

African Kings, Roman Rule: The Life of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene of Mauretania

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Abstract

Juba II (52 BC-AD 23), a North African prince, was orphaned in 46 BC by Julius Caesar and paraded through Rome, before being raised in his household. As a young man Juba fought alongside Caesar's adopted son Octavian – the future emperor Augustus – before being placed on the throne of Mauretania. Juba's wife, Cleopatra Selene (40 BC-5 BC), also knew what it was like to be a trophy. The daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, she was taken back to Rome after Octavian defeated her parents in 30 BC. Both Juba and Selene were raised and educated as Romans, groomed to rule on behalf of Augustus. After their marriage, they were sent to North Africa to as king and queen of Mauretania. Ruling in the name of Rome, they joined a select group of independent client-kings on the borders of the Roman Empire. However, Juba's legacy was not of tyranny but of scholarship, for he was a famed antiquarian, travel writer and explorer; he discovered the Canary Islands, wrote histories of Arabia and Libya, and led diplomatic missions to his fellow kings.

Intended for a non-specialist reader, this thesis introduces the lives of these important figures, from the death of their parents and childhood in Rome, to their reign as king and queen of Mauretania and their legacy both in North Africa and beyond. Textual sources for the lives of Juba and Cleopatra Selene are limited, causing previous studies to repeat the same well-worn histories or omit mention of them altogether. To overcome this lack of documentary evidence, I use an object-based methodology, with selected artefacts serving as lenses through which the couple's lives may be viewed. In the introduction to the project I also investigate the advantages of such an approach when writing biographies of other ancient figures.

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Dramatis Personae

A note on names

For simplicity and clarity, personalities are referred to by the names with which we are most familiar. So Cleopatra, not Kleopatra, Mark Antony not Marcus Antonius and Augustus throughout, even at points in the historical narrative where he was still known as Octavian. Similarly, to avoid confusion with their parents and namesakes, when the text refers to Juba, it means Juba II, King of Mauretania — his father will be referred to solely as Juba I or Juba I of Numidia — and Selene refers to Cleopatra Selene, Queen of Mauretania. The Roman province of Africa, although known variously during this time as Africa, Africa Novus and Africa Vetus, will be referred to by its eventual name, Africa Proconsularis, to avoid confusion with the continent. Finally, note that the ancient kingdom of Mauretania is unrelated to the modern nation of Mauritania, in both location and spelling.

In Rome

Agrippa (c. 63-12 BC) — Augustus' trusted lieutenant, married to Julia, father of Gaius, Lucius and Agrippina.

Agrippina (c. 14 BC-AD 33) — daughter of Julia and Agrippa, granddaughter of Augustus, married to Germanicus, mother of Caligula.

Antonia the Elder (b. 39 BC) — daughter of Antony and Octavia.

Antonia the Younger (36 BC-AD 37) — daughter of Antony and Octavia, mother of Germanicus and Claudius.

Augustus (63 BC-AD 14) — first emperor of Rome (r. 27 BC-AD 14) nephew of Julius Caesar, married to Livia. Also known as Octavian.

Caligula (AD 12-41) — third emperor of Rome (r. AD 37-41), son of Agrippina and Germanicus, murdered by Praetorian guard.

Cato the Younger (95-46 BC) — Roman statesman, ally of Pompey and Juba I.

Cicero (106-43 BC) — Roman statesman and orator, author of many, many texts.

Claudius (10 BC-AD 54) — fourth emperor of Rome (r. AD 41-54), grandson of Augustus, Livia and Antony, uncle of Caligula, nephew of Tiberius.

Crinagoras of Mytilene (70-18 BC) — ambassador, tutor to imperial household, court poet to Augustus, Herod and Juba II.

Germanicus (15 BC-AD 19) — son of Antonia the Younger, brother of Claudius, married to Agrippina the Elder, father of Caligula.

Julia (39 BC-AD 14) — Augustus' only child, married to Marcellus, Agrippa and then Tiberius, mother of Gaius, Lucius and Agrippina (with Agrippa), exiled by Augustus in 2 BC.

Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) — general and statesman, ally and then enemy of Pompey, father of Caesarion (with Cleopatra), uncle of Augustus and Octavia.

Livia (59 BC-AD29) — first empress of Rome, Augustus' second wife, mother of Tiberius.

Lucius Caesar (17 BC-AD 2) — son of Agrippa and Julia, grandson of Augustus, brother of Gaius. Died in Spain.

Gaius Caesar (20 BC-AD 4) — son of Agrippa and Julia, grandson and adopted heir of Augustus, brother of Lucius. Died in East.

Marcellus (42-23 BC) — son of Octavia, nephew of Augustus, cousin of Tiberius, married to Julia. Succumbed to plague.

Octavia (c. 66-11 BC) — sister of Augustus, nephew of Julius Caesar, formerly married to Mark Antony, mother of Marcellus, Antonia the Elder and Antonia the Younger.

Pompey the Great (106-48 BC) — senator and general, former ally of Julius Caesar turned sworn enemy during Civil War. Murdered in Egypt on orders of Ptolemy XIII.

Tiberius (42 BC-AD 37) — second emperor of Rome (r. AD 14-37), Livia's son, married to Julia.

In Egypt and the East

Alexander Helios (b. 40 BC) — son of Cleopatra, Selene's twin brother.

Archelaus (d. AD 17) — priest-king of Cappadocia, client-king of Rome, father of Glaphyra.

Caesarion (47-30 BC) — illegitimate son of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar, executed by Augustus.

Cleopatra VII (69 BC-30 BC, r. 51-30 BC) — Cleopatra the Great, queen of Egypt; lover of Julius Caesar, married to Mark Antony.

Glaphyra (c. 35 BC – AD 7) — princess of Cappadocia, daughter of Glaphyra, second wife of Juba II.

Herod the Great (c. 72-4 BC) — king of Judaea, client-king of Rome.

Mark Antony (83-30 BC) — former ally of Augustus turned sworn enemy, formerly married to Octavia.

Ptolemy Philadelphus (b. 36 BC) — younger brother of Selene, youngest son of Antony and Cleopatra.

Ptolemy XIII Philopator (c. 62-47 BC) — brother of and former co-ruler of Egypt with Cleopatra VII.

In Africa

Cleopatra Selene (40 - c. 5 BC) — queen of Mauretania; daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, raised by Octavia, married to Juba II.

Lucius Cornelius Lentulus (d. AD 3/4)— Augustus' master of the mint, governor of Africa Proconsularis, murdered in the Sahara.

Cossus Cornelius Lentulus (consul 1 BC) — Lucius's brother and successor as governor.

Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus (d. AD 39) — Cossus' son, friend of Ptolemy, executed for his part in conspiracy against Caligula.

Juba I (85-46 BC, r. 60-46 BC) — king of Numidia, ally of Pompey, enemy of Caesar.

Juba II (48 BC - AD 23, r. 25 BC - AD 23) — king of Mauretania; prince of Numidia, son of Juba I, raised by Octavia, married to Cleopatra Selene.

Jugurtha (r. 118-105 BC) – grandson of Massinissa, king of Numidia. Fought Rome during Jugurthine War, captured and paraded in triumph through the city.

Massinissa (238-148 BC) –first king of Numidia. Betrayed Carthage during Second Punic War to ally with Scipio Africanus. Ancestor of Juba.

Mastanabal (r. 148-140 BC) — son of Massinissa. Ancestor of Juba.

Ptolemy (c. 9 BC - AD 40, r. AD 20-40) — son of Juba II, succeeded as king of Mauretania, cousin to Caligula.

Tacfarinas (d. AD 24) — chief of Musulamians, former Roman auxiliary soldier turned rebel.

Abbreviations

BNJ: Brill's New Jacoby, edited by Ian Worthington, E.M. Carawan, K Dowden, J Engels, Andrew Erskine, R. Fowler, and Nicholas Jones, eds. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008).

Dio: Cassius Dio, *Dio's Roman History*, translated by Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library, 9 vols (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1961).

CNNM: Jean Mazard. *Corpus Nummorum Numidiæ Mauretaniæque* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1955).

IG: The Packard Humanities Institute. 'Greek Inscriptions', 13 July 2020.
<https://inscriptions.packhum.org/>.

OGIS: Wilhelm Dittenberger. *Orientalis graeci inscriptiones selectae : Supplementum Sylloges inscriptionum graecarum*. 2 vols (Lipsiae: Hirzel, 1903).

Pliny, NH: Pliny, *Natural History*, translated by M. A. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1967).

Roller 2004: Duane W. Roller. *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Introduction

A return of variety to the ancient world's skin tones paints a truer picture. It also asks us to reflect on the current state of those disciplines, fields, and practices connected to historical study. As a classicist, I am no stranger to the seas of lily white, spectacled and tweed-wearing people at conferences. My field is dominated by white folks. We have known for a long time that we have a diversity problem, and one way to address this might be to emphasize what an integral part people of color played within ancient Mediterranean history.

— Sarah Bond, 'Whitewashing Ancient Statues'

1. The Classics, Whitewashing, Juba II and Cleopatra Selene

In 2017, articles in *Forbes* and *The Times Literary Supplement* by the classicists Sarah Bond and Mary Beard about race in the ancient Roman world provoked a large amount of online abuse.¹ Both Beard and Bond were making the point that the Roman Empire had a sizeable number of citizens whose skin was Brown or Black, or at least not Caucasian.² The abuse that these articles prompted was often unambiguously racist in tone. One commenter wrote '[t]he left is literally trying to rewrite history to pretend Britain always had mass immigration'.³ Another tweeted '[t]hank God the BBC is portraying Roman Britain as ethnically diverse, I mean, who cares about historical accuracy, right?'.⁴ This caused debate about the

¹ Mary Beard. 'Roman Britain in Black and White'. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 August 2017. <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/roman-britain-black-white/>; Sarah E. Bond. 'Whitewashing Ancient Statues: Whiteness, Racism and Color in the Ancient World'. *Forbes*, 27 April 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/drsarahbond/2017/04/27/whitewashing-ancient-statues-whiteness-racism-and-color-in-the-ancient-world/#6289265075ad>; Bond. 'The Argument Made by the Absence: On Whiteness, Polychromy, and Diversity in Classics'. *History from Below* (blog), 2017. <https://sarahemilybond.com/2017/04/30/the-argument-made-by-the-absence-on-whiteness-polychromy-and-diversity-in-classics>.

² In the first century AD, the population of areas we would today consider Middle Eastern or African was somewhere in the region of 20 million people. The total population in the Roman Empire at this time is estimated at about 45 million. See Bruce Frier. 'Demography'. In *The Cambridge Ancient History: The High Empire, AD 70–192*, edited by Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey, and Dominic Rathbone, 2nd ed. Vol. 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 812.

³ Quote from a now-deleted *Infowars* article, cited in Beard, 'Roman Britain in Black and White'

⁴ Paul Joseph Watson. 'Thank God the BBC is Portraying Roman Britain as Ethnically Diverse. I Mean, Who Cares about Historical Accuracy, Right?'. Tweet. @PrisonPlanet, 25 July 2017. <https://twitter.com/PrisonPlanet/status/889804329082912769>; Paul Joseph Watson. PAUL JOSEPH WATSON

‘whitewashing’ of classics, a debate that has sharpened in the past five years: the perception was that Ancient Rome was white, whereas the fact that the Roman empire extended from Spain in the West to Syria in the East meant that it was inevitably a multicultural and multiethnic society.⁵ Almost as if to illustrate this point, shortly afterwards, while researching members of the Augustan court in first-century Rome, I stumbled upon the figure of Juba II, King of Mauretania, a Berber born in North Africa and raised in Rome in the imperial household. The more I read about this figure, the more details about his life I uncovered: he was a scholar whose work was referenced by Pliny the Elder and Plutarch, an explorer who named the Canary Isles, his wife Cleopatra Selene was the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, his son Ptolemy was murdered by Caligula. How was it that these histories were not more widely known in the popular imagination of Rome? Was their neglect the result of deliberate — or accidental — whitewashing, the bias of archaeological excavation towards the Western Roman provinces, or a general Romanocentric view of the ancient world — or was there something else going on? I tried to discover more but found a paucity of material: there is no extant biography of Juba II or Cleopatra Selene, and the popular history books that do make mention of them are either too focused on the details of their early lives or too wide-ranging in approach to afford them much attention.⁶

GOT OWNED! *YouTube*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtPZhDH4QU8>; Telegraph Reporters. ‘Alt-Right Commentator Gets “schooled” by Historian over Diversity in Roman Britain’. *The Telegraph*, 27 July 2017. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/27/alt-right-commentator-gets-schooled-historian-diversity-roman>.

⁵ See Matthew Nicholls. ‘How Diverse was Roman Britain?’ *Connecting Research: The Forum* (blog), 28 July 2017. <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/the-forum/2017/07/28/how-diverse-was-roman-britain>; Neville Morley. ‘Diversitas et Multiculturalismus’. *Sphinx* (blog), 2 August 2017.

<https://thesphinxblog.com/2017/08/02/diversitas-et-multiculturalismus>; Tim Whitmarsh. ‘Black Achilles’. *Aeon* (blog), 9 May 2018. <https://aeon.co/essays/when-homer-envisioned-achilles-did-he-see-a-black-man>; Margaret Talbot. ‘Color Blind: The Myth of Whiteness in Classical Sculpture’. *The New Yorker*, 29 October 2018.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/the-myth-of-whiteness-in-classical-sculpture>; Siobhan Ball, Joel Christensen, Al Duncan, David Elmer, Cassidy Due Hackney, Rebecca Futo Kennedy, Matthew Lloyd, et al. ‘Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash against Black Achilles, Part I: Ancient Greek Attitudes toward Africans’. *Pharos* (blog), 11 May 2018. <https://pharos.vassarspaces.net/2018/05/11/scholars-respond-to-racist-backlash-against-black-achilles-part-1-ancient-greek-attitudes-toward-africans>; Paula Gaither, Elisa McAtee, Kenneth Lapatin, and David Saunders. ‘Rethinking Descriptions of Black Africans in Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Art’. *Getty Iris* (blog), 15 December 2020. <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/rethinking-descriptions-of-black-africans-in-greek-etruscan-and-roman-art>.

⁶ Mary Beard. *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (London: Profile Books, 2015); Tom Holland. *Rubicon: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic*. Kindle Edition (London: Little, Brown), 2004; Adrian Goldsworthy. *Pax Romana* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2017); Robin Lane Fox. *The Classical World* (London: Penguin, 2006); and Michael Scott. *Ancient Worlds* (London: Windmill Books, 2017). In the latter stages of this thesis, Dr Jane Draycott released *Cleopatra’s Daughter: Egyptian Princess, Roman Prisoner, African Queen* (London, Head of Zeus, 2022), a biography of Cleopatra Selene. It is addressed in a little more detail in the conclusion.

One reason for this is that historians writing about Juba II and Cleopatra Selene's life have only had a very slight bibliography of ancient sources to use.⁷ As a result of drawing on the same ancient historians, Juba and Selene's story has tended to be told in similar ways, by using the same handful of source-texts over and over. As a result, Juba and Selene's biography concentrates on the beginning of their lives when they were in Rome and therefore within 'sight' of the Roman writers, who are writing from the centre. As soon as the couple leave Rome for Mauretania, they step out of view and therefore are no longer mentioned in their works. It is only at moments when events in their lives intersect with those of prominent Romans — such as during the Roman intervention in a regional uprising or Juba II's expedition in the company of Augustus' heir — that they reappear.⁸

This should not surprise us. In his 1979 essay 'The Life of Infamous Men', Michel Foucault comments on what makes the obscure lives in his essay visible:

The most intense point of lives, the one where their energy is concentrated, is precisely there where they clash with power, struggle with it, endeavour to utilise its forces or to escape its traps [...] These words are what gives to them, in order to travel through time, the brief flash of sound and fury and which carries them even to us.⁹

However, this does not result in a satisfactory history, let alone a biography. Therefore, in order to tell a new story — and to allow me to get closer to the emotions and senses of my subjects in a way the text does not — new sources must be identified and incorporated.¹⁰ While scholars of this period, myself included, eternally hope for a lost text to turn up somewhere — Juba II's purported autobiography, for example, or the missing books of Tacitus that cover the period of his reign — none are forthcoming. In the absence of further textual sources, we must turn to another source of evidence — the evidence from artefacts — and in doing so bring in another discipline: material culture, the discourse of objects. There is a surfeit of understudied artefacts associated with Juba II and Cleopatra Selene in museums around the world, in particular in their native North Africa, which offers the potential of bringing fresh new evidence to light.

⁷ See Historiographic Survey and Literature Reviews, below.

⁸ Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.30.136-41; Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.23; see section Sources for Juba II and Cleopatra Selene for a more detailed chronology.

⁹ Michel Foucault. 'The Life of Infamous Men'. In *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, edited by Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney, Australia: Feral Publications), 1979, p. 80.

¹⁰ Karen Harvey. *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 11; Serena Dyer. 'State of the Field: Material Culture'. *History* 106, no. 370 (2021), p282

In this thesis, I apply techniques derived from material culture studies to the field of biography and, using artefacts from ancient Mauretania in conjunction with historical written sources, produce a new biography of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene.¹¹ Rather than resorting to objects when the written record fails, artefacts will be at the centre of the study from the start, weaving the two parallel modes of history together into a coherent whole.¹²



Figure 1. Marble bust of Juba II of Mauretania, Cherchell Archaeological Museum, S68. Photograph from Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 75 fig. 12.

A sculpted marble head found in Cherchell, Algeria helps illustrate how bringing an object into the conversation complicates the story, allowing us to ask questions about emotion, feelings and identity that might otherwise be absent from historical sources. This head has been identified as Juba, the portrait depicting him with full lips, his hair curled in locks. Immediately this object tells us something that the historical sources never did — that Juba might have been Black or Berber in appearance, as many twentieth-century scholars were keen to point out. But, if it is so clear cut, why do Juba's other portraits depict him with more Caucasian features — what makes this portrait different? As well as providing answers about racial and cultural identity from Juba's own time — and not just about the king's appearance — the way that this object has been interpreted in the more recent past tells us a great deal too. In short, introducing an object into the story complicates the picture.

Terminology

¹¹ See section The Literature of Material Culture Studies later.

¹² See section Sources for Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, below.

Before proceeding it is necessary to define certain key terms that will be used throughout this thesis:

Material culture is not just the study of objects, but the study of culture through objects. It is in effect an object-based branch of the humanities and social sciences, which was first pioneered by Henry Glassie and is now a firmly established historiographical mode.¹³ It is sometimes used to refer to the physical objects themselves, but in this thesis its use will be constrained to the field of study only — the material will be referred to as objects or artefacts.

When we say ‘objects’ we are talking about *artefacts*: objects made by or modified by man. There is no limit on scale here: an artefact could be anything from a brooch pin to an amphitheatre. Artefacts do not normally include natural objects such as stones and bones, but can sometimes include those objects when modified by man, such as a pile of butchered bones or a knapped stone.¹⁴ Artefacts are informed by, and inform our understanding of, the narrative of the historical moment of their creation, a narrative in part created by those artefacts, as part of a hermeneutic circle.

Historical evidence is here used to mean the counterpoint to artefactual evidence: documentary or written records, typically those from the ancient past but sometimes more recently. They are not necessarily primary or first-hand sources, but written evidence from the past, including classical literature and poetry.

Context is an archaeological term for the specific place an object is found and the date it was deposited there, but in material culture studies is used as a shorthand for the differing environments and cultures an object might have moved through or encountered.

An *object-based* biography is the term I’ve chosen to use for the methodology employed in this thesis, in which the artefacts are placed at the centre of the story, and have their own individual histories — analogous to the meaning of the term bibliographical in book-history studies.

¹³ Jules David Prown. ‘Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method’. *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982), pp. 1-2; Bernard L. Herman. *The Stolen House*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992, p4; Henry Glassie. *Material Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

¹⁴ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, p. 2.

When I talk about *identity*, specifically in the ancient past, I am referring to the way individuals thought about themselves and the way they chose to communicate this to others. Identity is based on a collective set of characteristics, which could be any mixture of cultural, racial and ethnic features, including material culture.¹⁵ *Race* is, at least in this thesis, used to describe an individual's physical attributes. It is often an external grouping or label applied to an individual. *Ethnicity*, on the other hand, is a form of cultural identity, comprising a mixture of physical and cultural features.¹⁶ It is often self-selected.¹⁷

2. Sources for Juba II and Cleopatra Selene

Two parallel chronologies can be written — one based on the textual evidence, the second based on the evidence from objects — to show the limitations of using both sources alone.

In the former, Juba I, King of Numidia and ally of Pompey during the Roman civil war, commits suicide after his defeat in battle to Julius Caesar.¹⁸ His young family are captured, amongst them his infant son and heir Juba II, and paraded through Rome in Caesar's African Triumph.¹⁹ Juba II is then adopted by Caesar's family and raised in Rome, where he meets his future wife Cleopatra Selene.²⁰ Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, is raised in Alexandria where she is formally recognised by her father as part of the Donations of Alexandria.²¹ Upon her parents' suicide, she too is captured by the Romans and paraded alongside her twin brother Alexander Helios and an effigy of her mother in Augustus' Egyptian triumph. She is also adopted by the emperor Augustus, and raised by his sister, Antony's ex-wife Octavia alongside half-siblings. There, Octavia arranges her marriage to Juba II, and Augustus grants the pair the kingdom of Mauretania to rule on his behalf.²²

The written evidence then becomes scant: Selene gives Juba II a son, Ptolemy, and then dies at some point after, an event marked by a lunar eclipse. Juba II subsequently

¹⁵ Tamar Hodos. 'Local and Global Perspectives in the Study of Social and Cultural Identities', p3-4; and Carla M. Antonaccio, '(Re)Defining Ethnicity: Culture, Material Culture, and Identity', p34, both in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, edited by Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

¹⁶ Antonaccio, '(Re)Defining Ethnicity', p32-3.

¹⁷ Hodos, 'Local and Global Perspectives', p4.

¹⁸ Seneca, *On Providence*, 2.10.

¹⁹ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Antony*, 87.

²¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, 36.

²² Plutarch, *Antony*, 87; Dio, 51.15.6.

marries the Cappadocian princess, Glaphyra, whose own story is scant.²³ We know also that Juba II accompanied Augustus' heir, Gaius Caesar, on his expedition to the East to sort out the dynastic dispute following Herod's death.²⁴ And, lastly, we know that throughout much of his reign, Juba II had to contend with various insurgencies, the longest lasting led by the Berber chieftain and former Roman soldier Tacfarinas, which required multiple Roman military campaigns to suppress.²⁵ Juba II died before Tacfarinas' defeat.²⁶ About their son, Ptolemy, we know even less: he was an ineffective ruler, and he was murdered by his cousin, the fourth Roman emperor Caligula, for apparently frivolous but disputed reasons.²⁷ After his death, Caligula's successor Claudius seized his kingdom and turned it into two Roman provinces, Mauretania Tingitana and Caesariensis, a transition marked by a revolt led by one of Ptolemy's kinsmen.²⁸

The chronology told by objects principally comes from the coinage minted by Juba II and Cleopatra Selene and the artworks and inscriptions from their capitals in Mauretania, and therefore starts only when they are established in their new kingdom. As a result, aside from objects associated with Selene's royal upbringing — her depiction at the foot of the goddess Isis on a temple wall in Egypt, for example, or the Victory Monument from Nicopolis displaying her as Augustus' captive — there is little to inform us of their youths spent in Rome.²⁹ Instead, we must wait until the two are established in their new kingdom to pick up the chronology as told by objects: there are various victories, presumably over local tribesmen, celebrated with triumphs and honours bestowed by Rome; the construction of a new Rome in North Africa with theatres, baths and circuses;³⁰ and jubilee games held in the capital.³¹ We also see Juba and Selene as artistic patrons, with both original artworks commissioned by the royal couple and imported copies of famous statues erected throughout

²³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.349-53; and *Wars*, 2.114-16.

²⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.31.141, 12.31.56, 32.4.10.

²⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.52; 3.20-1, 32, 73-4; 4.23-6.

²⁶ Strabo, 7.3.7, 9.

²⁷ Seneca, *On the Tranquility of Mind*, 11.12; Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.1.11; Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.1, 5, 23; Suetonius, *Gaius*, 26.

²⁸ Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.1; Dio, 60.9.5.

²⁹ *Graeco-Roman Group Statue of Unusual Character from Dendera*. Cairo Museum, JE 46278; *Victory Monument at Nicopolis*. Archaeological Museum of Nicopolis.

³⁰ D. Fishwick. 'Coins as Evidence: Some Phantom Temples'. *Echos Du Monde Classique: Classical Views* 28/2 (1984), 263-70.

³¹ *CNNM*, #227ff

the kingdom.³² There is also evidence of trade and royal patronage of the nearest outpost of the Roman Empire, in Gades in southern Spain.³³ Local customs and traditions persisted throughout their reign: there are signs of the continued worship of North African deities, as well as the couple's burial in a tomb complex with distinctive Numidian features.³⁴ Finally, after an uprising prompted by Ptolemy's own death, Claudius awarded Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of the city of Volubilis.³⁵

As can be seen by the two brief chronologies presented above, relying on just one set of sources to write a biography of Juba II and Selene would produce an incomplete life. Even when the two are combined, it is inevitable that gaps will remain. Whereas other biographers might see it as advantageous to smooth over such gaps, I believe that in acknowledging their existence, allowing them to remain, leaving it to the reader to suppose what might have been, provides for a more fruitful approach.

3. Historiographic Survey and Literature Reviews

3.1 The Historiography Relating to Juba II and Cleopatra Selene

Contemporary and Near-Contemporary Sources

Of the ancient sources to which we still have access, three writers were contemporaries of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, knowing them personally in varying capacities. The poet Horace (65-8 BC) mentions Juba in one of his *Odes*, written in 23BC: 'such an omen as warlike Apulia does not support in the wide oak forests and the land of Juba does not produce, dry nurse of lions.'³⁶ Crinagoras of Mytilene (70 BC-AD18), Cleopatra Selene's childhood tutor and court poet commemorates her marriage in *Epigram 25*, as well as her death in *Epigram 18*: '[g]reat bordering regions of the world which the full stream of Nile separates from the black Aethiopians, you have by marriage made your sovereigns common to both,

³² See Paul Lachlan MacKendrick. *The North African Stones Speak*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980, p209; and Roller 2004, p. 139, for a summary of Juba II's art collection.

³³ From an inscription in Spain, *ILS 840*; *Festa Avienus Ora Maritima 277-83*; see Mazard no. 397 for a coin suggesting that Juba was duumvir alongside one Cn. Attellius.

³⁴ The Tomb of the Christian Woman, Tipasa; see MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p192

³⁵ *Inscription of Claudius*. Volubilis, Morocco.

³⁶ Horace, *Odes*, 1.22.

turning Egypt and Libya into one country.³⁷ The geographer Strabo (63 BC-AD 23), too, makes reference to his childhood friend Juba II in his *Geography*, as well as referencing the king's own scholarship and explorations: '[b]ut at the present time Juba has been invested with the rule, not only of Maurusia, but also of many parts of the rest of Libya, because of his loyalty and his friendship for the Romans.'³⁸

A number of other ancient authors make mention of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene in their writing, although almost always in the context of Julius Caesar or Augustus. These authors were all writing after the couple's deaths, so cannot be considered contemporaries. There seems to be enough variation — but not contradiction — between their texts to suggest they are not all reworking the same sources, however. The Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37-100), for example, briefly mentions Juba II in the context of the king's second marriage to the Cappadocian princess Glaphyra. Glaphyra was of interest to Josephus as she had previously been married to one of Herod's sons.³⁹

The Greek biographer Plutarch (AD 45-127) makes mention of Juba II in several of his *Parallel Lives*, most notably in the *Life of Caesar* where he describes Juba I's defeat at Thapsus and the infant Juba II's role in Julius Caesar's African triumph.⁴⁰ It is in this volume that he describes Juba II as 'the most fortunate captive ever taken'.⁴¹ In the epilogue at the end of the *Life of Antony*, Plutarch describes Juba II and Cleopatra Selene's marriage as he sums up what became of Antony's children: 'Cleopatra [Selene], the daughter of Cleopatra, Octavia gave in marriage to Juba, the most accomplished of kings'.⁴² He also mentions Juba II in passing in the *Life of Sertorius* and the *Life of Sulla*.⁴³ The foremost modern scholar of Juba II and Selene, Duane Roller, has suggested that one of Plutarch's primary sources was Juba II himself and his lost text, *Roman Archaeology*.⁴⁴ Unlike some of the other later writers, Plutarch had something of a direct connection to Juba and Selene: his grandfather, a doctor in Alexandria, knew Cleopatra's cook and some stories from their court had been passed down to him.

The Roman historian Tacitus (c. AD 55-117) mentions Juba II's rule when describing the Roman frontiers. He also describes Ptolemy's attempts to put down the

³⁷ Crinagoras, Epigrams 18 and 25, in *The Greek Anthology*.

³⁸ Strabo, 6.4.2, 17.3.7, 12, 25.

³⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.13.4 and *Wars*, 2.115.

⁴⁰ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55.1-2.

⁴¹ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55.2.

⁴² Plutarch, *Antony*, 87.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Sertorius* 9.5 and *Sulla* 16.8.

⁴⁴ Roller 2004, p7.

rebellion of Tacfarinas, in which Tacitus dismisses Juba's son as a 'heedless youth'.⁴⁵ The Greek historian Appian (c. AD 95-165) writes of Juba I's defeat and Juba II's subsequent capture and parade in Caesar's triumph.⁴⁶ The Roman historian Cassius Dio (AD 155-235) writes on Juba and Selene's marriage and makes limited comments on their reign at moments at which it intersects with his history of Rome, most notably during Tacfarinas' revolt.⁴⁷ As a result, Cassius Dio is our best non-contemporary written source. The Roman historian and gossipmonger Suetonius (c. AD 69-122) mentions both Juba I and Ptolemy, but not Juba II directly.⁴⁸ He does, however, discuss Augustus' approach to dealing with neighbouring kings.⁴⁹ The Latin author Ampelius (writing c. AD 240) provides the briefest of sketches of Juba I and II's lives, but does give the king the memorable epithet *rex literatissimus*: 'most scholarly king'.⁵⁰

As discussed previously, if we rely solely on the ancient sources for Juba and Selene, we are left with an unsatisfying, incomplete account. The moments in which they do appear immediately enliven the text, but these sources cannot be relied upon alone.

Juba II's Writing

Juba II was himself a polymath, but none of his own extensive body of works has survived intact. Instead several fragments have been preserved in the writing of other classical authors. 104 fragments of Juba's writing were identified and compiled by Felix Jacoby in his *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (1923), which has recently been published in a new English translation.⁵¹ Most of these fragments were preserved in Pliny the Elder's (AD 23-79) *Natural History*, as well as in Plutarch's *Romulus*, *Numa* and *Roman Questions*, and works by Athenaeus (AD 170-223).⁵² His fragments can also be found in the works of at least another dozen classical authors, although Roller believes Aelian (AD 175-235) was the last author to have been directly referencing Juba's original works.⁵³

⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.23-25.

⁴⁶ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.44-6, 83, 87, 95-6, 100-2.

⁴⁷ Dio, 51.15.6, 53.26.2, 55.28.3-4.

⁴⁸ Suetonius, *Caesar* 35-71 and *Caligula* 26.1, respectively.

⁴⁹ Suetonius, *Augustus* 48 and 60.

⁵⁰ Ampelius, *Liber memorialis*, 38.1.4.

⁵¹ *BNJ*

⁵² Pliny, *NH*; Plutarch, *Romulus*; *Numa*; *Roman Questions*; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 4.77.

⁵³ Duane W. Roller. 'Juba II of Mauretania - Biographical Essay'. In *Brill's New Jacoby*, edited by Ian Worthington, E.M. Carawan, K Dowden, J Engels, Andrew Erskine, R. Fowler, and Nicholas Jones. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Although it is through misfortune and chance that none of Juba's works survive in their original form, it is possible to speculate that their loss might have contributed to his own story being overlooked.

Modern Scholarship on Juba II and Cleopatra Selene

In 1841, Konrad Muller identified and published 91 fragments of Juba's writing in his *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, initiating scholarly interest in Juba II for the first time.⁵⁴ Two dissertations swiftly followed, both written by Germans in Latin — Wenceslaus Plagge's *De Juba II. rege Mauretaniae* and Ludwig Keller's *De Juba Appiani Cassiique Dionis auctore* — but these offered little in the way of critique, and were more concerned with compiling the fragments of Juba II's writing.⁵⁵ Hermann Peter's monograph, *Ueber den Werth der historischen Schriftstellerei von König Juba II von Mauretanien*, attempted to apply a more critical perspective to Juba's writing.⁵⁶

1883 saw both the publication of Maria-Renatus de la Blanchère's *De Rege Juba, Regis Jubae Filio*, the first scholarly work in French, as well as E.H. Bunbury's *A History of Ancient Geography*, which acknowledged Juba II as a significant influence in the early study of geography.⁵⁷ At the same time, France's colonisation of North Africa led to interest in the archaeological sites of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco; the excavations of Juba II's cities at Caesarea in Algeria and Volubilis in Morocco began at this point.

Two works from the beginning of the twentieth century still remain integral to the field of study. Felix Jacoby's huge undertaking *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* was published in German in 1923, but not translated into English until nearly a century later in 2008. Jacoby identified 100 fragments of classical texts as having been written by or making mention of Juba II, covering a wide range of subjects from geography and exploration to natural history and pharmacology.⁵⁸ Then, in 1928, Stephane Gsell completed his eight-volume *Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique Du Nord*, which remains the essential

⁵⁴ Konrad Muller. *Digital Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, n.d. <http://www.dfhg-project.org/>.

⁵⁵ Ludwig Keller. *De Juba Appiani Cassiique Dionis auctore*. Berlin: Elwert, 1872; Wenceslaus Plagge. *De Juba II. rege Mauretaniae: Dissertatio*. Regensburg: Ex Typographia Frid, 1849.

⁵⁶ Hermann Peter. *Ueber den Werth der historischen Schriftstellerei von König Juba II von Mauretanien*. Meißen: Klinkicht, 1879.

⁵⁷ R. du Coudray La Blanchère. *De rege Juba, regis Jubae filio*. Paris: E. Thorin, 1883; E. H. Bunbury. *A History of Ancient Geography among the Greeks and Romans from the Earliest Ages till the Fall of the Roman Empire*. 2nd ed. London: Murray, 1883.

⁵⁸ BNJ

reference work for the study of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene.⁵⁹

There then follows a gap in new scholarship until after the Second World War, and it is not until the late 1970s and 1980s that new studies into Juba II and Cleopatra Selene begin to emerge, in particular Klaus Fittschen's extensive work on the portraiture of Juba II.⁶⁰ David Braund's *Rome and the Friendly Client King* is perhaps the most important text to understand the context in which Juba II and Selene ruled.⁶¹ Braund's journal article in the same year, concerning Juba's attempts to chart the course of the Nile, is perhaps more interesting to us but symptomatic of the problem faced — that modern scholarship inevitably focuses on a single event or moment in minute detail, rather than grand narratives.⁶²

Conversely, Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress' history of the Berbers attempts to place Juba II in the context of Berber rule and compare the client-kingdom of Mauretania to the Berber kingdoms that preceded it in North Africa.⁶³ As with many wide-ranging histories, while Juba II is at least mentioned, it is not in any great depth.

Released in 1997, Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy's *Le royaume de Maurétanie sous Juba II et Ptolémée* was the first book solely devoted to the kingdom of Mauretania in nearly seventy years.⁶⁴ Although MacMullen's entry on Juba II in *Romanization in the Time of Augustus* is brief, it does provide an insightful account of the Mauretanian client kingdom, attempting to get beyond the 'big people' view of history to explore what the 'little people' under Juba thought about the Romans.⁶⁵

David Jacobson's 2001 journal article, 'Three Roman Client Kings', uses the extensive source material we have for Herod the Great, King of Judaea (from Josephus, mainly) to make comparisons between the kingdoms of his contemporaries, Archelaus, King

⁵⁹ Stéphane Gsell. *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*. 4ème ed., rev. Vol. 8. Paris: Hachette, 1928.

⁶⁰ K. Fittschen. 'Die Bildnisse der mauretanischen Könige und ihre stadtrömischen Vorbilder'. *Madrider Mitteilungen* 15 (1974): pp. 156–73; Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige' and 'Juba II und seine Residenz Jol/Caesarea (Cherchel)', both in *Die Numider: Reiter und Könige nördlich der Sahara*, edited by Heinz Günter Horn and Christoph B. Rüger, pp. 209–25, 227–42; Fittschen, 'Zwei Ptolemäerbildnisse in Cherchel'. In *Alessandria e Il Mondo Ellenistico-Romano: Studi in Onore Di Achille Adriani*, edited by Nicola Bonacasa and Antonino Di Vita, 1 (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1983): 165–71.

⁶¹ David Braund. *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

⁶² David Braund, 'Anth. Pal. 9. 235: Juba II, Cleopatra Selene and the Course of the Nile'. *The Classical Quarterly* 34/1 (1984): 175–78.

⁶³ Elizabeth Fentress and Michael Brett. *The Berbers. The Peoples of Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

⁶⁴ Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy. *Le royaume de Maurétanie sous Juba II et Ptolémée (25 av. J. - C.-40 ap. J.-C.)* (Paris: CNRS, 1997).

⁶⁵ Ramsay MacMullen. *Romanization in the Time of Augustus* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

of Cappadocia, and Juba II.⁶⁶ Jacobson successfully makes the case that the client-kings of the late first century BC owed more to the Hellenistic model of kingship than directly to the Roman model of rule, but in doing so they were following in Augustus' own steps towards Hellenism. Jacobson also argues that there were strong dynastic bonds between the three kings, leading to close ties and cultural exchanges around the periphery of the Roman Empire.

In 2002, Christa Landwehr both expanded upon and eventually refuted the chronology of portraiture put forward by Klaus Fittschen, having discovered uncertainties and contradictions with his dating scheme.⁶⁷

These studies fit in with the recent turn towards global history and postcolonial studies, widening our views of the ancient world to encompass more than just Rome and Greece and reconsidering the impact African and Asian civilisations have had on the West too.⁶⁸

Duane Roller's Scholarship

Any discussion of the historiography of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene beyond the ancient sources must address the most comprehensive work on the subject, Duane W. Roller's monograph, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene*.⁶⁹ Roller's interest in the couple sits within his scholarship on the kingdoms at Rome's periphery, including that of Herod's Judaea and Ptolemaic Egypt.⁷⁰

The book acts as both as an introduction to the topic and a much closer examination of the classical sources from which much of our knowledge of Juba and Selene is derived. However, with the sole exception of a chapter focused on the architectural remains from Juba and Selene's capital city of Iol Caesarea and scattered references elsewhere to coins and busts, the remainder of the book makes clear Roller's own academic interests, devoted as it is to the scholarly output of Juba II.

Roller is quick to acknowledge the absences in the historical record, pointing

⁶⁶ David M. Jacobson. 'Three Roman Client Kings: Herod of Judaea, Archelaus of Cappadocia and Juba of Mauretania'. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 133/1 (2001): 22–38.

⁶⁷ Christa Landwehr. 'Les portraits de Juba II, roi de Maurétanie, et de Ptolémée, son fils et successeur'. *Revue archéologique* 43/1 (2007); and Landwehr. *Die römischen Skulpturen von Caesarea Mauretaniae - Idealplastik, männliche Figuren*. Vol. 2.; Bd. 18 (Berlin: GebrMann, 2000), specifically p. 77 for her argument against Fittschen.

⁶⁸ See the section The Literature of Race, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient History, below.

⁶⁹ Roller 2004.

⁷⁰ Duane W. Roller. *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1998); and *Cleopatra: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

to the twenty-year gap between Caesar's triumph and Juba's coronation, Selene's virtual disappearance from the record following her marriage and the lack of detail from Mauretania during its brief existence. Unlike more recent works, by Barnaby Rogerson for example (see below), Roller makes no attempt to fill in these gaps with speculation or supposition. What he does, however, is point us to the wider historical context and then lets the reader draw their own conclusions — for example, when he describes Juba's likely education, for which we have no direct evidence, he provides analogous examples from the other children in the Augustan court.⁷¹

The importance of this work cannot be understated, it remains the critical reference point for all work on Juba and Selene, and has been widely cited in innumerable papers and books since. Although many of these successor works use Roller to help build up a picture of the first century world beyond Rome;⁷² others make use of *The World of Juba II* to provide a foundation for their own studies, such as an examination of ancient trade routes or the cultural appropriation of Rome.⁷³

Several of Roller's subsequent publications also have a bearing on this historiography, including his writings on the racial identities of both Juba II and Cleopatra Selene's forebears.⁷⁴ In *Through the Pillars of Herakles*, Roller widens his focus to encompass all Greek and Roman explorers. In doing so he spends a number of pages assessing Juba II's contribution to geography, in particular his discovery of the Canary Islands and his expeditions to chart North Africa and Arabia.⁷⁵ Roller's *A Historical and Topographical Guide to the Geography of Strabo* is a companion guide to the geographer Strabo's work.⁷⁶ While not explicitly about Juba II, Strabo was a life-long friend of his, and the book addresses this fact. In attempting to unpick Strabo's various sources — some of

⁷¹ Roller 2004, p. 67.

⁷² Édith Parmentier, 'Le cercle d'Hérode : enquête prosopographique. Identités ethniques et choix politiques dans l'entourage du roi'. *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, Supplement 17 (11 December 2017): 423–52; Guy De la Bédoyère. *The Real Lives of Roman Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

⁷³ Eivind Heldaas Seland, 'Writ in Water, Lines in Sand: Ancient Trade Routes, Models and Comparative Evidence'. *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 2/1 (2015); Matthew P. Loar, Carolyn MacDonald, and Dan-el Padilla Peralta. *Rome, Empire of Plunder: The Dynamics of Cultural Appropriation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁷⁴ Duane W. Roller. 'A Note on the Berber Head in London'. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 122 (2002): 144–46; and 'Cleopatra's True Racial Background (and Does It Really Matter?)'. *OUPblog* (blog), 6 December 2010. <https://blog.oup.com/2010/12/cleopatra-2/>.

⁷⁵ Duane W. Roller. *Through the Pillars of Herakles: Greco-Roman Exploration of the Atlantic* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁷⁶ Duane W. Roller. *A Historical and Topographical Guide to the Geography of Strabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

which arose from the personal scholarship and explorations of Juba II — Roller reveals something of Juba’s activities during the period in which *Geography* was written, although he never fully brings him into the light. Although Roller’s most recent work takes Cleopatra Selene as its title, it only devotes a single chapter to her life, reflecting the even greater lack of evidence for Selene than for her husband.⁷⁷ In substance, this work does not add anything to the scholarship that was not already covered by *The World of Juba II*.

While his contribution to the field is hard to overstate and *The World of Juba II* will be referenced throughout this thesis, Roller remains concerned with the textual evidence and Juba’s legacy as a scholar. Although he does make use of objects, these are either covered in summary, or to illustrate wider cultural or artistic practices within the kingdom. There remains a gap for a serious biography of Juba II and Selene alongside Roller’s monographs, which builds upon and enters into meaningful dialogue with his work.

Scholarship After Roller

Roller’s work of 2004 remains the last published book solely devoted to Juba II and Cleopatra Selene. More recent publications and journal articles have either included their story as part of a larger appraisal of the period or geographical region or else focused in on a single aspect of their lives. Examples of the former include Schumacher’s article on Juba II, within a wider study of the view of Rome from the perspective of the provinces, or David Mattingly’s recent scholarship on the African frontiers.⁷⁸ Articles that fall into the latter category include works by Antoine Pietrobelli focused on Juba’s interest in pharmacology, Enrique Cravioto on his exploration of the Atlantic coast of Africa and the Atlas Mountains and Cairns on Horace’s commemoration of Juba II.⁷⁹ More recently, Jane Draycott has published a number of

⁷⁷ Duane W. Roller. *Cleopatra’s Daughter: And Other Royal Women of the Augustan Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁷⁸ Leonhard Schumacher. ‘Glanz ohne Macht: Juba II. von Mauretanien als römischer Klientelkönig’. In *Augustus, der Blick von aussen: die Wahrnehmung des Kaisers in den Provinzen des Reiches und in den Nachbarstaaten ; Akten der internationalen Tagung an der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz vom 12. bis 14. Oktober 2006*, edited by Karl U. Mahler, Patrick Schollmeyer, and Thomas M. Weber (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008); David Mattingly. ‘Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting’. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17/1 (2004): 5-26; Mattingly. ‘Cultural Crossovers: Global and Local Identities in the Classical World’. In *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, edited by Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010): 289-93; Mattingly, Alan Rushworth, Martin Sterry, and Victoria Leitch. *The African Frontiers. Frontiers of the Roman Empire*. (London: The Roman Society, 2013).

⁷⁹ A. Pietrobelli. ‘The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II, King of Mauretania’. *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 42 (2014): 157-82; Enrique Cravioto. ‘Africa in the Imaginary: The Geographical Explorations of the King Juba

academic articles on Juba and Selene, focusing on the material manifestation of their dynastic ambitions. She is also the author of a biography of Cleopatra Selene, published too late to be considered in this thesis.⁸⁰

Finally, Juba II is the focus of a chapter of Barnaby Rogerson's *In Search of Ancient North Africa*.⁸¹ Written for a popular rather than an academic audience, Rogerson neglects to provide any sources for his lively interpretation of the subject, forcing us to relegate much of his description and interpretation to the category of unsubstantiated speculation.

These publications offer either micro-history or grand sweeping narrative, neither of which is an entirely satisfactory approach — the former is too narrow in scope to give a complete account of Juba and Selene's lives, the latter too broad so that it omits too much. However, we can move beyond these binary approaches focusing on the lives of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene to provide us with a broader narrative arc, whilst simultaneously employing objects associated with them to act as a lens to zoom in and out as required.

3.2 The Literature of Material Culture Studies

The concept of 'material culture' as a distinct field emerged from archaeology and anthropology in the late twentieth century, engendered by divisions between studies of the cultural (focused on field work) and the material (museum work), and between two-dimensional (the preserve of art historians) and three-dimensional objects (as studied by archaeologists).⁸² Dan Hicks defines four distinct traditions of material culture studies: the first is associated with the work of the folklorist Henry Glassie and his students in Indiana.⁸³ The second is the decorative arts approach, which grew out of the graduate program at Winterthur in Delaware.⁸⁴ The third approach emerged in the nineties amongst British

II of Mauretania'. *Studia Historica: Historia Antiqua* 29 (2012): 153-81; and Francis Cairns. 'Horace Odes 1.22 (and Odes 1.2.39): Juba II and the Mauri'. In *Roman Lyric: Collected Papers on Catullus and Horace* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

⁸⁰ Jane Draycott. 'The Sacred Crocodile of Juba II of Mauretania'. *Acta Classica* 53 (2010): 211-17; Draycott, 'The Symbol of Cleopatra Selene: Reading Crocodiles on Coins in the Late Republic and Early Principate'. *Acta Classica* 55 (2012): 43-56; Draycott, 'Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining: Cleopatra Selene on the so-called "Africa" Dish from the Villa Della Pisanella at Boscoreale'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 80 (2012): p45-64; Draycott. 'Cleopatra's Daughter'. *History Today*, May 2018; Draycott. *Cleopatra's Daughter*.

⁸¹ Barnaby Rogerson. *In Search of Ancient North Africa* (Haus Publishing, 2017).

⁸² Dan Hicks and Mary Carolyn Beaudry. *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 5, 25-6; Dyer, 'State of the Field', p. 284.

⁸³ Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* is the somewhat unlikely sounding landmark text here, along with *Material Culture*; but see also James Deetz. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977); Herman, *The Stolen House*.

⁸⁴ See Carson, *Ambitious Appetites*; Palmer, *Glass in Early America*; Nylander, *Our Own Snug Fireside*; along

scholars from the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge and the Department of Anthropology at UCL, who sought to create a distinct field of material culture that transcended their respective disciplines.⁸⁵ The fourth approach is looser, more widespread and less explicitly defined, ranging from the physical examination and scientific analysis of objects in labs and museums to archaeology and anthropology fieldwork.⁸⁶

The rise of material culture studies in turn prompted the ‘material turn’ in the late eighties, building on work by Bruno Latour and Daniel Miller amongst others, which centred the role of the object in social studies.⁸⁷ This led not only to a boom in literature surrounding material culture studies, but also the incorporation of material culture into other fields within the humanities.⁸⁸

Over the past thirty years, the material turn has extended material culture studies beyond its traditional disciplines of archaeology and anthropology, and into art history, history, sociology, literature and more besides.⁸⁹ As well as in academic disciplines, books about material culture have been the unlikely focus of a popular publishing boom over the past decade. Browse the shelves of pretty much any non-fiction section of a bookshop and, sooner or later, you’ll find a book that uses material culture to tell its story, as a recent visit to Waterstones Norwich confirmed. Amongst the new publications on display were a study of Christianity through the lens of churches, a prehistory of Britain in seven burials and a new history of the Vikings told through their artefacts.⁹⁰ The popular catalyst for this lies with the huge success of Neil Ferguson’s *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, originally a hit Radio 4 series and then a bestselling book that spawned an entire sub-genre — ‘A History of X in Y Objects’ — of its own.⁹¹ Some of these books are quick cash-ins, but many are more nuanced,

with a number of articles by Prown, including ‘Style as Evidence’, ‘Mind in Matter’ and ‘The Truth of Material Culture’, as well as his book *Art as Evidence*.

⁸⁵ Christopher Y. Tilley. *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2006), p. 6.

⁸⁶ Dan Hicks. ‘The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, edited by Dan Hicks and Mary Carolyn Beaudry (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 26.

⁸⁷ Bruno Latour. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Daniel Miller. *Capitalism: An Ethnographic Approach*. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997).

⁸⁸ Miller, Hicks and Beaudry, *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, pp. 1-2; for a comprehensive history of material culture studies, see Hicks, ‘The Material-Cultural Turn’, pp. 25-98.

⁸⁹ Astrid Van Oyen and Martin Pitts. ‘What Did Objects Do in the Roman World? Beyond Representation’. In *Materialising Roman Histories* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), p. 10

⁹⁰ Respectively: Peter Stanford. *If These Stones Could Talk: The History of Christianity in Britain and Ireland through Twenty-One Buildings* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2021); Alice Roberts. *Ancestors: A Prehistory of Britain in Seven Burials* (London: Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2021); Cat Jarman. *River Kings: A New History of the Vikings from Scandinavia to the Silk Roads* (London: William Collins, 2021).

⁹¹ Neil MacGregor. *A History of the World in 100 Objects*. BBC Radio 4, 2010.

the use of material culture allowing a subject to be looked at in a new light. Biography has not been immune to such publishing trends.

Until recently biographers have for the most part treated objects aesthetically not analytically, as an illustration of a theory or as a hook on which to hang an explanation or story.⁹² In the past decade, however, several biographers have begun to embrace material culture as another source. Early examples include Deborah Lutz's *The Brontë Cabinet*, *The Real Jane Austen* by Paula Byrne, and Kate Strasdin's *Inside the Royal Wardrobe*, all of which sought to use objects to find a new 'in' to their subjects.⁹³ However, they are dealing with subjects about whom there is no shortage of written evidence, which means that, at times, it feels as if their attachment to material culture is really a way of going back to a well-worn subject in the hope of finding a new way in to it. More recently, memoirists including Haruki Murakami and Marina Warner have turned to the object as a means of structuring their autobiographical works. Again, the object is providing structure, not a new source of evidence.⁹⁴ Instead, more apt examples might be found in biographies of more obscure characters such as Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* (2010), Lynn Knight's biography of the women in her family, *The Button Box* (2016), or Zara Anishanslin's *Portrait of a Woman in Silk* (2018). These books all centre the objects as evidence, not just as a means to structure the text, allowing the authors to retrieve lives that might otherwise have been lost to them had they been forced to rely on written sources as evidence.⁹⁵

3.3 The Literature of Race, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient History

Research into race and ethnicity in antiquity has traditionally been overlooked, in much the

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nrt2>; and *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (London: Penguin Books, 2012); see also Forrest Wickman. 'A History of Publishing's New Favorite Gimmick in 100 Objects'. *Slate*, 30 April 2014. <https://slate.com/culture/2014/04/a-history-of-publishings-new-favorite-gimmick-in-100-objects.html>.

⁹² Sara Pennell. 'Mundane Materiality, or, Should Small Things still be Forgotten?' In *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), p.175; Kate Strasdin. 'Rediscovering Queen Alexandra's Wardrobe: The Challenges and Rewards of Object-Based Research'. *The Court Historian* 24/ 2 (2019), p. 181

⁹³ Deborah Lutz. *The Brontë Cabinet*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015; Paula Byrne. *The Real Jane Austen: A Life in Small Things* (New York: Harper, 2013). Neither are wholly successful, as I'll explain later.

⁹⁴ Haruki Murakami. *Murakami T: The T-Shirts I Love* (London: Random House, 2021); Marina Warner. *Inventory of a Life Mislaid: An Unreliable Memoir* (London: William Collins, 2021).

⁹⁵ Edmund De Waal. *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2010); Lynn Knight. *The Button Box: Lifting the Lid on Women's Lives* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016); Zara Anishanslin. *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

same way as was the study of women, because it is a subject rarely mentioned by ancient authors.⁹⁶ This has begun to change over the past forty years.

Any study of race and identity in the ancient world has to begin with how our own prejudices were formed, and how modern racism often serves as a lens through which the past was viewed. While today, when we think about racism we instinctively think about prejudice based on skin colour the Greeks and Romans did not view the world as divided along racial lines into Black people and White people. This is a specifically modern form of racism, which has at its root the slave trade and nineteenth century racial theories.⁹⁷

The German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), one of the founders of modern art history, also contributed to the later development of race science and white supremacy. Winckelmann's celebration of the pared-back aesthetic of classical sculpture over painted oriental statuary equated white marble — and the White race — with beauty.⁹⁸ His celebration of the Apollo of the Belvedere as the quintessence of beauty later led to the statue being used as the model of the 'ideal person', against which both statues — and people — from Egypt and the Middle East were compared.⁹⁹

In the nineteenth century, as theories of race science began to form, anthropologists, archaeologists and classicists increasingly looked to the ancient past to justify racist beliefs in the present. Greek theories of racial superiority and the inherent subservience of certain races were used to justify colonialism, conquest and slavery.¹⁰⁰ The study of ancient languages via language genealogies was used to prove that European nations were legitimate inheritors of Greek and Roman societies.¹⁰¹ Racist ideology — specifically concerning race mixing — was used to explain the decline of the Roman Empire, including in such prominent

⁹⁶ Denise Eileen McCoskey. 'Answering the Multicultural Imperative: A Course on Race and Ethnicity in Antiquity'. *The Classical World* 92/6 (1999): 553–61.

⁹⁷ Whitmarsh, 'Black Achilles'.

⁹⁸ Sarah E. Bond. 'Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color'. *Hyperallergic* (blog), 7 June 2017. <http://hyperallergic.com/383776/why-we-need-to-start-seeing-the-classical-world-in-color>; Talbot, 'Color Blind'.

⁹⁹ Jeremy Tanner. 'Race and Representation in Ancient Art: Black Athena and After'. In *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, edited by David Bindman, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Karen C. C. Dalton, New edition. Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Bond, 'Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color'.

¹⁰⁰ Rheba Macha. 'Curating in Colour: Seeing Blackness in Post-18th Century Greco-Roman Collecting Culture'. *Ancient World Magazine* (blog), 26 February 2021. <https://www.ancientworldmagazine.com/articles/curating-colour>.

¹⁰¹ Denise Eileen McCoskey. *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy. Ancients and Moderns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 5.

works as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and, later, the work of Tenney Frank.¹⁰²

It was not until the 1970s that the groundbreaking scholarship of Frank M. Snowden Jr, one of the only African-American classicists in the field at the time, proved that skin colour did not form a part of racial identity in antiquity, and that there was not a fundamental racial opposition between Black and White in the ancient world.¹⁰³ This helped overturn the commonly held belief that racist structures — specifically racism based on skin colour, the type of racial prejudice we are most familiar with today — had always been the norm, but it did lead to a new myth emerging in its place: that Greek and Roman societies were free of racism of any kind, and therefore more enlightened.¹⁰⁴

Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* proposed an alternative hypothesis of an African origin for Greek culture. Both controversial, and largely disproved, *Black Athena's* legacy endures in the Afrocentrism movement and questions about Cleopatra's identity as a Black woman.¹⁰⁵ While its existence is acknowledged here, it will not be seriously considered within this thesis.

The study of identity, rather than specifically race or ethnicity, in the ancient world has become a critical concept in archaeology and classics over the past decade. This has in part been prompted by overlaps with postcolonial studies, and the movement away from studying ruling elites to subject populations.¹⁰⁶ Identity studies has in the mainstream replaced previously dominant concepts such as Romanisation and Hellenisation, which have increasingly fallen out of favour.¹⁰⁷ The essays within Hales and Hodos' *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World* (2010) provides a good snapshot of where the field currently stands.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Edward Gibbon. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Frederick Warne, 1873); Tenney Frank. 'Race Mixture in the Roman Empire'. *The American Historical Review* 21/4 (1916): 689-708; McCoskey, *Race*, p. 6.

¹⁰³ Frank M. Snowden Jr. *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970); Snowden Jr. *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); see also Lloyd A. Thompson. *Romans and Blacks* (London: Routledge & Oklahoma University Press, 1989) and the review essay by Snowden Jr. 'Romans and Blacks: A Review Essay'. *The American Journal of Philology* 111/4 (1990): 543-57.

¹⁰⁴ McCoskey, *Race*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Bernal. *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (London: Free Association Books, 1987); Mary R. Lefkowitz. *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Stanley M. Burstein. 'The Debate over Black Athena'. *Scholia: Studies in Classical Antiquity* 5/1 (January 1996): 3-16; Jeremy Tanner. 'Race and Representation in Ancient Art'; Roller, 'Cleopatra's True Racial Background'.

¹⁰⁶ Mattingly, 'Cultural Crossovers', pp. 283-4.

¹⁰⁷ Mattingly, 'Cultural Crossovers', pp. 285-6.

¹⁰⁸ Hales and Hodos, *Material culture and social identities in the ancient world*.

More recently, scholars have begun to look at the legacy of ancient racism — and its reception — on modern societies. The art historian Nell Irvin Painter has written extensively on the creation myth of the concept of Whiteness and that of a White race.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Denise McCoskey has written on how modern White vs. Black racism can find its roots in ancient history, undermining the myth of the ancient world as one of enlightened racial harmony.¹¹⁰

This remains a live issue. The appearance of Black Greeks and Romans in television shows have not only prompted discussions on the attitudes of the ancients towards race, but also a reexamining of modern prejudices that persist within the academy. Sarah Bond has written extensively on the whitewashing within art history and classics regarding the polychromy of classical statuary.¹¹¹ Tim Whitmore along with a number of other prominent scholars have written on the notion of a Black Achilles and the presentation of race within Homer.¹¹² And, as recently as last year, a high-profile Twitter storm concerning the whitewashing of a popular medieval history book shows that this discussion is very much ongoing.¹¹³

By bringing an otherwise overlooked African-Roman to the fore it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the conversation by challenging the public imagination of the Roman Empire as White/European.

4. Methodological Framework

The methodological framework used for this biography adapts several different approaches and concepts taken from the field of material culture and applies them to the study of biography. These will be addressed in separate subsections in order to clarify the distinct functions of each.

¹⁰⁹ Nell Irvin Painter. *The History of White People* (London: W.W. Norton, 2010); Painter. ‘What Is Whiteness?’ *The New York Times*, 20 June 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/what-is-whiteness.html>.

¹¹⁰ Denise Eileen McCoskey. ‘Answering the Multicultural Imperative: A Course on Race and Ethnicity in Antiquity’. *The Classical World* 92/6 (1999): 553–61; McCoskey, *Race*.

¹¹¹ Bond, ‘The Argument Made by the Absence’; Bond, ‘Whitewashing Ancient Statues’; and Bond, ‘Why we Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color’; see also Morley, ‘Diversitas et Multiculturalismus’; and Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

¹¹² Whitmarsh, ‘Black Achilles’; Ball et al., ‘Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash’.

¹¹³ M. Rambaran-Olm. ‘Sounds about White. Review of Matthew Gabriele & David M. Perry’s *The Bright Ages*’. *Medium* (blog), 27 April 2022. <https://mrambaranolm.medium.com/sounds-about-white-333d0c0fd201>.

4.1 General Principles of Material Culture Studies (or, why this methodology?)

The American folklorist Henry Glassie writes that ‘we miss more than most people in recent times, and everyone in the most ancient days, when we restrict historical research to [written] documents’.¹¹⁴ This is especially true when writing about ancient societies, as the historical record was the preserve of the literate elite. Even in the case of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene — both highly literate subjects — the loss of their own writing, coupled with the bias of evidence towards Rome over the provinces, means that if we were to rely on the historical record alone we would miss out most of their lives. Objects allow us to access this ‘wordless’ history, offering a more wide-ranging source of evidence than historical evidence alone.¹¹⁵

Artefacts are not just another source of evidence, however, and should not be seen as a way of plugging a gap in the documentary record. Instead, artefacts both have their own stories to tell, and enrich the stories we already have from historical evidence. The study of material culture is not just focused on the physical properties of an object, but also the numerous contexts it passes through, and through which it gains meaning. Objects are more than just things made by people, but are at the heart of the human experience; because of this, artefacts invariably reflect or contain traces of something of the culture that made them.¹¹⁶ For example, a common bronze coin depicting Juba II might be used to tell us what he looked like, but his portrait has been consciously constructed; in investigating *how* he has chosen to be portrayed we might gain an insight into any number of wider cultural contexts. More than this, an object might unconsciously reflect a culture’s most fundamental beliefs, revealing deeper cultural truths than might be communicated by conscious, written history or art.¹¹⁷ That same coin portrait might, in its portrayal of Juba II in the same style as Augustus, reveal an unconscious cultural belief on the part of the king, the artist or the wider society — suggesting, for example, that they looked to Rome and its rulers for the model of rulership they adopted in their own kingdom.

The art historian Jules David Prown described an artefact as the only historical event to have occurred in the past but persist in the present. As a result, Prown argues, an

¹¹⁴ Glassie, *Material Culture*, p. 44.

¹¹⁵ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt. *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.8.

artefact allows history to be directly experienced.¹¹⁸ Although our cultural contexts are vastly different from those of the ancients, our sensory experiences remain the same — in other words, we still *see* the same, *hear* the same, *touch* the same — allowing us to perceive something of what an object’s makers and users would have perceived.¹¹⁹ When we hold one of Juba’s coins, we are handling an object that might have changed hands hundreds of times and been used in countless transactions. While that coin’s intrinsic meaning and value is very different to us than it would have been to a Mauretanian citizen, it feels the same to us as it would have to them: the same weight in your hand, the same cold feeling of bronze against skin, the same metallic smell.

History’s first engagement with material culture was as a means to solve a particular problem, namely gaps in the historical record. Scholars of ‘history from below’ — that is, the history of ordinary people — in the late 1960s resorted to objects to circumvent the absence of written records pertaining to ordinary or forgotten lives.¹²⁰ This leads us to material culture’s ability to escape the restrictions imposed by white, literate, Western elites that have traditionally shaped historical sources and whitewashed or erased cultures, as has often been the case in classical studies. The study of material culture — especially cross-cultural exchange — allows us to reclaim the histories of the historically forgotten and marginalised, widening out the history of Rome to include narratives from beyond Europe.¹²¹ Material culture is not immune to such forces, of course, and museum collections have long been shaped by the biases of historic collecting policies, but by choosing what objects we study we can perhaps repair some of the damage of the past.¹²²

Traditionally, history has valued text over artefacts, words regarded as being more reliable, readable messengers than objects.¹²³ With an object-based approach, these texts — not just the physical objects that hold them, but the writing itself — might also be treated as artefacts.¹²⁴ We can interrogate them in the same way as any other object, questioning who

¹¹⁸ Jules David Prown. ‘The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?’ In *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, edited by Steven D. Lubar and W. D. Kingery (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993): 1-19 (2-3).

¹¹⁹ Jules David Prown. ‘Style as Evidence’. *Winterthur Portfolio* 15/3 (1 October 1980): 197-210 (208).

¹²⁰ Dyer, ‘State of the Field’, p. 285.

¹²¹ Bond, ‘Whitewashing Ancient Statues’; Bond, ‘The Argument Made by the Absence’; Beard, ‘Roman Britain in Black and White’; Gaither et al., ‘Rethinking Descriptions of Black Africans’; Dyer, ‘State of the Field’, pp. 287-8.

¹²² Dyer, ‘State of the Field’, pp. 287-8.

¹²³ Ann Brower Stahl. ‘Material Histories’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, edited by Dan Hicks and Mary Carolyn Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 150-72 (150).

¹²⁴ Van Oyen and Pitts, ‘What Did Objects Do in the Roman World?’, p. 9.

has written what and why, and how it has come down to us.¹²⁵ We must not privilege them as a source or take them at face value, any more than we would the evidence from an artefact. Descriptions of the rebellion of Tacfarinas in Tacitus might be used to embellish or support our narrative, for example, but should not be given immediate pre-eminence over the victory coins Juba II minted to celebrate his victories.

4.2 Principles of Analysis (or, how do we read objects?)

The American historian Bernard Herman makes the distinction between object-*centred* and object-*driven* studies.¹²⁶ The object-*centred* approach focuses study on the object itself, describing and focusing on its materiality and its manufacture.¹²⁷ An object-*driven* approach, on the other hand, takes the evidence generated by the study of an object and then extends it to investigate the broader context of the object and the society that made it.¹²⁸ The distinction is one of focus, the difference between the description of an object as might appear in a museum catalogue and that accompanying the exhibition in which it sits.¹²⁹

To continue the example from earlier, with an object-centred approach the physical description of Juba II's coin might lead us to questions about the metals used in its manufacture and where they were mined, about identifying the foundry at which it was struck and the artist who designed the image on the coin. The object-driven approach might start with the same physical description, but we might widen our focus to consider how it fitted into the art program of Juba II and Selene, what their citizens would have thought of it, how the coins of Mauretania were entangled in wider networks of trade.

Both approaches have their advantages and drawbacks. With an object-centred approach it is easy to be too closely focused on the artefact and lose sight of its wider cultural context. With an object-driven approach, however, it is easy to lose sight of the object amid all the context.¹³⁰

The archaeologist Ann B. Stahl suggests three complementary analytical

¹²⁵ Herman, *The Stolen House*, p. 11.

¹²⁶ Herman, *The Stolen House*, p. 4.

¹²⁷ Herman, *The Stolen House*, p. 11; Rodney Harrison. 'An Introduction to Material Culture'. *OpenLearn*, 9 August 2012. <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/visual-art/introduction-material-culture/content-section-0>.

¹²⁸ Herman, *The Stolen House*, p. 11; Harrison, 'An Introduction to Material Culture'.

¹²⁹ Adam Bencard. 'Not Just Object-Centered or Object-Driven but Also Object-Oriented'. *Medical Museion* (blog), 5 August 2013. <https://www.museion.ku.dk/en/2013/08/not-just-object-centered-or-object-driven-but-also-object-oriented>.

¹³⁰ Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, pp. 2-3.

approaches, all derived from archaeology and anthropology, to aid in the investigation of material culture: the biographical, depositional and genealogical. The *biographical* approach is based on the idea that objects both have lives of their own, and shape lives. This approach focuses on an object's life history, including its change in use and value as it moves between contexts.¹³¹ The biographical approach centres on the concept of object biographies (see below). The *depositional* approach studies how different objects are combined in specific contexts, changing their relationship and meaning. This approach investigates the depositional act too, whether ritual such as a burial, habitual as in rubbish disposal, or accidental. The *genealogical* approach focuses on the transformation of practice over time, comparing objects over time or between different regions to explore similarities and differences.¹³² Stahl recommends using the three approaches in combination, producing 'empirically rich and contextually attuned material histories'.¹³³ While all three approaches will be used in this study to greater or lesser degrees, the biographical approach will be at the forefront.

First conceived by the anthropologist Igor Kopytoff in his formative 1986 article 'The Cultural Biography of Things', and then subsequently developed by artist Neil Cummings and sociologist Tim Dant, the object biography has proven one of the most useful and enduring tools in the use of objects in wider studies.¹³⁴ An object biography is a technique by which a close study of an artefact is used to produce a biography of that object, typically beginning with its creation and ending with its destruction or discarding.¹³⁵ An object biography might continue the story past its death, into its afterlife, documenting its reuse or repurposing, its entry into the archaeological record and possible accession into a museum collection.¹³⁶ By itself, a single object biography allows us insight into a relatively limited time frame, but by placing a series of object biographies together these snapshots can be turned into a sequence of stills taken from different angles.¹³⁷

Prown advocated a three-stage approach to analysing an object that has

¹³¹ Stahl, 'Material Histories', p. 155

¹³² Stahl, 'Material Histories', p. 156

¹³³ Stahl, 'Material Histories', p. 157

¹³⁴ I. Kopytoff. 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process'. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Tim Dant. *Material Culture in the Social World: Values, Activities, Lifestyles* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1999); Neil Cummings. *Reading Things*. Vol. 3 (London: Chance Books, 1993); Karin Dannehl. 'Object Biographies: From Production to Consumption'. In Harvey, *History and Material Culture*.

¹³⁵ Van Oyen and Pitts, 'What Did Objects Do in the Roman World?', p. 13.

¹³⁶ Clare Rowan and Annabel Bokern. *Embodying Value?: The Transformation of Objects in and from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014), p. 6.

¹³⁷ Dannehl, 'Object Biographies', p. 121.

remained enduringly useful: firstly, the researcher engages in precise *description*, focusing on the evidence presented by the object.¹³⁸ Secondly, the researcher engages in *deduction*, exploring possible connections between the object and people. Finally, the researcher engages in *speculation*, drawing in external evidence as well as framing questions to help understand the object and its broader context.¹³⁹

The description of the object is concerned purely with recording its physical, observable characteristics. Prown warns that the analyst must at this stage ‘continually guard against the intrusion of either subjective assumptions or conclusions derived from other experience’.¹⁴⁰ The description begins with a physical inventory of the object, typically proceeding from the largest, most obvious traits and on to smaller details: the physical dimensions, the material the object is made of, how it is connected together. Then, the subject matter — usually only relevant to art or other decorated objects — is described in its simplest, most factual sense. Deeper analysis of the meaning of the artwork is not attempted at this stage.¹⁴¹

To assist with the descriptive process, I devised a list of questions to ask of each object:

- What is it?
- What is it made of?
- What condition is it in?
- Is it the only one?
- Where was it found?
- Who made it?
- For whom was it made?
- What is going on in it?
- What does it mean?
- What did it mean?

¹³⁸ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, p. 7. Prown’s methodology remains influential to this day — see Dyer, ‘State of the Field’, p. 284 note 9. Other methodologies exist, of course. See also Glassie, *Material Culture*, who focuses on tracing paths of creation and consumption; and Gordon, ‘The Interpretation of Artifacts in the History of Technology’, whose approach involves archaeometric analysis and formulating linkages backwards and forwards in time from the object’s creation.

¹³⁹ Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, p. 8.

- Who looked at it?
- Where is it now?
- How is it presented?
- How did it come here?
- When did it come here?
- Who acquired it?
- Why?

The second stage of Prown's approach involves moving from the object itself to the relationship between the object and people, starting with the emotional response of the analyst themselves. The analyst handles the object, if possible, or otherwise considers what it might be like to use or interact with, and then records the personal reaction they experience.¹⁴² This is a 'synchronic' experience, one that is unique to the time and place at which it occurs. As Prown puts it, the particular encounter between the object with its history and the analyst with theirs shapes this encounter. The analyst then considers what it might have originally been used for, bringing in both their own experiences and knowledge of wider contexts, to deduce what they can about the object and its relevance.¹⁴³ In my thesis, this step will also begin to map out connections between the object and Juba and Selene.

Harvey emphasises that physical engagement with an artefact is important at this stage: holding or touching it where permitted, looking at it from all angles, seeing how it catches and reflects the light, how it looks from behind or below, as well as enlisting the other senses where appropriate. Sensory engagement with an object can offer up important information that looking at a photograph or reading a description of it cannot provide alone.¹⁴⁴ Even physically visiting the location where the object was found, and currently stands if now in a museum, has much to add to our understanding of it. This 'hands on' approach proved to be especially fruitful in Chapter 2, where visiting the bronze bust of an athlete in the British Museum revealed its close proximity with a marble bust — at first the two seemed unconnected, but further investigation revealed strands that connected them within the story.

The final stage shifts from analysis of the physical evidence of the object to finding external evidence to investigate, such as documentary evidence, historical records or similar objects found in the same context. The analyst formulates theories about what the

¹⁴² Prown, 'Mind in Matter', p. 8.

¹⁴³ Prown, 'Mind in Matter', p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, p. 11; Dyer, 'State of the Field', p. 288.

object was used for and how it fits in to the wider contexts of investigation. Throughout the process, the analyst must not lose sight of the object itself, continually switching back and forth between the object and the wider field of study.¹⁴⁵ Prown says ‘what is desired is as much creative imagining as possible’, but in doing so opens up something of a can of worms.¹⁴⁶ The word ‘imagining’ here must be treated with care, for what I am not doing is invention or fictionalisation. Instead, I am engaging in informed speculation, carefully sourcing every supposition or suggestion I make along the way.

The final step will bring the artefact into conversation with other objects as well as the wider historical context of the Roman Empire in the first century BC and AD, more vividly realising the object’s connections with Juba and Selene, placing the story of both object and subjects in the frame at the same time. Some of the objects will offer new answers to questions about Juba and Selene themselves, others about their reign or their subjects.

The object biographies in Appendix A illustrate how this approach to object biography will be realised.

4.3 Principles of Curation and Organisation

The archaeologists Astrid Van Oyens and Martin Pitts argue that ‘[object] biographies [...] work best when focusing on single objects’ as they allow the individual characteristics of that artefact be explored, rather than reducing it to one of many used in comparison with one another.¹⁴⁷ While many objects investigated by historians tend towards the unexceptional, as a means to access the lives of the historically undocumented, in this study many of the objects will be unique and precious artefacts, after Gallagher and Greenblatt’s rejoinder to understand history through an ‘encounter with the singular, specific, and the individual’.¹⁴⁸ The historian Karin Dannehl refers to the self-fulfilling phenomena associated with such exceptional objects, in which they are invested with interest and consequently attract comment, so that the more valuable an object is the more likely it is to accumulate a documentary record over the course of its life. Then, the more an object is discussed, the more important it becomes, and the more likely it is that its life story will be told.¹⁴⁹

With perhaps one exception — Selene’s signet ring in Chapter 10 — these

¹⁴⁵ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴⁷ Van Oyen and Pitts, ‘What Did Objects Do in the Roman World?’, p. 14.

¹⁴⁸ Gallagher and Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, p. 6; Dannehl, ‘Object Biographies’, p. 124.

¹⁴⁹ Dannehl, ‘Object Biographies’, pp. 126-7.

objects are certainly not ‘everyday’ or personal objects associated with the subjects: such artefacts have simply not survived. Instead these are exceptional, often unique pieces — but as described earlier, there are many such objects. What is it about an object that calls out for it to be the focus of study, what criteria might we use to qualify it for inclusion? For Dannehl, ‘the life stories of objects are gathered largely from the discursive material that surrounds the object’.¹⁵⁰ Fashion historian Kate Strasdin, discussing the selection of dresses for her object-led biography of Queen Alexandra, follows suit, suggesting objects accompanied by a more complete historical record. With that in mind, most of my objects have been the subject of at least some academic study already, enabling me to draw on expert knowledge and engage in critical debate, and most are accompanied by a bibliography of their own.¹⁵¹ Some objects are famous in their own right, such as the Africa Dish in Chapter 13. Some are indelibly connected to a known moment of history supported by written sources, such as the Victory Frieze of Nicopolis in Chapter 5. Often they have an interesting history of their own or a story to tell in their own right, such as the bust of Ptolemy in Chapter 14. There is no mathematical calculation here, by which likely objects might be assigned a rating ahead of selection; much of what makes an objective attractive is difficult to quantify.

An object network is a grouping of objects that share certain similarities, such as the location in which they were found or made, age, type and so on.¹⁵² An assemblage of objects expands on the concept of an object network by placing the artefacts in association with other materials, such as documents, people and landscapes.¹⁵³ The trait shared by all the artefacts in our object network was some connection to Juba or Selene. The nature of this connection could be direct: the object might have been owned or used by the royal couple. More often it was an object commissioned by them or on their behalf. The connection might be indirect, such as an object that depicted or memorialised Juba II, Selene or even their son. It might also be contemporary, such as an object that existed in the same place and time as Juba II. In the process of assembling this network, the network expanded further — objects led to other objects, such as the sard gem I handled in the British Museum’s stores, which led to the discovery of a similar object in the Met. An object is rarely discovered alone, and this network might be expanded to include other objects found at the same time and place, such as the bronze head of Juba II found alongside a head of the Roman elder statesman Cato in

¹⁵⁰ Dannehl, ‘Object Biographies’.

¹⁵¹ Strasdin, ‘Rediscovering Queen Alexandra’s Wardrobe’, p. 187.

¹⁵² Van Oyen and Pitts, ‘What did Objects do in the Roman World?’, p. 13.

¹⁵³ Pennell, ‘Mundane Materiality’, p. 186.

Morocco. Likewise, objects are often grouped typologically, and again by adding a single object of that type to the network other similar objects might be brought in too. This is nowhere more true than with coinage.

The key with the initial network was inclusivity and range, so that the net was cast as widely as possible without prejudgement or expectation. The second step was to expand the object network into an assemblage, by putting the artefacts in conversation with other material. This was done on an object by object basis, so that in time each artefact was accompanied by its own entourage of material. In places, equipped with an existing chronology of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, I did set out to include objects that might throw light on different parts of their lives; but I always did so with an open mind, never deliberately looking for an object that would allow me to tell a preconceived part of the story.

The initial difficulty in constructing this network of objects was that there was no one catalogue or listing of objects associated with Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, or even from their kingdom. On the contrary, these artefacts are scattered through countless museum collections, each catalogued in their own unique way, and the discovery of the objects themselves was an exercise in archival detective work. To date I have found 57 objects in 18 different museums located in 14 countries, not including the countless number of coins.¹⁵⁴ Some objects, such as the Boscoreale Treasure, are famous in their own right; others are obscure even within the museum in which they sit. Due to a quirk of historical chance, many of the objects remain in their country of discovery — namely, Morocco and Algeria — and not in European museums. While this made their study all the more tricky — the museums in question lacked the digital catalogues or extensive online imagery of their Western counterparts, and Algeria in particular is a difficult country to visit — these were the objects that often had the most to reveal, as they have typically been understudied in the past.

