Classical Quarterly 61.2 595–607 (2011) Printed in Great Britain
doi:10.1017/S000983881100022X

THE QUEEN SURVEYS HER REALM: THE NILE CRUISE OF CLEOPATRA VII

In the spring of 47 B.C.E. Cleopatra VII is said to have undertaken a trip up the Nile, accompanied, according to both Appian and Suetonius, by Julius Caesar.[1] The *Bellum Alexandrinum* makes no mention of this trip and gives the impression that the Roman commander, who had been embroiled in the Alexandrian War since early October 48, departed the country almost immediately after the end of that conflict in March:

> Caesar Aegypto atque Alexandrea potius reges constituit quos Ptolomaeus testamento scripserat atque obtestatus erat populum Romanum ne mutarentur. Nam maiore ex duobus pueris, rege, amisso minori tradidit regnum maiorique ex duabus filiis, Cleopatrae, quae manserat in fide praesidiisque eius … Legiones ibi veterana sexta secum reducta ceteras reliquit … Sic rebus omnibus confectis et collocatis ipse … profectus est in Syriam.[2]

The failure of the *Bellum Alexandrinum* to comment on a Nile journey has led some scholars to restrict drastically the amount of time Caesar could have spent on such an excursion and to conclude that the episode is myth and that the ancient accounts that represent it are romance.[3] The objections are not only chronological. Balsdon declares that Caesar's participation in such a 'honey-moon cruise up the Nile' would be 'evidence of Caesar's utter irresponsibility' and disallows the accounts of the journey primarily because he rejects the possibility that the Roman general might have acted recklessly.[4] He is not alone in his scepticism about the voyage.[5]

The absence from the *Bellum Alexandrinum* of any reference to the Nile cruise, however, need not eliminate the possibility that such a trip actually occurred. One can readily imagine reasons for the author of the *Bellum Alexandrinum* omitting information about Caesar's extended journey with Cleopatra. He may, for example, have wanted to avoid exposing Caesar to the accusation, from friend and foe alike, that he *had* behaved irresponsibly and had been busy attending to the queen of Egypt when he ought to have been attending to the business of Rome.

[1] App. *B Civ.* 2.90; Suet. *Iul.* 52.1. For the date of Caesar's arrival in Alexandria and the duration of his stay in Egypt, see H. Heinen, 'Rom und Ägypten von 51 bis 47 v. Chr.' (Diss., Tübingen University, 1966), 142–58.

[2] *B Alex.* 33.

[3] L.E. Lord, 'The date of Julius Caesar's Departure from Alexandria', *JRS* 28 (1938), 19–40. Lord has Caesar leaving for Syria by early April 47 B.C.E. and explicitly characterizes Appian's and Suetonius' accounts of the journey as 'romance, not history'. H. Volkmann, *Cleopatra: A Study in Politics and Propaganda*, trans. T.J. Cadoux (New York, 1958), 70, accepts Lord's chronology but still maintains that Caesar made the trip up the Nile.

[4] See J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Julius Caesar and Rome* (London, 1967), 140, 145.

[5] Cf. R.D. Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome* (Toronto, 1990), 260, and T.W. Hillard, 'The Nile cruise of Cleopatra and Caesar', *CQ* 52 (2002), 549–54.

In addition to this, the voyage finds archaeological corroboration in a boat shrine at the temple of Geb at Koptos, which has often been taken to have been dedicated by Cleopatra to commemorate her trip on the Nile with Julius Caesar.[6]

There have been scholars willing to accept that Caesar *did* make the trip, but existing explanations of its purpose disappoint, specifically because these studies have traditionally inclined to view the episode from Caesar's perspective and have failed to describe fully what the political purpose and import of the expedition may have been for Cleopatra.

Gelzer, for one, does believe that Caesar toured the Nile with Cleopatra. In his view their voyage up the river served two purposes. While simultaneously providing much-needed relief and recreation for Caesar and his soldiers 'after the nerve-racking battles in Alexandria', it also supplied the Roman consul with the means of cementing the queen's affection for him.[7] The latter point is significant if one supposes, with Gelzer, that 'the queen's love guaranteed [Caesar] the possession of Egypt'.[8] While this allows that the journey was, in part, politically motivated, the focus of that motivation is Caesar. Cleopatra's concerns are ignored, and her willingness meekly to surrender Egyptian resources to a Roman official is taken for granted.

Heinen is likewise convinced of a Nile cruise and acknowledges that such a trip may have had political overtones. He neglects, however, to consider precisely what the political subtext might have been, emphasizing instead the chronology of the trip and of the conclusion of Caesar's stay in Egypt.[9]

Grant, accepting the fact of the excursion, claims that 'the scope and political significance of the journey were considerable' and that 'such a parade played an essential part in the pacification of Egypt and provided a means of strengthening Cleopatra's pro-Roman regime'.[10] He maintains that 'it was advisable for [Cleopatra] to renew … ties with [Upper Egypt] by a personal visit and highly appropriate that she should travel in the company of the great Roman commander who guaranteed her regime'.[11] In spite of these observations, Grant neither details adequately what 'the scope and political significance of the journey' were, nor explains why and how ties with Upper Egypt should be restored at this time. The

[6] B. Porter and R.L.B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings 5. Upper Egypt: Sites* (Oxford, 1937), 128; S. Walker and P. Higgs (eds.), *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth* (London, 2001), no. 170; S.-A. Ashton, 'Cleopatra: goddess, ruler or regent', in S. Walker and S.-A. Ashton (edd.), *Cleopatra Reassessed* (London, 2003), 25–30, at 25–6, with pl. 1; D. Roller, *Cleopatra: A Biography* (Oxford, 2010), 114.

