Mithridatis and Nyssa, to Ptolemy XII and his brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus, while they were held captive in Pontus. However, it has been uncertain whether they actually married, based on Appian’s statement that they were still maidens or still girls growing up together⁸⁰ when they committed suicide with their father, Mithridates VI, in 63 BCE. We do know that shortly after the betrothals, Ptolemy XII returned to Egypt (to become Pharaoh) and married Cleopatra V Tryphaena in 80 BCE or 79 BCE.

It is entirely consistent with the established betrothal of Ptolemy XII to a daughter of Mithridates VI that the daughter would be with Ptolemy XII in Egypt in 70 BCE. She would thus be safe from the vicissitudes of the Mithridatic War in Pontus. Having his daughter in the entourage of a pharaoh would be also consistent with Mithridates VI’s goal of cementing a relationship with Rome’s bread basket, Egypt. Similarly, by later returning to Pontus to be with her father, she could be seen as one of Mithridates’ hostages possibly to be a bargaining chip for use in negotiations between Rome and Pontus.

for the argument that Strabo confused Berenike IV with a statement in Pausanias 1.9.3 that Berenike III was the only legitimate child of Ptolemy IX (meaning that her mother was one of Ptolemy IX’s wives, Cleopatra Selene or Cleopatra IV). Bennett argues that Pausanias’ statement Berenike III being legitimate is supportable, but that, “Strabo’s statement [regarding Berenike IV] is not so supported, and so is I think correctly regarded as a misremembered account of the legitimacy of Berenike III.” However, Strabo lived in Alexandria from shortly after Cleopatra’s death in 30 BCE to about 25 BCE, thus making it seem unlikely that Strabo erred. He could, instead have been referring to the Roman, as opposed to the Egyptian sense of legitimacy, meaning that Cleopatra VII’s mother was a ‘minor wife,’ i.e., Mithridatis or Nyssa. It also can be argued that Cleopatra VII only became a real threat to Rome in the time of Augustus, when she sided with Marc Antony, and that questioning her legitimacy before that might well have been offset by Egypt’s value to Rome.

⁷⁷Ptolemy I’s father was rumored to be Phillip II and not his mother Arsinoe’s husband, Lagus. Thus Ptolemy I would be the half-brother of Alexander the Great. The mothers of Berenike III and Cleopatra V Tryphaena (Cleopatra VII’s putative mother) also are uncertain. Cleopatra Selene (the daughter of Ptolemy IX and Cleopatra III) may have been the mother of Berenike III and Berenike III may have been the mother of Cleopatra V. Through marriage Cleopatra Selene became a queen of Syria; she was killed by Tigranes the Great in 69 BCE when he attempted to regain control of Syriatic Armenia. Cleopatra VII’s son by Julius Caesar also was illegitimate. Her children by Marc Antony may have been as well, but only in the Roman sense as some sources say he married Cleopatra under Egyptian law.

⁷⁸http://www.tyndalehouse.com/egypt/ptolemies/ptolemy_xii. See also Livius (<http://livius.org/dynasties/ptolemies>) indicating that an important aspect of the Ptolemaic monarchy was the prominence of women (including the seven ‘queens’ named Cleopatra), some of whom had power themselves (Arsinoe II [see Footnote 6], Cleopatra I after the death of Ptolemy V [see Footnote 6], Cleopatra II from about 130 to 127 BCE after ousting Ptolemy VIII and his wife/daughter Cleopatra III, she then ruled with Ptolemy IX and X; Berenike III, Berenike IV with her mother/sister Cleopatra V/VI) and finally, Cleopatra VII.

⁷⁹Livius at http://www.livius.org/ps-pz/ptolemies/ptolemy_ix_soter.html.

⁸⁰Appian, *Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVI, §111. What Appian meant is unclear. Bevan argued that the intended sense was that they were brought up with the kings of Egypt and Cyprus to whom they had been engaged. See Footnotes 84, 85 and 92, *infra*. The children of a concubine of Mithridates’ are listed as daughters Nyssa, Eupatra, Cleopatra the Younger, Mithridatis and Orsabaris and sons, Cyrus, Xerxes, Darius, Ariarathes IX, Artaphernes, Oxathres, and Exipodras. Although the concubine is not named, multiple sources indicate that Hypsicratea was a concubine of Mithridates VI, before marrying him.

