



Queens On the Throne of Egypt

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
إِن أُرِيدُ إِلَّا
الإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ
وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ
عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

سورہ ہود

﴿I intend nothing but reform to the best of my ability. My success depends on Allah only; in Him I trust and to Him I return.﴾ (Quran, 11:88)



*In The Name of Allah, the All-Mer-
ciful, the Gracious*

Foreword

All praises are due to Allah. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon the Last of prophets and upon his family and companions!

No doubt, the homeland needs the efforts of all sincere patriots and parties, men and women, young and old, to work together in perfect harmony and coordination in due attention to serve the best interests of our homeland. Each one does his best without underestimating others' roles and contributions. Finally, small things jointed together would make great achievements. Young people need the expertise of old people. Likewise, the efforts of men and women should complete each other.



Muslim and human history are rich with outstanding women, who played some historic lasting roles living beyond time and place and leaving lasting effect on the entire humanity. The Quran, for example, recounts the stories of Mary—daughter of ‘Imran, Asiya—wife of Pharaoh, and the Queen of Sheba. They all had prominent roles in human history. The wives of Prophet Muhammad, especially Khadijah, ‘Aishah, Ḥafṣah, as well as the wives of the Ṣaḥābah—the Prophet’s Companions, and of their successors and other sincere leading women of other generations, who played patriotic roles in history of Egypt and other regions are exemplary outstanding influential women.

The collective national and vocational duties are not restricted to men; the national charitable and voluntary roles of women surpass men in some situations. With female physicians, engineers, teachers, and technicians, they perfect the national, vocational, and champion performance



of male counterparts. Furthermore, the hard-working wives stand by their husbands in plants, laboratories, and farms assuring the valuable contributions of women in all aspects of public life.

- Addressing the male-female question, the Almighty (may He be Exalted) says, **﴿O mankind! Reverence your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate, and from the two has spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Reverence God, through Whom you demand your rights of one another, and family relations. Truly God is a Watcher over you﴾** (Quran, 4: 1).
- Allah(may He be Exalted) also says, **﴿He has created you from a single person (Adam), and He has created from him his mate (Eve), so that he might find comfort with her﴾** (Quran, 7: 189).

Allah (may He be Exalted) also says, **﴿It is He Who has created you from a single person**



(Adam), so there is a time-limit (on the earth) and a resting place (in the Afterlife). Indeed, We have made clear the Verses for people who understand﴾ (Quran, 6: 98).

Obviously, men and women belong to the same origin; they are perfect pairs and integrated couples. They should support each other and take care of each other. The Almighty (may He be Exalted) says, ﴿**They are your keepers (from sinning) and you are their keepers (from sinning)**﴾ (Quran, 2: 187). He (may He be Exalted) also says, ﴿**They (women) have rights equal to those (of men) over them in a just manner**﴾ (Quran, 2: 228). The Almighty (may He be Exalted) says, ﴿**Men will be rewarded according to their deeds and women 'equally' according to theirs**﴾ (Quran, 4: 32).

In his inclusive speech on the Farewell Hajj, the Prophet stresses, “You have rights on your



women and your women have rights on you.” Such linguistic equivalence speaks of the moral and religious equivalence in these honorable sacred indications.

Islam never ever devalues the importance and rights of men and women. Allah (may He be Exalted) says, **﴿Their Lord answered them, ‘I do not waste the work of any worker among you, whether male or female; you are all on the same footing﴾** (Quran, 3: 195). Allah also says, **﴿Whoever does good work, be he male or female, and is a believer, We will give him a good life and We will reward them their dues with the best of what they used to do﴾** (Quran, 16: 97). Allah also says, **﴿Whoever does good work whether male or female and be a Muslim, then they shall enter the Paradise and they shall be provided therein without count﴾** (Quran, 40: 40).

﴿Human history knows many outstanding women and the Quran memorializes directly or



implicitly several of them. The Quran even dedicated one chapter for the memory of Mary ﴿﴾ (Quran, Surat Mary, 19). The women directly or indirectly mentioned in the Quran include some Egyptian women, who were born, grew up, visited, or lived in Egypt such as Hajar—the mother of Isma‘īl (Ishmael), Moses’ mother and sister, pharaoh’s wife, al-‘Azīz’s wife, the mother of Yusuf (Joseph)—the wife of Jacob, peace be upon them all.

