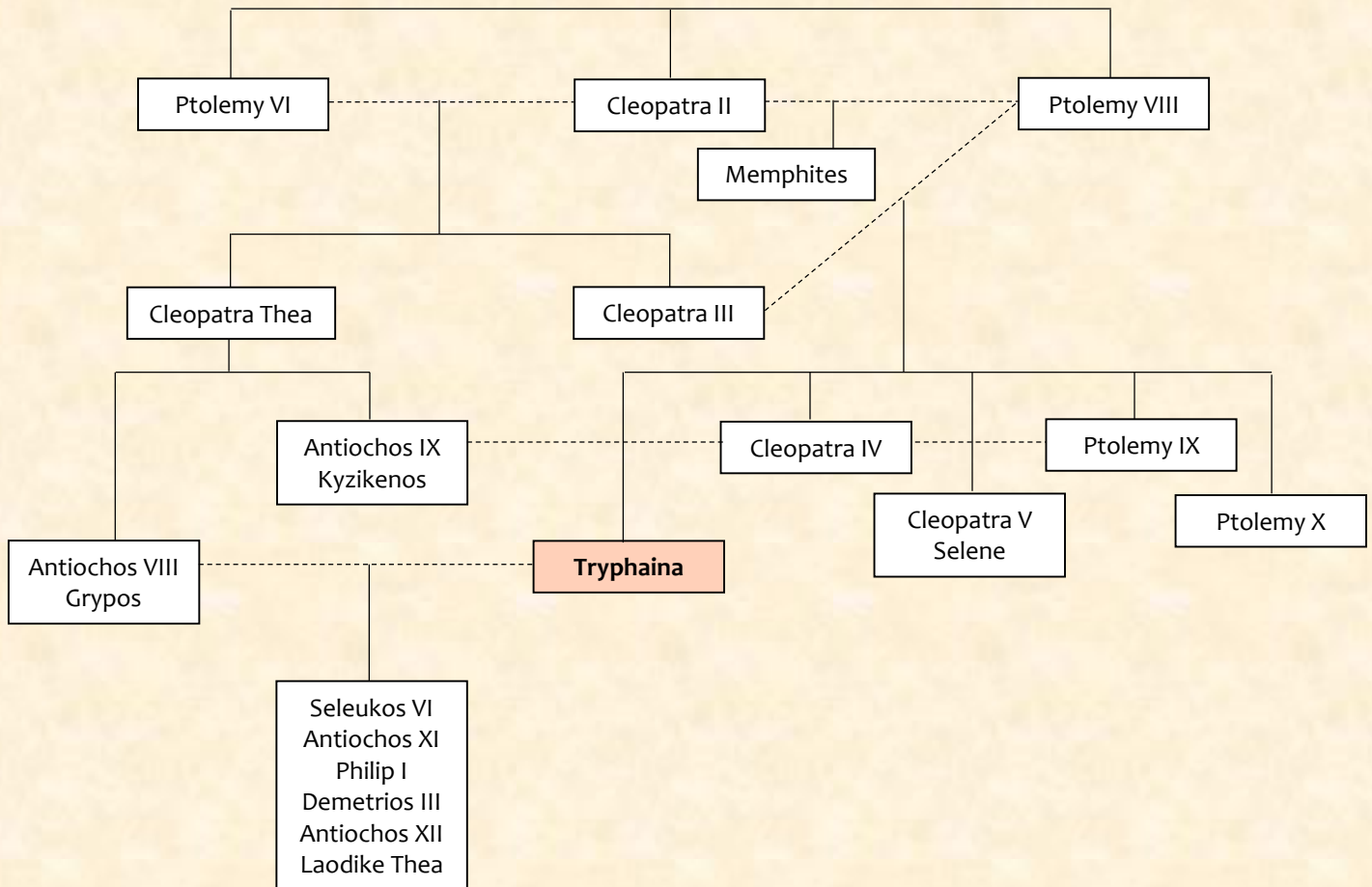


Despised and Reviled: The Infamy of Cleopatra Tryphaina

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Tryphaina's marriage to the Seleukid ruler Antiochos VIII Grypos¹

After seizing the throne of Syria, Alexander [II Zabinas] was flushed with pride over his success, and began to show disdain even for Ptolemy [VIII] himself, the man who had engineered his accession to the throne. Ptolemy accordingly settled his differences with his sister [Cleopatra II] and proceeded to devote his entire strength to the destruction of Alexander's kingdom, which the latter had acquired by Ptolemy's resources solely because of his hatred for Demetrios [II]. He therefore sent assistance to Grypos on a massive scale and also gave him the hand of his [and Cleopatra III's] daughter, Tryphaina, in marriage, in order to encourage the various peoples to support his grandson by establishing family ties as well as a military alliance with him. It was not an unsuccessful manoeuvre. When everyone saw Grypos equipped with the resources of Egypt, they began little by little to defect from Alexander. (Justin 39.2.1-4; Yardley translation).