This is compounded by the phenomenon of loss in the archaeological record. As Adamson says, ‘when it comes to the material past, disappearance is the norm, preservation the exception’.¹⁵⁵ Deetz too warns that surviving artefacts cannot be taken to be representative, especially those found within museum collections; museums traditionally preserved the unusual and the valuable, whereas commonplace objects were abandoned.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ See Appendix B for a complete listing; two catalogues of coins were consulted: Mazard, *CNNM*; and Jacques Alexandropoulos. *Les monnaies de l’Afrique antique* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2007).

¹⁵⁵ Glenn Adamson. ‘The Case of the Missing Footstool’. In *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 192.

¹⁵⁶ Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, pp. 6-7.

The items in my object network are there by accident, their survival at once random and the production of past curatorial bias. We must not assume the object record is complete, and proceed with caution when looking for patterns or drawing conclusions from such surviving material.

Once the object network had been compiled, likely artefacts were selected from this list to form the basis for object biographies. Following Van Oyens and Pitts admonition, groups of items, even coin hoards, were excluded and the focus was placed wherever possible on a single object at a time.¹⁵⁷ This did not prevent objects from being placed in conversation with one another, or even considering other objects found in the same context — on the contrary, no object has been considered entirely on its own.

4.4 Limitations and Constraints

As has been shown with the parallel chronologies earlier, too much emphasis placed on objects can prove as much of a problem as not enough. Both Grassby and Harvey call for historians to test inferences made from objects against written documents, and vice versa, to supplement documentary evidence with archaeological finds.¹⁵⁸ However, this hybrid approach requires a cautionary note too. Glassie says: '[w]hen documents accompany artifacts, it would be foolish to ignore them, but it would be no less a mistake to assume that they say the same thing and that the document is the more reliable source'.¹⁵⁹

One of the risks with an object-based approach is 'over-reading' an artefact.¹⁶⁰ While a certain degree of speculation is encouraged when analysing an object, there is the danger of making too much of the object as absolute proof. This is a particular problem with artistic works; as Grassby warns, art objects were rarely intended to represent reality literally. While such an object might apparently provide direct evidence for events or characters, this is often presupposition.¹⁶¹ The crown Selene wears on the Africa Dish in Chapter 13, for example — this could be read literally, as the literal depiction of the crown of Mauretania, but it should more likely be read symbolically, as part of her association with the continent.

There remains the larger issue, that so much of the historical evidence we have

¹⁵⁷ Van Oyen and Pitts, 'What did Objects do in the Roman World?', pp 14.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Grassby. 'Material Culture and Cultural History'. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35/4 (1 April 2005): 591-603.

¹⁵⁹ Glassie, *Material Culture*, p. 46.

¹⁶⁰ Lutz, *The Bronte Cabinet*, xxiv.

¹⁶¹ Grassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', p. 599-600.

concerns the lives of the literate elite. One of the goals for historians who use objects is to recover evidence for other members of society; women, the poor, the illiterate.¹⁶² With ancient history the problem is only amplified because the vast passage of time has led to even more being lost, further exacerbating the gap in evidence that survives from the elite compared to the rest of society; the solution is not quite so simple as even the archaeological record remains scant, even for such elite subjects as Juba and Selene.

Finally, as Prown cautions, when analysing objects from cultures and times different from our own, we must be aware of our own cultural biases.¹⁶³ The meaning of objects vary in time, space, and in relation to different social contexts including class, status, race and gender, and it is all too easy to project our own assumptions about an object into the past.¹⁶⁴ Just as the object captures the moment of creation, so too does the object's interpretation say much about the moment of interpretation. While this too needs to be approached with caution, the interpretation itself can also add to an object's story — past interpretations, such as an object being copied during the Renaissance, or a nineteenth-century racist interpretation of an object, can also form part of our understanding.

4.5 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis will comprise a series of self-contained chapters each proceeding from an object biography centred on a different object. The object biographies will in turn be arranged chronologically, not by the age of the object but the date in the story it pertains to, so as to form an arc that follows the lives of Juba II, Cleopatra Selene and their son, Ptolemy. The objects will provide both the framework for the biography and, via their object biography, the starting point for its contents, so that it becomes at once a biography of the subject and of the objects themselves.

We are fortunate enough to know the broad sweep of Juba and Selene's timeline, and it would be imprudent to ignore this completely when structuring their biography. The risk with this is to attempt to find objects that illustrate the significant event as recorded in the written record, reducing them to little more than glorified images. Instead, the timeline is used as a guide to arranging the selected objects, allowing us to see the points where the historical narrative is lacking, but not dictating the stories told. Throughout, the

¹⁶² Linda Przybyszewski. 'Review of Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World'. *New England Quarterly* 90/4 (December 2017): 610-12 (611).

¹⁶³ Prown, 'Mind in Matter', p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ Stahl, 'Material Histories', p. 159.

story from written historical records will be woven in with the story from objects.

Due to the nature of the object-based approach, gaps inevitably arise throughout the narrative. While the storyteller's instinct might be to 'smooth' over these gaps, part of the strength of this approach is that the object-led chapters can stand alone. We should not consider that these 'gaps' between the objects diminish the story, or make it less valid than a traditionally told 'cradle-to-grave' narrative. Invoking Hayden White's theory of postmodern history, classicist William Batstone writes:

...whenever one writes history one must fictionalize, and what one fictionalizes is the plot, the structure of events that confers meaning by emphasizing some, obscuring others (one cannot, after all, include all the events – either because of deficiencies and contradictions in the archive or because of the chaotic nature of what happens) and by giving to isolated 'events' a trajectory, the 'meaning' of their occurrence [...] It is an imaginative effort to align arbitrary ideological traces of the past in a narrative which is at once acceptable to the institution and aesthetically pleasing.¹⁶⁵

In formulating the methodology, a number of decisions, assumptions and exclusions had to be made in order to limit scope or maintain focus on the subjects. Firstly, with regards to the objects, the intricacies of design theory, form vs. function and so on, were left out, except where they afforded an insight into the subject. Material culture often overlaps with material science, but the choice was made not to include this much detail except where it added to the story or helped understand the object better. Secondly, in order to maintain a clear focus, specificity over generalisation and digression was preferred. In her biography of the Brontës, Lutz uses specific objects as a route to digression, covering wider societal or historical trends rather than maintaining the focus on her subjects. For example, she uses the Brontës' embroidered samplers as a prompt to talk about the importance of sewing to women in the Victorian era.¹⁶⁶ The decision was made not to do this, so as to keep the spotlight on my subject throughout.

5. Implications and Applications

While the application of material culture theories and practices continues to be embraced by

¹⁶⁵ William Batstone. 'Postmodern Historiographical Theory and the Roman Historians'. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*, edited by Andrew Feldherr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 24-40; see also Horace White. 'Introduction to the Roman History'. In *The Roman History*, by Appian. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912).

¹⁶⁶ Lutz, *The Bronte Cabinet*, p. 35.

popular history, as shown by the proliferation of works in that genre, there have been only a handful of object-based biographies published in the past few years. The methodology remains under-exploited by biographers, who are often reliant on textual accounts, to the field's detriment.

The advantage of combining different methodological approaches — object biographies, object-led studies, the concepts of networks and assemblages of artefacts — offers a far broader series of sources with which to write a biography, other than purely textual evidence. This in turn offers a possible methodological solution to the question at the heart of the thesis: how can we find a better way to tell the story of an ancient subject, especially one for whom the written sources are incomplete or lacking?

While reviewing a biography of Cleopatra in 2013, Mary Beard wrote that '[The biographer's] problem lies more in the nature that she has set herself: namely to write the biography of an ancient character as if it were possible to tell a reasonably reliable story from cradle to grave'. She goes on to add that '[f]or most biographical subjects there is an almost total void to be filled before the age of twenty or thirty. For Cleopatra there are also periods of several years later in her career when we know next to nothing of her life or whereabouts. It is here that "context" tends to substitute, misleadingly, for biography'.¹⁶⁷ By this, Beard means that biographers tend to fall into the trap of taking what we know about a typical Roman childhood, or wedding, or funeral, and then applying the general to the specific.

My methodology will enable future biographers to avoid this trap, by widening the pool of available source material and demonstrating how objects might be made to substitute for textual sources in life writing. Furthermore, the deliberately 'fragmented' nature of this approach, in which the natural gaps that emerge between the stories of objects are left, not smoothed over with contextual sources, will sidestep the initial problem that Beard identifies.

The thesis' most significant contribution, however, will be in the recovery and retelling of the story of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene. Their story — and its absence from our imagination of Rome — forms an important part in our understanding of race and identity in the ancient world. In telling it, it helps wrest the spotlight of attention away from the centre of empire and on to the margins, and by extension on to the marginalised. And, after Gallagher and Greenblatt, this newly recovered story is not just of interest in itself, but by placing it

¹⁶⁷ Mary Beard. *Confronting the Classics: Traditions, Adventures and Innovations* (London: Profile, 2013), pp. 123-5.

alongside well-known subjects — such as Augustus, Tiberius, Antony and Cleopatra, or works by well-known scholars such as Pliny the Elder and Plutarch — their stories too can be re-examined.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Gallagher and Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, p. 10.

Part 1

African & Roman

1. Portrait of a King



Figure 2. Marble bust of Juba II of Mauretania from Cherchell (Cherchell Archaeological Museum, S68). Photograph from Landwehr, ‘Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée’.

In 1926 during excavations on the Kebilen family’s farm near Cherchell, Algeria, the sculpted, life-sized marble head of a young man was found.¹ The long face has smooth cheeks and full lips, the hair in curled locks. The subject wears a royal diadem, simply sculpted as a plain band. The diadem, as well as the find site, identifies the head as Juba II of Mauretania — but the portrait is unlike any other we have of the king.²

For a start, it is not only damaged, but also poorly crafted, the ears and the neck only roughly formed on one side. The diadem is only superficially engraved, dwindling away on both sides.³ This has been variously attributed to the clumsiness of the sculptor or it being a practice piece, perhaps the work of a local sculptor rather than one of the Greek artisans brought to Mauretania by Juba.⁴ Furthermore, the facial features of this bust in particular have been held up by some twentieth-century scholars as the only portrait to show

¹ Philippe Leveau. ‘Les maisons nobles de Caesarea de Maurétanie’. *Antiquités africaines* 18/1 (1982): 109-65 (109).

² E. Boucher-Colozier. ‘Quelques marbres de Cherchel au Musée du Louvre’. *Libyca. Archéologie, épigraphie: bulletin du Service des antiquités*. 1 (1953), p. 26.

³ Landwehr, ‘Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée’, p. 75.

⁴ Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l’Afrique du Nord*, p. 216 note 3; Landwehr, ‘Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée’, p. 75.

Juba's 'true aspect' or 'ethnic' appearance — by which they mean Black African or North African appearance.⁵

The French archaeologist Stéphane Gsell determined that the crude rendition of the bust was the 'fault of the sculptor'.⁶ However, in a subsequent description of the bust from 1953, E. Boucher-Colozier argued that this was a deliberate artistic decision, commenting that its 'thick mouth', 'long and heavy cheeks' and 'very elongated round skull, of Negroid type [...] show us the true aspect of Juba'.⁷ While this language makes for uncomfortable reading today and the attempt at racial categorisation is outdated, scholars continue to scrutinise Juba's portraits in an attempt to determine his 'true aspect'. Klaus Fittschen wrote in 1979 that the Cherchell bust 'reveal[s] ethnic features in the formation of the mouth [...] also in the shape of the nose'.⁸ Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy noted in 1997 that 'some busts of Juba retain ethnic features [...] the hair appears frizzy or [...] strongly curled'.⁹ And as recently as 2016 Paul Zanker referred to Juba's 'obviously Berber features'.¹⁰

So far, ten busts of Juba II have been identified, all found in either Italy or North Africa. Some date to the very beginning of Juba's reign, the king depicted as a beautiful, smooth-cheeked youth.¹¹ Others date to the very end when the king was an old man, his busts faithfully depicting him, wrinkles and all.¹² Some are self-consciously modelled on portraits of the emperor, intended to be displayed prominently at centres of power. Others are small things, the faces worn smooth from private reverence.¹³ Some were made by Greek sculptors who joined Juba and Selene in their new capital at Iol Caesarea, others were made by locals. None of the sources describe what Juba II looked like, so we cannot compare these portraits to any literary description. Yet there is something physiognomic about the way we peer at portraits of Juba, trying to make inferences about his character: this bust has a scholarly appearance, that one apparent wisdom, this one a bit more African than the others.¹⁴

⁵ Boucher-Colozier, 'Quelques marbres de Cherchel au Musée du Louvre', p. 26; Fittschen, 'Die Bildnisse der mauretanischen Könige', p. 160; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 143.

⁶ Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 216 note 3.

⁷ Boucher-Colozier, 'Quelques marbres de Cherchel au Musée du Louvre', p. 26.

⁸ Fittschen, 'Die Bildnisse der mauretanischen Könige und ihre stadtrömischen Vorbilder', p. 160.

⁹ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 143.

¹⁰ Paul Zanker. 'Greek Art in Rome'. In *Pergamon and the Hellenistic Kingdoms of the Ancient World*, edited by Carlos A. Picón and Seán A. Hemingway. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016, p. 98.

¹¹ *Bronze Portrait Bust of Juba II*. 99.1.2.1340, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat. See also Chapter 9.

¹² *Marble Bust of Juba II*. MA 1886, Musée du Louvre.

¹³ Jean Boube. 'Un Nouveau Portrait de Juba II Découvert a Sala'. *Bulletin d'archéologie Marocaine* 6 (1966), pp. 91-106; Boube speculates that Juba was deified and worshipped locally after his death.

¹⁴ Benjamin H. Isaac. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 505.

It is in support of this last point that some modern scholars seem particularly interested in finding evidence, analysing his face in search of ‘ethnic’ features to match the only salient recorded detail about his identity: that he was born in North Africa, the son of a Berber king.¹⁵ While it is inevitable as we look at each of these busts to try to work out which one — if any — depicted him as he really looked, in trying to find traces of his African ancestry, modern scholars are constructing an identity for Juba that he would not himself have recognised.

The question of Juba’s identity is one that has long troubled modern scholars, in no small part because he does not fit neatly into any preconceived category. We know from ancient historians that he was born in Cirta, Numidia (modern-day Constantine, Algeria), which would make him North African or Berber by birth — and it is down to this fact alone that so much time has been spent peering at his sculptures looking for clues to his ethnicity. His identity is complicated by the fact that his father’s court drew as much from the culture of the wider Greek world as it did the traditions native to North Africa, and as a scholar Juba wrote almost exclusively in Greek, even though he grew up speaking Latin. He arrived in Rome when he was still a child, so memories of his birthplace in Numidia would have been hazy at best, his upbringing entirely upper-class Roman. So what did Juba see when he looked at his busts, at his own reflection: did he see himself as Berber or Black, Greek or Roman? In short, how would Juba have self-identified?

* * *

Ancient scholars believed that Africa was one of three continents, divided from Europe by the Mediterranean and Asia by the Nile.¹⁶ By the first century the term had come to mean both the Roman provinces that stood where Carthage and Numidia once had, as well as the continent itself.¹⁷ By Juba’s time Rome had had a toehold in Africa for over a century and there were plenty of Roman citizens of African descent living throughout the empire; but despite the increased dealings with both Africa and Africans, a mythical concept of Africa continued to maintain a hold on the Roman imagination in ways recognisable even today:

¹⁵ Landwehr comments on this tendency — see ‘Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée’, p. 75 note 47.

¹⁶ Including but not limited to, Herodotus, 2.16-7, 4.41-5; Alexander Polyhistor; Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 17.3; Lucan, 9.411, 9.871; Pliny, *NH*, 5.1.1; Claudian, *De Bello Gildonico* and *De Consulatu Stilichonis*. See J.A. Maritz and Jessie Martiz. ‘The Classical Image of Africa: The Evidence from Claudian’. *Acta Classica* 43 (2000): 81-99 for a longer discussion, in particular p. 82 note 6.

¹⁷ J.A. Maritz. ‘The Image of Africa: The Evidence of the Coinage’. *Acta Classica* 44 (2001): 105-25 (110); Painter, *The History of White People*, p. 24.

Africa was simultaneously a place of extreme heat and bountiful fertility, of drought, sandstorms and wild animals. The geographer Strabo compared it to a leopard's skin spotted with islands of habitation surrounded by waterless desert.¹⁸ Ancient writers were particularly fascinated by tales of Africa's more outlandish inhabitants — men with the heads of dogs or faces in their chest amongst those described by Pliny the Elder in his encyclopedic *Natural History* — blurring the lines between geography and mythology yet further.¹⁹

'Africa' wasn't thought of as a single, unified place, and 'African' certainly wasn't recognised as a cultural grouping, so it is impossible Juba or his father would have considered themselves as such. The indigenous inhabitants of North Africa — the people we now collectively refer to as Berber — were known by a multitude of tribal names, such as the Garamantes, the Gaetuli or the Numidians, lists of whom Strabo compiled in the seventeen volumes of *The Geography*.²⁰ Alongside them were the Ethiopians, literally meaning 'burnt face' in Greek, the term originally referring to the people who came from the south of Egypt, but which came to mean any Black African.²¹ Homer considered Ethiopians to be loyal and lordly, favoured by the Greek gods, while Herodotus said they were the most handsome of all men.²²

Ancient writers often wrote about the physical differences between different peoples, sometimes employing stereotypes we might recognise today.²³ The Greek historian Herodotus described the Ethiopians as having the 'woolliest hair', whilst Virgil described an Ethiopian housekeeper as having 'thick' lips, 'dark' colour and 'curly' hair.²⁴ The Ethiopians became the gauge by which ancient writers described skin colours, the poet Marcus Manilius describing a sliding scale in the first century AD:

Ethiopians [...] a race of men steeped in darkness; less sun-burnt are the Indians; the

¹⁸ Strabo, 2.5.33. See also Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 79; Livy, 8.3.24; Mela, 1.21.

¹⁹ Maritz and Martiz, 'The Classical Image of Africa', p. 98; it should be noted that Pliny the Elder presented such tales with a fair degree of scepticism, although subsequent writers who used him as a source often presented them at face value — see Chapter 8.

²⁰ Strabo, 17.3.19. See also Jehan Desanges. *Catalogue des tribus africaines de l'antiquité classique à l'ouest du Nil* (Université de Dakar, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines: Dakar, 1962); Desanges. 'Les territoires gétules de Juba II'. *Revue des Études Anciennes* 66/1–2 (1964): 33–47; Elizabeth Fentress. 'Tribe and Faction: The Case of the Gaetuli'. *Mélanges de l'école Française de Rome* 94/1 (1982): 325–34; G. Camps. 'Bavares (Babares – Baveres)'. In *Encyclopédie berbère* (Leuven, Belgium: Éditions Peeters, 1991): 1394–99; Painter, *The History of White People*, p. 5.

²¹ Snowden Jr, *Before Color Prejudice*, p. 7.

²² Homer, *Iliad*, 1.423–4, 23.205–7; Herodotus, 3.20; Whitmarsh, 'Black Achilles'.

²³ Ball et al., 'Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash'.

²⁴ Herodotus, 7.70; Virgil, 'Moretum', 31–5; Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, p. 7.

land of Egypt [...] darkens bodies more mildly; the Sun-god dries up with dust the tribes of Africans amid their desert lands; the Moors derive their name from their faces, and their identity is proclaimed by the colour of their skins.²⁵

The Greek word for black, *mauron*, not only gave the ‘Moors’ — the Mauri, who lived in north-west Africa — their name, but by extension Juba’s kingdom and, much later, the Moors of North Africa and Spain. Their skin colour was variously described by ancient authors as *nigri* (black) and *adusti* (scorched), whereas the Roman poet Lucan said that they were as black as Indians.²⁶ The Garamantes, who lived in the desert south of Juba’s ancestral kingdom of Numidia, were also described as distinct from both Ethiopians and Mauri, their skin colour described as *perusti* (sunburned) and *furvi* (swarthy), their hair dark and curly.²⁷

The Romans also recognised that physical difference was about more than just skin colour, as a scene from Petronius’ *Satyricon* makes clear. In this scene a group of slaves discuss disguising themselves as Ethiopians to escape, before one argues:

‘Suppose the stain of dye on the face could last for some time [...] tell me, can we make our lips swell to a hideous thickness? Or transform our hair with curling-tongs? Or plough up our foreheads with scars? Or walk bow-legged? Or bend our ankles over to the ground? Or trim our beards in a foreign cut? Artificial colours dirty one’s body without altering it.’²⁸

In the same scene, the slaves also consider ‘chalk[ing] our faces till Gaul takes us for her own sons’, suggesting that, while the Romans understood the concept of White people just as they recognised Black people, they did not consider it to apply to them.²⁹ Indeed, a Roman man would have been aghast to be thought of as ‘White’: while pale skin was seen as desirable in a woman, suggesting that she had the luxury to stay indoors all day, by the same measure it also had connotations of effeminacy.³⁰ ‘Real’ men — by which we mean Roman men — were supposed to be outdoors, in the field, at war, in the arena, their skin bronzed to reflect this.³¹

The Romans derived their conception of race from the Greek physician Hippocrates and the philosopher Aristotle, believing both a person’s appearance and

²⁵ Manilius, 4.722-30.

²⁶ Lucan, 4.678-9; Manilius, 4.729-30; Isidore, 14.5.10; Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, p. 9 note 32.

²⁷ Lucan, 4.679; Arnobius, 6.5; Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, p. 9.

²⁸ Petronius, 102.

²⁹ Petronius, 102.

³⁰ Whitmarsh, ‘Black Achilles’; Ball et al., ‘Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash’.

³¹ Margaret Talbot. ‘Color Blind’.

personality were determined by the climate of their home.³² In the *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder recorded that:

... it is beyond question that the Ethiopians are burnt by the heat of the heavenly body near them, and are born with a scorched appearance, with curly beard and hair, and that in the opposite region of the world the races have white frosty skins, with yellow hair that hangs straight; while the latter are fierce owing to the rigidity of their climate but the former wise because of the mobility of theirs.³³

Germans were therefore made stupid but courageous by the cold weather, Ethiopians smart but cowardly by the heat.³⁴ Peoples from the East — including the Greeks, when it suited the Romans — were considered to be decadent and servile by nature.³⁵ The ideal climate was somewhere between the two extremes where, as luck would have it, Greece and, later, Rome lay. Pliny continued:

[...] in the middle of the earth, owing to a healthy blending of all both elements, there are tracts that are fertile for all sorts of produce, and men are of medium bodily stature, with a marked blending even in the matter of complexion; customs are gentle, senses clear, intellects fertile and able to grasp the whole of nature; and they also have governments, which the outer races have never possessed [...].³⁶

The Romans used this theory of environmental determinism to justify their imperialism — after all, weren't they *naturally* the dominant race?³⁷ Such an outlook has since been used as the basis for early modern race theories as well as European imperialism, White European seamlessly — if incongruously — substituting for Roman in the equation, just as Roman had replaced Greek.³⁸

Not all Romans shared the same views, of course. The statesman Cicero believed that a person's social interactions had as much of a part to play in their character as the environment.³⁹ Strabo, who had travelled extensively and therefore witnessed cultural

³² Ball et al., 'Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash'; Talbot, 'Color Blind'.

³³ Pliny, *NH*, 2.16.80

³⁴ J. P. V. D. Balsdon. *Romans and Aliens* (Richmond-upon-Thames: Duckworth, 1979), pp. 59-60; see also Pliny, *NH*, 2.80.189; Vegetius, 1, 2; Vitruvius, 6, 1, 1-4 and 9-11; Isidore, 9, 2, 105.

³⁵ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 503.

³⁶ Pliny, *NH*, 2.16.80.

³⁷ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 503; Tanner, 'Race and Representation in Ancient Art', p. 27.

³⁸ Emma Dench. 'Roman Identity'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies*, edited by Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 266-80 (273); Tanner, 'Race and Representation in Ancient Art', p. 13; Ball et al., 'Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash'.

³⁹ Cicero, *De fato*, 4.8.

differences first hand, explicitly rejected environmental determinism:

For such a distribution of animals, plants and climates as exists is not the result of design — just as the differences of race, or of language, are not, either — but rather of accident and chance. And again, as regards the various arts and faculties and institutions of mankind, most of them, when once men have made a beginning, flourish in any latitude whatsoever and in certain instances even in spite of the latitude; so that some local characteristics of a people come by nature, others by training and habit.⁴⁰

Even Julius Caesar, following his conquest of Gaul in 50 BC, believed that diet and lifestyle had more of an impact on a culture than the environment.⁴¹ Caesar believed that the Gauls had become weak enough to defeat after Roman wealth and wine had corrupted them, in contrast to the unconquered Germans who had remained strong by shunning such extravagances.⁴² This was a constant concern amongst the rulers of Rome, especially at the end of the Republic, who worried that campaigns in the Eastern Mediterranean would expose their soldiers to luxury, sexual excess and general moral decrepitude, leading to them becoming weak and effeminate — Mark Antony's 'corruption' by Cleopatra was held up as the ultimate example of this. In turn the Roman army would bring such vices back to Rome and, through the very expansion of the empire, would sow the seeds of its downfall.⁴³

While the Romans were certainly prejudiced against foreigners with attitudes bordering on racist, the colour of a person's skin would have had little bearing on them.⁴⁴ To the Romans, where a person was from — or rather, whether they were a Roman citizen or not — mattered more than what they looked like.⁴⁵

Ever since Rome extended its citizenship to all Italians in 87 BC, it had embraced a flexible approach to who got to be Roman.⁴⁶ Being Roman — the concept of *Romanitas* — was no longer a matter of where one was born; it ceased to be an ethnicity, instead becoming a cultural, ideological and, ultimately, legal distinction. This paved the way for the subsequent

⁴⁰ Strabo, *Geography*, 2.3.7.

⁴¹ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.1.8-9.

⁴² Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 97.

⁴³ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 510. This was a theme expounded upon by American Antebellum scholars in the nineteenth century, who argued that immigration and racial admixture led to the inevitable fall of Rome – see McCoskey, *Race*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Dench, 'Roman Identity', p. 273; Tanner, 'Race and Representation in Ancient Art', p. 13; Ball et al., 'Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash'.

⁴⁵ Dench, 'Roman Identity', p. 273; Ball et al., 'Scholars Respond to Racist Backlash'.

⁴⁶ McCoskey, *Race*, p. 70.

expansion of the empire, offering a means by which multitudinous peoples, often from widely differing cultural backgrounds, could be incorporated into a single cultural whole.

Much like the modern United States, ancient Rome became an empire of hyphenated identities — Romano-British, Romano-Greek, Romano-Syrian and so on.⁴⁷ In 56 BC, Cicero wrote about a Roman having two fatherlands: the one acquired through birth, where one's ancestors are buried and one's native cults are venerated; the other, Rome itself, gained through choice — and 'for her it is our duty to die, to her to give ourselves entirely'.⁴⁸ By Juba's day, Rome was already a melting pot of immigrants drawn from around the Mediterranean, with distinctive cultural quarters: the Jewish population in Trastevere, the Syrians on the Aventine, the Egyptians in the Campus Martius.⁴⁹ Over time, these ethnic distinctions became less important the longer they had been incorporated into the empire; only at the periphery, where the empire was still expanding, did they remain as markers of difference.⁵⁰ Within a couple of centuries the descendants of immigrants were in charge, culminating in the second-century reign of the North African emperor Septimius Severus and his Syrian wife Julia Domna.

Even the most staunchly traditional Roman would have considered themselves to be of mixed ancestry, identifying alternately as Italian, by dint of birth; Greek, as heirs to their culture and civilisation; and Trojan, via the foundation myth of Aeneas. It wasn't just Aeneas from whom the Romans claimed descent; aspirational genealogies linked many individual Roman families with mythological forebears.⁵¹ Thus Julius Caesar traced his maternal ancestry to the goddess Venus, while Juba considered himself descended from Hercules — numerous statues of the demigod have been found in Caesarea and he appears on many of the kingdom's coins.⁵² Such genealogical lineages served an important role, beyond burnishing the mythical credentials of the families involved: they were a way to establish or strengthen ties between communities and colonies, fostering kinship between sometimes disparate cultural groups.⁵³ In Juba's case, for example, Hercules was long associated with north-west Africa, many of his trials supposedly occurring there, his iconography and mythology tying him with the peripheries of civilisation. By claiming descent from the hero,

⁴⁷ Dench, 'Roman Identity', p. 268.

⁴⁸ Cicero, *Laws*, 2.2.5.

⁴⁹ McCoskey, *Race*, p. 118.

⁵⁰ Mattingly, 'Cultural Crossovers', p. 292.

⁵¹ Dench, 'Roman Identity', p. 271.

⁵² See the *Heracles Coin from Mauretania*. 1908,0404.16, British Museum.

⁵³ David Konstan. 'Review of Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World, by Christopher P. Jones.' *Classical Philology* 96/3 (2001): 321-325 (325).

Juba not only bolstered his own rule, but efficiently tied his new kingdom into the ever-widening Greco-Roman world.⁵⁴ That Selene also claimed Herculean descent couldn't have hurt matters either, intertwining their dynasties ever closer.⁵⁵

Citizenship had always been something that could be granted or bestowed, whether on freed slaves, conquered peoples or foreign allies.⁵⁶ Inevitably a trade in grants of citizenship sprung up; indeed, trafficking in such grants was one of the crimes of which Augustus accused Mark Antony.⁵⁷ Under the empire such a trade became a tool of imperial policy, however, Roman citizenship an incentive offered to the rulers of neighbouring kingdoms to ensure cooperation. This was especially the case under Augustus, who granted citizenship to Eurycles of Sparta, Ariobarzanes of Media, Mithridates of Commagene, Samsigeramus of Emes, Cottius of the Alps — as well as to Juba.

To some of the client-kings, citizenship was just a perk, a golden passport that provided them certain benefits without any of the obligations that being a citizen entailed.⁵⁸ But Juba *was* Roman, his full name Gaius Julius Juba following his adoption into Julius Caesar's family. Raised in Rome since he was a young child, Juba would have been too young to remember life in Numidia, had never known any life except that as a Roman. And it shows on his arrival in his new kingdom: both in his personal portraits and those of his son, self-consciously styled after the emperor and his heirs; or in his program of architecture, with baths, theatre and circus all modelled on Rome. Juba thought of himself — and wanted to be seen — as a Roman citizen.

* * *

⁵⁴ Pliny, *NH*, 5.1.7; Strabo, 17.3.7.

⁵⁵ Roller 2004, pp. 154-5.

⁵⁶ Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, p. 82.

⁵⁷ Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, p. 90.

⁵⁸ Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, p. 91.

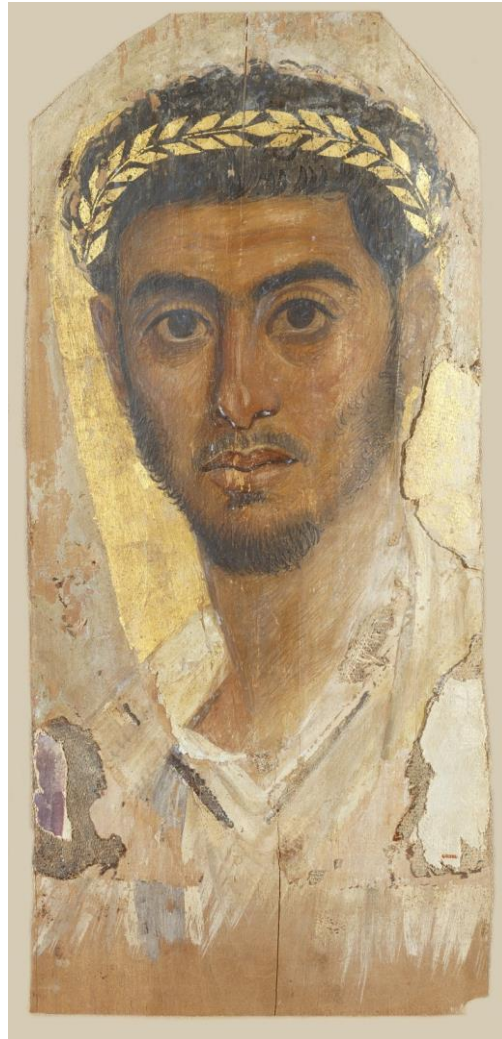


Figure 3. Mummy portrait of a man (Brooklyn Museum of Art, 40.386).

Roman artwork encapsulated the multiplicity of human appearance visible throughout the empire. This is most apparent on the Fayum mummy portraits, visible today in museums around the world. These beautiful, naturalistic paintings were affixed over a mummy's face, depicting the deceased as they were in life and demonstrating the wide ethnic diversity amongst the elite in Roman Egypt.⁵⁹ The wide variety of ethnicities present throughout the empire is further made apparent by the frequent depiction of Black people in paintings and mosaics too, as slaves, gladiators and tradesmen, merchants, soldiers and high-ranking officials.⁶⁰

This diversity would have been most apparent from marble statues, almost all of which would once have been painted in vibrant colours and richly embellished with gilt,

⁵⁹ Talbot, 'Color Blind'.

⁶⁰ Snowden, *Before Color Prejudice*, p. 91-2, 95.

silver and other inlays, but which have since been rendered monochrome by the ravages of time and overzealous post-excavation cleaning.⁶¹ Where today in museums we see displays of homogeneous white statues, often indistinguishable from one another, in antiquity these polychromatic statues — displayed on the streets, in people’s homes — would have looked almost lifelike, carefully painted features making each one stand out as a distinct individual.⁶² The painter and sculptor worked hand-in-hand, the finished marble providing the canvas for the painter.⁶³ Coloured marble was also painted, dark stone in particular prized for use in expensive decorative statuary, often to depict the gods of Egypt or darker skin tones on subjects.⁶⁴ Sculptures depicting Black Africans were often carved from basalt, for example, and then painted with reds and browns to create a lifelike effect — a good example of this can be seen on the head of a young boy from the first century BC now in Hamburg, which still bears traces of mahogany-coloured paint on its cheeks and nose.⁶⁵ Different marbles allowed the painter to achieve different effects, explaining why even the most precious marbles were painted over in some fashion, in part if not always in full.⁶⁶



Figure 4. Head of an African Boy (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, 1961.1).

⁶¹ Mark B. Abbe. ‘Polychromy’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture*, edited by Elise A. Friedland, Melanie Grunow Sobocinski, and Elaine K. Gazda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 173-188 (173); Bond, ‘Whitewashing Ancient Statues’; Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

⁶² Abbe, ‘Polychromy’, p. 179; Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

⁶³ Bond, ‘Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color’; Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

⁶⁴ Abbe, ‘Polychromy’, p. 180.

⁶⁵ Talbot, ‘Color Blind’; see *Head of an African Boy*. 1961.1, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg.

⁶⁶ Abbe, ‘Polychromy’, p.179.

The marble busts of Juba would have been no exception, and would once have been painted too. The bust of Juba in Cherchell is not the only one to have been ascribed ‘African’ features; the marble bust of Juba in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen has also been described as having ‘ethnic’ features.⁶⁷ The Glyptoteket has pioneered a technique to examine marble busts for evidence of this colour palette, analysing them one by one in the laboratory for trace elements of paint in an attempt to restore them to their original polychromatic appearance.⁶⁸ I spoke to the curator in charge of the project, Cecile Brøns, and discovered that, while the Copenhagen bust of Juba II has not yet formally been analysed, an initial examination confirmed that any obvious traces of paint had been scrubbed away prior to its acquisition by the museum.⁶⁹ Even if we had been able to tell what colour the bust had been painted, what would that really have told us about Juba’s identity? After all, it is not always possible to discern the motivation behind the choice of materials: a particular type of marble or pigment colour might have been picked because it was expensive rather than being true to life.⁷⁰

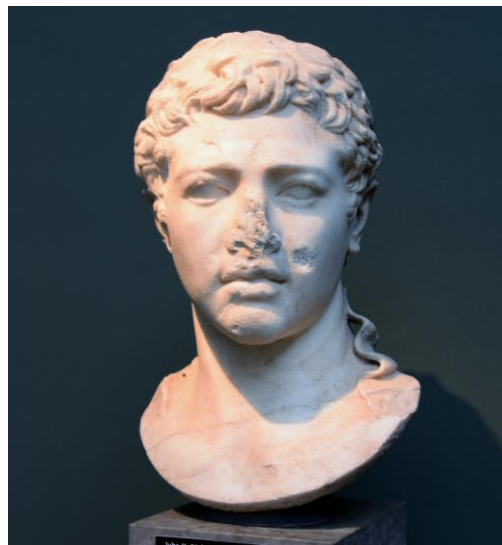


Figure 5. Marble bust of Juba II from Rome (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, IN 1591). Photograph: Richard Mortel via WikiCommons.

Juba’s statues are not the only ones to have suffered this fate. After millennia

⁶⁷ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 143.

⁶⁸ Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

⁶⁹ Cecilie Brøns. ‘Tracking Color and the Head of Juba II’, email conversation, 14 February 2022.

⁷⁰ McCoskey, *Race*, p. 184.

exposed to the elements or buried in the soil, the paint has worn off most Greek and Roman statues, or else has been accidentally brushed off along with the dirt during the cleaning process. What was once historical accident and misinterpretation, however, became a matter of ideology. A myth took hold that the Greeks and Romans deliberately left their statues bare, in comparison to the painted statuary of Egypt and the Middle East, on which the paint survived due to the dry climate and burial in sand — thus confirming superior ‘Western’ rationality.⁷¹ Colour on statuary came to be equated with barbarism, and so in contrast civilisation and whiteness came to be linked too.⁷² During the Renaissance, artists began to deliberately make works that extolled form over colour, in homage to what they thought classical art looked like.⁷³ Johann Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century art scholar who is often referred to as the ‘father of art history’, proclaimed that the ‘whiter the body, the more beautiful it is’ — and his views extended beyond statuary.⁷⁴ Winckelmann’s theory that Greek art represented the quintessence of beauty contributed to the development of race science in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁵ Although these theories of art history have long been discredited — fragments of paint on classical statuary were noted as early as the nineteenth century — they still crop up today as part of white supremacist ideology, whose attempts to equate ancient history with White history leans heavily into the still-prevalent perception of classical sculpture as nothing but lily-white statues.⁷⁶

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⁷¹ Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

⁷² Bond, ‘Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color’.

⁷³ Talbot, ‘Color Blind’.

⁷⁴ Tanner, ‘Race and Representation in Ancient Art’, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Bond, ‘Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color’.

⁷⁶ Painter, *The History of White People*, x.



Figure 6. *The Philopappos Monument, Athens. Photograph: George E. Koronaios.*

Still towering above Athens today, looking across to the ruins of the Parthenon and the modern city beyond, is a monument that can help us to understand how Juba might have considered his own identity. The Philopappos Monument is a two-storey mausoleum for Gaius Julius Antiochus Euphrosyne Philopappos, its lower storey depicting the proudest moment of his life — his election as Roman consul in AD 109 — while the upper storey shows him flanked by his grandfather and dynastic forebear. Apart from the huge scale and prominent site, this is a funerary monument like so many others in the Roman Empire. Philopappos achieved the highest ranks of office in both Rome, where he grew up and served as consul, and Athens, where he later settled and became archon. But, more than that, Philopappos was also the heir to the small client-kingdom of Commagene in Asia Minor, dispossessed since its annexation by the Romans in AD 17. By dint of his royal inheritance, he was also, technically, a god.⁷⁷ All of these identities are represented on his monument: the upper storey shows his grandfather, Antiochus IV, last king of Commagene, and Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the dynasty, representing his royal inheritance; the procession below it depicts Philopappos being inaugurated as Roman consul, his head crowned with a divine halo and a statue of Heracles a nod to his mythological lineage.⁷⁸ Yet none of these identities are at odds with one another; indeed they intersect and merge: his grandfather wears a toga, he

⁷⁷ R. Miles. 'Communicating Culture, Identity and Power'. In *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, edited by Janet Huskinson (London: Routledge in association with Open University Press, 2000), pp. 30-1.

⁷⁸ Dench, 'Roman Identity', p. 275.

wears a divine halo during his inauguration. Philopappos never felt the need to pick just one identity and stick with it, nor did his cultural identity stand in the way of his career — far from it, he celebrated his ancestry, divine and regal, even at the moment he achieved the pinnacle of Roman political success.

The Philopappos Monument shows that identities in the ancient world — amongst the Mediterranean elite, at least — were both constructed and highly mutable.⁷⁹ In this regard Juba had something of a blank slate to work with. As we will see throughout the rest of this thesis, Juba’s coinage, his official portraiture, even his mausoleum — were all means by which he could convey a message about himself, about his kingdom, to his people. His identity was his to define.

* * *



Figure 7. Marble bust of Germanicus from Cyrene (Cyrene Museum). Photograph: Walker, 'The Imperial Family as Seen in Cyrene'.

In 1989, a family group of sculptures was found in Cyrene, Libya. With high cheekbones, full lips and almond-shaped eyes, these figures share similar facial features with the ‘African’ bust

⁷⁹ Miles, ‘Communicating Culture, Identity and Power’, p. 34.

of Juba. In all probability, this family grouping is the Imperial family, including the second emperor Tiberius' adopted son Germanicus.⁸⁰ Unlike Juba, Germanicus' ancestry is as Roman as can be: his father was Tiberius' older brother Drusus, his mother Antonia, daughter of Antony and Octavia. Nobody is proposing that this statue represents Germanicus' 'true aspect', but rather the work of a local sculptor, showing his devotion to the emperor's family, his artistry reflecting his own appearance.⁸¹

That same logic might well be applied to the head from Cherehell, that rather than reflecting Juba's 'real' appearance, it might instead reveal the 'true aspect' of the sculptor. Just as the sculptor has projected his own identity on to his subject, so too do we find modern scholars doing the same, projecting their own racial views on to the King. To do so is an ultimately futile exercise, for there is no singular image of Juba II, no one portrait that represents the 'true aspect'. Identity is, has always been, multi-faceted — something Juba understood only too well. He was neither African, nor Roman — he was many things, sometimes all at once.

⁸⁰ Susan Walker. 'The Imperial Family as Seen in Cyrene'. *Libyan Studies* 25 (1994): 167-84 (177, 181).

⁸¹ Walker, 'The Imperial Family as Seen in Cyrene', p. 182.

2. The Dynasts



Figure 8. Head of a North African from Cyrene (British Museum, 1861,1127.13).

A life-size bronze head of a man — long-separated from his body — stares out from inside a perspex box affixed to the back wall of ‘The World of Alexander Gallery’ in the British Museum.¹ The head is the only surviving part of a larger statue, severed at the neck during the destruction of the Temple of Apollo in Cyrene, modern-day Libya, in which it once stood alongside statues of kings, athletes and other heroic figures. It was found in 1860 by British archaeologists Sir Robert Murdoch Smith and Cdr Edwin A. Porcher alongside burnt pieces of a broken bronze sculpture of a horse, suggesting it originally depicted the subject as a horseman or charioteer. The head is bronze, long-since stained green with verdigris. Its lips are plated with silver, slightly parted to reveal teeth made from bone. The eyes were made

¹ *Bronze Head of a North African*. 1861,1127.13. British Museum.

from glass flux with whites of magnesium carbonate; once they would have glittered as they caught the light, but now they are dull, the glass cracked and broken.

Unlike many of the other portraits in the gallery — for the most part idealised depictions of gods, mythic heroes and royalty pretending to be both — this sculpture is unmistakably that of a real person. The furrowed brow, irregular nose, short chin and broad cheekbones; the thick head of hair, sculpted into distinct curls that provide a sense of motion; the carefully shaved chinstrap beard and soft, downy moustache — all suggest that this is a portrait drawn from life.² This fact becomes inescapable when the method of craftsmanship is taken into account, for it was forged using the ‘indirect lost-wax method’ — meaning the bronze was poured into a mould cast in wax, often from a living subject. This is not some imagined, idealised god-head, but an actual human being who lived and breathed two thousand years ago.

The date that the head was buried beneath the temple has long been established; the widespread destruction caused by the Jewish revolt in North Africa in AD 115 is attested to by both historical records and a thick layer of black soil in the archaeological record. However, the period of its manufacture has always been more fiercely contested, for the bust is without real precedent or comparison in the Greek world.³ Originally dated by its excavators to somewhere in the fourth century BC, this date has largely gone unchallenged — the label in the British Museum still notes that it is from ‘about 300 BC’.⁴ Duane Roller advanced an alternative theory in 2002, re-dating the head to the second century BC.⁵ Roller undermined the consensus that was based on stylistic comparison, noting that the bust had no equivalents — especially not from North Africa — against which it could be compared.⁶ In fact, the only portraits that it does have stylistic elements in common with — specifically, the distinctive chinstrap beard — are coins depicting late Ptolemaic kings from the second century BC.⁷ To further confirm this date, Roller used literary sources to identify a period when the royal courts of Numidia and Cyrene were closely connected — during the reigns of

² Reinhard Lullies and Max Hirmer. *Greek Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1960), p. 90; Roller, ‘A Note on the Berber Head in London’, p. 144.

³ Lullies and Hirmer, *Greek Sculpture*, p. 90.

⁴ Robert Murdoch Smith and E. A. Porcher. *History of the Recent Discoveries at Cyrene, Made During an Expedition to the Cyrenaica in 1860-61 under the Auspices of Her Majesty's Government* (London: Day, 1864), p. 94 note 2; Lullies and Hirmer, *Greek Sculpture*, p. 90; *Bronze Head of a North African*. 1861,1127.13, British Museum.

⁵ Roller, ‘A Note on the Berber Head in London’, p. 144; Lullies and Hirmer, *Greek Sculpture*, p. 90.

⁶ Roller, ‘A Note on the Berber Head in London’, p. 145.

⁷ Susan Walker and Peter Higgs, eds. *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth* (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), #44-45, 90.

Massinissa and Ptolemy VIII Physcon, who were friends during the final years of the former's life and the latter's reign — arriving at a date range of between 163 and 148 BC.⁸

Before this revised date, any attempt to identify to whom the head might have belonged was impossible but with the more precise date a more accurate identification could be attempted.⁹ Its distinctive facial features — receding forehead and broad cheekbones, full lips, soft, downy facial hair and tight curls of hair on the head — suggest a North African origin, and the location where it was found marks it out as being the portrait of either a king or a victorious athlete, the only two categories of subject honoured in the Temple of Apollo. There is one candidate who ticks all of the boxes: Mastanabal, a North African prince *as well as* a noted athlete.¹⁰ He was also Juba II's great-great-grandfather.

* * *

There are many reasons why Mastanabal should be so highly honoured in the Temple of Apollo in Cyrene, not least because of his parentage. Mastanabal's father was Massinissa (238-148 BC), the long-reigning king of Numidia throughout much of the first and second centuries BC, famous amongst both ancient writers and modern historians. Massinissa successfully led his kingdom through a period of tumultuous change in North Africa, during which the balance of power in the Mediterranean first tipped one way and then the other. This was the time of the Second and Third Punic Wars when Rome and Carthage battled it out for dominance; neighbouring kings who backed the wrong side would share the fate of their ally, and the political landscape was shaken up more than once during this period. Although eventually Rome rose victorious and Carthage was utterly destroyed, that outcome was no means certain for much of the war.

Massinissa was born at a time when Carthage still held sway over the African coast. As a result he was 'educated' in Carthage — for which we must read 'held hostage' to ensure the loyalty of his own father, who was king of the Massylian tribe in Eastern Numidia.¹¹ Being raised a hostage was not without its advantages, however, and he was educated by the Greek scholars resident in Carthage, setting him on the course to be an

⁸ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146.

⁹ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 145.

¹⁰ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146; Josephine Crawley Quinn. 'Monumental Power: "Numidian Royal Architecture" in Context'. In *The Hellenistic West. Rethinking the Ancient Mediterranean*, edited by J. R. W. Prag and Josephine Crawley Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 194

¹¹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 11.

enlightened, scholarly ruler and forming the mould that many of his descendants would subsequently follow. He became the protege of the Carthaginian king Hasdrubal, who promised him his daughter Sophonisba's hand in marriage, and at the age of 25 he was appointed as one of Carthage's generals.¹²

At the outset of the Second Punic War in 218 BC — the war made famous for Hannibal's surprise attack across the Alps, thirty-seven elephants in tow — Massinissa was left behind to command the Carthaginian forces in North Africa, leading his horsemen against Rome's local ally, Syphax, before crossing to Spain to join the rest of the Carthaginian army fighting against Publius Scipio.¹³

Syphax was Massinissa's arch-enemy, king of the rival Masaesyli tribe in Western Numidia and a staunch ally of Rome before he had switched sides to join the Carthaginians in 206 BC — an alliance sealed through marriage to Sophonisba.¹⁴ Worse, when Massinissa's father died in 205 BC, Syphax took advantage of the confusion surrounding the succession to seize large parts of his kingdom, declaring himself king of all Numidia.¹⁵ In the Romans, Massinissa saw a vehicle for revenge.

While stationed at the island-port of Gades — modern-day Cadiz, Spain — Massinissa met in secret with the Roman commander, Scipio Africanus.¹⁶ There, on a rocky, scrub-covered hillside, they pledged their allegiance to one another: Massinissa would return to Africa and side with Rome against Carthage, and in return Rome would support his claim to the Numidian throne.¹⁷ It was at this moment, on this Spanish hillside, that Numidia — all of North Africa, really — found its fate bound to that of Rome.

Massinissa returned to Africa, to turn his people against Carthage and to overthrow Syphax, but he was soon outnumbered, defeated and wounded, and forced to hide out in the mountains for two years.¹⁸ Eventually, in 204 BC, Scipio landed his legions in North Africa, where he was joined by Massinissa and a couple of hundred Numidian horsemen. Together, they defeated the Carthaginian army in a battle in which forty-thousand men died and Massinissa personally captured Syphax.¹⁹

¹² Diodorus Siculus, 27.7; Appian, *Punic Wars*, 10; William Smith. 'Masinissa'. In *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (London: John Murray, 1873).

¹³ Livy, 24.7; Appian, *Punic Wars*, 10.

¹⁴ Livy, 29.14; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 37.

¹⁵ Livy, 29.14.

¹⁶ Livy, 28.16; Appian, *Spanish Wars*, 37.

¹⁷ Livy, 28.35.

¹⁸ P. G. Walsh. 'Massinissa'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 55/1-2 (1965), p. 150.

¹⁹ Livy, 29.15-6.

But victory would be bittersweet for Massinissa. In the aftermath of the battle, he was reunited with Sophonisba. But, as Sophonisba was a princess of Carthage, Scipio had cause for concern that she might persuade Massinissa to break with Rome.²⁰ Scipio insisted that, as the captured wife and daughter of a defeated king, she must be paraded in triumph through Rome. Caught between love for his new wife and loyalty to his ally, Massinissa forced Sophonisba to drink a chalice of poison wine.²¹ Their tragic love story, with more than a few parallels to the suicides of both Cleopatra and Dido, was embellished by later Roman writers for dramatic effect. It would go on to inspire countless poems, paintings and operas, the most famous of which is Petrarch's epic poem *Africa*.

She grasped the goblet, raised her eyes to Heaven
and cried: "Sweet sun, farewell; farewell, ye gods;
farewell, my Massinissa; think of me!"
And then, as one who quenches avid thirst,
she quaffed, with tranquil mien, the envenomed draught
and her fierce spirit fled to Tartarus.²²

Following the Carthaginian defeat, Hannibal returned from Italy to protect Carthage.²³ He was defeated in battle at Zama by the Roman army, alongside nine-thousand cavalry led by Massinissa, ending the war. Afterwards, Massinissa was acknowledged as king of all Numidia by the Roman Senate.²⁴

Massinissa went on to rule Numidia for another fifty-five years, living to the age of 93 and fathering the last of his forty-six sons aged 86.²⁵ His descendants ruled Numidia for another century after that; he was succeeded by his son Mastanabal, following his line down to the last king of Numidia, his great-great-grandson Juba I — father of Juba II.

Massinissa turned out to be a wise ruler, credited with unifying the tribes of Numidia and transforming what was once a nomadic people into a prosperous agrarian society.²⁶ His was a land rich with natural resources, and he capitalised on this during his rule, trading North African grain and Numidian yellow and red-veined marble across the Mediterranean. He was a skillful politician, too, balancing his kingdom's own interests with

²⁰ Diodorus Siculus, 27.7.

²¹ Diodorus Siculus, 27.7.

²² Francesco Petrarca. *Africa*. Translated by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Alice S. Wilson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 5.1005-1011.

²³ Livy, 30.4.

²⁴ Walsh, 'Massinissa', p. 151; Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 24.

²⁵ Polybius, 36.16.1; Livy, 50.5-6.

²⁶ Polybius, 36.16.7.

those of his allies — no small feat, given that Numidia bordered Carthage but was a close ally of Rome — eventually engineering Rome’s final destruction of their mutual rival in the Third Punic War.²⁷ He was also politically active throughout the Mediterranean, sending troops to Macedonia and supplies to the Greek island of Delos, befriending King Nikomedes II of Bithynia and sending his sons to Athens to be educated. Of all his neighbours, he was closer to none than Ptolemy VIII Physcon, King of Cyrene (182-116 BC).²⁸

Massinissa did not write an autobiography, however. He left no written records, very few objects either, from his reign. Fortunately, though, he was an exotic, compelling subject, and one whose story ancient historians could not resist telling — although each of them had their own reasons for telling it as they did.²⁹

One of the few contemporary sources we do have for Massinissa is from his friend, Ptolemy VIII, who *did* write an autobiography, of which a few scraps have survived recounting a visit to his court.³⁰ The Greek historian, Polybius (c.200-118 BC), also met Massinissa, and it’s from his *Histories* that we know most of what we do about the latter’s reign. Polybius was not just a writer of history, he was a witness to it too — standing at Scipio Africanus’ side as they watched Carthage burn.³¹ As a result, he was a firm advocate of using first-hand experience and eye-witness accounts to write history, dismissing what we might today call ‘armchair historians’. It’s because of this diligence that we can place a high degree of trust in what Polybius has to say, especially when it comes to the details of Massinissa’s role in the war, his friendship with Scipio and his relationship with Sophonisba.

But even though he met him in person, Polybius’ description of Massinissa still fits into the expectations of the age as to how a king should look and behave. In Greek writing of the first and second centuries BC, kings could be divided into good kings and bad kings, each with appropriate characteristics to match. Massinissa, held up by Polybius to be a good king, was accompanied by a trail of positive accolades and anecdotes.³² Here’s just one example of many:

Massinissa, the king of the Numidians in Africa, one of the best and most fortunate men of our time [...] He also excelled all his contemporaries in bodily strength, for

²⁷ Livy, 37, 48.

²⁸ Walsh, ‘Massinissa’, p. 155.

²⁹ Walsh, ‘Massinissa’, p. 149.

³⁰ Collated in Jacoby, *Die Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker*, iiB, 985.

³¹ H.J. Edwards. ‘Introduction to The Histories of Polybius’. In *The Histories* by Polybius (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), ix.

³² B. C.McGing. *Polybius’ Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 31.

when it was necessary to stand, he could stand in the same place for a whole day without shifting, and again, if he were seated, he never used to get up. And he could also continue to ride hard by night and day without feeling any the worse.³³

It's easy to see how, in providing his subject with appropriate accolades, Polybius had sowed the seeds for subsequent historians to embellish Massinissa's story into his legend. This might not be as much of a problem, were it not for the fact that much of Polybius' writing has been lost to us. Instead we must make use of subsequent histories that might once have had had Polybius as their source, but which have come to us through successive layers of Roman writing.

Foremost of these is the monumental *History of Rome*, written by Livy (59-17 BC) in the latter half of the first century BC. Livy was a near-contemporary of Augustus, and his work did not just cover Rome's ancient past, but brought its history right into the present, including Augustus' reign.³⁴ Although Livy did not move within Rome's inner circles, nor form part of the imperial propaganda machine, his work was still of particular interest to Augustus, who had his own social project to refashion society.³⁵ The Romans saw the role of history as educational, providing exemplary accounts that they could actively follow in their own lives.³⁶ In this vein, Livy set out to provide a moral example to his fellow Romans, providing them with role models from whom they could learn how to behave — and we know that was his intended goal, because he says so in his own preface.³⁷ In the aftermath of nearly a century of civil war, his advocacy for consensus and accommodation over conflict sent a powerful message.³⁸

It's with this lofty moral purpose in mind that he described Massinissa. The role in which Livy chose to cast Massinissa was that of the noble savage. In this, he provided the model that all Rome's allied kings should aspire to follow; a 'young man of such promise'³⁹ made 'famous and powerful'⁴⁰ through his loyalty to and patronage by Rome. This is certainly the model that Juba II chose to adopt on becoming King of Mauretania, ruling his kingdom as a de facto Roman governor on Augustus' behalf. Juba became king around the

³³ Polybius, 36.16.

³⁴ Jona Lendering, 'Livy'. *Livius*, 2003. <https://www.livius.org/articles/person/livy>.

³⁵ Lendering, 'Livy'.

³⁶ John Marincola. 'Ancient Audience and Expectations'. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*, edited by Andrew Feldherr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 11-23 (20).

³⁷ Livy, preface 10; Feldherr, *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*, p. 5.

³⁸ Daniel J. Kapust. *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 81.

³⁹ Livy, 24.49.1-2.

⁴⁰ Livy, 25.34.

same time that Livy began publishing the *History of Rome*; as Juba was a keen scholar within Augustus' own household, living in Rome at the same time Livy was writing, it is not much of a stretch to think that he might have seen an early draft.

But Massinissa's was not the only model of kingship presented by the Roman historians; Juba II's father, Juba I, unwittingly followed the model set by another of his ancestors: Jugurtha (c160-104 BC). Jugurtha was Mastanabal's son and nephew of the Numidian king, who usurped the throne from his cousins and, through various convoluted alliances, found himself embroiled in a conflict against the Romans that ended with his defeat and the loss of his kingdom.⁴¹ He may have been motivated out of a sense of Berber nationalism, attempting to unify the North African tribes, but his motivations are rarely dwelt upon.⁴² The Roman historian Sallust provides a largely literary, heavily embellished account of the Jugurthine War, in which he also conjures up the spirit of Massinissa.⁴³ His Massinissa is a hero, Rome's true and loyal friend about whom a descendant says:⁴⁴

Massinissa conditioned us to court no one except the Roman people, to contract no new alliances or bonds; he taught that in your friendship we would have an abundance of great protection that, if the fortune of this empire of yours should change, we must fall with it.⁴⁵

While Livy used Massinissa as an example for contemporaries — perhaps Juba II included — to follow, by portraying him as a paragon Sallust sought to use him as a foil against which Jugurtha's wickedness would stand in stark contrast. When Jugurtha's cousin sends letters to the Roman Senate to seek aid, it is Massinissa's legend that Sallust has him invoke:

I implore you by the majesty of your dominion and by the trust placed in your friendship, if you retain any memory at all of my grandfather Massinissa.⁴⁶

* * *

⁴¹ Sallust 5.6, 12.

⁴² Abdallah Laroui. *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 30.

⁴³ J.C. Rolfe. 'The Life and Works of Sallust'. In *The War with Jugurtha* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), xv.

⁴⁴ Sallust, 5.5, 9.2.

⁴⁵ Sallust, 14.18.

⁴⁶ Sallust, 24.10.

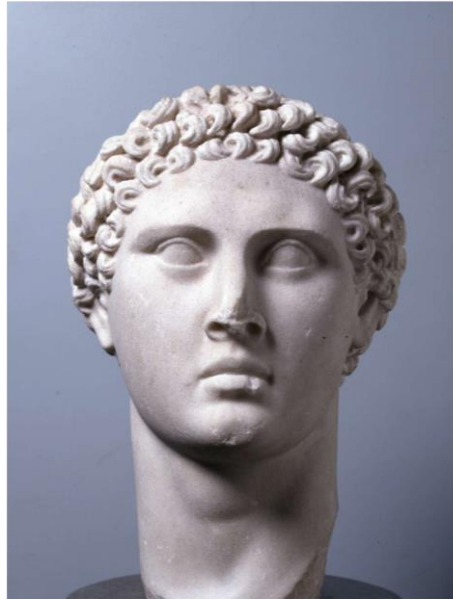


Figure 9. Marble portrait head of a Ptolemaic ruler, perhaps Apion, King of Cyrene (British Museum, 1861,0725.11).

The sights in the British Museum upon which Mastanabal gazes would not have been entirely unfamiliar, for many of the other statues in the gallery were also excavated from the Temple of Apollo. Closest of these familiar faces is a marble bust, similarly decapitated, of Ptolemy Apion (c.150-96 BC), the last King of Cyrene — and great-grandfather of Cleopatra Selene.⁴⁷

Apion sports a distinctive, tightly curled hairstyle with deeply drilled locks — not too dissimilar from Mastanabal's own — coupled with a diadem worn high on the head.⁴⁸ Whereas Mastanabal is ruggedly handsome, well-groomed beard and furrowed brow, Apion's portrait is formal, stiff; the king presented as idol.⁴⁹ With the exception of the curly hair, there is no sense of the person behind the portrait — just of the carefully curated image of the ruler the sculptor wanted to convey.

It was this style of portraiture, not the realism inherent in Mastanabal's sculpture, that proved popular with the elite of Rome, personified in the myriad busts of Augustus found throughout the empire, his portrait remaining young even though he ruled into his seventies. By the time of Juba II, the royal portraits of North Africa were all following suit, idealised and sanitised to convey only youthful vigour and regal power; no room for

⁴⁷ *Marble Portrait Head of a Ptolemaic Ruler, Perhaps Ptolemy Apion, King of Cyrene.* 1861,0725.11, British Museum.

⁴⁸ *Marble Portrait Head of a Ptolemaic Ruler.*

⁴⁹ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 57.

human fallibility.

The two busts might make for unlikely companions, yet the subjects would have known one another — as friends, maybe — in life. Ptolemy Apion was the illegitimate son of Ptolemy VIII Physcon and his North African mistress, Eirene.⁵⁰ Physcon was King of Cyrene between 163 BC and 144 BC during a brief period of exile while his brother was pharaoh, before he claimed the throne of Egypt for himself in somewhat dubious circumstances in 144 BC — at which point Apion became King of Cyrene.⁵¹ It was during his exile that Physcon struck up a friendship with Massinissa, the two regularly visiting one another's courts, their families in tow.⁵² Some of the fashions of the Ptolemaic court seem to have influenced Massinissa's family, too — the style of chin-strap beard worn by Mastanabal is one closely associated with the Ptolemies in their own portraiture.⁵³

It was not just the Ptolemies' grooming habits that influenced Massinissa, for many aspects of Greek culture prevalent in their kingdom were also adopted in Numidia.⁵⁴ Massinissa was the first Numidian to Hellenise his kingdom, beginning to build in the style of Greece, commissioning Greek-style sculptures and artworks and generally engaging with the wider Greek world.⁵⁵ Commemorating his son's athletic victory in Greece, in a Greek style at a Greek sanctuary, was a powerful piece of propaganda for Massinissa, underlining Numidia's position as a civilised, enlightened state.⁵⁶

When, a century later, the Romans had reason to confront, in turn, Juba I of Numidia and then Cleopatra VIII of Egypt, they did not deal with them as they might the meddlesome local chieftains of Northern Europe, but as powerful world leaders with their own well-developed network of cultural and political ties independent of Rome. When the Romans arrived on the shores of North Africa, they did not arrive — as Livy would have us believe — to find an uncivilised fringe-land full of noble savages, ripe for colonisation; they found a highly civilised, culturally diverse landscape at the centre of its own Mediterranean world, both of which had a far greater, and far longer, claim to the notion of civilisation than Rome did.

⁵⁰ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 57.

⁵¹ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 57.

⁵² As described in Ptolemy Physcon's autobiography, *BNJ* iiB, 985.

⁵³ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, #44-45, #90.

⁵⁴ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146.

⁵⁵ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 144.

⁵⁶ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146.

3. The Elephant and the Dragon



Figure 10. Julius Caesar 'Elephant' Silver Denarius (Fitzwilliam Museum, CM.CA.219-R).

In the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge is an example of a silver denarius minted by Julius Caesar, one of tens of millions issued with the same design.¹ In places an errant hammer blow

¹ *Julius Caesar 'Elephant' Silver Denarius*. CM.CA.219-R, Fitzwilliam Museum.; Debra L. Nousek. 'Turning Points in Roman History: The Case of Caesar's Elephant Denarius'. *Phoenix* 62/3-4 (2008): 290-307 (293).

during the casting process has damaged the edge and in others heavy usage during its lifetime has worn the edges smooth, but for the most part it is so shiny and new that there are pound coins in my pocket that are more worn.

On one side of the coin are the symbols of one of Rome's highest magistracies, that of Pontifex Maximus or high priest, a post that Julius Caesar had held from 67 BC: the *culullus*,² *aspergillum*³, axe⁴ and apex⁵. These symbols hold the key to the coin's dating, for in 47 BC Caesar became augur too — the symbols of which he immediately added to all his coins.⁶ Their absence here suggests that the coin must have been minted before this date.

On the obverse is a rather more unexpected tableau: that of an elephant trampling a crested serpent or dragon; the name CAESAR proudly emblazoned beneath. The intended message was clear enough: 'I will trample on the heads of my enemies,' as he declared he would to the Senate in 59 BC.⁷

* * *

The oldest sacred site in Rome is the Temple of Saturn, whose porch of travertine marble still towers over the Forum today. There has been a temple on this site since 498 BC⁸ and, according to Roman myth, it was from here that Saturn ruled all of Italy for a time after being ousted from Olympus by Jupiter.⁹ The cult statue of Saturn was kept here, wrapped in woollen bonds until the festival of the Saturnalia, held every year on the 17th December, when it was freed and Roman society loosened up, at least for a day.¹⁰

The Temple of Saturn was also the site of the *aerarium sanctius*, the state treasury where all of Rome's wealth was stored in a strongroom beneath the podium.¹¹ Established as a reserve in 357 BC to finance wars against Gaul, it was originally funded from

² A horn-shaped drinking vessel holding milk or wine, which was the symbol of the vestal virgins.

³ A stick affixed at one end with horse hair, used by Roman priests to sprinkle water over those who assisted with sacrifices, over the altar and the sacrifice itself.

⁴ The symbol of Roman high office, typically carried in bundles known as fasces by lictors, the ceremonial bodyguards of the consuls.

⁵ A leather skull-cap worn by Roman priests, with a point of olive wood on its top and wool around its base.

⁶ Nousek, 'Turning Points in Roman History', p. 294.

⁷ Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 22.2.

⁸ James Grout. 'Temple of Saturn'. *Encyclopaedia Romana*.

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/romanforum/saturn.html.

⁹ Peter J. Aicher. *Rome Alive: A Source Guide to the Ancient City* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2004), #35.

¹⁰ Aicher. *Rome Alive*, #35.

¹¹ Nousek, 'Turning Points in Roman History', p. 293; Macrobius, 1.8.3-5.

the proceeds of a tax imposed on the manumission of slaves.¹² By 49 BC there were vast sums stored within. The poet Lucan, writing a century later, offers us a descriptive account of the wealth contained within the *aerarium sanctius*, noting that it contained:

Spoils of the Punic Wars, spoil from Perses, and plunder from conquered Philip. What Gauls left behind when retreating from you, Rome, and gold for which Fabricius did not sell you to Pyrrhus. Whatever our grandfathers' frugal habits saved up, the wealth that Asian peoples had sent as tribute, and what Minoan Crete had given Metellus our conqueror. What Cato had hauled overseas from faraway Cyprus. Last of all, the riches of captured kings of the East, royal treasures Pompey had shown off in his triumph.¹³

The treasures listed by Lucan correspond neatly with Rome's dominion at the time, enlisting the contents of the vault to serve as a litany of Roman conquest, but regardless of his poetic license the vault still contained unimaginable sums of money.

In 50 BC, Pompey had ordered Caesar, then serving as governor of Gaul, to disband his army and return to Rome to face accusations of treason. Caesar was reluctant to come back, especially without guarantees of political immunity or the protection of his soldiers. On the 10th January 49 BC he crossed the Rubicon, bringing his legions out of Gaul — where they were permitted to stand under arms — and into Italy — where they most assuredly were not. The Senate, fearful that Caesar intended to declare war upon them rather than face prosecution, threw their lot in with Pompey, who promptly fled south with many of his allies. By early April, Caesar had entered a calm and deserted Rome, in desperate need of money with which to pay his legions.

What happened next is much-attested to by contemporary authors. Even Caesar made mention of Metellus' legal opposition in his own account, if not the physical confrontation that followed. First, Caesar spent three days negotiating with the Senate, initially offering clemency and then attempting to gain access to funds to pay his soldiers. The tribune Lucius Metellus, whose great-great-grandfather had defeated the Carthaginians at Panormus, had been left by Pompey to thwart Caesar, legally opposed Caesar's propositions.¹⁴ Eventually, his patience exhausted, Caesar and his soldiers stormed the Temple of Saturn. There, standing watch, was Metellus.¹⁵ He barred their way, citing legal

¹² Charles T. Barlow. 'The Sanctius Aerarium and the Argento Publico Coinage'. *The American Journal of Philology* 98/3 (1977), p. 290.

¹³ Lucan, 3.165.

¹⁴ Caesar, *Civil War*, 1.33.3.

¹⁵ Dio, 41.17.2.

opposition to Caesar as though they were in a courtroom.

‘Arms and laws had not the same season,’ Caesar said. ‘But if thou art displeased at what is going on, for the present get out of the way, since war has no use for free speech; when, however, I have come to terms and laid down my arms, then thou shalt come before the people with thy harangues.’¹⁶ Caesar then pushed past Metellus and walked up to the door to the treasury. Seeing it was barred, he sent for smiths to break it down. Metellus was not dissuaded, and continued to obstruct Caesar. It was only when Caesar threatened to kill him that Metellus finally fled.¹⁷

Caesar’s smiths then broke down the door and his soldiers carried off all the money — according to Pliny amounting to 15,000 gold ingots, 30,000 silver ingots and 30 million sesterces in coin — 2500 talents in all.¹⁸ That’s about £60 million in today’s money, to which Lucan quipped, ‘for the first time, Rome was poorer than Caesar.’¹⁹

From this silver Caesar minted vast quantities of coins to pay his loyal legions, in three separate issues. One, predictably enough, featured Winged Victory — the same image appears on countless other Roman coins, as well as some of Juba’s.²⁰ The second, rather more controversially, featured Caesar’s own face; in doing so he became the first living figure to appear on a coin, anywhere, and in doing so placed himself amongst the gods.²¹ But it is the third coin that intrigues, the one depicting an elephant trampling a snake — a metaphor for Caesar trampling his enemies.

Which enemies did Caesar have in mind when he minted his coin and why had he chosen to portray himself as an elephant — not an animal traditionally associated with the Romans? At the time the coin was minted, three of Caesar’s enemies *were* closely associated with the elephant: Pompey the Great (106-48 BC), former ally turned arch-nemesis; Q. Scipio Metellus (95-46 BC), head of the ancient and influential family of the Metelli; and Juba I (85-46 BC), King of Numidia. All three had long been close allies, but now they shared a mutual enemy, too: Julius Caesar, against whom they were now embroiled in civil war.

Pliny wrote that:

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 35.

¹⁷ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 35.

¹⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 33.17.56; Dio, 41.17.2.

¹⁹ Lucan, 3.165; Bill Jennings. ‘The Relative Value of Ancient Coinage’. *The CAMPVS* (blog), 2004. <http://thecampvs.com/2006/03/21/the-relative-value-of-ancient-coinage>.

²⁰ Nousek, ‘Turning Points in Roman History’, p. 292. See Chapter 16.

²¹ *The Baldwin’s Blog*. ‘The Caesar Denarius: Face of a Dictator’, 24 October 2017. <https://www.baldwin.co.uk/news/caesar-denarius-dictato-rceltic-roman>.

The biggest [elephants are produced in] India, as well as serpents that keep up a continual feud and warfare with them, the serpents also being of so large a size that they easily encircle the elephants in their coils and fetter them with a twisted knot. In this duel both combatants die together, and the vanquished elephant in falling crushes with its weight the snake coiled round it.²²

And if, on Caesar's coin, it is these enemies that are shown being trampled underfoot, then what Pliny writes was true — that this contest would prove equally fatal to both sides. By 44 BC Caesar, Pompey, Metellus Scipio and Juba I were all dead.

* * *

In Republican Rome, every great victory was accompanied by a triumph — a sort of homecoming parade for the victorious general, in the manner of a victorious football team processing through their hometown after winning the league. A triumph was an exceptional thing, amongst the highest accolades the Senate could bestow. To receive even one was a rare privilege; by 61 BC, Pompey had received three.

His first triumph, awarded to him despite his youth, was one that he would likely have sooner forgotten. Pompey had encouraged his reputation to be associated with that of his hero Alexander the Great, and in the manner of Alexander's own successors that meant employing the elephant in his iconography.²³ Pompey started off by minting coins showing the bust of a woman wearing a headdress made from an elephant scalp — a symbol connected not only with Alexander, but also with Africa personified — but that was too subtle.²⁴ In his first triumph in 81 BC, reluctantly granted to him by the Senate, instead of the team of horses that was customary, Pompey hitched his chariot to four elephants captured from the usurper-king Hiarbas of Numidia.²⁵ But he was thwarted; the gates into Rome proved too small for the elephants to pass through, although that did not dissuade him from giving it a second go before reluctantly accepting defeat and switching to horses instead, to the barely contained

²² Pliny, *NH*, 8.11.32; it was a common misconception in antiquity that Indian elephants were larger than African elephants. This misconception arose from the fact that the most commonly seen subspecies of African elephant at the time was the jungle elephant, common then in North Africa although largely extinct now, which is indeed smaller than the Indian. The savannah elephant, the type we think of when we think of African elephants, was largely unknown to the Romans.

²³ Kohaku. 'Julius Caesar and the Roman Civil War Coin Details'. *NGC Collectors Society*, n.d. <https://coins.www.collectors-society.com/wcm/coinview.aspx?sc=339962>; Nousek. 'Turning Points in History', p. 298.

²⁴ Nousek, 'Turning Points in Roman History', p. 295. See also the depiction of Selene on the Africa Dish in Chapter 13.

²⁵ Nousek, 'Turning Points in Roman History', p. 295.

glee of the assembled senators.²⁶

Pompey did not learn his lesson from this embarrassment, continuing an association with elephants for the rest of his life. In 55 BC Pompey put on several days' worth of extravagant games as part of a dedication to the Temple of Venus Victrix, in which a battle against a herd of elephants was to provide the centrepiece. Cicero was an eye witness, writing about the games in a letter to his cousin Marius:

The last day was for the elephants. The groundlings showed much astonishment thereat, but no enjoyment. There was even an impulse of compassion, a feeling that the monsters had something human about them.²⁷

Pliny the Elder, drawing on secondary sources a few decades later, writes a rather more vivid description of the spectacle in a chapter of *Natural History* devoted to 'the Combats of Elephants':

Pompey's elephants when they had lost all hope of escape tried to gain the compassion of the crowd by indescribable gestures of entreaty, deploring their fate with a sort of wailing, so much to the distress of the public that they forgot the general and his munificence carefully devised for their honour, and bursting into tears rose in a body and invoked curses on the head of Pompey for which he soon afterwards paid the penalty.²⁸

It's notable that Pliny — and the crowd, allegedly — chose to side with the elephants over Pompey's gladiators. In part this was because Pliny was writing with the benefit of hindsight, buying into — or at least choosing to repeat — the narrative of Pompey as villain. Pompey is shown to be inhumane foreshadowing his grisly end; contrast this with Caesar, who on hearing of Pompey's death, showing his humanity.²⁹

Conversely Seneca, writing in AD 49, saw the human tragedy of the situation. He considered the whole affair absurd; and while Seneca considered all manner of things absurd, it shows that a century later Pompey's embarrassment was still common knowledge.

Does it serve any useful purpose to know that Pompey was the first to exhibit the slaughter of eighteen elephants in the Circus, pitting criminals against them in a mimic battle? He, a leader of the state and one who, according to report, was conspicuous among the leaders of old for the kindness of his heart, thought it a notable kind of

²⁶ Plutarch, *Pompey*, 14.4.

²⁷ Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, 24 (VII.1).

²⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 8.7.20-22.

²⁹ Plutarch, *Pompey*, 80.5.

spectacle to kill human beings after a new fashion. Do they fight to the death? That is not enough! Are they torn to pieces? That is not enough! Let them be crushed by animals of monstrous bulk!³⁰

* * *



³⁰ Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*, XIII.

Figure 11. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Triumph of Marius Curius Dentatus (State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, ГЭ-7475). Image: WikiCommons.

Pompey was not the first Roman to feature elephants in his triumph — Seneca says that was Curius Dentatus in 275 BC, whose triumph formed the subject of a painting by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.³¹ Nor was his the grandest display of elephants; Livy reports that Lucius Caecilius Metellus paraded 120 elephants captured after the Carthaginian defeat at Panormus beneath the walls of Rome in his triumph of 251 BC.³² Ever after, the symbol of the Metelli family had been an elephant.³³ It was no coincidence that, two centuries later, the Metelli were closely allied with Pompey. Pompey had twice married Metelli brides and had previously raised a private army to fight in Spain alongside Metellus Pius.³⁴

In 48 BC, the Metelli were the most powerful family in Rome with a long tradition of civic office; they were remarkable for having held the consulship some twenty-six times in the family's history.³⁵ Foremost amongst them was Metellus Scipio, consul in 56 BC and Pompey's father-in-law. Born into the Scipio family — themselves raised up through Scipio Africanus' defeat of Hannibal in 202 BC and then Scipio Aemilianus' destruction of Carthage in 149 BC — Metellus Scipio was subsequently adopted into the Metelli family. Unlike his forebears in either his adoptive or birth family, he was neither a noble general nor a respected statesman but was instead famed for the quality of the pornographic stage shows he arranged. He was personally despicable and politically reactionary. So loathed was he by Caesar that he made him the butt of his only recorded joke:³⁶

At this period Scipio had incurred some losses near the Amanus range and given himself the title *imperator*.³⁷

While he may not have lived up to the reputation of his ancestry, he still made full use of his

³¹ Seneca, *De Brevitate Vitae*, 13; Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. *Triumph of Marius Curius Dentatus*. 1725. ГЭ-7475, State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.

³² Livy, 19.

³³ Nousek, 'Turning Points in Roman History', p. 299.

³⁴ Nousek, 'Turning Points in Roman History', p. 299.

³⁵ T.R.S Broughton. *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*. Vol. 2. (New York: American Philological Association, 1952).

³⁶ John H. Collins. 'Caesar and the Corruption of Power'. *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 4/4 (1955): 445-65 (457, note 64).