Our mother Hajar (biblically Hagar) suffered many afflictions when Allah commanded Prophet Ibrahīm (Abraham) to take her along with her son Isma‘īl to the barren valley of Mecca close to the Sacred House. Allah (may He be Exalted) says, **﴿Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in a barren valley near Your Sacred House, so they may perform the prayer, so soften people’s hearts towards them and provide them with the fruits; haply they may be grateful﴾** (Quran, 14: 37). **Ibrāhīm** used the plural formula “Our Lord”



to declare the submission of the entire family to the will of the Lord, leaving Syria to Mecca and putting their trust in Allah. Writers of history mentioned that when Ibrahīm wanted to depart his small family, he turned to his wife and son. His wife Hajar said, “Does your lord command you to leave us.” In response, he said, “Yes!” She commented, “Well, He will not leave us to waste!”

Accounts then tell about Hajar’s walking back and forth between the Mounts of Şafa and Marwa in search after water to give drink to her little son. Consequently, Allah blessed them with the Spring of Zamzam as a blessing for them, and then for the inhabitants of Mecca—the Holy Land, and all coming visitors to the Last Day. Walking back and forth between the mounts of Şafa and Marwa has even become a ritual pillar of hajj and symbolic of serious work and putting full trust in Allah.

Reflecting on the act of walking between the Mounts of Şafa and Marwa seven **timeswhile** be-



ing tough and rocky in the past times—shows the matchless resoluteness of the Egyptian woman that lived by herself in this desolate area with her son. She took care of him in the best way in full contentment with Allah without any fears of the difficult dry environment infamous for drought and solitude. She had firm faith and limitless trust in Allah; He chose that place for her and her son, and He know the way-out and the right time of relief. However, she did her best and did not take a negative stand waiting for heavens but worked hard until the Lord blessed her with the grace of water and led people to live with them in the blessed area. Allah also mentioned them in His Glorious Book as an ideal guide and made her action a ritual pillar of hajj for all humankind to follow.

In another context indicative of the personal liability and responsibility, as Allah never let the good deeds go unrewarded, the Quran praises the wife of Pharaoh, “Allah sets forth an example



for the believers: the wife of Pharaoh, who said, ﴿**My Lord! Build me a house in Paradise near You, deliver me from Pharaoh and his works, and save me from the wrongdoing people**﴾ (Quran, 66: 11). Allah responded to her prayers and saved her from the evils of pharaoh. Each human being is responsible for his/her deeds only: ﴿**None shall bear the burden of another; and man shall have nothing but what he did**﴾ (Quran, 53: 38-39). When one is sincere and righteous, the sins and misguidance of others will not affect him in the least, even if they are close relatives, e.g., father, brother, son, or spouse.

This great woman inspired by Allah to save Moses from Pharaoh and his people. When Moses was put in a chest and cast into the river, they wanted to kill him but she said, ﴿**He would be a joy for me and you; do not kill him. Perhaps, he may be useful to us or we may adopt him as a son**﴾ (Quran, 28: 9).



Another two great women, who lived in Egypt, also helped to save Moses; namely, his mother and sister. When the fortunetellers told Pharaoh that an Israelite child is about to be born, who would destroy the kingdom of Pharaoh, he started killing all sons. Moses mother gave birth at this difficult moment and feared they may come and slay him. Here, the inspiration touched her heart:

“We inspired the mother of Moses: **﴿Nurse him, and when you fear for him, put him into the river, and do not fear or grieve. We will surely return him to you and make him a messenger.﴾**

(Quran, 28: 7). The Mother **of Moses** prepared the wooden chest and followed the inspiration of the Lord, putting her baby in the chest and then cast it into the river. She was heartbroken and so asked the sister, “Follow him!” The sister then **﴿watched him from a distance and no one noticed her﴾** (Quran, 28: 11). She followed his traces on the bank of the river, which took him to the place of Pharaoh, where his mother



feared most. Some narratives tell that his sister was working in the palace. The infant is now in the palace and refuses breastfeeding from all women in the palace, which made nursing him a big issue. The sister then suggested, **﴿Shall I tell you about a family that will feed him for you and be good to him﴾** (Quran, 28: 12). They simply accepted her suggestion without any critical questions; why she is sure about this family and soon the good news unexpectedly reached the mother of Moses: **﴿So We returned him to his mother, that she might find rest, not grief, and know that God's promise is true, even though most them do not know﴾** (Quran, 28: 13). The second prophecy that he would be a messenger also came true.