Given that there is no definitive identification of Cleopatra VII's mother, circumstantial evidence suggests that Mithridatis and Nyssa should be considered as a strong candidates.⁸¹ Hutan Ashrafain makes an interesting argument that Cleopatra VII's mother is not Ptolemaic because she did not exhibit certain genetic disorders, as well as obesity, which were evident in many of the Ptolemies.⁸² Thus, Cleopatra VII would have had a more heterogeneous genetic makeup, meaning that her mother was not a 'Ptolemy.' Additional evidence may come from remains found near Ephesus that may be those of her sister, Arsinoe IV.⁸³ The study of these remains has not yet been published.

It is unlikely that Cleopatra VII could have been at the court of Mithridates VI for any significant length of time since she was only six or seven when he committed suicide in 63 BCE. Her whereabouts before 58 BCE are not known. As for Mithridates VI's daughters, some sources say that they were quite young when betrothed to Ptolemy XII and his brother in 80 BCE.⁸⁴ Others however, suggest that they were more the age of Ptolemy XII⁸⁵ who would have been 20 to 40 years old.⁸⁶ Of course, since no one knows where Mithridatis and/or Nyssa were between 80 BCE and 63 BCE when they likely committed suicide with their father, Mithridates VI, one or both daughters could have been with Ptolemy XII when Cleopatra VII was conceived in 70 BCE, particularly since Ptolemy XII was also not necessarily in Egypt then. As mentioned previously, Hysicratea simply disappears even though she should have been in Panticapaeum with Mithridates VI, Mithridatis and Nyssa for at least some period of time.

As previously mentioned, the mother of Mithridatis and Nyssa has been known only as a concubine of Mithridates VI.⁸⁷ Mithridates VI and Hysicratea were together in 65 BCE. Since Mithridatis and Nyssa were with their father when they died in 63 BCE, did he meet up with them after escaping Pompey, or as speculated before, were they with him and Hysicratea when they headed for Panticapaeum?⁸⁸ Again,

⁸¹Even after the Romans defeated Mithridates VI in 63 BCE, there was contact between Egypt and Pontus. Berenike IV's second husband was Archelaus. He claimed to be a son of Mithridates VI, but more likely was the son of a general of Mithridates VI who defected to Rome; he died in battle in 55 BCE when Ptolemy XII ousted Berenike IV with the aid of the Romans. As discussed *infra*, Mithridates of Pergamon, who may have been a son of Mithridates VI, helped Caesar regain Egypt for Cleopatra VII.

⁸²See Ashrafain, Hutan, *Familial proptosis and obesity in the Ptolemies*. J R Soc Med. Feb 2005; 98(2): 85–86. "On coins and on sculptures, portrayals of members of this dynasty are notable for prominent eyes and necks...the presence of neck masses, I suggest, may implicate a multiorgan fibrotic condition such as Erdheim-Chester disease or familial multifocal fibrosclerosis in which thyroiditis can coincide with obesity and proptosis."

⁸³Arsinoe IV sided with Ptolemy XIII against Cleopatra VII and Rome; Ptolemy XIII drowned in battle. Arsinoe was captured. She appeared in Caesar's triumph in 46 BCE, but was not strangled at its end. Rather, she was given sanctuary at the Temple of Artemis near Ephesus until 41 BCE. In that year, at the supposed request of Cleopatra VII, Antony had Arsinoe executed.

⁸⁴See Appian, Chap. XVI §108. "There two of his daughters, who were still girls growing up together, named Mithridatis and Nyssa, who had been betrothed to the kings of Egypt and of Cyprus, asked him to let them have some of the poison first, and insisted strenuously and prevented him from drinking it until they had taken some and swallowed it." Since this was 63 BCE, some have argued that the daughters were perhaps 3 to 7 years old in 80 BCE when betrothed. But see Bennett, Footnotes 85 and 92, *infra*.

⁸⁵See Bennett [Ptolemy XII, note 32], who posits: "If they were 'maidens' in the late 60s, then they were toddlers or even infants in 81/0. One possible solution is to argue that Appian's intent is to say that the two princesses had been engaged when they were girls, in 81/0, and remained together unmarried at Mithridates' court till his (and their) death in 63. It could be argued that if the daughters were still of marriageable age at this time, then it is, at least, odd that they were not included amongst the daughters who, according to Appian, *Mithr. Wars*, Chap. XVI, §108, were sent to be married to Scythian chieftains...and that they may have been spared as being too old." See also, http://www.livius.org/ps-pz/ptolemies/ptolemy_xii_auletes.html suggesting that the actual betrothal was in 84 BCE.