³⁷ Caesar, *Civil War*, 3.31.3; at the risk of having to explain the joke, a general would normally be saluted as *Imperator* by his soldiers after a victory, not a defeat.

families' symbolism, minting coins bearing his name and title — SCIPIO IMP[ERATOR] — framing the image of an elephant.³⁸



Figure 12. *Q. Metellus Scipio Elephant Denarius* (British Museum, 2002,0102.4552).

* * *



Map 1. *Numidia c. 46 BC*. Image: WikiWand.

Caesar's third enemy was a far more obvious target to portray on his coinage: Juba I, King of Numidia, close friend of Pompey's, long-term antagonist of Caesar and, perhaps most importantly, not a Roman.

Juba I had been Rome's key ally in North Africa, the kingdom of Numidia

³⁸ *Q. Metellus Scipio Elephant Denarius*. 2002,0102.4552, British Museum.

bordering the Roman province of Africa Proconsularis to the south and the west. Both kingdom and province had arisen after the Third Punic War in 146 BC, comprising territory once Carthaginian; the Romans claimed the lands around Carthage (modern-day Tunisia), governing from the city of Utica, while the Numidian king Massinissa added the remainder to his own kingdom, building a new capital at Cirta. Unlike Africa Proconsularis's eastern neighbour, Ptolemy XIII of Egypt — engaged in an internecine struggle against his older sister and wife, Cleopatra — Juba I was reliable, loyal and, perhaps most importantly, in control of his 'vast domains'.³⁹ While exaggerated for effect, Lucan's description of Numidia offers a flavour of the complex make-up of Juba I's kingdom:

No warlord's realm was more extensive. At its widest, his kingdom stretched west to Atlas, neighbor of Gades, and east to Ammon, gateway to the Syrtes. The vast tract of his hot domain ranges inland from the ocean to the scorching torrid zone. His regions teem with peoples, countless follow his camp: Autolols, nomad Numidians and Gaetuli always ready on unsaddled stallions; Moors, the color of Indians; Nasamones, a poor tribe; swift Marmarides mixed with dark Garamantes; the Mazax, who can twist a quivering missile to match in speed the arrows of the Medes; Massylian tribes who rest on bareback steeds that have never known reins, a simple crop will turn them and African hunters who wander with flimsy tents; they do not rely at all on iron weapons, but with flowing robes ambush irate lions.⁴⁰

Like Pompey and Scipio Metellus, Juba I, too, featured elephants on his coins; indeed, for an African king, it would have been stranger had he not.⁴¹ Unlike Pompey and Scipio, he employed them in his armies too, having a ready source at hand from the forests of neighbouring Mauretania.⁴²

Juba I owed his position to the support of the Roman Senate, but was personally loyal to Pompey, whose defeat of the usurper Hiarbas in 81 BC had restored his father Hiempsal to the throne.⁴³

³⁹ Lucan, 10.602.

⁴⁰ Lucan, 4.699-720.

⁴¹ See, for example, *Coin of Juba I and Elephant*. G.350, British Museum.

⁴² Pliny, *NH*, 8.1.2, 8.11.32.

⁴³ Caesar, *Civil Wars*, 2.25; Dio, 41.41.3.

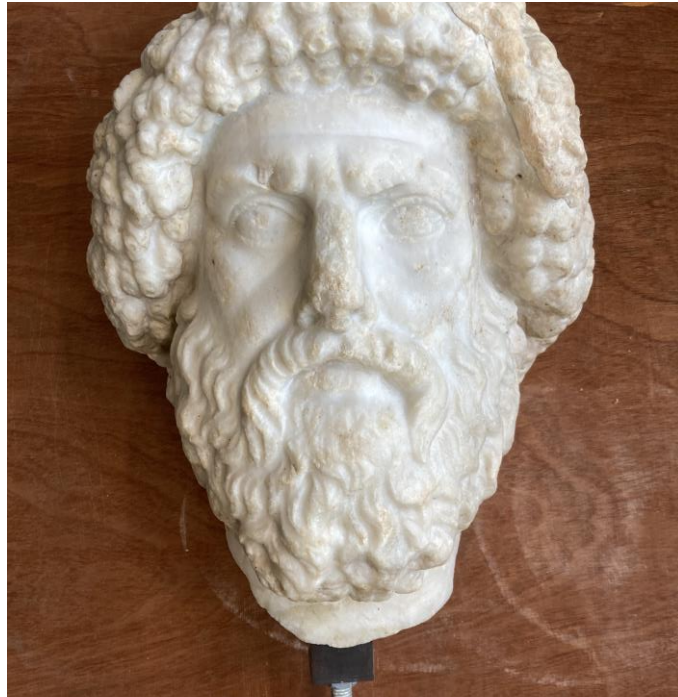


Figure 13. Marble bust of Juba I (The Louvre, MA 1885). Photograph: author's own.

Juba I first visited Rome in 63 BC, sent by his father to bribe senators to oppose any Roman foreign policy that might disfavour Numidia.⁴⁴ Juba's bushy beard and long hair — so clearly seen in both the coinage he minted once king, and the statue later erected by his son in his Caesarea and now in the Louvre — made him a distinctive presence at court.⁴⁵ Juba's fashions were so out of keeping with those of the clean-cut Roman elite that they often became the butt of their jokes; the Latinised form of his name, *iuba*, also means mane.⁴⁶ Cicero, always first with a witty remark, commented in one of his speeches:

For I see fluttering before those men's eyes the king's son, Juba, a youth whose full purse attracts not less than his flowing locks.⁴⁷

It was on one such trip to the Senate in 63 BC that he almost came to blows with a young Julius Caesar, who 'caught the king's son Juba by the beard'⁴⁸ while vigorously arguing the case for a rival North African, a young man named Masintha, whom Hiempsal had accused of some crime or another. The two were separated and Caesar lost his case,

⁴⁴ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 62.

⁴⁵ *Bust of Juba I*. MA 1885, Louvre; Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 68 note 25.

⁴⁶ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 68 note 25.

⁴⁷ Cicero, *De Lege Agraria*, 2.59.

⁴⁸ Suetonius, *The Life of Julius Caesar*, 71.

spiriting Masintha out of the clutches of Numidia to Spain. Juba I did not forget the slight, and when the Civil War broke out it was widely known that he had ‘a personal score to settle’.⁴⁹

Caesar, too, had not forgotten his old antagonist, declaring Juba I an enemy of the state. Instead, he formally recognised the brothers Bocchus and Bogudes — who each ruled one half of Mauretania, and challenged Juba I’s claim to the throne of Numidia — as the rightful kings.⁵⁰ Insult was piled upon insult, as Caesar’s choice of commander to lead the expedition to Africa in 49 BC a further provocation. C. Scribonius Curio, while serving as tribune the previous year, had suggested that the Senate confiscate Juba’s lands.⁵¹ He had eventually withdrawn the motion, but Juba I continued to bear a grudge against Curio.⁵² The war would be ‘the fruit of his salvaged scepter’⁵³ That fruit would soon be ripe for the picking.

Curio sailed from Sicily, landing along with his two legions near the ruins of Carthage. Putting a large Numidian cavalry force to flight, he then besieged Utica, where Juba I’s ally, the Roman governor of Africa Proconsularis P. Attius Varus, was held up.⁵⁴ Juba I, hearing of this, did not wait for Curio to invade Numidia, but marched to meet him in battle.⁵⁵

According to Lucan, Juba I employed ‘Libyan fraud and Punic tactics [...] poisoned with guile’ to defeat Curio, afraid that he would retreat out to sea if he knew of his approach.⁵⁶ He spread a rumour before him that he had turned back at the River Bagradas with the bulk of his forces to return home, having heard that Numidia had been invaded by his enemies, leaving his right-hand man in charge. In truth, Juba I withdrew but a short distance, hiding his army in a dried-up riverbed. Curio, neglecting to check the substance of the story, led his army down from the hills where they had been camped and on to the open plains. There they proved easy prey for Juba’s army.⁵⁷

Although the ancient authors do not make mention of it, the tactics initially employed by Curio — refusing to give battle on the open plains, holding the high ground — were exactly those historically employed by the Romans when facing elephants in battle.⁵⁸ Perhaps part of Juba’s ruse was to lure Curio into a position where his greatest strength — the

⁴⁹ Lucan, 4.721.

⁵⁰ Pliny. *NH*, 5.1.19; Dio, 41.41-2.

⁵¹ Caesar, *Civil War*, 2.25.

⁵² Dio, 41.41-2.

⁵³ Lucan, 4.728.

⁵⁴ Caesar, *Civil War*, 2.25; Lucan, 4.615; Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.44.

⁵⁵ Dio, 41.41.4.

⁵⁶ Lucan, 7.74; Dio, 41.41.4.

⁵⁷ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.45.

⁵⁸ H. H. Scullard. *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 106.

sixty elephants he had with him — could be unleashed.⁵⁹

It is thanks to the historian Gaius Asinius Pollio that we know what we do of the battle. Pollio, one of Curio's commanders, was one of the few survivors of the battle, having withdrawn with his horsemen to guard against an attack in the rear.⁶⁰ Although now lost to us, his first-hand account was used by writers including Plutarch and Appian, who recorded that:

Curio despised the danger and very imprudently led his enfeebled army down to the plain, where he was surrounded by the Numidian horse. Here for some time he sustained the attack by retiring slowly and drawing his men together into a small space, but being much distressed he retreated again into the hills [...] Curio perished fighting bravely, together with all his men, not one returning to Utica to join Pollio.⁶¹

Caesar received word of the defeat from Pollio personally, offering something of a posthumous rebuke to Curio, who he previously thought to be impetuous and vainglorious:

Curio declares that he will never present himself again before the eyes of Caesar after losing the army that he has received from him on trust, and so dies fighting. Very few horsemen come safe out of the battle, but those who, as was explained, halted in the extreme rear for the purpose of refreshing their horses, observing from a distance the flight of the whole army, retreat to the camp unhurt. The foot-soldiers are slain to a man.⁶²

In Lucan, too, we can see the same details of Curio's defeat repeated, although by the time he was writing in the second half of the first century AD the myth-making of the Civil War was in full swing:

So a mighty army was squeezed to a small circle, and if any man, afraid, tried to hide in the middle, he barely got through unpunished by comrades' sword. The ring compressed as front ranks took steps back, tightening their own noose. There is no space left to swing a sword. Crowding bodies grind; as armored chests collide their armor breaks. The victorious Moor could not enjoy the full spectacle that Fortune granted. He missed the rivers of gore, limbs falling, bodies ground into the earth — crowded corpses, propping each other up. Fortune, wake the spiteful ghosts of fallen Carthage for these grim new sacrifices! May they appease cruel Hannibal and the Punic shades! Gods above, what a sin to make Libyan soil the site of a Roman ruin,

⁵⁹ Caesar, *Civil War*, 2.40.

⁶⁰ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.45.

⁶¹ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.45.

⁶² Caesar, *Civil War*, 2.42.

for Pompey, to serve the Senate's will. Instead, let Africa conquer us for herself.⁶³

But, in victory, perhaps Juba I went too far. Appian reported that Juba gave in to a savage bloodthirst, taking his revenge in a most barbaric manner. He says that Curio's 'head was cut off and carried to Juba'⁶⁴ and that, after the remainder of Curio's forces — still camped at Utica — surrendered to Varus, Juba 'put them all to the sword'.⁶⁵ This played into the barbarian-king trope that Roman writers had deployed before against their foreign foes, especially Juba's ancestor Jugurtha.⁶⁶

Caesar, too, took the same line, commenting that Juba declared his captors 'his booty [and] ordered a great part of them to be slain'.⁶⁷ It suited Caesar more than most to play up the savage butchery of Juba I, painting him not as a civilised ally but a malign foe. Stories of Romans savagely killing Romans did not go down well back home. But Romans being butchered by *foreign* savages — now that was something everybody could rally against.

This was a problem that Caesar understood all too well. Caesar was a shrewd propagandist — his own writings display a canny ability to propagate his own version of events first — and he took great care over the construction of both his image and story. Amongst the greatest propaganda tools he had at his disposal was minting his own coins. Coins could be quickly produced to reflect the latest messaging and, through monetary exchange, spread rapidly by themselves. But, in order to be effective, that message had to be readily understandable or the meaning become lost. Nuanced meaning or obscure allusion represented wasted effort.

Curio's expedition to Africa not only offered Caesar a clear message — 'I will trample on the heads of my enemies' — but also a clear target. Pompey and Metellus Scipio were too Roman, too iconic of the Republic and, to the everyday citizen viewing the coin, their connection with the elephant was too obscure. There was no danger of Juba I being mistaken for a Roman, however, no matter how civilised and Hellenised a king he might really be. And even to a citizen unfamiliar with Juba, the symbols of a snake and an elephant would instantly bring the foreign lands of Africa to mind.⁶⁸

For those with the wit to see it, a further layer of clever wordplay was encoded

⁶³ Lucan, 817-833.

⁶⁴ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.46.

⁶⁵ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.46.

⁶⁶ Appian, *Numidian War*, 8.2.4; Sallust, *The War with Jugurtha* 12. See Chapter 2.

⁶⁷ Caesar, *Civil War*, 2.44.

⁶⁸ Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 79; Livy, 8.3.24; Mela 1.21; Maritz and Martiz, 'The Classical Image of Africa', p. 87.

into the design, hiding the true meaning of the coin in plain sight.⁶⁹ According to a legend commonly known in Rome, the name Caesar derived from the Punic word for elephant, *caesai*, commemorating an ancestor single-handedly slaying such a beast.⁷⁰ Similarly, just as Cicero had punned on the word *iuba* — the Latinised version of Juba — to mean mane, it could also mean crested, as Virgil demonstrated in the *Aeneid* when he referred to snakes ‘with crests, blood-red, overtop the waves’.⁷¹ And there on the coin, clearly visible atop the snake’s head is a crest: the *iuba* about to be trampled by the *caesai*. By minting cleverly coded coins to commemorate Curio’s invasion of Africa, Caesar deftly deflected the target of his attack from Pompey and Scipio to Juba I. It would not be long before he would do so again...

* * *

After Juba’s victory over Curio, he was escorted into Utica by an honour guard of senators. There, he sent word of his victory to Pompey, by then camped in Macedonia with the rest of the Senate. Africa Proconsularis and Numidia secure, Juba I then rounded up his army and marched home to his capital, Zama. In 48 BC, word was received from Macedonia that the Senate had officially recognised him as King of Numidia: by no means a given, even for as close an ally as Juba I.⁷² A few months after, one of Juba I’s wives gave birth to a boy, Prince of Numidia and heir to the throne: Juba II.

This was the pinnacle of Juba I’s career — he had exacted his vengeance upon his most-hated foe and had his legitimacy recognised by the Roman Senate. More importantly, his dynasty was secure with the birth of a male heir. And perhaps, had Pompey not been defeated at Pharsalus in Greece in 48 BC, that would have been the case — but instead it was Caesar who was triumphant. Pompey’s generals fled from Caesar south across the Mediterranean, Metellus Scipio and Cato the Younger joining Juba I in North Africa. Pompey turned to Ptolemy XIII of Egypt for aid but, a little way off the coast of Alexandria, he was betrayed and beheaded on Ptolemy’s orders. Pompey’s grisly remains were sent to

⁶⁹ David Woods. ‘Caesar the Elephant against Juba the Snake’. *The Numismatic Chronicle* (1966-) 169 (2009): 189-92 (191).

⁷⁰ Nousek, ‘Turning Points in Roman History’, pp. 296-7. See Servius 1.286; Aelius 2.3-5 and others for this legend.

⁷¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.203-8; Woods, ‘Caesar the Elephant against Juba the Snake’, pp. 190-1.

⁷² Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 24.

Caesar to curry his favour; upon receiving them Caesar supposedly wept.⁷³

It was over a year later that Caesar landed in Africa Proconsularis, ensnared as he had become in the politics of Ptolemaic Egypt, eventually deciding the civil war there in favour of Cleopatra. Amongst Caesar's invading forces was an unnamed Roman officer, who went on to author an anonymous, first-hand account called *The African Wars*. While undoubtedly biased in parts against Caesar's foes, the detail it provides us with is unparalleled — a rare example of an eye-witness account surviving in its entirety. By the time he arrived in North Africa at the end of December 47 BC, Juba I and his Roman allies had firmly entrenched along the coast, building watchtowers and fortifications, and amassing a vast army comprising ten Roman legions — some of whom were drawn from Curio's defeated army — four royal legions loyal to Juba, innumerable light infantry, 50,000 horsemen and 120 elephants.⁷⁴

Despite heavily outnumbering Caesar's own forces, shorn of their leader Pompey, Juba I and his allies were anything but unified. Juba had a reputation for 'arrogance and indolence'⁷⁵, at one point supposedly clashing with Scipio over his purple cloak — a colour that Juba I felt should only be worn by royalty such as he.⁷⁶ Juba's army, too, was a union of disparate tribesmen and competing factions that proved especially susceptible to defection or treachery — actions that Juba I punished by crucifixion.⁷⁷ Amongst those factions he had to contend with were the Gaetulians, nomadic horsemen from the south — who would later prove to be a thorn in Juba II's side — who Caesar induced to revolt, forcing Juba I to send a portion of his army back to Numidia to defend against them.⁷⁸ Worse still, early in 46 BC the Mauretanian king Bocchus — previously legitimised by Caesar — attacked Massinissa's old capital at Cirta, accompanied by a Roman adventurer named Sittius. Juba I abandoned Scipio, leaving him a fraction of his army — including just thirty untrained elephants — with which to face Caesar.⁷⁹

Caesar eventually brought Juba I to battle near the city of Thapsus, on the north-east coast of what is now modern Tunisia, in April 46 BC. He moved with speed to attack the Numidian camp, catching the defenders by surprise and putting them to rout.⁸⁰ Juba

⁷³ Plutarch, *Pompey*, 80.5.

⁷⁴ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.96; Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 1-2.

⁷⁵ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 57.

⁷⁶ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 57.

⁷⁷ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 66.

⁷⁸ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 55. See Chapter 16 for more about Juba II's conflict with the Gaetulians.

⁷⁹ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.96; Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 25.

⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 53.1-4.

I, along with the Roman general Petreius, fled the battlefield, hiding in farms by day and travelling at night to avoid Caesar's outriders. Eventually they made it to the Numidian capital of Zama. There, Juba I had left his wives and children, including his infant son Juba II, along with all his wealth. But the gates were barred against him and his people would not let him enter, understandably so, for before he marched to battle he had had a pyre built in the town square so that:

should it so chance he was beaten in the war, he might pile all his possessions on it, then massacre all his citizens and fling them also on to it, set it alight, and then finally slay himself on top of it, and thus be consumed by fire along with his children, wives, citizens, and the entire royal treasure.⁸¹

At first Juba threatened the men guarding the gates, then he pleaded with them to let him return to his home. Finally, he begged them to hand over his family, so that he could take them away with him, but the townsfolk mistrusted his intentions and swore to protect them.

Juba I and Petreius withdrew to a nearby villa, where the king instructed his servants to prepare a sumptuous banquet. Then, midway through dinner, he and Petreius drew their swords at the table and fought, scattering their half-consumed meal all around.⁸² Juba was the stronger of the two and ran Petreius through, before attempting to stab himself in the chest. Unable to do so, he handed his sword to a slave and ordered him to kill him.⁸³ Scipio killed himself too, thrusting a sword through his stomach when his fleeing ship was boarded.⁸⁴ The dragon was dead. But within two years, so too was the elephant.

* * *

In September, 46 BC, Caesar held four extravagant triumphs of his own to celebrate victory in the Civil War. It was considered unseemly to celebrate victory over his fellow Romans, so Caesar presented them as triumphs over his enemies' foreign allies: a Gallic Triumph to commemorate his wars in Gaul against Vercingetorix, an Egyptian triumph to celebrate his naval battle against Ptolemy XIII, a Pontic triumph over Pharnaces and an African triumph to celebrate victory over Juba I.⁸⁵ Caesar's African triumph included some of the sixty-four war

⁸¹ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 91.

⁸² Florus, 2.13.69.

⁸³ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 114; Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.100.

⁸⁴ Florus, 2.13.68.

⁸⁵ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.101; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55.1-6.

elephants Caesar had captured from Juba I, each holding a lit torch in their trunk, and scenes from the war displayed on placards: Pompey's general Lucius Scipio, throwing himself into the sea, Cato, tearing his own innards out, and Juba I and Petreius killing one another.⁸⁶ The triumphs also included the customary parade of defeated monarchs and their families, amongst them Cleopatra's older sister Arsinoë who walked in chains and two-year-old Juba II, who was carried in the procession.⁸⁷

The fate of such royal captives after the triumph was typically to be put to death — as was the fate of Vercingetorix — or sent to a life of guarded exile in the Italian or Greek countryside, as was the fate of Arsinoë of Egypt.⁸⁸ Whether it was pity or some larger plan that stayed Caesar's hand, Juba II did not suffer either fate — instead, he remained in Rome, raised at first as part of Caesar's own household. When Julius Caesar was assassinated two years later, Juba II joined Caesar's niece Octavia and her increasingly extended family. He would not be the last foreign royal to do so.

⁸⁶ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.101; Stephen Dando-Collins. *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Roman Legion* (Hachette UK, 2010), p. 64, 207.

⁸⁷ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.101; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55.1-6; Dio, 43.19; A.-C. Harders. 'An Imperial Family Man: Augustus as Surrogate Father to Marcus Antonius' Children'. In *Growing Up Fatherless in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 217-40 (223).

⁸⁸ Dio, 43.19; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 223.

4. The Twins



Figure 14. Bronze statuette of a boy in Eastern Dress from Suez (The Met Fifth Avenue, 49.11.3).

In 1954, a Roman sculptors' workshop was excavated in Baiae, the Roman holiday resort on the Bay of Naples, perfectly preserved in the aftermath of Vesuvius' eruption in AD 79. More significant than the complete statues unearthed — many Greek originals being copied en masse for the Roman elite — was the discovery of four hundred fragmentary plaster casts used in the manufacturing process.¹ Until relatively recently it was thought that Roman

¹ Will Mather. 'Finds from the Fields of Fire: The Other Volcano on the Bay of Naples'. *Australian National Maritime Museum* (blog), 1 August 2017. <https://www.sea.museum/2017/08/01/pompeii-in-context-artefacts-from-the-bay-of-naples>.

sculptors could only make one-of-a-kind bronze statues, the original mould destroyed in the manufacturing process.² Yet, the discovery of these plaster casts revealed that Roman sculptors had mastery of the indirect lost wax method — hitherto thought to be unknown to them — a process in which the master mould is not destroyed, allowing for the production of almost endless identical copies of the same sculpture.³

As so few bronze sculptures have survived from the ancient world at all, only a handful of examples of identical statues cast from the same mould exist.⁴ Two such twins, discovered together east of Suez but separated ever since, are now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.⁵ Although discovered in 1912, it was not until 1995 that the pair were examined together and their identical nature confirmed.⁶

Both depict the same chubby, elaborately dressed child with long, curly hair. He is aged no more than four or five years old, although it is difficult to tell — classical portrayals of children were not realistically proportioned, and the Romans had a tendency to depict them simply as small adults.⁷ The boy is balanced on his toes as though about to step forward, but his bulky outfit makes the movement awkward.⁸ He is dressed for a cold climate, wearing trousers and shoes tied with long bows, a long-sleeved shirt with a short-sleeved tunic over the top belted at the waist, and a thick cloak fastened on the right shoulder; dress that both a Greek and Roman audience would have considered exotic. Most distinctive is his tall, four-sided pyramidal headdress.⁹ The headdress is decorated with stylised palmettes that would have been inlaid with silver.¹⁰ A flap falls down the back of the neck, designed to look

² Roger Ling. *Making Classical Art: Process & Practice* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), p. 41.

³ Ling, *Making Classical Art*, p. 42. See Chapter 1, where this technique is described in conjunction with the head of Mastanabal.

⁴ Ling, *Making Classical Art*, p. 42.

⁵ *Bronze Statuette of a Boy in Eastern Dress*. 49.11.3, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁶ Arthur Beale. 'A Study of the Bronze Statuette in the Walters Art Gallery and its Identical Twin in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995-95'. In *The Fire of Hephaistos: Large Classical Bronzes from North American Collections*, by Carol C. Mattusch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1996), p. 259.

⁷ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250.

⁸ Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

⁹ A. H. Smith. 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume'. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 37 (1917): 135-9 (135-6); Joan R. Mertens. 'Greek Bronzes: In the Metropolitan Museum of Art'. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 43/2 (1985): 1-64 (51); Arielle P. Kozloff and David Gordon Mitten. *The Gods Delight: The Human Figure in Classical Bronze* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 288; Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255; Diana E. E. Kleiner and Bridget Buxton. 'Pledges of Empire: The Ara Pacis and the Donations of Rome'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 112/1 (2008): 57-89 (80).

¹⁰ Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 288; Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

like it was made of a softer material than the rest.¹¹

The surface of the statuette in The Met is covered in a patina of alternating red-browns and greens and scraping damage on the surface has been caused by the mechanical removal of corrosion.¹² The pupils of the eyes are pierced and may have been designed to hold glass inlays, now lost.¹³ The top of the object once held in his right hand has broken away, as has the left end of the sash suspended from the belt. The hat might have had ear flaps that are now missing too.

The bronze statuettes are so alike that they must have been made from the same master model, likely in a sculptor's workshop in Alexandria.¹⁴ The statuette was cast in between eight and eleven separate pieces — body, right and possibly also left arms, objects in hands, perhaps the hands too, the cloak, and probably three separate flaps on the hat — and then heated and attached together in such a way that the joins can no longer be seen.¹⁵



Figure 15. Coin of Arsames I, draped bust with tiara, c240 BC. Photograph: 'What Was The True Shape Of The Ancient Armenian Crown?'

¹¹ Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 136; Dorothy Kent Hill. 'Bracatae Nationes'. *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 7/8 (1944): 74-81 (80-1).

¹² Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 293; Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 258.

¹³ Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 293; Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

¹⁴ *Bronze Statuette of a Boy in Eastern Dress*; Ling, *Making Classical Art*, p. 41; Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250.

¹⁵ Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255; Seán Hemingway and Colette Hemingway. 'The Technique of Bronze Statuary in Ancient Greece'. *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, 2003.

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/grbr/hd_grbr.htm.



Figure 16. Roman coin depicting Germanicus crowning Artaxias (Münzkabinett, Berlin, 1891/474).

The clue to the identity of the wearer comes from the hat. The ancient Near East was not short of a distinctive headdress or two, from the tower-like hats of the Assyrians to the Babylonian horned caps and many more besides, each unique to a particular culture or kingdom. In this case, one hat stands out as the clear contender: the royal headdress of the kings of Armenia, as seen not only on their own coins, but also on a later Roman coin depicting Tiberius' adopted son Germanicus crowning King Artaxias of Armenia in the early first century AD.¹⁶

Yet the statue is not of an Armenian king, but of a boy dressed in the Armenian royal costume. So what child would have had the fame — or the famous parents — to be produced en masse in an Alexandrian workshop in the late first century BC?¹⁷ Although the identity is still disputed, variously identified as a Near Eastern deity, the geographical personification of Armenia or just a generic barbarian — there is really only one candidate: Alexander Helios, twin-brother of Cleopatra Selene, son of Mark Antony and Cleopatra.¹⁸ But

¹⁶ Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 136; *PeopleOfAr*. 'What was the True Shape of the Ancient Armenian Crown?', 29 May 2015. <https://www.peopleofar.com/2015/05/29/what-was-the-true-shape-of-the-ancient-armenian-crown>; Anahide Kéfélian. 'Armenia and Armenians in Roman Numismatics'. *Electrum* 28 (2021): 105-34 (106-8).

¹⁷ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250.

¹⁸ For identification as Alexander Helios see Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250; Claude Rolley. 'Kleopatras Kinder'. In *Kleopatra und die Caesaren: eine Ausstellung des Bucerius Kunst Forums, 28. Oktober 2006 bis 4. Februar 2007*, edited by Bernard Andreae and Karin Rhein (München: Hirmer, 2006), p. 167; Carlos A. Picón, Joan R. Mertens, Elizabeth J. Milleker, Christopher S. Lightfoot, and Seán A. Hemingway. *Art of the Classical World in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven, CT: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2007), p. 452; Kéfélian, 'Armenia and Armenians in Roman Numismatics', p. 109. The statue has also been identified as a Near Eastern deity, typically Attis: see Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 135; Hill, 'Bracatae Nationes', p. 81; as well as a geographical personification of

why was he dressed not in Greek or even Egyptian garb, but as the king of Armenia?

* * *

Armenia was an ancient kingdom in the Caucasus that had long stood between East and West. It was contested by both the Romans and their great rivals in the east, the Parthians, strategically placed between the two empires, and its allegiance had vacillated over the centuries. In the mid-first century BC it was allied to Rome, and personally to Mark Antony.¹⁹

After the defeat of Julius Caesar's assassins at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, the Roman world was split between the two victors: Caesar's general and friend Mark Antony took the East, his adopted son and heir Augustus the West. As well as preparing for war with Parthia, Antony was also tasked with the reorganisation of Rome's holdings in the Eastern Mediterranean, which included reaffirming alliances with the various client-kings who ruled the region, including Herod the Great, Archelaus of Cappadocia and Artavasdes of Armenia.²⁰ There were many reasons why Antony was well suited to the role that fell to him in the East: like Julius Caesar before him, he was an adventurous politician not afraid to get involved in regional politics, but he was also vulnerable to temptation by the luxuries the region had to offer — extravagant feasts, limitless wine and gold and a ready willingness to treat a Roman general like a king.²¹ Antony's promiscuity was so well known in Rome that Augustus composed a poem mocking his affair with Glaphyra, mother of Archelaus of Cappadocia:

Glaphyra's fucked by Antony
Fulvia therefore claims a
Balancing fuck from me.²²

Antony set up court at Tarsus, in the south-eastern corner of modern-day Turkey, and prepared to receive the various rulers. Amongst those he summoned was the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra VII. Ostensibly she was there to justify Egyptian support for Antony and Augustus' foes during the Civil War — actually the result of disobedient

Armenia: see Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 290; Picón et al, *Art of the Classical World in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, p. 452; or just a generic barbarian: see Hill, 'Bracatae Nationes', p. 81.

¹⁹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 41.

²⁰ Günther Hölbl. *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 240; Diana Preston. *Cleopatra and Antony* (London: Transworld, 2008), p. 217.

²¹ Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 240.

²² Preston, *Cleopatra and Antony*, p. 217; Fulvia (83-40 BC) was Antony's first wife. By a strange twist of fate, Glaphyra was the grandmother of Juba II's second wife, also called Glaphyra – see Chapter 15.

commanders — but really Antony wanted her there to confirm her support in his war against Parthia.²³ Cleopatra had goals of her own: to foster an unbreakable alliance with Rome, to ensure the survival of her dynasty and then confirm the legitimacy of her son with Julius Caesar.²⁴ Cleopatra arrived at Tarsus in all the splendour she could muster, as described in Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, used by Shakespeare:

Therefore when she was sent vnto by diuers letters, both from Antonius him selfe, and also from his frendes, she made so light of it, and mocked Antonius so much, that she disdained to set forward otherwise, but to take her barge in the riuer of Cydnus, the poepe whereof was of gold, the sailes of purple, and the owers of siluer, which kept stroke in rowing after the sounde of the musicke of flutes, how boyes, citherns, violls, and such other instruments as they played vpon in the barge. And now for the person of her selfe: she was layed vnder a pauillion of cloth of gold of tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddesse Venus, commonly drawen in picture: and hard by her, on either hand of her, pretie faire boyes apparelled as painters doe set forth god Cupide, with litle fannes in their hands, with the which they fanned wind vpon her. Her Ladies and gentlewomen also, the fairest of them were apparelled like the nymphes Nereides (which are the mermaides of the waters) and like the Graces, some steering the helme, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge, out of the which there came a wonderfull passing sweete sauor of perfumes, that perfumed the wharfes side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people.²⁵

Her arrival made an enormous impact, not just on Antony — the two began their affair that first evening — but on our collective imagination, that scene dominating not just Plutarch, but Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Elizabeth Taylor's *Cleopatra*. Antony was 42 years old, Cleopatra just 28.²⁶ When she returned to Alexandria at the end of 41 BC, she was pregnant with his twins.²⁷ Antony followed, and they spent the winter together, feasting and drinking as part of a group they called the Inimitable Livers.²⁸ His interest in public affairs dwindled, save for acquiescing to Cleopatra's requests — having her older sister Arsinoë murdered, for example.²⁹ While many of the stories of this time — made famous by Shakespeare — are the products of Augustus' highly successful propaganda campaign, those

²³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 25.1-4; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 240.

²⁴ Alan Roberts. *Mark Antony His Life and Times* (Upton-upon-Severn: Malvern Publishing, 1988), p. 275; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 240.

²⁵ Thomas North. *The lives of the noble Grecians and Romanes compared together by that graue learned philosopher and historiographer, Plutarke of Chæronea ; translated out of Greeke into French by Iames Amyot ... ; and out of French into Englishe, by Thomas North* (London: Thomas Vautrollier and John Wight, 1579), sig. NNNN5r.

²⁶ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 5.8.1; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 240.

²⁷ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 220 note 14.

²⁸ Plutarch, *Antony*, 28-9.

²⁹ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 5.9.1.

recounted by the Greek biographer Plutarch at least are from an unusually close source: his grandfather was a physician who, while studying in Alexandria, had befriended one of the royal cooks and bore witness to the sumptuousness of one of Antony and Cleopatra's feasts.³⁰

The following year — apparently abandoning Cleopatra — Antony returned to Brundisium, the port-city on the heel of Italy and in September 40 BC signed a new treaty with Augustus.³¹ To reaffirm their alliance, Antony agreed to marry Augustus' recently widowed sister Octavia. They lived together, in Rome and then in Athens, and at first their marriage was as successful as Antony's alliance with Augustus. The family was what we might now call 'blended', comprising not only the two children Octavia bore Antony, both named Antonia after their father, but also the three sons Antony had from his late wife Fulvia and the three children Octavia had from her late husband, not to mention Juba II, the young prince of Numidia whom her uncle had left in her care, now eight years old. Cleopatra and her newborn twins — also named Cleopatra, meaning 'beloved of the father', and Alexander — were forgotten by Antony, although probably not by Octavia.³²

In the spring of 37 BC the family returned home to Rome as Antony's relationship with Augustus began to deteriorate. Octavia successfully brokered a new alliance between the two, the Treaty of Tarentum, which renewed their agreement for five more years. Once again, this alliance was accompanied by another engagement, this time between Antyllus, Antony's teenage son, and Augustus' only child Julia. The deal then done, Antony returned to the East finally to embark on his war with Parthia, leaving his family behind. Octavia and her children would not see him again.³³

Antony reached Antioch (modern-day Antakya, Turkey) in the autumn, close to the border with Armenia and Parthia, where he intended to overwinter before launching his campaign the following spring. Cleopatra joined him, bringing the twins — then aged three — to meet their father for the first time. Antony gave them cosmic epithets: the Moon, Selene, and the Sun, Helios, both popular deities worshipped throughout the Near East. More significantly, he formally acknowledged them as his own, possibly granting them Roman citizenship too.³⁴ He also had coins struck with his portrait on the front, Cleopatra's on the

³⁰ Plutarch, *Antony*, 29.2.

³¹ Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 241.

³² Celia E. Schultz, *Fulvia: Playing for Power at the End of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 105.

³³ Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 241; Schultz, *Fulvia*, pp. 105-6.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, 36.5; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 242; Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 105.

reverse.³⁵ Word of this reached Rome, humiliating Octavia, but Augustus sensed an opportunity: he began to lay the groundwork for the story that Antony had fallen under the sway of a foreign temptress.³⁶

Antony used the winter spent with Cleopatra to begin his reorganisation of the Roman Near East. He consolidated the number of Roman provinces, granted various client-kingdoms to new rulers — including Judaea to Herod — and restored considerable territories to Egypt: Chalkis in Lebanon, rich balsam and date groves near Jericho along with the Red Sea coast of the Nabataean kingdom, estates on Crete and the city of Cyrene in Libya.³⁷ While this was part of a careful, deliberate administrative policy that won Antony powerful allies in the region, that was not how it was seen back home. Dio wrote that Antony was ‘not so severely criticised’ by the citizens of Rome for appointing new client-kings, but was ‘greatly censured’ for giving such gifts to Cleopatra.³⁸

Cleopatra — now pregnant with a third child by Antony, Ptolemy Philadelphus — and the young twins eventually returned to Alexandria. Antony finally began the long-delayed invasion of Parthia.³⁹ Despite the campaign being years in the making, it ended in disaster and the deaths of 20,000 Romans.⁴⁰ Afterwards, Octavia sailed to meet Antony in Athens, bringing him aid and reinforcements including two thousand elite soldiers that she had paid for herself.⁴¹ From Antony’s point of view, the whole thing was a trap set by Augustus: if he accepted Octavia’s help, it was a sign of submission. If he refused it, it would be an unforgivable insult. Instead of sailing to meet his wife in Athens, Antony instead went to Syria to take counsel with Cleopatra.⁴² According to Roman writers Cleopatra acted the wounded woman and forced Antony to choose between her and Octavia, once and for all. Antony chose Cleopatra, sending Octavia home — but he told her to leave her reinforcements for him all the same.⁴³

³⁵ Plutarch, *Antony*, 36.2; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 242.

³⁶ Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 105.

³⁷ Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 242; ‘The Coins of Julius Caesar – Cleopatra and Egypt’, *Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies*. 2014.
http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/acans/caesar/CivilWars_Cleopatra.htm.

³⁸ Dio, 49.32.4; Eleanor Goltz Huzar. *Mark Antony: A Biography* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 198-9; Pascal Arnaud. ‘Alexandre-Helios et Cleopatre-Selene. Origine et Posterite Romaines Dun Couple Cosmique’. In *Marc Antoine: Son Idéologie et Sa Descendance: Actes Du Colloque Organisé à Lyon Le Jeudi 28 Juin 1990* (Paris: Société des amis de Jacob Spon, 1993), p. 140; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 242.

³⁹ Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 105.

⁴⁰ Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 105.

⁴¹ Dio, 49.33.3.

⁴² Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 105.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 37-52; Dio, 49.24-31; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 243.



Figure 17. Mark Antony 'Armenia Devicta' silver coin (British Museum, 1860,0328.21).

Antony pinned the blame for his defeat on his former ally, King Artavasdes of Armenia, who fled the battlefield along with his army at a key moment. In 34 BC he set out to exact revenge.⁴⁴ Finally, he had his victory in the East, conquering Armenia and turning it into a Roman province, and making peace with the kingdom of Media beyond. The Eastern frontier was settled at last, the threat from Parthia neutralised for now.⁴⁵ Antony minted a silver coin to celebrate, not just commemorating his victory, but also to proclaim his relationship with Cleopatra. The coin shows his portrait on the obverse — with the distinctive Armenian pyramidal crown just visible to his left — alongside the legend *ARMENIA DEVICTA*: 'Armenia conquered'. Cleopatra's portrait appears on the reverse, with what would prove to be a far more controversial legend: 'Cleopatra, Queen of Kings and of her Sons who are Kings'.⁴⁶

That autumn, a great festival was held in Alexandria to celebrate Antony's conquest of Armenia.⁴⁷ The climax was a procession through the streets of Alexandria, led by Antony dressed not as a triumphant Roman general but as the Greek god Dionysus in calf-length leather boots and golden robes, head wreathed in ivy and riding in a chariot pulled by four white horses. Behind him marched Artavasdes, his wife and children, shackled with gold and silver chains, followed by Armenian prisoners of war and wagons displaying captured treasure. Envoys from Rome's client-kingdoms marched alongside too, carrying golden

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, 39.1.

⁴⁵ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 278.

⁴⁶ Maria Wyke. 'Meretrix Regina: Augustan Cleopatras'. In *Augustus*, edited by J. C. Edmondson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009): 334-80 (351); 'The Coins of Julius Caesar – Cleopatra and Egypt'.

⁴⁷ Hermann Bengtson. *Marcus Antonius, Triumvir Und Herrscher Des Orients* (München: Beck, 2013), p. 216.

crowns to present to Antony, followed by battle-hardened Roman legionaries bearing shields decorated with the letter 'C' in honour of Cleopatra and auxiliary soldiers from all corners of the empire. Everywhere, symbols of Roman power and Egyptian extravagance were on display.⁴⁸

The parade started at the palace, perhaps waved off by Antony and Cleopatra's children, winding around the edge of the Great Harbour before entering the city by the Gate of the Moon. There it proceeded up the Street of the Soma, a tree-lined avenue thirty metres wide, past the mausoleum where Alexander the Great's body lay in a crystal coffin, before turning onto the colonnaded Canopic Way. This was the main axis of the city that took the triumph past the Great Library and the Paneium, an artificial hill built in the shape of a pine cone that was packed with onlookers, before passing the huge Gymnasium, home to Alexandria's university.⁴⁹

The procession ended at the foot of the Temple of Sarapis, where Antony dismounted to lead the Armenian king inside. The floors of the temple were marble, the walls hung with gold, silver and bronze, and the building surmounted by a huge, gilded dome. At the east end of the temple stood a huge gold and ivory statue of Sarapis, a sceptre raised in his left hand, his right resting on a statue of Cerberus.⁵⁰ Antony paused to make sacrifice, officiated by the Egyptian high-priest, the teenage Petubastes IV, before turning to Cleopatra, seated on a throne of gold.⁵¹ There, presented to the Queen, Artavasdes refused to bow down to her, refused even to address her by her title, and was beaten and imprisoned for his defiance. He would later lose his head.⁵²

This Roman-style spectacle was followed a few days later by an even more extravagant celebration in the Gymnasium, which has come to be known as the Donations of Alexandria. This great, colonnaded hall held a vast number of Alexandrians, all packed in to watch the proceedings. At one end, on a raised, silver-plated platform, sat Antony and Cleopatra on golden thrones.⁵³ Cleopatra wore robes sacred to Isis: a white linen dress, golden rattle in her hand and the royal cobra on her forehead. Antony was dressed in the full panoply

⁴⁸ Bengtson, *Marcus Antonius*, p. 217.

⁴⁹ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 274-5.

⁵⁰ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 275.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, 50; Dio, 49.40; Velleius Paterculus, 82.4; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 243.

⁵² Dio, 49.40.4, 51.5.5; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 274.

⁵³ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 275; Paul M. Martin. *Antoine et Cléopâtre: la fin d'un rêve* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1990), p. 180; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 243; Bengtson, *Marcus Antonius*, p. 217.

of a Roman general.⁵⁴ Beneath them, on child-sized silver thrones of their own, sat Cleopatra's four children. Caesarion, her son by Julius Caesar, not yet fourteen but already designated co-ruler of Egypt; sitting next to him were her three children by Antony: the twins, Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, aged six or seven, and little Ptolemy Philadelphus, a toddler of just two.⁵⁵ All four were dressed in the clothes of Egypt's domains, the reason for which would soon become apparent: Caesarion in pharaonic garb; Alexander Helios in the costume of Armenia — very much like the bronze statuette in The Met — a heavy, embroidered robe and high pyramidal tiara complete with peacock feathers; and Ptolemy Philadelphus, darling of the crowd dressed as a tiny Macedonian king, complete with diademed beret and purple chlamys.⁵⁶ What Cleopatra Selene wore is unrecorded, but she was undoubtedly costumed in the manner of her brothers.⁵⁷

Antony stood up and addressed the crowd in Greek, announcing that the ceremony was to pay tribute to the deified Julius Caesar.⁵⁸ He then went on to make a series of shock announcements: Cleopatra was pronounced 'Queen of Kings' and her children 'King of Kings,' acknowledging their pre-eminence not only over the various fiefdoms of the Eastern Mediterranean, but also over Rome's holdings too.⁵⁹ He then divided up the Near East among the children: Alexander Helios became King of Armenia, overlord of Media and all the (as-yet-unconquered) lands east of the Euphrates, including Parthia, as far as India. He was also betrothed to the King of Media's daughter, Iotape.⁶⁰ His twin sister, Cleopatra Selene, was granted the kingdom of Libya and the city of Cyrene — once ruled by her great-grandfather Ptolemy Apion — as well as the island of Crete.⁶¹ Ptolemy Philadelphus received Phoenicia, northern Syria and Cilicia, and was to become overlord of all the kings and princes of Asia Minor from the Bosphorus to the Euphrates.⁶² Antony saved the biggest surprise till last, formally recognising Caesarion as being Caesar's legitimate son — laying down a deliberate challenge to Augustus, whose own authority came from being Caesar's adopted heir.⁶³ After Antony finished, the children stood up and hugged their parents and received

⁵⁴ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 275; Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 182.

⁵⁵ Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 180.

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Antony*, 54.4-5; Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 183; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 276.

⁵⁷ Preston, *Cleopatra and Antony*, p. 275.

⁵⁸ Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 180-1; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 276.

⁵⁹ Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 183; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, p. 244; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 220.

⁶⁰ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 198; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 280; Preston, *Cleopatra and Antony*, p. 275.

⁶¹ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 199; Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 183; Preston, *Cleopatra and Antony*, p. 275.

⁶² Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 199; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 276; Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, p. 183.

⁶³ Martin, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, pp. 180-1.

bodyguards from their new domains.⁶⁴

The bronze statuette in the Met depicts Alexander Helios as he must have been at this moment, self-confidently waving at the crowd, dressed in the elaborate costume and distinctive headdress of his new domain.⁶⁵ The statuettes were likely produced alongside similar statues of Alexander's siblings, either to commemorate the Donations or even to form part of the proceedings, perhaps to be carried in a parade or sent to the children's new holdings.⁶⁶

If Augustus ever saw the statuette, he would have been aghast.⁶⁷ He was sufficiently horrified that, when news of the Donations reached him in Dalmatia where he was convalescing from a wound, he immediately returned home.⁶⁸

As far as Roman law was concerned, the Donations were entirely legal; before he had even set off for the East, the Senate had voted to ratify all of Antony's policies in advance.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Antony wrote to them immediately after the ceremony to tell them what he had done.⁷⁰ Not that he was doing anything particularly unusual: Roman generals in the East had been making and unmaking client-kings for a century, and in handing territory to Ptolemaic Egypt he was merely bolstering a trustworthy ally in the face of a hostile Persia.⁷¹ This was not how it was viewed back home. When Antony's letter arrived in Rome, his allies were so concerned about how it would be perceived that they refused to read it aloud in the Senate. Augustus, too, blocked any news about Antony's Armenian victory from being made public.⁷² Political tensions grew between Antony in the East and Augustus in the West, a cold war developing between the two camps.⁷³

Antony's main problem was his position, far from Rome. Communications between Italy and Egypt dried up — even Octavia, ever-loyal, stopped writing to him — and Antony became increasingly entrenched in the East.⁷⁴ Augustus, based in Rome, could control the narrative. Augustus' problem, however, was that Mark Antony remained stubbornly

⁶⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, 54.6; Bengtson, *Marcus Antonius*, p. 218.

⁶⁵ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250; Rolley, 'Kleopatras Kinder', p. 167; Picón et al., *Art of the Classical World*, p. 452.

⁶⁶ Kleiner and Buxton, 'Pledges of Empire', p. 80.

⁶⁷ Diana E. E. Kleiner. *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 110.

⁶⁸ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 276.

⁶⁹ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 220 note 12.

⁷⁰ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 200.

⁷¹ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 199.

⁷² Dio, *Roman History*, 49.41.4-5; Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 200; Wyke, 'Augustan Cleopatras', p. 66.

⁷³ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 69; Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, 55; Dio 50.1.

⁷⁴ Bengtson, *Marcus Antonius*, p. 217.

popular. Antony was respected by the whole army, and thousands of veterans who had fought under him remained loyal even though they had received settlements of land from Augustus.⁷⁵ He was also preferred to Augustus by Rome's upper classes, who viewed him as more Republican.⁷⁶ Moreover, the people of Rome were tired of war, especially civil war.⁷⁷

To circumvent this, Augustus pivoted to attack Cleopatra's Egypt rather than Mark Antony directly, stoking up Roman xenophobia. The negligible threat Egypt posed to Rome was played up, and Antony was reduced to the role of love-stricken fool, a tool for Cleopatra to gain land and power.⁷⁸ Both the Donations of Alexander and Antony and Cleopatra's children were at the heart of this propaganda campaign. In a speech to the Senate, Augustus rebuked Antony for his relationship with Cleopatra, accusing him of giving away Roman territory to foreign rulers and blaspheming the gods by holding a triumph.⁷⁹ Augustus' writers were quick to join in, describing Cleopatra's grasping hands.⁸⁰

Antony was stung not just by Augustus' personal attacks but also his hypocrisy, for Augustus was certainly no faithful husband to Livia. Antony wrote a personal letter to him, perhaps seeking to defuse tensions:⁸¹

‘Why this sudden change? Because I lay the Queen? She's [not] my wife [...] do you only lay [Livia]? Good riddance to you if by the time you read this you haven't laid Terulla and Terentilla, Rufillia, Salvia Titisensia and the lot of them. What does it matter where and how you get your rise?’⁸²

The propaganda war showed no signs of calming down. Augustus paid extra attention to Antony and Cleopatra's children in his efforts. Antony naming his twins after Eastern divinities was presented as an example of his Hellenistic megalomania and their inclusion in his triumph as evidence of his delusions.⁸³ The children were presented as exotic, alien, decidedly un-Roman. The claims that Caesarion was legitimate — claims that posed a particular threat to Augustus' own legitimacy as Caesar's heir — ridiculed.⁸⁴ The descriptions of the children from the Donations of Alexandria only helped drive this message home. They

⁷⁵ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 202; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 278.

⁷⁶ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 201.

⁷⁷ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 277.

⁷⁸ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 278; Harders, ‘An Imperial Family Man’, p. 219.

⁷⁹ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 278.

⁸⁰ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 358.

⁸¹ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 279.

⁸² Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 279.

⁸³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 36; Dio, 50.25-4, 51.21.8; Harders, ‘An Imperial Family Man’, p. 219, 222.

⁸⁴ Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 278; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, pp. 244-5.

were presented as an external threat along with their mother, cast as antagonists to Octavia's daughters by Antony, Antonia Maior and Minor.⁸⁵ Augustus' own nephews, nieces and stepsons were presented in stark contrast, depicted as part of the ideal Roman family. He had to do this, of course, because the truth was rather more inconvenient: via Antony's marriage to Octavia, all of the children were related to one another in some fashion.⁸⁶

In the summer of 32 BC Antony made a fatal miscalculation: he divorced Octavia. Throughout this entire episode, Octavia had remained steadfastly loyal to Antony. Even when he was with Cleopatra, she stood by him and attempted to restrain her brother from acting in her defence. Antony's divorce was the final indignity, the humiliation that turned the last of Antony's supporters in Rome against him. Even those gathered around him in Alexandria were dismayed on Octavia's behalf.⁸⁷ Two such senators revealed to Augustus the existence of Antony's will, held in trust by the Vestal Virgins in Rome. Acting entirely illegally, Augustus had it seized, opened it and read it — or at least selected passages from it — to the Senate. According to Augustus, the will once again acknowledged Caesarion as Caesar's son, reaffirmed the Donations of Alexandria and gave instructions that Antony's body was to be buried not in Rome but in Alexandria next to Cleopatra. Worse still, Antony's property was to be given to Cleopatra and her children — foreigners, in Augustus' eyes — disenfranchising his children by Octavia.⁸⁸ The Roman public were appalled.

Later that year, Augustus judged public sentiments and fears sufficiently roused against Cleopatra to declare war on Egypt.⁸⁹ The following autumn, his navy defeated Antony and Cleopatra's at Actium. The year after that, both of them lay dead; Egypt and the twins fell into Augustus' hands. The next triumph Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios would participate in was Augustus' own, as prisoners of Rome.

⁸⁵ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 221.

⁸⁶ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 223.

⁸⁷ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 207.

⁸⁸ Dio, 50.3.3-5; Plutarch, *Antony*, 58.4-11; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 17.1; Huzar, *Mark Antony*, pp. 207-8; Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, pp. 245-6; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 221.

⁸⁹ Huzar, *Mark Antony*, p. 208.

5. Three Processions



Figure 18. A section of the victory frieze, Archaeological Museum of Nicopolis. Photograph: Zachos, *An Archaeological Guide to Nicopolis*.

On 13th, 14th and 15th of August 29 BC, Augustus celebrated three consecutive triumphs, described by Virgil — an eyewitness — in Book 8 of the *Aeneid*:

But Caesar, entering the walls of Rome in triple triumph, was dedicating to Italy's gods his immortal votive gift — three hundred mighty shrines throughout the city. The streets were ringing with gladness and games and shouting; in all the temples was a band of matrons, in all were altars, and before the altars slain steers covered the ground. He himself, seated at the snowy threshold of shining Phoebus, reviews the gifts of nations and hangs them on the proud portals. The conquered peoples move in long array, as diverse in fashion of dress and arms as in tongues.¹

The first of the triumphs celebrated his victory over dozens of northern tribes. The second day celebrated the naval victory at Actium over Antony and Cleopatra's fleet. On the final day, Augustus celebrated his conquest of Egypt and Cleopatra in the Alexandrian triumph.² As the centrepiece of the Alexandrian triumph, Augustus had intended to parade Cleopatra herself through the streets of Rome, but her suicide had thwarted his plans. Instead, her surviving children — Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios — were made to stand in for their mother. A reclining effigy of the queen, complete with an asp, formed a ghoulish tableau

¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.714-24.

² Dio, 51.21.2-7; Konstantinos L. Zachos. 'The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium at Nikopolis: Interim Report'. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16/1 (2003), p. 90; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 222.

recreating the moment of her death.³

To commemorate his victory, Augustus also had a new city, Nicopolis – literally ‘victory city’ – constructed in 29 BC near Actium in north-west Greece. Overlooking the city he built a Victory Monument, decorated with a monumental frieze. The Victory Monument was sacked at some point in Late Antiquity and the frieze smashed into thousands of pieces, most likely by Christians intent on desecrating a pagan altar.⁴ The site remained abandoned and overgrown until 1995, when an archaeological excavation began to uncover many of the friezes.⁵ The entire frieze was painstakingly excavated and reassembled by Konstantinos Zachov between 1995-2005, the finds now housed in the Archaeological Museum of Nicopolis.⁶

The frieze is made from Pentelic marble, a white stone with a faint golden tinge, sculpted by local Attic sculptors familiar with working with it, but under the supervision of planners fluent in the iconography of the Roman triumph, sent from Rome.⁷ The frieze was originally one of two mounted on the rear wall of the monumental limestone altar. The lower of the two friezes shows the spoils of victory: various captured weaponry and standards. The upper frieze is more elaborate, depicting a series of sculpted figures moving in procession from right to left. This frieze depicts the second of three triumphs held by Augustus in Rome in 29 BC, his Actian Triumph. This particular panel shows Augustus riding in a chariot at the head of the triumph. Although it is missing both the rider’s and horse’s heads, the rider’s head has been found separately, allowing him to be identified as Augustus. While there are many triumphal friezes from later in the Roman Empire, this is the only one to depict him in the role of *triumphator*.⁸ This is not the most unusual aspect of the scene, however, for shown riding in the chariot with Augustus are two young children, a boy and a girl, their heads just visible poking over the rim.

³ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 17.4; Livy, 54; Dio, 51.21.7-9; Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 264; Mary Beard. *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 143; Harders, ‘An Imperial Family Man’, p. 222.

⁴ John Pollini. *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion, and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), p. 193.

⁵ William M. Murray. ‘Augustus’s Victory Monument, 3D Modeling, and New Directions for Warship Research’. In *Speira, the Honorary Volume to K. Zachos and A. Douzougli*, edited by J. Papadopoulos and S. Morris (Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, Ministry of Culture, 2016).

⁶ Although on a recent visit to the museum, the frieze itself was no longer on display, replaced by a photograph instead.

⁷ Pollini, *From Republic to Empire*, p. 196; *The Art of Making in Antiquity: Stoneworking in the Roman World*. ‘Material: Pentelic Marble’, n.d. <http://www.artofmaking.ac.uk/explore/materials/8/Pentelic-Marble>.

⁸ The general granted a triumph.

* * *



Figure 19. Christian Albrecht Jensen, Portrait of William Martin Leake. 1838. (National Portrait Gallery, NPG 6481).

In 1802, a team of Greek labourers began to remove the sculptures and friezes that had decorated the Parthenon in Athens for over two thousand years. Thomas Bruce (1766-1841), the 7th Earl of Elgin and British ambassador to Constantinople, concerned at the damage the sculptures had suffered during the Turkish occupation of Greece, obtained in August 1800 permission from the Ottoman authorities to make illustrations and casts from them. A year later, on 6th July 1801, he went one step further and obtained a license to remove any

sculptures containing inscriptions and figures to take them back to Britain for ‘safeguarding’.⁹

In September, under the supervision of Lord Elgin’s secretary, William Richard Hamilton, and Colonel William Martin Leake (1777-1860), seventeen cases of marble artefacts were loaded into the hold of Elgin’s ship, the *Mentor*. Leake, an English military officer, diplomat, topographer and antiquarian, is today most famous for founding the Royal Geographical Society, but in 1802 was working for Elgin.¹⁰ He had been instructed to persuade the captain of the *Mentor*, William Helgen, to carry as much as possible, even going so far as to request the ship’s hatches be enlarged to accommodate the largest of the Parthenon’s sculptures.¹¹ Captain Helgen refused — fortunately, as it would turn out — but when the *Mentor* sailed on the morning of 15th September, it still carried fourteen sections of the Parthenon frieze, four pieces of the frieze from the Temple of Athena Nike and an ancient throne given as a gift by the Archbishop of Athens to Lord Elgin’s in-laws.¹²

The *Mentor* departed the Athenian port of Piraeus for Malta, from where it was to continue on to London — but it never left Greek waters.¹³ A strong but favourable wind took it to Cape Matapan, the southernmost point of the Greek mainland. There the crew realised the ship was taking on water and the captain decided to make for a safe harbour, heading for the island of Cythera. Braving the stormy sea, they reached Cape Avlemonas on Cythera by the afternoon, but the wind and waves threatened to dash the ship onto the shore. The crew dropped the anchors, vainly attempting to stave off disaster, and the ship violently crashed onto the rocks. The *Mentor* sank at once, sending boxes of antiquities to the bottom of the sea. Only the passengers and crew survived, rescued by the crew of a nearby vessel. No sooner had they reached shore than Hamilton and Leake began to organise a rescue operation.¹⁴

Seven experienced divers from Kalymnos were hired at great expense, on the condition that anything they retrieved was to be given directly to Hamilton. If they were

⁹ Matt Barrett. ‘Lord Elgin’s Work in Athens’. *Athens Guide*.

<https://www.athensguide.com/elginmarbles/work.html>; George Leontsinis. ‘The Wreck of the *Mentor* on the Coast of the Island of Kythera and the Operation to Retrieve, Salvage, and Transport the Parthenon Sculptures to London (1802-1805)’. *Philathenaios: Studies in Honour of Michael J Osborne* (Athens: Greek Epigraphical Society, 2010), p. 255.

¹⁰ J.M. Wagstaff. ‘Pausanias and the Topographers: The Case of Colonel Leake’. In *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*, edited by Susan E. Alcock, John F. Cherry, and Jaś Elsner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 192.

¹¹ Leontsinis, ‘The Wreck of the *Mentor*’, p. 257.

¹² William St. Clair. *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 116.

¹³ Leontsinis, ‘The Wreck of the *Mentor*’, p. 255.

¹⁴ Leontsinis, ‘The Wreck of the *Mentor*’, pp. 256-7.

unsuccessful, they would be paid nothing.¹⁵ The operation was carried out with the utmost discretion, Lord Elgin at pains to downplay the true value of the artefacts to the local authorities.¹⁶ It took until summer 1804 to recover all of the sculptures and the marble throne, and it would be another year before the artefacts were safely en route to London once more.¹⁷

Two thousand years previously, in 29 BC, a ship carrying the monumental marble frieze of Augustus had rounded this same cape, and while it safely continued on to Nicopolis, in north-west Greece, it had begun its life in the same place as the Elgin marbles: the quarries of Mount Pentelicus.

* * *

The quarry is still visible from the Acropolis, twelve miles away to the north-east; a two-mile long, glistening white wound gouged into the side of Mount Pentelicus. No quarry before it had been so large nor so deep, for the Roman appetite for Pentelic marble was insatiable.¹⁸

Numerous teams of quarrymen swarmed across the surface of the marble, clambering up ladders and shimmying down ropes, bracing heavily on huge iron levers or chipping away at the edge of fissures. Here and there a lone figure remained still, a stonemason inspecting the stone or an architect come to view the progress of their work, but they were motionless islands stranded in a great sea of human activity. The man-made valley echoed to the rhythms of metal striking upon stone, rising slowly from a low, muted tone to an ear-splitting shriek as another slab of marble began to break free. Clouds of fine, white dust rose from the blows of the quarrymen's mallets and the fissure opened up, slowly but inevitably parting marble slab from mother lode.¹⁹

Then, with delicate care and precision, stonemasons cut and smoothed the slab so that it was roughly the right shape and size, chiselling away excess stone. At some point, when the upper surface was smooth and flat, the whole piece of stone was lifted up just enough for iron rollers to be slid underneath, before it was rolled to the edge of the stone shelf and then tipped over so that the work could begin all over again on the underside. All the

¹⁵ Leontsinis, 'The Wreck of the Mentor', pp. 261-2.

¹⁶ Leontsinis, 'The Wreck of the Mentor', p. 263, 265.

¹⁷ Leontsinis, 'The Wreck of the Mentor', pp. 263-4.

¹⁸ M. Korres. *From Pentelicon to the Parthenon: The Ancient Quarries and the Story of a Half-Worked Column Capital of the First Marble Parthenon* (Athens: Melissa, 1995), p. 10.

¹⁹ Korres, *From Pentelicon to the Parthenon*, p. 18.

while, the master mason examined it for flaws that might jeopardise the future endeavour, mar the work of art that it would become.²⁰

Two months would go by until the marble was ready to leave the quarry. Massive wooden levers were used to lift it up, nimble quarrymen darting underneath to assemble a huge wooden sledge underneath. Timber planks formed a ramp to the quarry entrance, where long, powerful ropes and great winches hoisted the sledge painstakingly up. Then, from the apex, it began its descent down to Athens — first by sledge to the loading platform, then by four-wheeled wagon pulled by a team of pack animals down the mountain road, and finally to the dockside at Piraeus and onto a waiting ship.²¹ Dozens of wagons passed one another every day on their way between Athens and the quarries.²²

A week passed before the ship was fully loaded and ready to depart, its cargo safely stowed in the hold, its captain satisfied that its weight was not causing the ship to ride too low in the water. The ship first sailed down the coast of the Peloponnese before rounding Cape Matapan and turning north, hugging the coast all the while. Eventually, many days later, the promontory of Actium came into view — the site where, just two years previously, Augustus' navy had sunk Antony and Cleopatra's fleet. The ship sailed through the narrow straits and into the gulf of Ambracia, where it began to unload its cargo onto the recently completed dockside of Nicopolis. There, a wagon identical to that used in Athens, purposefully shipped there, stood ready to receive the marble slab, carrying it five miles up through the new city to the top of the Michaltisi hill.

It was only then, twelve months and 350 nautical miles after the stonemasons of Mount Pentelicus first began to extract the stone, that the sculptors could begin to make their mark upon the marble.

* * *

²⁰ Korres, *From Pentelicon to the Parthenon*, p. 26.

²¹ Korres, *From Pentelicon to the Parthenon*, p. 36.

²² Korres, *From Pentelicon to the Parthenon*, p. 38.



Map 2. The locations of Actium, Nicopolis and the Victory Monument relative to one another.
Image: Scientific Committee of Nicopolis.

In June 1805 William Leake returned to Greece, using his official mission to survey the landscape for the British army and meet local officials as a cover for him to pursue his own interests: to visit ancient sites that had already been discovered, as well as to investigate reports by locals about the presence of ancient remains that had yet to be identified or explored. In the first volume of his travelogue, *Travels in Northern Greece*, researched and written upon his return to England but not published until 1835, Leake wrote about his visit to the site of Nicopolis:

The road thither leads for two miles through the olive plantations and vineyards, which occupy all the south-western part of the peninsula of Prevyza, and for another mile over a shrubby, uncultivated plain. The first ruins that occur are some [...] arched buildings of brick, probably sepulchral [...] Although these works are lofty and solid, they do not resemble those of the Augustan age; indeed the variety of marble fragments, and even remains of inscriptions, of the time of the Roman empire, inserted in the masonry, prove the whole to have been a repair, though upon the exact site perhaps of the original citadel, and restored so as to form an inclosure sufficiently large for the diminished population of the place.²³

Leake described the site as ‘so overgrown with vegetation in the lower part that it is not easily examined’, recording that ‘the stones of a pavement and a statue of white marble are said to have been transported lately to Prevyza.’²⁴ As he started to climb to the top of Michaltisi hill, he noted that:

the earth, which has been washed from the superincumbent hill during the fourteen centuries which have elapsed since the decease of Pagan civilization, renders an exact measurement unattainable without excavation; in the present season a dense vegetation is a farther impediment and, in particular, a forest of thistles, now in the full strength of their growth, mixed with other plants, which are equally troublesome from being already pulverized by the heat, especially the Sfaka, or Verbascum, which at least touch throws out a cloud of acrid dust.²⁵

Leake wrote in the manner of a military surveyor, concentrating on measurable, empirical details such as the topography, soil structure and flora of a site. Much of his scholarship drew on observations made on the spot, often in conditions of haste and physical danger.²⁶ Yet despite his misgivings about the state of Nicopolis, Leake was in no doubt about its historical significance, writing that amongst its treasures:

is still one of the best preserved Roman theatres in existence [that] well deserves to be accurately measured and delineated by an architect.²⁷

If you go to Nicopolis today, you will find that nothing much has changed since Leake’s visit over two hundred years ago, apart from the addition of the odd information board and a fence

²³ William Martin Leake. *Travels in Northern Greece* (London: J. Rodwell, 1835), p. 186.

²⁴ Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, pp. 189-90.

²⁵ Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, p. 192.

²⁶ Christian Albrecht Jensen. *Portrait of William Martin Leake*. 1838. NPG 6481, National Portrait Gallery.

²⁷ Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, p. 191.

to protect intermittent archaeological excavations.²⁸ Go back two thousand years, however, and you would find yourself in the midst of a brand-new city. The Greek historian Strabo travelled to the city sometime before 7 BC while writing his *Geography*, noting that

Nicopolis is populous, and its numbers are increasing daily, since it has [...] a considerable territory and the adornment taken from the spoils of the battle.²⁹

In founding Nicopolis, Augustus was following a tradition of city building that dated back at least as far as Alexander the Great.³⁰ Formed from the forced union of several neighbouring city-states, Nicopolis straddled the narrow isthmus between the Ambracian Gulf and the Ionian Sea, from where it came to dominate the trade to Italy, swiftly becoming the political, economic and social centre of north-west of Greece.³¹ Although the whole city was conceived as a kind of living monument to Augustus' victory, the Victory Monument itself rose high into the air from a hillside just north of the city, visible for many miles around.³²

After exploring the undergrowth, Leake clambered up the steep slope of Michaltisi hill, which rose up immediately behind the theatre. As he did so, he looked back at the wide panorama spread before him, down the length of the Preveza peninsula.³³ Beyond Nicopolis, the coastline and shores of the Ambracian Gulf could be seen to the left, to the right the turquoise waters of the Ionian Sea and the islands of the Paxi nestled within.³⁴ On the clear summer's day, the mountains of Akarnia and Leukas were visible far away to the south, and just a few miles below, the promontory of Actium.³⁵ Continuing up to the summit, Leake arrived at the spot he believed was where Augustus had set up his tent in 31 BC.³⁶ It was easy to see why Augustus favoured the site both for his encampment and afterwards for the construction of his new city: it provided wide visibility across the landscape, allowing not only direct oversight over the coast and the peninsula plains, but also providing him with a powerful symbol of his

²⁸ Murray, 'Augustus's Victory Monument', p. 13.

²⁹ Strabo, 7.7.6.

³⁰ Stefan De Vries and Alexandra Vouza. 'Octavian's Victory Monument at Nicopolis: A Symbol of Status Quo'. *Landscape and Memory in the Ancient World* (blog), 17 October 2017. <https://landscapeandmemoryintheancientworld.wordpress.com/2017/10/17/octavians-victory-monument-at-nicopolis-a-symbol-of-status-quo/>.

³¹ Zachos, 'The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium', p. 65.

³² De Vries and Vouza, 'Octavian's Victory Monument'.

³³ Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, p. 192.

³⁴ Zachos, 'The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium', pp. 65-6.

³⁵ Zachos, 'The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium', pp. 65-6.

³⁶ Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, p. 193.

command over land and sea.³⁷ It was from here that, on the 2nd September 31 BC, Augustus supposedly watched his fleet defeat that of Antony and Cleopatra in battle.

Armed with copies of Cassius Dio and Strabo, Leake knew that this had to be the spot where Augustus had set-up his camp, which meant that this must also be the spot where ‘some time afterward [...] the *hypoethrium*³⁸ was constructed on the site of the tent of Augustus.’³⁹ Yet he could find little real evidence for this temple besides thorn-choked piles of rubble.⁴⁰ It was only when, a century later in 1913, Greek-led excavations began, the first real evidence was found of a huge monumental structure, not on the spot where Leake had determined it should be but some distance to the south.⁴¹ This monument was in many ways not just the first real public monument of the Augustan Age, but of the Roman Empire.⁴²

Strabo, Cassius Dio and Plutarch all describe this monument. It is likely that only Strabo ever saw it with his own eyes, within a decade or so of its construction, a fact that shows in his attention to detail and description:

In [Nicopolis’s] suburbs, [is] the thoroughly equipped sacred precinct — one part of it being in a sacred grove that contains a gymnasium and a stadium for the celebration of the quinquennial games, the other part being on the hill that is sacred to Apollo and lies above the grove.⁴³

When Plutarch mentions it, writing at least one hundred years after Strabo’s visit, he followed his usual practice of incorporating old oral testimonies about it into his story:

Caesar, we are told, who had left his tent while it was still dark and was going round to visit his ships, was met by a man driving an ass. Caesar asked the man his name, and he, recognizing Caesar, replied: ‘My name is Prosper, and my ass’s name is Victor.’ Therefore, when Caesar afterwards decided the place with the beaks of ships, he set up bronze figures of an ass and a man.⁴⁴

By the time Cassius Dio was writing, another century on, the mythology

³⁷ De Vries and Vouza, ‘Octavian’s Victory Monument’; Dio, 50.12.

³⁸ An open-topped temple.

³⁹ Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, p. 195.

⁴⁰ Murray, ‘Augustus’s Victory Monument’, p. 13.

⁴¹ William M. Murray and Photios M. Petsas. ‘Octavian’s Campsite Memorial for the Actian War’. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 79/4 (1989): 1-172 (12-4).

⁴² Zachos, ‘The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium’, p. 66.

⁴³ Strabo, 7.7.6.

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, 65.

surrounding the monument's founding — that the foundations were personally laid by Augustus, on the same spot as he had set up his tent — is firmly intertwined in the narrative:

On the spot where he had had his tent, he laid a foundation of square stones, adorned it with the captured beaks [of the ships], and erected on it, open to the sky, a shrine of Apollo.⁴⁵

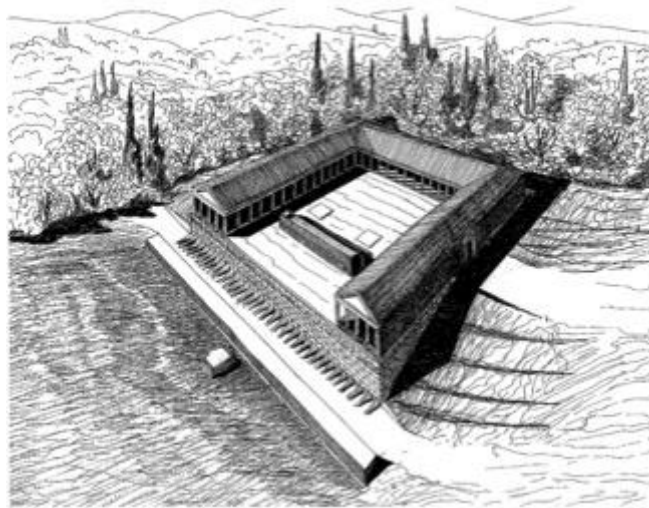


Figure 20. Reconstruction of the Victory Monument. Image: Zachos, An Archaeological Guide to Nicopolis.

Excavations of the summit throughout the twentieth century brought to light the true scale of the monument: a vast, two-terraced *tropaeum*⁴⁶ crowning the hill and reminding all who saw it of Augustus' dominance. The Victory Monument comprised two terraces built upon sandstone slabs thrust into the top of the slope. The lower terrace was built from a retaining wall of concrete over two metres thick, studded with the bronze, glittering beaks of thirty-six captured ships and surmounted by a monumental inscription seven metres high carved into thirty limestone blocks, each one too heavy for a man to move alone.⁴⁷ This in turn created a podium-like structure sixty metres across surrounded by a portico⁴⁸ that ran around the rear and sides, leaving the front open to the landscape. The *tropaeum* was built in such a way that a visitor was forced to process along the whole of the lower terrace, past the rams of all of the ships and along the entire length of the inscription — reading it as they went

⁴⁵ Dio, 51.1.3.

⁴⁶ A monument erected on the battlefield to celebrate victory over one's foes, originally by piling up the arms and armour of the dead. It's where we get the word trophy from.

⁴⁷ Zachos, 'The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium', p. 74.

⁴⁸ A sort of extended colonnade; or, to put it another way, a long, columned hallway.

— before eventually climbing up to the upper terrace; literally processing through the history of Augustus’ moment of victory.

There, in the wide, open space in the middle, stood a huge limestone altar, measuring over two metres in height and twenty metres wide, and surrounded by three larger-than-life bronze statues — one of an old man, the other of an ass, the third of Augustus himself — each mounted on their own elaborately decorated pedestals.⁴⁹ The side of the altar that faced the city was decorated with two metre-high marble friezes that ran the entire width, and possibly around the sides too. The friezes were positioned in such a way that they would have been visible to visitors as they walked up the hill from the city, even though the details would have remained obscured until they ascended through the monument to the top.

The friezes were made from Pentelic marble, the same stone that springs to mind whenever we think of ancient Athens or Rome — with good reason, for it was widely used for construction in ancient Athens, most notably for the Parthenon.⁵⁰ But despite the way that we imagine the monuments of classical antiquity, the Victory Monument of Nicopolis would not have been white at all but painted in bright, garish colours, giving the whole place the look more of a gaudy funfair than a staid, monochrome statue park.

The lower of the two friezes showed the spoils of victory: weapons hanging from the branches of trees, heaps of weapons and armour as well as captured ships.⁵¹ The upper frieze was more elaborate, depicting a great procession of sculpted figures: the Actian Triumph. While the triumphal frieze features a cast of character types familiar from depictions of both Pompey and Caesar’s triumphs — victorious general and his family members, reverent, bearded senators crowned with laurel wreaths, humbled captives with sad-looking eyes — two figures stand out as unusual, the two children riding in Augustus’s chariot. The girl sports a distinctive ‘melon-style’ hairstyle, an exotic style that Cleopatra was often shown as wearing in portraiture.⁵² It is this, coupled with the other children in Augustus’ household being too old or too young, that helps us identify them as Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, the twin children of Cleopatra and Mark Antony — now in the hands of their sworn enemy Augustus.⁵³

Not all agree on this identification. Both Mary Beard and Ida Östenberg argue that in triumphal tradition captives were only ever shown in front of the triumphator, whereas

⁴⁹ Zachos, ‘The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium’, p. 81; Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, p. 195.

⁵⁰ ‘Material: Pentelic Marble’.

⁵¹ Zachos, ‘The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium’, pp. 84-5.

⁵² See Chapter 11 for more about this particular hairstyle.

⁵³ Zachos, ‘The Tropaeum of the Sea-Battle of Actium’, p. 92.

family members were shown marching alongside or behind him. Therefore, they must be relatives of Augustus, Julia and Drusus, Augustus' daughter and stepson.⁵⁴ While they were of a similar age to the twins, they did not quite fit in other ways. Firstly, while it might seem unusual to depict captives within the triumphal chariot, it would have been equally unusual to depict family members in it — everywhere else, the triumphant general had always ridden alone. Secondly, while there are few distinguishing features to help identify the children, there is the matter of the girl's hair. The 'melon-style hairdo' was made famous by Cleopatra VII, so there is no reason to depict Augustus' daughter with such a hairstyle, and every reason to show Cleopatra Selene sporting it.⁵⁵ And, finally, these were not just any old captives, but simultaneously captured enemies and the children of one of Rome's fallen heroes. It is something of an understatement to say that their identity was complex, and their presence in the triumph brought with them a host of potential problems for Augustus — but also the potential for a propaganda coup.

Despite scholarly misgivings, this whole scenario is not without precedent elsewhere in the history of Rome. In AD 39, Emperor Caligula displayed in his chariot the hostage king Darius as he drove across the Bay of Baiae — a feat made possible by the construction of a massive wooden pontoon across the mouth of the bay — in part to impress the king, but in part to show him off to the awed spectators as he did so.⁵⁶ Augustus had treated the children of King Phraates of Parthia — sent to Rome as hostages — in a similar manner, first displaying them in the arena before seating them in the row of seats behind himself.⁵⁷

These were exceptional times in Rome: Augustus was rewriting the rules of the Republic to better suit his own agenda. He was more than prepared to flout tradition when it suited him by deploying the children of his enemy as both a symbol of defeat and of mercy. As we saw in the preceding chapter, before Actium the twins had played a central role in Augustus' propaganda campaign, but as we will see again with his treatment of Cleopatra's legacy, he was more than prepared to change his approach to better fit the circumstances.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ida Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 144; Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, pp. 224-5.

⁵⁵ Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 155.

⁵⁶ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 15.

⁵⁷ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 43.4; Ann Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), p. 113.

⁵⁸ See Chapters 4 and 11 respectively.