We can confirm that women's role over human history has been always effective and important, not marginal or insignificant. For example, the mother and sister of Moses saved the family from surrounding dangers, which ensure wom-



en's abilities to face challenges and overcome risks. Women can always protect their families, houses, dignity, and children and contribute to the renaissance and progress of their countries.

Here, we introduce this book by Professor MAMDUH ELDMATI, the professor of antiquities, Ain Shams University, and the former minister of antiquities, in which he discusses the lives of a number of Egyptian queens who were ascended to the throne of Egypt. It is indicative of the greatness of Egyptian civilization and the genuine respect and honor of women over the different ages of history. It is a fact that readers would easily perceive from the book, which interestingly written and well narrated. All success only belongs to Allah.

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Introduction

Women's Position in Ancient Egypt

This book briefly epitomizes the book of “Queens of Egypt” published by the General Egyptian Book Organization (2017) and reprinted in (2018). It presents the biographies of some Egyptian women, highlighting their important position over history, especially in the ancient times. Egypt honored women and respected their social role, ascending them to the throne many times over history long time before other nations. This significant role started during the times of ancient Pharaohs and continued through the rule of Ptolemaic dynasty until the reign of the great queen Shajar al-Durr by the end of the Ayyubid dynasty and the outset of the Mamluk rule. The book presents an informative content in plain and lucid language without deep discussions of



historic questions, so readers know the most familiar views amongst the historians without delving into the academic debates and polemics.

Distinguished by its diversity in science, arts, literatures, social heterogeneousness, and politics, the ancient Egyptian civilization assigned a great outstanding position to women clearly excelling **allother** human civilizations or societies. The antiquities of Egyptian civilization have many indications to this fact; women are always portrayed and presented as equal counterparts to men in solitary, two-person, or family statues. The grave artwork also presents them equally in adornments and clothes in journeys for hunting and in public banquets, and even in sacrificial offering banquets. Egyptian women paid exceptional attention to their beauty and elegant appearance, so they would always appear in the most brilliant manner, wearing beautiful white dresses made of flax, with nice flounces, wigs, and **wonderfulpiece** of jewelry in harmony with



their dresses. You can truly call the Egyptian woman of that time “The Lady of Elegance” and “Miss World” of the time.

The Egyptian woman was not only stylish in her dress, but she also had special concern about her fitness and took part in sporting and in social parties, enjoying dancing, music, singing and other joys of urban life. Texts of Egyptian literature asserted the important status of women in the Egyptian ancient society. Egypt was the first to honor women and grant her a lofty status. Sages of ancient Egypt would advise their children as follows, “My son! If you are truly wise, when you prosper, found your house and love your wife with ardor, fill her belly, clothe her back; ointment her body. Gladden her heart as long as you live. Never be cruel with her, for cruelty destroys the house you founded. It is your life’s house. You chose her before God and you are responsible for her before Him!”



Senebkhotep addressed his son saying, “If you like to please God, love your spouse and give a special care for her. So she takes care of your house. Bring her close to your heart, for God has made her a twin of your soul. If you make her happy, you make your house happy and you become happy. Give her clothes, means to adornment, and gift her with her favorite flowers and perfumes. This will come back to your house and brighten your life with delight and happiness so long as you live. She is the divine gift and God’s answer for your prayers and blessed you with her. Sanctifying the blessings would please the Lord.”

The woman was in control of her house; she had the title of ‘the Mistress of the House’, which shows her exceptional status in the marital house. This meaning is still used by modern Egyptians till today, ‘the Mistress of the House.’