¹ Aside from these passages in Justin, the only mention of Tryphaina in the historical record is a passage in Porphyry that specifies that Philip I was the son of Antiochos VIII and Tryphaina (BNJ 260 F32 §28).

Tryphaina's treatment of her full sister Cleopatra IV, and her own death

While the kingdom of Syria was being convulsed by these murderous rivalries, King Ptolemy [VIII] of Egypt died, leaving the Egyptian throne to his wife [Cleopatra III] and whichever of their two sons she should choose. He was acting as if matters would be more settled in Egypt than in Syria, when the mother in choosing one of the sons was sure to make an enemy of the other. The mother leaned towards the younger son [Ptolemy X], but she was forced by the people to select the elder [Ptolemy IX]. Before giving him the throne, however, she deprived him of his wife, forcing him to divorce his sister Cleopatra [IV], whom he loved dearly, and ordering him to marry his younger sister [Cleopatra (V)] Selene – an unmotherly decision to make with respect to her daughters, in that she was taking a husband from one and giving him to the other.

Cleopatra [IV], who was thus not so much repudiated by her husband as dismissed by her mother with the divorce, married [Antiochos IX] Kyzikenos in Syria and, so as not to bring him merely the bare title of wife, she also came to her husband with a dowry in the form of the garrison of Cyprus, which she inveigled into defecting. Now equal to his brother Grypos in military strength, [Antiochos IX] Kyzikenos opened hostilities against him, only to be defeated and put to flight.

Then Grypos proceeded to besiege Antioch, the city where Kyzikenos' wife Cleopatra [IV] was to be found, and when it was captured Tryphaina, the wife of Grypos, ordered that highest priority be given to hunting down her sister Cleopatra. Not that she wished to help her when taken prisoner; rather it was to ensure that she escape none of the miseries of captivity. For Tryphaina believed that it was from feelings of jealousy towards herself that Cleopatra [IV] had entered this kingdom rather than any other, and that she had declared herself her sister's enemy by marrying her sister's foe. She then accused Cleopatra [IV] of introducing foreign armies into the dispute between the brothers, and also of marrying outside Egypt against her mother's wishes, after she had been repudiated by her brother [Ptolemy IX].

For his part, Grypos begged Tryphaina not to force him to do so dreadful a deed. None of his ancestors, he said, amidst so many wars domestic and foreign, had ever unleashed his wrath on women after a victory; their sex itself sufficed to spare them the perils of war and the cruelty of the victors. And in the case of this particular woman there was also, apart from the code of ethics observed by all combatants, a blood relationship, for the woman who was the object of her vindictive fury was her own sister, his cousin, and the aunt to the children whom they shared. To all these family ties he added his reverence for the temple in which Cleopatra [IV] had sought refuge, saying that he needed to be all the more respectful of the gods since his victory derived from their favour and support. Furthermore, by killing Cleopatra [IV] Grypos would in no way impair Kyzikenos' strength, nor indeed would he bolster it by giving her back to him.

But the more stubbornly Grypos refused to give way, the more the sister was fired with a womanly doggedness (*muliebri pertinacia*), for she thought all these words derived not from human compassion but from sexual attraction. She therefore summoned some soldiers and sent a group of them to kill her sister. They entered the temple; unable to drag her out, they hacked off her hands while she clung to the statue of the goddess. Then, cursing her assassins, Cleopatra [IV] expired, enjoining revenge for her death on the deities who had been violated. Shortly afterwards another engagement found Kyzikenos victorious. He captured Grypos' wife Tryphaina, who had just murdered her sister and, by executing her, appeased the shades of his late wife (*eiusque supplicio uxoris manibus parentavit*). (Justin 39.3.1-12; Yardley translation).