After the triumph, Augustus had no further need to highlight his victory over Antony and Cleopatra; in fact, doing so might prove detrimental. While Ptolemaic Egypt had been forcibly brought under the boot of Roman rule, a softer approach was needed to bring the rival Antonian faction of Rome back into the Augustan fold. It was not enough that Augustus had spared the lives of Antony's children — he had conspicuously to do so, carved in stone slabs two metres high. Even that was not enough, for no sooner had they been paraded through Rome as captives Augustus made the ultimate in conspicuous gestures: he adopted them into his own household where he 'reared them [...] as carefully as if they were his own kin.'⁵⁹

The twins were welcomed by Octavia into her house on the Palatine Hill. After their divorce in 33 BC, Mark Antony evicted Octavia from the house they had shared in Rome, and by now she was living as part of the rapidly expanding complex that would form the imperial household, her house somewhere close to her brother's own abode.⁶⁰ There the twins joined her extended family, which at the time included Octavia's eldest children by her first husband — Marcellus (aged 12), Marcella the Elder (aged 11) and Marcella the Younger (aged 10) — and her children with Antony, the twins' half sisters Antonia the Elder and Antonia the Younger, aged 9 and 6, of similar age to Alexander, Selene and Ptolemy. Also present was Antony's son by his first wife Fulvia, the twins' half-brother Iullus Antonius (aged 13).⁶¹ They would have grown up alongside the children in Augustus and Livia's house next door too: Augustus' daughter Julia (aged 9), and Livia's sons Tiberius and Drusus (aged 12 and 8), not to mention the sons of other foreign nobles sent to Rome for an education — or to serve as hostages.⁶² Amongst the foreign children who lived in the imperial household at one point or another were eight of Herod's sons, the children of Phraates, the sons of the murdered King of Thrace, Cotys VIII — and Juba II, of course.⁶³

Octavia was not the only Roman matriarch to have such a large brood — both Augustus' wife Livia and Octavia's daughter Antonia would go on to raise large extended families of their own too — but she was especially considered a paragon of motherhood.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 17.5.

⁶⁰ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 225.

⁶¹ Preston, *Cleopatra and Antony*, p. 343, 350; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 221.

⁶² Charles Brian Rose. "'Princes' and Barbarians on the Ara Pacis'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 94/3 (1990): 453-60 (460).

⁶³ Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus*, p. 112; Jacobson, 'Three Roman Client Kings', p. 26. See Chapter 15 for more on both Herod and Phraates, and their relationship with Augustus.

⁶⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, 54.1-2; Suetonius, *Otho*, 1.1; Susan Fischler. 'Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women at Rome'. In *Women in Ancient Societies — an Illusion of the Night*, edited by Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 123-4; Schumacher, 'Augustus, der Blick von aussen', p. 142.

Octavia garnered particular praise for treating Cleopatra's children with such kindness, making no apparent distinction between her own children and her stepchildren, nor between Iullus and his Egyptian-born siblings.⁶⁵

Suetonius makes Augustus out to be quite the doting father and grandfather to his family too. He taught them 'reading, swimming, and the other elements of education, for the most part himself, taking special pains to train them to imitate his own handwriting'.⁶⁶ He treated Antony's offspring as though they were his own, even though he had had poor relationships with their mothers.⁶⁷ Although we cannot dismiss him having an emotional bond with his adopted family, there was also a societal expectation that he would care for his sister's children — even her step-children — as though they were his own.⁶⁸ In Latin a maternal uncle was known as an *avunculus*, and it's from this duty towards his nieces and nephews that we gain the word *avuncular*.

While Juba, Selene and their various siblings were educated to a very high standard, this was not unusual for the children of aristocratic families. In the first century, the Roman education system remained under the total control of Greek scholars and they would have received the very best education, which under the Greek system included astronomy, arithmetic, geometry and music, alongside the literature, history and philosophy that we might expect it to have included.⁶⁹ Greek remained the scholarly language of choice in Rome, hence Juba was taught in Greek and learnt to write in Greek (Selene, of course, was already a native speaker).⁷⁰ So it was only natural that, when it came to his own scholarship, he would also write in Greek.

Juba and Selene benefited from the extraordinary cultural environment that had sprung up around the nascent imperial household on the Palatine Hill. As well as a newly founded library in the adjoining Temple of Apollo, Augustus' residence was home to a number of ageing scholars, all of whom would have been on hand to teach the children:⁷¹ Alexander Polyhistor, a historian, geographer and philosopher in his seventies, but no less sharp for it; the Stoic philosopher Athenodorus of Tarsus, an explorer who described the

⁶⁵ Plutarch, *Antony*, 54; Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 34; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', pp. 225-6.

⁶⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 48.1, 64.3.

⁶⁷ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 218 including note 5.

⁶⁸ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 218.

⁶⁹ John F. Healy. 'Introduction'. In *Natural History: A Selection*, by Pliny the Elder (London: Penguin Books, 1991), xix.

⁷⁰ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55.2; Plutarch, *Comparison of Pelopidas and Marcellus*, 1.5; Roller 2004, p. 165; Roller, 'Juba II of Mauretania'.

⁷¹ L. D. Reynolds. *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 25.

extremities of the world; and Timagenes of Alexandria, a historian and rhetorician who had once been a slave of the dictator Sulla, and who offered Selene a connection to her home, all tutored young Juba and Selene.⁷² Other scholars were frequent visitors to the Palatine too, including the geographer Strabo — with whom Juba would strike up a lifelong friendship — Nikolaos of Damascus, formerly of both Herod and Cleopatra's court, and who had probably tutored Selene in Alexandria too, and the prolific author Varro, whose scholarly interests can be seen reflected in Juba's own.⁷³ Octavia's house was a centre for Rome's intellectual and literary life too, so Juba and Selene grew up constantly surrounded by intellectuals and artists, including the architectural writer Vitruvius, the poets Virgil and Crinagoras of Mytilene, another of Selene's tutors at Alexandria, who would end up accompanying them to Mauretania.⁷⁴

* * *

Aged 10 by the time she arrived in Rome, Selene was close to marriageable age by Roman standards.⁷⁵ Her adopted siblings were all engaged: Julia to Marcellus, Marcella to Augustus' lieutenant Agrippa, Antonia to Drusus.⁷⁶ Each of these betrothals had been carefully planned, and Selene's would have been no different — she was a princess and her future marriage was a matter of statecraft.⁷⁷ No doubt she had been engaged before: Antony and Cleopatra would have arranged a marriage for their daughter to a foreign prince, just as they had with Alexander Helios, who had been betrothed to marry Iotape, princess of Armenia, since he was six years old.⁷⁸ With her parents' death and the twins' capture, however, such arrangements were off. With the murder of their elder half-brothers, Caesarion and Antyllus, the twins were now heirs — both literally and symbolically — to both the Egyptian throne and the Antonian cause.⁷⁹ To marry them off quickly would have been careless.

Juba was nearly eighteen by this point and as he approached maturity Augustus must have been giving much thought to the role he would play in his new regime. Then,

⁷² Pietrobelli. 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 168.

⁷³ Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II, p. 168; Roller 2004, p. 182.

⁷⁴ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 226.

⁷⁵ Mary Harlow and Ray Laurence. *Growing up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 61.

⁷⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 63

⁷⁷ Harlow and Laurence, *Growing up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome*, p. 58, 81.

⁷⁸ Dio, 49.39.2; Roberts, *Mark Antony*, p. 358.

⁷⁹ Roller 2004, p. 83 note 42; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 223

Octavia presented him with a solution: to marry him to Cleopatra Selene. The sources all agree that it was Octavia, not Augustus, who had the idea that they should wed.⁸⁰ She certainly knew them both well, could see the potential to be good and trusted rulers within them. She was also a shrewd political operator, and knew how to solve problems through diplomacy — including marriage alliances.⁸¹ How much Juba and Selene would have known one another is unclear. By the time Selene arrived, Juba was already a young adult and before long was accompanying Augustus, Marcellus and Tiberius on campaign to Spain.

And what of Selene's two surviving brothers, what became of them? Here, the sources differ. Alexander Helios was certainly brought to Rome, for Dio describes him as having marched in the Actian Triumph alongside the effigy of his dead mother.⁸² Ptolemy Philadelphus is not mentioned in connection with the triumph, so perhaps he did not make it back to Rome alive.⁸³ Dio's description of the triumph is also the last mention of Alexander Helios, so the common assumption is that he died in childhood in Rome — but that might not have been the case.⁸⁴ The expected fate after the triumph, in line with those of other royal captives, would have been a life of guarded exile.⁸⁵ This was the fate of Cleopatra's sister — Selene's aunt — Arsinoë, who was spared by Julius Caesar and permitted to live in Ephesus until Cleopatra had Antony order her murder in 41 BC.⁸⁶ In this regard then, it is Selene who is the exception, rather than her brother — perhaps Helios lived out a quiet life of indolence and luxury elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

Yet some modern historians claim both Alexander Helios and Ptolemy Philadelphus were sent with their sister to Mauretania, permitted to live in obscurity under her watch instead.⁸⁷ This seems somewhat implausible, not to mention a risk on Augustus' part. It would certainly have required the emperor to have had the utmost trust in the loyalty of Juba and Selene — although, as we will see, he did.

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⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Antony*, 87.2; Dio, 51.15.6; Fittschen, 'Juba II und seine Residenz Jol', p. 239.

⁸¹ Dio, 48.54.3-5; Kleiner, 'Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts', p. 28.

⁸² Dio, 51.21.7-9.

⁸³ Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 108.

⁸⁴ Schultz, *Fulvia*, p. 108.

⁸⁵ Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 223.

⁸⁶ Dio, 43.19.2-4.

⁸⁷ Lucy Hughes-Hallett. *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams, and Distortions* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990), p. 32; Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 252; neither reference this claim, however, so it must be taken with a pinch of salt.



Figure 21. The south frieze of the Ara Pacis, Rome. Photograph: author's own.

Sixteen years after construction of the Victory Monument was completed the Roman Senate voted in 13 BC to build another large monument, this time in Rome — the Ara Pacis, the ‘altar of peace’. Ostensibly built to commemorate the successful pacification of both Rome’s western and eastern borders, it was really an altar to celebrate Augustus and his vision for the nascent empire.⁸⁸ The frieze on the south wall of the Ara Pacis shows a religious procession, led by Augustus and a group of priests and senators, followed by his family. This was no mere sentimentality; a key part of Augustan politics was a return to traditional family values, and his own family were often employed to help make this point.⁸⁹

Many of the figures have been identified, and they give a fascinating glimpse of the family dynamics of the imperial household.⁹⁰ The first group behind Augustus and the priests comprises Augustus’ daughter Julia and her husband Agrippa, as well as their son Gaius, Augustus’ intended heir, clutching the hem of his father’s cloak.⁹¹ Behind them stands Livia’s

⁸⁸ Dio, 54.21.1-3, 28.1; Paul Zanker. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988), pp. 120-1; Rose, “‘Princes’ and Barbarians on the Ara Pacis”, p. 453.

⁸⁹ Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 158; Rose, “‘Princes’ and Barbarians on the Ara Pacis”, p. 467; Roller 2004, p. 74; Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 229.

⁹⁰ Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 121.

⁹¹ Jocelyn M C. Toynbee. *The Ara Pacis Reconsidered and Historical Art in Roman Italy* (London: British Academy, 1953), p. 84; R. Ross Holloway. ‘Who’s Who on the Ara Pacis’. In *Alessandria e Il Mondo Ellenistico-Romano: Studi in Onore Di Achille Adriani*, edited by Nicola Bonacasa and Antonino Di Vita (Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1983): 625-8 (627); Ronald Syme. ‘Neglected Children on the Ara Pacis’. *American Journal of Archaeology* 88/4 (1984), p. 583.

son Tiberius, Augustus' eventual successor as emperor. Next to him, in military dress, is Tiberius' brother Drusus with his wife Antonia the Younger and their young son Germanicus.⁹² The final group comprises Antonia the Elder and her husband Ahenobarbus, as well as their two children.⁹³ Drusus and Antonia turn to talk to one another, while behind them an older woman appears to shush them — it has been suggested that this is Octavia, for who else but the matriarch of the family would command such authority?⁹⁴ A number of other figures remain unidentified; the older man at the end of the line, for example — the poet Horace, perhaps, or Augustus' advisor Maecenas.⁹⁵ Other figures in the back row too are undefined, offering the tantalising possibility that amongst them in the family grouping were Juba and Selene, with young Ptolemy in tow perhaps.⁹⁶ Although by the time of the procession the royal couple had ruled Mauretania for over a decade, there is evidence — principally from funerary monuments erected by members of their household buried in Rome — that they still returned to the city on occasion.⁹⁷ If they did, this would have been the last time the extended family would all be together in Rome — Octavia died just two years later, in 11 BC.

⁹² Holloway, 'Who's Who on the Ara Pacis', p. 627.

⁹³ Holloway, 'Who's Who on the Ara Pacis', p. 627; Syme, 'Neglected Children on the Ara Pacis', p. 585.

⁹⁴ Toynbee, *The Ara Pacis Reconsidered*, p. 86.

⁹⁵ Holloway, 'Who's Who on the Ara Pacis', p. 628; Syme, 'Neglected Children on the Ara Pacis', p. 589.

⁹⁶ Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 110; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, pp. 44-5.

⁹⁷ Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 129.

Part 2

King & Queen

6. The Emperor of the World



Figure 22. Cuirassed statue of Augustus from Cherchell (Cherchell Archaeological Museum, S72 177).

Standing at the far end of the East Gallery of the Museum of Cherchell, rarely visited and easily overlooked next to a vast wall mosaic, is one of the finest examples of Roman sculpture in the world.¹ If it were in the British Museum or the Louvre it would be world famous —

¹ *Cuirassed Statue of Augustus from Cherchel. S72 177, Musée National de Cherchell. This is the view of*

comparable with the exquisite Augustus of Prima Porta in the Vatican — but because it is in a provincial museum in a hard-to-get-to country it remains obscure. It is a larger-than-life statue of a man measuring over two metres in height — even without his missing head and plinth — propped up by the trunk of a palm tree. The man wears an ornate breastplate, his epaulettes decorated with bundles of lightning bolts and pteryges depicting stylised foreign faces with elaborate moustaches and bushy beards.² He wears intricately detailed fur-laced boots, featuring embroidered hems, lotus palms and a network of acanthus leaves — again, by Klaus Fittschen’s reckoning, the decoration on the boots alone is some of the most meticulous, detailed work found anywhere in ancient art.³ As well as the head, both arms and part of the left leg are missing, but by looking at similar statues we can make an educated guess at how this statue might have looked complete: the right arm raised in a gesture of address, the left, wrapped in a general’s cloak, holding a sceptre or sword.⁴

The sculpture belongs to a category — of which hundreds of examples exist — known as cuirassed statues due to the elaborately decorated, anatomically idealised breastplate they each wore, not unlike the elaborate leather and bronze breastplates that formed the parade armour of Roman officers and generals.⁵ This style of statue was typically used to depict Roman emperors, generals, mythical heroes or any politician seeking to emphasise their military credentials.⁶ The breastplates served as a canvas to broadcast an intricate array of symbols and messages to the viewer, although whether these designs were based on the designs of actual breastplates is unknown.⁷ The cuirass here depicts a number of mythological characters arranged in three horizontal bands. At the top is a bust of an armoured, helmeted god gazing upwards, his cloak fluttering around him. This is Mars Ultor, the Roman god of war in his guise as avenger. Below him is a scene in which Winged Victory crowns a naked man — the deified Julius Caesar, star upon his brow — with a wreath of oak leaves, who in turn presents a trophy to the goddess Venus. Venus, swathed in a cloak, is

renowned experts including Klaus Fittschen and Ann Kuttner.

² Klaus Fittschen. ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’. *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 91 (1976): 174-210 (195).

³ Fittschen, ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’, p. 200; Fittschen, ‘Juba II und seine Residenz’, p. 232.

⁴ Fittschen, ‘Juba II und seine Residenz’, p. 232; Heinz Günter Horn and Christoph B. Rügner. *Die Numider: Reiter und Könige nördlich der Sahara* (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1979), p. 530.

⁵ Richard A. Gergel. ‘An Allegory of Imperial Victory on a Cuirassed Statue of Domitian’. *Record of the Art Museum*, Princeton University 45/1 (1986): 3-15; Raffaele D’Amato and Andrey Evgenevich Negin. *Decorated Roman Armour: From the Age of the Kings to the Death of Justinian the Great* (Havertown, PA: Pen & Sword Books, 2017), p. 55.

⁶ D’Amato and Negin, *Decorated Roman Armour*, p. 112.

⁷ D’Amato and Negin, *Decorated Roman Armour*, pp. 110-2.

holding a sword in the crook of her arm, her hand resting on a shield depicting the bearded head of Oceanus; beside her is Eros. Below this scene is a Triton, a merman, holding the prow of a ship, facing a centaur holding a cornucopia.⁸

The statue was discovered in February 1916 in Cherchell by workers building a new sewer on the Rue de l'Hippodrome, at the north-east corner of the ancient theatre. The statue was commissioned, possibly even designed, by Juba who, judging by both his exquisite collection of statuary and treatise on art, was something of an expert.⁹ It was carved from Carrara marble — known in antiquity as Luna marble, used for many of Rome's most famous monuments — by expert sculptors working in a specialist workshop in Rome, before being shipped to Iol Caesarea to take its place in the middle of the city.¹⁰ This was only right and proper, for this was a statue of Juba and Selene's father Augustus, first emperor of Rome, son of a god and ruler of the Western world.¹¹

* * *

In the summer of 44 BC, during the games held by Augustus in honour of Julius Caesar, a comet was spotted in the sky above Rome.¹² The comet was so bright that it could be seen even during the day, and it was visible for a week.¹³ The gathered crowds declared excitedly that it must be Caesar's soul ascending to the heavens to become a god, four months after his assassination. Augustus, just eighteen years old yet already possessing a keen sense of how to spin things in his favour, hastily agreed. As well he might: he was Caesar's adopted son, which meant that he was now the son of a god too.¹⁴ To make sure that nobody forgot this auspicious turn of events, he had the statue of Julius Caesar in front of the Temple of Venus Genetrix crowned with a star upon its brow to symbolise both the comet and the divine status it brought. Ever after the star became the symbol of Divus Julius, the Deified Caesar. Yet Augustus' own rise was far from foretold; Caesar's assassins were still on the loose, causing

⁸ Fittschen, 'Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel', p. 177, 181, 530; Erika Simon. *Augustus: Kunst Und Leben in Rom Um Die Zeitenwende* (Munich: Hirmer, 1986), p. 223; Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 223; Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus*, pp. 29-30.

⁹ Simon, *Augustus*, p. 223; Roller 2004, pp. 173-4.

¹⁰ *The Art of Making in Antiquity: Stoneworking in the Roman World*. 'Place: Carrara', n.d.
<http://www.artofmaking.ac.uk/explore/places/4/>.

¹¹ Fittschen, 'Juba II und seine Residenz', p. 232.

¹² Suetonius, *Caesar*, 88.

¹³ John T. Ramsey and A. Lewis Licht. *The Comet of 44 B.C. and Caesar's Funeral Games* (Scholars Press, 1997), p. 1.

¹⁴ Holland, *Rubicon*, loc. 5336.

trouble in the East, and peace seemed a distant prospect. The crowds in the Roman Forum — amongst them Juba, still a young boy of four and a relative newcomer to the Julio-Claudian household — watched on as Augustus made the dedication and wondered what sort of future the comet really foretold.

Twenty-seven years later, during the Secular Games thrown by Augustus in 17 BC, another comet shone above the city. Again, Augustus claimed it as a good omen, and this time there could be few who doubted him. Victorious against Caesar's assassins at Philippi in 42 BC and against Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC, Augustus was now the undisputed master of the world. To commemorate this sign, the master of the mint had a new coin struck depicting Augustus handing Julius Caesar — star upon his brow — victory.¹⁵ This was a subversion of the norm; it was meant to be the gods who presented mortals with victory, not the other way round. The meaning could not be clearer: peace and prosperity flowed from Augustus now, not the gods.¹⁶



Figure 23. *L. Lentulus denarius*. (British Museum, 2002,0102.4978).

In 27 BC, the peace secured in Rome, Augustus embarked on an ambitious plan to secure and expand the borders of the empire. He marched first to Gaul and then south into Spain to Tarraco (modern-day Tarragona), tens of thousands of soldiers at his back and the rising stars

¹⁵ Michael Koortbojian. 'The Bringer of Victory: Imagery and Institutions at the Advent of Empire'. In *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, edited by Sheila Dillon and Katherine E. Welch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 191-2.

¹⁶ Koortbojian, 'The Bringer of Victory', p. 184.

of his household by his side: his nephew Marcellus (42-23 BC), his stepson Tiberius (42 BC-AD 37) and his adopted son Juba, all precocious youths eager for a taste of battle. This was a common tradition amongst the Roman aristocracy, and a teenage Augustus had himself joined Caesar on campaign in Spain in 46 BC.¹⁷

Although Spain had been the first of Rome's foreign provinces — the province of Hispania Citerior, draped along the Mediterranean coast, had been settled by the Romans for over two centuries by this point — the Iberian peninsula was far from secure. During the chaos of the Civil War, two of the mountain tribes — the Cantabrians and the Asturians — that inhabited the north-west of Spain and Portugal had descended on the province eager to make off with plunder, and now it was time for Augustus to put them in their place and complete the conquest.¹⁸

In 26 BC the Roman legions marched north from Tarraco. The terrain was mountainous and Augustus was forced to split his armies into three, commanding one column himself and delegating the other two to his legates.¹⁹ The campaign was grim and arduous, the mountain tribes amongst the most ferocious opponents the legions had faced.²⁰ Augustus was victorious, defeating the army of the Cantabrians at Vellica; capturing Aracelium to the west of Pamplona; and invading the mountainous territory of the Asturians, taking their stronghold in the middle of winter, Augustus receiving their surrender in person.²¹ For a brief moment Spain became the centre of the world as embassies from as far afield as India and Arabia came to pay homage to the emperor at his makeshift court in Tarraco — amongst them the Greek poet Crinagoras of Mytilene, who served as an ambassador to Augustus from his homeland.²²

By 25 BC, however, the toils of the campaign had taken their toll on the perennially sickly Augustus, who fell seriously ill. For much of the year he was bedbound in Tarraco, leaving his tent only to take the healing waters in the springs of the Pyrenees, finding comfort instead in writing his autobiography.²³ While victory was declared upon the

¹⁷ Roller 2004, p. 73; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 8.

¹⁸ Ronald Syme. *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 332-3.

¹⁹ Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, pp. 332-3.

²⁰ Ronald Syme. 'The Spanish War of Augustus (26-25 B. C.)'. *The American Journal of Philology* 55/4 (1934): 293-317 (294).

²¹ Syme, 'The Spanish War of Augustus', p. 296.

²² G. Alföldi. 'Spain'. In *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.-A.D. 69*, edited by Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and A. W. Lintott, Vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 451; Regina Hoschele. 'Greek Epigram in Rome in the First Century CE'. In *A Companion to Ancient Epigram*, edited by Christer Henriksen (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019): 475-90 (476).

²³ Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, pp. 332-3; Alföldi, 'Spain', p. 451; Crinagoras, in Epigram 29, acknowledges

emperor's return to Rome in 24 BC, the subjugation of Spain was to drag on for another five years. Exactly what action the three youths themselves saw is unrecorded, for our only sources rely upon Augustus' autobiography, which only recorded the emperor's own exploits — or lack thereof. However, the occasion was commemorated by Crinagoras:

Returning home from the Western War, laden with spoils, to the boundaries of rocky Italy, Marcellus shaved his blond beard for the first time; such was his patria's desire, to send him out a boy and receive him back a man.²⁴

Crinagoras' epigram certainly implies the boys saw battle and earned their fair share of glory. They must have acquitted themselves well enough, for each was handsomely rewarded: Marcellus was given the hand of Augustus' daughter Julia in marriage, Tiberius was given command of the armies in the East,²⁵ and to Juba

he gave portions of Gaetulia in return for the prince's hereditary domain [of Numidia], the most of whose inhabitants had been enrolled in the Roman state, and also the possessions of Bocchus and Bogud [in Mauretania].²⁶

Mauretania was a large kingdom to the west of Juba's ancestral home of Numidia, in what is now Morocco and Algeria — not to be confused with the modern state that bears a similar name, Mauritania.²⁷ Until 38 BC, Mauretania had been a twinned kingdom divided in two by the River Malva, each half ruled by a brother, Bocchus and Bogud, from their capitals of Iol and Volubilis. Both had been rivals with Juba's father for the throne of Numidia, but eventually fell out with one another over support for Mark Antony, leading to Bocchus deposing Bogud in 38 BC.²⁸ Bogud was subsequently killed fighting alongside Antony in the East, and when Bocchus died he left both halves of the kingdom to Augustus in his will. Augustus, in turn, passed it on to Juba.²⁹

The comet that had appeared above Augustus' games might have inspired Virgil to include one in the *Aeneid*. There a comet over Troy was an omen of rebirth, heralding the future foundation of Rome.³⁰ Whether such a comet was seen in either Spain or

both Augustus' victory but also his need to take to the 'waters of the Pyrenees'.

²⁴ Crinagoras, Epigram 10.

²⁵ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 9.

²⁶ Dio, 53.26.2.

²⁷ Dio, 53.26.2.

²⁸ Dio, 41.41-2.

²⁹ Strabo, 17.3.7.

³⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.671-704; Davide Antonio Secci. 'On Virgil's Lightning, Comets, and Libyan She-Bears'.

North Africa is unknown, but soon after Juba arrived in his new kingdom another city was reborn: the town of Iol as Iol Caesarea.

Juba made Iol the capital of his new kingdom, for it lay on the Mediterranean coast within a few day's sail from Rome. As shown by the fine art found there, Volubilis remained an important city, perhaps used by Juba and Selene as their winter residence, but it was too remote to serve as a capital of a client-kingdom. It's likely that Juba had the idea to rename Iol as Caesarea at the same time he became king, for amongst the administrative actions Augustus had taken while at Tarraco was to refound the colony of Antioch in Pisidia as Colonia Caesarea.³¹ Juba might well have been the first client-king or Roman governor to do so, but he was far from the last: his fellow kings Herod of Judaea and Archelaus of Cappadocia swiftly followed suit.³² It eventually became such a common way for towns to demonstrate loyalty to Rome that Herod's Caesarea had to be renamed Caesarea Maritima, Juba's as Iol Caesarea, in order to tell them apart from all the other Caesareas that came to litter maps of the empire.³³

The reconstruction of the African city of Iol into the Roman city of Caesarea was an impressive, meticulously planned process that would form an exposition for Juba's new kingdom. The new city covered an area comparable in size to Rome's urban centre, more than thirty times larger than Mauretania's next biggest city, making it one of the largest cities in the Western world.³⁴ Standing on a stepped plateau, Caesarea rose dramatically from the sea, the approach carefully stage managed by Juba's architects to be at its best when approached by ship.³⁵ The monumental port was seen first, complete with lighthouse modelled after Alexandria's famous landmark; behind that rose the royal palace and temples to both Roman and Egyptian gods; then, the Italian-style theatre — the first built anywhere outside of Rome — and amphitheatre, site of the future games; finally, along a ridge in the distance, the city's walls; all built by Roman craftsmen out of Luna marble and lavishly decorated in imported statuary.³⁶

The *Classical Quarterly* 64/2 (2014): 707-24 (715-6).

³¹ Strabo, 17.3.12; Stephen Mitchell and Marc Waelkens. *Pisidian Antioch: The Site and Its Monuments* (Bristol, CT: ISD, 1998), p.8.

³² Josephus, *Wars*, 1.21.6-8; Roller, *The Building Program of Herod*, p. 89 note 14; Roller 2004, p. 120 note 5.

³³ Roller, *The Building Program of Herod*, p. 90, 134.

³⁴ Brent D. Shaw. 'Review of Le Royaume de Maurétanie sous Juba II et Ptolémée (25 av. J.-C.-40 ap. J.-C.), by Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy.' *Gnomon* 72/5 (2000): 424-5; Roller 2004, p. 127; T. W. Potter. *Towns in Late Antiquity: Iol Caesarea and its Context* (Sheffield: Ian Sanders Memorial Committee, Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, University of Sheffield, 1995), pp. 15-6.

³⁵ Roller 2004, pp. 130-1.

³⁶ T.W. Potter. 'City and Territory in Roman Algeria: The Case of Iol Caesarea'. *Journal of Roman*

However, by the time Juba placed the cuirassed statue of Augustus in front of his theatre in the early first century AD, two decades had already passed since the refounding. The city was already replete with sculptures, including a colossal statue of Augustus that stood near the baths in the west of the city.³⁷ What was it about this statue — and that moment — that led Juba to erect it then? To find the answer we need to return to the master of Augustus' mint.

* * *

The master of the mint was Lucius Cornelius Lentulus, scion of the Lentuli family.³⁸ The Lentuli had survived down the turbulent centuries of Roman history for two reasons: strength of numbers, and a scrupulous tendency to avoid either hazard or renown.³⁹ Their path was adequacy, mediocrity their mark. No Lentuli general had earned a triumph, no poet signed his magnum opus 'Lentulus'.⁴⁰ This path had served them entirely well up until now. But, in striking the coin depicting Augustus handing Caesar victory, Lucius had earned Augustus' favour and in doing so had inadvertently embarked on a new path, one that would lead him to renown — and misfortune. In 3 BC he was elected consul — the highest elected position in Roman politics — and soon after his term of office was complete he was sent to govern the province of Africa Proconsularis.

While in Africa, in AD 3 or 4, Lucius led an expedition deep into the Libyan desert, and there had the misfortune to be murdered. The culprits were the Nasamones, one of the many Berber tribes who roamed the barren, arid lands to the south of Mauretania.⁴¹ The Greek historian Herodotus had described them in the fifth century BC as a 'proud and violent' people, their youth prone to 'wild adventures' in the desert, whose greatest exploit was crossing the Sahara to reach Timbuktu. But by Juba's reign the Roman poet Lucan knew them only as 'poor'.⁴² Juba was away in the East at the time, visiting allied client-kings, and this crisis prompted him to hurry home.⁴³ By the time Juba returned to Mauretania, Lucius'

Archaeology 1 (1988): 190-6 (190-1); Potter, *Towns in Late Antiquity*, p. 8; Shaw, 'Review of Le Royaume de Maurétanie', pp. 424-5.

³⁷ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, pp. 155-6.

³⁸ There are going to be three Cornelius Lentulus' in fairly swift succession. This one is only briefly relevant. His brother and his nephew have greater significance, in this and later chapters. I will refer to them Lucius, Cossus and Gaetulicus to avoid confusion.

³⁹ Ronald Syme. *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), p. 284.

⁴⁰ Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy*, p. 424, 286.

⁴¹ Strabo, 17.3.23.

⁴² Herodotus, 2.32.2-3; Lucan, 712-3.

⁴³ Duncan Fishwick and Brent D. Shaw. 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus'. *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 25, no. 4 (1976): 491-4 (493). See Chapters 15 and 16 for more on his time

replacement had arrived in Africa to quell any subsequent unrest. His successor was also a Lentuli: Lucius' brother Cossus, accompanied by his teenage son Gaetulicus.⁴⁴

Soon after his return, Juba, by then in his early fifties, marked thirty years on the Mauretanian throne. He celebrated his jubilee with a great festival at Iol Caesarea, incorporating athletic events, martial tournaments, musical contests and theatrical performances.⁴⁵ Juba and Selene's son Ptolemy, then a teenager, returned from his studies in Athens to join his father's festivities too. Ptolemy was more interested in martial events than his father, so might well have competed, afoot or on horseback, as his great-great-great grandfather Mastanabal had at the Panathenaic Games a century and a half before.⁴⁶

Amongst the events that were popular in Rome at the time — and there is no reason to think that Juba, having grown up watching those same games, would not have brought them to Mauretania — was one called the 'Game of Troy'. This game, a cavalry tournament akin to a cross between dressage and polo, was played between two teams of aristocratic youths, Ptolemy amongst them perhaps.⁴⁷ Virgil includes the games in a scene in *The Aeneid*, but such is the detail that he must have been describing contemporary games he had seen. He told how the boys galloped apart in two squadrons, before wheeling round and charging at one another with lances levelled, parting at the last minute to pass one another harmlessly by. These manoeuvres became increasingly complex, the boys directing their horses in intricate patterns 'like the Labyrinth'.⁴⁸ Aside from the astonishing feats of horsemanship, most noticeable was the glittering bronze armour that the boys wore, decorated cuirasses of a type similar to that worn by Roman soldiers for parades and ceremonies, or by generals during a triumph.⁴⁹

To commemorate the games, some of Juba's coins from that year bore the symbol of the crown given to the winners of the contests.⁵⁰ Others celebrated the young heir's coming of age, depicting Ptolemy on the reverse for the first time.⁵¹ Yet all was not well

there, and his return.

⁴⁴ Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 492; Gaetulicus will play a significant role in Chapter 17.

⁴⁵ Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 492.

⁴⁶ Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus'; Stephen V. Tracy and Christian Habicht. 'New and Old Panathenaic Victor Lists'. *Hesperia* 60/2 (1991), p. 216 note 119. See Chapter 2 for more about Mastanabal, and Chapters 14 and 18 for more about Ptolemy.

⁴⁷ D'Amato and Negin, *Decorated Roman Armour*, p. 73.

⁴⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5.545-603.

⁴⁹ D'Amato and Negin, *Decorated Roman Armour*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ *CNNM*, #227.

⁵¹ *CNNM*, #375-6.

within the kingdom: shortly after the victorious athletes were awarded with crowns of laurel leaves, riders arrived in the capital to warn the king that war had broken out.⁵²

The Gaetulians, another Berber tribe, had risen up in revolt, threatening a vast border area from the Roman provincial capital of Lepcis Magna in the east to Juba's capital of Iol Caesarea in the west, a front nine-hundred miles wide.⁵³ Dio reports that the Gaetulians ravaged the neighbouring territories, slaying many Romans in Africa Proconsularis, and no doubt Mauretians too.⁵⁴ Juba was forced to take up arms, calling on the governor Cossus — brother of the murdered Lucius — and the Roman legion stationed over the border, the *Legio III Augusta*, for support.⁵⁵ The two fought a successful campaign together, and the Gaetulians were eventually driven back. It was at this time that Ptolemy befriended Gaetulicus, Cossus' son, who had accompanied him to the province. Of similar age to Ptolemy, Gaetulicus was too young to fight so had stayed in the Mauretanian capital during his father's campaigns. The two became lifelong friends; a relationship that would one day have dire consequences for Ptolemy.⁵⁶

Victorious, Cossus returned home, and both he and Juba were awarded triumphal honours by the Roman Senate.⁵⁷ Augustus was commemorated too; Juba built a shrine next to the theatre in his honour and commissioned a new statue to go in it: the cuirassed statue of Augustus.⁵⁸ The similarity between the central figure of Divus Julius on the cuirass and on Augustus' coin is striking, and it's entirely possible that the statue was commissioned jointly with Cossus, or in part to honour the memory of his late brother Lucius, or both.

Of course, the main reason for commissioning the statue was to honour the emperor and the support he had lent to Mauretania's defence. Honouring the emperor by erecting statues and inscriptions and building shrines was part and parcel of being a loyal servant of Rome, whether imperial governor or client-king, and images of Augustus were ubiquitous throughout both the empire's provinces and the kingdoms that bordered them. By installing statues of Augustus, the kings were performing two functions: firstly, they were

⁵² Alexandropolous #226; Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 493 note 12.

⁵³ Jean-Claude Faur. 'Caligula et la Maurétanie: La fin de Ptolémée'. *Klio* 55 (1973): 249-71 (255).

⁵⁴ Dio, 55.28.3

⁵⁵ Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p94; Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 94

⁵⁶ Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', pp. 493-4. See Chapter 17

⁵⁷ Dio, 55.28.3; Velleius Paterculus, 2.116.2; Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 492. For more about these honours, see Chapter 17.

⁵⁸ Fittschen, 'Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel', p. 202.

making ostentatious displays of fealty towards Rome, displays that would be seen by visiting Romans, making it explicitly clear where their loyalties lay. Secondly, they were reminding their own subjects of their king's connections with Rome, reminding them that they were the conduit through which Roman wealth and influence flowed into the kingdom.⁵⁹ Juba owed his position to Augustus, and Mauretania owed the emperor its prosperity and, more often than not, its peace too.

The occasion that prompted the commissioning of the statue might have been the defeat of the Gaetuli by the joint forces of Juba and Cossus, but the imagery of the statue commemorated a different victory entirely, the victory that had raised Augustus above all other men: Actium.

* * *

The key to understanding the imagery of Augustus' cuirass lies in Virgil's famous description of Aeneas' shield, written only a few years before the statue was sculpted. Virgil offers an insight into how a Roman might 'read' the symbolism of such a piece:

On the one side Augustus Caesar stands on the lofty stern, leading Italians to strife,
with Senate and People, the Penates of the state, and all the mighty gods; his
auspicious brows shoot forth a double flame, and on his head dawns his father's star.⁶⁰

The Greeks called this rhetorical device *ekphrasis* — literally, 'description' — wherein an object is vividly, dramatically described, but in such a way as to evoke deeper story and emotion. The most famous example in ancient literature is the shield scene in Book 18 of *The Iliad*, through which the description of the imagery on Achilles' new shield tells the story of the wider war. It is no coincidence that Virgil is also describing a shield in his own ekphrasis, channelling Homer as he does so. However, in the *Aeneid* Virgil uses the device to elevate his poetry to a piece of propaganda, the images of the future on Aeneas' shield reminding the audience of the peace Augustus has won in the present. In the same way that the shields of both Achilles and Aeneas are objects imagined by their authors, the description of them serving as rhetorical tools to tell a story, so too is Augustus' cuirass. There is no evidence that the sculptor was copying the design of a real breastplate, but instead his sculpture is serving the same purpose as Virgil's poetry — describing an imaginary object, and in doing so telling a story. Ekphrasis in marble.

⁵⁹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 55, 58.

⁶⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.675-82.

Whilst Virgil describes the scene immediately before the Battle of Actium, the decoration on the cuirass evokes its aftermath: booty from the battle — the stern of a ship — is borne aloft by a Triton; Augustus' household gods — Mars, Venus, Divus Julius, star on his brow — receive the victory honours; and peace and prosperity are guaranteed at last, in the form of the centaur bearing the cornucopia and Venus putting down Mars' arms. And just as Virgil's poetry is intended as propaganda for Augustus' reign, so too is the sculpted cuirass. An educated audience would have been able to deduce its meaning, being reminded of the peace Augustus' victory at Actium had brought to the Mediterranean, and through that peace the security that underpinned Juba's reign.

Scholars have remarked that it seems odd that the defeat of Selene's parents would be so conspicuously celebrated in her capital, or that Juba decided to commemorate it decades after the fact.⁶¹ But this is to ignore an overlooked detail — by the time the statue stood in the centre of Caesarea in AD 5, Cleopatra Selene was already dead. Any awkwardness that might have lingered around celebrating the defeat of her parents had now gone. This presented both a setback and an opportunity. As we will see, Juba had spent much cultural currency attempting to forge links between his dynasty and that of his wife, using her Egyptian bloodline to bolster his own credentials as a Hellenistic king in his own right. Without her to legitimise — or perhaps encourage — the connection, this route was closed off to him. It's notable that, upon Selene's death, all Egyptian iconography on the kingdom's coinage vanishes.⁶²

Instead of his own birthright, Juba turned to the dynasty into which he had been adopted: the Julio-Claudians. While all client-kings prospered from their close association with Augustus and his heirs, none were as close as Juba.

Juba's relationship with Augustus was more than that of ruler and subject, or client and patron; they were close family. Both Juba and Selene had been formally adopted by Augustus into the Julio-Claudian household and by burnishing Augustus' reputation Juba was, by extension, burnishing his own.

The installation of the cuirassed statue of the emperor, and with it the celebration of Augustus' greatest victory at Actium, would mark a new start for Juba. With

⁶¹ Roller 2004, p.144, calls it an 'astonishing piece of political pragmatism since this conspicuous public sculpture at Caesarea memorializing the defeat of Kleopatra Selene's parents and necessarily ignored the prominent role of her father in the avenging of Caesar's death.'

⁶² Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 252.

the death of Selene, it was no longer enough for Juba to link his kingdom to the lineage of older, more prestigious dynasties like the Ptolemies of Egypt — there was only one dynasty that mattered now, the Julio-Claudians, upon whom the fate of Mauretania would solely depend.

7. Two Gold Coins



Figure 24. Gold Aureus from Cherchell depicting Juba II (Museum of the Bank of the Maghrib in Rabat, Morocco).

While countless bronze and silver coins survive from Juba's reign — almost every Western museum has a collection, largely unsorted and undisplayed — only two gold coins are known to exist. These are gold aurei, the largest Roman coin, equivalent to 25 silver denarii.¹ This particular aureus is on display in the Museum of the Bank of the Maghrib in Rabat, Morocco. The bronze and silver coins displayed alongside it are tarnished and dull, but the gold coin remains in near-perfect condition, gleaming, the design still crisp as though it had just been newly minted. Only in a few places is it scratched or scuffed, offering only the slightest indication that the coin had laid buried for centuries until archaeological excavations in Cherchell, Algeria brought it to light in 1930.

On the front is a portrait of Juba II, facing right, with the legend in Latin REX IVBA (King Juba). On the reverse is a simplified version of the symbol of the Egyptian goddess Isis: a pair of cow's horns framing a sun surmounted by sheafs of wheat. The symbol is accompanied by the Greek words KLEOPATRA BASILISSA (Queen Cleopatra). The design is similar to bronze coins from the beginning of their reign, when the coin was probably struck in the royal mint in Iol Caesarea.² This is unusual for Roman coinage, which rarely featured women in any capacity, and unique amongst client-kingdoms, which never depicted co-rulers — and yet fully a third of the kingdom's coins were jointly issued by Juba

¹ A single silver denarius was roughly a day's wages for a soldier or labourer.

² Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 44 note 59.

and Selene.³

Aureii were rare even in Rome in the first century BC, where gold was still associated with decadent luxury, but they were rarer still amongst the client-kingdoms — almost unheard of, in fact.

* * *



Map 3. The Kingdom of Mauretania, c. first century BC. Image: Arienne King.

When Juba became King of Mauretania in 25 BC, he joined the small group of client-kings who ruled the lands neighbouring the Roman Empire, semi-autonomous autocrats who reigned very much at Rome’s pleasure. Client-king is a decidedly modern phrase; the Romans referred to these kings as *rex sociusque et amicus* — ‘friend and ally of Rome’ — *rex*, *amicus* or *socius* for short.⁴

By the time Juba became king, only two other client-kings remained along the Mediterranean sea-board: Archelaus, priest-king of Cappadocia (in the south-east of modern-day Turkey) and Herod the Great, king of Judaea, both of whom owed their status to Selene’s father, Mark Antony.⁵ The other kingdoms that had once surrounded the Mediterranean had been swallowed up one by one by Roman expansion.⁶

Essentially the client-kingdoms were vassal states of Rome, subject in every regard to their more powerful neighbour’s whims and wishes. In many ways they were

³ See the analysis by Faur, ‘Caligula et la Maurétanie’, p. 252.

⁴ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 23.

⁵ Preston, *Cleopatra and Antony*, p. 217.

⁶ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 5.

comparable to the USA's relationship with its South American neighbours during the Cold War, where dictators were toppled or imposed to enable friendlier relations in line with America's interests. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil fictionalises this relationship between the client-kings and the emperor in the guise of King Aeolus, who is tasked with keeping storms and winds at bay by Jupiter, the father of gods.⁷

While the kings were sometimes counted amongst the emperor's personal friends and confidantes, even giving counsel at times, there were stringent limits placed on what they were permitted to do, even within their own kingdom. For example, they were expected to maintain law and order within their borders, keeping it free of banditry and piracy, but were limited as to the size and disposition of their armies so they never became a threat themselves to Rome. They certainly could not launch a foreign war without the emperor's express permission.⁸

Although each of the client-kings had their own coins minted, they were forced to adopt the Roman standard of the silver denarius — and were not permitted to mint gold coins at all. Such a privilege was reserved for the emperor alone.⁹ Augustus must have granted Juba special permission to mint these two coins, an honour he bestowed sparingly. Their rarity suggests that they never saw general circulation, but were issued instead to commemorate significant events in the lives of the royal couple: this aureus coincides with Juba and Selene's wedding in 25 BC; the second gold coin with Selene's death in AD 5.¹⁰

The coin was not the only thing commissioned by Juba and Selene to mark their marriage — the Greek poet Crinagoras of Mytilene commemorated the event in an epigram:

Great bordering regions of the world which the full stream of Nile separates from the black Ethiopians, you have by marriage made your sovereigns common to both, turning Egypt and Libya into one country. May the children of these princes ever again rule with unshaken dominion over both lands.¹¹

The epigram was only ever a minor, if enormously varied, poetic genre, but one that proved remarkably persistent throughout the classical world, remaining in use from around 800 BC until the end of antiquity. Often used on inscriptions or to commemorate key

⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.50-80.

⁸ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 91.

⁹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 123; Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', pp. 260-1.

¹⁰ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', pp. 260-1.

¹¹ Crinagoras, Epigram 25.

public figures or events, it functioned in ancient Rome along the lines of a ‘society column’.¹² While employed by some of Rome’s most famous poets, including Catullus and Martial, the epigram remained indelibly linked to Greece. Amongst its many advocates were the Ptolemies, who employed it partly to reinforce their dynastic links with Alexander the Great and the wider Hellenic world.¹³ It is perhaps no surprise that the epigram was the form to which Juba and Selene would turn to commemorate their marriage.

Crinagoras’ epigram tells of a contemporary marriage between the children of the kings of Egypt and Libya. While it does not name them, it is widely accepted to be about Juba and Selene.¹⁴ Selene, of course, was the sole survivor of the Egyptian royal dynasty, and while she was the daughter of a queen not a king, Crinagoras cannot be talking about anyone else. Similarly, he is using Libya in the manner of Homer — as a poetic allusion to North Africa — as the historian Josephus later does when he also calls Juba ‘King of Libya’.¹⁵ While Crinagoras seems unfamiliar with their ancestral lands, as demonstrated by his muddling of the geography of North Africa and the course of the Nile, this was more a case of poetic license to please the king and queen than deliberate error. Certainly it served Juba’s own political and scholarly interests to connect both his new kingdom and his wife’s ancestral lands by dint of the Nile, as we shall see later, and Crinagoras was more than familiar with the geography of North Africa.¹⁶

Born in 70 BC, Crinagoras lived a long life, first serving as an ambassador to the courts of Herod, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and Augustus, and then as poet laureate in Rome.¹⁷ While attending Augustus during his campaign in Spain in 25 BC, he befriended both the emperor and his nephew and heir, Marcellus, accompanying them on their return to Rome where he entered the service of the imperial household as a tutor.¹⁸ He became close friends with Selene, who he probably knew from his time in Alexandria, eventually accompanying her and Juba to Mauretania, where he would have taught her children.¹⁹

There, established as court poet, Crinagoras helped Selene keep the Ptolemaic tradition of epigram alive. Juba, always keen to associate himself with the Hellenistic kings, seems to have taken to the form himself, writing at least one epigram poking fun at the weight

¹² Henriksén, *A Companion to Ancient Epigram*, p. 64.

¹³ Hoschele, ‘Greek Epigram in Rome’, p. 478.

¹⁴ Braund, ‘Anth. Pal. 9. 235’, p. 175.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.3.4; *Wars*, 2.115.

¹⁶ Braund, ‘Anth. Pal. 9. 235’, p.177; Roller 2004, p. 187, 190.

¹⁷ Roller 2004, p. 70, 87

¹⁸ Roller 2004, p. 87. See Chapters 5 and 8 for more on Crinagoras’ role as a tutor.

¹⁹ Jacobson, ‘Three Roman Client Kings’, p.31

gained by his court tragedian, Leonteus of Argos:²⁰

While looking at me, Leonteus, echo of an artichoke-eating tragedian,
Do not look into the heart of wretched Hypsipyle.
For I was once the friend of Bakchos, who admired no voice
More than mine, listening with gold-lobed ears,
But now earthen pot-stands and dry saucepans
Have deprived me of my voice, because I gratified my stomach.²¹

It's possible that Crinagoras wrote the epigram as a gift to the royal couple. This was not without precedent: he wrote a whole series of poems to accompany various gifts, from a book of poetry for Selene's half-sister Antonia to a silver pen for a young boy named Proclus:²²

This silver pen-nib, with its newly polished holder, nicely moulded with two easily dividing tips, running glib with even flow over the rapidly written page, Crinagoras sends you, Proclus, for your birthday, a little token of great affection, which will sympathize with your newly acquired readiness in learning.²³

Gift exchange was an integral part of the system of patronage upon which Rome and the client-kingdoms ran, doubly so when it came to artists and poets. In exchange for poetic praise, Crinagoras could expect both social and economic support from his imperial and royal patrons and although there was a certain element of quid-pro-quo to it, such client-patron relationships were often genuine friendships.²⁴

* * *

Twenty years later, a second gold coin was minted too, found at Banasa, Morocco, in the *Maison à l'Aureus de Juba*. As with the first coin, this too shows a crowned head of Juba on the front, and on the reverse a symbolic representation of Selene. Here, Selene is depicted as a serpent, crowned with the horned symbol of Isis, to her left the crescent moon that was both

²⁰ Athenaios, 8.343e-f (Juba fr. 104); A.-M. Desrousseux. 'Une Épigramme du roi Juba (FHG, III, p. 483, fr. 83)'. In *Mélanges dédiés à la Mémoire de Félix Grat*, edited by É.-A. van Moé, Jeanne Vielliard, and Pierre Marot (Paris: En Dépôt Chez Mme. Pecqueur-Grat, 1949): 27-30.

²¹ Athenaios, 8.343e-f = BNJ 275 F104.

²² Crinagoras, Epigram 6.227, 9.239; Hoschele, 'Greek Epigram in Rome', p. 478.

²³ Crinagoras, Epigrams 6.227.

²⁴ Hoschele, 'Greek Epigram in Rome', p. 479.

the symbol of her divine namesake and her kingdom. This coin is referred to as the ‘deification’ aureus, and it is commonly accepted to have been minted by Juba to commemorate the death of Selene, in 5 BC.²⁵ This occasion, too, was commemorated by Crinagoras in verse. In Epigram 18, he writes:

The moon herself, rising at early eve, dimmed her light, veiling her mourning in night, because she saw her namesake, pretty Selene, going down dead to murky Hades. On her she had bestowed the beauty of her light, and with her death she mingled her own darkness.²⁶

And unlike the poetic license employed in his first epigram, here Crinagoras might not be writing allegorically at all — astronomical modelling suggests that on 23rd March 5 BC there was a total eclipse of the moon.²⁷ The kingdom of Mauretania was plunged into darkness, its king into a period of sorrowful mourning.



Figure 25. Silver coin from Banasa, featuring the same design as the ‘Deification Aureus’ (British Museum, 1908,0404.47).

²⁵ Roller 2004, p. 249.

²⁶ Crinagoras, Epigram 18.

²⁷ Roller 2004, p. 250; see also Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.167, as it occurred just before death of Herod.

8. Men of Letters

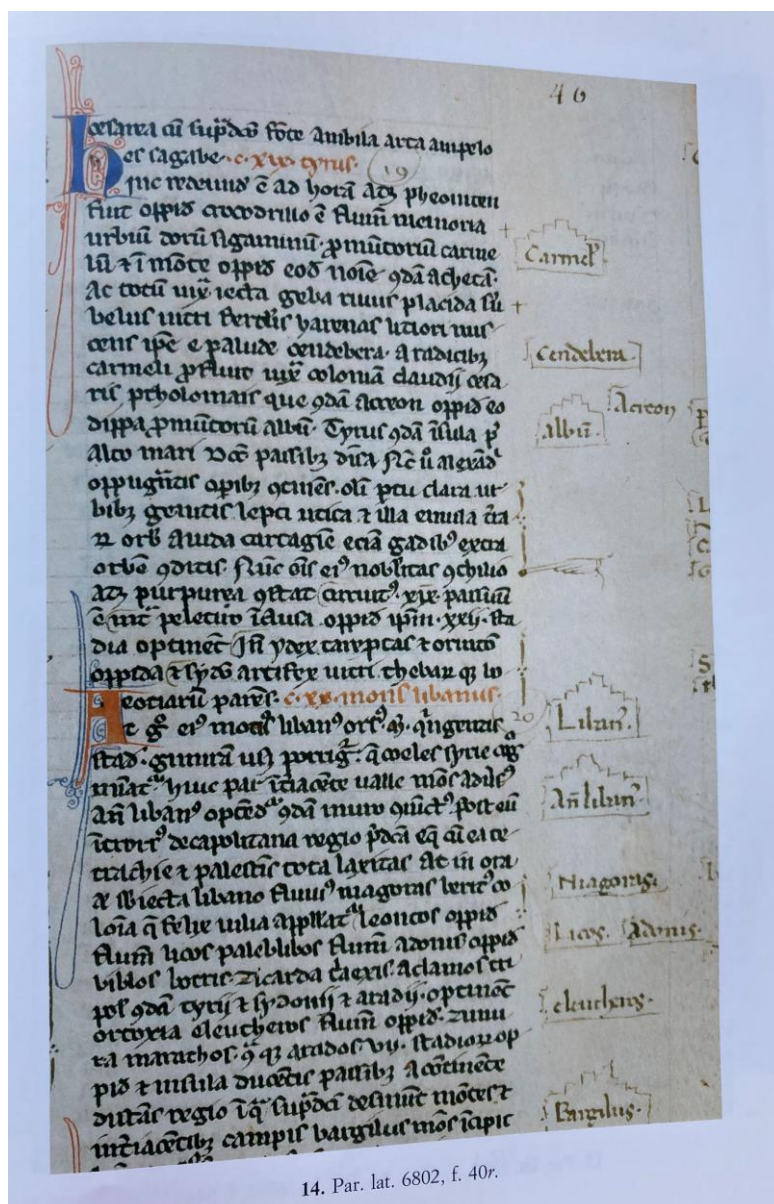


Figure 26. Page from Petrarch's copy of the *Natural History* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Par. Lat. 6802, f.40 r). Photograph: Fiorilla, Marginalia figurati nei codici di Petrarca.

This small, leatherbound book is a copy of Pliny the Elder's first-century encyclopedia, the *Natural History*.¹ It contains two columns of handwritten text written in Latin, including a series of illuminated letters. The main body text is in black ink, with marginal annotations in

¹ Pliny the Elder. *Caii Plinii Secundi Historiae Naturalis Libri Triginta Septem: Praemittitur Plinii Vita è Tranquilli Catalogo Virorum Illustrium Descripta*. Latin 6802, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits.

brown, and paraphs in blue and red.² The style of the scribal handwriting suggests that this copy of the manuscript was originally made in the late thirteenth century.³ The manuscript itself belongs to a group of manuscripts of the *Natural History* descended from a common hyparchetype, originally copied in France in the ninth or tenth centuries.⁴ A note written on the frontis tells us that it was purchased on 6th July 1350 in Mantua, northern Italy, the handwriting identified by the French historian Pierre de Nolhac as belonging to Francesco Petrarca (1304-74) — known to posterity as Petrarch — an early humanist scholar and poet whose impact on the Renaissance cannot be overestimated.⁵ The manuscript is not a complete copy but an abridgement; while all thirty-seven books are represented, some are no more than a paragraph long. Petrarch might not have immediately realised the extent of the omissions, but he did notice the poor quality of the Latin in his copy.⁶ A letter written shortly after expresses his dismay.⁷

What would Cicero, or Livy, or the other great men of the past, Pliny above all, think if they could return to life and read their own books?⁸

After Petrarch's death in 1374 the book entered the collection of Tomasso di Campo Fregoso, the Doge of Genoa, before passing to the bibliophile King Alfonso V of Aragon. By 1481 it was recorded as being owned by his son, the King of Naples, Ferdinando I. After the French conquest of Naples in 1495, the Aragonese library was brought back to Tours, whence it eventually entered the royal library and subsequently the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where it still resides.⁹

The margins of the manuscript contain annotations in two different hands. At some point the vertical edges of the pages have been trimmed to fit a smaller binding, truncating some of these marginalia.¹⁰ Most of the annotations have been attributed to

² Marjorie Chibnall. 'Pliny's *Natural History* and the Middle Ages'. In *Empire and Aftermath. Silver Latin II*, edited by Thomas Alan Dorey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975): 57-78 (75).

³ Pierre de Nolhac. *Pétrarque et l'humanisme* (Paris: E. Bouillon, 1892), p. 270; Sarah Blake McHam. *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), p.63.

⁴ Known as Manuscript 'E'; Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 270 note 2; L. D. Reynolds. *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 312-3.

⁵ Pliny the Elder, *Caii Plinii Secundi Historiae Naturalis Libri Triginta Septem*.

⁶ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 63.

⁷ Healy, 'Introduction', xxxvii.

⁸ Petrarch, *Familiars*, XII.5.

⁹ Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, pp. 89-90 including note 1; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 63 note 23.

¹⁰ Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 270 note 3; Chibnall, 'Pliny's *Natural History*', p. 75; McHam, *Pliny*

Petrarch, but the second hand in the annotations has been attributed to Giovanni Boccaccio, Petrarch's close friend and contemporary, implying that he allowed him access to the manuscript.¹¹ Paleographical analysis shows that Petrarch glossed the text on two separate occasions: firstly, in 1350, shortly after its purchase, and again six years later.¹² In places, Petrarch adds a commentary on the text or a personal anecdote, such as reports of storms or an earthquake he has experienced, or the bad smells pervading Avignon.¹³ In three separate places, someone has added a drawing in the margin — a bust of a bearded man, a stork wading at the foot of a mountain, and a domed cathedral. Throughout, Petrarch has attempted to correct errors in the Latin of the text.¹⁴

Most of Petrarch's notes were written to make the text more navigable, in lieu of an index. When he encountered a reference to a place, he wrote it in the margin so he could find it again, employing different symbols to add clarity: underlining the name of rivers, drawing a line over cities, marking a region with a vertical stroke to the left and surrounding a mountain with a peaked frame.¹⁵ Likewise whenever he read about an author who interested him, he added their names in the margin too — so, for example, on the reverse of folio 21 he writes the name Livy, on folio 79 he writes Josephus, in seven separate places he writes the name Suetonius.¹⁶ On 39f he writes 'Juba' in the margin, next to a story about a crocodile, and then again, on 234v, he writes 'Juba ad Gaius'.¹⁷ Which is odd, because by the fourteenth century, Juba's own writing — even the knowledge of Juba as a scholar — was thought to have been lost.

Record of Juba's writing only survives, after a fashion, in the works of other authors. For example, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch and Athenaeus all make reference not just to the king but to the contents of his books. While these authors rarely, if ever, directly quote Juba, they often paraphrase him or reference his books by name. Just as Petrarch wrote the names of authors referenced by Pliny in the margins of the *Natural History*, modern scholars too have combed

and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance, p. 23.

¹¹ Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 275; Maurizio Fiorilla. *Marginalia figurati nei codici di Petrarca*. Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2005; Toby Lester. 'Armchair Travelers'. *The American Scholar*, 1 September 2009. <https://theamericanscholar.org/armchair-travelers>; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 64.

¹² McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 64.

¹³ Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, pp. 279-80.

¹⁴ Healy, 'Introduction', xxxvii.

¹⁵ Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 275; Lester, 'Armchair Travelers'.

¹⁶ Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 277; Fiorilla, *Marginalia figurati nei codici di Petrarca*, p. 23.

¹⁷ Latin 6802, 39f and 234v. See Pliny, 5.10, for the corresponding story regarding Juba and the crocodile.

through countless ancient sources to find traces of Juba. In this way, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ludwig Müller and then Felix Jacoby identified references to Juba's writing nestled within the work of ancient writers, including the titles of some of his books and allusions to their contents.¹⁸ Thus we have Stephanos of Byzantium's sixth century mention of a book called *Roman History*, possibly the first of Juba's works written while he was still a youth in Rome:

Ostia, city of Italy. Juba in the first book of his *Roman History*: 'The Tiber is near to the city of Ostia on the north side.'¹⁹

Roman History, elsewhere called *Roman Archaeology*, covered the period from the mythical founding of Italy and the regal period, to the Spanish wars of the second century BC. As well as Stephanos, it was also cited by Plutarch, who considered Juba one of the most reliable sources for early Roman history, favouring him over Livy.²⁰ Antiquarianism grew increasingly popular during the Augustan age, and in writing about Roman history and antiquities Juba was following in the footsteps of popular scholars including Dionysios of Halicarnassus and Varro.²¹ He might have had the edge in one regard, however — as a member of the imperial family, he would have had privileged access to archival material unavailable to other historians.²²

Another topic in vogue amongst scholars of the Augustan age was an attempt to connect the Greek and Roman worlds, culturally and linguistically. Rome had long been self-conscious about its relative youth and barbarism when compared to Greece, and sought to garner credibility and grandeur through the discovery — or invention — of Greek origins for Roman customs and culture.²³ In return, Greek authors sought to hitch their own cultural heritage to Rome's rising star.²⁴ Again, Juba followed suit, writing a series of linguistic treatises about the Greek origins of Latin words — a topic that would turn out to be a something of a favourite of Juba's — called *On Resemblances*. Plutarch referenced this work

¹⁸ Ludwig Müller, Christian Tuxen Falbe, and Jacob Christian Lindberg. *Numismatique de l'ancienne Afrique* (L. Müller, 1860); Felix Jacoby. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923); Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II, King of Mauretania', p. 167.

¹⁹ BNJ 275 F10; Stephanos of Byzantium, *Ethnika*; Stephanos' own work survives only in fragmentary form.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Sulla*, 16.8; Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 4, 59, 89; Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene*, pp. 167-9.

²¹ Roller 2004, p. 168; Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 167.

²² Roller 2004, pp. 166-7, 9.

²³ Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 167.

²⁴ Dionysios, *Roman Archaeology*, 1.5.1; Varro, *De lingua latina*, 5.21, 77-9; Strabo 3.4.19; Roller 2004, pp. 170-1.

several times:

They call the shields ἀγκίλια (ancile) because of their shape, for they do not appear to be circular, like a shield, or even round, but have a curving indentation, whose projections are turned back closely together toward each other, which makes their shape bent [ἀγκύλος]. Or they are so called because they are carried at the elbow [ἀγκών]. This is what Juba says, who strove to derive the name from Greek.²⁵

As well as history and linguistics, Juba also wrote about art and culture. A fleeting reference to a book about art can be found in Harpocration, a second century grammarian in Alexandria:

Thus the painter Parrhasios is conspicuous in everything. Juba in the eighth book of his *On Painters* has discussed his career in detail, saying that he was the son and pupil of Euenor. He was an Ephesian.²⁶

In a somewhat tangential monologue in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*, one of the musicians at Larensius' banquet lectures the diners about various dances and musical instruments, repeatedly quoting another book by Juba.²⁷ Juba had a lifelong passion for the theatre, even going so far as to build a theatre of his own in Caesarea, so it's no surprise that he might write extensively on the subject too:

In regard to the instrument called the triangle, Juba, in the fourth book of his *Theatrical History*, says that it is a Syrian invention, like the so-called Phoenician lyre [...] and the sambyke.²⁸

All in all, 104 references to Juba's writing have been found. We can be fairly confident as to the topics about which Juba wrote, if not his literary style — with perhaps one possible exception. A lengthy description in the *Natural History* of the Nile, for which Juba is named as the source, is notably not in Pliny's usual style — so might actually preserve something of the king's own words:²⁹

Pouring forth from this lake, [the Nile] disdains flowing through sandy places and wastelands and disappears for a journey of some days, but eventually bursts out into a larger lake in the Masaesyli territory of Mauretanian Caesariensis, as if inspecting the

²⁵ BNJ 275 F89; Plutarch, *Numa*, 13.9-10.

²⁶ BNJ 275 F20.

²⁷ BNJ 275 F15A; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 4.77.

²⁸ BNJ 275 F15A; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 4.77.

²⁹ Roller 2004, p. 181.

gathering of mankind, proving its identity by displaying the same fauna. Again received by the desert sand, it hides a second time for twenty days, as far as the nearest Ethiopians, and when it senses mankind again it rushes forth at a spring, probably the one called Niger.³⁰

Certainly, asides about the origin of place names later in the same passage fit what we know about Juba's interest in etymology:

The river runs through the middle of Ethiopia and is named the Astapous, which, in the language of those people, means 'water flowing from the darkness.' It thus scatters innumerable islands, some of great size, that in spite of its great speed it flies past them in five days, not less. While it goes around the most famous of these, Meroë, the left hand channel is called the Astoboures, that is 'the branch of water coming out of the darkness', and the right the Astosapes, which means 'the side branch'. It is not the Nile again until all the waters have come back together, and even then it still has its former name of Giris for some miles. It is the Aigyptos throughout to Homer, but to others the Triton.³¹

By the time Juba became king in 25 BC, he had already been writing scholarly works for ten years. As the sources for his books are very much second hand, it's difficult to arrange them in any sort of chronology, but it's likely that works such as *Roman History*, *Resemblances* and *On Theatre*, of which only the slightest of traces remain, were part of his considerable youthful output, written while still in Rome.³² His more substantial works — *Libyca* and *On Arabia* — referenced by Pliny over and over again for the flora, fauna, geography and customs of Africa and Arabia, were not written until he became king.

No one relied on Juba as much as Pliny the Elder, who referenced the king more than fifty times. Pliny so trusted Juba's diligence that he believed an error in one of his works to be the fault of the copyist instead:³³

Juba, who appears to have investigated all these matters extremely carefully, has omitted to mention [...] (unless there is an error in the copies of his work) [...].³⁴

Pliny was not the only writer who came to rely on Juba's scholarship. Soon after his death, Juba was widely regarded for his reputation as a scholar.³⁵ Plutarch said of

³⁰ BNJ 275 F38a; Pliny, *NH*, 5.10.51-5.

³¹ BNJ 275 F38a; Pliny, *NH*, 5.10.51-5.

³² Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 167.

³³ Roller 2004, p. 163.

³⁴ Pliny, *NH*, 6.33.170.

³⁵ Roller 2004, p. 163.

Juba that he was ‘of all kings, the most devoted to historical enquiry’, and made extensive use of his writing.³⁶ Over a century after his death Juba was mentioned in the same breath as more famous — to us, today — historians by the Christian theologian Tertullian, and in the third century he was considered by his fellow countryman, the Mauretanian writer Lucius Ampelius to be ‘rex literatissimus’ — ‘the most scholarly king’.³⁷

Pliny the Elder’s own story is sufficiently well known that it’s only worth briefly recapping: born to an equestrian family in Como in AD 23 or 24, Pliny served as a military officer fighting German tribes during the reign of Claudius.³⁸ He later became friend and advisor to the emperor Vespasian (r. AD 69-79) and admiral of the West Italian fleet based at Misenum, on the Bay of Naples. Pliny the Elder’s biography, as well as the *Natural History* itself, comes to us via his nephew, the inveterate letter writer Pliny the Younger (AD 61-c113).³⁹ It is via such a letter, written to his friend, the historian Tacitus, that Pliny the Younger provides a vivid account of his uncle’s death, in the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79:

My uncle’s scholarly acumen saw at once that it was important enough for a closer inspection, and he ordered a boat be made ready [...]. As he was leaving the house he was handed a message from Rectina, wife of Tascus, whose house was at the foot of the mountain. She was terrified by the danger threatening her and implored him to rescue her from her fate. He changed his plans, and what he had begun in a spirit of inquiry he completed as a hero.⁴⁰

Throughout his career, Pliny the Elder wrote extensively whenever his duties allowed, as recounted by his nephew in another letter:

In the country, the only time he took from his work was for his bath, and by bath I mean his actual immersion, for while he was being rubbed down and dried he had a book read to him or dictated notes. When he travelled he felt free from other responsibilities to give every minute to work; he kept a secretary at his side with book and notebook, and in winter saw that his hands were protected by long sleeves, so that even bitter weather should not rob him of a working hour. For the same reason he used to be carried about Rome in a chair. I can remember how he scolded me for walking; according to him I need not have wasted those hours, for he thought any time wasted which was not devoted to work.⁴¹

³⁶ Plutarch, *Sertorius*, 9.5.

³⁷ Tertullian, *Apology*, 19.6; Lucius Ampelius, *Liber memorialis*, 38.1.2.

³⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 16.1.3-5.

³⁹ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 25; Daisy Dunn. *In the Shadow of Vesuvius: A Life of Pliny*. Kindle edition (London: William Collins, 2019).

⁴⁰ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 6.16.

⁴¹ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 3.5.

In antiquity, Pliny the Elder was best known as a historian, but of the seven books he wrote, only the *Natural History* has survived.⁴² Completed just a couple of years before his death, the *Natural History* was written at a rare time of peace in the Roman world, at a moment when it seemed scientific advancement and human knowledge had reached their zenith.⁴³ The *Natural History* was intended to capture this moment, providing a comprehensive encyclopedia of ‘nature, that is, life’.⁴⁴ It was intended for a popular audience, Pliny writing in his dedication that it was ‘for the masses, for the horde of farmers and artisans and, finally, for those who have time to devote to these pursuits’.⁴⁵ But it was also written for Vespasian’s successor, Titus (r. AD 79-81), on whose patronage Pliny’s career depended, and much of the preface is filled with flattery towards the new emperor.⁴⁶

Pliny’s original title was *Historia Naturalis*; while this is typically translated as *Natural History*, it can also be translated as *Research on the World* — a better fit, perhaps, for the breadth of knowledge contained within it is truly vast. Its 37 books encompass everything from eclipses of the sun and the moon, the origin of winds, the island of Britain and the route to India, Caesarian sections, hippos and rhinos, the government of bees, how to make olive oil, kidney beans, where to build a farm house, twenty-six remedies from a wild cucumber, sex and sneezing, gold rings and who can wear them, Roman painters and the manufacture of cement.⁴⁷ Pliny wasn’t a scientist, however, but rather a compiler of scientific knowledge.⁴⁸ By his own reckoning, the *Natural History* contains 20,000 facts, from 200 works by 100 authors.⁴⁹ This is, by all accounts, an underestimate, as nearly 500 authors are named throughout the text — 146 Roman and 327 foreign authors.⁵⁰

Pliny arranged the book in a logical fashion, proceeding from the overall structure of the natural world down to its constituent components — from the universe to the earth, including kingdoms and geography; then to creatures, from man to animals, then to

⁴² Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 3.5; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 27.

⁴³ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, pp. 27-8.

⁴⁴ Pliny, *NH*, Preface 13.

⁴⁵ Pliny, *NH*, Preface 6.

⁴⁶ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Respectively covered in Pliny, *NH*, 2.7.47, 2.44.114, 4.16.102, 6.26.96-106, 7.9.47, 8.29.71, 8.39.95, 11.17.52-4, 15.6.20-3, 18.7.32, 18.33.125, 20.2.3, 28.15.57, 28.16.58, 33.6.17-28, 35.7.19, 35.47.166; Healy, ‘Introduction’, xvii.

⁴⁸ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 27.

⁴⁹ Pliny, *NH*, Preface, 21.

⁵⁰ Healy, ‘Introduction’, xvii; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 28.

plants; and finally to stone and metal.⁵¹ Despite the vast scale of the book, it wasn't until 1514 — nearly 1500 years after it was published — that an index was first produced for it, which was sold separately in Venice alongside the first printed edition.⁵² It's no wonder that Petrarch felt the need to devise his own system for navigating the work, jotting down key words in the margins so he could find them again. The location and concentration of Petrarch's annotations — far from evenly spread — give us an insight into his own interests within the *Natural History*: geography and the culture of the ancient world in particular, as well as Pliny's digressions about ancient art.⁵³

Petrarch was diligent and dedicated in his research and accomplished in his poetry and prose. He went further than anyone else in trying to resurrect the ideals of the classical world within a Christian society, as well as to bring as much from antiquity that had been lost back into the light.⁵⁴ Petrarch was born in Arezzo, Italy but raised in Avignon, France after his father went into exile there.⁵⁵ Avignon was a crucible of learning, a point of cultural contact between Italy and France, and filled with older scholars with an abiding interest in ancient texts. While based there Petrarch made immense discoveries, many in French libraries: he uncovered copies of Seneca's *Tragedies* at Avignon, Livy's *Roman History* at Chartres, Propertius in Paris and Cicero's *Pro Archia* in Liege, all previously thought lost. Across the Alps in Northern Italy he found Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, the *Historia Augusta*, as well as Varro's *De Lingua Latina*. His classical library was the best in the world at that time. It would have been easy for Petrarch to become a simple book collector, but he was an avid scholar too; he read his books over and over again, patiently annotating and correcting texts whenever he found mistakes.⁵⁶ All the while he was studying these books, his student and colleague Boccaccio was busy making copies available to humanists elsewhere.⁵⁷

Petrarch did not rediscover the *Natural History*, however; Pope John XXII had a complete copy made for the papal library in 1317, and other copies were circulating — by 1369 the bookshop in Avignon had at least four in stock.⁵⁸ Finding a complete copy wasn't

⁵¹ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 27.

⁵² Richard Yeo. 'Review of Pliny's Encyclopedia: The Reception of the Natural History, by Aude Doody.' *Isis* 103/1 (2012): 169.

⁵³ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 64.

⁵⁴ Reynolds, *Scribes and Scholars*, p. 129.

⁵⁵ Petrarch, *Seniles*, 18.

⁵⁶ Reynolds, *Scribes and Scholars*, p. 132.

⁵⁷ Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, xl.

⁵⁸ Nollhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 59, 270 note 1; Arno Borst. *Das Buch der Naturgeschichte: Plinius*

the problem, therefore — finding an error-free manuscript was. With its large number of technical terms and unknown names, scribes had always found the *Natural History* a difficult book to copy. Over the past centuries, so many errors had crept into the text that, when Petrarch bought his copy, the first thing he did was immediately set to work annotating and emending it whenever he encountered a mistake.⁵⁹ He made corrections and cleared up any obscurities in the text, setting out to verify Pliny's references whenever he could — he invited Boccaccio to join him in a search for the source of the Timavo and checked Pliny's geography of Greece against accurate sea charts he acquired of the Mediterranean.⁶⁰ And, throughout the manuscript, he crowded the margins with innumerable annotations, summaries of anecdotes and lists of proper names, so that the text might become usable — both to Petrarch, who frequently referenced it within his own book *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, as well as to other scholars within his circle.⁶¹ Petrarch might not have rediscovered the *Natural History* — it was never completely lost, after all — but he probably contributed more to its study and popularity than any other scholar since the end of antiquity.

* * *

Juba was a voracious reader, his appetite for books was still well known six centuries later, the Greek scholar Elias writing that the King was once swindled by forgers who sold him a set of fake manuscripts supposedly by Pythagoras.⁶² Before he set out for his new kingdom, one of the priorities uppermost in his mind would be to have copies made of as many books as he could get his hands on in Rome. In Rome, he would have had ready access to books from across the Mediterranean, from one of the city's many booksellers or libraries, such as the one founded by Augustus in the Temple of Apollo in 28 BC.⁶³ In Mauretania, Juba would have to rely on copies being sent from abroad. Had any of the king's correspondence survived, we would no doubt find him asking his friends back in Rome and Athens to send him copies of the latest books, as Cicero did in a letter to his brother Quintus.⁶⁴

On assuming the throne, Juba continued to write, immediately beginning a vast

und seine Leser im Zeitalter des Pergaments (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1994), p. 293 note 1.

⁵⁹ Chibnall, 'Pliny's Natural History', p. 74; Healy, 'Introduction', xxxviii-xxxix.

⁶⁰ Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 271, 276 note 1; Chibnall, 'Pliny's Natural History and the Middle Ages', pp. 74-5.

⁶¹ Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 272; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 68.

⁶² Elias, *In Arist. cat. com.*

⁶³ Reynolds, *Scribes and Scholars*, p. 25.

⁶⁴ Cicero, *Letters to Quintus*, 3.5.

treatise called *Libyca*, covering not only Mauretania itself but the whole of North Africa from the Atlantic in the west to the Red Sea in the east.⁶⁵ This was the apparatus by which the King approached the governance of his new kingdom — to investigate it, to analyse it, and then to catalogue it.⁶⁶ The information Juba accessed was impeccable, amongst his sources were the *Libri Punici*, the vaunted library of Carthage rescued from the fires of destruction and inherited from his grandfather Hiempsal II, as well as the writings of the Ptolemaic kings he had access to by dint of Selene's birthright — but they were decades, a century even, out of date.⁶⁷ To update them, Juba collected first-hand reports, interviewing eye witnesses such as merchants and traders, as well as locals old enough to remember life under King Bocchus II. More significantly, he commissioned trusted explorers to conduct new surveys or set out himself in the name of research.⁶⁸ Expeditions such as these were not uncommon, and they served a political purpose as well as a scientific one. They delimited the territory a king ruled over and catalogued his subject peoples — or soon-to-be subject peoples — along with its resources. His explorers made maps, recorded customs, took plant samples and inventories of new species.⁶⁹

Within the first few years of his reign, Juba had sent expeditions into the deserts that bordered Mauretania to the south and up into the Atlas Mountains. It was on such a trip that, if Pliny is to be taken literally, the king himself went in search of the Nile, bringing back crocodiles from a lake he erroneously judged to be its source.⁷⁰ He also sent ships down the western coast of Africa and into the Atlantic, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, the Carthaginian explorer Hanno and the writer Polybius. There they discovered the Purple Islands — modern-day Mogador, off the coast of Morocco — and the source of the purple dye that would contribute to Mauretania's great wealth. They also found the Fortunate Islands, a chain of islands that featured heavily in Greek myth, just about visible off the southernmost coast of Mauretania. Juba named the last of the isles Canaria, for its population of large dogs, two of which his sailors brought back for him, and for which the islands are known today: the Canary Islands.⁷¹ It is in Juba's description of the Fortunate Islands —

⁶⁵ Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 162.

⁶⁶ Roller 2004, p. 183.

⁶⁷ BNJ 275 F49, 51A, 53; Roller 2004, p. 185, 190-1.

⁶⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 8.5.13-15; Roller 2004, p. 192.

⁶⁹ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 138; Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II, King of Mauretania', p. 162.

⁷⁰ Pliny, *NH*, 5.10.51; Roller 2004, p. 192. See Chapter 12 for the potential political motivations for this expedition.