[7] M. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman* (Cambridge, 1968), 255, with n. 4. Cf. C. Meier, *Caesar* (Berlin, 1982), 486, who claims that Caesar remained in Egypt for weeks after the conclusion of the Alexandrian War and sailed up the Nile with the queen in a beautifully decorated vessel. Meier's treatment suggests that the trip was primarily recreational.

[8] Gelzer (n. 7), 255–6, with n. 4.

[9] Heinen (n. 1), 142–58. He sensibly describes (148) the nine months that Appian (2.90) claims Caesar spent in Egypt as 'die Gesamtdauer von Cäsars Aufenthalt' and thus, reckoning from Caesar's arrival on 1 October in Alexandria, locates the journey up the Nile before July 47. Unlike Lord, Balsdon and Volkmann, Heinen's chronological reconstruction *can* be reconciled with Cicero's statements regarding Caesar's whereabouts. See Cic. *Att.* 11.18.1, 11.10.1, 11.25.2; *Brut.* 156. Cf. Heinen (n. 1), 151–8 and Gelzer (n. 7), 255, n. 2.

[10] M. Grant, *Cleopatra: A Biography* (London, 1972), 81.

[11] Ibid. Elsewhere Grant describes the interlude as 'a peaceful parade to demonstrate the amicable relations between Egypt and Rome' (M. Grant, *Julius Caesar* [London, 1969], 202).

references to Cleopatra are, moreover, coloured by the presumed prominence of Caesar's role in the affair.

Lately, most scholars have allowed the journey and acknowledged its possible political nuances. Too often, however, their discussions have lacked sufficient elucidation, and one may still detect in them the familiar Roman bias and the underlying assumption that Cleopatra gladly allowed her target audience to view Caesar as a veritable shareholder in her rule of Egypt. Examples abound. Hughes-Hallett locates the journey within the recent history of the queen, 'who had so recently been deposed and in exile', but she does not provide the specific meaning of that recent deposition and exile for the Nile journey.[12] Burstein describes the event as 'a brief but pleasant interlude', 'during which [Cleopatra's] subjects observed both their queen and the Roman protector who made her power possible'.[13] Kleiner calls it a 'triumphal procession', and asserts that the queen and consul would have used it to showcase 'not only their alliance but their combined authority as well'.[14] Ashton describes the journey as a way for Caesar 'to assert his authority' and for Cleopatra 'to show the Romans her country, wealth and power'.[15] Even Roller's very recent book-length treatment of Cleopatra, while admitting that the expedition should be viewed as more than a mere 'pleasure cruise', characterizes it primarily as an occasion for *Caesar* to engage in 'geographical reconnaissance' and to seek the source of the Nile. Of Cleopatra's motives, Roller says only that she 'would wish to see more of the kingdom that she finally controlled'.[16]

A more complete and satisfying reading of the event must be attempted, the success of which depends upon considering the expedition more thoroughly against the backdrop of Cleopatra's personal history and from her perspective.[17] In the early spring of 51 B.C.E., when still a mere teen, Cleopatra became ruler of a country long plagued by dynastic strife and worn out by periodic famine and financial exploitation. Within the Ptolemaic court hierarchy, she had to contend with powerful opposition to her personal sovereignty. This opposition came in the persons of the adult advisors to her young brother and co-ruler, Ptolemy XIII, and was so serious that she was eventually driven from her office and from her country.[18]

Deprived of power in Egypt, Cleopatra made her way beyond Pelusium, to the regions east of her country, and set about recruiting an army. When Pompey arrived in Egypt in September 48, after his defeat by Caesar at Pharsalus, the queen was just beyond the eastern borders of Egypt, preparing to enforce her claim to power. Her brother Ptolemy, his advisors and their forces awaited her at Pelusium. Pompey, as it happened, was murdered by the young king Ptolemy's men. Caesar arrived in Egypt not long after his rival's death. He installed himself in the city of Alexandria and took charge of affairs. On the grounds that the disputes of the royal family concerned both the Roman people and himself as consul, Caesar

[12] L. Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams and Distortions* (London, 1990), 77.
[13] S.M. Burstein, *The Reign of Cleopatra* (Westport, CT, 2004), 19–20.
[14] D.E.E. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge and London, 2005), 80.
[15] S.-A. Ashton, *Cleopatra and Egypt* (Oxford, 2008), 55.
[16] Roller (n. 6), 65–6.
[17] Indeed, so much of what has been written about the Nile cruise concerns itself with Caesar's interests in the voyage that this discussion will omit consideration of his motives in favour of Cleopatra's.
[18] Caes. *B Civ.* 3.103; App. *B Civ.* 2.84; Livy *Per.* 111; Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 77; *Vit. Caes*. 48; Dio Cass. 42.3.1; Strabo 17.1.11.

announced that Ptolemy and Cleopatra should disband their armies and submit their quarrels to him for judgement.[19]

Here was a unique opportunity for Cleopatra. Caesar suddenly represented the best avenue to power. Now that Pompey was dead, he was indisputably the most powerful Roman, and he was fully intending to arbitrate the Ptolemaic conflict. If he could be persuaded to support Cleopatra's claim to the throne she might find herself re-established as queen. If only she could persuade him. Ptolemy XIII was brought back to court by his counsellor Pothinus, although his army remained intact at Pelusium. Cleopatra, effectively shut out from Alexandria by her brother's supporters, abandoned efforts to communicate her interests to Caesar through agents and took herself into the palace by night. According to Plutarch, the queen, with a flare for the theatrical, had herself transported into the palace in a bedsack.[20] What precisely passed between Cleopatra and the Roman statesman is uncertain, but Caesar was sufficiently satisfied with her that the following day, when he invited her and Ptolemy to appear before his judgement seat, he reasserted the terms of their father's will and acknowledged both Cleopatra and Ptolemy as rightful rulers of Egypt.[21] It cannot have been long after this first meeting that Cleopatra and Caesar began their affair.