For mother’s status, the ancient Egyptians said, “Mother is the gift of God; give her abun-



dantly, for she gave you her love and kindness. Give her food generously, for she fed you the juice of her body; carry her in her old age, for she carried you in your childhood. Keep her in your prayers to the Great Lord. Whenever you remember her, she would remember you and so God is happy with you. His pleasure comes from her satisfaction with you.”

An ancient Egyptian sage, said, “Never forget your mother and what she did for you; Give back in abundance the bread your mother gave you. Support her as she supported you. Carry her as she carried you; if you forget her, God would forget you. She had born you nine months and breastfed you for years and never disguised your discharge.”

As far as marriage and divorce are concerned, Egypt was the first to document marriage and divorce. The agreement would start verbally among the seniors of the two families and later would



be written. Relatives and villagers would attend the wedding party and stand as witnesses to the marriage contract with their names on the document of marriage. The contract would include the solemn pledges the husband makes, and the value of silver-and-crops dowry he offers as well as the deferred dowry (currently the ‘mu’akh-khar’) that he should pay in case of dispute and separation.

A woman has an outstanding role in the social and economic life of the ancient Egyptian society; she worked as Scribe; a job that qualified for high official positions in the government. She also occupied highly important offices in the State, including the posts of judges such as ‘Benet’ from the sixth dynasty, who won the title of the female judge and the minister of the king—one of the highest ranked positions. Women also worked as physicians, such as Peseshet—the best and closest physician to **the king** during the fourth dynasty.



Women were also successful businesswomen, like 'Ni Nafar', who owned vast farms, properties, and real estates in the time of the modern state. She also had commercial agents marketing her products and had been a regular taxpayer. Generally, women had enjoyed all the economic rights, equal to men, at the times of pharaohs. She also enjoyed the tax exemptions, labor supply, and other rights. Women in ancient Egypt had also a role in government as the queen and wife of the king, either with him or through him. In some cases, she was ascended to the throne as the governing queen.

Those Queens include:

- 'Nitocris': The pharaoh by the end of the Sixth dynasty (2218-2216 BC).
- Sobekneferu: She reigned by the end of the Twelfth dynasty (1785-1781 BC).
- Hatshepsut: She reigned during the Eighteenth Dynasty (1479-1458 BC).



- Tausret: The last known ruler and the final Pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty (1194-1186 BC).
- Cleopatra: The queen of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt. She was its last ruler (51-30 BC).

The history of Egypt even had a queen on the throne during the Islamic time; she is Shajar al-Durr, who ruled by the end of the Ayyubid Dynasty. For many historians, she is the first Mamluk Sultan of Egypt. She was the last female ruler of Egypt until now.



Figure (1) Two Solitary Statues for Prince Rahotep and His Wife Princess Nofret of the Fourth Dynasty (c. 2600 BC)



Figure (2) A Detail of Statue of Princess Nofret



Figure (3): A relief of a musical dancing party from the Tomb of Nebamun of the Eighteenth Dynasty 1350 BC.



Figure (4): A belief of the sarcophagus of Queen Kawit, Wife of Pharaoh Mentuhotep II of the 11th Dynasty (2020 BC).



Queens of Ancient Egypt

Queen Merit-Neith

The name of Merit-Neith means ‘beloved by Neith’. She is the daughter of king Djer, the wife of King Djety, and the mother of king Den. She was a unique woman as she ruled after her husband’s death as the first female independent regent pharaoh and the earliest queen regnant in recorded history of Egypt and human history. She reigned for almost ten years (2939-2929 BC).

Merit-Neith wisely took control of the country with deep understanding and insight in this ancient time. She allowed no one to govern and served independently as a regent given the restrictive customs and religious traditions of governance at the time.

Merit-Neith ruled independently for a short time after her husband passed away before



she **co-rule** with her child Den—the heir of the throne, until she paved the way for his stable rule. Once he was qualified and able to rule independently after the training she gave to him, she withdrew herself from government and politics acting as the mother queen, who just stood by her son with advice and consultation when necessary. Her son Den was a lucky pharaoh, who had the advantage of a powerful and **smart** mother. She raised him as a king and ruler of Egypt and he became one of the most important pharaohs of the First Dynasty of Egypt. His works speak of the great advice and opinion of his mother queen Merit-Neith. He supervised her burial in a great tomb befitting a majestic queen and ruler.