⁷¹ Vincent H. Cassidy. 'Other Fortunate Islands and Some That Were Lost'. *Terrae Incognitae* 1/1 (1969): 35-

communicated to us via Pliny, for whom the *Libyka* is the only source for information on the islands — that the clearest picture emerges of Juba's broad range of scholarly interests, taking in everything from ancient history to natural history and horticulture:⁷²

About the [Fortunate Islands] Juba has ascertained the following facts: [...] that the first island reached is called Ombrios,⁷³ and there are no traces of buildings upon it, but it has a pool surrounded by mountains and trees resembling the giant fennel, from which water is extracted, the black ones giving a bitter fluid and those of brighter colour a juice that is agreeable to drink; that the second island is called Junonia,⁷⁴ and that there is a small temple on it built of only a single stone; and that in its neighbourhood there is a smaller island of the same name, and then Capraria,⁷⁵ which swarms with large lizards; and that in view from these islands is Ninguaria,⁷⁶ so named from its perpetual snow, and wrapped in cloud; and next to it one named Canaria, from its multitude of dogs of a huge size (two of these were brought back for Juba). He said that in this island there are traces of buildings; that while they all have an abundant supply of fruit and of birds of every kind, Canaria also abounds in palm-groves bearing dates, and in conifers; that in addition to this there is a large supply of honey, and also papyrus grows in the rivers, and sheat-fish; and that these islands are plagued with the rotting carcasses of monstrous creatures that are constantly being cast ashore by the sea.⁷⁷

Petrarch, too, had an interest in the Fortunate Islands, making a note beside them in the margin of the *Natural History*, and later identifying them as the same islands that 'within the memory of our fathers, the warships of the Genoese penetrated to'.⁷⁸

As well as the Canary Islands, another of Juba's discoveries remains in everyday parlance today, even if we don't realise it: euphorbion, a cactus-like plant native to Morocco more commonly known as the resin spurge, and more widely as the plant genus *euphorbia*. Juba discovered the plant on an expedition into the Atlas Mountains and named it for his physician, Euphorbus, who was presumably accompanying him:⁷⁹

In the time of our fathers King Juba discovered a plant that he called euphorbion, named after his physician [...] Juba's book on this plant still exists, and is a well-known report. He discovered it on Mt. Atlas. It looks like a thyrus with acanthus-like

9; Roller 2004, pp. 196-7; Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II, King of Mauretania', p. 162.

⁷² Roller 2004, pp. 197-8.

⁷³ Ferro.

⁷⁴ Fuerteventura.

⁷⁵ Gomera.

⁷⁶ Tenerife.

⁷⁷ Pliny, *NH*, 6.37.201-5.

⁷⁸ Lester, 'Armchair Travelers'.

⁷⁹ BNJ 275 F7, F42; Pliny, *NH*, 25.33.77-8, 5.116.

leaves. Its strength is such that the juice is extracted from a distance by cutting with a pole, catching it underneath in receptacles made from kid's stomachs. A milky juice is seen to flow down, and when it has dried and congealed it has the appearance of frankincense. Those who collect it see better. It is a remedy for snake bite: regardless of where one is bitten, an incision is made on the top of the head and the medication added there. The Gaetulians who gather it mix it with milk, because of its bitterness, but it can be distinguished by fire, since even when not pure it has a disagreeable odor.⁸⁰

Antonius Euphorbus was a Greek freedman formerly in the service of Selene's father, who accompanied Juba from Rome in 25 BC to become the couple's personal physician and pharmacologist — one of many Greek intellectuals to join the nascent court in Iol Caesarea.⁸¹ His brother Antonius Musa was also a doctor who remained in Rome in the employ of Augustus, gaining something of a celebrity status for saving the emperor's life in 23 BC, and thereafter counting Agrippa, Maecenas and Horace amongst his patients.⁸²

While it was Euphorbus who explored the plant's therapeutic value — already known to the native Gaetulians — it was Juba who popularised it. Juba wrote a treatise about the plant, its properties and uses, *On Euphorbion*, which the Greek medical writer Galen called the king's 'tiny, small book'.⁸³ Within just a few years of its discovery, euphorbion was cropping up in recipes in medical handbooks all over the Greek and Roman world — testament not only to Juba's reputation as a scholar, but also to Mauretania's position within a network of Mediterranean trade.⁸⁴

Euphorbias can still be found in gardens the world over, most commonly in the variety called poinsettia. The euphorbion plant named for Juba's physician continues to have medicinal uses too: an extract from the resin spurge was recently discovered to have potential treating the chronic pain associated with advanced cancer.⁸⁵

The *Natural History* remained popular throughout antiquity and into the medieval period, so

⁸⁰ BNJ 275 F7; Pliny, *NH*, 25.33.77-8.

⁸¹ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 208; Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 159, 164.

⁸² Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 165.

⁸³ Galen, *De comp. med. sec. loc.*, 9.4 (13.270–271 K.); Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 159, 177.

⁸⁴ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 114; Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 159, 177.

⁸⁵ Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 178; National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR). 'A Phase I Study of the Intrathecal Administration of Resiniferatoxin for Treating Severe Refractory Pain Associated With Advanced Cancer'. *clinicaltrials.gov*, 20 August 2022. <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT00804154>.

much so that material from Pliny — and hence Juba — frequently cropped up in the works of other authors — not always with attribution. Pliny became the major source for subsequent authors compiling more specialised encyclopaedias that sought to rectify the main problem with the *Natural History* — that it was just too comprehensive, too cumbersome, to use.⁸⁶ The third century author Solinus published a description of far-flung regions of the world and the fables associated with them. Most of these accounts came from the *Natural History*, but while Pliny cast a credulous eye over his more outlandish tales, Solinus presented them all as fact.⁸⁷ Solinus' work proved to be popular in Western Europe, hence Pliny's tales of people with huge feet or dog's heads, griffins, manticores and magical stones entered the popular imagination of the Middle Ages.⁸⁸ As an aside, Pliny's account of the manticores — a mythical creature with the body of a lion, a human face and the sting of a scorpion — came from Juba's *Libyca*, it was more probably nothing more exotic than a tiger.⁸⁹

In the thirteenth century a number of encyclopaedias made mention of an obscure book of natural science — variously named *De plantis*, *De animalibus* or *De naturalibus* — attributed to an obscure figure, Iorach of Chaldea.⁹⁰ While his epithet 'Chaldean' suggests a Middle Eastern origin, perhaps Syrian or Babylonian, Chaldean was also used to refer to a group of people — astronomers, magi and scholars.⁹¹ None of Iorach's works survives, but scattered references suggest it was a catalogue of plants and animals, many from North Africa, all drawn from the *Natural History*.⁹² Recent research by the French medievalist Isabelle Draelants has cross-referenced these references with Pliny, and in most cases they correspond to information that all comes from the same source: Juba.⁹³ It has even been suggested, by Draelants and others, that the name Iorach is itself a corruption of Juba — from Iuba, to Ioba, to Iopa, to Iora.⁹⁴ While Juba's scholarship might not have survived until today, it certainly enjoyed a longer afterlife than previously thought.⁹⁵

⁸⁶ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 29.

⁸⁷ Healy, 'Introduction', xxxvi.

⁸⁸ Healy, 'Introduction', xxxvi; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 31.

⁸⁹ BNJ 275 F57; Pliny, *NH*, 8.45.107; Roller 2004, p. 200.

⁹⁰ Isabelle Draelants. 'Le dossier des livres "sur les animaux et les plantes" de Iorach: tradition occidentale et orientale'. In *Occident et Proche-Orient: contacts scientifiques au temps des croisades: actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve, 24 et 25 mars 1997*, edited by Baudouin van den Abeele, Isabelle Draelants, and Anne Tihon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), p. 192.

⁹¹ Draelants, 'Le dossier des livres', p. 195.

⁹² Draelants, 'Le dossier des livres', pp. 192-3, 212.

⁹³ Draelants, 'Le dossier des livres', p. 212.

⁹⁴ Draelants, 'Le dossier des livres', p. 231.

⁹⁵ Pietrobelli, 'The Pharmacological Treatise of Juba II', p. 178 note 3.

‘How many foreign books Pliny [the Elder] has accumulated for me’, Petrarch wrote in a letter about the endless list of sources he had gathered through his reading of the *Natural History*.⁹⁶ Although Juba had largely been forgotten, if anyone in the early Renaissance was to know about him it would have been Petrarch. Not only do his annotations of ‘Juba’ in the margins of his copy of the *Natural History* suggest familiarity, but so too does a line in his epic poem, *Africa*:

And you, dear spouse, if you hold fast to him [Scipio]
as his ally, will endlessly be vexed
by turmoil of your neighbors; you shall see
your children die untimely and their sons
dishonored in the brawls of civil strife.
And from that very stock a bloody churl
Shall rise to harry and revile your heirs
with insolence and drag them through the walls
in bonds before cruel chariots; aye that Rome
you love will crown her triumphs with your kin.⁹⁷

In this, one of the most famous parts of the *Africa*, the doomed Carthaginian princess Sophonisba prepares to commit suicide to escape her fate as a Roman captive. She delivers a warning to her husband Massinissa, who has forced her into this position, warning him that allying with Rome will lead to the downfall of his descendants. Petrarch, writing with the benefit of hindsight, is most probably referencing Massinissa’s grandson Jugurtha, who waged war against the Romans and was paraded through the streets of Rome in 105 BC. But, in his use of the plural *triumphs*, Petrarch might also have been making reference to Juba II, a descendant of Massinissa, who was also paraded through Rome.

⁹⁶ Petrarch, *Epistolae Familiares*, 3.18; Nohac, *Pétrarque et l’humanisme*, p. 272.

⁹⁷ Petrarch, *Africa*, 5.993-1003.

9. The Collectors



Figure 27. Bronze bust of Juba II from Volubilis (Museum of Civilisations, Rabat, 99.1.2.1340).

Barely a ten-minute walk uphill from the Arch of Caracalla in the centre of Volubilis in Morocco is a tangle of low stone walls and broken paving slabs, spreading on both sides of the city's main north-south avenue, the Decumanus Maximus. Here and there is a section of aqueduct, a tumbledown arch. As you pick your way between the walls you begin to make sense of the layout, recognising series of rooms ordered around central atriums. Some show signs of private bathhouses, secluded courtyard gardens too, and occasionally rich ornamentation in the form of mosaics on the floor. Most also contain evidence of industry — olive presses, wine presses and flour mills — activities normally confined to country villas,

amongst the Romans at least.¹ It's not obvious now, but in the first couple of centuries AD, this was the city's wealthiest neighbourhood, and these tumbledown ruins were once home to its richest residents.² These were the city's upper-middle classes, merchants for the most part who had made their money manufacturing and exporting olive oil, harvested from the olive groves that still dot the surrounding hills to this day, and they were not afraid to exhibit their prosperity; they decorated their houses with lavish mosaics, intricate friezes painted on the walls and bronze and marble statuary.

The richest of these was the owner of the House of Venus, his wealth conspicuously displayed in a series of intricate mosaics that decorated the floor of almost every room. The subject of the mosaics was varied and colourful, including erotic scenes taken from Greek mythology, chariots pulled by geese and peacocks, cherubs feeding birds, a fountain decorated with dolphins, and, tucked away in the corner of the dining room, a cartoon depicting a cat chasing a rat.³ The star attraction was the eponymous mosaic that dominated the centre of the dining room, depicting Venus on the poop deck of a galley rowed by Graces, manned by Cupids, and escorted by Tritons holding baskets of flowers.⁴

The wealth of the House of Venus' owner is not just apparent by the lavishness of the mosaics, nor by the possibility of a second storey, but by the conspicuous lack of the tools of trade like those found in his neighbours' houses — either this was the house of a merchant or entrepreneur who had made his millions in agriculture or trade, or someone whose wealth came from less mundane sources.⁵ The house was also home to a remarkable collection of antique bronze figures and busts — already a century old by the time the house was built — discovered by archaeologists in situ or buried nearby beneath a layer of shallow soil, as though they had simply been abandoned when the owners closed the door to the house one last time.

Amongst them was a bronze bust of Juba II, now the star exhibit at the Museum of Civilisation in Rabat.⁶ The bust is slightly larger than life-size, depicting Juba as a young man wearing a diadem and a disdainful expression, likely made at the beginning of his

¹ Eric Cross. 'Presenting Volubilis, Ancient Capital of Berber Morocco'. *Eric Ross, Academic* (blog), 16 February 2015. <https://ericrossacademic.wordpress.com/2015/02/16/presenting-volubilis-ancient-capital-of-berber-morocco>.

² Susan Walker. 'La Maison de Vénus : une résidence de l'Antiquité tardive ?' In *Volubilis après Rome: Les fouilles UCL/INSAP, 2000-2005* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2018): 38-50 (38).

³ Walker, 'La Maison de Vénus', p. 39.

⁴ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 305.

⁵ Walker, 'La Maison de Vénus', p. 38, 40.

⁶ *Bronze Portrait Bust of Juba II*. 99.1.2.1340, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat.

rule when he was no older than twenty or twenty-one. It is made from bronze, hollow cast using the lost-wax method. The bronze has gained a dark green patina over the millennia, spotted with countless, barely noticeable red dots of copper protoxide.⁷ For so old an artefact it is in excellent condition — only the bronze eyelashes (the sockets for which can still be seen), glass insets for the eyes (which would have been inserted before the top of the head was affixed — the diadem cleverly concealing the join) and a small section of the diadem are missing.⁸ The features of the subject are beautiful but the artist has also captured a look of arrogance and self-indulgence.⁹ The hair on the head is thick, separately sculpted to form distinct, curly locks. The facial characteristics — especially the lips, cheeks and brow — point to Juba's Berber heritage, but the style of the artwork, its pose and expression, shouts Hellenistic prince.¹⁰ While once thought to be the original portrait, scientific analysis of its hollow interior suggest that it is a replica — one of many such portraits distributed to the cities of Mauretania, so that the population remembered who was in charge.¹¹ The alloy has the same percentage of tin as that of a bust of Cato found nearby, so it is reasonable to suppose they are of the same date — cast in pieces for ease of transport, then assembled on the spot.¹²

* * *

The limestone crags and wooded flanks of Mount Cithaeron, to the north-west of Athens dividing civilised Attica from wild Boeotia, were the setting for many of the Greek myths. It was on the slopes of Cithaeron that Oedipus was exposed as a baby, in its glens that Dionysus danced with his priestesses, and in its woods that Heracles hunted the Lion of Cithaeron. Other hunters have found their fates intertwined upon Mount Cithaeron too; it was here that, according to Ovid — a contemporary of Juba's in Rome — the young prince Actaeon chanced upon the goddess of the hunt, Diana, in the bath:

⁷ Christiane Boube-Piccot. 'Techniques de Fabrication Des Bustes de Bronze de Juba II et de Caton d'Utique Decouverts a Volubilis'. *Bulletin d'archéologie Marocaine* 7 (1967): 447-75 (455).

⁸ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 310.

⁹ B. H. Warmington. 'Review of Maisons de Volubilis: Le Palais dit de Gordien et la Maison à la Mosaïque de Venus., by Raymond Thouvenot.' *The Classical Review* 9/3 (1959): 303-4 (303).

¹⁰ Boube-Piccot, 'Techniques de Fabrication Des Bustes de Bronze', p. 468; Fittschen, K. 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 213.

¹¹ Boube-Piccot, 'Techniques de Fabrication Des Bustes de Bronze', p. 468.

¹² MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 311.

Then, though the band of nymphs pressed close about her, she [Diana] stood turning aside a little and cast back her gaze; and though she would fain have had her arrows ready, what she had she took up, the water, and flung it into the young man's face. And as she poured these avenging drops upon his hair, she spoke these words foreboding his coming doom: 'Now you are free to tell that you have seen me all unrobed — if you can tell.' No more than this she spoke; but on the head which she had sprinkled she caused to grow the horns of the long-lived stag, stretched out his neck, sharpened his ear-tips, gave feet in place of hands, changed his arms into long leg, and clothed his body with a spotted hide. And last of all she planted fear in his heart.¹³

The moment at which Actaeon stumbles upon Diana and her nymphs — and is hence transformed into a stag — was a firm favourite with audiences in the ancient world. It has captured the imagination of artists ever since, most famously Titian, who painted it for King Phillip II of Spain.¹⁴

This scene can also be found on a mosaic in the House of Venus. Here, Diana, hair up, clothes off and with her back to the viewer, steps into an overflowing stone bath. She hands her flowing red robes to a nymph to her left and her quiver and unstrung bow to a nymph to her right. In the bottom right of the scene, Actaeon, barely clothed himself, crouches behind a tree, spying but as yet unnoticed. And yet Actaeon is not alone in the act of spying upon Diana, for a brick pedestal next to the mosaic once held the bronze bust of Juba II, brought from elsewhere in the city and placed at a deliberate angle so that the scholar-king appeared to ogle the naked goddess.

¹³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.180-97

¹⁴ Titian. *Diana and Actaeon*. 1556. NG6611, National Gallery.



Figure 28. Diana and Actaeon, mosaic from the House of Venus, Volubilis. Photograph: author's own.

While this might seem an ignominious fate for a statue of the king, at least Juba is spared poor Actaeon's fate, a gruesome twist in the tale that is the hallmark of classical myth: Actaeon, turned into a stag, is torn apart by his own hounds.



Figure 29. *The Rape of Hylas, mosaic from the House of Venus, Volubilis. Photograph: author's own.*

In an adjoining room, another bronze bust — this time of the Roman statesman, Cato the Younger, an ally of Juba's father — sitting atop an identical brick pedestal gazing down at an even more erotically charged scene.¹⁵ In a wooded glade watched over by birds and winged figures, a young, blond-haired man, naked but for a red cloak, struggles against two equally naked women. One woman grabs the man's wrist, the other clamps a hand over his mouth. For good measure, the man is ejaculating into a pot. This is the Rape of Hylas, another mythical scene beloved by artists especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The scene was most strikingly rendered by John William Waterhouse, whose painting *Hylas and the Nymphs* was recently removed from the walls of Manchester Art Gallery for being borderline pornographic.¹⁶

Hylas was Heracles' lover, who accompanied him on his journey with Jason and the Argonauts. During the voyage, the crew put ashore in Moesia, on the shore of the Black Sea, to resupply.¹⁷ While Heracles went looking for timber, Hylas went to fill his bronze pitcher with water, stumbling upon a spring haunted by water-nymphs, who instantly took a shine to him. The nymphs seized him, dragging him under water to stop him from crying out to Heracles for help. Heracles, still searching for his lover, was left behind by the *Argo*, and charged the locals to keep looking for Hylas — or else. To this day, the people of Moesia still look for him. Hylas' end was not entirely unhappy, for he was shot by an arrow

¹⁵ *Bronze Portrait Bust of Cato the Younger*. 99.1.12.1341, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat.

¹⁶ Waterhouse. *Hylas and the Nymphs*. 1896. 1896.15, Manchester Art Gallery; Mark Brown. 'Gallery Removes Naked Nymphs Painting to "Prompt Conversation"'. *The Guardian*, 31 January 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/31/manchester-art-gallery-removes-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-painting-prompt-conversation>.

¹⁷ See Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1; Theocritus, *Idylls*, 13.

from Cupid's bow and so fell in love with his captors — a mythological version of Stockholm syndrome.

* * *

Juba died in AD 23, his son Ptolemy ruling for only another seventeen years before Mauretania came under direct rule by Rome from AD 41 to 285; the House of Venus belongs to the end of this period. The two busts — dating to the early years of Juba's reign, long before the house's construction — must originally have stood in another part of the city, before being claimed by some Roman with a taste for antiquities, or an eye for a bawdy joke. While Juba and Selene's residence in Volubilis has yet to be found, the likeliest candidate is a house even grander than the House of Venus, the Gordian Palace. Named for the emperor Gordian III (r. AD 233-244), whose name was found on a dedication inside, the Gordian Palace stood just a couple of blocks away from the House of Venus, right on the main road. The complex comprised over forty rooms, including a row of ten shops along the front, lavish colonnades with columns made from all manner of African stones and even private baths.¹⁸ In the second century this was the home of the provincial governor, who in turn must have picked the most important site in the Mauretanian-era city to build upon: Juba II's own residence. And if Juba's residence in Volubilis followed the same pattern as his palace in his capital of Caesarea, it would have been here that his own collection of art would have been on display.

A collection of fine art — especially statuary — was the hallmark of any Hellenistic king, conspicuously demonstrating that their cultural values accorded them a place in the Greco-Roman world. As inheritor to the legacies of both the Numidian and Ptolemaic kingdoms, the kingdom of Mauretania was no exception.¹⁹ In the palace of Caesarea and Volubilis were portrait busts of the king and queen, of course, and in time busts of their son and heir Ptolemy too. There was commemoration of both royal dynasties as well, a bust of Juba I, now in the Louvre, acknowledging the king's Numidian ancestry, and a bust of Ptolemy I, still in Cherchell, representing Selene's Greco-Egyptian heritage.²⁰ Above all else there were overt demonstrations of the kingdom's fealty to Rome — a huge statue of Augustus stood in the centre of Caesarea, and busts depicting the emperor and his family were

¹⁸ Warmington, 'Review of Raymond Thouvenot: Maisons de Volubilis', p. 303.

¹⁹ Roller 2004, p. 137.

²⁰ *Marble Bust of Juba I*. MA 1885, Louvre; *Marble Bust of Ptolemy I*. 50, Musée National de Cherchell.

placed alongside those of Juba and Selene.²¹

But Juba and Selene went a great deal further, for they had grown up in Rome during the Augustan construction boom, about which Augustus supposedly remarked that he ‘found [the city] built of brick and left it in marble.’²² They were first-hand witnesses to the emperor’s cultural policy, with which he rebuilt not only his capital city but also the social and political fabric of the empire, erecting monuments and commissioning artworks that served as subtle — and not so subtle — propaganda for the new regime.²³ They wasted little time following suit in their own kingdom, commissioning works of art and erecting monuments that combined the dominance of Rome and the grandeur of their own, far older dynasties and turned the artistic vision into something new, something hybridised.

In this they went further than might be expected of supposed loyal allies of Rome. For their artistic program did not simply imitate that of Augustus, but harnessed it to the needs of their own dynastic ambitions. In this manner, less than two decades after Juba’s father had been a sworn enemy of Rome, his bust stood in the capital of one of its client-kingdoms. Selene’s mother, too, was similarly honoured — probably the only place in the Roman sphere where a portrait of Cleopatra could be legitimately displayed, when she was being actively demonised in Roman literature.²⁴ In a similar vein was the bust of Cato the Younger, found in close proximity to that of Juba II in the House of Venus. Cato was another of Caesar’s sworn enemies, but a close friend and loyal ally of Juba I. Although even under Augustus Cato continued to embody Republican moral virtues, no Roman with any sense of self-preservation would have displayed his portrait; yet here, in Volubilis, his bust was on display in Juba’s palace, perhaps sitting proudly alongside the busts of Juba II and his father.²⁵ Loyalty to Rome was one thing, but so too was loyalty to family, friends and ancestors.

Yet even the couple’s dynastic ambitions do not fully explain the sophistication of the artwork found at Volubilis and Cherchell, some of which had no obvious political purpose at all. The gladiator-owner throwing in his towel; the wizened old Egyptian fisherman; the beautiful bronze sculpture of a youthful athlete crowned with ivy.²⁶ Some of these were originals commissioned by the couple, others exacting copies of famous pieces of

²¹ *Cuirassed Statue of Augustus*. S72 177, Musée National de Cherchell. See Chapter 6.

²² Suetonius, *Augustus*, 28.

²³ Amongst them the Ara Pacis, see Chapter 5.

²⁴ *Portrait of Cleopatra VII*, 1976.10, Antikenmuseum; *Marble Statue of Cleopatra*, 179, Vatican Museums; Roller 2004, p. 139 note 101. See also Chapter 11.

²⁵ Walker, ‘La Maison de Vénus’, p. 38.

²⁶ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 209; Raymond Thouvenot. ‘Bronzes gréco-romains trouvés à Volubilis (Maroc)’. *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 43 (1949): 70-82 (81).

Greek sculpture, others still already-ancient artefacts imported from Alexandria.²⁷ All are amongst the finest examples of art from antiquity, pointing to the personal tastes of Juba and Selene.

* * *

There is one last twist to the tale of the collectors of Volubilis: recent re-excavation of the site led by Susan Walker suggest that the bronzes might, in fact, have been brought to the House of Venus much later than previously thought — in the early fourth century AD, in the decades *after* the formal end of Roman rule.²⁸ That is to say, after the Roman administrators returned home, leaving the people of Volubilis on their own, life in the city continued much as it always had, and at least one resident retained the good taste for culture and refinement to gather — and display — bronze antiquities in his house.

²⁷ Roller 2004, p. 142.

²⁸ Walker, 'La Maison de Vénus', p. 50.

10. The Artist



Figure 30. Carnelian oval set in a 17th–18th century gold ring (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 10.110.1*).

At the Collegio Romano where he taught, the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602-80) kept a cabinet of curiosities — a *wunderkammer*, literally a ‘chamber of wonders’ — filled with all manner of objects to delight his audiences.¹

¹ Athanasius Kircher and Filippo Buonanni. *Musaeum Kircherianum Sive Musaeum a p. Athanasio Kirchero in Collegio Romano Societatis Jesu Jam Pridem Incoeptum Nuper Restitutum, Auctum, Descriptum, & Iconibus Illustratum ...* (Rome: Typis Georgii Plachi Caelaturam, 1709); Laurel Byrnes. ‘Athanasius Kircher’s Cabinet of Wonder: The Man Who Believed in Everything and His Museum of the Miraculous, Universal, and Absurd’.

The first cabinets of curiosity were conceived as a way to display items collected on the owner's travels, although many swiftly outgrew this conceit.² At the height of their popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period contemporary with the rise of the natural sciences, cabinets of curiosity served as a way to manage the anxiety of a world through science rather than God, offering the owner a way to impose order over a complex world.³ Knowledge had yet to be divided into separate subjects, the distinction between natural objects and objets d'art remained highly fluid, explaining the broad range of artefacts represented within the cabinet — in fact, often the only criteria for inclusion was an object's rarity.⁴ Like many modern museums that had their origins in private cabinets of curiosity — most notably the British Museum, which has at its heart the collection of Hans Sloane — when the contents of Kircher's Wunderkammer was donated to the Collegio Romano it swiftly became a destination for scholars and aristocrats undertaking the Grand Tour.⁵

Amongst the objects in Kircher's collection were fossils and gemstones; stuffed birds and birds nests; Roman clay lamps and Greek pediment sculptures; the skeletons of sharks and microscopic insects; an extensive array of sandals and mathematical instruments; alongside all manner of mechanical devices of his own invention, including an infamous vomiting statue and a near-blasphemous magnetic Jesus that could walk on water. When it was finally itemised and published after his death, the catalogue for the collection filled hundreds upon hundreds of pages.⁶

Biodiversity Heritage Library Blog (blog), 6 June 2019. <https://blog.biodiversitylibrary.org/2019/06/athanasius-kirchers-cabinet-of-wonder.html>; Sarah Boxer. 'A Postmodernist of the 1600s is Back in Fashion'. *The New York Times*, 25 May 2005. <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/25/arts/a-postmodernist-of-the-1600-s-is-back-in-fashion.html>.

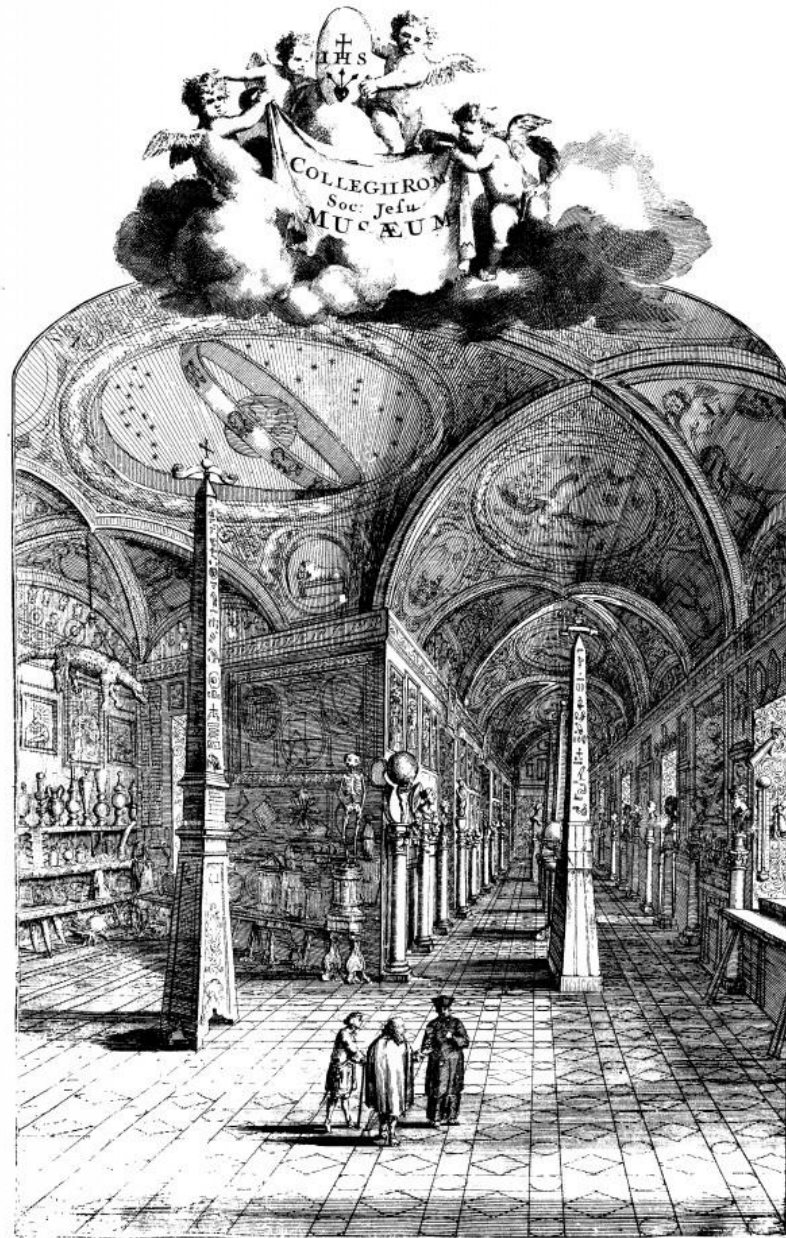
² Giovanni Aloï. 'Cabinets of Curiosities and The Origin of Collecting'. *Sotheby's Institute of Art (blog)*. Accessed 17 October 2022. <https://www.sothebysinstitute.com/cabinets-of-curiosities-and-the-origin-of-collecting>.

³ Aloï, 'Cabinets of Curiosities and The Origin of Collecting'; Sarah Rose Sharp. 'Curating a Contemporary Cabinet of Curiosities'. *Hyperallergic* (blog), 5 March 2015. <http://hyperallergic.com/188131/curating-a-contemporary-cabinet-of-curiosities>; Antonis Chaliakopoulos. 'The Pre-Modern Museum: What Is A Cabinet Of Curiosities?' *The Collector*, 13 February 2021. <https://www.thecollector.com/cabinet-of-curiosities-museum-wunderkammer>.

⁴ Antonis Chaliakopoulos. 'The Pre-Modern Museum: What Is A Cabinet Of Curiosities?' *The Collector*, 13 February 2021. <https://www.thecollector.com/cabinet-of-curiosities-museum-wunderkammer>.

⁵ Marian Maaskant-Kleibrink. 'Engraved Gems and Northern European Humanists'. *Studies in the History of Art* 54 (1997): 228-47 (232); Byrnes, 'Athanasius Kircher's Cabinet of Wonder'.

⁶ Athanasius Kircher and Filippo Buonanni. *Musaeum Kircherianum Sive Musaeum*; Byrnes, 'Athanasius Kircher's Cabinet of Wonder'; Boxer, 'A Postmodernist of the 1600s is Back in Fashion'.



Kircheriana Domus naturæ ætifi; theatrum
 Pœtæ cum vix alibi cernere posse datur.
 AMSTELÆDAMI.
 Ex officina Joh. Janssonii - Waelbergiana Anno MDCCLXVIII.

Figure 31. Kircher's museum at the Collegio Romano, frontispiece from Giorgio de Sepibus, *Romani Collegii Musaeum Celeberrimum*, frontispiece, 1678. Image: public domain.

Most prized amongst Kircher's possessions was a small carnelian gemstone, measuring no more than 2cm in diameter, intricately engraved with a portrait of a woman.⁷ Viewed under normal conditions the gem was a rich, almost-scarlet red colour, but when held up to the light it blazed into life, the reds flaring to oranges, a halo of yellow blooming around

⁷ Gnaios. *Carnelian Oval Set in a 17th–18th Century Gold Ring*. 10.110.1, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

the woman's head. It is reminiscent of the sorts of gems the goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) witnessed being dug up during a visit to Rome a century before:

While digging the ground, [Lombard peasants] frequently turned up antique medals, agates, chrysoprases, cornelians, and cameos; also sometimes jewels, as, for instance, emeralds, sapphires, diamonds, and rubies. The peasants used to sell things of this sort to the traders for a mere trifle; and I very often, when I met them, paid the latter several times as many golden crowns as they had given giulios for some object.⁸

The portrait was engraved in intaglio — the detail recessed rather than raised — so that when the gem was pressed into soft wax or clay an image in relief was left behind.⁹ While the gem itself was ancient, it had been mounted in a gold ring and repaired — also with gold — at some point in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, perhaps by Kircher himself.¹⁰ Proud to show off the centrepiece of his collection, Kircher circulated copies of the gem amongst his circle of friends in the form of gypsum impressions, which captured the intricacies of the engraving, but none of the depth, colour or majesty of the gem itself.¹¹

While early Renaissance collectors were most interested in acquiring coins, principally as a means to collect portraits of the Roman emperors, later collectors including the Dutch antiquary Abraham Gorlaeus (1549-1608) became fascinated with engraved gems.¹² What appealed to Gorlaeus in particular was the direct connection that such gems — known to be worn as finger rings, the gems used as seal stones — were perceived to provide to other famous figures.¹³

So who was the famous figure on Kircher's gem? The subject's clothing are unmistakably Greek in style, and the way in which her long hair is tied up with a narrow strip of cloth to form fillets is seen frequently in Greek sculpture. Both her coiffure, and the cloth with which it is tied, work together to create the impression of a diadem atop her head, a regal aspect further reinforced by the sceptre, a traditional Roman symbol of leadership when seen on coinage. All of this combines to suggest that she was a Greek — most likely Ptolemaic —

⁸ Benvenuto Cellini. *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*. Project Gutenberg, 2003, xxvii.

⁹ Gisela M. A. Richter. *Catalogue of Engraved Gems: Greek, Etruscan, and Roman*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1956, p.101.

¹⁰ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, pp. 101-2.

¹¹ James David Draper. 'Cameo Appearances'. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 65/4 (2008), p. 7 fig. 2.

¹² John Boardman. *Engraved Gems: The Ionides Collection* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968), p. 9; Maaskant-Kleibrink, 'Engraved Gems and Northern European Humanists', p. 230, 233.

¹³ Maaskant-Kleibrink, 'Engraved Gems and Northern European Humanists', p. 233; Paul Baines. *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 152-3.

ruler connected to Rome.¹⁴ There is only one such woman that this could possibly be: Cleopatra Selene.¹⁵

The gemstone was not prized solely for the quality of the engraving, nor for its subject, but for the name signed below the portrait by the artist: ‘the work of Gnaios’.¹⁶ In the Renaissance, gems signed by the artist were highly sought after for their rarity. However, the popularity of signed originals meant that they were forged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in great numbers, signatures added to ancient gems and modern gems made to look ancient.¹⁷ Such was the scale of the problem that, when it was eventually revealed that whole collections were fake, the bottom dropped out of the market entirely.¹⁸ Part of the difficulty in detecting a forgery is that the techniques used to engrave gems remain largely unchanged: drills, worked mechanically with the aid of a bow or wheel, rubbed abrading powders to carefully cut the stone, before further abrasives polished the stone; the same method today as two thousand or more years ago.¹⁹ Only by close analysis of the signature — a relatively recent development — can a forgery be detected, and it is through this technique that Kircher’s gem — and most notably its signature — has been confirmed as authentic.²⁰

From the ancient world we know the names of just forty-one gem engravers, almost entirely from their signatures; some signatures appear on gems just the once, others half a dozen times or more. It was by no means a given that an artist would sign their name on a finished work, and some of the very best examples of engraving are unattributed.²¹ All forty-one engravers were Greek; even those bearing Latin names were almost certainly Greek freedmen who adopted the names of their former slave masters. This was the case right through the Roman period, suggesting a monopoly on gem engraving by craftsmen of Greek heritage.²² While other engravers are mentioned by ancient writers, we have both literary record and physical signature for a single engraver: Dioskourides, who Pliny tells us designed

¹⁴ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, p. 101.

¹⁵ Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 27; Picón and Hemingway, *Pergamon*, p. 312.

¹⁶ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, xxxiv.

¹⁷ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, p. 101; John Boardman, ‘Classical Gems and Media Interaction’, *Studies in the History of Art* 54 (1997): 12-21 (17).

¹⁸ Draper, ‘Cameo Appearances’, p. 5; see also Baines, *The House of Forgery*, pp. 152-155, in which he discusses a similar market in fake antiquities in the eighteenth century.

¹⁹ Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 9; Draper, ‘Cameo Appearances’, p. 5.

²⁰ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, pp. 101-2.

²¹ Gisela M. A. Richter, ‘Inscriptions on Engraved Gems of the Roman Period and Some Modern or Problematical Representations’, *Archeologia Classica* 25/26 (1974/1973): 631-8 (631).

²² Richter, ‘Inscriptions on Engraved Gems’, p. 632; Boardman, ‘Classical Gems and Media Interaction’, p. 17.

Augustus' personal seal, an 'excellent likeness' of the emperor engraved upon a signet ring.²³

Gnaios, whose neat signature adorns Kircher's jewel, was one of the most prolific engravers known to us: at least half a dozen gems bear his signature, and by following their trail the briefest portrait of him can be sketched. While he signed his name in Greek, Gnaios was more properly known by the Latin form of his name, Cnaeus, which suggests that he was a Greek slave who, upon earning his freedom, adopted a Latin name.²⁴ His earliest engravings are copies of well-known classical sculptures and artworks rendered with exquisite attention to detail: a head of Heracles cut in blue beryl, previously owned by assorted dukes, counts and princes, now in the British Museum; a garnet gem portraying an athlete pouring oil from a jar, based on a famous fifth century Greek statue by Polykleitos; and that perennial scene beloved of first century artists: Diomedes stealing the Palladium from Troy.²⁵ These works, while displaying a high level of craftsmanship, do not by themselves mark Gnaios out as an especially accomplished artist — he is simply replicating, albeit entirely freehand by eye, well-known artworks for consumption by wealthy patrons hungry for such images.²⁶



Figure 32. Blue Beryl Gem Engraved with Herakles (British Museum, 1867,0507.318).

²³ Pliny, *NH*, 37.4.8; Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', p. 632.

²⁴ Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 27; Erika Zwierlein-Diehl. *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), p. 121.

²⁵ Gnaios. *Gem of Herakles*. 1st C BC. 1867,0507.318, British Museum; Gnaios. *Intaglio with an Athlete Set in a Ring*. 42.109, The Walters Art Museum; Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 33; Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xxxii.

²⁶ Boardman, 'Classical Gems and Media Interaction', p. 15; Toby Yuen. 'Glyptic Sources of Renaissance Art'. *Studies in the History of Art* 54 (1997): 136-57 (137).

This appetite for exotic treasures was fuelled by Roman campaigning in the East in the latter half of the first century BC.²⁷ In earlier times the Roman elite had considered gems and jewels to be unwanted signs of decadence, symbolic of eastern degeneracy.²⁸ The spectacular triumphs of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, as well as the spoils of the campaigns of Mark Antony, paraded treasures the likes of which had never been seen before in Rome. Suddenly gem-collecting became a passion amongst the aristocracy, senators competing to pay enormous prices for particularly fine specimens.²⁹ When the flow of imported treasure dried up, Roman artists began producing copies of Greek artwork to satisfy demand.³⁰

At some point around 30 BC Gnaios began to produce original artworks in the form of individual portraits, drawn from life. Especially apparent in these portraits is Gnaios' customary style, characterised by soft contours and broad, polished surfaces.³¹ His first portrait was Mark Antony himself, who had been partly responsible for Rome's interest in gems in the first place. Antony's portly face is carved unsparingly into an amethyst jewel measuring less than 2cm across, complete with rolls of flabby flesh and finely detailed curls of hair, set into a gold ring now in the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.³² Pliny tells a story of Antony's lust for jewels, in which a rival senator's refusal to sell him an opal ring leads to his exile:

There still exists even today a precious stone of this variety which caused Antony to outlaw a senator [...] This Nonius, when outlawed, fled, taking with him this ring alone of all his many possessions. There is no doubt that at that time the value of the ring was 2,000,000 sesterces; but how amazing was Antony's savagery and extravagant caprice in outlawing a man for the sake of a gemstone, and equally, how extraordinary was the obstinacy of Nonius in clinging to his 'doom' [...]³³

²⁷ Boardman, 'Classical Gems and Media Interaction', p. 15.

²⁸ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 510.

²⁹ Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xxix-xxx.

³⁰ Gisela M. A. Richter. 'The Subjects on Roman Engraved Gems, Their Derivation, Style and Meaning'. *Revue Archéologique*, 2 (1968): 279-86 (279); Boardman, 'Classical Gems and Media Interaction', p. 15; Yuen, 'Glyptic Sources of Renaissance Art', p. 137.

³¹ Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 27.

³² Gnaios. *Engraved Gem Set into a Ring*. 2001.28.1, Getty Museum.

³³ Pliny, *NH*, 37.21.81-2.



Figure 33. Amethyst intaglio depicting Mark Antony (Getty Museum, 2001.28.1).

Julius Caesar, too, was an enthusiastic art collector — and alongside statues and other artworks he coveted engraved jewels, to the extent that Suetonius suggests that Caesar's real reason for invading Britain was on account of the pearls he might find there.³⁴ This might seem rather a fanciful reason for war, but it speaks to the mania such exotic treasures inspired at the time. Caesar's particular interest lay in acquiring artworks made by early artists, or by former slaves. He paid vast sums for some works of art and was so ashamed that he forbade the exact amount being entered into his accounts. Caesar donated his gem collection to the Temple of Venus Genetrix, which he had built in Rome in 46 BC, alongside a huge gold statue of Cleopatra; both his collection and the statue were still there during Selene's time in the capital. Selene's step-brother Marcellus had his own collection as well, which in later life he dedicated to the Temple of the Palatine Apollo; perhaps his early interest in collecting precious gems inspired not only Selene but also Juba, who he campaigned with in Spain. Juba went on to become an expert on precious gems himself, cited several times on the subject by Pliny, and it's hard to imagine the king not having his own

³⁴ Suetonius, *Caesar*, 47; Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xxx.

collection.³⁵

While Gnaios was drawn into Antony's orbit while he was at Alexandria in 34 BC, it's not clear whether his gem-portrait of him was made during his life, or commissioned posthumously some years later by his daughter.³⁶ Regardless, from Alexandria, Gnaios appears to have followed a familiar path: first to Rome, where an engraving depicting Augustus as Neptune suggests he was at the imperial court for a time; and thence to Mauretania sometime after 20 BC whence Kircher's gem almost certainly originates.³⁷

It's probable Gnaios either accompanied Selene to Caesarea as part of her entourage, or was subsequently invited there at her behest.³⁸ There Gnaios formed part of a diverse community of artists and scholars, working for Juba II, that also included sculptors and architects, as well as poets, playwrights and scientists, drawn from all over the Mediterranean.³⁹



Figure 34. Sard gem engraved with an unknown male portrait (British Museum, 1867,0507.542).

There is a companion piece to Kircher's gem in the British Museum: a sard — a type of carnelian — gem engraved with the portrait of a clean-shaven man wearing a diadem and a

³⁵ BNJ 275 F35, 75; Pliny, *NH*, 35.107-8, 37.5; Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 27.

³⁶ Roller 2004, pp. 150-1.

³⁷ Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen*, p. 121.

³⁸ See Chapter 6.

³⁹ Roller 2004, p. 4.

somewhat petulant look.⁴⁰ Only the briefest of examinations is necessary to identify the subject as Juba II for the engraving bears a striking similarity to the images on both his coins and his portrait busts. The object is unsigned, but the quality of the engraving high enough — the curled locks individually carved, the delicate tassels hanging down from the diadem — that it could be the work of Gnaios, or one of his fellow artists at court. While the quality of the engraving is comparable with that of Selene's, in demeanour the two portraits could not be less alike: where Selene holds her head up, looking sternly, regally ahead, Juba scowls down at the floor, his expression petulant. Where Selene is cast as a queen, Juba is depicted as a youth, nothing regal about him save his diadem.

* * *

The Romans typically had three uses for engraved gems, all of which were intended for the private individual: as seals to safeguard their possessions or documents, as amulets to invoke the protection of the gods, and as objets d'art.⁴¹ So which was the carnelian gem? We can immediately dismiss it as an amulet — Roman amulets never featured portraits, except those of the gods — which leaves the possibility that it was carved purely for ornamentation, or was intended for use as a seal.

Gnaios certainly engraved gems intended to be admired: his Hercules and his Diomedes are both works of art of the highest order. These both bore mythic imagery, the most common design amongst Roman objets d'art. Even his engraving of Augustus is cast in a mythic light, as Neptune. While portraits of individuals did at one point become highly collectible in the Augustan age, was Selene high enough profile to have been a subject desired in such a manner?⁴² Perhaps — the Africa Dish we will see later demonstrates her fame, and the quality of the engraving by itself is certainly high enough to warrant its addition to a collection, as Kircher later demonstrated — but this was unlikely to have been the reason Gnaios originally engraved it.⁴³

Although the rings in which they are currently set are altogether more recent, both the carnelian gem depicting Selene and the sard gem of Juba were always intended to be set in rings — but their ancient mounts are now long lost. This makes it all the more likely

⁴⁰ *Sard Gem Engraved with an Unknown Male Portrait-Head in Profile*. 1867,0507.542, British Museum.

⁴¹ Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xvi; Yuen, 'Glyptic Sources of Renaissance Art', p. 137 note 1.

⁴² Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xxx.

⁴³ See Chapter 13.

that the gems were intended to be used as seals, as in the Republic and early empire a jewelled ring was almost always worn with such a practical purpose in mind.⁴⁴ An engraved gem imprinted into wax was used in the same way as a written signature might be today, as well as to ensure the contents of a message remained secure.⁴⁵ Ancient authors frequently referred to the act of sealing a letter, contract or will with an impression from an engraved gem; they also wrote about the precautions taken to prevent the seal's design from falling into the wrong hands.⁴⁶

Traditionally, the design engraved upon a gem for use as a personal seal was pictorial in nature: a deity or mythological hero perhaps, a favoured animal, even a famous ancestor or foe. As his seal Sulla used the image of Juba's ancestor Jugurtha, against whom he had emerged triumphant during the Jugurthine War, captured.⁴⁷ Augustus' eccentric advisor and some-time regent Maecenas employed the image of a frog, and Rome's citizens lived in fear of seeing it attached to a decree for it often heralded an increase in taxes.⁴⁸ Augustus' personal seal varied over the course of his life; he originally employed a picture of a sphinx, before changing it to a portrait of Alexander the Great and eventually his own image.⁴⁹ Augustus' portrait remained the official seal of Rome for many of his successors too.⁵⁰ Juba and Selene might have opted to follow suit and employ self-portraits as the designs for their own personal seals — they modelled their particular brand of leadership after Augustus in so many other ways, after all.

There is something about the intimacy of such an object that fires the imagination, just as it did to Abraham Gorlaeus; the possibility that, maybe more than any of the other objects herein, these were artefacts physically owned, worn and touched by Juba and Selene. That these were both rings worn on their fingers, removed by them, used to press into wax to form a seal on a document written by their own hands — and even if such documents are lost to us, their signature seals remain.

* * *

⁴⁴ Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 28; Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xix. See also the example of the *Sard Sealstone of Livia*. 1867,0507.491, British Museum.

⁴⁵ Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems of the Roman Period', xvi.

⁴⁶ See Suetonius, *Claudius*, 44; Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 3.15; and Martial, *Epigrams*, 10.70; Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 10.74, amongst many others.

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Sulla*, 3.4.

⁴⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 37.4.10.

⁴⁹ Pliny, *NH*, 37; Dio, 51.3.6; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 50.

⁵⁰ Dio, 51.3.6.

In other parts of the Mediterranean, gem engravers used coin portraits as the basis for their designs, but in Mauretania the opposite was true: the designer of Juba and Selene's coinage either used the engraving on their seals as the basis for their coin portraits, or Gnaios was also the artist behind the coinage of the kingdom of Mauretania.⁵¹ In this regard Gnaios fitted perfectly into Juba and Selene's carefully thought out artistic and cultural program; the designs on the Mauretanian coins — and the official seals of state — were deliberately chosen to send out a message, just as the other works of art commissioned by the couple.

⁵¹ Boardman, *Engraved Gems*, p. 24; Richter, 'Inscriptions on Engraved Gems', xxi; Roller 2004, pp. 150-1.

11. Mother(s) and Daughter



Figure 35. Marble bust, perhaps of Cleopatra Selene (Cherchell Archaeological Museum, S66 (31)). Photograph: Hichem Algerino.

A slightly larger than life-sized marble bust of a woman tilts her head upwards, the details rendered with precision and care: the knotted brow, the large staring eyes, the straight and delicate nose — the missing tip notwithstanding — all combine to create a remarkable portrait with a strong sense of authority.¹

The bust was made during the reign of Juba and Selene, at the end of the first century BC, and was found close to the site of their palace in Cherchell in 1856.² Today it stands in a long gallery in the Museum of Cherchell, where a sign labels it definitively as Cleopatra Selene.³ If this labelling is accurate, this would be a remarkable discovery, for it is the only known portrait bust of the Mauretanian queen. But, since the rediscovery of a new bust of Cleopatra in Berlin in the 1970s, the identification of the Cherchell bust has come

¹ Peter Higgs, 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image: Classical Portraits in Stone'. In *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, edited by Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001): 200-209 (207-8).

² Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, #197.

³ Higgs, 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image', p. 207.

under increased scrutiny, bringing with it the suggestion that it too could be Selene's mother.⁴

* * *

In short, the significance of a woman's coiffure is so great that, no matter how finely attired she may be when she steps out in her gold, robes, jewels, and all her other finery, unless she has embellished her hair she cannot be called well-dressed.⁵

So wrote the author Apuleius (AD 124-70) in the mid-first century AD, embodying a long-held Roman belief that, when it came to beauty, the hair was a woman's foremost attraction — likely stemming from Roman matrons hiding their hair beneath a veil or hood when out in public, only adding to the allure.⁶ Apuleius was far from the only Roman writer obsessed with women's hair; Ovid (43 BC-AD 17/18) tells female readers of his *Ars Amatoria* ('The Art of Love', written in AD 2): 'let not your locks be lawless'.⁷ As well as chapters titled 'Conceal your defects', 'Make him believe he is loved' and the somewhat self-serving 'Avoid the vices, favour the poets', he devotes a whole chapter to how a woman should use her hair to attract a man. At one point, he provides lengthy advice about what style of hair would best suit what shape face, for instance 'an oval face prefers a parting upon the head left unadorned'.⁸ And on he goes, commenting on the hairstyles of goddesses and other mythical women, before finally conceding that:

You will not count the acorns on the oak's numerous boughs, nor how many bees there are in Hybla, nor wild beasts upon the Alps; nor can I enumerate all the fashions that there are: each day adds more adornments.⁹

Most of the evidence we have for women's hairstyles comes from one of two sources: portraits of high-status women on coins, typically Roman empresses, and funerary monuments depicting deceased, elite women. From the evidence from the first century BC,

⁴ For arguments in favour of it being Selene, see: Gisela M.A. Richter. *The Portraits of the Greeks* (London: Phaidon Press, 1965); Mafoud Ferroukhi. 'Les Deux Portraits de Chercell Presumes de Cleopatra VII'. In *Cleopatra Reassessed*, edited by Susan Walker and Sally-Ann Ashton (London: British Museum, 2003): 103-8. For arguments in favour of it being her mother, see: Fittschen, 'Die Bildnisse der mauretanischen Könige'; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*; and Higgs, 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image'.

⁵ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 2.9.

⁶ Elizabeth Bartman. *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 32.

⁷ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.130-6.

⁸ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.137.

⁹ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.149-154.

we can see that Ovid was not exaggerating — Roman women wore their hair in almost too many styles to count.

Partly as a result of the importation of fashions — especially royal fashions — from the Hellenistic world following Roman expansion into the eastern Mediterranean, Roman women at this time wore their hair in complicated styles, featuring ringlets, curls, braids and buns, often combined with expensive accessories such as gold hair nets and ivory hair pins, not to mention hair attachments woven into the wearer's hair or worn as a wig. These were, of course, made from human hair; jet black hair from Indians and blonde hair from captured Germans were especially prized for wigs.¹⁰ The most extravagant hairstyles would take time and patience to concoct, requiring the assistance not just of a slave but of specialist servants called *ornatrices*.¹¹ Augustus' wife, Livia, was said to have a team of five, and she was far from the only wealthy woman to employ her own hairdressers.¹² Of course, the more complex and time consuming to fashion was the hairstyle, the wealthier the wearer had to be — only a woman able to afford slaves, and the leisure time required, could pull off such extravagant styles.¹³ Roman men spent no less time on their appearance than women, visiting the barber daily for both a shave and a haircut, but this was considered purely practical grooming; to be seen to be overly concerned with one's appearance was considered feminine.¹⁴ Equally, to be seen to be neglecting one's appearance entirely — for a woman to have dishevelled hair or a man to have a bushy beard — was considered to be the mark of the barbarian.¹⁵

While a general hairstyle might be found on more than one female portrait, there are so few instances of exact repetition as to suggest that high-status Roman women scrupulously avoided copying the hairstyle of their contemporaries.¹⁶ As the hairstyles of the Roman upper-classes were so distinctive, often unique to the wearer, they are often relied upon by scholars working today to identify a portrait. So if, say, a coin of a Roman empress depicts her with a certain hairstyle, then a portrait bust depicting a woman with the same hairstyle will often be identified as the same empress. This tautologous approach has its

¹⁰ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 1.14.45-6; Martial, 14.26; Elizabeth Bartman. 'Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 105/1 (2001): 1-25 (14).

¹¹ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 33, 38.

¹² Bartman, 'Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment', p. 8. See also the over-enthusiastic *ornatrice* featured in Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 1.14.

¹³ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 39.

¹⁴ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 25; Glenys Davies. 'Portrait Statues as Models for Gender Roles in Roman Society'. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes* 7 (2008): 207-20 (210).

¹⁵ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 39.

¹⁶ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 33.

drawbacks, of course. It neglects the fact that, as our evidence comes from statuary, only the well off could afford to commission statues, so offers us little insight into the appearance of everyday Romans. It fails to take into account that a woman — especially an empress — might change her hairstyle over the course of her life. It also doesn't factor in that, although hairstyles were often unique amongst upper-class women, they might subsequently be copied by women of other social ranks, as shown, for example, by the proliferation of the so-called melon hair-style on funerary monuments in the middle of the first century BC.

The woman depicted on the Chercell bust — whether Cleopatra or Selene — wears her hair in this complex hairstyle, named by modern scholars as a 'melon hairdo' for its defining feature: thick braids tied back in such a way as to resemble the segments of a melon. In this case, the braids are held in place by a broad diadem — indicative of royal status — sculpted to look like metal, as well as a bun at the nape of the neck, now lost.¹⁷ The melon segments are not the only element of the woman's hairstyle, however. In front of the diadem, the hair is arranged in a series of waves, pulled back from a central parting to cover the upper brow.¹⁸ Finally, the hair is arranged into a row of tight snail-shell curls across the forehead.¹⁹ As if that wasn't complicated enough, in addition to the missing bun, something has broken off the centre of the figure's brow — perhaps a tuft or lock of hair, bunched up or swept back in a style known as a nodus, or else a decorative accessory of some kind.²⁰

The melon-do was a style first worn by the early Ptolemaic queens of the third and fourth centuries BC, but is most closely associated with Cleopatra VII, who brought it back into fashion in the middle of the first century BC.²¹ While it was worn by Greek women as early as the fourth century BC, it was relatively unknown in Rome until Cleopatra's arrival in the city in 46 BC.²²

¹⁷ Ferroukhi, 'Les Deux Portraits de Chercell Presumes de Cleopatra VII', p. 103; Walker, 'Cleopatra's Images', p. 142.

¹⁸ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, #197.

¹⁹ Susan Walker and Peter Higgs. 'Cleopatra VII at the Louvre'. In *Cleopatra Reassessed*, edited by Susan Walker and Sally-Ann Ashton (London: British Museum, 2003), p. 71.

²⁰ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, #197.

²¹ Ferroukhi, 'Les Deux Portraits de Chercell Presumes de Cleopatra VII', p. 103

²² Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 35; Higgs, Peter. 'Resembling Cleopatra: Cleopatra VII's Portraits in the Context of Late Hellenistic Female Portraiture'. In *Cleopatra Reassessed*, edited by Susan Walker and Sally-Ann Ashton. British Museum Occasional Papers 103 (London: British Museum, 2003): 57-70 (64).



Figure 36. Bust of Cleopatra VII (profile view) (Vatican Museums, 38511). Photograph: Sergey Sosnovskiy via WikiCommons.



Figure 37. Bust of Cleopatra VII (rear view) (Vatican Museums, 38511). Photograph: Sergey Sosnovskiy via WikiCommons

Cleopatra's was a familiar face in Rome, both in her lifetime and long after her death. Between 46 and 44 BC she lived there in a villa south of the Tiber owned by Julius Caesar, with whom she was having an affair. There she brought sculptors and artists as part of her entourage to commemorate her visit in painting and stone — the bust of Cleopatra now displayed in the Vatican dates from this time. Julius Caesar even had a gold statue made of her and placed it in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, where crowds flocked to see it.²³ For a time, the Romans were obsessed with Cleopatra. She became a potent symbol of female beauty, power and wealth, and her distinctive hairstyle was copied by women seeking to capture a touch of the exotic East.²⁴ However, her affair with Caesar was met with disapproval and from the moment she arrived in Rome she was seen as a threat to the

²³ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.102.

²⁴ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 36; Higgs, 'Resembling Cleopatra', p. 64.

patriarchy.²⁵ Egyptian women enjoyed far more liberty than their Roman counterparts and the senatorial elite were loathe for this to catch on in the same way as her hairstyle had.²⁶

During the civil war against Antony and Cleopatra, Augustus directed the full force of his propaganda machine against her. He publicly denounced Antony and Cleopatra, and his friends joined in the chorus of condemnation too, circulating stories that gave increased credence to Augustus' allegations.²⁷ His circle of loyal poets fell into line; the poems they wrote at the time all remarkably consistent in repeating the same message: that Augustus was competent and just, that Antony was unfit to rule and, above all, Cleopatra was dangerous.²⁸ Suddenly, everything that had made her such a fascinating figure was turned against her; her wealth was recast as decadence, her power emasculating and her beauty — especially her hairstyle — was deemed to be un-Roman.²⁹ After her defeat, the propaganda made an abrupt about-face, in poetry her forces changing from an army of emasculated, effete soldiers to a dangerous and worthy foe.³⁰ Cleopatra, too, was transformed into a defeated foe to be pitied not feared, whose subjugation by Augustus serving as a metaphor for Egypt's conquest.³¹

Unlike the images of Mark Antony, which were destroyed or defaced after his death, those of Cleopatra remained. According to Plutarch, this was because her rich friend, the Alexandrian Archibius, paid Augustus two thousand talents of gold — about 12 million denarii, enough to pay 12 million soldiers for a day — to spare them Antony's fate.³² Whatever the truth of this, Caesar's gold statue of Cleopatra still stood in the Temple of Venus Genetrix when Cassius Dio was writing, three centuries later.³³ Despite the survival of her existing statues, no right-minded Roman would dare go so far as to commission a new

²⁵ Mary Hamer. *Signs of Cleopatra: Reading an Icon Historically* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), p. 2.

²⁶ Hamer, *Signs of Cleopatra*, pp. 19-20.

²⁷ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 42.

²⁸ See Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.675; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.826; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 10.59-77; Propertius, *Elegies*, 3.11; Horace, *Epodes*, 9; Marilyn L. Williamson. *Infinite Variety: Antony and Cleopatra in Renaissance Drama and Earlier Tradition* (Mystic, CT: L. Verry, 1974), p. 19; Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 40.

²⁹ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 36.

³⁰ Christopher Pelling. 'Anything Truth can do, we can do Better: The Cleopatra Legend'. In *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, edited by Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001): 290-301 (295).

³¹ Pelling, 'Anything Truth can do, we can do Better', p. 294; Hamer, *Signs of Cleopatra*, p. 156. See also Horace, *Odes*, 1.37 for one example of this in poetry.

³² Plutarch, *Antony*, 86.5.

³³ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.102; Dio 51.22.3.

statue of Cleopatra — except her daughter, Selene, far removed in Caesarea.³⁴



Figure 38. Bust of Cleopatra VII (Altes Museum, Berlin, 1976.10). Photograph: author's own.

Which brings us back to the bust in Chercell museum and its identification as either Cleopatra or Selene. The question of identity is only complicated by a reliance on coin portraits, as there are no other known portraits of Selene, and only two of Cleopatra.³⁵ Certainly, the Chercell bust shares Cleopatra's trademark hairstyle with her busts in Berlin

³⁴ Higgs, 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image', p. 207.

³⁵ *Portrait of Kleopatra VII. 1976.10, Antikensammlung Berlin; Bust of Cleopatra VII. 38511, Vatican Museums.*

and the Vatican, but her pose, expression, even aspects of her facial features differ.³⁶ However, if you compare the bust with Selene's coin portraits instead, the hairstyles are completely different. On her coins, her hair is simply scraped back into a bun — no melon segments to be seen. Differing hairstyles between portraits should not immediately discount the portrait as being Selene: although the coin portrait is hardly the most detailed design, there is a likeness of features between coin and bust, and there is more than enough precedent in the ancient world for presenting different images to different audiences.³⁷

And yet, we should not dismiss Selene's coin portraits so readily, for in this simpler hairstyle we can see a similarity with another woman who loomed large in her life: her adoptive mother, Octavia.³⁸



³⁶ Higgs, 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image', p. 207.

³⁷ Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, Fig. 2009-10.

³⁸ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 165.

Figure 39. Silver denarius depicting Cleopatra Selene (British Museum, 1947,0406.530).



Figure 40. Bust of Octavia (Museo Nazionale Romano, 121221). Photograph: author's own.

Portraits of Octavia first appeared on coins minted by her second husband Mark Antony, her graceful features contrast with Antony's thick neck.³⁹ Octavia became the first Roman woman to appear on coinage as herself (and not in the guise of a goddess), showing the importance she held even then. Her coin portrait commemorated her central role in reconciling Rome's two most powerful men — her husband and her brother — their alliance essentially held together by her marriage to Antony.⁴⁰

When Antony left Octavia for Cleopatra, this alliance fell apart and Augustus

³⁹ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 213. See also Chapter 4.

⁴⁰ Diana E. E. Kleiner. 'Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts in the Early Empire'. In *I, Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, edited by Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996), p. 36.

ruthlessly employed his sister's image to turn Rome against the lovers. Whilst Cleopatra was portrayed by Augustan propaganda as the exotic, decadent foreign temptress, Octavia took on the role as dutiful, stay-at-home matron in Rome. While Antony played at being a king in the eastern Mediterranean, Octavia returned home to raise his children by herself. Later writers including Plutarch portrayed her as a paragon of virtue, the personification of the ideal Roman matron, but in doing so they were only following the path set down by Augustus.⁴¹

Octavia's sculptural portraits from this time reinforce this, projecting an image of strength, maturity, of moral fibre.⁴² In all of them, the hairstyle is the same: hair pulled into a wide bun at the back of her head, except above the forehead, where the hair is gathered up into the knot that gives this particular hairstyle its name — the *nodus*. Ovid makes mention of this style too:

Round faces would fain have a small knot left on top of the head, so that the ears show.⁴³

Ovid was hardly abreast of the latest trends, for by the time he had composed his *Ars Amatoria*, the *nodus* had been fashionable for thirty years or more. The *nodus* itself could be worn in a number of different ways — a complex knot above the forehead, a wide plait of hair that rose up and folded back on itself, or multiple strands that came together as a thick knob — often accompanied by braids along the side of the head tied in a bun at the back.⁴⁴ A woman needed very long hair to wear it in a *nodus* style, suggesting that a wig or hairpiece were often incorporated as part of the design.⁴⁵ The most iconic iteration of the hairstyle was that worn by Augustus' wife, Livia, whose *nodus* comprised a wide roll of hair that swept up and back from the centre of her forehead, not unlike a quiff.

The *nodus* hairstyle came to embody an element of restraint, its tightly bound coiffure underscoring the wearer's modesty and chastity.⁴⁶ It was seen as reassuringly homegrown, a definitively Roman invention that harked back to simpler, native Italian styles with none of the pernicious 'foreign' influences or royal extravagance that the melon-do had come to represent.⁴⁷ That it became popular in the decade following Cleopatra's visit to Rome

⁴¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, 54.

⁴² Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 214.

⁴³ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.139-40.

⁴⁴ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 38.

⁴⁵ Rolf Winkes. 'Livia: Portrait and Propaganda'. In *I, Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*, edited by Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000), p. 32.

⁴⁶ Kleiner, 'Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts', p. 37; Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 38.

⁴⁷ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 32, 37.

is no coincidence, emerging as a reaction by Octavia and Livia to the Egyptian queen's hairstyle.⁴⁸ And it proved popular, its adoption a clear statement of national pride: of all Roman female portraits from this period, fully half are depicted wearing some variant of the nodus hairstyle.⁴⁹

The nodus eventually fell out of fashion, and the next generation of imperial women — Selene's stepsisters amongst them — are depicted with a different hairstyle from their mothers. Even Livia stopped wearing it eventually, although it persisted even on her new sculptures long after, so bound up was it in her visual identity.⁵⁰

Perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that Selene was depicted with this hairstyle throughout her life — not only was it in fashion when she was coming of age, but it was a politically astute image to project too. Unlike the identity of the Cherchell bust, there is no disputing the identity of Selene's coin portraits — her name, in Greek, is right there next to her image. So that settles the argument: Selene wore her hair in a nodus style, so the Cherchell bust with her melon-do must be a portrait of her mother.

Except, we have already encountered another portrait of Selene with her hair in a completely different hairstyle: Gnaios' carnelian gemstone portrait of Selene.⁵¹ While the hairstyle is superficially similar on both coin and gem — the waves along the side of the head, the bun at the back — instead of forming either melon segments or a nodus, the hair is tied into fillets by a diadem running transversely across the head. And of course this makes sense too, as a portrait on a signet ring had an altogether different audience, a different reach to a coin; it was far more personal, intimate, essentially private.⁵²

We find evidence to support this from Livia, in the form of the so-called Gonzaga Cameo in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg.⁵³ This cameo portrait depicts Augustus and Livia in the guise of Alexander the Great and his Bactrian wife Roxana, complete with Persian headdresses and hairstyle; a far more daring portrait than the somewhat humbler, homespun images seen on public busts and coinage. Such a portrait, never intended to be circulated widely, confirms that the imagery of Imperial Rome was constantly tailored and tweaked to appeal to different audiences.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 38.

⁴⁹ Kleiner, 'Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts', p. 37; Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 38.

⁵⁰ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 38.

⁵¹ Signed by Gnaios. *Carnelian Oval*. 10.110.1, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See Chapter 10.

⁵² Yuen, 'Glyptic Sources of Renaissance Art', p. 137 note 1.

⁵³ Referred to as such because the identity of this cameo is now the subject of some dispute, with various museums claiming their own cameo to be *the* Gonzaga Cameo.

⁵⁴ Winkes, 'Livia', p. 34.



Figure 41. Gonzaga Cameo, State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg. Photograph: Sailko.

When constructing her own identity — personal, civic and regnal — Selene had three role models to choose from: her adoptive mother Octavia; the empress Livia, who upon Octavia’s death took up the mantle of *materfamilias* of Rome; and her own mother, Cleopatra. Each of these maternal figures set a different role that she might inhabit. In following Octavia’s footsteps, she might become the mother not only to Juba’s children, but symbolically to Mauretania as a whole. Her lot would be to endure stoically from the sidelines. Whereas if she chose to rule in Livia’s image, she would have power, commanding respect through her association with the king, but not necessarily authority. Finally, if she embraced her mother’s legacy, she might rule in her own right, overshadowing her husband’s claim to the throne with the weight of her own dynastic legacy.

Yet, as the evidence from the coin, the gemstone and above all the bust show,

Cleopatra Selene did not present just one image, one persona to the world, but many different faces.

If Augustus and Livia could present different faces to different audiences, then so too could Juba and Selene. The coinage of Juba and Selene, legal tender not just within the kingdom but throughout the empire, conveyed one message: that the king and queen looked and behaved as loyal Roman subjects, their allegiance to Augustus unquestioned. Back home, however, within the confines of their own palace, their images could tell a different story, emphasising their identity as Hellenistic rulers with the gemstone portrait, or as legitimate heirs to long-standing North African dynasties with the marble bust. If this was the intent, Selene would absolutely have wanted to align her portraiture with that of her mother, for amongst her subjects in Mauretania there was as much mileage in portraying herself as a Ptolemy as there was as a Roman. To identify herself with her mother, by claiming her mother's iconic hairstyle for herself, was not just to stake a claim to her mother's legacy, but to take the first steps towards rehabilitating it too.

12. The Priest and the Princess



Figure 42. Statue of Petubastes IV (Cherchell Archeological Museum, S75 (94)). Photograph: from Grenier, 'Cléopâtre Sélénè reine de Maurétanie'.

A headless statuette, just half a metre tall, has stood in the south-east pavilion of Cherchell

Archeological Museum in Algeria ever since it was found in 1908 during the construction of a rug factory by the English Protestant Mission.¹ The statuette was carved in Egypt, from a single piece of basalt, and is distinctively Egyptian in style. The subject stands upright, one leg slightly in front of the other, his arms flat at his side. He wears a long linen robe and, wrapped around his shoulders, a leopard skin — the insignia of a high priest of Memphis.² The head and the right shoulder of the statuette are missing, perhaps deliberately vandalised. A long hieroglyphic inscription is carved into the back of the statuette, identifying the priest as Petubastes IV, high priest of Ptah during the reign of Cleopatra VII.³ Petubastes was just sixteen years old when he died on 31st July 30 BC, the same day that Egypt fell to the Romans.⁴ But if Petubastes died in Egypt, how did his statue come to be buried in Algeria?

* * *

In early July 30 BC, a year after his victory at Actium, Augustus' army made camp south of Alexandria's walls. Where crowds of Alexandrians had once flocked to watch chariot races in its hippodrome, the Lageion, Roman soldiers now pitched their tents and dug their latrines.⁵ Mark Antony, humbled from a string of defeats and humiliating desertions, was anxious to prove to his lover Cleopatra that there was still hope. He immediately mustered his men and rode out, routing Augustus' vanguard of cavalry and pursuing them back to their camp. Antony returned, jubilant, to the palace, where — still wearing his armour — he embraced Cleopatra and presented her with the soldier who had fought the most valiantly. Cleopatra rewarded the soldier with a golden helmet and cuirass.⁶

The mood quickly soured, however. First, the soldiers taken prisoner by Antony chose death over disloyalty to Augustus.⁷ Then, in the night, the soldier honoured by Cleopatra deserted, taking his prize with him. Antony, growing increasingly desperate, challenged Augustus to a duel, as he had done before Actium. Augustus demurred.

¹ *Statue of Petubastes IV*. S75 (94), Cherchell Archaeological Museum.

² Paul Gauckler and Marcel Durry. *Musée de Cherchel*. (*Supplément par Marcel Durry*). Translation author's own. *Musées et collections archéologiques de l'Algérie et de la Tunisie* (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1895), p. 56; Isidore Lévy. 'Le Grand Prêtre Égyptien Du Musée de Cherchel'. *Revue Archéologique* 22 (1913): 73-81 (75); Horn and Rüger, *Die Numider*, p. 520; K. Fittschen. 'Juba II und seine Residenz', p. 239.

³ Stéphane Gsell. *Cherchel: Antique Iol-Caesarea* (Alger: Imprimerie officielle, 1952), p. 66.

⁴ Gsell, *Cherchel*, p. 66.

⁵ Hans Volkmann. *Cleopatra: A Study in Politics and Propaganda*. Translated by T.J. Cadoux (New York, NY: Sagamore Press, 1958), p. 196.

⁶ Plutarch, *Antony*, 74.3.

⁷ Volkmann, *Cleopatra*, p. 197.

Worse was to come. On the night of the 31st July the city was quiet with anticipation, when musical instruments and the sounds of revellers were suddenly heard. This raucous procession proceeded through the streets, although no one could be seen, so the apocryphal tale goes. The noise from this invisible revelry seemed to make its way out of the gates and to the Roman camp, before suddenly falling silent once more.⁸ To Alexandria's fearful citizens and Antony's soldiers alike the meaning was clear: Antony's patron-god, Dionysus, had abandoned him.⁹

Insult heaped upon insult: the next day Antony's fleet changed side, then his cavalry deserted and, finally, what remained of his army was defeated by Augustus in open battle, forcing Antony to slope back to the city, broken and beaten.¹⁰

On 1st August, a month after the city was first laid to siege, Alexandria finally fell to Augustus' forces. Augustus and his men were restrained in their victory, Cassius Dio writing that:

in the case of the Egyptians and the Alexandrians, he spared them all, so that none perished. The truth was that he did not see fit to inflict any irreparable injury upon a people so numerous, who might prove very useful to the Romans in many ways; nevertheless, he offered as a pretext for his kindness their god Serapis [...] The speech in which he proclaimed to them his pardon he delivered in Greek, so that they might understand him.¹¹

Augustus' victory was not entirely without its victims, of course. Mark Antony fell on his own sword, his attempts to negotiate exile to Greece having been rebuffed.¹² Cleopatra followed him, killing herself while under Roman guard. Caesarion, Cleopatra's son by Julius Caesar, was murdered on Augustus' orders while attempting to board a ship to India, as was Antony's eldest son Antyllus.¹³ Cleopatra and Antony's younger children together, the ten-year old twins Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, as well as Ptolemy Philadelphus, aged just five, were taken prisoner. In time they would return to Rome with Augustus, to be paraded in triumph through the streets next to an effigy of their dead mother.¹⁴

On the same day that Alexandria fell to Rome, Petubastes IV died in Memphis.

⁸ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, pp. 34-5.

⁹ Plutarch, *Antony*, 75.3; this scene is also the subject of the poem 'The God Abandons Antony' by the Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933).

¹⁰ Plutarch, *Antony*, 76.1-2

¹¹ Dio, 51.15.3-4.

¹² Suetonius, *Augustus*, 17.4.

¹³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 81, Dio 51.15.5-7; Harders, 'An Imperial Family Man', p. 221.

¹⁴ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 17.4; Dio 51.21.7-9. See Chapters 4 and 5.

Even though Memphis was one-hundred miles removed from Alexandria, this seems too much of a coincidence for it to have been a natural death. Did he, distraught at the dramatic defeat of his patrons, kill himself to avoid serving Egypt's new masters?¹⁵ Or was it murder? There are reasons to think it might have been — as high priest of Ptah, his position was central in appointing the new ruler of the nation.¹⁶ Would he have been resistant to acknowledge Augustus' authority? Perhaps Augustus was unwilling to take the risk that he would be, especially as the priests of Ptah had the ear of the Egyptian people. And, through the priesthood and his family's intermarriage with the royal family, Petubastes had a claim to the throne too. We cannot know how or why Petubastes died, but we do know an unusual amount about both his life — and afterlife.

The hieroglyphic inscription on the back of his statuette reads:

[...] Ptah, priest of the temples [of Memphis],
 prophet of Chnum, lord of Semenu-Hor,
 prophet of Horus-Re, lord of Sachebu,
 prophet of Sokaris, lord of Hut-Horu,
 scribe of Ptah,
 overseer of the storehouse,
 prophet of Ptah, lord of provisions of the temple of Ptah south of his wall, lord of Anchtawi,
 master of the secrets of the temple of Ptah of Rosetau,
 (and) of the temple of Apis-Osiris of Busins (Pr-Wsir)
 [...]
 who knows the secrets of Upper and Lower Egypt,
 first prophet of any god,
 overseer of the prophets of all gods and goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt,
 hereditary noble and local prince,
 the high priest Petubastes,
 son: the god's father beloved of the god,
 master of the secrets of the temple of Ptah of Rosetau and Rutiset, Psenptais, born of Taimouthes.
 May these name[s last in this temple for ever].¹⁷

While most of the inscription is a list of titles, honorifics and duties, two lines stand out as personal: 'Petubastes, son' and 'born of Taimouthes'. This is not just an official inscription, but a highly personal one too, erected by Pserenptah to honour his son while he

¹⁵ Lévy, 'Le Grand Prêtre Égyptien', p. 80.

¹⁶ Dorothy J. Thompson. *Memphis under the Ptolemies*. 2nd ed (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 143 note 222.

¹⁷ J. Quaegebeur. 'The Genealogy of the Memphite High Priest Family in the Hellenistic Period'. *Studia Hellenistica* 24 (1980): 45-81 (62).

was still a little boy.¹⁸ As so many inscriptions pertaining to Petubastes and his family have survived, including another inscription from his tomb in the Serapeion in Memphis, funeral stelae, statues, sarcophagi and Books of the Dead, their story can be told in some detail.¹⁹

The funeral stele of his mother, Taimouthes, for example, is surprisingly intimate, describing her and her husband's struggle to have a son. Taimouthes was a musician, married to the high priest of Ptah at Memphis.²⁰ She had three daughters but no sons, and the stele describes how she prayed to the god Imouthes-Asklepios for one. The god appeared to her husband in a dream, telling him to build a new hall in his temple, which he did. In return, on 13th July 46 BC, Taimouthes gave birth to a son, Imouthes-Petubastes, his name honouring the god.²¹ Taimouthes died just four years later, and the final part of her inscription is addressed directly to her husband: '[c]ease not to drink, to eat, to get drunk, to enjoy love, to make the day joyful, to follow your inclination both night and day; allow no grief to enter your heart...'²²

Her husband died a couple of years after, when Petubastes was just six, suggesting that he must have erected the statuette while Petubastes was still a little boy. A year later, upon the death of his uncle in July 39 BC, Petubastes became high priest, although the post would have been held by a regency of sorts until he was a little older.²³ The position of high priest of Ptah was hereditary and had been held by Petubastes' family for the past three centuries, ever since Ptolemy I became pharaoh of Egypt in 305 BC and Petubastes' ancestor Esisout became his first high priest.²⁴

Ptah was the city-god of the old Egyptian capital of Memphis as well as the god of crafts and craftsmen. Under Ptolemaic rule he was identified with the Greek smith-god Hephaestus and later under the Romans with Vulcan.²⁵ His high priests bore the title 'chief of artificers' and his temples doubled as factories that produced bronze statues, arms and armour and other metal objects.²⁶ The high priests of Ptah also served as head of the cults of Apis, lord of the necropolis, and Oserapis, god of the sun. During Egyptian funerary rites the priests of Ptah performed the important function of literally opening a mummy's mouth so it could

¹⁸ Fittschen, 'Juba II und seine Residenz', p. 239.

¹⁹ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 131.

²⁰ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 133 note 171.

²¹ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 130.

²² Lévy, 'Le Grand Prêtre Égyptien', p. 79; Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 131.

²³ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 132.

²⁴ Lévy, 'Le Grand Prêtre Égyptien', p. 80; Fittschen, 'Juba II und seine Residenz', p. 238.