Outside the palace, matters were not settled so easily. According to Dio, Ptolemy roused the mob by shouting that he had been betrayed. Caesar captured him and made a speech to mollify the crowd, in which he supposedly recognized the two remaining children of Ptolemy Auletes, Arsinoë and Ptolemy XIV, as joint rulers of Cyprus – this in spite of the fact that Ptolemaic Cyprus had been annexed by Rome in 59/58 B.C.E.[22]

The announcement may have satisfied the crowd, but it did not appease Ptolemy's advisors, whose power was threatened by Caesar's presence and Cleopatra's reinstatement. Opposition to Caesar was inflamed, and the victor of Pharsalus found himself embroiled in the Alexandrian War with only a handful of soldiers to ward off trouble. After several months of varying fortunes, the help the Roman consul had requested finally came from Pergamon. In the end Caesar was victorious, Ptolemy XIII – who had been handed over to the Egyptians as a goodwill gesture – was dead, and Cleopatra was again a co-ruler of Egypt, now married to her youngest brother, Ptolemy XIV.[23]

Cleopatra's position, however, remained precarious. She was re-established in her capital city because of Roman intervention. Caesar had not come to Egypt for that purpose, but it had been the result none the less, and his role in the affairs of

[19] Caes. *B Civ.* 3.106–7.

[20] Plutarch, *Vit. Caes.* 48–9. Plutarch's account is the only source for this episode, which, while perhaps fictional in its detail, has become one of the most memorable anecdotes of her life. See also Dio Cass. 42.34.3–6, whose account is less dramatic.

[21] Caes. *B Civ.* 3.107; Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 48–9; Dio Cass. 42.34.2–35.1–3; Livy *Per.* 111; Flor. 2.13.56–8.

[22] Dio Cass. 42.35.4–6. Caesar includes no notice of such an announcement, and the historicity of the grant has been challenged. A. Bouche-Leclerq, *Histoire des Lagides* (Paris, 1903–7), 2.193, rejects Dio's account, as does Heinen (n. 1), 91, n. 2. On the Roman annexation of Cyprus, see App. *B Civ.* 2.23; Dio Cass. 38.30.5, 39.12.1–2, 22.2–4; Cic. *Sest.* 57, 59; Strabo 14.6.6; Plut. *Vit. Cat. Min.* 34–8; Vell. Pat. 2.38.6, 2.45.4; Livy *Per.* 104.

[23] *B Alex. passim*; Dio Cass. 42.34–43; Livy *Per.* 112. On the death of Ptolemy XIII, see *B Alex*. 31; Livy *Per*. 112; Dio 42.43. On the joint reign of Cleopatra VII and her youngest brother, Ptolemy XIV, see *B Alex*. 33; Strabo 17.1.11; Suet. *Iul.* 35; Dio Cass. 42.44; Porph. *FGrH* 260.

the Ptolemies was viewed by some with suspicion and hostility. Among Cleopatra's subjects there was a history of resentment over Ptolemaic involvement with and indebtedness to Rome and her representatives. Cleopatra's own father, Ptolemy XII Auletes, had made himself dangerously unpopular when he showed himself too submissive to Roman demands. He had laid out 6,000 talents – money derived partly from Egyptian sources, partly from Roman financiers – to win political support for his official recognition as a 'friend and ally of the Roman people', a boon that, after years of negotiation, was finally realized in 59 B.C.E.[24] A year after winning the coveted title, Auletes meekly acquiesced to the Roman annexation of Cyprus, perhaps yielding that ancient Ptolemaic territory as part of the price he had agreed to pay for Roman support.[25] His subjects were so furious, owing both to the extortion of funds and, more particularly, to the king's surrender of Cyprus, that Auletes was forced to flee, not being restored until two years later through the armed assistance of Aulus Gabinius, the Roman governor of Syria.[26]

The survival of that old anger against Roman interference had been lately manifest. When Caesar first arrived in Alexandria, he appeared with full consular pomp, accompanied by lictors and *fasces*. According to Caesar's own account, the sight of these traditional markers of Roman authority, perceived as a slight against the royal dignity, roused the Alexandrians to violence against him and his meagre force.[27] Plutarch says that the Roman commander also made appeals for money, claiming that funds were still owing to him from Ptolemy XII – more than seventeen million drachmas, of which he now required ten million.[28] If true, this demand would have reminded the Alexandrians of Auletes' former submission to Rome's arrogance and would have provoked them accordingly. Aware of this history and her people's feelings, Cleopatra, if she wished to achieve and preserve the loyal