⁸⁶See Footnote 56 regarding the uncertainty of Ptolemy XII's age.

⁸⁷See, e.g., Duggan, *He Died Old* p. 194.

⁸⁸Mayor, *Poison King* p. 349 where she says that the daughters were being raised at the Panticapaeum palace and hence that's "how they came to be in the tower with him [Mithridates VI]." Although possible, it seems

there is no record of Hypsicratea after Mithridates' death; she simply disappears from the historical record. Bodies of the daughters, Mithridatis and Nyssa, were sent to Pompey.⁸⁹

We posit that if (1) Hypsicratea was the 'concubine' who was the mother of Mithridatis and/or Nyssa and (2) Mithridatis and/or Nyssa actually was a wife of Ptolemy XII, then it would be reasonable to suggest that Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates was the mother of Mithridatis and/or Nyssa, who, in turn, was Cleopatra VII's mother. Thus, Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates would be Cleopatra VII's grandmother.

Since Hypsicratea was the sixth wife, we can approximate the date of her marriage to Mithridates VI by relating it to what we know of the other five wives. The known chronology is:

1. Laodicea: marriage 115/113 BCE until c. 90 BCE; she was poisoned by Mithridates VI;
2. Monime: marriage 89/88 BCE to 72/71 BCE; she was put to death at Pharnacia;
3. Berenice of Chios: marriage 86 BCE to 72/71 BCE; she died rather than being taken captive by Lucullus;
4. Stratonice of Pontus, married from after 86 BCE to 63 BCE; she turned to Pompey in 65 BCE because Mithridates had abandoned her; Mithridates then killed her son, Xiphares;
5. Unknown;
6. Hypsicratea married from an unknown date to 63 BCE.

Laodicea probably was 16 when she married Mithridates VI.⁹⁰ The list above shows that Mithridates VI was not monogamous. As referenced elsewhere, Hypsicratea may have been 30 to 40 years younger than Mithridates VI,⁹¹ and thus, would have been between 14 and 24 in 80 BCE. Also, a reading of Appian has led some to conclude that Mithridatis and Nyssa were between 3 and 7⁹² when they were betrothed to Ptolemy XII and Ptolemy of Cyprus in 80 BCE. However, seventeen years later in 63 BCE, they had to be at least in their twenties and, in 70 BCE and, when Cleopatra VII was conceived, could have been at least 17. Thus, there is an acceptable range of possible ages for Mithridatis or Nyssa to be the mother of Cleopatra VII as well as for Hypsicratea to be the mother of Mithridatis and/or Nyssa.

Shortly after the 'betrothal,' but also in 80 BCE, Ptolemy XII returned to Egypt to become Pharaoh and marry Cleopatra V. Their first and possibly only legitimate daughter, Berenike IV, was born in 75 BCE. Assuming that Ptolemy XII maintained relations with the Mithridatic court, when Cleopatra VII was born in late 70/69 BCE, Mithridatis would have been 13 to 17 years old, thus young, but again within an acceptable range of possible ages for her to have been Cleopatra VII's mother.

Mayor goes on to say that "Hypsicrates, serving as a historian, accompanied Caesar on his campaigns."⁹³ As mentioned in Footnotes 94 and 95, *infra*, when Josephus discussed Caesar's Alexandrian War, he cites Strabo, who in turn cites Hypsicrates. This suggests that Hypsicrates was in Alexandria with Caesar. It would be interesting if Cleopatra VII, who first met Julius Caesar in 48 BCE, also met Caesar's slave Hypsicrates, who wasn't freed until 47 BCE at Amisus. She could then have met her grandmother,

questionable that they would be in Panticapaeum with their brother Machares, who had decided to side with Rome, especially since Mithridates VI appearance there was unexpected.

⁸⁹Mayor, *Poison King* p. 352.

⁹⁰In ancient Greece, menarche occurred at about the age of 14, meaning that a woman was ready for marriage and children. See http://webpage.pace.edu/nreagin/tempmotherhood/spring2002h/Motherhood_in_Ancient_Greece.html *Motherhood in Ancient Greece*. In discussing Cleopatra I and her sisters, Bennett says "[S]ince all three daughters, including Cleopatra's two younger sisters, were of marriageable age in 194/3, they may be assumed to be 14 or older at that time..." http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Egypt/ptolemies/cleopatra_i.htm#Cleopatra I.3.