²⁵ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 137.

²⁶ Guy Weill Goudchaux. 'Cleopatra's Subtle Religious Strategy'. In *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, edited by Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001): 128-41 (129).

eat and breathe in the afterlife, or symbolically opening the mouth of a statue to invest it with life.

In a land where the fortunes of Egypt, its gods and its ruler were intertwined, it had long fallen to the priesthood to mediate between the pharaoh and his people through ritual and diplomacy. Under earlier dynasties it had been the priesthood of Amun that had fulfilled this duty, but with the coming of the Ptolemies and Greek rule — and the revolts that subsequently consumed Amun's traditional heartland in the south — Ptah took on the role.²⁷ The priests of Ptah were prepared to acknowledge successive Ptolemies as pharaoh, and in return Ptah was rewarded with pre-eminence over the other Egyptian cults. In truth the Ptolemies needed the priesthood more, for without them — and their artisans and farmers that controlled the economy — nothing worked.²⁸ The priests became interlocutors between the Greek elite — the merchants, the officials and, above all, the Ptolemaic pharaoh — and the Egyptian masses.²⁹ Their most important official duty was in the rite of coronation, now performed by the high priest of Ptah at Memphis.³⁰

When Cleopatra was crowned as pharaoh in Memphis in 51 BC, it was Petubastes' father Pserenptah who placed the crown on her head. And, when Petubastes became high priest at the age of seven, he travelled upriver from Memphis to Alexandria for his investment by Cleopatra.³¹

He [the high priest] came to Alexandria, he drank in the presence of the [pharaoh], and he was given the heqa sceptre of rule, garments from the southern store, the bouquet proper to Ptah for festivals and processions. He had placed on his head the great golden crown, according to age-old custom.

Cleopatra Selene was only a baby at the time of Petubastes' investment, but the close ties between the priesthood of Ptah and the royal family ensured that she would have met him at some point in the ten years she lived in Alexandria.³² Modern scholars have suggested all manner of different connections between the two — how else to explain the presence of the statuette in her palace, if not through personal acquaintance? They were likely

²⁷ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 137.

²⁸ Goudchaux, 'Cleopatra's Subtle Religious Strategy', p. 129.

²⁹ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 137.

³⁰ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 135.

³¹ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 136.

³² Wolfram Grajetzki. 'High Priests of Ptah in the Ptolemaic Period'. *Digital Egypt for Universities*, 2002. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/memphis/highpriestptol.html>; Sally-Ann Ashton. *Cleopatra and Egypt* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p. 196; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 40.

related, cousins even; the royal family and the priestly family had intermarried on more than one occasion. Maybe they were childhood friends, or perhaps Petubastes was a ‘favourite’ of hers, or it might just be that the statuette was a reminder of her last days in Egypt.³³

Selene maintained an interest in her Egyptian heritage throughout her reign. Many of her coins bore symbols of Egypt: the Apis bull, the crown of Isis, hippopotami, crocodiles.³⁴ Other Egyptian artefacts have been found in the capital she shared with Juba, including a sculpture of a uraeus, the rearing Egyptian cobra that was the emblem of the royal house of Egypt; the head from a colossal statue of the god Amun; and the sculpted legs of the pharaoh Thutmose I (r. 1506-1494 BC), by far the oldest antique at Selene’s court.³⁵ Bronze lamps in an Egyptian style and a squatting statuette of the dwarf-god Bes found in Volubilis suggest that the queen’s tastes were reflected throughout her kingdom, too.³⁶ And, most prominent of all, on an island in the middle of Caesarea’s harbour, she had a huge Temple of Isis built, in which many of the Egyptian antiquities would have been displayed.³⁷

Isis was central to the Egyptian creation myth; the twin sister and wife to Osiris and mother through immaculate conception of Horus, who was both Osiris’ son and his reincarnation. She was said to preside over the annual flooding of the Nile that rendered the land fertile, which in turn meant she was worshipped as goddess of fertility and the harvest too.³⁸ Over the millennia, her cult grew by absorbing other gods, and by the first century BC she was worshipped as an almost monotheistic deity with myriad guises: as the goddess of sailors and the sea, of the moon, of love, of fidelity, of self-sacrifice and much more besides. The second-century author Apuleius acknowledged this in *Metamorphoses*, describing how she is ‘worshipped by all the world under different forms, with various rites, and by manifold names.’³⁹

By the fifth century BC her cult had spread throughout the Mediterranean.⁴⁰ For the Ptolemaic queens of Egypt, associating themselves with Isis — a goddess worshipped in both Greece and Egypt — proved politically valuable, bridging the gap between the Greek-

³³ Ashton, *Cleopatra and Egypt*, p. 196; Roller 2004, p. 142; Roller, *Cleopatra’s Daughter*, p. 40.

³⁴ Lévy, ‘Le Grand Prêtre Égyptien’, p. 81; *CNNM*, p. 73.

³⁵ Roller 2004, pp. 142-4.

³⁶ Roller 2004, p. 144.

³⁷ Which we know only from Pliny, *NH*, 5.10.51. See also Gauckler and Durry, *Musée de Cherchel*, p. 57; Potter, *Towns in Late Antiquity*, p. 8; Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene*, p. 126.

³⁸ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, pp. 82-3.

³⁹ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11.5.

⁴⁰ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 85; Carla Alfano. ‘Egyptian Influences in Italy’. In *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, edited by Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001): 276-91 (283).

speaking court and their Egyptian subjects.⁴¹ Both queens Berenice I (r. 340-268 BC) and Arsinoë II (r. 316-270 BC) were worshipped as Isis. In linking themselves to the goddess, they were able to add a veneer of legitimacy to their rule, as the Ptolemies were still viewed as usurpers by many Egyptians.⁴²

Cleopatra took this to an extreme, going to extraordinary lengths to present herself as the earthly embodiment of Isis. On public occasions in Egypt, Cleopatra wore a robe sacred to Isis, furthering her association with the goddess and fostering love and reverence from her worshippers.⁴³ In this guise she would have resembled Apuleius' description of Isis:⁴⁴

First of all her hair, thick, long, and lightly curled, flowed softly down, loosely spread over her divine neck and shoulders. The top of her head was encircled by an intricate crown into which were woven all kinds of flowers. At its midpoint, above her forehead, a flat round disc like a mirror — or rather a symbol for the moon — glistened with white light. To right and left the crown was bounded by coils of rearing snakes, and adorned above with outstretched ears of wheat. Her robe, woven of sheer linen, was of many colours, here shining with white brilliance, there yellow with saffron bloom, there flaming with rosy redness; and what most especially confounded my sight was a deep black cloak gleaming with dark sheen, which was wrapped about her, running under her right arm up to her left shoulder, with part of its broder let down in the form of a knot; it hung in complicated pleats, beautifully undulating with knotted tassels at its lower edge. Along the embroidered border and over the surface of the cloak glittering stars were scattered, and at their centre the full moon exhaled fiery flames. Wherever streamed the hem of that wondrous robe, a garland of flowers and fruits of every kind was attached to it with an inseparable bond.⁴⁵

Plutarch and Cassius Dio both say that Cleopatra was dressed in this way when she died.⁴⁶ It's not unreasonable to suggest that the ornamental snakes that also formed part of Isis' panoply might have been the source of the legend that she was killed by the bite of an asp.⁴⁷

Cleopatra extended her association with Isis to her family. In the carvings on the side of the monumental temple of Hathor at Dendera, for example, she had herself depicted as Isis and her son Caesarion as Horus, recasting herself, her son and his father Julius Caesar as the figures in Egyptian myth — an association that took on a deeper meaning with

⁴¹ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 79.

⁴² Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 79, p85.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 54.9.

⁴⁴ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 81

⁴⁵ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11.3.

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *Antony*, 86.6-7; Dio, 51.13.5.

⁴⁷ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 107.

Caesar's death.⁴⁸ When she visited Athens with Mark Antony, they appeared together dressed as Isis and Osiris; Antony, ever the narcissist, had no qualms being portrayed as a god.⁴⁹ Their twins were identified as children of Isis from an early age, a votive offering from a shrine to Isis, also from Dendera, depicting them huddled at the goddess' feet.⁵⁰ Whether Selene continued this tradition is unclear, but she used the symbolism of Isis — the crown of Isis, the horned cobra, the sistrum or rattle, and sheafs of wheat — on many of her coins, not to mention on the Africa Dish found at Pompeii.⁵¹ Worship of the goddess was brought with Selene to Mauretania with the construction of a temple, and it was there that Juba displayed the crocodile he brought back from his expedition to discover the source of the Nile.⁵²

While Isis had arrived in Rome long before Cleopatra, the queen's stay in the city between 46 and 44 BC only added to the allure of the cult, making it fashionable amongst Roman elite women.

Rome had long assimilated the cults of its conquests — it was one of the secrets of its success — merging newly encountered deities with those of existing cults, sometimes with no more than the change of a name and the repurposing of iconography. In this regard, the cult of Isis was especially well suited to inveigle its way into the Roman world, as the goddess already contained a multiplicity of divinities within her.⁵³ Worship of Isis was first brought to the ports of southern Italy by Egyptian sailors and merchants, who set up shrines to Isis Pelagia, goddess of sailors and navigations, and by trafficked slaves, who identified with her message of salvation.⁵⁴ Isis also found followers amongst Rome's elite families, both the Scipios and Metelli building Isiac shrines and sanctuaries as early as 64 BC, and the triumvirs — Augustus, Antony and Lepidus — dedicated the large Iseum on the Campus Martius in 43 BC.⁵⁵

Already transformed by the Greeks into a familiar, non-exotic form, Isis became something of a universal deity in Rome, her deeper spirituality and message of life

⁴⁸ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 83.

⁴⁹ Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 229.

⁵⁰ Aly Abdalla. 'A Graeco-Roman Group Statue of Unusual Character from Dendera'. *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 77 (1991): 189-93 (189, 191).

⁵¹ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, #271-4, 275. For the Africa Dish, see Chapter 13.

⁵² Gauckler and Durry, *Musée de Cherchel*, p. 57; Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie'. See Chapter 8.

⁵³ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 80.

⁵⁴ Goudchaux, 'Cleopatra's Subtle Religious Strategy', p. 131; Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 279.

⁵⁵ Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences in Italy', p. 283; Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, pp. 166-7.

after death appealing to a wide range of social groups.⁵⁶ Her message of salvation offered a more satisfying faith to the lower classes, including slaves and freedmen, while more educated, wealthier followers, especially women, were able to take on a greater role than in more traditional Roman cults.⁵⁷

Despite its growing popularity, the cult of Isis was viewed with suspicion by the Roman authorities, fearing that her worship — especially amongst foreigners, freedmen and slaves, and women — might lead to political instability.⁵⁸ Throughout both the first centuries BC and AD there was a repeated cycle of prohibition and persecution, with temples and shrines to Isis torn down, worship banned, and her priests and believers deported or crucified. These periods were inevitably followed by a resurgence of the cult, often spurred by the patronage of a wealthy family, and temples were rebuilt over and over again.⁵⁹ It wasn't until the reign of Caligula (r. AD 37-41) that this cycle ended with the official recognition of the cult.⁶⁰

Despite his earlier support for Isis, under Augustus opposition to her cult reached its height. Much of this was part of his propaganda war against Cleopatra, in which he sought to emphasise the contrast between Rome and Egypt, painting himself as the only one who could defend the traditional Roman way of life. Cleopatra's decision to portray herself as Isis led to an easy public relations win for Augustus. He framed both her and her cult as malignant influencers, bewitching good, honest Romans with their exotic charms, as Cassius Dio's account of Augustus' speech to his men before Actium illustrated:⁶¹

Who would not weep [...] when he sees that this man [Antony] has now abandoned all his ancestors' habits of life, has emulated all alien and barbaric customs, that he pays no honour to us or to the laws or to his fathers' gods, but pays homage to that wench as if she were some Isis or Selene, calling her children Helios and Selene, and finally taking for himself the title of Osiris or Dionysus [...].⁶²

A commonly used slur was that the temples of Isis were dens of iniquity, her priestesses prostitutes. Juvenal referred to Isis as a brothel's 'Madam'.⁶³ Other Egyptian gods

⁵⁶ Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 283.

⁵⁷ Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 281.

⁵⁸ Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 281.

⁵⁹ Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, p. 79; Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 281.

⁶⁰ Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 166.

⁶¹ Eric M. Orlin. 'Octavian and Egyptian Cults: Redrawing the Boundaries of Romanness'. *The American Journal of Philology* 129/2 (2008): 231-53 (238). See Chapter 4.

⁶² Dio, 50.25.

⁶³ Juvenal, *Satire*, 6.489.

were similarly denigrated, especially Anubis, who was referred to as ‘barker’ for his dog-head.⁶⁴ Virgil’s *Aeneid*, ever on message, portrayed the gods of Egypt as monsters facing off against the traditional Roman pantheon at Actium.⁶⁵

After his conquest of Egypt, Augustus regulated the worship of foreign gods in Rome, banning animal worship and banishing ‘Eastern cults’ from the heart of Rome.⁶⁶ This was not specifically a proscription against Isis, or even the Egyptian cults in general, but rather part of his wider attempts to reaffirm traditional Roman values in the aftermath of decades of civil war.⁶⁷

At the same time, as a result of increased contact between Egypt and Rome, culminating with Cleopatra’s visit and later the conquest of Egypt, Rome was in the grip of a form of ‘Egyptomania’, much like the kind that swept Europe and the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Egyptian elements appeared on statuary, in paintings and frescoes, and there was a keen demand for Egyptian-style artefacts — many of which were actually manufactured in Italy. With the conquest of Egypt, this only heightened further, with tombs, temples and palaces systematically plundered, their contents — even the structures themselves — shipped back to Rome to satisfy the demand.⁶⁸ Examples of Rome’s Egyptian craze endure in the city to this day, not least in the numerous Egyptian obelisks that still adorn its squares. The most prominent example still standing is the huge Pyramid of Cestius, a first-century tomb inspired by Egyptian monumental architecture, which was subsequently incorporated into the later city walls and is the first thing a commuter sees when they exit the metro station named for the landmark — Piramide.

Many of the Egyptian artefacts imported to Rome had been chosen at random from amongst those that were easily accessible, or were stolen from famous sites. Considered together, the sorts of artefacts imported to Rome resemble the Egyptian gallery of a modern-day museum — obelisks, pyramids, sphinxes, lions and gods with the heads of animals — all chosen to fit the Romans’ idea of what Egypt was like. Rarer still, were those specially picked for their historical or religious significance, such as those bearing cartouches of famous

⁶⁴ Michel Malaise. *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015), p. 248.

⁶⁵ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.671-713.

⁶⁶ Alfano, ‘Egyptian Influences’, p. 286.

⁶⁷ Orlin, ‘Octavian and Egyptian Cults’, p. 232.

⁶⁸ Alfano, ‘Egyptian Influences’, p. 286.

pharaohs.⁶⁹ But, like the Greeks who had ruled the country before them, few Romans had sufficient knowledge of Egyptian culture to be able to make such a deduction for themselves, which suggests that these imports were overseen by Egyptians, most likely Egyptian priests who came to the capital to preside over the new temples to Isis in Rome.⁷⁰

Augustus wasn't above such fashions, either. He decorated his mausoleum with obelisks brought back from Egypt, and erected an obelisk from Heliopolis to be the huge gnomon for a monumental sundial he had built in the Campus Martius.⁷¹ Even the Temple of Apollo he constructed right at the top of the Palatine Hill, intended to make the point that the Greco-Roman gods alone were worshipped in the centre of Rome, was decorated with Egyptian themes.⁷² His house on the Palatine was similarly adorned: Egyptian motifs such as obelisks, lotus flowers and rearing cobras abounded; the wall of one room was covered in a Nilotic scene complete with pygmies and hippopotami; another with a painting of a veiled priestess of Isis.⁷³ Augustus' wasn't the only imperial residence to be decorated in this way. His wife Livia's house was similarly embellished, as was the Villa della Farnesina inhabited by his daughter Julia and her husband Agrippa.⁷⁴

And perhaps it's not surprising. Whether he liked it or not, with the conquest of Egypt Augustus was now an Eastern sovereign — de facto pharaoh — with all the iconography and symbolism that entailed. In embracing Egyptian culture, bringing it into the fold in a controlled manner, Augustus was bridging the gap between East and West, allowing the nascent Roman Empire to itself become truly universal.⁷⁵

Juba and Selene, growing up in Rome at the height of Egyptomania, cannot help but to have been exposed to Egyptian imagery at every turn, and so it's no surprise to find these trends on display in Mauretania, too, whether in the form of imported statuary or Egyptian-style art. Due to Selene's Egyptian heritage, it's easy to credit her and Juba with more cultural insight than the fashion followers in Rome, to explain away the Egyptian artefacts found in Caesarea as being possessed of more meaning than they perhaps deserve. Take the previously mentioned statue of Thutmose I, for example. Modern-day scholars have

⁶⁹ Anne Roulet. *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*. Études Préliminaires Aux Religions Orientales Dans l'empire Romain: T. 20 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1972), p. 13.

⁷⁰ Roulet, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*, p. 16; Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 168.

⁷¹ Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 286. The obelisk stood there until the eighth century, and was later re-erected in the Piazza di Montecitorio in 1789.

⁷² Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, pp. 174-8.

⁷³ Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, p. 170.

⁷⁴ Orlin, 'Octavian and Egyptian Cults', p. 239.

⁷⁵ Alfano, 'Egyptian Influences', p. 286; Orlin, 'Octavian and Egyptian Cults', p. 234.

tried to explain its significance, but truly what could this pharaoh — who ruled Egypt over a millennia before Selene’s Ptolemaic ancestors ever set foot in the country — have meant to Selene? Surely it was just idle decoration, the royal couple oblivious to its true meaning or identity. And yet we have the statuette of Petubastes, a priest with a real connection to Selene, and whose presence in Caesarea can only be the result of deliberate, considered action. And if this object has a deeper meaning, it is possible that the Egyptian artefacts found in Caesarea did too.

Of course, Selene had more reason than most to take a continued interest in Egypt. She had lived in Alexandria for the first ten years of her life, so her experiences of the art and culture of Egypt were first hand. She was also the sole surviving Ptolemy, raised in the heart of Cleopatra’s court, and therefore Egypt’s rightful heir. While her loyalty to Rome had been assured during her rehabilitation in Octavia’s household, her inheritance as an Egyptian princess must have remained at least a part of her identity.⁷⁶

This must have been one of the reasons that, when Juba and Selene arrived in their new capital of Iol, the first thing they did was set about rebuilding it not as Rome but as Alexandria.⁷⁷ The similarities are readily apparent: both were ports on the southern Mediterranean, complete with monumental lighthouses overlooking the harbour, their city streets deliberately laid out on a grid pattern.⁷⁸ They were both conceived as seats of learning, complete with libraries and museums, and just as Alexandria was littered with Egyptian monuments plundered from native cities in the Nile Delta, so too was Caesarea decorated with Egyptian monuments taken from Alexandria and Memphis.⁷⁹ Caesarea, too, was a cosmopolitan city, drawing immigrants from across the Mediterranean world, not just from Greece but also from Egypt, to the extent that the court of Juba and Selene resembled one of Alexandria in exile.⁸⁰

Selene was not alone in embracing her Egyptian heritage. Juba too had a life-long interest in Egypt, fostered either through his upbringing during the height of Roman Egyptomania, via his wife’s patronage of the cult of Isis or his own studies of the scientific

⁷⁶ Fittschen, ‘Juba II und seine Residenz’, p. 239; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 157.

⁷⁷ Roller, *Cleopatra’s Daughter*, p. 40.

⁷⁸ Shaw, ‘Review of Le Royaume de Maurétanie’, pp. 424-5.

⁷⁹ John Ray. ‘Alexandria’. In *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, edited by Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001): 32-37 (36-37); Draycott, ‘The Sacred Crocodile of Juba II’, p. 215.

⁸⁰ Andy Merrills. *Roman Geographies of the Nile: From the Late Republic to the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 46.

advances and ocean voyages of the Ptolemies.⁸¹ In Selene's Ptolemaic ancestry Juba must have sensed an opportunity too; the Ptolemies were a dynasty far older than that of his father, and with far greater claims to rule over vast swathes of North Africa. By embracing Selene's heritage, connecting it to the new land they both found themselves in, Juba could add a veneer of legitimacy to their rule — after all, the pharaohs had once claimed dominion over Libya and beyond, so why shouldn't Selene? Juba attempted to prove a physical connection between the two kingdoms, mounting an expedition to locate the source of the Nile in Mauretania. This was not as fanciful an endeavour as it might sound, as the belief that the Nile rose in the Atlas Mountains was commonly held at the time.⁸² Juba found what he was looking for, according to Pliny:

King Juba was able to ascertain [that] it has its origin in a mountain of lower Mauretania not far from the Ocean, and immediately forms a stagnant lake called Nilides. Fish found in this lake are the alabeta, coracinus and silurus; also a crocodile was brought from it by Juba to prove his theory, and placed as a votive offering in the temple of Isis at Caesarea, where it is on view today. Moreover, it has been observed that the Nile rises in proportion to excessive falls of snow or rain in Mauretania.⁸³

In proving a physical connection, Juba hoped to hitch Mauretania's reputation to the coattails of Egypt's, and his own dynasty's glory to that of the Ptolemies.⁸⁴ By displaying the crocodile he had brought back from the source of the Nile, Juba was proclaiming that here, in Mauretania, the true successor kingdom to Egypt could be found.

* * *

After his death in the summer of 30 BC, Petubastes' body was carried to the necropolis in Memphis and mummified, but his mummy remained there, unburied for another seven years.⁸⁵ Egypt's new ruler was suspicious of the Ptolemies' favoured priests, and it was another two and a half years before Augustus allowed a new high priest to be appointed: Petubastes' cousin Psenamounis II. Petubastes was eventually buried on 9th April 23 BC, Augustus' conflict with the cult of Ptah presumably allayed. His successor performed the

⁸¹ Merrills, *Roman Geographies of the Nile*, p. 46.

⁸² Merrills, *Roman Geographies of the Nile*, p. 45; see also Pomponius Mela 1.50-2, Vitruvius 8, Crinagoras, Epigram 25.

⁸³ Pliny, *NH*, 5.10.51.

⁸⁴ Draycott, 'The Sacred Crocodile of Juba II of Mauretania', p. 216.

⁸⁵ Lévy, 'Le Grand Prêtre Égyptien', p. 81.

ceremony, Augustus himself playing the role of pharaoh. No expense was spared, but this would be the last great Egyptian ceremony held in Memphis.⁸⁶ It's likely that it was at this time, following his funeral, that Selene had the statuette of Petubastes brought to Caesarea — perhaps a gift from Augustus himself to his adopted daughter.⁸⁷

Whatever Juba and Selene's own pharaonic ambitions, there was little hope they could be realised — Augustus saw to that, dismantling the symbiotic relationship between the Ptolemies and the cult of Ptah. While Augustus never claimed the title pharaoh, he refashioned local traditions to his own benefit — as he had elsewhere — so that he became known as Prophet of Caesar, ending the monopoly the priests of Ptah held on appointing the ruler of Egypt.⁸⁸ And although Psenamounis II succeeded Petubastes IV as high priest, he in turn would be the last of his line.⁸⁹ While the cult of Ptah continued to dominate religious life in Memphis — the Temple of Ptah proved to be a popular attraction for Roman tourists, its priests never again held the power that they had under the Ptolemies.⁹⁰ The last pharaoh of Egypt was Cleopatra.

⁸⁶ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 252.

⁸⁷ Fittschen, 'Juba II und seine Residenz', p. 239.

⁸⁸ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 157.

⁸⁹ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 252.

⁹⁰ Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p. 251.

13. The Family Silver



Figure 43. 'Africa' Dish from Boscoreale, Italy (Louvre, BJ 1969). Photograph: Hervé Lewandowski.

The very first thing a visitor to the Louvre-Lens' exhibition, 'Rome, the City and the Empire' sees is a large, highly decorated silver serving dish known as the 'Africa' dish. The dish is so adorned with symbols that barely an inch of its surface remains unworked. The decoration is sculpted in high relief — in other words, largely three-dimensional — using a technique called repoussé, where it is hammered into shape from the back and then delicately engraved on the front.¹ The decoration comprises a highly complex set of allegorical symbols and characters, surrounding a portrait of a woman. The woman has a mass of thick curly hair, framing a face with strong features — deep set eyes, a long, slightly hooked nose, a prominent jaw and a thick neck — suggestive of a portrait of a real person, not an idealised portrait of a

¹ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 312.

mythological figure. Her most striking feature is not how she looks but what she wears: the scalp of an elephant, trunk, tusks and all, as a headdress, often synonymous with the personification of Africa.²

An asp — a creature closely associated not only with Cleopatra's death, but also the royal symbol of Egypt — is wrapped around her right wrist, facing off against a pantheress, a symbol of Dionysus adopted by Mark Antony.³ The woman holds pomegranates, figs and grapes in her open right palm, and in her left hand is a cornucopia — a horn of plenty — overflowing with ears of corn and yet more fruit. The cornucopia is topped with a crescent moon set on a pine cone, and the horn itself engraved with an eagle and the image of a young boy, his head surrounded with a radiant crown.⁴

The iconography continues elsewhere on the plate — symbols representing mythological subjects from various pantheons, from the Greek Heracles to the Egyptian Isis — far too dense and rich to go into in any detail here, all surrounded with a knotted wreath of olive and myrtle branches.⁵ With the exception of the woman's skin, which was left silver, all of the sculpted decoration was originally gilded too, although this has rubbed away in places.⁶

The bust is not idealised enough for it to be intended as a mythological subject or, as was once thought, the personification of a city or state.⁷ Instead, the specific, individualised details of its sculpted features suggest that it was a portrait based on a real-life figure.⁸ Furthermore, as the dish was intended for prominent display, the sculpture had to be of an instantly recognisable figure.⁹ The most obvious female subjects from the Augustan age can immediately be discounted; it looks like neither Augustus' wife Livia nor his sister Octavia. It does, however, resemble portraits of Cleopatra — the bust shares her distinctive hooked nose and thick neck, both inherited from her father — and several scholars have identified it as such.¹⁰ If it bears a passing similarity to her mother, it is uncannily like

² Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 312. See also Chapter 3.

³ Plutarch, *Antony*, 24.3, 54.6, 60.3; Dio 50.5.3.

⁴ Antoine Héron de Villefosse. 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale'. *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 5/1 (1899): 7-132 (40).

⁵ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 312. Symbols around the bust include the quiver of Diana, the club of Hercules, the sistrum of Isis, the dolphin of Poseidon, the tongs of Hephaestus, the staff of Asklepios, the sword of Ares and the lyre of Apollo or Dionysus.

⁶ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 42.

⁷ See Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 39; Michael Ivanovitch Rostovzeff. *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 277.

⁸ Marie-Benedicte Astier. 'Boscoreale 'Africa' Dish.' *Louvre*. <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/boscoreale-treasure>.

⁹ Draycott, 'Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining', p. 48.

¹⁰ Draycott, 'Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining', p. 49; Donald Emrys Strong. *Greek and Roman*

portraits of Cleopatra Selene found on her coinage: the same curly hair, swept back, the same deep-set eyes, the same thick neck, hooked nose and strong chin.¹¹

If we had any doubts, the bust's identity is confirmed as Cleopatra Selene by the cornucopia held in her left hand: the eagle is that of the Ptolemies, the dynasty of her mother, and the crescent moon is the symbol of the moon goddess, Selene's namesake. The young boy, too, is dressed with the whip and radiant crown of the sun god Helios — for whom her twin, Alexander Helios, was named.

It is in an astonishing state of conservation, the craftsmanship on display the work of a master silversmith in Alexandria or Campania at the end of the first century BC, a time when Roman metalwork was at its height.¹² On the back, the original craftsman has engraved the weight of the dish, and there is just 7g difference between the weight today and the weight stated in the inscription.¹³ That it survived in any condition at all is all the more astonishing, considering where it was found — buried beneath layers of volcanic ash.

* * *

Sometime after midday, on the 24th October AD 79, Mount Vesuvius erupted.¹⁴ Over the following centuries the volcano's inexhaustible fountains of fire would become a common sight, but in AD 79 Vesuvius had not erupted in some three centuries.¹⁵ The cloud of white smoke and black ash that shot high into the air prompted alarm amongst the inhabitants of the towns, villages and country estates that dotted the mountain's lower slopes.¹⁶ Amongst them was Maxima, the owner of a large winery and the heiress to her father's banking fortune.¹⁷ Her villa at Boscoreale lay between the city of Pompeii and the summit of Vesuvius, where its open mountain sides and rich, crumbly earth provided the perfect soil in which to plant

Gold and Silver Plate (North Yorkshire: Methuen, 1966), p. 151 note 3.

¹¹ Draycott, 'Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining', p. 50 note 21; see *Bronze Crocodile Coin of Cleopatra Selene*. G1874,0715.491, British Museum.

¹² Rostovzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, p. 277.

¹³ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 43.

¹⁴ Vesuvius was long considered to have erupted in August, but it is now believed to have been October. BBC News. 'Pompeii: Vesuvius Eruption May Have Been Later than Thought', 16 October 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45874858>.

¹⁵ Dio, 66.21.1.

¹⁶ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 6.16. The younger Pliny was an eyewitness to the eruption that claimed the life of his uncle, Pliny the Elder, who died attempting a daring rescue by sea. The description that follows is drawn from two letters written to the historian Tacitus — see Chapter 8.

¹⁷ National Archaeological Institute with Museum. 'Exhibition "Silver from the Louvre. Boscoreale Treasure"', 2015. <http://naim.bg/en/content/news/600/857/559>.

vines.¹⁸ The vineyards that surrounded her villa were laden down with plentiful grapes and her slaves were preparing to harvest them to begin pressing them into rich-flowing wine when the volcano began to erupt.¹⁹ Loathe to abandon her family's country estate — and the fruitful harvest — Maxima began to direct her servants to secure the farm buildings and villa as best they could.

By the time the servants had finished, ashes were falling, piling up on the rooftops. Pumice-stones and chunks of black flint fell too, charred and cracked by the heat of the flames, threatening to set fires wherever they landed. The way out by road was already cut off, and a strong wind blowing onto shore prevented escape by sea.²⁰ Instead Maxima and her entourage headed back into the safety of the villa and resigned themselves to waiting until the danger passed — if, indeed, it would. Her stewards set up a makeshift bedroom in the innermost storeroom so that she could at least wait in comfort.²¹ Her most trusted companion took her most valuable goods, stowed in a wooden chest and lowered it into the empty cistern beneath the wine cellar, before climbing down to join it.²² In the wooden chest was a dinner set containing over a hundred silver items, from decorated plates and serving dishes to wine jugs and drinking cups. Some of these items were relatively new and unused, others over a century old and well worn; all were incalculably valuable, each one a masterpiece in its own right. It was, quite literally, the family silver.

But there was little comfort to be had in knowing the treasure was safe. All through the night the mountain shook and flames rose high into the air from higher up its flank, lighting up the sky, the brightness all the more striking against the darkness of the night.²³ Watching from her portico, Maxima couldn't help but wonder if these were her neighbour's estates going up in flames. All through the night the courtyards and porticoes surrounding the villa began to fill up with ashes and pumice-stones.²⁴

Though dawn came elsewhere, in the morning the sky above Boscoreale was still blacker and thicker than an ordinary night. Suddenly the stench of sulphur filled the air. The dogs chained up in the hallway began barking, straining at their leashes, and the horses still in the stable broke down the stall doors.²⁵ One of the slaves tried to make a run for it,

¹⁸ Virgil, *Georgics*, 2.259-353.

¹⁹ Virgil, *Georgics*, 2.177-225, 2.354-420.

²⁰ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 6.16.

²¹ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 26.

²² Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 29.

²³ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 6.16.

²⁴ Dio, 66.23.

²⁵ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 21, 24.

clutching his possessions in his hands, but returned a moment later, blinded by the ashes.²⁶ Maxima and her companions rushed to tie scarves over their faces — but it was all too late.²⁷ A moment later the column of ash collapsed, sending a wave of super-heated gas, ash and rock racing down the mountain, burying villas, towns and cities alike in an instant.²⁸

The Villa della Pisanella remained buried beneath the slopes of Mount Vesuvius for another 1800 years, until renewed interest in the archaeology of Pompeii led to its rediscovery in 1876. But it was only on 13th April — Easter Saturday — 1895 that the real treasure was found. As the labourers prepared to go home for the festive holiday, one of their number, Michele, was finishing clearing rubble from what he thought was an old well. Instead, at the bottom, he discovered a large, vaulted chamber. He returned to the surface to tell the others what he saw, but quickly felt unwell, complaining of ‘bad air’ — long-trapped volcanic gases, perhaps — in the chamber. None of the other labourers wanted to get sick, so kept clear until it was time to leave. Michele waited until they had gone and then told Vincenzo de Prisco, the owner of the land, what he had really found. Under the cover of darkness, they both returned with lanterns and baskets and, working late into the night, carefully removed dozens of items of silver tableware, and hundreds of gold coins.²⁹

Part of the reason for this secrecy was to avoid the scrutiny of the Italian authorities, who were concerned about important archaeological finds being sold abroad to private collectors or foreign museums. To this end they had observers closely watching excavations, but over the holiday they too had gone home. They were right to have been worried, for barely a month later de Prisco arrived in Paris with 41 pieces of silverware. While his agents remained discrete as they attempted to strike a deal with the Louvre, de Prisco could not keep quiet and soon collectors from all over the world were clamouring to buy the treasure.³⁰ The Louvre could not afford the enormous price set by de Prisco — 500,000 francs — and its curators assumed it would be lost.³¹ But then, five days later, a telegram arrived:

²⁶ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 22, 26.

²⁷ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 26.

²⁸ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 6.20.

²⁹ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 31.

³⁰ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 32.

³¹ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 33; Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus*, p. 8.

Paris, June 24, 1895.

Mr. Director General,

Having learned from MM. Schlumberger and Villefosse the great interest that there was for archaeological science in preserving in France the Boscoreale Treasure that your Administration would have liked to see appear in its collections, I acquired this treasure with the intention to offer it to the Louvre. I asked M. de Villefosse to kindly inform you of the conditions under which I proposed to make this donation to the Louvre.

I only want to warn you today myself. And, before to realize my intentions and to deliver to your Administration the objects in question, I want to have the handles and the parts of these pieces unsoldered by time reattached.

Accept, Mr. Director-General, the assurance of my feelings of high consideration.

BARON EDMOND DE ROTHSCHILD³²

The bequest came with just two conditions attached: firstly, that all the donated objects must be exhibited in the Louvre. This was realised less than six months after its purchase when, on 22nd October, the Boscoreale Treasure was displayed to the public in its entirety for the first time, in a specially built display case in the centre of the Antique Jewellery room of the Louvre.

The second condition was that the silverware should be cleaned, restored and any pieces that had been broken should be repaired.³³ Foremost among these was a large serving dish, the central, decorated disc broken away from the surround. As the restorator, M. Alfred André, began to clean the ash and dirt away, to resolder the disc in place, it quickly became apparent that this — the Africa Dish — was the real prize.³⁴

Although it ended up in Maxima's collection, it is unlikely that either she or her father — the Pompeiian banker Lucius Caecilius Iucundus — commissioned the dish themselves. Much of her father's wealth was inherited from the Julio-Claudian dynasty in Campania,³⁵ and it is more likely that the dish once belonged to a member of this family, related as they were to Selene, and came into Iucundus' possession via this inheritance. It is not unrealistic to think that it was commissioned by Juba or Ptolemy, and then gifted to their imperial relatives back in Italy, either to celebrate or commemorate Selene, or to further their own dynastic ambitions.

The possession of silverware was an important signifier of wealth as well as

³² Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', pp. 34-5.

³³ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 35.

³⁴ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 34.

³⁵ 'Exhibition "Silver from the Louvre. Boscoreale Treasure"'.

culture at the end of the first century BC, and many upper-class households prominently displayed their collections.³⁶ The greatest treasuries of silver, such as the one found at the House of Menander in Pompeii, or the Boscoreale Treasure itself, contained over a hundred items, any one of which would be considered a prize artefact to both us and the ancients by itself.³⁷

While the silverware of the Boscoreale Treasure was well used by its owners, some of the items over a hundred years old and showing signs of great wear, the Africa Dish was not.³⁸ Its central sculpture took up so much of the surface that it would have been impractical to use to serve food in. Instead it was a ‘show-plate’ — in reality a picture cast in silver— that would have stood prominently at one end of the dining table during a banquet, or displayed in a cabinet the rest of the time. The fashion for these dishes began in the third century BC, and they were enthusiastically collected by wealthy Romans of the Late Republic. This makes them tricky to date — or to use to date a find site — doubly so as they were often passed down from generation to generation.³⁹ Luckily — although not for Maxima — there is no such difficulty establishing a date of burial for the Boscoreale Treasure: 24th October AD 79, at the moment Pompeii and the surrounding lands was buried in ash and stone from Vesuvius’ cataclysmic eruption.

The density of decoration displayed on the dish, combined with a lack of a narrative and the ambiguity inherent in symbols, leaves its meaning wide open to interpretation. In fact, this ambiguity was not only deliberate, but part of the appeal to Roman viewers.⁴⁰ The symbols formed something of a puzzle that was left to the audience to solve, who would have debated and discussed the meaning in private — in the case of a serving dish such as this, over dinner while reclining in the *triclinium*.

So what might the diners at one of Maxima’s banquets have made of this dish? Much like the modern viewer, their gaze would first have alighted on the central figure, the elephant scalp instantly conjuring up images of Africa. In the absence of a name, to find out who she was, the diners would have to look to the the rest of the decoration for clues. First they would look to the items the figure was holding — the horn of plenty, which provided the most obvious hints — followed by the prominent symbols of the asp and the pantheress,

³⁶ Draycott, ‘Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining’, p. 62.

³⁷ Katherine M. D. Dunbabin. *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 66.

³⁸ Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus*, p. 7.

³⁹ Strong, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate*, p. 151 including note 1.

⁴⁰ Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 253.

considering what they might mean in combination with one another. Finally, they would take in the iconography around the edge of the dish, considering the various meanings each might have, whether mythical or historical. The diners might not come up with a single solution to the meaning of the dish — indeed, the discussion around the table would be made all the more lively if they disagreed.

Certainly there is no shortage of modern scholars ready with an answer too: Rostovzeff considered there to be ‘no doubt’ that the bust is a personification of Alexandria, the symbols all representative of the maritime trade and blessing of the Egyptian gods that contributed to her wealth.⁴¹ Roller thought the bust was instead Africa personified, the symbolism evoking the cornucopia and lion found on Mauretania’s coinage.⁴² Maritz argued that although the image of Africa personified was a Roman invention, previously Cleopatra II had depicted herself wearing an elephant scalp so there was precedence in it being intended as a specific person.⁴³ Draycott, believing that the bust was a lifelike depiction of Cleopatra Selene, and that the symbols are all associated with her parents and their descent from Heracles, argues that they relate to the choice between the paths of vice and virtue; that Antony and Cleopatra, choosing the path of vice, faced ruin, but that Selene — and by implicit extension, Juba — took the virtuous, loyal path, and were rewarded by a prosperous reign.⁴⁴ Finally, Cline and Elkins suggest that, by contemplating Selene’s image, audiences might have considered the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty and contemplate human fortunes.⁴⁵ But we cannot know for sure — even the iconography on more straightforward sculptures can be hard to interpret, so to decipher the complex symbolism on a dish deliberately designed to be obtuse is next to impossible.

What the dish does suggest though, if this is Selene, is that she was famous enough to be known of long after her death. This fame is testified in other mediums too, such as the ivory games counter found in Alexandria that features a portrait of her.⁴⁶ Her fame was at its height at the time of her marriage to Juba, when their union was commemorated in verse by Crinagoras, and in the decade after when she attracted no shortage of attention whenever she returned to Rome.⁴⁷ As we saw earlier, it was at this time that she appeared in the imperial

⁴¹ Rostovzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, p. 277.

⁴² Roller 2004, p142; *CNNM*, #140, 269.

⁴³ Maritz, ‘The Image of Africa’, pp. 109-10, 112.

⁴⁴ Draycott, ‘Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining’, pp. 56-7.

⁴⁵ Lea K. Cline and Nathan T. Elkins. *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Imagery and Iconography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 133.

⁴⁶ *Ivory Counter with Portrait of a Woman*. 1927,0318.5, British Museum. See also Roller, p. 141.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 6.

family procession in 13 BC depicted on the Ara Pacis.⁴⁸ It's likely that the dish was made at this time, when she was at her most prominent in Rome.⁴⁹

But, according to the silver dish, Selene's fame wasn't tied to her own kingdom — the only symbols connecting her to either Mauretania or Juba is the elephant scalp her portrait wears. Instead her fame stemmed from the mythology that now surrounded her parents and her maternal dynasty, as represented by the profusion of symbols associating them with the gods. She was famous not in spite of being the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, but because of it. The people of Rome continued to be fascinated with her as a result. It was as though, in an era when her once glamorised parents had been cast down, she remained the acceptable face of the dynasty. This fascination with the children and grandchildren of Antony and Cleopatra would continue with — and be encouraged by — Selene's son Ptolemy — with disastrous consequences.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁴⁹ Draycott, 'Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining', p. 60.

⁵⁰ See Chapter 14.

Part 3

Death & Dynasty

14. Heirs Apparent



Figure 44. Bust of Ptolemy of Mauretania, current whereabouts unknown. Photograph: Sotheby's.

A life-size bronze bust depicts a boy, perhaps aged nine or ten. The face is round, the eyes almond-shaped and somewhat sunken, the brows curved, the mouth small and slightly open, as though about to speak.¹ The hair is flat, combed forward from the crown to form a fringe across the forehead. The boy once wore a diadem — the symbol of a Hellenistic prince — fashioned as a separate piece, probably made from a more precious material such as gold or silver, but this has long been lost. The bronze retains its original colour and, apart from several cracks in the bust and a little corrosion on the right side of the neck, remains in remarkably good condition for an artefact over two-thousand years old.²

A black-and-white photograph shows an old man propped up in bed, cradling this same bust. The old man is Count Gustav Malcolm Hamilton, the photograph taken at his family home in Hedensberg, Sweden, not long before his death in 1914. The bust is Prince Ptolemy of Mauretania, son of Juba II and Cleopatra, sculpted sometime around AD 5 when the boy was just 10 or 12.³ The photograph is now lost, the bust hidden away in private hands.

¹ Antoine Héron de Villefosse. 'Buste de Ptolémée, dernier roi de Maurétanie (Musée du Louvre)'. *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 2/2 (1895): 191-6 (193).

² Horn and Rüger, *Die Numider*, p. 502.

³ Sotheby's. 'A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania', 2004.

<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2004/egyptian-classical-and-western-asiatic-antiquities-n08035/lot.284.html>.

The Swedish Hamiltons are originally descended from the Hamiltons of Dalselvf, themselves a minor branch of the Scottish House of Hamilton, and can trace their lineage back to Malcolm Hamilton (1575-1629), Archbishop of Cashel in Ireland. During the Swedish Intervention in the Thirty Years War (1630-5) three of Archbishop Hamilton's sons and two of his grandsons found themselves in service to Sweden, most famous amongst them his eldest son Hugh, who rose to the rank of colonel in the Swedish army. In recognition of their service Hugh and his brother Lewis become Swedish barons — naturalised as Hugo and Ludwig — and their nephews counts, titles that their Swedish descendants hold to this day.⁴

It is by this line of descent that Gustav Malcolm Hamilton (1826-1914) became count on the death of his father. He was able to lavish the family fortune on the hobby for which he was famed: the collection of antiquities. Most of his collection comprised locally found — and produced — archaeological artefacts: Nordic Neolithic stone axe-heads and Bronze Age buckles, for the most part. But the prize possession in his collection was the bronze bust of Ptolemy. The bust was unearthed in the middle of the nineteenth century beneath the central square of Uppsala, Sweden, finding its way to a blacksmith who also sold scrap metal and old tools, alongside other, stranger items.⁵ It was from this blacksmith that Count Hamilton bought the bust, displaying it proudly on his bedside table.⁶ But how did the Mauretanian prince come to be buried beneath the centre of Uppsala at all?

The Romans were aware of Scandinavia — the name is Latin for 'islands of the dangers' referring to the shifting sandbanks that dot the coast of southern Sweden, upon which an unwary vessel might founder — but thought it to be a huge island in the middle of an immense sea.⁷ Early writers such as Strabo and Pliny the Elder were fascinated by the sluggish, heavy seas — Pliny referred to it as the *mare concretum*, or frozen ocean — and the concept of the midnight sun, whilst Tacitus wrote about its people including the Cimbri, the Goths and the Svear.⁸ The Romans traded for amber and furs from Scandinavia via intermediaries, but aside from a couple of isolated expeditions — the first in AD 5, when

⁴ Sir Robert Douglas and Sir James Balfour Paul. *The Scots Peerage, Founded on Wood's Ed. of Sir Robert Douglas's Peerage of Scotland, Containing an Historical and Genealogical Account of the Nobility of That Kingdom*. Vol. 4 (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1904).

⁵ Olof Vessberg. 'Ett Fursteporträtt Från Julisk-claudisk Tid'. *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 16/4 (1947), p. 127.

⁶ Sotheby's. 'A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania'.

⁷ J. M. Alonso-Núñez. 'Roman Knowledge of Scandinavia in the Imperial Period'. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 7/1 (1988), p. 47, 61.

⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 4.16.104; Tacitus, *Germania*, 37.1, 44.1, 44.2-3.

Augustus sent his navy to round the tip of Jutland, and in AD 55 when Julianus, the manager of Nero's gladiatorial exhibitions, went to obtain amber to decorate the arena — they did not explore Scandinavia for themselves.⁹ So it seems implausible that the bust was brought to Scandinavia by the Romans, even through trade.

It could have formed early Viking loot stolen from the former Roman provinces of Gaul or Britain — its diadem, made separately and long-since lost, was probably made from a precious metal that might have made it worth stealing — and there are other examples of Roman bronze busts having been uncovered in Swedish soil.¹⁰ But there is little reason for a bust of Ptolemy of Mauretania to have been in Gaul or Britain in the first place, and its good state of preservation suggests that it has not lain buried for two-thousand years — more likely two or three-hundred.

It was more likely brought back to Uppsala much later by a Swedish traveller to Italy either during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Queen Christina of Sweden (1626-89) amassed an art collection on a grand scale, her intention to turn Stockholm into an 'Athens of the North'; many other Swedish aristocrats followed suit, buying art and antiquities. In 1654 she abdicated the throne, converted to Catholicism and moved to Rome, where she continued to collect works of art and manuscripts on a prodigious scale; she is one of only three women to be buried in St Peter's and her enormous library of manuscripts is now a part of the Vatican collection.¹¹ Her sculptural collection, however, ended up in the Prado Museum in Madrid, amongst them a bust of Juba II.¹²

Swedish interest in art and antiquities only increased in the eighteenth century in the wake of King Gustav III's (1746-92) grand tour of Italy, carried out in disguise as the Count of Haga. In Rome the Swedish king was hosted by Pope Pius VI, who gave him a personal tour of the Vatican's collection of classical sculpture, the Museo Pio Clementino — including the sculptures of Cleopatra and Augustus we saw in earlier chapters.¹³ When Gustav

⁹ Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 26.4; Pliny, *Natural History*, 37.11.45; Alonso-Núñez, 'Roman Knowledge of Scandinavia', pp. 53-5.

¹⁰ Vessberg, 'Ett Fursteporträtt Från Julisk-claudisk Tid', p. 128.

¹¹ Veronica Buckley. *Christina, Queen of Sweden: The Restless Life of a European Eccentric* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005); Dawn Hoskin. 'Born on This Day: Queen Christina of Sweden'. *V&A Blog*, 18 December 2014. <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/creating-new-europe-1600-1800-galleries/born-on-this-day-queen-christina-of-sweden>.

¹² Ingrid E.M. Edlund, 'Christina (Kristina) (1626-89)'. In *Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology*, edited by Nancy Thomson de Grummond (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 282. The bust is in the collection of the Museo Nacional del Prado, E000358; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 97 fig. 44, Type J-8.

¹³ The Royal Palaces. 'Gustav III and the Museum of Antiquities'.

III returned from Italy in the Autumn of 1784 it was with an extensive collection of Roman sculpture, which upon his death became part of the founding collections of one of Europe's first modern museums of art, the Gustavus III Museum of Antiquities in Stockholm.¹⁴

Although it would be a delightful coincidence for the bust of Ptolemy to have once belonged to Queen Christina or King Gustav III, they were both too significant as collectors for part of their collections to have simply been lost and buried. More likely it was bought in Rome by a companion of Gustav III's, or another traveller inspired by his tour, before being forgotten and buried for a century beneath the centre of Uppsala.¹⁵

* * *

While many mysteries remain about the bust, one thing is certain: the identity of its subject. Three near-identical marble busts were found in Iol Caesarea, close enough in design that they had to have all been copies from the same original. A similar image also appears on the official coinage of Mauretania alongside that of its king, marking it as Prince Ptolemy, son and heir of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene.¹⁶ This bronze bust must have been the first official portrait of Ptolemy, intended to formally introduce the crown prince to his future subjects by displaying it throughout the kingdom.

One of the problems when attempting to date depictions of Ptolemy is that his date of birth is unknown.¹⁷ He must have been born at sometime between 25 BC (the likeliest date for his parent's marriage) but before 5 BC (the probable date for his mother's death), but that still leaves an immense amount of variance;¹⁸ whether Ptolemy was a 22 year-old wunderkind triumphant in AD 17 or a grizzled general of 51 makes a significant difference to his story.¹⁹ The only firm dating evidence we have is his appearance on the kingdom's coinage, alongside his father, from AD 5. In these first portraits he is depicted as a

<https://www.kungligaslotten.se/english/articles-and-movies/news/2019-06-07-gustav-iii-and-the-museum-of-antiquities.html>.

¹⁴ Anne-Marie Leander Touati. *Ancient Sculptures in the Royal Museum: The Eighteenth-Century Collection in Stockholm* (Stockholm: Swedish National Art Museums, 1998); Carole Paul. *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early- 19th-Century Europe* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2012).

¹⁵ Vessberg, 'Ett Fursteporträtt Från Julisk-claudisk Tid', pp. 127-8.

¹⁶ Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 217.

¹⁷ Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 82.

¹⁸ Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 82 note 64.

¹⁹ A thread picked up in Chapter 17.

beardless youth, strongly resembling the bust from Uppsala.²⁰ His father had no reason to depict him younger than he actually was, so in AD 5 he must still have been a child or teenager. Later coins from around AD 10 show him as a young man with a light beard, mirrored on a bust in the Villa Albani, which surely suggests that he was in his late teens by then — certainly no younger.²¹ The evidence from the coinage therefore suggests that Ptolemy was born around 8 or 9 BC.²²

But even agreeing upon this date — and scholars are by no means in agreement — throws up yet more questions, for we do know the date of birth of Ptolemy's mother, Selene: 40 BC. This means that she did not have Ptolemy until she was in her thirties; while this is considered average for a woman to become a mother in modern Europe, in Roman times women were considered of marriageable age at twelve, and expected to become mothers not long after.²³ Even though Juba and Selene did not marry until she was in her mid-teens, it seems unlikely that the couple then waited fifteen years to have children. Much more likely, then, that Ptolemy was not the firstborn child, and that his older siblings did not survive to adulthood, were girls, or have for some other reason been forgotten by history. An inscription in Athens suggests that Selene had a daughter — whom Tacitus names Drusilla — but about her we know even less.²⁴

It was the norm amongst the Mediterranean aristocracy to receive an education not only in Greek but in Greece, and so sometime around the end of the first century BC Ptolemy was sent to Athens to study.²⁵ Perhaps to the disappointment of his father, Ptolemy did not follow in his scholarly footsteps. We have no record of any of Ptolemy's writings, and the artistic standards, not to mention volume, of the sculptures and artworks produced during his reign are much diminished. Instead Ptolemy took after both his grandfathers — Juba I and Mark Antony — with an interest in martial pursuits, attested to by an inscription and a bronze bust, now lost, erected in the Gymnasium of Ptolemy in Athens.²⁶ He also gained a reputation as a skilled and eager general, an aspect of rule that his father only took to reluctantly.²⁷

After Athens, Ptolemy went to Rome to complete his education, where he

²⁰ *CNNM*, p. 121, #375 (5-6 AD).

²¹ *CNNM*, p. 122, #383; *Bust of Ptolemy from the Villa Albani*, Inv. 58; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 82.

²² Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 103 note 118.

²³ Harlow and Laurence, *Growing up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome*, p. 6.

²⁴ IG II2 3439; IG 1111 1309; Tacitus, *Histories*, 5.9; *CNNM*, p. 71.

²⁵ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 11.

²⁶ Pausanias, 1.17.2; OGIS 197.

²⁷ See Chapter 16 for more about their respective generalships.

would have been in good company with sons of the other client-kings sent there to study Roman values too.²⁸ He might have stayed with his mother's extended family, getting to know his cousins, amongst them the future emperor Claudius, just a few years younger. Three decades after his death Mark Antony remained a popular figure, and the Romans maintained an avid interest in what his descendants were up to. Ptolemy — Antony's grandson — would have been greeted with more than a little curiosity. It is no surprise that so many busts of Ptolemy — including his only bronze — were found in Rome.²⁹ A bust now in the Vatican Museum coincides with Ptolemy's stay in Rome, perhaps even commissioned especially to commemorate his time there.³⁰

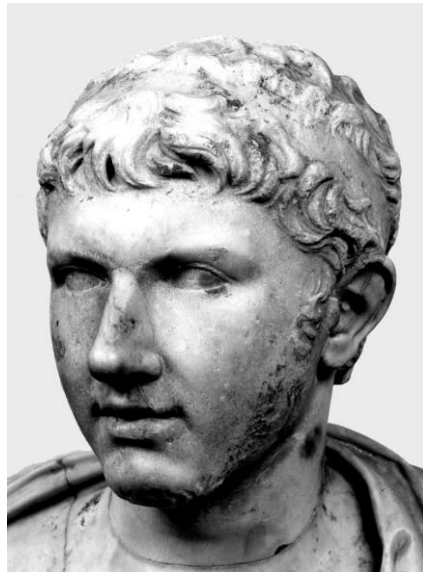


Figure 45. Marble bust of Ptolemy in the Vatican Museum (Braccio Nuovo, Inv. 2253). Photograph: Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée'.

²⁸ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 9, 11.

²⁹ Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 217.

³⁰ *Marble Bust of Ptolemy in the Vatican*. Inv. 2253, Museo Vaticani Braccio Nuovo; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 94.



Figure 46. *Marble Bust of Ptolemy from Rome (Villa Albani, Inv. 58). Photograph: Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée'.*

In the three busts found in and around Rome we can watch with fascination as Ptolemy grows up, from child to adolescent to young man. Firstly, the bronze bust dug up in Uppsala, depicting him as a young child. Next, the Vatican bust, likely corresponding to the time of those first coin images, captures him at the moment of puberty, Adam's apple prominent and first downy beard on his cheeks.³¹ Finally, in the bust from the Villa Albani, Ptolemy as a young man, full face sporting a serious expression and the stubble that was fashionable amongst the young aristocrats in Rome at the time.³²

* * *

After decades of civil war, through military dominance and political acumen, Augustus had put all the pieces of Rome back together. The Pax Augusta — Augustus' peace — held firm, but only through his sheer force of will. Inevitably, thoughts turned to the future. If Augustus were to die, could the fragile peace hold without him?

In 23 BC — not long after returning from campaigning in Spain, where he had declared Juba king — these questions were thrust to the fore. Plague swept through the streets

³¹ *Marble Bust of Ptolemy in the Vatican Museum*; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 94.

³² *Marble Bust of Ptolemy from the Villa Albani*. Inv. 58. Villa Albani, Rome; Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 220; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 95, 98.

of Rome and Augustus fell ill. Suddenly the Pax Augusta was under threat. Seemingly on his deathbed, Augustus named his closest male relative, his nephew Marcellus as his heir. But then Marcellus, too, was struck down with the plague. With the aid of his physician Antonius Musa, brother of Juba's doctor, Augustus recovered. Marcellus died, Virgil commemorated his death in a passage in Book 6:

At this Aeneas said — for by his side he saw a youth of passing beauty in resplendent arms, but with joyless mien and eyes downcast: 'Who, father, is he that thus attends the warrior on his way? Is it his son, or some other of his progeny's heroic line? What a stir among his entourage! What majesty is his! But death's dark shadow flickers mournfully about his head.' Then, as his tears well up, Father Anchises begins: 'My son, seek not to taste the bitter grief of your people; only a glimpse of him will fate give earth nor suffer him to stay long.'³³

When Virgil recited the passage, Octavia — Marcellus' mother — supposedly fainted dead away.³⁴ Although Augustus was distraught, he had greater concerns on his mind. He had to act to secure the peace, his legacy and his dynasty.

Three years later, in 20 BC, Augustus' only child Julia had a son, Gaius. Then, in 17 BC, another, Lucius. Augustus saw hope — and opportunity — in their birth, adopting both of his grandsons as his own, symbolically buying them off Agrippa as tradition dictated and naming them his heirs apparent.³⁵ Augustus doted on his new sons, teaching them how to read and write, how to swim.³⁶ And, when they were still children, he invited them into his administration, taking them to meetings with the senate and including them in his counsel.³⁷ At the same time, he formally introduced them to the people of Rome with a massive publicity campaign.

The next generation of imperial princes were placed next to statues of Augustus and his wife Livia: Gaius and Lucius Caesar, as well as Livia's own sons Tiberius and Drusus. In every depiction, in every detail right down to their haircuts — flat fringes combed forward — their images were carefully curated to draw similarities with those of Augustus.³⁸ The Roman public were left in no doubt that these were Augustus' sons and stepsons. And in doing so, Augustus introduced the audience to his anointed heirs, reassuring

³³ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.860-71.

³⁴ Hoschele, 'Greek Epigram in Rome in the First Century CE', pp. 475-6.

³⁵ Dio, 54.18.1; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 64.1.

³⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 64.3.

³⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.229, 17.30. See Chapter 15 for more about Gaius' involvement in Rome's foreign affairs.

³⁸ *Prince Gaius Caesar*. E000121, Museo Nacional del Prado.

the citizens of Rome that they were in safe hands with the Julio-Claudians in charge.

Gaius' portraits were modelled after Augustus' Prima Porta statue, now in the Vatican.³⁹ His hairstyle is characterised by a series of pincer-like locks over his left eye, with an additional tuft over the right, and the facial features are almost identical to Augustus'. Lucius' portraits are almost identical too, the only distinguishing feature his brother's hairstyle arranged in a central parting.⁴⁰ Although they were Augustus' grandchildren, the family resemblance was assuredly exaggerated on their official portraits to strengthen the audience's impression of them as the emperor's adopted heirs.⁴¹



Figure 47. Marble bust of Prince Gaius Caesar, (Museo del Prado, Madrid, E000121).

³⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁴⁰ Charles Brian Rose. *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period*. *Cambridge Studies in Classical Art and Iconography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 62, plates 90, 107-109, 113, 187, 197).

⁴¹ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture*, pp. 12-14.

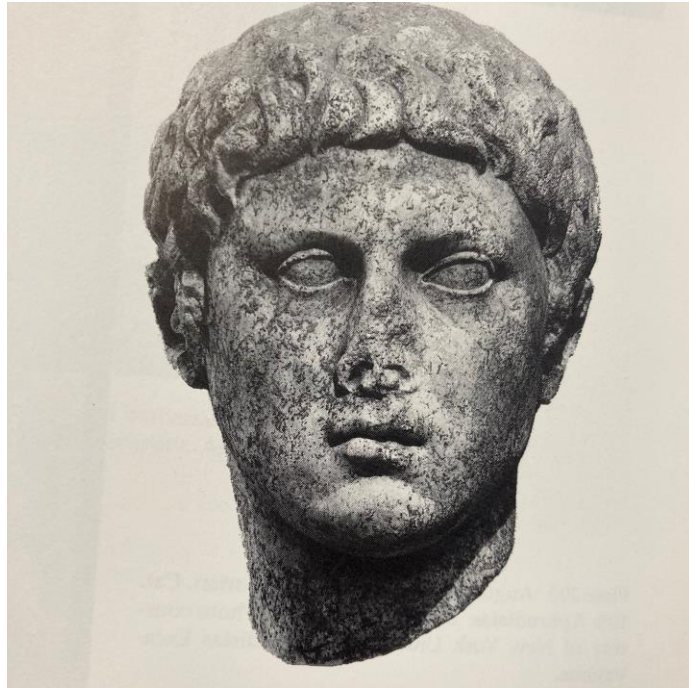


Figure 48. Bust of Lucius Caesar. (Thasos Archaeological Museum, 102). Photograph: Rose, Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture, Plate 198.

Whenever Juba and Selene returned to Rome — as they no doubt did for the funeral of Octavia in 11 BC, or the dedication of the Ara Pacis in 9 BC — the increasing public emphasis placed on Augustus' intended successors cannot have failed to escape their notice; boys they had known since they were all children.⁴² So it should naturally follow that, in forging their own dynasty, they would follow in Augustus' stead, erecting statues of their son next to their own, placing his portrait on official coinage alongside the image of his father, introducing him to his future subjects. This was how successions were handled. Juba and Selene were legitimately king and queen, possessing the dynastic right to pass the crown down to their son — not for them the political manoeuvring necessary with the nascent Roman succession. But it was not just a homegrown audience that they sought to woo with images of their son; they were also appealing to a Roman audience, as evidenced by the numerous busts found in Rome. In visually equating Ptolemy with his Roman — his imperial — cousins Juba and Selene were strengthening ties between their two nations.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that in his bronze portrait bust, Ptolemy does not look much like his father at all: the face rounder, the brows curved, the mouth small. The most notable difference is his hairstyle, flat and straight, a fringe combed forward over his forehead like

⁴² Roller 2004, p. 138.

those sported in portraits of the imperial princes — certainly not tightly curled like that of Juba II. Only in the small and delicate nose can a likeness to his father be seen. It is Ptolemy's maternal, Roman heritage that is being emphasised here, not his Numidian ancestry.⁴³

* * *

The bust of Ptolemy did not appear in public until November 1979, when it was briefly loaned to an exhibition at the Landesmuseum in Bonn. And then in 2004, after a century and a half in their private collection, the Hamilton family decided to sell it at auction at Sotheby's in New York. Despite an estimated sale price of \$300,000, the bust sold to an unknown buyer for \$960,000. It has not been seen since.⁴⁴

⁴³ The portrait bust can be identified through comparison with Ptolemy's early coin portraits. See Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', pp. 164-5, 217.

⁴⁴ *A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania*.

15. Kings in the East



Figure 49. *The Inscription of Glaphyra from the Acropolis (Athens Epigraphic Museum, OGIS 363; IG II² 3437/8). Photograph: Kokkinos, 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens'.*

In the Epigraphic Museum in Athens, in a storeroom lined with floor to ceiling metal shelving, sit hundreds upon hundreds of blocks of stone, each bearing an inscription in Greek. One of these blocks has been stored here since it was first excavated on the Acropolis in 1886, and bears the reference number IG II² 3437/8 written on its side in thick black marker pen.¹ This is a statue base — the statue never found — made from Eleusinian marble, a fine-grain, blue-black stone often used for monumental friezes. This block once belonged to an architrave on the south side of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis, before being reused for the statue base. It is now broken into four, but the inscription can still be read. It says:

ἡ βουλὴ καὶ [ὁ δ]ῆμος
[β]ασίλισσαν Γλαφύραν βασιλέω[ς]
Ἀρχελάου θυγατέρα βασιλέως Ἰόβ[α]
γυναῖκ[α ἀρε]τῆς ἔνε[κ]α.

Which can be roughly translated as:

the parliament and [the] state [...] [honour]
Queen Glaphyra, daughter of King
Archelaus, wife of King Juba,

¹ OGIS 363; IG II² 3437/8.

a virtuous woman.²

The statue was erected by the parliament of ancient Athens, the Boule, to honour this Queen Glaphyra, possibly in recognition of a donation she made towards the construction of a building or monument, perhaps when she visited Athens.³ The inscription would have been one of many on the Acropolis, the focal point for conspicuous displays of wealth in ancient Athens, not just for local dignitaries but also for rulers from across the Mediterranean world. Atop the Acropolis, opposite the Parthenon itself, Glaphyra's statue would have rubbed shoulders with those of other prominent figures: the great and the good of Athenian society, the elite of Rome, kings from the East and pharaohs from Egypt, all wanting to be associated with the heart of Greek culture, all boasting about what they had contributed to the city.⁴

The setting atop the Acropolis was not unusual; in the ancient world, few inscriptions stood alone.⁵ In the Roman period, inscriptions tended to be set up alongside one another in so-called epigraphic environments, such as cemeteries, public squares or on the walls of public buildings.⁶ New inscriptions gained credibility through proximity to older inscriptions, sometimes responding in some way to those that were already there.⁷ Nearly three quarters of surviving Roman inscriptions were epitaphs, erected by the deceased's family to commemorate their life and accomplishments.⁸ Others were a way to memorialise an otherwise momentary event that held lasting significance: the signing of a treaty, an act of public generosity or a religious offering.⁹ Many Roman inscriptions were in Latin but, like Glaphyra's, just as many were in Greek — or both.¹⁰

The most important — and therefore the most prominent — part of an inscription was the name.¹¹ Except in the case of the most well-known figures, who could be recognised by their features or clothing, the inscription helped the viewer identify who the

² IG II² 3437/8.

³ Nikkos Kokkinos. 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens'. *Zeitschrift Fur Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 68 (1987): 288-90 (289-90).

⁴ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, pp. 78-9.

⁵ Antony Eastmond. *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 3.

⁶ Greg Woolf. 'Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 22-39 (28).

⁷ Greg Woolf, 'Monumental Writing', p. 28; Eastmond, *Viewing Inscriptions*, p. 6.

⁸ Greg Woolf, 'Monumental Writing', p. 23.

⁹ Greg Woolf, 'Monumental Writing', p. 27.

¹⁰ Christopher Lightfoot. 'Roman Inscriptions'. *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, 2009. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/insc/hd_insc.htm.

¹¹ Woolf, 'Monumental Writing', p. 28.

statue was.¹² In addition to the name, an inscription usually contained precise biographical details about the subject too, such as their profession, their status, who they were related to, even something of their personality.¹³ Thus, in Glaphyra's case, most of the inscription is taken up detailing that she was a queen, that her father was Archelaus, her husband Juba, and finally that the inscription had been paid for by the parliament of Athens. Prior to the discovery of this inscription, the Jewish historian Josephus was the only source to mention Juba II's marriage to the Cappadocian princess Glaphyra, himself referencing first-hand accounts by Nikolaos of Damascus, now lost.¹⁴ The Inscription of Glaphyra confirms these accounts to be true, allowing us to recover the story of a woman otherwise lost.¹⁵

Inscriptions often provide the only fleeting glimpses we have of ancient people, even those relatively high profile characters like Gaius Caesar or Juba II. Beyond Josephus, the only evidence for Glaphyra — and her marriage to Juba — is her inscription from the Acropolis. No coins were minted in her image, no portraits remain, no other artefacts that were associated with her survive. This should not be surprising, as women — even royal women — left little trace within the historical record, often little more than the names of who they married and who they birthed.¹⁶

* * *

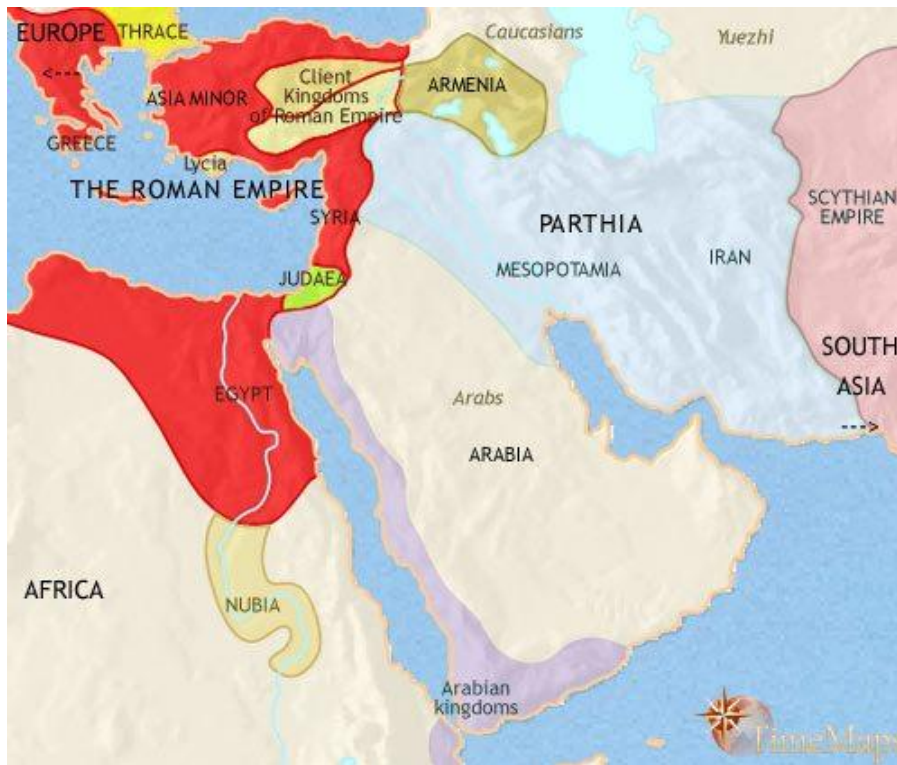
¹² Woolf, 'Monumental Writing', p. 29.

¹³ Oleg Grabar. 'Graffiti or Proclamations: Why Write on Buildings'. In *Islamic Art and Beyond*. Grabar, Oleg. Constructing the Study of Islamic Art. Vol. 3. (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006): 239-46; Lightfoot, 'Roman Inscriptions'.

¹⁴ Jacobson, 'Three Roman Client Kings', p. 22; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 148.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.349-50; BNJ 275 T 7.

¹⁶ Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 57.



Map 4. The Middle East c. 30 BC. Image: Timemaps,
<https://www.timemaps.com/history/middle-east-30bc>.

In 4 BC, Rome’s stalwart ally in the East, Herod the Great, King of Judaea, died a long, painful death.¹⁷ Today, Herod is principally known for the Massacre of the Innocents in the Gospel of Matthew, and while this event is untrue, there is plenty of evidence for Herod’s brutality. Along with many other victims, on various occasions he had three of his own sons executed, prompting Augustus to joke that ‘it’s better to be Herod’s pig than his son.’¹⁸ Nonetheless, Augustus could not deny that Herod was an effective ruler, keeping him in power even though the king had previously sided with Antony at Actium.¹⁹ Since gaining the throne in 40 BC, Herod had kept the competing factions of Judaea — and his own fractious family — together through sheer force of will, turning what had been an unstable kingdom into a bulwark in the East. When Herod died, he left his kingdom to his youngest son and appointed Augustus as the executor. When his two eldest sons came to Rome to contest the will, a council convened by Augustus eventually deciding to divide the kingdom between

¹⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.6.5.

¹⁸ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 2.4.11. The joke has an antisemitic undercurrent — as a Jew, Herod would not kill a pig, but had no such qualms about executing his sons.

¹⁹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 57.

them all — to the satisfaction of none.²⁰

Around the same time, the death of a number of other client-kings along Rome's eastern frontier threatened to destabilise the entire region. In 8 BC Obodas III, King of Nabataea, was poisoned.²¹ The Nabataean kingdom, which lay south of Judaea, between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, and was famous for its capital city of Petra, had never been the most stable of monarchies. With the death of its king it was thrown into a violent succession struggle. At around the same time, the Armenian king installed by Augustus, Tigranes III, died, replaced by his notoriously anti-Roman son Tigranes IV.²² Along the entire length of the eastern border of the Roman Empire, the Augustan peace imposed two decades before seemed to be falling apart, once-reliable allied kingdoms crumbling.

But the man who had been charged with ensuring stability in the East, Augustus' stepson and potential successor Tiberius — a childhood friend of Juba's — was absent without leave. Tiberius had cast himself into self-imposed exile on the island of Rhodes, absconding from political and military life to spend his life reading Greek literature instead. Augustus was increasingly forced to rely on his grandsons Gaius and Lucius Caesar.

In 2 BC Augustus dispatched Gaius to bring order to the region. But Gaius was young — not yet twenty — and inexperienced, his only taste of international affairs hitherto sitting on the panel that helped decide Herod's will.²³ Augustus sent with him a counsel of advisers: amongst them long-time supporters of the emperor, Marcus Lollius Publius and Sulpicius Quirinius, both of whom had served as magistrates in the East, and Selene's brother-in-law Ahenobarbus. Also on Gaius' military staff were two junior officers who would become famous in later years: L. Aelius Sejanus (c20 BC-AD 31) and Velleius Paterculus (19 BC-cAD 31). Sejanus, famously the subject of a Ben Jonson play, would go on to serve as Tiberius' praetorian prefect, imperial confidante and would-be-usurper, but was chiefly there because his adopted father Aelius Gallus had campaigned in Arabia before. The future historian Velleius Paterculus served as tribune in Gaius' army, later writing that 'it is not without feelings of pleasure that I recall the many events, places, peoples, and cities' he visited.²⁴

²⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.6.1; Josephus, *Wars*, 2.6.1.

²¹ Roller 2004, p. 212.

²² Dio, 55.9.4; F. E. Romer. 'Gaius Caesar's Military Diplomacy in the East'. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 109 (1979): 199-214 (201); Brian Campbell. 'War and Diplomacy: Rome and Parthia, 31 BC-AD 235'. In *War and Society in the Roman World*, edited by John Rich and Graham Shipley (London: Routledge, 1993).

²³ Josephus, *Wars*, 2.25, 2.81; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.229, 17.30; Dio, 55.9-10.

²⁴ Velleius Paterculus, 2.101; Roller 2004, p. 216.

As well as a coterie of military, Augustus also sent a number of civilian advisors, each an expert in the region: Isidoros of Charax, sent in advance to write a guide to Arabia; Archelaos, priest-king of Cappadocia, who had served as the emperor's long-term eyes and ears in the region; and Juba II.²⁵ His book, *Libyca*, had made him something of an expert on the north-eastern African and Red Sea coasts. Juba was, of course, family, but he was also close friends with Gaius, dedicating his subsequent book *On Arabia* to the young prince. With the death of Gaius' own father, Juba took on the role of mentor and father-figure during the expedition.²⁶ Juba was himself still in mourning over the death of Selene three years prior, and likely relished the opportunity to travel — especially if it gave him the opportunity to visit his own son Ptolemy, still studying in Athens.²⁷

With no great haste, Gaius embarked for the East in 2 BC. That Augustus had appointed as many scholars and politicians as he had military officers suggests that he saw the trip to be something of an instructional exercise for Gaius, preparing his grandson for a future role as military commander or consul — perhaps even as emperor, one day.²⁸ Certainly the dates provided on scattered inscriptions and dedications found in towns along the way suggest there was no great urgency to the expedition, Gaius stopping to make dedications, meet dignitaries and visit tourist sites including the ruins of Troy.²⁹ By the time Gaius arrived in Antioch a year and a half later, however, the situation had grown immeasurably more urgent: the Parthian king Phraates IV had died in a palace coup. Phraates IV's cooperation had been ensured through his sons being held hostage by the Romans; his bastard son, 'little Phraates', Phrataces now sat on the throne — and he was a good deal less friendly towards Rome than his father had been.³⁰

While bolstering Rome's network of allies remained a key part of Gaius' mission, contemporary literature shows that the Romans considered the Parthian problem the more pressing concern. Antipater of Thessalonica addressed an epigram to Gaius:

Go forth to the Euphrates, son of Zeus; already in the East the feet of the Parthians hasten to desert to you. Go forth on your way, O prince, and you shall find, Caesar, their bow strings relaxed by fear. But base all you do on your father's instructions. The

²⁵ Pliny, *NH*, 6.31.141; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.3.2; Richard D. Sullivan. 'Dynasty of Cappadocia'. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, edited by Hildegard Temporini. 2.7 (1980): 1156-7.

²⁶ BNJ 275 F 34, 38a-40, 75; Roller 2004, p. 5; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 93.

²⁷ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 141.

²⁸ Dio, 55.10.17.

²⁹ Romer, 'Gaius Caesar's Military Diplomacy', p. 203.

³⁰ Romer, 'Gaius Caesar's Military Diplomacy', p. 204.

Ocean is Rome's boundary on every side; be you the first to seal her domination with the rising Sun.³¹

Ovid makes mention of Parthia too, just as Gaius was preparing to cross the Euphrates. Although the campaign itself proved to be peaceful, Ovid's jingoistic tone shows how it was being spun back home:

Lo! Caesar is preparing to add what was lacking to the conquered world: now, farthest East, shalt thou be ours. Parthian, thou shalt pay penalty.³²

Although the threat of Parthia loomed large in the Roman imagination, as Carthage once had, the reality was somewhat different.³³ A successor of the Persian empire, Parthia stretched from the edge of India nearly to the Mediterranean coast. While Rome still considered Parthia to be a comparable power, it was no longer a real match, either in terms of resources or military might.³⁴ Cassius Dio's appraisal of the Parthians was that 'they have a reputation greater than their achievements', and while he was writing much later his assessment would still have been accurate at the time of Gaius' expedition.³⁵ Nonetheless, Rome had consistently proven incapable of defeating the Parthians, and Augustus had sensibly recognised that war with Parthia was ill-advised.³⁶

While Phrtaaces had initially proven bellicose upon taking the Parthian throne, trading insults with Augustus and demanding the return of his half-brothers on threat of war, unrest at home forced a change of heart.³⁷ In AD 2, Gaius travelled to the Parthian border along with his advisers, Juba included, to meet Phrtaaces.³⁸ Velleius Paterculus, an eye-witness, wrote:

On an island in the Euphrates, with an equal retinue on each side, Gaius had a meeting with the king of the Parthians, a young man of distinguished presence. This spectacle of the Roman army arrayed on one side, the Parthian on the other, while these two eminent leaders not only of the empires they represented but also of mankind thus met in conference — truly a notable and a memorable sight — it was my fortunate lot to

³¹ Antipater of Thessalonica, Epigram 47.

³² Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 1.177-79. Rome had unfinished business with Parthia dating back to the Battle of Carrhae in 53 BC, in which Caesar's former ally Crassus was killed along with some 20,000 Roman soldiers.

³³ Campbell, 'War and Diplomacy', p. 217.

³⁴ Campbell, 'War and Diplomacy', p. 218.

³⁵ Dio, 40.14.4.

³⁶ Campbell, 'War and Diplomacy', p. 221.

³⁷ Dio, 55.10a.4.