[24] Caesar, as consul, had overseen Auletes' acknowledgement as friend and ally in 59 B.C.E.: *Ptolemaeo et lege et senatus consulto societas erat facta*. See Caes. *B Civ.* 3.107; App. *Mith.* 114; Cic. *Att*. 2.16.2, *Rab. Post.* 6; Suet. *Iul.* 54.3; Dio Cass. 39.12; Plin. *HN* 33.136. On the money raised for these political machinations and its sources, see Cic. *Rab. Post.* 4. There is some evidence (Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.76) that Auletes began his bid for Roman recognition as early as the seventies. It seems a likely time. If the king was informed of the mid-seventies' visit to Rome by the sons of Cleopatra Selene and their attempt to win support for *their* claims to the Ptolemaic crown, he would very sensibly have countered this with his own efforts to gain Roman recognition of his status. On the relationship between Auletes and the Romans see M. Siani-Davis, *Ptolemy XII and the Romans*, in M. Siani-Davis (trans.), *Cicero's Speech Pro Rabirio Postumo* (Oxford, 2001), 1–38.

[25] App. *B Civ.* 2.23; Dio Cass. 38.30.5, 39.12.1–2, 22.2–4; Cic. *Sest.* 57, 59; Strabo 14.6.6; Plut. *Vit. Cat. Min.* 34–8; Vell. Pat. 2.38.6, 2.45.4; Livy *Per.* 104. On two distinct enactments, one calling for the annexation of Cyprus, the other naming Cato to realise the king's property, see S.I. Oost, 'Cato Uticensis and the annexation of Cyprus', *CPh* 50 (1955), 98–112, at 99. According to E. Badian, 'M. Porcius Cato and the annexation and early administration of Cyprus', *JRS* 55 (1965), 110–21, at 112–13, Cato was responsible for the announcement of the annexation and the disposition of the king's property, but he seems not to have undertaken the organization of the province. That task later fell to P. Lentulus Spinther as proconsul of Cilicia in 56.

[26] Dio Cass. 39.12.1–3, 39.55–8; Strabo 17.1.11; Livy *Per*. 104–5; Cic. *Att.* 4.10.1; *Rab. Post.* 19–21, 30–1; *Pis.* 48–50; Val. Max. 9.1; Joseph *AJ* 14.98–100; Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 3. His restoration came at enormous cost. Auletes supposedly spent 10,000 talents. On the subject of Egypt in Roman politics more generally in this period, see I. Shatzman, 'The Egyptian question in Roman politics', *Latomus* 30 (1971), 363–9.

[27] Caes. *B Civ*. 3.106; cf. Dio Cass. 42.7.

[28] Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 48.8. Cf. Dio Cass. 42.9. Caesar says nothing of these demands. The amount, if not the actual request, may be hyperbole on Plutarch's part.

support of her own subjects, dared not forfeit too much of her own authority or of her country's resources in exchange for ongoing Roman assistance.

At the same time Cleopatra found herself anticipating the birth of Caesar's child. The queen might have expected that the eventual arrival of that child would help her to negotiate her relationship with Caesar, but it would not by itself secure her relationship with her own people or guarantee the status of her country in the Roman-dominated Mediterranean world. Cleopatra would, among other concerns, need to determine how to take the best political advantage of the pregnancy.

The Alexandrian War ended in March 47 and, accepting Heinen's chronological reconstruction, Caesar departed Egypt by July of that same year.[29] The journey up the Nile had to have occurred between late March and the beginning of July, but precisely how long it lasted is not known. Nor is it known what was done on the journey. The two ancient sources that remark on the trip are decidedly telescoped and largely treat it as a sort of romantic pleasure cruise. Suetonius refers to it in connection with Caesar's love affair with Cleopatra: *dilexit et reginas ... sed maxime Cleopatram, cum qua et convivia in primam lucem saepe protraxit et eadem nave thalamego paene Aethiopia tenus Aegyptum penetravit, nisi exercitus sequi recusasset.*[30] Appian adds a little more insight, but frustrates his reader when he notes that the details of the journey can be found in one of his no-longer-surviving works: *καὶ τὸν Νεῖλον ἐπὶ τετρακοσίων νεῶν, τὴν χώραν θεώμενος, περιέπλει μετὰ τῆς Κλεοπάτρας, καὶ τἆλλα ἡδόμενος αὐτῇ. ἀλλὰ τάδε μὲν ἕκαστα ὅπως ἐγένετο, ἀκριβέστερον ἢ περὶ Αἰγύπτου συγγραφὴ διέξεισι.*[31]

Certain elements in both these accounts belie the implication that this was primarily a recreational trip. While Suetonius admittedly highlights Caesar's romantic interest in Cleopatra, he adds that the Roman general would have gone with her even to Ethiopia 'had the army been willing to follow'. And Appian, for his part, claims that 'four hundred ships' transported the lovers and the army. The references to an army travelling aboard four hundred ships are notable. Yet the authors do not specify the size or the allegiance of the military contingent, nor elaborate on the purpose of its presence on the excursion. These are matters that must be addressed.

First let us consider the character of Cleopatra's and Caesar's accompanying troops and ships. Whose were the army and ships? Were they all under Roman control? When Caesar arrived in Egypt he had with him ten Rhodian galleys, along with a few others from Asia. On board those ships he supposedly brought two legions, one of which had followed him from Thessaly, the other having been

[29] Heinen (n. 1), 151–8.