⁹¹Mayor, *Poison King*, p. 304

⁹²As discussed in Footnote 85, *supra*, Bennett suggests that Mithridatis and Nyssa may have been too old in 63 BCE to be sent to the Scythians for marriage.

⁹³Mayor, *Amazons* p. 350.

Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates, the wife of Mithridates VI, whose daughter/step-daughter Mithridatis/Nyssa had been betrothed to Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra VII's father, one of whom could be her mother.

Cleopatra VII – The Pharaoh; Part 3

When Cleopatra VII's father died in 51 BCE, her co-regency with him ended, but a co-regency with her brother, Ptolemy XIII began. She ruled pretty much on her own until 48 BCE, when a coup, backing her brother Ptolemy XIII, drove her out of Alexandria. She raised troops in Syria, re-entered Egypt and met her brother's army at Pelusium (near modern Port Said). As the two armies were preparing for battle, Pompey, having lost the battle of Pharsalus to Julius Caesar (August 48 BCE) landed in Egypt where he expected to be granted shelter. However, Ptolemy XIII and his advisors murdered Pompey (September 48 BCE) assuming the death would garner favor with Caesar.

When Caesar got to Egypt in October 48 BCE, and found that Pompey had been murdered, he took up residence in the royal palace and sent for Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra VII. He ordered them to appear together to settle issues relating to their co-regency. Although Ptolemy XIII appeared, Cleopatra VII sent representatives. She then either requested from Caesar a meeting without her brother being present or arrived wrapped in a rug.⁹⁴ Thus began the Alexandrian War. Ptolemy XIII had the backing of the Egyptian army. Caesar, with Cleopatra VII, got backing from the government of Judaea and Mithridates of Pergamon, who was the son of Mithridates VI's concubine, Adobogiona the Elder, and possibly Mithridates VI himself.⁹⁵ Mithridates of Pergamon and his army joined Caesar for the final battle with Ptolemy XIII.⁹⁶ In late March of 47 BCE, the combined armies routed Ptolemy XIII's army. King Ptolemy XIII drowned while trying to escape. Caesar then secured the reign of Cleopatra VII by enforcing the will of her father Ptolemy XII, a condition of which required that she marry her younger brother, Ptolemy XIV. It should be noted that when Josephus discussed Caesar's Alexandrian War, he cited Strabo, who cited Hypsicrates. Thus, Hypsicrates also may have helped Caesar write his history of the Alexandrian War, since he was most likely there. He may even have helped secure the participation of Mithridates of Pergamon.

In May of 47 BCE, Caesar turned his focus on Pharnaces II, who had begun retaking parts of his father's former Kingdom. He quashed the revolt in August 47 BCE at Zela, with Pharnaces II dying in the battle.⁹⁷ After the battle, Caesar manumitted Hypsicrates along with a number of others at Amisus. Since Pharnaces II had betrayed Mithridates VI in 63 BCE, there would be little love lost between him and Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates when Caesar defeated him at Zela. Perhaps Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates had even provided information to help Caesar defeat Pharnaces II.

When Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE, Cleopatra VII offered naval support to the Second Triumvirate, but was unable to join the battle. As indicated *supra*, after Caesar's assassination, the Second Triumvirate gave Marc Antony Bithynia and Pontus in addition to Egypt. In the autumn of 34 BCE, Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII executed a political act referred to as the second of the Donations

⁹⁴See Cassius Dio, at 42.34.3-6 for the 'request' approach and Plutarch (Caesar, 49.1-2) for the 'rug' approach.

⁹⁵Regarding Mithridates of Pergamon's participation with Caesar in the Alexandrian War, see Canfaro, Luciano. Julius Caesar: The Life and Times of the People's Dictator. University of California Press, 2007 at pp 214-215. He says "The possibility cannot be excluded that Hypsicrates took directly from Mithridates of Pergamon [a 'pupil' of Mithridates VI] the information on the Alexandrian campaign, and that Strabo took it from Hypsicrates"

⁹⁶Antiquities of the Jews, Book 14, Chapter 8 p. 285 "Strabo says thus again ... in the name of Hypsicrates, "Mithridates [of Pergamon] at first went out alone, but that Antipater ... was also present on this expedition."