³⁸ James E.G. Zetzel. 'New Light on Gaius Caesar's Eastern Campaign'. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 11/3 (1970): 259-66 (261).

see early in my career as a soldier.³⁹

In exchange for a secure border along the river, Phrataces ceded his claim to Armenia and allowed Augustus to keep his half-brothers as hostages.⁴⁰ As a further gesture of good faith, Phrataces informed Gaius that one of his counsellors, Lollius, was in the pay of foreign powers and was plotting against the young prince. A few days later, Lollius turned up dead.⁴¹

Gaius also led an expedition into Arabia, perhaps attempting to rival the expedition of Sejanus' adopted father, Aelius Gallus, to Arabia Felix (modern-day Yemen, on the south-western tip of the Arabian peninsula) two decades before, but he only reached as far as the Gulf of Aqaba at the tip of the Red Sea and fought no significant battles.⁴² Pliny remarked dismissively that Gaius only caught a 'glimpse' of Arabia.⁴³ Instead he visited the Nabataean capital of Petra, hidden within a maze of desert canyons, where he restored the kingdom to King Aretas IV, who would remain a loyal ally of Rome for another forty years. The Nabataeans had been under threat from some unnamed foe beyond the frontiers, and part of Gaius' reason for journeying there in person was to gather what information he could about the situation and then provide whatever assistance Rome could. This involved, according to an inscription subsequently erected in his honour, 'waging war' — although the foe went unnamed.⁴⁴ As we shall see in the next chapter, Juba had more than a little experience dealing with unstable frontiers, so was able to offer advice of his own.⁴⁵ For his part, Juba used his time in Petra to gather first-hand accounts of Arabia. He interviewed merchants and traders about the routes taken to the Sabaeen kingdom in Arabia Felix and around the coast of the peninsula to India, whence precious incense, perfume and spices came to Rome — much of which was subsequently repeated by Pliny.⁴⁶ Juba remained with Gaius until the expedition returned to Antioch, at which point he left the prince's side to visit Alexandria, before going to stay at the court of Archelaus at Sebaste in Cappadocia, to work on his treatise *On Arabia*.

Archelaus was one of the few client-kings installed by Antony to have survived into the Augustan era. With the death of Herod he was now the senior of the client-

³⁹ Velleius Paterculus, 2.101.

⁴⁰ Dio, 55.10a.4.

⁴¹ Velleius Paterculus, 2.102.1; Romer, 'Gaius Caesar's Military Diplomacy', p. 210.

⁴² Pliny, *NH*, 6.32.160. For Gallus' expedition see also Augustus, *Res Gestae* 26.5; Strabo, 16.4.22.

⁴³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.32.160.

⁴⁴ Pisan Cenotaph, *ILS* 140; Roller 2004, p. 224.

⁴⁵ Roller 2004, p. 224.

⁴⁶ G.W. Bowersock. *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 2, 46.

kings.⁴⁷ Archelaus did not come from royalty, as such, but from a powerful line of aristocratic priests from Pontus, a neighbouring kingdom on the Black Sea. Archelaus' grandfather had been married to Cleopatra's older sister, Berenice, although both died fighting her father for control of Egypt.⁴⁸ Archelaus was appointed king of Cappadocia in 41 BC, as part of Antony's reorganisation of the region. Gossipmongers in Rome — amongst them Augustus himself, who penned a bawdy epigram about the subject — claimed that this was because Antony had slept with Archelaus' mother. While it might well have been true, all of Antony's decisions were ascribed to sexual motives by Augustus' propagandists.⁴⁹ Remaining loyal as a result, Archelaus fought alongside Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, but Augustus kept him as king all the same.⁵⁰

Of similar age to Juba's father, Archelaus might well have been a mentor figure for the younger king. The two certainly had much in common: both ruled large, coastal regions with untamed, mountainous interiors.⁵¹ Both were foreign to their own kingdoms, having been appointed by Roman politicians, and as a result bore resentment from their subjects. Both named their capitals after Augustus, too — Juba's city of Iol Caesarea, Archelaus's island capital of Elaioussa-Sebaste (the Greek for Caesar). Both were keen scholars, as well, Pliny borrowing heavily from a book about gemstones written by the priest-king for the *Natural History*.⁵²

It was during his stay at Sebaste that Juba first met Archelaus's daughter Glaphyra. Like Juba, Glaphyra had been recently widowed. Unlike Juba, Glaphyra's spouse — Alexander of Judaea, Herod's eldest — had been executed by his own father. In 17 BC, when she was 18, Glaphyra had married Alexander, cementing an alliance between the kingdoms of Cappadocia and Judaea. Josephus tells us that, with haughty manners and a superior attitude Glaphyra swiftly made herself unpopular with the other women at court. Her mother was an Armenian princess descended from both Persian and Macedonian royalty; in contrast, Herod and his family — minor nobles according to some sources, borderline

⁴⁷ Dio, 51.2.1-2.

⁴⁸ Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 50.

⁴⁹ Jacobson, 'Three Roman Client Kings', pp. 24-5; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 51. See Chapter 4 for an account of both Antony's administration in the region, and his relationship with Glaphyra.

⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Antony*, 61.2.

⁵¹ Brent D. Shaw. *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians in Roman North Africa* (Rugby: Variorum, 1995), VIII p. 67.

⁵² Pliny, *NH*, 37.15.95, 30.30.104, 37.32.107; Jacobson, 'Three Roman Client Kings', p. 31; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, pp. 52-3.

commoners according to others — had usurped the throne of Judaea.⁵³ Glaphyra made no attempt to hide her contempt for her in-laws, remarking that she outranked the other women at court and reminding them of her own ancestry.⁵⁴ In particular, she incurred the enmity of Herod's sister Salome, a powerful political force in her own right, who began to spread rumours about Glaphyra, not just of infidelity but also of a conspiracy involving Glaphyra and her husband.⁵⁵

One of the benefits of intermarriage between client-kingdoms was closer cooperation and communication between the two courts, often to the betterment of both kingdoms — witness the marriages between Polemo of Pontus and Dynamis of the Bosphorus, or between Cotys of Thrace and Antonia Tryphaena of Pontus.⁵⁶ But not always. In 12 BC, Archelaus, concerned by rumours from the Herodian court and worried for his daughter's safety, travelled to Jerusalem in an attempt to arbitrate. While he must have meant well, his meddling made the situation far more perilous. Archelaus was accused of conspiracy against Herod along with his daughter, her husband and his brother. Archelaus took Glaphyra and her children and fled back to Cappadocia. He offered Herod's sons sanctuary, but Herod had them imprisoned and eventually executed.⁵⁷

When Juba arrived at Archelaus' court, Glaphyra was a widow and the two soon married. Whether the match was purely political, or whether Juba and Glaphyra fell in love during his time there, is unrecorded. The two were certainly wed by the summer of AD 1, for they travelled together to Athens — when the inscription to Glaphyra was erected — to attend the Olympic games.⁵⁸

All of the client-kings had a reputation for municipal philanthropy, sponsoring building programs in nearby kingdoms: building new walls and paving streets, restoring temples and constructing bath complexes, erecting monuments and public artworks.⁵⁹ Inscriptions tells us that Juba gave money towards the Spanish cities of Gades and New Carthage, just across the Straits of Gibraltar from his kingdom, Archelaus and his mother were honoured for donations

⁵³ Sullivan, 'Dynasty of Cappadocia', p. 1161.

⁵⁴ Sullivan, 'Dynasty of Cappadocia', pp. 1161-2; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, pp. 53-4.

⁵⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.6-11; Roller 2004, p. 247.

⁵⁶ Dio, 54.24-4-6; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 48; Matthew William Shillam. 'Imperial Matchmaker: The Involvement of the Roman Emperor in the Arrangement of Marriages between Client Kings'. PhD Thesis, University of New England, 2016, p. 147, 163.

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.8; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 54.

⁵⁸ Roller 2004, pp. 248-9, 256; *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 75.

to cities across Greece and Turkey, whilst Herod restored a portico on the Greek island of Chios where his ship had once sheltered from a storm.⁶⁰ This was rarely down to generosity alone: Herod contributed towards the construction of almost all the public buildings in the centre of Nicopolis, the city founded by Augustus to celebrate his victory at Actium, not out of a sense of civic duty but as a very public declaration of his allegiance to the emperor.⁶¹ This benevolence brought — or, rather, bought — a client-king prominence on the world stage; it was what world leaders, such as Roman emperors or governors, did, after all. Competing with the Romans was a risky endeavour, however, and a king had to be careful not to upstage them with their generosity.⁶²

More than anywhere else, the kings donated money to Athens. Athens was the centre of the Greek world and acted as an advertisement for the kings' very public acts of generosity. Countless temples, shrines and monuments in the city resulted from their contributions and, in return, the Athenians erected statues to honour the kings and their families.⁶³ We know from inscriptions found in Athens as well as Pausanias' description of the city that Juba and his family were honoured by the Athenians in this manner.⁶⁴

Juba made at least one trip to Athens, most likely during his time in the East first with Gaius and then Archelaus. Juba was an ardent Philhellene, writing exclusively in Greek, studying the Greek philosophers, poets and playwrights; Athens was the centre of the Greek world, still the cultural capital of the Mediterranean — Juba could hardly have resisted its lure. While there, Juba repaired and expanded the Gymnasium of Ptolemy — originally constructed by one of Selene's ancestors — and a statue of the king and his family erected outside to commemorate it.⁶⁵ Nestled at the base of the northern slopes of the Acropolis with views up to the Erechtheion and the Parthenon, the Gymnasium complex was just a couple of streets away from the Roman Agora, and provided the Mauretanian court with its base in the city. Knowing what we do of Juba's scholarly interests, it is no surprise that under his patronage the Gymnasium became the major educational centre in Athens, complete with a

⁶⁰ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 76; Jacobson, 'Three Roman Client Kings', p. 32.

⁶¹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 77. See Chapter 5 for more about Nicopolis.

⁶² Josephus, *Wars*, 1.21.12; Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 79.

⁶³ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, pp. 77-9.

⁶⁴ *OGIS* 197, 363; *IG II²* 3436-9; Pausanias, 1.17.2.

⁶⁵ Pausanias, 1.17.2; Stephen G. Miller. 'Architecture as Evidence for the Identity of the Early Polis'. In *Sources for the Ancient Greek City-State: Symposium August, 24-27 1994*, edited by Mogens Herman Hansen. Vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1995): 201-44 (208); Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 141.

library of its own.⁶⁶

As well as the restoration of the Gymnasium of Ptolemy, Juba was probably numbered amongst the kings who Suetonius tells us engaged in a joint venture in Athens: the restoration of the Temple to Olympian Zeus near the city's southern gate. This was to be the largest temple in the world, dedicated not just to Zeus but also to the client-kings' patron, Augustus.⁶⁷ The archaeological remains are still prominent in Athens and tell a different story from Suetonius — the temple was never finished, at least not in Augustus' lifetime, Hadrian eventually completing it in AD 132.⁶⁸ Perhaps the client-kings fell out, or maybe Augustus got squeamish about being compared so prominently to Zeus and halted their plans — Hadrian certainly had no such qualms, a huge statue of the emperor eventually sat beside Zeus.⁶⁹

While the various client-kings — especially those in the Eastern Mediterranean — often made separate trips to Greece, there was one occasion in the calendar for which they all gathered: the Olympic games, which took place every four years. The games, held in the heat of late summer in Olympia in the western Peloponnese, attracted the largest crowds of any festival in Greece — the main stadium at Olympia held some 40,000 people.⁷⁰ Much as they did in Athens, the client-kings demonstrated their Hellenism by contributing towards the upkeep of the games. Herod not only paid a handsome sum towards the Olympics in 12 BC, being made president-for-life as a result, but once competed as an athlete there too.⁷¹ Archelaus also donated to the games, an inscription on the statue base of a charioteer thanking him for his gift.⁷² While his own interests tended toward the literary rather than the physical, Juba no doubt followed suit.

Although the Olympic programme was strictly athletic in nature — unlike the Delphic games, which included an artistic programme too — the games had long been a meeting place for poets, artists, philosophers and historians. Herodotus had once recited from his *Histories* there, and Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides had famously attended in the past

⁶⁶ Miller, 'Architecture as Evidence for the Identity of the Early Polis'; p. 203, 208; Roller 2004, p. 137 note 84.

⁶⁷ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 60; Herbert Abramson. 'The Olympieion in Athens and its Connections with Rome'. *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 7 (1974): 1-25 (2).

⁶⁸ Abramson, 'The Olympieion in Athens', p. 23.

⁶⁹ Abramson, 'The Olympieion in Athens', p. 2, 24-5.

⁷⁰ Nigel Crowther. 'Visiting the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece: Travel and Conditions for Athletes and Spectators'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18/4 (2001): 37-52 (38).

⁷¹ Josephus, *Wars*, 1.21.12; Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 77; Roller 2004, p. 271.

⁷² *OGIS* 359.

too.⁷³ Velleius Paterculus, Juba's colleague on Gaius' expedition, later wrote that the Olympic games were 'the most effective in developing the qualities both of body and mind'.⁷⁴ Juba was evidently so taken by the occasion that upon his eventual return to Mauretania he held his own games to celebrate his jubilee, incorporating athletic events, musical contests and theatrical performances.⁷⁵

* * *

There are many reasons why Juba and Glaphyra's marriage should have been successful. They were well matched, and both Juba and Glaphyra's father ruled large kingdoms; a marriage between their houses would create a powerful alliance linking the east and western ends of the Mediterranean. Archelaus had not long married Queen Pythodiris of Pontus, herself the ruler of a large kingdom along the south-eastern coast of the Black Sea, greatly increasing his own territory.⁷⁶ The combined strength of Cappadocia, Pontus and Mauretania proved its undoing, as Augustus was wary of too powerful an alliance being fostered between his clients — especially if the alliance was wrought without his input.⁷⁷ Augustus suggested, if not exactly commanded, that Juba and Glaphyra should divorce.⁷⁸ When Juba eventually returned home to Mauretania in AD 5, it was on his own.

Glaphyra remarried soon after and was propelled back into the Judaeian court. She married Herod's youngest son, Archelaus, named after her own father. Her third marriage was even less auspicious than her first two, contravening as it did Jewish laws prohibiting the marriage of a brother to his brother's widow. In AD 6, Glaphyra reported that she had dreamt that her first husband reproached her for this:

'Your Libyan marriage might have sufficed you, but, not content with that, you now return to my hearth and home, having taken to yourself a third husband, and him, audacious woman, my own brother. I will not brook this outrage and shall reclaim you whether you will or no.'⁷⁹

⁷³ Crowther, 'Visiting the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece', p. 48.

⁷⁴ Velleius Paterculus, 1.8.1.

⁷⁵ Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 492; *CNNM*, #227. See also Chapters 6 and 16.

⁷⁶ Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 55.

⁷⁷ Roller 2004, p. 248; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 56.

⁷⁸ Sullivan, 'Dynasty of Cappadocia', p. 1166.

⁷⁹ Alexander of Judaea, as reported by Josephus, *Wars*, 2.114.

Two days later, Glaphyra died.⁸⁰

Even though Gaius' eastern expedition is mentioned extensively by Roman writers, physical evidence for it remains scant. Gaius' final act as emperor was to invade Armenia, to restore Tigranes IV to the throne. While negotiating with the leader of the Armenian rebels in September AD 3, Gaius was fatally wounded, eventually dying from his injuries on his way back to Rome the following January.⁸¹ An inscription, left at the site of his death in Lycia, in modern Turkey, is one of the only archaeological testimonies to his expedition.⁸²

⁸⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.13.1-4; Josephus, *Wars*, 2.114; Roller 2004, p. 249; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 56.

⁸¹ Dio, 55.10a.9.

⁸² Pisan Cenotaph, *ILS* 140.

16. Victory in the Desert



Figure 50. Winged Victory Coin of Juba II from Banasa (British Museum, 1908,0404.38).

At some point in the forty-second year of Juba's reign (AD 17/18), in the colony of Banasa on the coast of Mauretania, an unknown resident took three large jars and packed into them all his worldly wealth: four-thousand silver and bronze coins, each one depicting the King of Mauretania. He then dragged them outside to bury them beneath his yard, where he assumed his wealth would be safe. He intended to return to dig them up later when the threat had passed — but he never came back. Instead, the jars remained buried for nearly two thousand years, until a chance discovery in 1907 brought them to light, their contents greedily bought up by private collectors and museums.¹ Some of them were acquired by the British Museum, amongst them a whole series of coins depicting the Roman winged goddess Victory.

These coins all display the same familiar image on the front: Juba's youthful, diademed portrait, along with the words REX IUBA — King Juba. The design on the back varies between coins, but many incorporate the same winged figure: the Roman goddess Victory. On some she stands alone, on others she is on top of a temple.² The rarest design is a silver denarius dated to AD 7, on which Victory, outstretched hands proffering a laurel crown and a palm leaf, is standing atop the head of an elephant, which is also holding a crown in its trunk.³ The laurel crown, the palm leaf, Victory herself, are all potent symbols of military

¹ Marguerite Spoerri and C. Gazdac. 'Hoard Details 5414 – Banasa'. *Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire*, 2019. <https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/hoard/5414>.

² *Juba II Temple Coin*. 1908.0404.19, British Museum.

³ *Juba II Winged Victory Coin*. 1908,0404.38, British Museum.

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1908-0404-38. On the rarity, see Seth William Stevenson, C. Roach Smith, and Frederic W. Madden. *A Dictionary of Roman Coins* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), p. 865; Coin Archives. 'Lot Number: 816'.

<https://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=1762633&AucID=4053&Lot=816&Val=d68f0f3c23ff2934881c062e93897de9>

proWess, appearing on Roman coins struck to commemorate victories on the battlefield since the earliest days of the Republic.⁴ Her position atop an elephant — an instantly recognisable symbol of Africa — recalls the famous statue of Victory standing on a globe that Augustus erected above the Senate house to symbolise Rome's conquest of the known world.⁵ The message on this coin was similar: Juba was claiming victory over Africa.

In the same way that governments still do today, ancient rulers — Juba included — used the reverse of their coins as billboards, commemorating events, spreading propaganda and circulating ideas. Coins were a way of communicating a ruler's message to their people. By associating the image of an emperor or king on the front with a symbol or idea on the back, a message was conveyed: 'this ruler has brought you bountiful food/wealth/peace.' For the Romans, none of these symbols had a longer tradition than that of Victory.

The symbol of the winged goddess had appeared on Roman coins as far back as the defeat of Carthage in the third century BC, embodying the belief that the goddess would bring them victory.⁶ Compared to violent scenes of battle and spectacular triumphs, victory coins allowed war to be celebrated — and commemorated — as part of everyday life, rooting it deep within the culture and psychology of Rome. Rather than reminding the viewer of the real horrors of war, it refigured it into an abstract ideal, sanitising the concept of victory.⁷

However, the nature of conflict since Rome's civil wars had changed dramatically. There were few 'big' enemies left to decisively conquer. What remained were either wars against fellow citizens, victory over whom was swept under the carpet, or skirmishes fought against rebels, bandits or barbarian tribes, against whom a decisive, final victory was impossible to attain. Yet for a general seeking glory, or an emperor looking to burnish his achievements, he took his wins where he could get them — claiming a triumph or minting a victory coin for a battle that in an earlier age might have gone unmentioned. Even scholarly Juba was no exception, eager to cement his reputation as a general whenever the opportunity arose, and while other images appear on his coins with greater frequency, winged Victory remained a recurrent theme on the currency of Mauretania until the very end of his

⁴ Stevenson, Smith, and Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p. 596.

⁵ Sheila Dillon and Katherine E. Welch. *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 18.

⁶ Koortbojian, 'The Bringer of Victory', p. 184; Dillon and Welch, *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, p. 18.

⁷ Koortbojian, 'The Bringer of Victory', p. 185.

reign.⁸ These proclamations of victory and peace were, at best, optimistic. As the burial of the hoard in AD 17 or 18 testifies, victory was never entirely certain for Juba or his heir, Ptolemy.

* * *

By the first century AD, Roman North Africa was divided up into a number of provinces, amongst them Egypt and Cyrenaica (comprising the eastern parts of Libya along with the island of Crete). The oldest of these provinces, formed in the aftermath of Rome's conquest of Carthage, was Africa Vetus, meaning Old Africa, which corresponded to modern-day Tunisia. To the west of Africa Vetus had been Juba I's kingdom of Numidia, but after his death in 46 BC it became the province of Africa Nova (New Africa). Sometime around 27 BC Augustus combined both Africa Vetus and Africa Nova into a single province, Africa Proconsularis.⁹ As the name suggests, the province was ruled by a proconsul, a politician of senatorial rank who governed for just one year before being replaced. It was Africa Proconsularis that bordered Mauretania, and to whose governor Juba II turned for military support in times of trouble.¹⁰

The borders of these provinces were often just lines on a map, if that. Certainly many of the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples who lived and grazed their cattle in the lands claimed by the Romans continued to migrate across provincial borders as they always had.¹¹ The Romans built border forts linked to the coastal towns by roads in an attempt to monitor and control the movement of the tribesmen, as well as to exact taxes on local trade, but for the most part they were too spread out to prove effective.¹²

Ever since Carthage had ruled North Africa, there had been conflicts between the settlers who farmed the fertile lands along the coast and the nomadic Berber tribes who herded cattle and sheep in the interior.¹³ The accession of Juba II — viewed by the locals as a Roman interloper, despite his Berber ancestry — in 25 BC had only exacerbated these existing tensions. It is no coincidence that the first uprising of the Berber tribes took place that

⁸ *CNNM* #288.

⁹ Anthony Barrett. *Caligula: The Corruption of Power* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1989), p. 157.

¹⁰ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 157.

¹¹ C. R. Whittaker. 'Roman Africa: Augustus to Vespasian'. In *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.-A.D. 69*, edited by Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, and A. W. Lintott, Vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 595-6.

¹² Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, VII p. 42-3; Wouter Vanacker. "'Adhuc Tacfarinas'": Causes of the Tiberian War in North Africa (AD ca. 15-24) and the Impact of the Conflict on Roman Imperial Policy'. *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 64/3 (2015): 336-56 (348).

¹³ Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, p. 34.

same year.¹⁴ Cassius Dio, writing two centuries later, says that they were:

discontented with their king, Juba, and scorning the thought that they, too, should be ruled over by Romans, rose against him.¹⁵

The tribe with the most cause for grievance were the Gaetulians, who lived in a long band of territory between the settled lands along the coast and the desert. They had a reputation as being skilled horsemen, riding ‘unsaddled stallions’, and had fought for Caesar during the Civil War.¹⁶ They were also a ‘rough and uncivilized folk [...] governed neither by institutions nor laws nor by anyone’s authority’ according to Sallust, who added they were ‘aimless drifters’.¹⁷

While Sallust certainly had experience of the situation, having served as governor of Africa himself in the mid first century BC, his writing simultaneously displays flagrant Roman prejudices and oft-peddled stereotypes.

Increasing Roman colonisation of North Africa had not led to more accurate knowledge of the continent back home. Hackneyed clichés, outdated stereotypes and wild inaccuracies persisted; common tropes included droughts and heat, deserts and sandstorms, wild animals, snakes and monsters.¹⁸ The stereotypical descriptions extended to the native peoples too, despite increasingly frequent contact — and conflict — with them. They were described as warlike barbarians, were cruel and untrustworthy with unpronounceable names, they lived in huts and — like the inhabitants of Britain — were said to lack art or culture of their own.¹⁹ The geographer Strabo is one of the few exceptions, making an attempt to reconcile these apocryphal accounts with accurate reports from explorers who had actually visited Africa.²⁰ Elsewhere, his accounts of the ‘Marousians’, or Moors, of Juba’s kingdom are largely free from ethnographic stereotyping — it’s telling that he was friends with Juba, and likely received accurate, first-hand accounts from the king.²¹

Stereotypical portrayals were deliberately employed by writers to serve their

¹⁴ Faur, ‘Caligula et la Maurétanie’, p. 255.

¹⁵ Dio, 55.28.3.

¹⁶ Lucan, 4.699-720.

¹⁷ Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 18.1.

¹⁸ Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 79; Livy, 8.3.24; Mela 1.21; Maritz and Martiz, ‘The Classical Image of Africa’, p. 87.

¹⁹ Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, 9.7, Cicero, *Orations*, 93; Varr. Men. 225; Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.337, 339; Sil.

16.1797; Konrad Muller. ‘Digital Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum (DFHG)’, 2.180.249, 5.87-88.

²⁰ Strabo, 17.3.1, 8, 10; Roller, *A Historical and Topographical Guide to the Geography of Strabo*, 17.3.1, 8, 10.

²¹ Strabo, 17.3.4, 7, 25; Roller, *A Historical and Topographical Guide to the Geography of Strabo*, 17.3.4, 7, 25.

own agendas, perhaps to exaggerate the threat faced on the frontier, to make an unpopular emperor look weak when suffering a defeat by them, or to embody the anxiety felt in Rome towards external threats — real or perceived.

Roman anxieties about events in the region are reflected in the fiction of the time. It is perhaps telling that at the same time as the Gaetulians were causing trouble in North Africa, Virgil was writing the *Aeneid*, complete with a Gaetolian king, Iarbas, making trouble as Dido's rejected suitor:

‘And does it not come to your mind whose lands you have settled in? On this side Gaetolian cities, a race invincible in war, unbridled Numidians, and the unfriendly Sirtis hem you in; on that side lies a tract barren with drought, and Barcaeans, raging far and wide.’²²

In 25 BC Augustus had handed much of the Gaetolian's traditional territories to Juba II to make up for the loss of his father's kingdom, now subsumed into the Roman Empire.²³ In some ways this was similar to the divvying up of the Middle East by Britain and France after the First World War, with artificial borders drawn without reference to long-standing tribal territories — with similarly disastrous results. Relations between the Mauretians and the Gaetulians never really improved from there, at best returning to a background simmer rather than a boil. The borders of Mauretania remained difficult to police, with the result that Juba was constantly forced to call on Rome for help.

Many attempts had been made to placate the Berber tribes over the centuries, from diplomatic efforts to punitive raids, from offering grants of land in return for military service to Pompey's policy of forced settlement.²⁴ As they did elsewhere, the Romans took advantage of this ready supply of armed and potentially violent warriors, enlisting them into the army as part of the *auxilia*,²⁵ typically as mounted cavalry.²⁶ This also had the advantage of integrating the Berbers into Roman society, for after their service they were granted citizenship, and a piece of land.²⁷

²² Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.39-43.

²³ Dio, 53.26.2.

²⁴ Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, p. 34; for the latter of these see Plutarch, *Pompey*, 28.3.

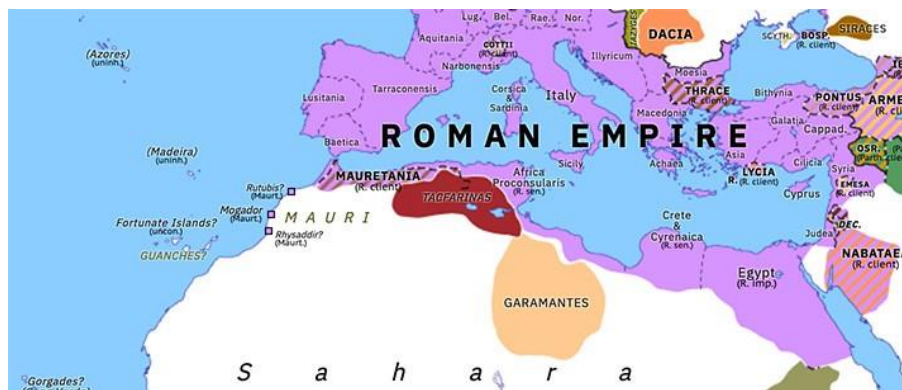
²⁵ The Romans had a long-standing tradition of allowing non-citizens to enlist in the army, with the promise of citizenship at the end of their service. Typically these *auxilia* were light infantry, skirmishers, archers and cavalry, making use of traditional fighting styles and tactics.

²⁶ Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, p. 35.

²⁷ Abdallah Laroui. *The History of the Maghrib : An Interpretive Essay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 32.

These efforts met with only limited success, and in AD 5 or 6 the Gaetulians rose up once more, threatening a vast border area from Lepcis Magna in the east to Iol Caesarea in the west, a front nine-hundred miles wide.²⁸ The Gaetulians were eventually defeated, with the help of the Roman legion, the *III Augusta*, stationed in the neighbouring province and led by the governor Cossus Lentulus.²⁹

A new legionary fortress was built at Ammaedara near the border with Mauretania so that the Romans could keep watch over the Berber tribes — a somewhat chastening turn of events, given that keeping the peace was a task that should have fallen to Juba.³⁰ Nonetheless, Juba minted a commemorative victory coin, although the threat remained.³¹



Map 5. The territories of the tribes that bordered Juba II's kingdom. Image: Omniatlas.

At around the same time as the Gaetulians were causing trouble in Africa, Rome was struggling to keep a grip on its northern frontiers too, facing rebellions along both the Danube and the Rhine. In AD 9 in Germania, Arminius, a local chieftain who had served in the Roman army long enough to be granted citizenship, had turned his knowledge of the Romans and their tactics against them, leading to the massacre of three entire legions. In the aftermath of this defeat, Rome retreated back across the Rhine and drew a new border along the river. The auxiliaries stationed there were drawn from all over the empire, and amongst them was a Berber soldier named Tacfarinas.³² In time he would threaten to do to the provinces of Africa

²⁸ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 255.

²⁹ For more about Cossus' exploits in North Africa, see Chapter 6. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 94; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 94.

³⁰ Fentress and Brett, *The Berbers*, p. 46.

³¹ Dio, 55.28.3; Florus, 2.31; *CNNM*, #199.

³² Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.52

what Arminius had done to Germania.

Sometime around AD 10, Tacfarinas, back on the African frontier, deserted the army along with a number of his comrades.³³ Tacitus, writing a century later, is the only Roman historian to document his rise:

[Tacfarinas] began by recruiting gangs of vagrants, accustomed to robbery, for the purposes of plunder and of rapine: then he marshalled them into a body in the military style by companies and troops; finally he was recognized as the head, not of a chaotic horde, but of the Musulamian people.³⁴

Tacitus is our only real source for what followed, but if we were to take him at face value we might come to the conclusion that this was a conflict that did not concern Juba or Ptolemy at all — despite it being centred on the kingdom of Mauretania, and lasting seven years of the king's reign.³⁵

This should not be too much of a surprise. Tacitus was writing about the events a century later, and in doing so he was trying to evoke the style of the grand histories of the Republic, especially Sallust's *Jugurthine War*, penned in 40 BC about the uprising of Juba's ancestor Jugurtha. That Tacitus was writing the history of another conflict in North Africa goes some way to explain his decision to focus on Tacfarinas when the likes of Cassius Dio and Suetonius make little or no mention of him.³⁶ In pitching the conflict as one between Tacfarinas and Tiberius, Tacitus used it as a means by which to pour scorn on the unpopular emperor. By painting Tacfarinas as a *latro*, a common bandit, who successfully gave four governors — each appointed by Tiberius, as Tacitus is at pains to mention — and two legions the runaround, he could in turn make Tiberius look weak and ineffectual.³⁷ That neither Juba nor Ptolemy figure largely in this account makes sense; their involvement does little to support Tacitus' narrative of homegrown Roman incompetence.

Evidence from the coinage of Mauretania paints a different picture, of far more

³³ Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, p. 38.

³⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.52.

³⁵ For a summary of these arguments, see N. Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas (17-24 AC): Historiographic Balance and New Perspectives about the Causes of Its Outbreak'. *Studia Historica, Historia Antigua* 37 (2019): 31-60 (53).

³⁶ Ronald Syme. 'Tacfarinas, the Musulamii and Thubursicu'. In *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allan Chester Johnson*, edited by Paul R. Coleman-Norton. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p120; Thomas Grünewald. *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 48-9.

³⁷ Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire*, p. 50; Vanacker, 'Adhuc Tacfarinas', p. 345; Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', pp. 48-9.

intensive involvement by the kings in the uprising than the historiography would suggest. By considering coins from the same period, we can reinsert Juba into Tacitus' familiar narrative.

Tacfarinas was — or rose to be — head of a Berber tribe called the Musulamians. The Musulamians were, according to Tacitus, a powerful tribe from the 'solitudes of Africa', who were 'innocent of city life' — by implication nomadic.³⁸ They ranged across the rolling plains of the Numidian plateau as far as the Gulf of Gabes to the east and into the foothills of the Aures Mountains to the south, a vast territory encompassing both sides of the modern-day Algerian and Tunisian border.³⁹ Then, as now, the ancient Musulamian territory did not map neatly onto borders. The Musulamians were no strangers to conflict with Rome; they had first rebelled when their lands were annexed as part of the formation of Juba's kingdom and, writing less than a century after the fact, the historian Florus identified them as one of the principle partisans in the Gaetulian War.⁴⁰

Tacfarinas first gathered support from amongst his own tribesmen, training them in the art of Roman warfare, instilling them with military discipline.⁴¹ He also took advantage of the resentment many of the Berber tribes felt towards the Romans — and Juba, who they saw as a puppet of Rome — building a coalition that included Moors from the mountainous region south of Mauretania and the Cinithii, a tribe from the coast of what is now Tunisia.⁴²

While Tacitus tells us that it wasn't until AD 17 that Tacfarinas began his hostilities, Juba minted victory coins in both AD 15 and 16.⁴³ This suggests that the kingdom of Mauretania was already dealing with a low-level insurgency by the time the Romans got involved, perhaps a prelude to the wider uprising. In AD 17, Tacfarinas led his tribal coalition into open revolt, plunging the entire region into conflict; it was as though the whole of Gaul had risen up at once.⁴⁴ The chaos sown by Tacfarinas penetrated into the kingdom of Mauretania to such an extent that at this moment the colonists of coastal Banasa were sufficiently alarmed to bury their worldly wealth. While the uprising was by no means universal, it was widespread and coordinated enough to draw two legions into a conflict that

³⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.52.

³⁹ Syme, 'Tacfarinas, the Musulamii and Thubursicu', p. 115; Susan Raven. *Rome in Africa* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 60 note 1; Fentress and Brett, *The Berbers*, p. 46; Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 34.

⁴⁰ Florus, 2.31; David Mattingly. *Tripolitania* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 116.

⁴¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.52; Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 50.

⁴² Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire*, p. 48; Mattingly, *Tripolitania*, p. 45.

⁴³ *Bronze coin*. 1909,0102.28, British Museum.

⁴⁴ Fentress and Brett, *The Berbers*, p. 46; Roller 2004, p. 112.

would ultimately last seven years.⁴⁵ Juba's soldiers continued to be embroiled in the fighting too, even after the Roman legions got involved.⁴⁶

This was not a conventional war of the sort the Roman army was used to fighting but a series of repeated, persistent hit-and-run raids that struck deep into both province and kingdom before retreating into the desert to avoid reprisal. It's notable that for the main part Tacitus describes it as a *latrocinium* — an outbreak of serious banditry — rather than an outright war, although this could again be in an attempt to belittle Tiberius' inability to end it.⁴⁷

The conflict with Tacfarinas bears comparison with France's experiences in the region in the twentieth century. During the French Protectorate of Morocco (1912-56) and, later, the Algerian War (1954-62), it was shown that controlling just the coastal plains of North Africa was meaningless if the interior could not be held too. Then, as in the first century, rebel tribes would entrench themselves in the mountainous interior or arid desert, into which they could not be pursued, regrouping and rearming before returning to resume their raids.⁴⁸ The territory of Mauretania — enormous, mountainous and never confidently controlled in its entirety by Juba or Ptolemy — played this role for the Musulamians and their allies, acting as a base to which they could withdraw, as well as providing a supply of disgruntled recruits for Tacfarinas.⁴⁹

Sure enough, when Tacfarinas was defeated in battle in the summer of AD 17 by the Roman governor Furius Camillus — Juba possibly fighting alongside him as he had alongside Lentulus years before — he escaped into the desert. A year later he had regrouped to foment dissent once more.⁵⁰ The Musulamians resumed their tactics, at first engaging in swift if desultory raids, too fast to face reprisals. Again Juba issued a victory coin; in Mauretania at least, these raids were anything but desultory.⁵¹ Eventually Tacfarinas' bandits grew in confidence and number to threaten the Roman province once more, destroying villages and making off with plunder on a much larger scale.⁵²

At times Tacfarinas deliberately provoked the Romans, attacking a fort near

⁴⁵ Vanacker, 'Adhuc Tacfarinas', p. 346.

⁴⁶ *CNNM*, #284.

⁴⁷ Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire*, p. 51.

⁴⁸ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 257.

⁴⁹ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 257; Raven, *Rome in Africa*, p. 56; Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 492.

⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.52; *CNNM*, #284; Syme, 'Tacfarinas, the Musulamii and Thubursicu', p. 117; Roller 2004, p. 112.

⁵¹ *CNNM*, p. 89 and #104.

⁵² Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.20.

the legionary stronghold at Ammaedara or putting flight to an entire cohort of soldiers stationed on the Bagradas River, an infamous incident remembered mainly for the antiquated form of punishment meted out on the survivors:

When the news reached Lucius Apronius (the successor of Camillus), perturbed more by the disgrace of his own troops than by the success of the enemy, he resorted to a measure rare in that period and reminiscent of an older world, drawing by lot and flogging to death every tenth man in the dishonoured cohort.⁵³

This decimation prompted Tiberius to reinforce the province with the ninth legion, *Legio IX Hispana*, posting them from the Danube to Africa Proconsularis.⁵⁴ Eventually the insurgents became victims of their own success when, encumbered by the booty gained from raiding coastal settlements, they were cornered by a fast-moving force of Roman cavalry led by L. Apronius Caesianus, the governor's son, who chased the survivors back into the desert.⁵⁵ The two coins Juba issued at this point divert from the model seen thus far. One depicts an elephant with a tower on its back, as though rigged for war, the other coin an elephant surging across a defensive trench. Both offer an intriguing glimpse at Juba II's own army — itself said to be in size equivalent to a Roman legion — employing elephants in battle against Tacfarinas as Juba I had before him.⁵⁶

The rebellion conformed to the pattern seen in other provinces elsewhere in the empire, which saw at least one major uprising within a generation or so of conquest.⁵⁷ But what was it that Tacfarinas wanted? In AD 22, still at large, he sent an embassy to Rome — notably not to Juba II; Tacfarinas knew full well where the power lay — with a list of his demands: land for himself and his army to settle on, the threat of unending war if the Romans refused.⁵⁸ Whether a desire for land was the sole reason for Tacfarinas' uprising has been the subject of much scholarly debate; more likely it was in response to the Romans' attempts to constrain the Berbers' semi-nomadic movements and impose taxes on them.⁵⁹

⁵³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.21.

⁵⁴ Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 52.

⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.21.1.

⁵⁶ Alexandropoulos, *Les monnaies de l'Afrique antique*, #234-5; Denis B. Saddington. 'Client Kings' Armies under Augustus: The Case of Herod'. In *Herod and Augustus: Papers Presented at the IJS Conference, 21st-23rd June 2005*, edited by David Jacobson and Nikos Kokkinos (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2009), p. 306.

⁵⁷ Goldsworthy, *Pax Romana*, p. 353.

⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.73.1.

⁵⁹ More has probably been written on the causes of Tacfarinas' rebellion than any other aspect of Juba II's reign. Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', pp. 40-1, provides a pretty good, up-to-date summary of many of the arguments, before suggesting his own.

Regardless of the real reasons behind the rebellion, Tacfarinas' demands prompted a furious response by the emperor to the Senate:

'Even Spartacus, after the annihilation of so many consular armies, when his fires were blazing through an Italy unavenged [...] even Spartacus was not accorded a capitulation upon terms. And now, at the glorious zenith of the Roman nation, [is] this brigand Tacfarinas to be bought off by a peace and a cession of lands?'⁶⁰

Tacitus claims that Tiberius had never been so 'stung' by an insult, which is saying something given the things of which he was at times accused. But it is not unreasonable to think that the emperor *was* personally affronted by Tacfarinas' demands. Tiberius too had served on the German frontier in the army, around the same time as Tacfarinas, gaining no small amount of prestige as a soldier and a commander. His military service was a source of great pride, and to see a common bandit issuing demands like a victorious general needled him.

Infuriated, the emperor sent Q. Junius Blaesus, uncle of his trusted adviser Sejanus, to take charge of the situation.⁶¹ He adopted a divide and conquer approach, first offering an amnesty to many of Tacfarinas' allies, before personally leading an elite force into the heart of Musulamian territory.⁶² He constructed a line of forward bases far beyond the frontier, allowing his forces to continue campaigning beyond their usual limits in an attempt to cut Tacfarinas off from his base.⁶³ Blaesus adopted guerrilla tactics too, employing highly mobile, lightly armed, fast-moving forces that were the antithesis of the sturdy, static infantry formations they normally fielded.⁶⁴ In this manner they hounded Tacfarinas and his followers wherever they turned, harrying him from desert camp to desert camp. This approach quickly yielded results, Blaesus capturing and killing Tacfarinas's brother, but Tacfarinas slipped away deeper into the desert.⁶⁵ Still, so sure were the Romans that this, at last, was victory that Blaesus was awarded triumphal honours and hailed imperator, and the ninth legion withdrawn from the province.⁶⁶ Juba, too, was confident enough in this victory that he issued what would be his final victory coin — but not because Tacfarinas had finally been defeated.⁶⁷

In AD 24, Juba II died at the age of 72. It must have been a peaceful death,

⁶⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.73.1.

⁶¹ Blaesus had previously led an expedition into Arabia as far as Yemen, prompting Augustus to send Sejanus on Gaius' ill-fated expedition to the East along with Juba — see Chapter 15.

⁶² Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 52.

⁶³ Whittaker, 'Roman Africa', p. 594.

⁶⁴ Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire*, p. 48; Raven, *Rome in Africa*, p. 61.

⁶⁵ Tacitus *Annals*, 74.1; Roller 2004, p. 112.

⁶⁶ Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 52.

⁶⁷ *CNNM*, #288.

probably of old age, as the sources say nothing else about it. He was buried alongside Cleopatra Selene in the huge royal mausoleum they had built at Tipaza, twenty miles along the coast from their capital. The ruins of the mausoleum are still visible today, in part evoking the tomb of Juba's Numidian ancestor Massinissa in Cirta, in part Augustus' huge mausoleum in Rome.⁶⁸ Juba's son Ptolemy, who had ruled alongside his father as co-regent since AD 17, now assumed the mantle of King of Mauretania.

With Juba's death, however, the war reignited.⁶⁹ Just as Juba's coronation had first provoked the Berber tribes all those years before, so too did Ptolemy's accession stir up trouble even within his own kingdom. Once-loyal Mauretians joined disaffected peasants from Africa and warriors sent by the Garamantes, all led by Tacfarinas.⁷⁰

Tacfarinas was still harrying Africa, reinforced by contingents of Moors, who, during the heedless youth of Juba's son Ptolemy, had sought in war a change from royal freedmen and servile despotism.⁷¹

Tacfarinas took advantage of this propaganda coup, citing both the uprising and the withdrawal of troops as proof of Roman decline. Once again, Tiberius was not amused, complaining that three governors had so far celebrated triumphs over Tacfarinas and yet the chieftain was still pillaging Africa undisturbed.⁷²

This time, the emperor dispatched P. Cornelius Dolabella, an energetic, talented commander from the Danube, who personally directed every detail of the campaign.⁷³ His first action was to execute the Musulamian leaders.⁷⁴ The second was to request support from Ptolemy, newly crowned king. Continuing his predecessor's plans to keep the Musulamians on the backfoot required more soldiers than he had available, forcing him to rely on Mauretanian soldiers for support.⁷⁵ Small companies of lightly armoured Roman cohorts, each led by a Moor specialising in guerrilla warfare, harried the enemy.⁷⁶ When word reached Dolabella that Tacfarinas was camped at a half-ruined fort at Auzea, deep

⁶⁸ The Tomb of the Christian Woman, Tipasa. See MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, pp. 190-2

⁶⁹ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 256.

⁷⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.23; Raven, *Rome in Africa*, p. 61.

⁷¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.24.

⁷² Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.23; Brett and Fentress, *The Berbers*, pp. 46-7.

⁷³ Roller 2004, p. 113; Raven, *Rome in Africa*, p. 61.

⁷⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.24.

⁷⁵ Raven, *Rome in Africa*, p. 61; Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 53.

⁷⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.24-5.

inside Mauretania, he dispatched a rapid force to trap the chieftain there, catching him unawares. Eight years of bloody warfare had taken its toll on the Romans, and they took the chance to avenge themselves on Tacfarinas's forces:

The soldiers, embittered by the memory of hardships undergone and of battle so often hoped for against this elusive foe, took every man his fill of revenge and blood. Word was passed round the maniples that all were to make for Tacfarinas, a familiar figure after so many engagements: there would be no rest from war till the arch-rebel was slain. He, with his guards cut down around him, his son already in chains, and Romans streaming up on all hands, rushed on the spears and escaped captivity by a death which was not unavenged.⁷⁷

Although he had delivered this final, decisive victory, Dolabella was snubbed by Tiberius and denied triumphal honours so as not to upstage Blaesus. Far from being the 'heedless youth' that Tacitus described him as, Tiberius felt Ptolemy's forces were sufficiently instrumental in Tacfarinas' final defeat to reward him with triumphal honours, which appear on Ptolemy's coins from AD 24 onwards.⁷⁸

* * *

The evidence from the coinage is inexact, of course. There were some years when Juba didn't issue a victory coin at all — were these years of relative peace, years when Mauretanian forces were not involved in the uprising, or just years lacking in victories? There were other years when the historical record provides evidence for Roman victory over Tacfarinas, when Juba didn't issue a victory coin either — what can we read into this? Perhaps that Juba took no part in those engagements, because they took place far beyond his borders?⁷⁹ Conversely there are some years when a victory coin was issued — especially by Ptolemy — for which we have no record of any disturbances; these were possibly trumped up military honours or, more likely, military or police actions that have escaped the historical record.⁸⁰

And was Juba wrong to issue his victory coins at all? Were his claims of victory premature each time — in the same way that the triumphs awarded to Furius Camillus and Q. Iunius Blaesus were considered premature by Tiberius? Or was he so eager to burnish his military credentials that he claimed victory even over minor skirmishes? Asking these

⁷⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.25.1.

⁷⁸ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 261; Cases Mora, 'The War of Tacfarinas', p. 54. See Chapter 17.

⁷⁹ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 48.

⁸⁰ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 171.

questions demonstrates something of a misunderstanding of the nature of the conflict between the Mauretanian state and the native tribes whose territories intersected it. Treating Tacfarinas' rebellion — and the long list of native uprisings before it — as a conventional war causes us to look for a single inciting incident, a series of discreet battles followed by a decisive final victory. But this was not a conventional war; this was an ongoing insurgency, mostly comprising low-level raids or altercations between settler and sedentarist, which occasionally erupted into bloodier boil before returning to a steady simmer. While Tacitus is an undeniably valuable source in this matter, in providing us with so much detail for Tacfarinas' uprising, he inadvertently — or deliberately — gives it undue significance when Tacfarinas' war was part of an ongoing series of skirmishes and conflicts, any one of which entitled Juba to claim victory. Just not the final victory for which we — and Juba — might have been hoping.

And as for whether the victories were meaningful in any way, we can return to the Banasa hoard. Hoards are the archetypal buried treasure, a universal fear response that recurs throughout human history, the world over. Fear either that your worldly goods might be in danger, or that while you might be forced to flee you might yet live to return and dig them back up again in the future. In ancient times the most common cause of that fear was the threat of war, although other things might prompt someone to bury their worldly goods such as mistrust in the government or the appearance of a foreign garrison. While coins are by far the most commonly found treasure in a hoard — in part because they survive so well — other goods were sometimes buried too, such as the burial of prized rugs in the Near East.⁸¹ It is perhaps a truism that the only hoards we find are those that were lost, those to which, for whatever reason, the owners never returned. Those hoards that were reclaimed are, paradoxically, lost to us.

Tacfarinas' uprising began in earnest in AD 17, the same year that the hoard was buried at Banasa. While some historians have used the relative lack of textual evidence to minimise the scale of the threat posed to Roman Africa by Tacfarinas, threatening a Roman colony was no mean feat — they were founded to provide settlements for retired soldiers, and veterans were often stationed there for the last few years of their service.⁸² And yet, the owner of the coin hoard felt sufficiently threatened to bury all his worldly wealth. He either felt that his property was in danger of being stolen, or his life was at risk and he could not carry it with him, or both. Whatever the reason, he never returned for it — was he killed by Berber raiders,

⁸¹ Sydney P. Noe. 'Hoard Evidence and Its Importance'. *Hesperia Supplements* 8 (1949), p239

⁸² Goldsworthy, *Pax Romana*, p99-100

or did he flee across the sea to Spain or Italy never to return? We don't know.

The death of Tacfarinas brought peace, for a time, but Mauretania's independence had been fatally undermined. Instead of acting as a stronghold in the region, a bulwark between the empire and its enemies, by the end of the war Mauretania had instead ended up serving as a holdout for those same enemies. Rome had become mired in a long, costly guerrilla war because Juba could not keep the peace himself. While, at the end of the uprising, Tiberius honoured Ptolemy by formally recognising him as King of Mauretania, Tacfarinas' uprising helped ensure he would be its last king.

17. The Last King of Mauretania



Figure 51. Statue of Ptolemy of Mauretania from Sala (Museum of Civilisations, Rabat, S-2289). Photograph: author's own.

A marble portrait statue of a male nude, slightly larger than life-size, leans against a tree trunk. It greets visitors to the central hall of the Museum of Civilisations in Rabat, Morocco, and was found in 1960 during archaeological excavations of the Roman port of Sala, a mile from the museum.¹ The statue, plinth and tree trunk have all been carved from the same block of white Pentelic marble, quarried and imported from Mount Pentelicus in Greece. The skin is translucent and softly polished, the marble's distinctive golden patina complemented by a reddish shade likely caused by staining from the red clay in which it had been buried for fifteen-hundred years.²

Burial has not been kind to the statue: it was discovered broken into several pieces, the plinth split down the middle, and both forearms are missing along with whatever

¹ *Marble Statue of Ptolemy of Mauretania from Sala. S-2289, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat.*

² Jean Boube. 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)'. *Revue Archéologique*, 2 (1990): 331-60 (335).

objects they once held. Marble from the tips of the nose and ears, the left brow and some of the toes have broken off, and the penis has almost entirely abraded.³

Yet the statue retains a dignified air, head held high, gaze fixed straight ahead.⁴ The eyes are small, narrow and close together, the nose quite short and slightly curved. The mouth is closed and rather small, the lips fleshy and well defined. The face has firm, full and hairless cheeks, a forehead marked by wrinkles and two slight furrows at the bridge of the nose, subtle markers of age. The hair is styled flat, shaped in bevelled relief, showing signs of a receding hairline around the temples.⁵ The torso is powerfully built, the muscles on the back executed with as much care by the sculptor as those on the front.⁶ No detail is left unmodelled: even the pubic hair and the folds of the scrotum have been carefully defined.⁷ While the statue is a nude, it is not entirely naked: the figure has a short cloak thrown over its left shoulder, and the angle of the upper arm suggests it once held an object in its left hand.⁸

While not a direct copy, from the neck down the statue's pose, form and proportions are clearly modelled on the Doryphoros of Polykleitos, one of the most famous statues from ancient Greece, beloved — and endlessly copied — by the Romans.⁹ The person depicted is of royal rank — attested to by the diadem — represented in a pose of 'heroic nudity', a style traditionally used by Greek sculptors in representations of gods, deities and mythical heroes but here used to depict a real person: King Ptolemy of Mauretania who we can recognise from similar depictions on his later coins.¹⁰ This is likely the king in middle-age, as attested to by the wrinkles on his face and receding hairline, if not his athletic figure. If we assume it was carved contemporaneously, then this would date it to sometime in the mid-thirties AD.¹¹

This is the only intact statue of Ptolemy that has been found and, if the dating is correct, it is possibly his final portrait. For not long after it was made, in AD 40, Ptolemy was executed for treason, his kingdom annexed by Rome and turned into a province of the empire.

³ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 335.

⁴ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 342.

⁵ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 344.

⁶ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', pp. 345-6.

⁷ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 345.

⁸ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 348.

⁹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 336.

¹⁰ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 335.

¹¹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 355; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 104.

In AD 37 the second emperor, Tiberius, died of old age on his private island of Capri. His death brought to a close the generation of generals, politicians, poets and kings who had forged the Roman Empire: Augustus, Livia, Octavia, Agrippa, Virgil, Horace, Herod, Juba and Selene; all were now dead. Rulership of the empire had passed to the next generation. Ptolemy had ruled Mauretania as king for over a decade, and now in Rome his cousin Gaius was proclaimed emperor aged just 25.

Today, Gaius is more commonly known for his childhood nickname, Caligula, meaning ‘little boots’, earned during his family’s time in the army camps on the Rhine frontier, when his mother would dress the toddler up in a little legionary’s outfit to the delight of the soldiers.¹²

Caligula reigned for just four years, but with the utmost cruelty and capriciousness. In that time he squandered the city’s treasury, declared war on the sea, made his horse a senator, and murdered and tormented countless Roman citizens, often for the most spurious of reasons.¹³ His many victims included his adopted-son Gemellus, his father-in-law Junius Silanus, and the commander of the Praetorian guard, Surtorius Macro, along with Macro’s wife and children.¹⁴

His victims were not just confined to his fellow Romans, for Caligula had a fiery relationship with the neighbouring client-kings too. Once, at dinner, when he overheard some kings discussing their royal heritage — and by implication questioning Caligula’s own right to rule — he threatened them for talking so subversively.¹⁵ Although Antiochus IV of Commagene had acted as a mentor and ‘tyrant-trainer’ to Caligula, that did not stop the emperor from seizing his kingdom on the Upper Euphrates.¹⁶ Then there is Mithridates, installed as King of Armenia by Tiberius, but arrested, thrown into jail and then sent into exile by Caligula for some unrecorded slight.¹⁷ But it is the fate of Ptolemy that concerns us, for it marked the end of the Mauretanian dynasty began by Juba and Selene — and the kingdom of Mauretania itself.

¹² For this reason, and to avoid confusion with Augustus’ grandson Gaius Caesar, he’ll be referred to as Caligula from now on.

¹³ Dio, 59.2.5, 59.25.3; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 46.1, 55; Barrett, *Caligula*, xviii-xx.

¹⁴ Philo, *In Flaccum*, 3.14; Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, 65; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 23.3; Dio, 59.81.1-4.

¹⁵ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 22.1; S. J. V. Malloch. ‘The Death of Ptolemy of Mauretania’. *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 53/1 (2004): 38-45 (44-5).

¹⁶ Dio, 59.24.1, 60.8.1.

¹⁷ Dio, 59.24.1, 60.8.1; Seneca the Younger, *Of Peace of Mind*, 11.

Exactly what happened is unclear: the three major sources — Seneca, Suetonius and Cassius Dio — agree on almost none of the details, but some semblance of a narrative can be pieced together.¹⁸ At some point late in AD 39 or 40, Caligula issued a summons for Ptolemy to attend him at court.¹⁹ This summons might have been issued following Caligula's return to Rome at the end of August AD 40 following a less-than-glorious campaign in Northern Europe, or during the preceding spring he spent holidaying in Campania. More likely it was while the emperor was wintering at Lugdunum (modern-day Lyon) from AD 39 to 40, as he also invited at least two of Ptolemy's fellow client-kings and many of the provincial governors there at the same time.²⁰

Although the invitation was dressed up in the language of diplomacy — Suetonius tells us he was received 'with honour' — the choice of words make it clear that Ptolemy was left with little option but to join the emperor.²¹ It was rare that a client-king should be ordered to court in such a manner; there was often little need, as they flocked to the emperor's side in search of favour.²² But in this Ptolemy stood apart from his peers, rarely leaving Mauretania, where his focus was on suppressing the unrest that still wracked his kingdom.²³

At Lugdunum, Caligula spent the winter hosting all manner of spectacles — chariot races, theatrical performances, rhetorical contests and his personal favourite, gladiatorial bouts — often delighting in taking part himself.²⁴ There, Ptolemy joined the emperor at the huge Amphitheatre of the Three Gauls.²⁵ Dressed in a manner befitting a king — splendid purple cloak edged in gold, ivory sceptre held high, royal diadem glittering in the sun — Ptolemy took his seat in the stands, where his appearance attracted the attention of the crowd, and the wrath of Caligula. Dio says that Caligula was covetous of Ptolemy's wealth, Suetonius that he was jealous of Ptolemy's purple cloak; whatever it was, something angered

¹⁸ Seneca the Younger, *Of Peace of Mind*, 11; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35.1; and Dio, 59.25.1. Pliny alludes to Caligula's cruelty towards Mauretania, too (*NH* 5.1.2) but it has no bearing here.

¹⁹ This uncertainty largely arises from having to rely on Dio's chronology, compounded by the loss of the section immediately following his description of the events — the missing section is tantalisingly listed in the index as 'How the Mauretanian came to be governed by Romans'.

²⁰ Dio, 59.24.1; Duncan Fishwick. 'The Annexation of Mauretania'. *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 20/4 (1971): 467-87 (471).

²¹ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35.1. See Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', pp. 253-4 for an analysis of the choice of Latin words used to describe the summons.

²² Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, pp. 55-7.

²³ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 254. See Chapter 16.

²⁴ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 20.

²⁵ Jérôme Carcopino. *Le Maroc antique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), pp. 198-9.

Caligula so much that he suddenly had the king executed.²⁶

Was Ptolemy executed then and there, in the arena itself — perhaps handed a sword and compelled to fight to the death as a gladiator? There was certainly precedent. Just a few years earlier, Caligula had fallen ill not long after acceding the throne, prompting his sycophantic supporters to out do one another with prayers for his swift recovery. Amongst them was a politician named Atanius Secundus, who vowed to fight in the arena if Caligula was saved; the emperor regained his health, and forced Atanius to keep his word, only sparing him once he had won a bout — or making him fight to the death, depending on whose account you believe.²⁷ He would not have been the only prominent victim slain in the Amphitheatre of Three Gauls either: Saints Pothinus and Blandina were both martyred here in the following century.²⁸ The Latin word Suetonius uses to describe Ptolemy's death is telling, too — *cruenta*, meaning a 'bloody death', or more specifically, 'bloodthirsty and cruel'.²⁹

More likely is that Ptolemy spent time languishing in jail in Rome, as Seneca — our only eye witness — had time to see him there before he was put to death.³⁰ This suggests calculation on Caligula's part, that the execution was ordered not on spurious grounds but to satisfy some long-held grievance, or as punishment fitting some terrible crime.

Yet it had not always been this way. Ptolemy and Caligula were first cousins, once removed, for Caligula's beloved grandmother Antonia was Selene's half-sister, the two raised together by Octavia. Ptolemy and Caligula had once been close friends too, and the king was received with honour when he arrived from Mauretania.³¹ So what changed — what did Ptolemy do to earn Caligula's wrath?

The sources aren't at all clear as to Ptolemy's 'crime'. Suetonius recounts the fate of Ptolemy in his biography of Caligula, written some eighty years after the emperor's death:

It would be trivial and pointless to add to this an account of his treatment of his relatives and friends, Ptolemy, son of Juba, his cousin [...] [was] rewarded for [his] kinship and [...] faithful service by a bloody death.³²

²⁶ Dio, 59.25.1; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35.1.

²⁷ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 14.2, 27.2; Dio, 59.8.3.

²⁸ Carcopino, *Le Maroc antique*, p. 198.

²⁹ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 26.1.

³⁰ Seneca, *Of Peace of Mind*, 11.

³¹ Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 469.

³² Suetonius, *Caligula*, 26.1.

He paints the emperor as impulsive, unwell, writing that he was ‘sound neither of body nor mind.’³³ He goes on to provide a more sensationalist account of Ptolemy’s death as evidence for Caligula’s crimes:

After inviting Ptolemy [...] to come from his kingdom and receiving him with honour, he suddenly had him executed for no other reason than when giving a gladiatorial show, he noticed that Ptolemy on entering the theatre attracted general attention by the splendour of his purple cloak.³⁴

Secondly, we have Dio’s account of Ptolemy’s death, which contributes to his ongoing theme of Caligula putting his enemies to death to take their money:

Gaius sent for Ptolemy, the son of Juba, and on learning that he was wealthy put him to death.³⁵

So we have two possible explanations: that Ptolemy was killed because Caligula coveted his wealth, or that Ptolemy was killed because Caligula was jealous of his cloak. At first glance, both seem implausible, outlandish, typical of the censorious and scandalised tone of Caligula’s ancient biographers. But both might hint at the truth, both might prove to be true, after a fashion. The statue of Ptolemy from Sala might hold the answer.

* * *

In AD 24, the Roman senate voted to revive an ancient custom to recognise the part Ptolemy had played in the final defeat of Tacfarinas, whose armed revolt had intermittently been a thorn in the side of North Africa for nearly two decades.³⁶ A senator was swiftly dispatched to Ptolemy’s capital at Iol Caesarea bearing the gifts that accompanied such an honour: a glittering golden crown, an ornate sceptre carved from an ivory tusk, a curule chair, a tunic embroidered with palms and, most magnificently of all, a purple toga edged in gold.³⁷

These were not a random assortment of treasures, but regalia heavily laden

³³ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 50.2.

³⁴ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35.1.

³⁵ Dio, 59.25.1.

³⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.26.1. See Chapter 16.

³⁷ Livy, 30.15.11.

with symbolism: they were the rewards of a triumphant general.³⁸ This honour was rarely bestowed upon foreigners, the Romans normally reserving it for their own heroes — and, since the reign of Augustus, almost exclusively for the emperor himself. Ptolemy's father, Juba, had received this honour eighteen years previously, and Scipio Africanus had chosen to award the regalia to Ptolemy's ancestor Massinissa two centuries before that.³⁹ That Rome saw fit to honour Ptolemy in this way was a mark of the favour in which it held him too.

Fully aware of the meaning — his recent family history was intertwined with that of the Roman triumph, after all — Ptolemy wasted little time in trumpeting it back home. He ordered his statues be upgraded to show off his new regalia.⁴⁰ The statue in Sala was one such statue, prominently displayed in the centre of Mauretania's largest port. While the left hand is now missing, evidence remains of the object it might once have held. Ptolemy's statue is modelled after the Doryphoros of Polykleitos, which literally means 'spear-carrier', and the spear that it carries forms part of the support for the arm. Ptolemy's arm is more relaxed than that of the Doryphoros, but a semi-circular groove in the folds of the cloak suggest that whatever it once held was also used as a support — but that the object was somewhat shorter, only 30cm long. So not a spear, but a triumphal sceptre.⁴¹

Ptolemy also had coins struck with the symbols of triumph the same year — and continued to do so every year afterwards. In doing so, he went a step too far, issuing gold coins that proudly displayed his martial honours.⁴² However, the right to issue gold coins was reserved for the emperor alone. Juba II was granted an exception on just two occasions: to celebrate his marriage to Selene, and to commemorate her death.⁴³ Those aureii that have survived from Ptolemy's reign suggest that he issued them with far less consideration. None were issued commemoratively, all were designed to burnish his own reputation. Indeed, the last gold aureii issued by Ptolemy — shortly before his summons to Rome — bore symbols of his triumphal regalia, the sceptre and curule chair. It could be that these gold coins — which were symbolically more significant than pure monetary value — was the wealth that Dio referred to.

³⁸ Malloch, 'The Death of Ptolemy of Mauretania', p. 39; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 158.

³⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.24.3; Livy, 30.15.11; Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus', p. 493.

⁴⁰ Malloch, 'The Death of Ptolemy of Mauretania', p. 39 note 9; Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 263; coins bearing the triumphal regalia appear from the fifth year of Ptolemy's reign: AD 25.

⁴¹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 349.

⁴² *CNNM*, #450.

⁴³ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 261; Mazard, *CNNM*, p. 101, #297 and 298. For more about these coins see Chapter 7.

If that satisfies Dio's explanation, where does that leave Suetonius' case of the purple cloak? While the sceptre and the curule chair appear on Ptolemy's coins, the toga picta does not. Yet it does appear alongside the sceptre on Ptolemy's statue. Could this be the same cloak that Suetonius says provoked Caligula's ire? Suetonius says Caligula noticed that Ptolemy attracted attention by the 'splendour of his purple cloak.'⁴⁴

Part of the problem in making sense of the passage is that Suetonius' meaning is lost in translation from the original Latin. It might seem obvious, but whilst in English we just have the one word for a cloak, the Romans had many. In the same way as we might wear an anorak or a cagoule to go out in the rain, an overcoat or parka in the winter, a suit jacket or a blazer for a formal occasion, the Romans had different styles of cloak appropriate for men and women of different status or vocation. So, the toga was formal wear for a man, for example, the stola for a woman. A palium was a cloak worn by Greek philosophers, but also by courtesans, whereas a paludamentum was specifically a military cloak, of the type worn by a soldier.⁴⁵

The exact word used by Suetonius to describe Ptolemy's purple cloak is *abolla*, which is defined by Lewis and Short as: '*a robe of thick woollen stuff worn by soldiers, philosophers etc.*'⁴⁶ The cloak over Ptolemy's shoulder on his statue, however, is a *chlamys*,⁴⁷ which is defined as:

*a broad, woollen upper garment worn in Greece, sometimes purple, and inwrought with gold, worn esp. by distinguished milit. characters, a Grecian military cloak, a state mantle.*⁴⁸

Significantly, the Latin grammarian Servius described an *abolla* as 'like a *chlamys*'⁴⁹, which gives us license to consider the two terms together. So we have on the statue the cloak that Ptolemy chose to be depicted in, and quite probably chose to wear at public events; a cloak that was synonymous with soldiers, distinguished military generals and ancient heroes famous for mythical deeds. When Ptolemy joined the emperor at Lugdunum, of course he wore an outfit appropriate to the occasion — hence his splendid purple cloak,

⁴⁴ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35.1.

⁴⁵ Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short. 'Palium', 'Paludamentum'. In *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879).

⁴⁶ Lewis and Short, 'Abolla'.

⁴⁷ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée', p. 344.

⁴⁸ Lewis and Short, 'Chlamys'.

⁴⁹ Maurus Servius Honoratus, *Commentary on the Aeneid of Vergil*, 5.421.

redolent with martial connotations.⁵⁰

During the Republic, even under previous emperors, this would not have been a problem. Rome had more than its fair share of military heroes, and its leaders were all too happy to parade their glories for all of Rome to see. Both Augustus and Tiberius had great victories to call their own and had triumphed through the city on more than one occasion. They were rarely threatened by the military glories of their fellow Romans, certainly not by the provincial victories of a client-king.

Caligula, on the other hand, had never served as a soldier nor commanded an army, had no such glory to call his own — a fact of which he was all too aware, a wound made all the more painful because his father had been one of Rome's greatest generals, Germanicus. When Caligula marched north from Rome in the autumn of AD 39 it was with the specific intent to burnish his own military credentials; he hoped to lead his legions to victory across the Rhine in Germania, maybe even to conquer Britain, but although he was hailed as imperator seven times by his men, 'he had won no battle, and slain no enemy.'⁵¹ The tribes of Germania were not as obliging as the gladiators he fought in the arena, his conquest of Britain amounting to no more than the surrender of an already-deposed king fled across the Channel to Gaul. When Caligula arrived at Lugdunum, it was with failure foremost in his mind, not victory. Ptolemy's choice of outfit, purple cloak and ivory sceptre glorifying his martial prowess, could only rub salt into Caligula's wounded pride.⁵²

The colour purple held a long association for Ptolemy, and not just because of the striking Gaetulian purple dye manufactured on the islands off the Mauretanian coast since Juba II's time.⁵³ It recalls a similar incident in *The African Wars*. In that contemporary, albeit biased, account of the civil war, Ptolemy's grandfather Juba I is said to have upbraided the Roman general Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio when both wore a purple cloak. Juba I had the right to wear purple by virtue of being a king, Scipio by virtue of being a victorious general. On that occasion, Scipio won a moral victory by changing into a white tunic, the anonymous author condemning Juba's arrogance for daring to pull rank over a Roman.⁵⁴ Later, though probably for unrelated reasons, Augustus had banned client-kings from wearing purple, reserving that privilege too for the imperial household. Regardless of Tiberius having

⁵⁰ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 159.

⁵¹ Dio, 59.22.2.

⁵² Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 159.

⁵³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.1.12; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 165 note 15; Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 470.

⁵⁴ Pseudo-Caesar, *The African Wars*, 57.

subsequently relaxed the rule, Ptolemy felt it his right to wear purple even in the emperor's presence.⁵⁵

In issuing his own gold coins, in dressing in purple, in flaunting his military prowess and ancestry, Ptolemy was reminding his subjects of his own power, his own right to rule, independently from Rome. Was his intention only to reinforce his authority in front of a domestic audience in Mauretania, or did he intend to provoke a reaction from his cousin too? Was he trying to stake out a claim to a greater role within the empire, or was he just trying to secure his own reputation? Whatever his intent, something about his actions prompted Caligula to act. The summons to attend the emperor arrived in Iol Caesarea; Ptolemy could hardly refuse.

* * *

At the end of AD 39, Caligula sent three daggers to the Temple of Mars Ultor ('the Avenger') as an offering to celebrate his victory: one for each of his defeated foes.⁵⁶ Yet he had won no wars in AD 39, defeated no foes in battle.

In the system that Augustus had founded there remained a unique flaw: the emperor himself. If the emperor remained strong, as Augustus had been, commanding the loyalty of the Senate and the armies, then so too did the empire. But if the emperor showed any weakness, then conspiracy and unrest were bound to form. Tiberius' paranoia and absence from Rome had allowed a conspiracy to form against him, prompting him to see foes everywhere and instigate murderous purges of the Senate, claiming the lives of Caligula's mother and his older brothers. While at first Caligula promised a cowed Senate that his reign would be different, he quickly followed in his predecessor's footsteps, governing first through selective ruthlessness and then savage brutality.⁵⁷ In AD 39, in a speech delivered in the Curia — the traditional seat of government in the heart of the Roman Forum — the young emperor imagined out loud the advice that Tiberius might give him on dealing with the Senate:

'[S]how no affection for any of them and spare none of them. For they all hate you and they all pray for your death; and they will murder you if they can.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Dio, 57.13.5; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 159.

⁵⁶ Dio, 59.22.7.

⁵⁷ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 130.

⁵⁸ Dio, 59.16.5.

This was hardly a speech intended to put the Senate at ease. Any doubts as to what he meant died when Caligula famously quipped: ‘[I]et them hate me, so they but fear me.’⁵⁹ If the Senate thought that the emperor would be an acquiescent youth that they could control, they were sorely mistaken.⁶⁰ A conspiracy began to form.

Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus was a senator and general, whose family had proudly served both Augustus and Tiberius.⁶¹ His father, Cossus, was the general who had fought alongside Juba II to help put down a Berber uprising. For his victory Cossus earned the honorific Gaetulicus — even though the poet Florus accused him of awarding it to himself — passing it on to his son.⁶² Gaetulicus was of a similar age as Ptolemy, and the two became friends when he spent time at the Mauretanian royal court in Iol Caesarea while their fathers campaigned along the North African frontier.⁶³

In AD 39 Gaetulicus was on a very different frontier, having served for the past decade as legate of Upper Germany, where he directly or indirectly commanded eight legions garrisoned along the Rhine — that’s at least forty thousand men, plus accompanying auxiliary troops; nearly a third of the empire’s total forces.⁶⁴ He had a reputation as an easy-going commander, somewhat lax on discipline, and as a result was beloved by his men.⁶⁵

This was not Gaetulicus’ first conspiracy, either. In AD 34 he found himself accused of conspiring with his son-in-law Sejanus to oust Tiberius, but managed to escape punishment — presumably down to a combination of being physically distant from the centre of Sejanus’ conspiracy, and the massive number of troops under his command. But while he certainly had the manpower to mount a convincing bid for power, Gaetulicus lacked the political influence.

That was where the second member of the conspiracy, senator Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, came in. Lepidus was Caligula’s closest friend and had been married to the emperor’s beloved younger sister, Drusilla, until her death in AD 38. He was promiscuous, his other lovers including Drusilla’s sisters, Agrippina and Julia Livilla, as well as Caligula himself. Certainly Lepidus enjoyed a favoured status with the emperor, and on several occasions had been declared as his successor to the throne.⁶⁶ Now, with Drusilla dead and

⁵⁹ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 30.1.

⁶⁰ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 130.

⁶¹ See Chapter 6 for more on his father and uncle, Cossus and Lentulus.

⁶² Florus, 2.31.

⁶³ Fishwick and Shaw, ‘Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus’, p. 493-4.

⁶⁴ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 140.

⁶⁵ Suetonius, *Galba*, 6.2.

⁶⁶ Dio, 59.22.6.

Caligula's wife delivering the emperor an heir, Lepidus had been sidelined. So too had his lover Agrippina, who had long harboured ambitions not only for own son — the future emperor Nero — but also for herself.⁶⁷ But while Lepidus might have wielded political power and the prospect of marriage to Agrippina an attempt to provide legitimacy, would it be enough?

While Gaetulicus and Lepidus are listed as co-conspirators by Suetonius, the third conspirator is unnamed, but it might have been Ptolemy; the timing of his execution certainly coincides with that of the other ringleaders.⁶⁸ He would have brought substantial financial backing to the conspiracy: the wealth of Mauretania he displayed with his gold aureii; not to mention control of North African grain on which so many of Rome's mouths depended; possibly the Roman legion stationed in the nearby province of Africa Proconsularis too. In exchange for his support he was promised the return of his ancestral kingdoms — at the very least Numidia, possibly Egypt too.⁶⁹ He might have also been able to provide a certain legitimacy to the coup, more so than Lepidus — after all, he was related to Caligula, and his image had long been associated with that of Augustus' successors.⁷⁰ Perhaps his part in the conspiracy was not just to provide financial backing, but to found an imperial dynasty to rival — supplant, even — that of Caligula.⁷¹

The historian Aloys Winterling describes this moment as 'probably the best conditions for a conspiracy in the whole history of the Roman Empire.'⁷² While neither Dio nor Suetonius go into any further detail about the conspiracy, just looking at the cluster of events that occurred at the end of AD 39 is enough to demonstrate that something went badly wrong.

The Arval Brethren, a priesthood known mainly for its record-keeping, noted that a sacrifice was given '[o]n October 27 [...] because of the wicked plots of Gnaeus Lentulus Gaetulicus against Gaius Germanicus [Caligula].'⁷³ Somebody had tipped Caligula off about the conspiracy and he moved swiftly, ruthlessly to quash it.⁷⁴ Gaetulicus, Lepidus

⁶⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.2.2.

⁶⁸ See Fishwick and Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the Conspiracy of Gaetulicus'.

⁶⁹ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 14.

⁷¹ M. Lenoir. 'La piste égyptienne de Marc-Antoine, la cagnotte dilapidée et l'empereur psychopathe: l'élimination de Ptolémée, roi de Maurétanie'. In *Ubique amici: mélanges offerts à Jean-Marie Lassère*, edited by Jean-Marie Lassère and Christine Hamdoune (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier III, Centre d'études et de recherches sur les civilisations antiques de la Méditerranée, 2001): 117-127.

⁷² Aloys Winterling. *Caligula: A Biography* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2011), p. 107.

⁷³ Winterling, *Caligula*, p. 110; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 142.

⁷⁴ Winterling, *Caligula*, p. 108.

and, we must presume, Ptolemy were all summoned and then dispatched at the emperor's winter quarters at Lugdunum. The legion responsible for garrisoning Africa was stripped from the Senate's control, its commander abruptly replaced. Scores of senators, including both of the serving consuls, were brought to trial and prosecuted; some were executed, others took their own lives.⁷⁵ Caligula's sisters, for their part, were exiled to remote, barren islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea, but not before Agrippina was made to carry the bones of her lover back to Rome, where they were scattered unburied along with the remains of the other conspirators.⁷⁶

Despite the emperor's ruthless response — or perhaps because of it — the Senate remained committed. Within eighteen months of Ptolemy's death and the foiling of Gaetulicus' conspiracy, another conspiracy succeeded. On the 24th January AD 41, Caligula was stabbed to death in Rome by one of his bodyguards, his uncle Claudius replacing him on the throne.⁷⁷ But Caligula's death came too late for Mauretania or its people; their fate was sealed.

⁷⁵ Winterling, *Caligula*, p. 108; Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 472.

⁷⁶ Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 2.4; Dio, 59.22.8.

⁷⁷ Dio, 56.2, 58.2.

18. The End is the Beginning



Figure 52. Inscription of M. Valerius Severus, Volubilis, Morocco. Photograph: author's own.

Along the southern side of the Roman forum in Volubilis, Morocco, stands a marble statue base bearing a lengthy Latin inscription, uncovered during the excavation of the site's monumental centre in the late nineteenth century.¹ The statue itself is missing, but the base is largely intact apart from some damage to the corner of the plinth. Much of the stone is covered in a dark patina, except down the middle of the inscription where the original colour of the marble can still be seen. Two large cracks run through the inscription at right angles to one another. However, the inscription is still legible and can be translated as follows:

To Marcus Valerius Severus, son of Bostar, belonging to the Galeria tribe, aedile, suffete, duumvir, first flamin in his municipality, prefect of auxiliaries against Aedemon who was crushed during the war. To this character, the senate of the municipality of Volubilis, because of his merits towards the republic and the embassy which he carried out successfully and thanks to which he obtained from the divine Claudius, for his compatriots, Roman citizenship and the right marriage with peregrine women, immunity for ten years, domiciled foreigners, the property of citizens (Roman) killed in war for whom there were no heirs, (decreed a statue). Fabia Bira, daughter of Izelta, his wife, availing himself of this distinction, remitted the expense, raised (the statue) at his expense for her very benevolent husband and made it the

¹ 'A city emerges from the earth', wall text, Volubilis Museum, Morocco.

dedication.²

Marcus Valerius Severus was a dignitary of Volubilis in the mid-first century during Mauretania's transition from client-kingdom to Roman province. The inscription was written after his death in AD 54, and was paid for by his wife Fabia Bira. The inscription reveals that Marcus was a Roman citizen who had served the city in a variety of elected roles: he had not only been the *suffete* (the city's highest-ranking official and notably a holdover from Carthaginian rule), but also the *duumvir* (a magistrate), the *aedile* (the official in charge of public building work) and the *flamen* (the priest of a cult). Although Marcus bore a Roman name, his father's name was Punic, suggesting that he was a Romanised local.³ The inscription marks the literal end of Mauretanian Volubilis, and the beginning of Roman Volubilis.⁴

* * *

The end of the client-kingdom, when it came, was swift. News of Ptolemy's death in AD 39 and the Roman annexation of Mauretania a year later lit a touchpaper across the kingdom. A revolt swept through the towns and cities, beginning in the east, in the capital Iol Caesarea, and quickly spreading west.⁵ The uprising was instigated by a former slave named Aedemon, who was acting as regent during Ptolemy's absence attending Caligula in Lyon and Rome. Apart from the inscription, the only other source to mention Aedemon by name is Pliny, who tells us that he 'took up arms to avenge the death of King Ptolemy'.⁶

While the textual record is scant, the archaeological record is rich with evidence of civil unrest from this time. In the west of Mauretania, Volubilis' city centre was consumed by fire and abandoned, many of its inhabitants killed.⁷ A thick, dark layer of soil beneath Lixus — an ancient Phoenician city pre-dating Carthage and supposed site of the

² Jacques Gascou. 'Sur une inscription de Volubilis'. *Antiquités africaines* 28/1 (1992): 133-8 (134).