[30] Suet. *Iul.* 52.1. Suetonius' term for the boat on which Cleopatra and Caesar traveled – *thalamegos* – is the technical term that Callixeinus uses to describe the state barge of Ptolemy IV (see Athenaeus 204d–206c). Given what a costly and elaborate undertaking Ptolemy IV's barge seems to have been, it is possible that succeeding Ptolemies had, to borrow from Andrew Stewart's comment to me, 'maintained and refurbished' it over the years, and that Cleopatra was travelling with Caesar on the very boat originally commissioned by her ancestor. Hillard's article (n. 5) on the Nile cruise argues, by contrast, that there is no valid reason to believe, as scholars traditionally have done, that it was the royal barge of Ptolemy IV Philopator so elaborately depicted by Callixeinus. Hillard is, indeed, doubtful of the historical reliability of the ancient accounts that mention the cruise at all (see Hillard [n. 5], 549–54). Roller (n. 6), 66, says that the *thalamegos* was 'a type of boat, not a specific vessel', and, if this is so, we need not assume that that used by Cleopatra on the Nile journey was a renovated edition of her ancestor's vessel.

[31] App. *B Civ.* 2.90.

appropriated from the army of Quintus Fufius in Achaea. But the two legions were not at full strength; there were approximately 3,200 soldiers all told. In addition to these, Caesar conveyed 800 horse.[32] As the situation in Alexandria became more perilous he collected more ships from Rhodes, Syria and Cilicia.[33] Eventually, we are told, Caesar had at his service for the conduct of the Alexandrian War nine ships from Rhodes (one of the original ten having been shipwrecked off the coast of Egypt), eight ships from Pontus, five from Lycia and twelve from Asia.[34] This is a grand total of 34 ships. How many craft he requested is unknown.[35] Which, if any, of these ships remained to help transport the group that travelled up the Nile is likewise unknown. At the very least, it is clear that Caesar had nothing like four hundred Roman-commanded vessels at his disposal, nor the troops to require anything like that many ships.

Cleopatra's Egypt may have provided the rest. As recently as 49 B.C.E. Gnaeus Pompey had treated with Cleopatra for naval reinforcements, successfully obtaining between fifty and sixty ships, over which he himself assumed command in the civil war between his father and Caesar.[36] As significant as that number is, it must have represented only a portion of the entire Ptolemaic navy. Perhaps when Cleopatra proceeded up the Nile in 47 B.C.E. most of the ships and the accompanying troops were, in fact, under Ptolemaic control.

Now we must turn to the question of the voyage's purpose. Left only with the information that soldiers were present, the reader might assume, as certain scholars have, that they were, in fact, being rewarded with a sort of holiday after the difficulties that they had endured in Alexandria.[37] But Appian maintains that four hundred ships participated in the journey.[38] This suggests a large expedition, and these figures make an exclusively recreational interpretation difficult to accept. Not impossible: Caesar and Cleopatra might have requisitioned this many ships primarily to reward the soldiers who had helped preserve Caesar's life and reputation and had fought, in some measure, to guarantee Cleopatra's claim to the Egyptian throne. But at least one fact speaks against this: the soldiers seem not to have been particularly keen on going, and, indeed, their unwillingness finally abbreviated the journey planned and anticipated by Caesar and the queen.[39] The soldiers' refusal is not easily explicable if they were brought along primarily for their recreation and reward.

Grant explains the army's presence, in part, by saying that 'since Cleopatra and Caesar had so many enemies, [the expedition] must have included a large force of troops'.[40] The problems with this claim are several. There is no evidence

[32] Caes. *B Civ*. 3.106.

[33] *B Alex.* 1.

[34] Ibid., 13. Since Caesar apparently started with ten Rhodian vessels, it is unclear whether he sent for reinforcements only to Syria and Cilicia, or whether, as *B Alex.* 1 suggests, he requested additional aid from Rhodes as well.

[35] And the number will have fluctuated somewhat through the months of the war. At one point, for example, Caesar's forces seized one quinquereme and one bireme from the enemy, while in a later action he lost his own ship, along with 400 soldiers and more than that number of sailors and rowers. See *B Alex.* 16, 21.

[36] Caes. *B Civ*. 3.4, 5, 40, 111; App. *B Civ.* 2.49, 71.

[37] Cf. Gelzer (n. 7), 255, with n. 4; and Meier (n. 7), 486.

[38] App. *B Civ.* 2.90.

[39] Suet. *Iul.* 52.1.

[40] Grant (n. 10), 81.

of hostility to Cleopatra outside Alexandria. Cleopatra was, by all indications, popular in Middle and Upper Egypt. In fact, she had already in her reign been famously generous to the animal cults of Memphis and Thebes, and there is reason to believe that this generosity was appreciated and reciprocated in the form of priestly political support.

Two examples will suffice to demonstrate Cleopatra's patronage. The first recorded act of her reign was her personal participation in the installation of a new Buchis bull, the sacred animal of Hermonthis (modern Armant) in Upper Egypt.[41] Several years after her participation in this installation ceremony, she built a birth-temple (a *mammisi*) at Hermonthis.[42] The temple celebrates the birth of Ptolemy Caesar, the queen's son by Julius Caesar, in 47 B.C.E. The walls of the structure include hieroglyphic texts representing that the god Amun engendered the child, identified as 'Horus'.[43] This implies that the god, in the form of Caesar, fathered Ptolemy Caesar. While Cleopatra herself undoubtedly funded the building of the temple, the priests assume responsibility for the legitimacy and pharaonic divinity of the queen's offspring. This show of support from the native priesthood at Hermonthis was more than four years after Cleopatra's participation in the installation ceremony of the Buchis bull, but such an endorsement attests friendly relations. This association, which had its beginnings in Cleopatra's early consideration for the local cult, would undoubtedly have been renewed and strengthened during the queen's journey up the Nile with Caesar. Of a possible arrangement between Cleopatra and the priests for the shrine at Hermonthis on that journey more will be said below.