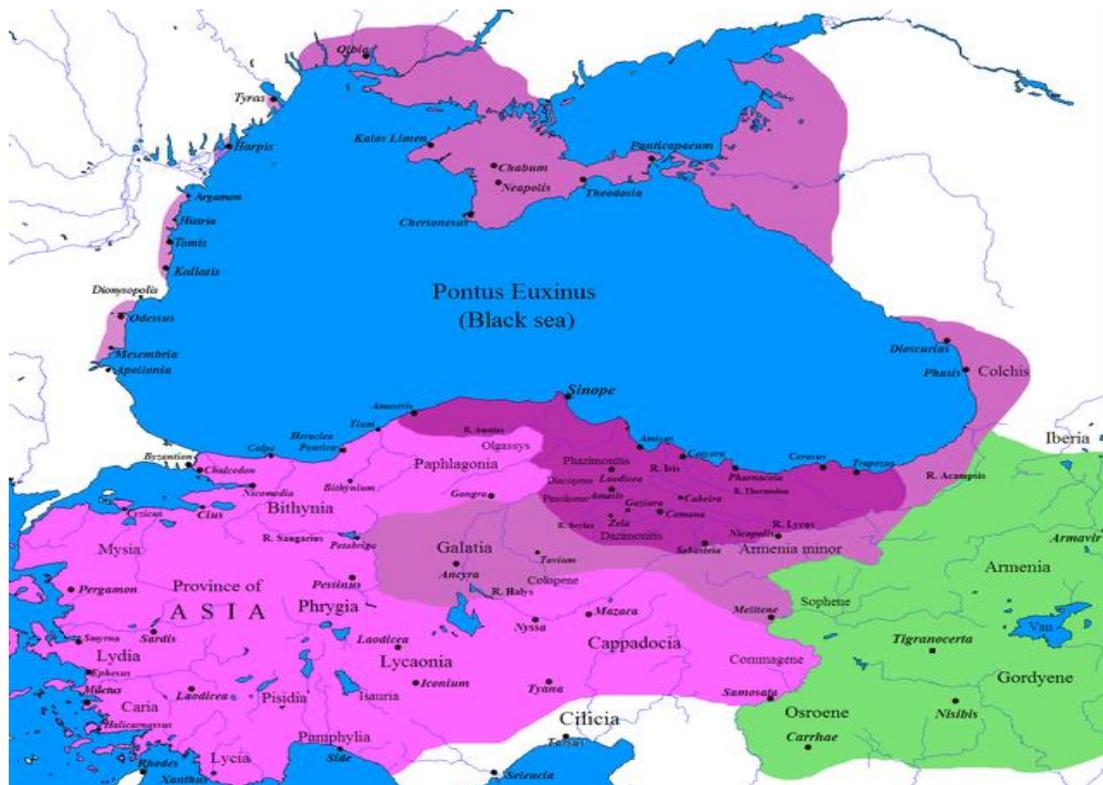
⁹⁷Informing the Senate of his victory, Caesar said "veni, vidi vici." Pharnaces' daughter, Dynamis assumed rule of the Kingdom after her father's death in 47 BCE. She was replaced by a relative later that year, but regained rule in 44 BCE which continued until her death in 14 BCE.

of Alexandria. The Donations were intended to distribute lands amongst Cleopatra VII's children by Antony. Ptolemy Philadelphus and twins, Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, were to receive grants that, in part, would overlap the old Kingdom of Pontus (see the map on the last page of this article).⁹⁸

Octavian approved the first Donations as part of Antony's strategy to rule the East by making use of Cleopatra VII's ties in that region. However, the second Donations were denied as being too far reaching. Thus began the war between Octavian and Antony. The decisive battle at Actium was fought on September 2, 31 BCE. It may never be known why Cleopatra VII and her fleet withdrew, but it will always be known that Octavian won and Antony and Cleopatra VII died. As for Hypsicratea/Hypsicrates, she/he likely lived for another 25 to 30 years.

Conclusion

With the defeat of Mithridates VI at Panticapaeum and then Cleopatra VII 30 years later at Actium, the Hellenistic world that had begun with Alexander the Great's conquests came to an end.⁹⁹ The intertwining of the two great successor empires of Pontus and Ptolemaic Egypt in their fight to keep Rome from conquering them was complicated. However, we believe it is nevertheless plausible that a daughter of Hypsicratea and Mithridates VI was the mother of Cleopatra VII.