³ 'Inscription of M. Valerius Severus, Son of Bostar', wall text, Volubilis Museum, Morocco; Gascou, 'Sur une inscription de Volubilis', p. 134.

⁴ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160.

⁵ Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 479.

⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.1.11; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 60.

⁷ Pliny, *NH*, 5.1.11; M. Tarradell. 'Nuevos datos sobre la guerra de los Romanos contra Aedemon'. In *I Congreso Arqueológico del Marruecos Español: Tetuan, 22-26 Junio, 1953* (Tetuan, Morocco (Spanish Zone): Imprenta Cremades, 1954): 377-44 (344); Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 479; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 60.

mythical Gardens of the Hesperides — attests to a destructive end at this time.⁸ In Tamuda, on the northern tip of Morocco, almost every house was burnt down, and the town was so completely razed that it remained unoccupied for hundreds of years.⁹

The Mauretanian army was well trained and familiar with Rome's tactics, but they could not hold out for more than a few months against a concerted invasion by a Roman legion — even with widespread popular support. And there is little evidence that Aedemon and his royalists enjoyed such support. Ptolemy had not been well liked, in part because he was seen to be under the thumb of his Greek — and hence foreign — freedmen, leaving the rule of his kingdom to men like Aedemon.¹⁰ Tacitus had written that the Mauretanians had previously risen up against Ptolemy for 'a change from royal freedmen and servile despotism.'¹¹ Hence, in towns across the kingdom, Mauretanians fought alongside the Romans against Aedemon's rebels; the efforts of Marcus Valerius Severus and his band of loyal auxiliaries, as recorded on the inscription from Volubilis, must have been just one such act of resistance. Elsewhere, the mountain and desert tribes who had long resisted Juba and Ptolemy's rule took advantage of the unrest to descend on Mauretania too.¹²

The task of pacifying Mauretania fell to Marcus Licinius Crassus Frugi, who would later gain fame for his exploits during the conquest of Britain.¹³ By the time Mauretania's annexation was complete, Frugi's own commander, the emperor Caligula, lay dead, murdered by his bodyguard. Caligula's uncle Claudius was now emperor, and the triumphal honours for the conquest of Mauretania were awarded to him instead. Frugi was rewarded with the betrothal of his son to Claudius' daughter.¹⁴

It is not hard to see why Caligula had made the decision to annex Mauretania. Augustus' intention all those decades earlier had been to both create a buffer state on his North African frontier, as well as to Romanise its population. Juba and then Ptolemy had proven ineffective at fending off raids. Frequent unrest in the kingdom often necessitated the Roman legions from the neighbouring province intervene to prop up the client-kings. This in turn left Africa Proconsularis vulnerable to attack, as was shown by Tacfarinas' continued

⁸ Pliny, *NH*, 5.1.9; Tarradell, 'Nuevos datos sobre la guerra de los Romanos contra Aedemon', p. 344; Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 479; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160.

⁹ Tarradell, 'Nuevos datos sobre la guerra de los Romanos contra Aedemon', p. 340; Fishwick, 'The Annexation of Mauretania', p. 479; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160.

¹⁰ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 256; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 60.

¹¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.23.

¹² Tarradell, 'Nuevos datos sobre la guerra de los Romanos contra Aedemon', p. 343; Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 64.

¹³ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 17.3.

¹⁴ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 27.2, 29.2; Dio, 60.5.7; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 162.

raids during his long insurgency — raids that should have been thwarted by Juba and Ptolemy, not the Romans.¹⁵ This was not entirely the fault of the client-kings; Mauretania was an unwieldy country, strung out along the coast and divided in two by a mountainous interior in which the nomadic tribes had free rein. Prior to Juba and Cleopatra Selene's rule, it had always been ruled by two kings and, indeed, following annexation it was divided in two once more: the provinces of Mauretania Tingitana in the west, roughly analogous to modern-day Morocco, and Mauretania Caesariensis, which corresponded to the coastal region of modern-day Algeria.¹⁶

Mauretania was perhaps a victim of Juba's own success at Romanising the kingdom. Juba had built Roman-style baths, theatres and colonnaded temples, brought playwrights and artists with him from Rome and lined the gridded streets and squares of its cities with statues of famous Romans. The kingdom's coins were interchangeable with those from Rome, Latin was increasingly spoken and people began to adopt Roman-sounding names. Mauretania was more closely connected, via Mediterranean trade routes, with the Roman Empire than ever before. In the face of Aedemon's revolt, many Mauretians felt that they had more in common with the rest of the empire than with the partisans supposedly fighting for their continued independence.

Perhaps nowhere is this Romanisation more in evidence than in Marcus' own inscription, which sketches out a transformation not unlike that of the king. Like Juba, he had become a Roman citizen, had adopted a Roman name too. He served as *duumvir*, a Roman role also held by Juba and later by Ptolemy in Gades (modern-day Cadiz, in Spain).¹⁷ He was also *aedile*, responsible for continuing Juba's building works, as well as *flamen*, and although it's unclear for which cult he was responsible it's likely it was the imperial cult revering the deified Augustus.¹⁸ Like Juba, whose own identity was born out of hybridity — Roman, Numidian, Mauretanian — Marcus' identity remained hybrid: he was *suffete* of Volubilis, a Carthaginian role, and honoured the Punic name of his father, Bostar. Juba had blazed the trail that many of his subjects, and their descendants, would themselves follow.

The inscription provides an insight into life in the city after the annexation too. Marcus went to Rome as part of an embassy to Emperor Claudius, where he was rewarded for

¹⁵ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 47; Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160.

¹⁶ Pliny, *NH*, 5.1.17.

¹⁷ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, p. 77.

¹⁸ 'Inscription of M. Valerius Severus, Son of Bostar', wall text, Volubilis Museum, Morocco; Gascou, 'Sur une inscription de Volubilis', p. 134; J. B. Rives. 'Imperial Cult and Native Tradition in Roman North Africa'. *The Classical Journal* 96/4 (2001), p. 432.

his loyalty. He secured Roman citizenship for his fellow Volubitani, as well as other benefits including ten years' exemption from taxes, the transformation of the city into a municipality, and the right to marry non-citizens.¹⁹ Volubilis thrived under Roman rule, until the Roman army withdrew during the near-collapse of the empire in the third century AD. Its citizens were left to fend for themselves. While evidence after that point grows sparse, Latin inscriptions appear as late as the seventh century, referring to the conversion of its populace to Christianity.²⁰

* * *

One final postscript. Decades after the kingdom had become a Roman province, in AD 69 — the Year of Four Emperors that followed the assassination of Nero — Mauretania briefly became a kingdom once more. Luceius Albinus had been the procurator of Judaea before his corruption had led to his reassignment to Mauretania.²¹ Sensing an opportunity amidst the political chaos north of the Mediterranean, he crowned himself king of Mauretania and ruled for a few months before he was murdered by agents of the emperor. The regnal name he chose? King Juba III.²² Half a century after Juba's death, his name still had power.

¹⁹ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, pp. 300-1; J. Spaul. 'Across the frontier in Tingitana'. Edited by W. G.-V. Waateringe. *Oxbow monograph*, 91 (1997): 253-60 (254).

²⁰ 'Volubilis: a very long history', wall text, Volubilis Museum, Morocco.

²¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.11.1; Josephus, *Wars*, 2.14.1.

²² Roller 2004, p. 255 note 64.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate the vital importance of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene's life story to a modern understanding of ancient biography, by means of an object-led approach, with a view to valorising both topic and method. By giving prominence to objects associated with Juba and Selene, many of which they commissioned or curated themselves, rather than on the customary textual evidence written from the Roman point of view, I have refocused the story on them and their kingdom.

This thesis has posited a number of suggestions for the reason for their excision from the popular arc of Roman history. Firstly, as I showed, for example in Chapters 6 and 9, their kingdom's position on the southern fringes of the empire, in a region of the world that continues to be difficult to visit, has led to its material culture being largely overlooked, and its contribution to the wider Mediterranean world being forgotten. Secondly, as I argue in Chapter 8, the loss of Juba's own writing has led to a loss of agency, his story reduced to anecdotes and references in the records of other ancient historians. This is compounded by the lack of any contemporary records from his kingdom — unlike accounts of the client-kingdom of Herod the Great — as shown in Chapter 15.

Thirdly, there is the question of race. As I argued in Chapter 1, although Juba's skin colour did not have a significant impact on his own life, nonetheless his ethnicity remains significant to us, today. As a Berber, born in North Africa but raised in Rome as a Roman, Juba illustrates the historical inaccuracy of the traditional view of Rome as a homogeneous, white culture. As I have shown in Chapters 1 and 16, Rome and its wider empire were extremely diverse. The more stories like Juba's can be recovered, the more the accepted picture of Rome can be diversified by widening our narrative to include figures from beyond Europe, the better the whitewashing of ancient history — whether deliberate or unintentional — can be countered. Objects such as the busts of Juba II from Cherchell and Copenhagen (both discussed in Chapter 1) are important for centring such narratives, although much more work remains to be done by others.

This thesis has argued — throughout, but particularly in Chapters 6 and 14 — that Juba and Selene should be given more prominence in the history of the early Roman Empire. I have shown the significant role that they played in not only furthering the artistic culture of the Mediterranean but also in laying the foundations for the Roman colonisation of North Africa.

I have argued in a number of chapters that many of the objects associated with Juba and Selene should be given wider recognition on account of their artistry or artistic significance, but this has been lacking due to their location within North African museums. Objects such as the armoured statue of Augustus (Chapter 6) should be held up as examples of the very best Roman sculpture. While not the central argument of this thesis, such a process of widening knowledge of the art and archaeology of North Africa overlooked by scholars in the West is an undeniable advantage of recovering Juba and Selene's own story.

Rather than the tendency amongst historians to focus on Juba and Selene's childhood, about which more is known, by deliberately selecting objects from later in their lives this thesis has focused attention on their reign in Mauretania, rather than Rome. Thus Chapter 8 showed how Juba made a study of his kingdom upon first taking the throne; Chapters 6 and 7 showed the couple grappling with the challenges of client-kingship; Chapters 13 and 14 showed their efforts to establish a new dynasty; Chapter 16 explored Juba's military successes. While this focus was a deliberate decision on my part, it was helped in many ways by the paucity of objects from their childhoods — at odds with the comparative wealth of historical material from this period. As was anticipated in the Introduction, the public nature of the objects associated with Juba and Selene's rule — primarily public portraiture, coinage and other officially sanctioned art — has made it difficult to get at the private, inner lives of the couple, and so much of the biography has of necessity focused on their public image and what that might say about them.

Applying the concept of the object biography — specifically an object's afterlife — to the artefacts in this study enabled the biography of Juba and Selene to be told in a different way. The story told has become not just about them, but about the way their lives have echoed down through the years. Their story intersected with those of myriad other collectors, archaeologists, curators and scholars, and it was gratifying to be able to include these stories in the biography too. While not necessarily the initial intention, parallel narratives emerged in a number of places — between the Roman slaves and the local labourers both working at Boscoreale in Chapter 13; or Juba's scholarship and that of Petrarch in Chapter 8; or the recurring conflict between sedentary and nomadic peoples of the Maghreb that persisted until the twentieth century, in Chapter 16.

Throughout, the object has been kept at the heart of each chapter. Structurally, this meant beginning each chapter with a version of the object biography, as set out in the Introduction. Thematically, it has meant continually referring the narrative back to the object throughout the chapter, so that it is not mentioned once and then forgotten or — as I counsel

against in the Introduction — simply used as a de facto illustration.

There were, however, places where this object-led approach caused conflict — where the established history/chronology was at odds with the object evidence available. One example of this was Juba's Eastern expedition, the putative subject of Chapter 15. This was an important event in Juba's life, which we know about from Pliny and Josephus — and yet there are no objects directly associated with it. This turned out to have a silver lining. Rather than try to force an object to fit the historical narrative, the Inscription of Glaphyra allowed the focus instead to fall on Juba's second marriage, which was a more personal story. Similarly, the selection of Petrarch's copy of the *Natural History* in Chapter 8 — the last object to be chosen — provoked a discussion on the transmission of classical texts.

Another challenge proved to be Cleopatra Selene herself. Although, as with Juba, the story of her childhood was well documented, she recedes from history far more rapidly than her husband. In this she suffers a similar fate to most women from the ancient world, even empresses and queens — after marriage and childbirth, they tend to vanish. Jane Draycott's recent book, *Cleopatra's Daughter* (released while I was in the final stages of writing this thesis) purports to address this issue directly, with a biography solely focused on the Queen. Unfortunately, Draycott falls into the familiar traps that Beard warned about, and is forced to resort to heavy speculation to fill in the gaps. Object-based evidence was of some value to me here; artefacts such as Selene's signet ring (Chapter 10), the bust in Cherchell (Chapter 11) and the statue of Petubastes (Chapter 12) demonstrated her reign and dynastic ambitions, while the golden aureii in Chapter 7 afforded some insight into her marriage and her death. However, objects associated with Selene were in scant supply compared to those relating to Juba II and Ptolemy.

The pressures of time and, in particular, the impact of the pandemic on my ability to visit museums in Algeria, forced me to make some difficult decisions with regard to the selection of objects. Despite my intention as stated in the Introduction to physically handle or examine each of the objects in person, there were a number of occasions where this was not possible. In many cases, especially those objects in European or North American museums, digital photographs were available of sufficient quality that viewing these was almost as good as seeing the object in person. By a stroke of good luck, in the early stages of the pandemic, many of the artefacts in Cherchell Museum were 3d scanned and digitised, which enabled a number of objects therein to be examined remotely, most significantly the Statue of Augustus (from Chapter 6). In several other instances written descriptions and sub-standard photography had to suffice, most notably in the case of the Inscription of Glaphyra in Chapter

15, which was not available to view during my visit to Athens, and the Statue of Petubastes in Chapter 12, which remained inaccessible in Algeria.

Some objects remain unknown to me, for example those in the museums of Cherchell and Algeria that do not appear in available catalogues but which might have shed further light on Juba and Selene. Others were discovered too late (due to COVID lockdown), or had to be left to one side due to deadlines and space. Amongst these were a dozen busts of Juba II, each of which had stories of their own to tell; most notably the bust in the Louvre that depicted him as an old man, which might have revealed something of his later kingship, and another well-worn image of the King that might have spoken to his deification. Also left out was the only surviving bust of his father, Juba I, also in the Louvre. Deliberately discounted were several structures, including the theatre in Cherchell, Temple B in Volubilis and, perhaps most significantly, the Royal Mausoleum of Tipasa. These were omitted as, to my mind, they stretched the definition of an object.

This thesis confirms that there is more work than can be done in the future, to continue to explore the potential impact of applying an object-based approach to the biography of an ancient figure. To this end, I have identified two further avenues in which further research might prove fruitful.

First, I believe applying this approach to an even more prominent figure would be useful in evaluating whether it affords genuinely new stories to be told. Juba II and Cleopatra Selene were both prominent enough for there to be written records, yet obscure enough that no real biography of the pair existed. With a more prominent figure — the emperor Augustus, for example, who has already been the subject of a great number of biographies — I believe there is even more scope for an object-based approach to reveal his character and his life in a new light.

Second, one might take the completely opposite approach, and to try to apply this methodology to an even more obscure character, about whom even less has survived in the written record. For example, a biography of the gemcutter Gnaios, about whom a scattering of written information exists alongside a rich collection of objects. I believe this would test the methodology to its limits. As this thesis has shown, to write a successful object-based biography the author needs a healthy mixture of both object and history. Wordless histories still need *some* words, after all.

Appendix A

Object Biographies

Object #1: Bust of Juba II from Cherchell

This is the sculpted marble head of a young man, 30cm high. The head was found in 1926 during excavations on a private property owned by the Kebilen family, in or near Cherchell, Algeria, although the exact location has since been lost.¹ The long face has smooth cheeks and pronounced lips. The head is noticeably elongated and the hair sculpted in curled locks. The subject wears a royal diadem, simply sculpted as a plain band, making it possible to identify it as Juba II of Mauretania.²

The head is poorly crafted, the skull disproportionate, the ears and the neck deformed on the right side. The diadem is only superficially engraved, ending abruptly on both sides.³ This has been alternately attributed to the clumsiness of the sculptor or the fact that it was a practice piece.⁴ It has also been suggested that the elongated skull, combined with the pronounced lips, represent Juba's 'true' — i.e. African — appearance.⁵ The head has been subsequently damaged, the nose and chin broken off.

The bust is now in Cherchell Museum.

¹ Leveau, 'Les maisons nobles de Caesarea de Maurétanie', p. 109.

² Boucher-Colozier, 'Quelques marbres de Cherchel au Musée du Louvre', p. 26.

³ Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 75.

⁴ Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 216 note 3; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 75.

⁵ Boucher-Colozier, 'Quelques marbres de Cherchel au Musée du Louvre', p. 26.

Object #2: The Head of a North African, British Museum

This is the head from a life-size sculpture of a man found buried beneath the Temple of Cyrene in Libya. It is made from bronze, forged using the indirect lost-wax method from a mould made from a living subject. Its lips were plated with silver and inserted separately, as were teeth made from bone. Originally the eyes would have been made from glass flux, with whites made from magnesium carbonate.⁶ Individual characteristics on the head and face suggest that the bust is a depiction of a specific individual. The face has a furrowed brow, broad cheekbones, an irregular nose and short chin. The hair on the head is a thick fur, separately sculpted as distinct curls.⁷ The moustache, beard shaved into a regular curve under the chin and eyebrows have all been chiselled to indicate soft, thin down.⁸ The facial characteristics suggest that the subject was North African.⁹ The head is the only surviving part of the statue, having been severed at the neck. It remains in good condition, although is now stained green with verdigris. It was found alongside burnt pieces of a broken bronze sculpture of a horse, suggesting it originally depicted the subject as a horseman or charioteer.

The statue was originally displayed in the Temple of Apollo, alongside statues of kings, athletes and other heroic figures. The statue is thought to have been commissioned by Massinissa, King of Numidia, and presented as a gift to his close friend Ptolemaios VIII Physcon¹⁰ during the period when the latter reigned as King of Cyrene.¹¹ Ptolemaios VIII was the great-great-grandfather of Cleopatra Selene. The statue depicts Mastanabal, Massinissa's son, who was renowned as an athlete, having been victorious in the Panathenaic Games — the most prestigious event in Athens — in 158 BC.¹² Mastanabal was father of the famous Numidian general, Jugurtha, and was also Juba II's great-great-grandfather.

There are no other portraits directly comparable to this one.¹³ This is the only known bust of Mastanabal. It is one of only two bronze busts found during the excavation of the temple, the other depicting Arkesilas IV, King of Cyrene during the 5th Century BC. The distinctive style of under-the-chin beard that the statue sports is more closely associated with the Ptolemaic dynasty during this period, appearing on contemporary portraiture especially

⁶ *Bronze Head of a North African*. 300AD. 1861,1127.13, British Museum.

⁷ Hirmer and Lullies, *Greek Sculpture*, p. 90.

⁸ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 144.

⁹ *Bronze Head of a North African*.

¹⁰ His nickname Physcon, literally meant 'potbelly'.

¹¹ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 144.

¹² Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146.

¹³ Hirmer, and Lullies, *Greek Sculpture*, p. 90.

coinage. There is a marble bust in the Louvre in a similar style, down to the same facial hair, dating from the early 1st Century AD; this bust depicts Ptolemy of Mauretania, Juba II's son and heir.

The Temple of Apollo, in which the statue was originally displayed, was long associated with athletic commemoration; it seems reasonable that the athletic son of an allied king and friend would also be commemorated there.¹⁴ Furthermore, Massanissa was the first king to begin the process of hellenising Numidia, and commissioning Greek-style sculpture formed part of this project. To commemorate his son's notable victory in Greece, in Greek fashion at a Greek sanctuary not only underlined this message, but also was a way of seeking legitimacy for his kingdom's place in the wider Greek world.¹⁵

The head is now in the British Museum, where it can be found on display in its own case in The World of Alexander gallery on the ground floor. It was found during excavations at Cyrene in Libya by Sir Robert Murdoch Smith and Cdr Edwin A. Porcher. The former had close ties with the British Museum throughout his career, subsequently advising its director Cecil Harcourt Smith on the feasibility of excavations in Iran, and it was through him that the British Museum acquired the head.

The statue is one of the best known pieces of ancient art. It is displayed within its own perspex display case, affixed to the wall of the gallery, where three sides of it can be viewed up close.

¹⁴ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146.

¹⁵ Roller, 'A Note on the Berber Head in London', p. 146.

Object #3: Julius Caesar ‘Elephant’ Denarius

This is a denarius, the standard Roman coin for nearly six hundred years.¹⁶ It is made from silver. The coin is tarnished and has a small amount of damage around the edge, but is otherwise in good condition. The coin was struck at a military mint of uncertain location, as it would have moved as part of the baggage train of the Roman army.

On one side the coin displays the pontifical emblems, the symbols of Roman high office: the *culullus*,¹⁷ *aspergillum*¹⁸, *axe*¹⁹ and *apex*²⁰, along with a border of dots. On the reverse it displays an elephant²¹ facing right, trampling a serpent facing left.²² Beneath it, in Latin, CAESAR.

The coin was made for Julius Caesar, at some point after he crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC, most likely in 46 BC after his African triumph. It was possibly made from melting down the hoard of treasure seized when Caesar stormed into the Temple of Saturn²³ shortly thereafter.²⁴

The coin was struck to commemorate Caesar’s African Triumph and his defeat of Pompey and Juba I. The snake, a symbol of Africa, represents Juba. The elephant was not only considered by the Romans to be a symbol of strength and honour, but was also highly symbolic to Caesar as his Legio V famously defeated Juba’s elephants in battle at Thapsis in 46 BC, forever gaining the elephant as their symbol.²⁵ It was also of highly symbolic meaning to the Numidians, too, and a common symbol on much of their coinage including that of Juba I himself.

Today, the denarius is held in the coin collection of the British Museum. It is not on display. There is no shortage of these coins — some 22.5 million of them were minted.²⁶ This is the only example in the British Museum, however — others can be found in

¹⁶ *Julius Caesar ‘Elephant’ Silver Denarius*. 49 BC. 1931,0604.1, British Museum.

¹⁷ Horn-shaped drinking vessel holding milk or wine; symbol of the vestal virgins.

¹⁸ Stick affixed at one end with long horse hair, used by Roman priests to sprinkle water over those who assisted with sacrifices, over the altar and the sacrifice.

¹⁹ Symbol of Roman high office, typically carried as bundles called *fascēs* by lictors before consuls.

²⁰ Leather skull-cap worn by Roman priests, with a point of olive wood on its top and wool at its base.

²¹ Frequently represented on Roman coins. Symbol for Africa, eternity, honour.

²² Normally the symbol of Asia, but also of Africa; see Stevenson, Smith, and Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p. 734

²³ An event described in: Plutarch Pompey, 62; Plutarch, Caesar 35.3-4; Appian, Civil War, 2.41; Dio 41.17.2.

²⁴ ‘The Julius Caesar “Elephant” Silver Denarius - Gibraltar Coins & Precious Metals’.

²⁵ Woods, ‘Caesar the Elephant against Juba the Snake’; Dando-Collins. *Legions of Rome*, p. 133.

²⁶ Nousek, ‘Turning Points in Roman History’, p. 293.

the Fitzwilliam Museum, amongst others.²⁷ It is considered valuable to collectors as it can be connected to a specific historical event in the life of Julius Caesar.²⁸

The coin was donated by Dr Laurie Asher Lawrence in 1931, a prolific coin collector and much of his collection was purchased by the British Museum after his death. Lawrence was an American surgeon who lived in Britain for most of his life, founding the British Numismatic Society in 1903 following a dramatic falling out with the long-established Numismatic Society of London.²⁹ In his retirement he volunteered at the British Museum.

²⁷ Gibraltar Coins. 'The Julius Caesar "Elephant" Silver Denarius', 30 September 2016. <https://gibraltarcoins.com/the-julius-caesar-elephant-silver-denarius/>.

²⁸ 'The Julius Caesar "Elephant" Silver Denarius'.

²⁹ Hugh Pagan. 'The British Numismatic Society: A History'. *British Numismatic Journal* 73 (2003), p.1.

Object #4: Statuette of Boy Dressed in Eastern Costume

This bronze statuette is one of a near-identical pair made from the same master model in a sculptor's workshop in Alexandria.³⁰ Both depict the same chubby, elaborately dressed child with long, curly hair, aged no more than four or five years old.³¹ He is balanced on his toes as though about to step forward, but his bulky outfits make the movement awkward.³²

The subject is wearing distinctly exotic dress, which would have been perceived as foreign to both a Greek and Roman audience.³³ He is dressed for a cold climate, wearing trousers and shoes tied with long bows, a long-sleeved shirt with a short-sleeved tunic over the top belted at the waist, and a thick cloak fastened on the right shoulder. Most distinctive, however is his tall, four-sided pyramidal headdress.³⁴ The headdress is decorated with stylised palmettes that would have been inlaid with silver.³⁵ A flap falls down the back of the neck, designed to look like it was made of a softer material than the headdress.³⁶ The headdress resembles the crown worn by the Armenian kings in the first century BC.³⁷

The entire bronze is covered in a patina of alternating red-browns and greens.³⁸ There is scraping damage on the surface caused by mechanical removal of corrosion.³⁹ The pupils of the eyes are pierced and may have been designed to hold glass inlays, now lost.⁴⁰ The top of the object in the right hand has broken away, as is the left end of the sash suspended from the belt. The hat might have had ear flaps that are now missing too.

It was cast in bronze using the indirect lost-wax technique.⁴¹ The statuette was cast in between eight and eleven separate pieces: body, right and possibly also left arm, objects in hands, perhaps hands too, cloaks, probably three flaps on hat. The right leg is solid

³⁰ *Bronze Statuette of a Boy in Eastern Dress*. 49.11.3, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250.

³¹ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, p. 250.

³² Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

³³ Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

³⁴ Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', pp. 135-6; Mertens, 'Greek Bronzes', p. 51; Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 288; Kleiner and Buxton, 'Pledges of Empire', p. 80.

³⁵ Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 288; Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

³⁶ Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 136; Hill, 'Bracatae Nationes', pp. 80-1.

³⁷ Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 136; *PeopleOfAr*. 'What Was the True Shape Of The Ancient Armenian Crown?', 29 May 2015; Anahide Kéfélian. 'Armenia and Armenians in Roman Numismatics', pp. 106-8.

³⁸ Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 293.

³⁹ Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 258.

⁴⁰ Kozloff and Mitten, *The Gods Delight*, p. 293; Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

⁴¹ Ling, *Making Classical Art*, p. 41.

bronze below knee, as are fingers of both hands.⁴²

Given the statue's distinctive dress and the location it was found, it was likely made to be part of — or to commemorate — the Donations of Alexandria in the winter of 34 BC, where the son of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, Alexander Helios, wore the costume of the king of Armenia, although this identification is very much disputed.⁴³

The statue was discovered along with its twin by Egyptian locals in 1912, either in ruins to the east of the Suez Canal, or in Alexandria.⁴⁴ By 1944 it was in the Spanish Art Gallery in London, but in 1949 was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where it now stands in the Greek and Roman Art wing.⁴⁵ Its twin is in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

⁴² Mattusch, *The Fire of Hephaistos*, p. 255.

⁴³ Picón et al., *Art of the Classical World in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, p. 452; for arguments against, see Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 139; Hill, 'Bracatae Nationes', p. 81; Mertens, 'Greek Bronzes', p. 51.

⁴⁴ Smith, 'A Bronze Figure of a Youth in Oriental Costume', p. 135.

⁴⁵ *Bronze Statuette of a Boy in Eastern Dress*.

Object #5: Victory Monument at Actium

This is a section of frieze from the altar of the Victory Monument at Actium, Greece. The monument was erected by Augustus to honour his victory at Actium over the fleet of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. The Victory Monument was sacked at some point in Late Antiquity and the frieze smashed into thousands of pieces, most likely by Christians intent on desecrating a pagan altar.⁴⁶ The site remained abandoned and overgrown until 1995, when an archaeology excavation began to uncover many of the friezes.⁴⁷ The entire frieze has been painstakingly excavated and reassembled by Konstantinos Zachov between 1995-2005. The excavation was completed in 2005, the finds now housed in the Archaeological Museum of Nikopolis.

The monument was a huge, two-terraced structure comprising a podium decorated with the prows of captured ships and surmounted by a U-shaped portico. In front of the portico was a monumental limestone altar, over two metres in height and twenty metres wide. The rear side of the altar — the side facing out of the complex — was decorated with two metre-high friezes that ran the entire width of the altar, and possibly around the sides too. The frieze was positioned on the back wall of the altar, where it would have been visible to all visitors walking up the hill towards the Victory Monument. The monument itself, sited atop a hill overlooking Actium, would have been visible from some distance away, possibly even by ships approaching from the sea.

The frieze is made from Pentelic marble, quarried from Mount Pentelicus, north of Athens. Pentelic marble was white with a slightly golden tinge, and was used for almost all of the major monuments in ancient Athens and from the 2nd Century BC onwards was exported in increasing quantities for use in Rome too.⁴⁸ Like all monuments in Classical Antiquity, the figures on the sculpture would have been painted in bright colours. The frieze was mounted on the rear wall of a limestone altar. The limestone was quarried locally. It was sculpted by local Attic sculptors, familiar with working with Pentelic marble, but under the supervision of planners familiar with the iconography of a Roman triumph, sent from Rome.⁴⁹

The lower of the two friezes showed the spoils of victory: various captured weaponry and standards. The upper frieze is more elaborate, depicting a series of sculpted

⁴⁶ Pollini, *From Republic to Empire*, p. 193.

⁴⁷ Murray, 'Augustus's Victory Monument, 3D Modeling, and New Directions for Warship Research'.

⁴⁸ 'The Art of Making in Antiquity'.

⁴⁹ Pollini, *From Republic to Empire*, p. 196.

figures moving in procession from right to left. This second of three triumphs was held in Rome in 29 BC, to celebrate Augustus' victory in the Civil War. This was the Actian Triumph, celebrating his victory in the Battle of Actium over the fleet of Antony and Cleopatra. The frieze portrays a historic scene in some detail, providing the modern viewer with an insight into one of the first triumphs of the Imperial period.

This particular panel shows Augustus riding in a chariot at the head of the triumph. Although it is missing both the rider's and horse's heads; the rider's head has been found separately, allowing him to be identified as Augustus. While there are many triumphal friezes from later in the Roman Empire, this is the only one to depict Augustus in the role of *triumphator*.

This is not the most unusual aspect of the frieze, however. Also shown riding in the chariot with Augustus are two young children, a boy and a girl, their heads just visible poking over the rim. The girl sports a distinctive 'melon-style' hair-do, an exotic style that Cleopatra was often shown as wearing in portraiture. It is this, coupled with the other children in Augustus' household being too old or too young, that helps us identify them as Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, the twin children of Cleopatra and Mark Antony.

The frieze formed a potent piece of propaganda, celebrating the peace Augustus had brought to the empire. It was certainly intended for fellow Romans, rather than Greek locals — but perhaps especially those who once supported Antony, rather than Augustus. This panel in particular reinforced this message: look how merciful Augustus is. By showing clemency to the children of his bitterest enemy, this mercy is in turn extended to all of Antony's supporters. This was on message for the new regime, the first task of which was to unite the factions in what had been an acrimonious civil war. Compare this with the iconography of Augustus' other great monument, the Ara Pacis in Rome, which rather than dwell on the past attempts to model what the future of the Roman state might look like.

Object #6: Cuirassed statue of Augustus from Cherchell

This is a larger than life statue of a man wearing an elaborately decorated armoured breastplate, or cuirass, measuring just over two metres in height without the plinth.⁵⁰ This statue belongs to a category of statues known as ‘cuirass statues’ due to the decorated breastplates they wear. It is one of the best examples of this style of statue, second only to the statue of Augustus of Prima Porta, in the Vatican Museum.⁵¹ The right arm would have been raised in a gesture of address, the left, wrapped in a general’s cloak, would have held a sceptre or sword.⁵² The statue wears intricately detailed fur-laced boots, featuring embroidered hems, lotus palms and a network of acanthus leaves.⁵³ The statue is supported by a tree trunk and a palm tree adjoining the right leg.⁵⁴ The epaulettes of the breastplate are decorated with bundles of lightning bolts, and the armoured flaps around its base feature stylised faces sporting elaborate moustaches and bushy beards, representing Parthians, the Rome’s great rival in the east.⁵⁵

The cuirass depicts a number of mythological characters arranged in three horizontal bands. At the top is a bust of an armoured, helmeted god with dolphins adorning his epaulettes. He gazes upwards, his cloak fluttering around him to represent his divine aura. This is Mars Ultor, the Roman god of war in his guise as avenger. Below him is a scene in which Winged Victory crowns a naked man with a wreath of oak leaves, who in turn presents a trophy to the goddess Venus. Venus is dressed in a transparent tunic with a cloak wrapped around her waist. She is holding a sword in the crook of her arm, her hand resting on a shield depicting the bearded head of Oceanus. Beside her is a winged youth holding a bow, Eros. Below this scene is a Triton, a merman, holding the prow of a ship, facing a centaur, whose lower half descends into a tangle of vines, holding a cornucopia.⁵⁶

The statue is made from Carrara marble, known in antiquity as Luna marble. Luna marble was quarried in north-western Tuscany and used for many of the famous

⁵⁰ *Cuirassed Statue of Augustus from Cherchel*. Cherchel S72 177, Musée National de Cherchell.

⁵¹ Fittschen, ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’, p. 175.

⁵² Fittschen, ‘Bildnisse numidischer Könige’, p. 232; Horn and Rieger, *Die Numider*, p. 530.

⁵³ Fittschen, ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’, p. 200.

⁵⁴ Fittschen, ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’, p. 199.

⁵⁵ Fittschen, ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’, p. 195.

⁵⁶ Fittschen, ‘Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel’, p. 177, 181; Horn and Rieger, p. 530; Simon, *Augustus*, p. 223; Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, p. 223; Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus*, pp. 29-30.

monuments of Rome, as well as exported in huge quantities until the second century AD.⁵⁷ The highest-quality of Luna marble was reserved for making statues, hence its name *statuario*, which was known for its distinctive ivory colour and ability to .⁵⁸ The statue would have followed the example of the Augustus of Prima Porta and been painted.⁵⁹ The marble is patinated yellow. The head and arms, both worked separately, are missing, as are individually worked buttons from the boots. There are numerous scratches and chips, particularly on the bust of Mars on the breastplate, but otherwise it is well preserved.⁶⁰

The statue was likely made by a first-rate copyist working in a specialist workshop in Rome, copying an original bronze model.⁶¹ The statue was probably made for King Juba II of Mauretania, who might have even designed it himself based on his knowledge of Roman sculpture.⁶² Given the context in which it was found, and the subject matter on the cuirass, the statue can only have depicted the emperor Augustus, the central figure on the cuirass his uncle and adoptive father, Julius Caesar.⁶³ The decoration on the breastplate is a celebration of Augustus' rise to power. The trinity of divine figures — Venus the mother of Aeneas, Mars the father of Romulus, and Divus Julius his own adoptive father — represent Augustus' divine ancestry. They were also the three gods to whom Augustus dedicated the Temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum in 2 BC, which he first commissioned to celebrate the vengeance he won for Caesar at Philippi.⁶⁴ The centaurs represent the peace Augustus won through war, specifically his most famous victory at Actium.⁶⁵ While the gods above point to the divine origins of his rule, the creatures below represent the actual foundation of the empire — war.⁶⁶

By erecting this statue in the centre of his capital, Juba acknowledged that Mauretania owed its prosperity to Augustus and his divine family — of which, via his and Selene's formal adoption into the Julian house, he was a part.⁶⁷ The statue originally stood in a sanctuary or shrine that formed part of the theatre in Caesarea. Other statues found nearby of

⁵⁷ The Art of Making in Antiquity: Stoneworking in the Roman World. 'Place: Carrara'.

⁵⁸ The Art of Making in Antiquity: Stoneworking in the Roman World. 'Material: Luna Marble'.

⁵⁹ Bradley, 'The Importance of Colour on Ancient Marble Sculpture'.

⁶⁰ Horn and Rüger, *Die Numider*, p. 530.

⁶¹ Boucher-Colozier, 'Recherches sur la statuaire de Cherchel', p. 127; Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 234

⁶² Simon, *Augustus*, p. 223.

⁶³ Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p.232.

⁶⁴ Fittschen, 'Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel', p. 194.

⁶⁵ Fittschen, 'Zur Panzerstatue in Cherchel', p. 194.

⁶⁶ Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 232.

⁶⁷ Simon, *Augustus*, p. 223; Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 234.

Augustus' heir Marcellus and niece Antonia suggest that the shrine honoured the imperial household or was dedicated to the worship of the imperial cult.

It is currently displayed in the East Gallery of the National Public Museum of Cherchell, Algeria, where it has been since it was discovered in 1916 during the construction of a sewer nearby.

Object #7: Gold Aureus from Cherchell

This is a gold aureus, the largest Roman coin, equivalent to 25 silver denarii. The gold remains in near-perfect condition, still shiny, the design still crisp after two-thousand years. Only in a few places is it scratched or scuffed.

On the obverse is a portrait of Juba II, facing right, with the legend REX IVBA (King Juba). On the reverse is a simplified version of the symbol of Isis: a pair of cow's horns framing a sun surmounted by sheafs of wheat. Isis was the Egyptian goddess closely associated with the Ptolemies, especially Cleopatra herself who served as her high-priest, a role handed down to her daughter. The symbol is accompanied words KLEOIIATRA BA[SILISSA] in Greek (Queen Cleopatra).⁶⁸ The coin was probably struck in the royal mint in Iol Caesarea, modern-day Cherchell in Algeria.

This coin is unique in design, and one of only two surviving gold aureii minted in Mauretania during the reign of Juba and Selene. Aureii were rare coins even in Rome, as gold was associated with decadent luxury. They were rarer still amongst the client-kingsdoms, as Augustus had forbidden kings from minting gold coins, reserving the right for himself alone.⁶⁹ Augustus must have granted Juba special permission to mint these coins, an honour he used sparingly. They were issued to commemorate significant events in the lives of the royal couple: this coin coincides with Juba and Selene's wedding in c. 20 BC; it's sister Selene's death in c. AD 5.⁷⁰

Today, the aureus is displayed at the Museum of the Bank of the Maghrib in Rabat, where it is mounted on a display alongside dozens of other coins from the Kingdom of Mauretania. It was originally found during excavations at Cherchell in Algeria in 1930. When or how it came to Morocco is unclear.

⁶⁸ Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le royaume de Maurétanie*, p. 44 note 59.

⁶⁹ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 260-1.

⁷⁰ Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie', p. 260-1.

Object #8: Petrarch's copy of the *Natural History*

This is a manuscript copy of Pliny the Elder's encyclopaedia, the *Natural History*, first published in the first century AD and, according to a note on the frontis, purchased by the humanist Petrarch on 6th July 1350 in Mantua, northern Italy.⁷¹ It comprises 227 parchment folios, each measuring 328 x 225mm, bound later in leather. It contains two columns of handwritten text written in Latin using a mixture of black, red and blue ink, along with illuminated letters.⁷² The style of the scribal handwriting suggests that this copy of the manuscript was originally made in the late thirteenth century.⁷³ The manuscript is not a complete copy but an abridgement; while all thirty-seven books are represented, some are just a paragraph long. Petrarch probably didn't realise the extent of the omissions.⁷⁴ The manuscript itself belongs to a group of manuscripts of the *Natural History* descended from a common hyparchetype, manuscript 'E', originally copied in France in the ninth or tenth centuries.⁷⁵

The margins of the manuscript contain annotations in two hands along with three sketches.⁷⁶ Most of these annotations have been attributed to Petrarch. At some point the vertical edges of the pages have been trimmed, truncating some of the marginal comments.⁷⁷ Most of Petrarch's notes were written to make the text more navigable in lieu of an index. To aid this he employed different symbols in the margins: underlining the name of a river, drawing a line over the name of a city, marking a region with a little line to the left and a peaked box surrounding the name of a mountain.⁷⁸ Other notes comment on the text, or add personal anecdotes of his own, such as reports of storms or an earthquake he has himself experienced, or the bad smells pervading Avignon.⁷⁹ In many places Petrarch attempted to correct errors in the text — in a letter he expressed his dismay at the quality of the text in his

⁷¹ Pliny the Elder. 'Caii Plinii Secundi Historiae Naturalis Libri Triginta Septem : Praemittitur Plinii Vita è Tranquilli Catalogo Virorum Illustrium Descripta.' Manuscript, 1400 1301. Latin 6802. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits.

⁷² Chibnall, 'Pliny's Natural History and the Middle Ages', p. 75.

⁷³ Nolz, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 270; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 63.

⁷⁴ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 63.

⁷⁵ Nolz, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 270 note 2; Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, p. 312-3.

⁷⁶ Chibnall, 'Pliny's Natural History and the Middle Ages', p. 75.

⁷⁷ Nolz, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 270 note 3; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Nolz, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 275; Lester, 'Armchair Travelers'.

⁷⁹ Nolz, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, p. 279-80.

copy of the *Natural History*.⁸⁰ Paleographical analysis shows that Petrarch glossed the text on two separate occasions: in 1350, shortly after its purchase, and again in 1356.⁸¹ A second hand in the marginalia has been attributed to Boccaccio, Petrarch's close friend and contemporary, showing that he circulated his copy amongst his friends.⁸² The location and concentration of the annotations — not consistently spread throughout — give us an insight into Petrarch's interests within the *Natural History*: geography and the culture of the ancient world, as well as Pliny's digressions about ancient art.⁸³

After his death it entered the collection of Tomasso di Campo Fregoso, the Doge of Genoa, before passing to the bibliophile King Alfonso V of Aragon. By 1481 it was recorded as being owned by his son, the King of Naples, Ferdinando I. After the French conquest of Naples in 1495, the Aragonese library was brought back to Tours, whence it eventually entered the royal library and subsequently the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where it still resides.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Healy, 'Introduction', xxxvii.

⁸¹ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 64.

⁸² McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 64.

⁸³ McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 64.

⁸⁴ Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, pp. 89-90; McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 63 note 23.

Object #9: Bronze Portrait Bust of Juba II

This is a slightly larger than life-size bust of young man wearing a diadem and a disdainful expression.⁸⁵ It is made from bronze, hollow cast using the lost-wax method. The bronze has gained a dark green patina over the millennia, spotted with countless, barely noticeable red dots of copper protoxide.⁸⁶ It is in an excellent state of conservation — only the bronze eyelashes (the sockets for which can still be seen), glass inset for the eyes (which would have been inserted before the top of the head was affixed — the diadem concealed the join)⁸⁷ and a small section of the diadem are missing. The features of the subject are superficially handsome but the artist has captured a look of arrogance and self-indulgence.⁸⁸ The hair on the head is thick, separately sculpted as distinct curly locks. The facial characteristics — especially the lips, cheeks and brow — suggest that the subject was North African. The bust was found buried in 1946 beneath a shallow layer of soil in a bakery adjoining the House of Venus in Volubilis, Morocco; just one of three extraordinary bronzes discovered in close proximity to one another during Raymond Thouvenot's excavations.⁸⁹

The bust is in the Hellenistic style, similar in pose and expression to many portrait busts of the emperor Augustus. Through comparison with other portraits in sculpture and coin, the bust has been identified as being that of Juba II. The youthfulness on display suggests it was an official portrait made early in his reign, somewhere around 25 BC when Juba would have been in his early twenties. While once thought to be an original portrait, scientific analysis of its hollow interior suggest that it is a reproduction, one of many replicas distributed to the cities of Mauretania.⁹⁰ The alloy has the same percentage of tin as that of the bust of Cato, so reasonable to suppose they are of the same date — cast in pieces for ease of transport, then assembled on the spot.⁹¹ It is not known for sure where the bust was made; in his excavation report Thouvenot believed it to have been made in Alexandria, but this has been subsequently disputed.⁹² While no evidence has been found at Volubilis for metal workshops (traces of metal-working workshops are hard to find as they were often temporary,

⁸⁵ *Bronze Portrait Bust of Juba II*. 99.1.2.1340, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat.

⁸⁶ Boube-Piccot, 'Techniques de Fabrication Des Bustes de Bronze de Juba II et de Caton d'Utique Decovers a Volubilis', p. 455.

⁸⁷ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 310.

⁸⁸ Warmington, 'Review of Raymond Thouvenot: Maisons de Volubilis', p. 303.

⁸⁹ Walker, 'La Maison de Vénus', p. 38.

⁹⁰ Boube-Piccot, 'Techniques de Fabrication des Bustes de Bronze de Juba II', p. 468.

⁹¹ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 311.

⁹² Warmington, 'Review of Raymond Thouvenot: Maisons de Volubilis', p. 303.

metal-workers typically itinerant)⁹³ — Volubilis was certainly the centre or market for bronze work, as a fragment of a red copper trophy found in the excavation's storeroom underlines.⁹⁴

The bust was found in an outbuilding adjacent to the House of Venus, in which a bust of the Roman senator Cato the Younger — close friend and ally of Juba's father — was found still standing atop a brick pedestal. The pedestal was placed so that the bust of Cato looked down upon a mosaic of the abduction of Hylas. An empty pedestal found in an adjoining room held the bust of Juba II, albeit deliberately angled so that it seemingly ogled a mosaic of Diane and nymphs bathing. While it has long been accepted that this house was not the original site for the bronzes it has recently been suggested that they were placed here after the formal end of the Roman administration in AD 285, perhaps by a collector with an appreciation for Roman artworks, possibly as late as the 4th Century.⁹⁵ It is likely that the bronzes were originally brought to Volubilis by or at the behest of Juba, along with countless other extraordinary artworks also found in the city dating from his reign.

⁹³ Morel-Deledalle and Fiszer, 'The Splendours of Volubilis'.

⁹⁴ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 311.

⁹⁵ MacKendrick, *The North African Stones Speak*, p. 305; Walker, 'La Maison de Vénus', p. 39.

#Object 10 — carnelian oval set in a 17th-18th century gold ring

This is a carnelian gemstone mounted in a solid gold ring.⁹⁶ In normal lighting conditions the gem is a rich, almost-scarlet red; when lit from behind the gem is luminescent, much closer to orange. A piece of the gemstone is missing in the lower right-hand corner, where it has been repaired in gold.⁹⁷ The gem is engraved with a portrait of a woman in profile facing left, in intaglio. The woman's long hair is tied with a fillet — a narrow strip of cloth — wound three times round her head, done up in a chignon — a knot — at the nape of her neck, a hairstyle recognisable from Greek sculpture. A sceptre is displayed in the field behind her, a symbol often associated with rulership in Roman coinage.⁹⁸

A signature below the portrait names the artist as Gnaios, who was a distinguished gem-cutter at both the courts of Mark Antony, Augustus and, as part of Cleopatra Selene's entourage, at the Mauretanian royal court.⁹⁹ This gem is one of only six attributed to Gnaios, and the only one bearing this design. A very similar but unattributed gem depicting a Hellenistic prince or king — probably Juba II, given its resemblance to his coin portraiture — is in the British Museum.¹⁰⁰ Because the artist can be identified, and the 'cold elegance' of the head is in line with Augustan-era portraiture, the gem can be dated to the end of the first century BC/start of the first century AD.¹⁰¹ The only prominent female ruler of this age was Cleopatra Selene, in whose entourage Gnaios was a part of. Therefore it is probable that this is a portrait of Selene herself.¹⁰²

The recessed nature of the engraving suggests it was intended to be pressed into wax to form a seal. The gem might have been made as the personal seal of Cleopatra Selene, or possibly her official seal of state; Augustus had previously set the precedent of using his portrait for both his official seal and personal seal.¹⁰³

The object is on display in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. It was acquired in 1910 from the collection of Marchese Alessandro Gregorio Capponi, one of the first objects purchased through the Jacob S. Rogers Fund. It was previously owned by the

⁹⁶ Signed by Gnaios. *Carnelian Oval Set in a 17th–18th Century Gold Ring*. AD 27. 10.110.1, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁹⁷ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, pp. 101-2.

⁹⁸ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, p. 101.

⁹⁹ Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben*, p. 66; Roller 2004, pp. 150-1.

¹⁰⁰ *Sard Gem Engraved with an Unknown Male Portrait-Head in Profile, Thought to Be Juba II of Mauretania*. 1867,0507.542, British Museum.

¹⁰¹ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, pp. 101-2.

¹⁰² Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben*, pp. 416-7, no. 478.

¹⁰³ Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben*, xxi.

seventeenth century polymath Athanasius Kircher, who kept it in his wunderkammer. In the Renaissance, gems signed by the artist were highly prized, and copies of this gem were circulated in the form of gypsum impressions.¹⁰⁴ However, the popularity of antique engravings meant that they were often forged; analysis of Gnaios' signature and the style of the engraving have verified this gem's authenticity, however.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Draper, 'Cameo Appearances', p. 7 fig. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Richter, *Catalogue of Engraved Gems*, p. 101.

Object #11 — Marble Bust, possibly of Cleopatra Selene

This is a slightly larger than life-sized bust of a mature woman carved from marble.¹⁰⁶ Her head is leaning to the left and slightly upturned, probably indicating that the finished sculpture was shown moving.¹⁰⁷ The artist has rendered the details with precision and care: the wrinkled brow, large staring eyes, the straight and delicate nose. All combine to create a remarkable portrait with a strong sense of authority.¹⁰⁸ The subject wears her hair in a refined melon coiffure, similar to that adopted by early Ptolemaic queens and subsequently revived by Cleopatra. The hair is held in place by a large, thick diadem, sculpted to look like metal, indicating the subject is a queen.¹⁰⁹ In front of the diadem the hair is elaborately arranged in a series of waves of locks, pulled back from the central parting to cover the upper brow.¹¹⁰ Below them, across the forehead, is a row of carefully arranged tight ‘snail-shell’ curls.¹¹¹ The bust is generally well preserved, except for chips missing from the chin, tip of the nose and lobes of the ears. Some of the hair has been lost too, including a central tuft above the brow.¹¹² The missing piece from the forehead could have been a tuft of hair in a style known as a nodus, or else it might have served as a mount for an Egyptian symbol such as the uraeus or lotus crown.¹¹³

The bust was made during the reign of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, most likely in the last decade of the first century BC. This is perhaps the only portrait bust of Cleopatra Selene, or one of only three portrait busts of her mother. The bust was likely displayed as part of the Mauretanian royal family’s family gallery, alongside portraits of Juba and Ptolemy, as well as their ancestors. In this context, neither a portrait of the queen or her mother would be out of place.

The hairstyle is the key to identifying the portrait, as it is closely associated with Cleopatra. Selene wears her hair in a different style on her coin portraits, but this could simply mean that her different portraits had different intended audiences. If the portrait is Cleopatra, that suggests that Selene had attempted to rehabilitate her image by erecting her

¹⁰⁶ Cherchell Archaeological Museum S66 (31).

¹⁰⁷ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, Cat. No. 197.

¹⁰⁸ Higgs, ‘Searching for Cleopatra’s Image’, pp. 207-8.

¹⁰⁹ Ferroukhi, ‘Les Deux Portraits de Cherchell Presumes de Cleopatra VII’, p. 103.

¹¹⁰ Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, Cat. No. 197.

¹¹¹ Walker and Higgs, ‘Cleopatra VII at the Louvre’, p. 71.

¹¹² Walker and Higgs, ‘Cleopatra VII at the Louvre’, p. 71

¹¹³ Ferroukhi, ‘Les Deux Portraits de Cherchell Presumes de Cleopatra VII’, p. 103; Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, Cat. No. 197.

portrait in her capital. If the portrait is of her daughter, that suggests that Selene was attempting to emulate her mother's image, perhaps drawing comparisons.

The bust was found close to the site of Juba's palace in Cherchell in 1856.¹¹⁴ It is presented alongside busts of Juba II and Ptolemy in a long gallery in Cherchell museum, labelled definitively as Cleopatra Selene. Fewer and fewer visitors are able to view the bust, as it is increasingly inaccessible.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Walker and Higgs, 'Cleopatra VII at the Louvre', p. 71.

¹¹⁵ Higgs, 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image', p. 207.

Object #12: Basalt Statuette of an Egyptian High Priest

This is a basalt statuette 0.45m high, dressed in a long, plain robe with a stylised leopard's skin wrapped around the shoulders, the insignia of a priest.¹¹⁶ The subject is portrayed in the traditional Egyptian way: he stands upright, with his arms flattened to his side, one leg slightly in front of the other. The head and the right shoulder of the statue are missing.¹¹⁷

A hieroglyphic inscription on the back of the statue tells us that it was made to honour the high priest of Ptah, Petubastes IV.¹¹⁸ The statue was likely erected in Petubastes' life time, the inscription added sometime after his death on 31st July AD 31, aged 16, during the sacking of Alexandria by Augustus.¹¹⁹ This statuette — and its accompanying inscription — forms part of a long, mostly complete series of inscriptions that provides us with a family tree for the high priests of Memphis — a hereditary position — going back three centuries.¹²⁰

Originally carved and erected in Memphis, the statuette was brought to Caesarea from Memphis during the reign of Cleopatra Selene, presumably at the queen's request.¹²¹ Petubastes was a cousin of Selene's, and the two would likely have known one another.¹²² This statuette is one of several pieces of Egyptian art imported from Alexandria to Mauretania, including a colossal head of the god Ammon and a statue of the pharaoh Tuthmosis I, the oldest antique at the court.¹²³

The statue is now in the Museum of Cherchell in Algeria. It was found in 1908 in the south-west of the town while digging foundations for the carpet/rug factory owned by the English Protestant Mission.

¹¹⁶ Cherchell Archaeological Museum S75 (94).

¹¹⁷ Gauckler and Durry, *Musée de Cherchel*, p. 56; Gsell, *Cherchel: Antique Iol-Caesarea*, p. 66; Horn and Rüger, *Die Numider*, p. 520.

¹¹⁸ Gauckler and Durry, *Musée de Cherchel*, p. 56.

¹¹⁹ Horn and Rüger, *Die Numider*, p. 520.

¹²⁰ Fittschen, 'Juba II und seine Residenz', p. 238.

¹²¹ Gauckler and Durry, *Musée de Cherchel*, p. 57.

¹²² Roller 2004, p. 142; Ashton, *Cleopatra and Egypt*, p. 196; Roller, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, p. 40.

¹²³ Roller 2004, p. 144.

Object #13: The ‘Africa’ Dish, part of the Boscoreale Treasure

This is a large, highly decorated serving dish.¹²⁴ It was made by a master silversmith, possibly in Alexandria or Campania, during a period when Roman metalwork flourished.¹²⁵ The dish is made from silver, the decoration gilded in places. The weight of the object — 927g — is inscribed in Latin on its base, likely at the time of manufacture. It weighs 7g more now than it did when made.¹²⁶

The decoration comprises a highly complex set of allegorical symbols and characters, surrounding a portrait of a middle-aged woman in high relief, depicted wearing the scalp of an elephant as a headdress. The central figure was intended to be recognisable, the careful rendering of her features suggests a portrait rather than an idealised personification.¹²⁷ The decoration formed something of a puzzle for viewers to solve — likely over dinner, where it would have been displayed at one end of the table — forcing them to first identify the symbols and subjects, and then prompting them to come to their own conclusions about meaning.¹²⁸ It might tell a moral story surrounding Antony and Cleopatra — to whom many of the symbols allude — and their children, in particular Cleopatra Selene, who is almost certainly the central figure depicted.¹²⁹

The dish was owned by the family of the banker Lucius Caecilius Iucunda; his daughter Maxima its last owner.¹³⁰ The villa and its occupants was buried during the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. The dish is one of a kind, specially commissioned, designed and crafted at some point in the late first century BC, or early in the first century AD.¹³¹ It forms part of the Boscoreale Treasure — a hoard of 109 silver vessels found at Boscoreale, Pompeii. This is not the only example of such a ‘show-plate’ — the fashion for them began in the third century BC, and they were enthusiastically collected during the late Republic.¹³² The dish is in an astonishing state of conservation, the gilding worn in a few places.¹³³

¹²⁴ Astier, *Boscoreale Treasure - The ‘Africa’ Dish*.

¹²⁵ Astier, *Boscoreale Treasure - The ‘Africa’ Dish*.; Rostovzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, p. 277.

¹²⁶ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 43.

¹²⁷ Draycott, ‘Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining’, p. 48; Astier, *Boscoreale Treasure - The ‘Africa’ Dish*.

¹²⁸ Draycott, ‘Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining’, p. 62.

¹²⁹ Draycott, ‘Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining’, p. 47.

¹³⁰ ‘Exhibition “Silver from the Louvre. Boscoreale Treasure”’.

¹³¹ Draycott, ‘Dynastic Politics, Defeat, Decadence and Dining’, p. 61.

¹³² Strong, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate*, p. 151.

¹³³ Héron de Villefosse, ‘Le Trésor de Boscoreale’, p. 31.

The dish was discovered in 1895, during the final few days of the excavation of the Villa della Pisanella at Boscoreale, Italy. The silverware was protected from harm because it had been placed in the cistern beneath the wine cellar for safekeeping. The Boscoreale Treasure was smuggled out of Italy in the spring of 1895 and brought to Paris, where it was offered for sale to the Louvre Museum for 500,000 francs. The Louvre could not afford to purchase it for that price, so thought the treasure lost. However, three weeks later Baron Edmond de Rothschild purchased the treasure in June 1895, and immediately gifted to the museum.¹³⁴ Today the object is displayed alongside dozens of other silverware from Boscoreale in the Salle Henri II hall at the Louvre.

¹³⁴ Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', p. 45.

Object #14: Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy from Uppsala, Sweden

This is the head of a high-quality, life-size sculpture of a boy, found in Uppsala, Sweden in the mid-nineteenth century. It is made from bronze using the lost-wax method. A hole in the chest suggests it was designed to be attached to a separate torso or statue. Despite its age, the bronze retains its original colour and, apart from several cracks in the bust and a little corrosion on the right side of the neck, remains in good condition. The boy once wore a diadem, fashioned as a separate piece, probably made from a more precious material such as gold or silver, but this has long been lost.¹³⁵

Through comparison with three near-identical marble busts found in Cherchell, as well as with similar images that start appearing on coins issued in Mauretania in AD 5, the bust has been identified as the son of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene: Prince Ptolemy, aged about 10 or 12, on the occasion of his declaration as heir to the throne of Mauretania.¹³⁶ This bust was the first official portrait of Ptolemy, intended to formally introduce the crown prince to his future subjects by display throughout the kingdom. This is Ptolemy's only known bronze portrait — while three other portraits of Ptolemy as a boy exist, all are in marble. The similarities suggest they are all copies made from the same original portrait.¹³⁷

In this portrait, Ptolemy's maternal, Greco-Roman heritage is emphasised, not his Numidian. The boy does not look at all like his father: the face is rounder, the brows curved, the mouth small and slightly open, as though about to speak. The most notable difference is his hairstyle, flat and straight, a fringe combed forward over his forehead — certainly not tightly curled like that of Juba II. Only in the small and delicate nose can a likeness to his father be seen.¹³⁸ Certain characteristics of the portrait — most notably the hairstyle — are drawn instead from contemporary portraits of Augustus' grandson Gaius Caesar and his stepson Tiberius. This suggests a deliberate comparison is intended to be drawn between the two, thereby aligning the heir to the Mauretanian throne with the heir to the Roman empire.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Horn and Rürger, *Die Numider*, p. 502.

¹³⁶ Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 217; difficulties arise when attempting to pin an age on subject of the portrait, as the exact date of birth for Ptolemy is unknown — see Landwehr (2007), p. 82 for a more involved discussion surrounding the difficulties with this.

¹³⁷ Sotheby's, 'A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania', 2004.

<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2004/egyptian-classical-and-western-asiatic-antiquities-n08035/lot.284.html>.

¹³⁸ Fittschen, 'Bildnisse numidischer Könige', p. 217.

¹³⁹ Horn and Rürger, *Die Numider*, p. 502.

The bust was originally unearthed in the middle of the nineteenth century in the central square in Uppsala, and found its way to a blacksmith who also sold scrap metal and old tools. It was bought by Count Gustav Hamilton (1826-1914) in the 1860s.¹⁴⁰ Hamilton had a private collection of artefacts — primarily Nordic Neolithic stone axe-heads and various Bronze Age metal items found locally — housed at his castle in Hedensberg.¹⁴¹ A photograph of the count, taken in 1911 but now lost, purportedly showed him lying in bed cradling the bronze bust, suggesting it was a particular favourite. The bust remained in the family until 2004 when it was sold at auction at Sotheby's, New York. It sold for \$960,000 to a private collector. It has not been seen or heard of since. How the bust came to Sweden remains a mystery. It could have formed early Viking loot from Gaul or Britain, as the bust's diadem was likely made from gold or silver.¹⁴² It was more likely brought back by a Swedish traveller to Italy, either during the seventeenth century emulating Queen Christina, who moved to Rome following her abdication where she started amassing a collection of marbles on a grand scale;¹⁴³ or during the eighteenth century, in the wake of King Gustav III's (1746-92) Italian grand tour, during which he gathered an extensive collection of Roman sculpture.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Sotheby's. 'A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania'.

¹⁴¹ Sotheby's. 'A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania'; the collection is mentioned in *Nordisk Familjebok Uggleupplagan*, Vol. 11, 1909.

¹⁴² Sotheby's. 'A Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania'.

¹⁴³ Buckley, *Christina, Queen of Sweden*; most of Queen Christina's antiquities are now in the Prado Museum in Madrid, amongst them a bust of Juba II.

¹⁴⁴ Leander Touati, *Ancient Sculptures in the Royal Museum*; King Gustav III's collection formed part of the founding collection of the Gustavus III Antiquities Museum in Stockholm.

Object #15 — The Inscription of Glaphyra

This is a Greek inscription on a statue base.¹⁴⁵ The statue base is made from a block of Eleusinian marble, a fine-grain, blue-black marble often used in friezes. This block of marble once belonged to the architrave on the south side of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis, before being reused for the statue base.¹⁴⁶ The inscription has been broken into four pieces. The statue is missing.¹⁴⁷

The Greek inscription reads:

ἡ βουλὴ καὶ [ὁ δ]ῆμος
[β]ασίλισσαν Γλαφύραν βασιλέω[ς]
Ἀρχελάου θυγατέρα βασιλέως Ἰόβ[α]
γυναῖκ[α ἀρε]τῆς ἔνε[κ]α.

Which can be roughly translated as:

the parliament and [the] state [...] [honour]
Queen Glaphyra, daughter of king
Archelaus, wife of King Juba.¹⁴⁸

Prior to the discovery of this inscription, the Jewish historian Josephus was the only literary source to mention Juba II's marriage to the Cappadocian princess Glaphyra; this inscription confirms his account as true.¹⁴⁹

The statue was erected by the parliament of ancient Athens, the Boule, to honour Glaphyra of Cappadocia, the second wife of King Juba II, likely to recognise a donation by her of a sum of money or her contribution to the construction of a building or monument.¹⁵⁰ It likely coincided with a visit by Glaphyra to Athens, no later than AD 4 but more likely in AD 1.¹⁵¹ The inscription was one of many erected atop the Acropolis, the focal

¹⁴⁵ OGIS 363.

¹⁴⁶ Kokkinos, 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens', p. 288 note 4.

¹⁴⁷ Kokkinos, 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens', p. 289.

¹⁴⁸ IG II² 3437/8.

¹⁴⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.349-50; BNJ 275 T 7.

¹⁵⁰ Kokkinos, 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens', p. 289.

¹⁵¹ Kokkinos, 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens', p. 290.

point for worship in ancient Athens. It would have been seen by countless visitors to the various temples there.

Three out of the four pieces of the inscription are in the Epigraphical Museum in Athens, not on display to the public, where they have been stored since 1886. The fourth piece was left behind and as recently as 1985 could be seen atop a plinth on the Acropolis, on or near the spot where it was originally found, although a recent visit by the author failed to locate it. The inscription was first published in 1872 by the German classical scholar Theodor Mommsen.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Kokkinos, 'Re-Assembling the Inscription of Glaphyra from Athens', p. 288.

Object #16: Winged Victory Coin from Banasa

This is a denarius, the standard Roman coin for nearly six hundred years.¹⁵³ It is made from silver. It was likely struck at a royal mint in the Mauretanian capital, Iol Caesarea.

On one side the coin displays the head of a young-looking Juba II wearing a diadem. Around the edge, the phrase, in Latin, REX IUBA (King Juba). On the reverse it displays an image of the winged goddess Victory holding a palm leaf and coronet, standing on an elephant's head. Around the edge is written RXXXII, meaning the thirty-second year of Juba's reign.

The symbols — the goddess Victory, the palm leaf, the laurel crown — all symbolise martial triumph, often appearing on coins struck to commemorate victories on the battlefield.¹⁵⁴ Given the date of the coin, this coin was likely struck to commemorate Juba II's victory in the Gaetulian War.¹⁵⁵ Whereas images of winged Victory are exceptionally commonplace on coins throughout the empire, this is the only such coin to depict Victory standing atop an elephant.¹⁵⁶ The elephant had a variety of meanings on coinage, including Africa, Julius Caesar and various honourable virtues.¹⁵⁷ Here it is likely that the elephant, in the guise of Africa vanquished by Victory, symbolises (a supposedly final) victory of Mauretania over Africa, specifically to commemorate the defeat of native Gaetuli tribesmen.

This is one of a series of coins from Juba II's reign that bear a winged Victory — there are two other silver coins and four bronze coins within the British Museum's collection; many more have been found elsewhere. This variation, depicting Victory atop an elephant's head, is considered extremely rare, however.¹⁵⁸

The coin is on display in the Money Gallery in the British Museum. It was purchased along with eighty other coins in 1908, from M. Dorez Freres, a jeweller based in Algiers. The coin was discovered as part of the Alkazar Hoard, a hoard of 4000 coins dating to the reign of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, buried in three large jars in AD 17/18 at the former Roman colony of Banasa, discovered by chance in 1907.

¹⁵³ *Juba II Winged Victory Coin*. AD 7. Coin. 1908,0404.38, British Museum.

¹⁵⁴ Stevenson, Smith, and Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p. 596.

¹⁵⁵ Dio 55.28.3; Velleius Paterculus 2.116.2; Fishwick and Shaw, p. 492.

¹⁵⁶ Stevenson, Smith, and Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p. 865.

¹⁵⁷ Stevenson, Smith, and Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p. 865.

¹⁵⁸ See Spoerri and Gazdac, 'Hoard Details 5414 - Banasa'; *Coin Archives*. 'Lot Number: 816'. Accessed 7 December 2020.

<https://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=1762633&AucID=4053&Lot=816&Val=d68f0f3c23ff2934881c062e93897de9>

Object #17: Nude Statue of Ptolemy from Sala

This is a marble portrait statue depicting a male nude leaning against a tree trunk. The statue stands 1.85 metres tall, or 1.96 metres including its plinth. The statue, plinth and tree trunk have all been carved in the round from the same block of marble.¹⁵⁹ The statue is made from Pentelic white marble. The marble has a number of fine, shiny crystals as well as greenish veins of sericite, particularly visible on the torso, back, thighs and right foot. The skin is translucent and softly polished. The marble has a golden patina with a reddish shade, likely staining from the red clay in which it was buried.¹⁶⁰ The statue was discovered broken into several pieces. Both forearms are missing, along with the object held in the left hand.¹⁶¹ The right arm was originally damaged in antiquity, at which point it was repaired with a metal dowel;¹⁶² it was subsequently broken to rob the metal out.¹⁶³ The left leg was restored in the late 1960s by technicians from the Louvre following damage suffered during a modern earthquake.¹⁶⁴ Fragments of marble have broken off from the forehead, the left brow, the tip of the nose and ears, the toes as well as the folds of fabric covering the shoulder. The penis has almost entirely abraded. The plinth has a split down the middle.¹⁶⁵

The statue depicts a person of royal rank — attested to by the diadem — represented in a pose of ‘heroic nudity’.¹⁶⁶ The subject is shown standing in a *contrapposto* pose, the body resting on the right leg, the left behind with only the toes touching the ground.¹⁶⁷ The head is held high, gazing straight ahead.¹⁶⁸ The eyes are small, narrow and close together, the nose quite short and slightly curved. The mouth is closed and rather small, the lips fleshy and well defined. The thick lower lip is separated by a deep dimple from the round chin. The face has firm, full and hairless cheeks, a forehead marked by two wrinkles and two slight furrows at the bridge of the nose. There is a slight but noticeable depression in the left temple, but whether this is a defect in the marble or the subject is unclear. The hair is styled in a flat cap with wavy locks, shaped in bevelled relief, and shows signs of a receding

¹⁵⁹ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335.

¹⁶⁰ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335.

¹⁶¹ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335.

¹⁶² Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 347.

¹⁶³ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 347 note 45.

¹⁶⁴ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335 note 17.

¹⁶⁵ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335.

¹⁶⁶ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335.

¹⁶⁷ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 335.

¹⁶⁸ Boube, ‘Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)’, p. 342.

hairline around the temples.¹⁶⁹ A narrow diadem girds the head, tied in a knot at the back.¹⁷⁰ The torso is powerfully muscled, the muscles on the back similarly executed with care by the sculptor.¹⁷¹ The right buttock has been sculpted in tension to complement the supporting leg, the left lower and relaxed in accordance with the bent left leg.¹⁷² Both the pubic hair and folds of the scrotum have been carefully defined by the sculptor.¹⁷³

While not a direct copy, from the neck down the statue's pose, form and near-perfect proportions is clearly inspired by the *Doryphoros* of Polykleitos, one of the most famous Greek sculptures from classical antiquity (the best-known copy of which was excavated in Pompeii).¹⁷⁴ It is also strongly reminiscent of the *Hermes of Andros*¹⁷⁵ and the *Augustus of Prima Porta*.¹⁷⁶ It differs in its dress and the item it once held. The figure has a *chlamys* — a short cloak worn by men in ancient Greece — thrown over his left shoulder,¹⁷⁷ again in a manner of a Hellenistic prince. Fragments of paint found in hollows of the cloak suggest that it was once painted scarlet red. Whereas the *Doryphoros* once held a spear (hence its name: spear-bearer), the pose of this statue's upper left arm is more relaxed, and probably once held a sceptre or a sword that doubled as a support.¹⁷⁸

Through comparison with busts and portraits on coins, the statue was identified as a portrait of Ptolemy of Mauretania (c. 9 BC-AD 40), Juba II's son and heir, but only as recently as 1990.¹⁷⁹ The statue likely depicts him in middle age, shortly before his death, as evidenced by his receding hairline if not his athletic figure.¹⁸⁰ This is the only surviving statue of Ptolemy, alongside only a handful of portrait busts. It is most closely comparable with a bust also found at Sala, now in the museum at Cherchell — and also, interestingly, including the same depression at the temple.¹⁸¹ These are obviously similar portraits of the same character, probably executed by the same artist — or at the very least in the same workshop, most likely in Caesarea from where copies were produced and then distributed to the main

¹⁶⁹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 344.

¹⁷⁰ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 343.

¹⁷¹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', pp. 345-6.

¹⁷² Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 346.

¹⁷³ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 345.

¹⁷⁴ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 336.

¹⁷⁵ A cast of which can be seen in the Museum of Classical Archaeology in Cambridge.

¹⁷⁶ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 342 note 36, p. 352.

¹⁷⁷ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 344.

¹⁷⁸ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 348.

¹⁷⁹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 354; Landwehr, 'Les portraits de Juba II et de Ptolémée', p. 72.

¹⁸⁰ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 355.

¹⁸¹ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 358 note 85.

cities of the kingdom.¹⁸² There is a possibility, due to the use of Pentelic marble, that the statue was instead carved in a workshop in Athens, which might suggest that it was a copy of a statue of Ptolemy erected by the Athenians next to a statue of Juba II in the Gymnasium of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, now known only through an inscription.¹⁸³

The statue likely held a sceptre, a triumphal item awarded to Ptolemy by the Roman Senate after the defeat of Tacfarinas in AD 24 and also depicted on coins issued by Ptolemy in this period.¹⁸⁴

The statue's apparent survival even after Ptolemy's murder and the annexation of the kingdom by the Claudius speaks to the prestige the Numidian and Mauretanian dynasties continued to hold in North Africa. The statue was possibly venerated as part of a royal cult of adoration, which only came to an end with the arrival of Christianity in the city in the fourth or fifth century and the abandonment of the temple.¹⁸⁵

The statue is now in the central hall of the Museum of Civilisations in Rabat, Morocco.

¹⁸² Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 358.

¹⁸³ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', pp. 358-9.

¹⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.26; Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', p. 349.

¹⁸⁵ Boube, 'Une statue-portrait de Ptolémée de Mauretanie a Sala (Maroc)', pp. 359-60.

Object #18: Inscription from Volubilis¹⁸⁶

This is a Latin inscription on a statue base made from marble with a yellowish tinge to it, probably uncovered during the excavation of the site's monumental centre between 1888 and 1890.¹⁸⁷ The statue itself is missing, although the statue base is largely intact except for some damage to the corner of the plinth. Much of the marble is covered in a dark patina, except down the middle of the inscription where the original colour of the marble can still be seen. Two large cracks run through the inscription at right angles to one another. The inscription remains legible, however.

The inscription honours Marcus Valerius Severus, son of Bostar, a dignitary of Volubilis in the mid first century during Mauretania's transition from client-kingdom to Roman province. The inscription was written after his death in AD 54, and was paid for by his wife Fabia Bira, daughter of Izelta. The inscription says that Marcus was a Roman citizen who had served as town councillor, as well as the first priest of the municipality. It honours his actions as leader of the auxiliary forces who helped the Romans defeat the uprising of Aedemon in AD 40, and his subsequent embassy to the Emperor Claudius, where he obtained privileges for his town including the grant of Roman citizenship to its inhabitants.¹⁸⁸ The inscription also says that Marcus was already a Roman citizen, even before the inhabitants of Volubilis were granted Roman citizenship. This inscription is significant as it is one of only two written references to the revolt of Aedemon, but because it marks the beginning of Roman Volubilis. Although Marcus bears a Roman name, his father's name is Punic, suggesting that he was a Romanised local.¹⁸⁹

Assuming that the inscription still stands in the same place it once did, at the civic heart of Roman Volubilis, it would have been viewed by a great many Volubitanians on a daily basis. While the evidence for other statues is absent, it is likely that Marcus' stood alongside other local dignitaries. The inscription now stands on the southern side of the Roman Forum at Volubilis. The inscription is viewed by tourists visiting the site, although the translation (in French and Arabic) is only found in the visitor's centre, some distance apart from it.

The inscription says:

¹⁸⁶ 'Inscription of M. Valerius Severus, Son of Bostar', Volubilis Museum, Morocco.

¹⁸⁷ 'A city emerges from the earth', wall text, Volubilis Museum, Morocco.

¹⁸⁸ 'Inscription of M. Valerius Severus, Son of Bostar', wall text, Volubilis Museum, Morocco; Gascou, 'Sur une inscription de Volubilis', p. 134.

¹⁸⁹ Barrett, *Caligula*, p. 160.

To Marcus Valerius Severus, son of Bostar, belonging to the Galeria tribe, edile, suffete, duumvir, first flamin in his municipality, prefect of auxiliaries against Aedemon who was crushed during the war. To this character, the senate of the municipality of Volubilis, because of his merits towards the republic and the embassy which he carried out successfully and thanks to which he obtained from the divine Claude, for his compatriots, Roman citizenship and the right marriage with peregrine women, immunity for ten years, domiciled foreigners, the property of citizens (Roman) killed in war for whom there were no heirs, (decreed a statue). Fabia Bira, daughter of Izelta, his wife, availing himself of this distinction, remitted the expense, raised (the statue) at his expense for her very benevolent husband and made it the dedication.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Gascou, 'Sur une inscription de Volubilis', p. 134.

Appendix B

Object Catalogue

Altars of Peace, Volubilis, IAM2 348-361, 384, 402.

Ara Pacis Augustae, 9AD, <http://www.arapacis.it/en>.

Boscovale 'Africa' Dish, Musée du Louvre, BJ 1969.

Badly preserved head of Ptolemy as child from Cherchell, Musée du Louvre, MA 3183.

Bronze Coin of Juba II found in Piercebridge, 25AD. Portable Antiquities Scheme, FASAM-21AFB5. <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/516997>.

Bronze Crocodile Coin of Cleopatra Selene, British Museum, G1874,0715.491.

Bronze Head of a North African, AD 300, British Museum, 1861,1127.13.

Bronze Portrait Bust of Cato the Younger, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat, 99.1.12.1341.

Bronze Portrait Bust of Juba II, Museum of Civilisations, Rabat, 99.1.2.1340.

Bronze Portrait Head of Ptolemy of Mauretania, Sotheby's, 2004. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2004/egyptian-classical-and-western-asiatic-antiquities-n08035/lot.284.html>. Accessed 16 January 2019.

Bronze Statuette Perhaps Representing Alexander Helios as Prince of Armenia,

Bust of Juba II, Musée public national de Cherchell, S 64.

Bust of Ptolemy as a child from Cherchell, Musée du Louvre, MA 1888.

Bust of Ptolemy in Villa Albani, Villa Albani, 58.

Bust of Ptolemy in Louvre, Musée du Louvre, MA 1887.

Bust of Ptolemy in Woburn Abbey, Woburn Abbey.

Bust of Ptolemy in Vatican, Museo Vatican, Braccio Nuovo 2253.

Bust of Ptolemy of Mauretania, AD 23-40, Musée du Louvre, LP 2528.

Coin of Juba I and Elephant, 46AD, British Museum, G.350.

Crocodile Statue from Roman Period. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992.13.

Cuirassed Statue of Augustus from Cherchell, 1st C AD, Musée public national de Cherchell, S72 177. <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/empereur-cuirasse-4126203c176f4ec5a7f1ded52cdfc16c>.

Dedication of a Baquate Prince, Volubilis, IAM2 376.

Female bust, possibly Drusilla, Musée public national de Cherchell, S 289.

Fragment of Head of Juba II, Musée public national de Cherchell, S 183.

Fragment of head of Ptolemy, Musée public national de Cherchell, S 70.

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