In the third year of Cleopatra's reign, another sacred animal of Egypt, the Apis bull of the cow Ta-nt-Bastet, died. The Harmachis stele credits the queen with generous consideration of this cult: she provided, among other things, 412 silver coins to establish a table of offerings, as well as daily allowances of wine, milk, bread and oil for those conducting the worship.[44] That Cleopatra's thoughtful gifts inspired the gratitude and recognition of the native priesthood is obvious from the stele itself. Further, the priesthood at Memphis, like that at Hermonthis, acknowledged and endorsed the birth of Ptolemy Caesar in 47 B.C.E., publicly entreating Apis' blessing upon the boy at his birth.[45] The connection initiated in the third year of Cleopatra's reign is manifestly secure in the fifth, and there is no reason to think that it waned in the interim. As at Hermonthis, the Nile cruise must have given the queen an opportunity to reinforce and profit from an already friendly relationship.

[41] See R. Mond and O.H. Myers, *The Bucheum*, 3 vols (London, 1934), 2.12, no. 13, lines 9–11.

[42] J. Ray, 'Cleopatra in the temples of Upper Egypt: the evidence of Dendera and Armant', in Walker and Ashton (n. 6), 9–12, at 10, questions whether the shrine at Hermonthis was, in fact, a *mammisi*. He points out that a *mammisi* was a 'subsidiary chapel', while the building at Hermonthis 'gives the impression of being a principal shrine of its own'. For this shrine see further R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1897), 60a; W. Otto, *Priester und Tempel in hellenistischen Ägypten: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus*, vol. 2 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1905), 270; G.W. Goudchaux, 'Cleopatra's subtle religious strategy', in Walker and Higgs (n. 6), 128–41, at 136.

[43] Ray (n. 42), 10–11.

[44] E. Revillout, 'Leçon d'ouverture prononcée à l'école du Louvre, le lundi, 19 Décembre 1887', *Revue Égyptologique* 6 (1891), 133–149, at 133 (Louvre stele 24); D.J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 124.

[45] Louvre stele, 335.

If there chanced to be hostility to Caesar in those areas to which they ventured, Cleopatra herself seems to have had native backing, and she was with the Roman general to smooth the way. Besides which, it is difficult to imagine that any bad feeling toward Caesar in the countryside would have taken the form of a military threat of such proportions that it would require 400 ships' worth of troops to withstand it. Such a large expedition is unlikely to have been functioning primarily as a personal bodyguard.

Several scholars, as we have seen, emphasize the value of Cleopatra being with Caesar and an army in order explicitly to advertise Caesar's role in the restoration and perpetuation of her power.[46] Certainly the presence of Caesar and a military force on 400 ships would serve as a reminder of someone's authority, but the queen cannot have wanted to draw too much attention to Caesar's role in her restoration nor represent him, as Grant says, as the guarantor of her regime. Feelings in Alexandria had been violently hostile to Roman authority in the person of Julius Caesar. More particularly, her own father's troubled political history makes it highly unlikely that Cleopatra would have risked the alienation of her subjects' affection by an overt display of *Roman* power. Indeed, she had already shown that she wanted herself and her country to remain independent of Roman control, and that she was willing to advance Egypt's interests at Rome's expense. Caesar's previously discussed announcement during the Alexandrian War of the return of Cyprus to Ptolemaic control suggests Cleopatra's active intervention on behalf of her nation's interests over and above those of Rome and of the Roman consul. It suggests, moreover, the queen's desire to be seen protecting and promoting those interests. We do not know how Caesar himself was received in Egypt outside of Alexandria, but it is difficult to imagine Cleopatra *anywhere* posing as the lucky recipient of Roman favour or encouraging an image of dependence upon and subservience to Rome.[47]

If, however, the army was neither on holiday, nor needed to protect the queen and consul, nor wanted to publicise Caesar's role as the necessary patron of Cleopatra's administration, one must ask what role it was meant to have on the journey. A hint is to be found in Suetonius, who identifies the intended target of the expedition – *paene Aethiopia tenus*.[48] This geographical goal had great military and political significance historically for a Ptolemaic ruler. At least from the time and text of Herodotus on, Ethiopia referred to the lands south of Egypt,[49] and it marked the southern boundary of Ptolemaic power. Its capital city, Meroe, was on the east bank of the Nile between the Fifth and Sixth Cataracts of the river.[50] Ptolemaic territory extended securely to the First Cataract, occasionally reaching to the Second Cataract.[51] If, indeed, Cleopatra and Caesar were intending to sail almost to Ethiopia, the queen was planning, at the very least, to examine the mood and condition of Egypt to the southernmost extremity of her country.

[46] For example, Grant (n. 10), 81; Kleiner (n. 14), 80; Hughes-Hallett (n. 12), 77; Burstein (n. 13), 19–20; Ashton (n. 15), 55.

[47] This is another reason to conclude that the troops and ships accompanying Cleopatra on the Nile cruise were primarily Ptolemaic. She would not have wanted to appear at the head of an invading Roman army.

[48] Suet. *Jul.* 52.1.