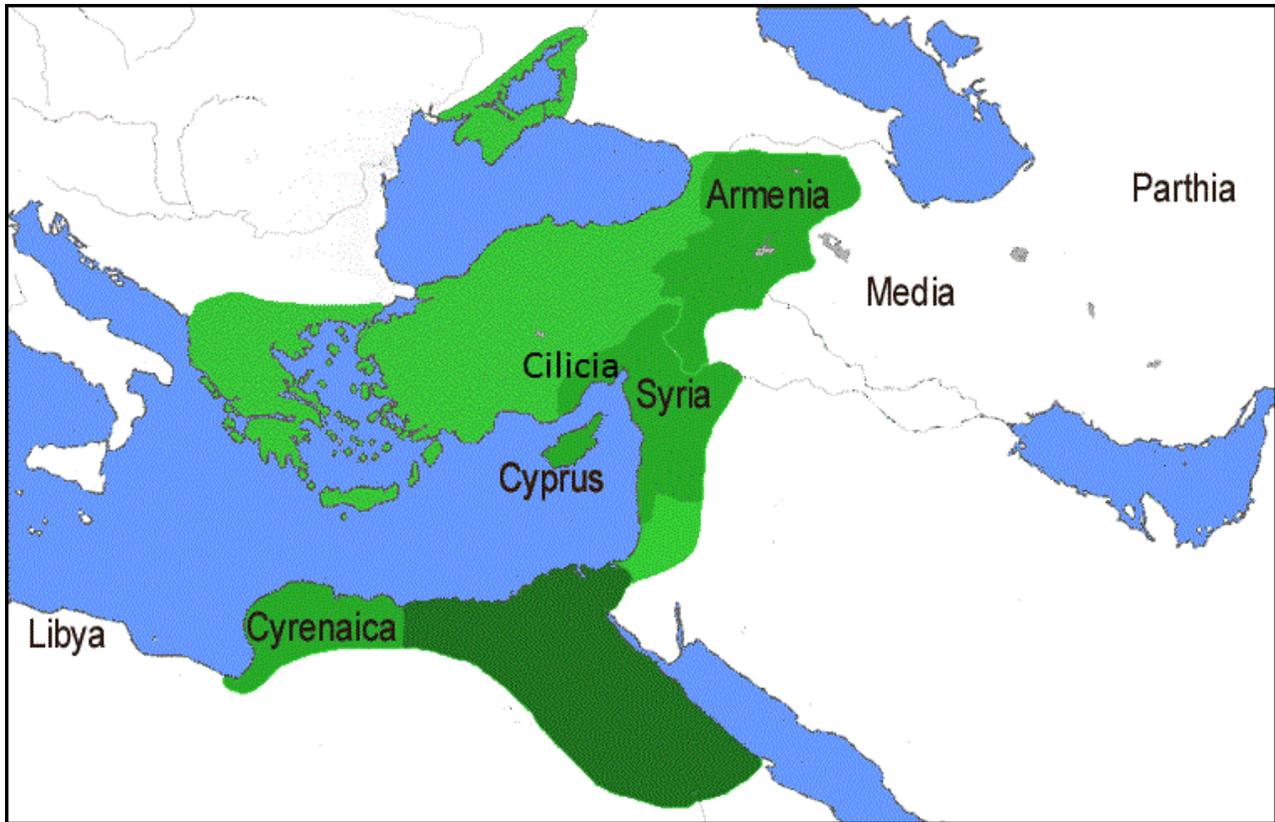


MAP OF THE PONTIC KINGDOM UNDER MITHRIDATES VI¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Caeserion, Cleopatra VII's son by Julius Caesar, was designated as co-regent in 44 BCE.

⁹⁹By 37-36 BCE, Cleopatra had begun promoting herself as the father lover/lover of her homeland. See Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra*, p. 298-299 suggesting that “[T]he grants of territory ceded to her by Antony [in the Donations]” helped further her association of the ‘homeland’ not only with Egypt but with Macedonia and the conquests of Alexander the Great.”

¹⁰⁰This map is in the Public Domain. It is referenced as follows: “Pontic Kingdom” by Javierfv1212 (talk). Original uploader was Javierfv1212 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia; transferred to Commons by User:



MAP OF THE PROPOSED SECOND DONATIONS OF ALEXANDRIA

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