[49] See, for example, Herodotus, 2.28–9.

[50] Ibid., 2.29; S.M. Burstein, *Graeco-Africana: Studies in the History of Greek Relations with Egypt and Nubia* (New Rochelle, NY, 1995), 105–23; *RE*, Meroe, cols 1054 ff.

[51] *OGI* 111.

This is reminiscent of Cleopatra's ancestor, Ptolemy VI Philometor. Philometor, who nominally succeeded to kingship when just a boy, had, like Cleopatra, to contend with multiple threats to his rule: the powerful jealousy and plots of his adult advisors, the aggression of the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV, and the repeated attempts by Philometor's own brother, Euergetes II, to claim the throne for himself. When, after years of uncertainty, Ptolemy VI was firmly established as the king of Egypt, he too ventured on an extended tour beyond Alexandria.[52] He visited Memphis and Upper Egypt, reviewing the condition of the country, showing himself off as the ruler, participating in native religious ritual (the installation of a sacred Buchis bull), and even ordering a military expansion that would securely, if briefly, expand Ptolemaic control along the southern frontier.[53] This tour was clearly designed to publicize the king's firm hold on the affairs and the territory of the kingdom, to highlight his devotion to the gods of Egypt and their reciprocal support of him, and to order the military venture that would extend the southern border of Egypt.

When she sailed up the Nile with Caesar, Cleopatra was at a stage in her career very similar to Ptolemy VI Philometor. Calculating from the time of the queen's departure from Egypt a few months before Caesar's arrival in October 48 until the end of the Alexandrian War in late March 47, approximately nine months of political turmoil and doubt had passed. They were months in which it remained unclear whether Caesar would extricate himself from the hazardous situation in Alexandria, and, most importantly for Cleopatra and the population of Egypt, who would rule the realm. In the end, Caesar was out of trouble and Cleopatra was the clearly established Ptolemaic ruler. The fact that the queen wanted to travel with an army almost to Ethiopia immediately after months of political instability suggests that she felt the need to remind the country of her authority, all the way to the southernmost territories. Presumably the queen wanted to help conclude this troubled time and calm her subjects by publicly advertising, like Ptolemy VI, her own control of the affairs and the territory of the kingdom; a voyage beginning at Alexandria and taking her to Ethiopia would provide the setting for such an advertisement.

Cleopatra, like Philometor, may also have been ambitious for the extension of her control in the southern region.[54] She may have been using the trip to serve notice of Ptolemaic authority, assisted by, but not subservient to, Roman military force. Beyond mere show, the queen may have seized the opportunity offered by the presence of Caesar and his troops to attempt a southern expansion similar to her ancestor's. How she would have convinced Caesar to assist her ambition we do not know, but she had apparently already convinced him to return Cyprus to

[52] For the beleaguered career of Ptomey VI Philometor, see W. Otto, 'Zur Geschichte der Zeit des 6. Ptolemäers', *ABAW*, *Neue Folge*, Heft 11 (Munich, 1934), throughout. See also G. Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, trans. T. Saavedra (London and New York, 2001), 181–94.

[53] *OGI* 111; See E. Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy* (Chicago, IL, 1968), 292–95, with notes; W.W. Tarn, 'The Bucheum stelae: a note', *JRS* 26 (1936), 187–9, at 188. With regard to Philometor's involvement in the installation of a Buchis bull, one should recall Cleopatra's similar participation at the very outset of her career.

[54] Alexander the Great certainly was. Curtius 4.8.3 tells us: *cupido haud iniusta quidem, ceterum intempestiva incesserat non interiora Aegypti, sed etiam Ethiopiam invisere*. This passage in Curtius may help to explain the interests of both Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra VII.

Ptolemaic control, and such a southern offensive would account for the size of their expedition. Such a plan would also account for the army's disinclination to follow to the intended end of the journey. Suetonius' text, as it stands, only indicates that the army refused to follow to the end, it does not describe why. If it was primarily a pleasure cruise, one would expect the soldiers to endure it willingly, unless, by some unlikely chance, those under Caesar's personal command were more sensitive to the military and political difficulties facing their leader outside Egypt than was Caesar himself, and more anxious to return to them. If, however, Caesar and Cleopatra were urging them to take up arms in the hot African sun, one can readily imagine the stirrings of mutiny among at least some of the troops. This proposition, if accepted, offers a plausible explanation for both the army's presence and its attitude.

Another, and equally important, purpose for the journey must be discussed. It is notable that Cleopatra made the voyage at just this time, between April and June 47. She was, after all, pregnant and would deliver a baby boy in late June of that year.[55] Surely she could have waited until after the birth of the child. It seems an inconvenient time to undertake an extended Nile cruise. Inconvenient, perhaps, but also critical. After months of upheaval, the queen had succeeded in returning to power, Alexandria was stabilized and she had no serious rival for the throne. That Cleopatra should have wanted to assure Egypt of the security of the country and of her reign is perfectly sensible, but she may also have used the trip as an occasion to publicize the pregnancy itself and, very importantly, the impending birth of an heir.

Reference has already been made to Cleopatra's relationship with the priesthood at Memphis and the fact that that priesthood advertised the birth of Ptolemy Caesar on an inscribed stele. Clearly Memphis knew of the birth of the heir and celebrated it. It is likely that the queen publicized her pregnancy when she visited the cities and sanctuaries of Upper Egypt and elicited the child's endorsement by the Memphite priesthood on that same trip.

An even more dramatic indication that Cleopatra highlighted the approaching birth of the heir during the Nile voyage is to be found in the shrine at Hermonthis. A scene on the wall of the inner sanctuary celebrates the birth of Ptolemy XV Caesar, Cleopatra's son by the Roman commander. Reliefs on the temple explicitly assert Cleopatra's personal authority, as well as the divine – and decidedly Egyptian – origin of her offspring. Cleopatra is present, along with a god and goddess, overseeing the birth of a divine child. The child is identified as 'Horus, the sun, the child, the eldest one of DN'.[56] Ray comments that the hieroglyph of the father is most like that of Amun, and this interpretation is strengthened by the appearance of that god in the scene. He further notes that Amun could traditionally take on 'the form of the queen's consort in order to father the legitimate heir to the throne' and that he appears to be performing just that function in this scene.[57]

[55] I accept that the birth date of the future Ptolemy XV, as suggested by the Demotic stele cited by Stähelin (*RE* 11.754), was, in fact, 23 June 47 B.C.E., but this date is admittedly disputed. See also Plutarch, *Vit. Caes.* 49.5; E. Grzybek, 'Pharao Caesar in einer demotischen Grabschrift aus Memphis', *MH* 35 (1978), 149–58.

[56] Ray (n. 42), 10–11; Lepsius (n. 42), 60a; Otto (n. 42), 270; Volkmann (n. 3), 75; D. Thompson, in *CAH*2 9 (Cambridge, 1994), 321; Bouche-Leclerq (n. 22), 2.217, n. 1; Volkmann, *RE* 1760; Stähelin, *RE*, 11.754.

[57] Ray (n. 42), 11.

The images therefore suggest that Caesar was a mere vessel of the god Amun and they downplay, indeed deny, the Roman-ness of Caesarion's father, making the child wholly divine and emphatically Egyptian. If there is an intentional reference to any mortal ruler, that figure is the source of Macedonian control in Egypt: Alexander the Great, who was supposedly addressed as the son of Amun on his visit to the oracle at Siwa.[58] The shrine and, by extension, the priests of Hermonthis declare and support the legitimacy of the queen's offspring by Caesar. It is probable that the queen made the arrangements for the temple that would be constructed at Hermonthis while on her Nile cruise. Far from highlighting Caesar or Rome as the guarantor of her regime, she seems to have been intent on recalling that the regime was Ptolemaic, that it was originated by Alexander and that its survival was (as her timely pregnancy demonstrated) assured by the promise of an heir, who was not only approved but even engendered by the gods of Egypt.

Another proof of the queen's focus is found among the ruins of Coptus. In addition to the boat shrine previously mentioned, a limestone crown from Coptus has been identified as belonging to a statue of Cleopatra VII.[59] The inscription on the back pillar of the crown describes the sculpted queen as 'king's daughter, king's sister, great royal wife', terms that could apply to several Ptolemaic queens, including Cleopatra, who was the offspring of a king and the wife of her own royal brothers.[60] The crown itself has two feathers, with a sun disk that is decorated with three cobras.[61] Ashton proposes an interesting reading of the triple *uraeus*. While allowing that the three cobras could be connected to the three titles found in the inscription, she notes that they might also 'represent the queen's role as Isis within the Egyptian divine/royal triad of Osiris, Horus and Isis'.[62] If true, this confirms what has already been said of the shrine at Hermonthis. By identifying herself as the goddess-mother in the triad, Cleopatra not only celebrated the birth of her child but also asserted the divinity of that child's heritage, locating him firmly within the Egyptian and Ptolemaic religious and political traditions. The queen's passage southward along the Nile allowed her to herald these facts, no doubt with great spectacle, to her entire kingdom.[63]

Cleopatra's Nile cruise may well have advanced aims other than those discussed, but it certainly seems to have been designed, among other things, to announce that the queen's government would remain secure, for she came through Egypt bearing

[58] Ibid. See Arr. 3.3–4; Diod. Cass. 17.49–51; Curt. 4.7.5–30; Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 26.11–27.11; Strabo 17.1.43.

[59] On the boat shrine, see n. 6 above. On the crown, see Walker and Higgs (n. 6), no. 170; Ashton (n. 6), 26; S.-A. Ashton, *Ptolemaic Royal Sculpture from Egypt: The Interaction Between Greek and Egyptian Tradition*, BAR International Series 923 (Oxford, 2001), 42–3; D. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1999), 221. While the crown was once thought to belong to Arsinoe II, analysis of the its iconography, which is not of a type usually worn by that queen, has led to the conclusion that the statue is more likely to represent Cleopatra VII. See Ashton (this note), 42.

[60] See Walker and Higgs (n. 6), no. 170; Ashton (n. 59), 42.

[61] See Walker and Higgs (n. 6), no. 170.

[62] Ashton (n. 6), 26.

[63] If, as seems likely, the *thalamegos* on which Cleopatra travelled with Caesar is the same as that on which she later made her appearance before Antony (Plutarch, *Vit. Ant.* 26; Socrates of Rhodes [*FGrHist* 192 F1 = Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 4.147–8]), then it was an impressive vehicle and underscores the queen's inspired theatricality. See C.B.R. Pelling, *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (Cambridge, 1988), 187–8.

arms. Her government would, moreover, remain securely Ptolemaic, for, as everyone could by then see, she also came through Egypt bearing the infant whose impending birth would guarantee the divine successor to a proud and ancient nation.

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