Although Merit Neith had not been given the royal title to keep the right of her son to the throne, being satisfied with ‘the Mother of the King’, she enjoyed all the privileges and powers of pharaohs. Over ten-year rule, she ruled Egypt and protected the country while preparing her son for rule. The rule of Merit-Neith was noted for stability and prosperity. She also put



the foundations for her son's rule and government as seen clearly in the government style of her son Den, who is one of the greatest rulers of ancient Egypt. Den's government and politics had become an ideal example for all succeeding pharaohs of Egypt until the end of pharaonic era.

Were Merit-Neith did nothing but raising her son and qualifying him to be a king, it is a great achievement for the civilization of ancient Egypt as one of the greatest pharaohs of ancient Egypt. He expanded the land of Egypt, protected the country, and Egypt enjoyed great economic prosperity and political and social stability during his time. He also founded the principles of sacred royal government that kings of Egypt followed to the end of the times of pharaohs.

Queen Khentkaus

She may have been a daughter of king Menkaure and the inheritor of the royal blood. Menkaure had no son from his main wife, so Shep-



seskaf—a son of one of the Pharaoh's secondary wives succeeded him in rule. Shepseskaf then married Khentkaus to strengthen his powers but he also passed away without a child as his passed away in his life, so Khentkaus ruled independently for two years (2479-2477 BC). Given the debate among the Egyptologists on the rule of Khentkaus, we are almost sure that she is the daughter of king Menkaure and the inheritor of the royal blood. She married her half-brother **Shepseskaf** and moved the legitimacy of rule to him. She bore him his son and regent Djed Ptah (for Manetho, he is Tamfetes), who was a child, so she became a queen regent but soon he died and she ruled independently for a short period of almost one year before she married to Oserkaf, who had been the Senior High Priest of Ra before ascending the throne. She again moved legitimacy to Oserkaf to the second time. This time the throne moved to another dynasty, not descending from royal ancestors. Oserkaf founded the Fifth Dynasty. Khentkaus bore him two sons: Sahure Ra



and Neferirkare; the second and third kings of the Fifth Dynasty. Thanks to Khentkaus, the rule moved peacefully from the Fourth Dynasty to the Fifth Dynasty.

Neit-Iqerty

The name ‘Neit-Iqerty’ means “the goddess Nit is excellent.” She is known for ancient historians as Nitocris. Most of historians described her as the most beautiful lady of her time; she had blonde irresistible beauty. She **is** the daughter of king Pepi II and Queen Neith. She **is** the last pharaoh of **ancient Egypt’s Sixth Dynasty** succeeding her brother Merenre II. She might have been also his wife. He only ruled one year and when he passed away, Neit-Iqerty **ruler** for two years.

Unfortunately, we do not know any informative sources about the rule of Neit-Iqerty or about her brother and their activities. Although we have some monuments from the rule of king Merenre



II, they tell nothing about queen Neith-Iqerty. Her name also had no mention in the inscriptions of ancient Egypt, so her historicity is questionable. We know very little about her and even the information about her is close to legendary stories and myths. Some historians even claim she may have been a legendary character.

Herodotus' histories about Egypt state that, "following the reign of Menes, 330 kings ruled Egypt. All of them are recorded in a papyrus. A priest of Memphis read their names to him and only one woman was among them; she is Nitocris, who was ascended to the throne following the murder of her brother—the then pharaoh of Egypt. The murder was planned by the people, who ascended Nitocris to the throne after him.'

After she became the queen, she planned for revenge and killed the killers of her brother. She invited the murderers of her brother—the king of Egypt, to **ahuge** banquet made underground,



then gave the command to the guards to **killall** guests by flooding the sealed room with the Nile while having their food. The guests were shocked by the surprise and they all passed drowning. Then, she committed suicide to escape retribution; she cast herself into a room filled with fire.

However, Manetho mentioned that she was the most beautiful lady of her time and she was the last ruler in the Sixth Dynasty. He stated that she ruled for twelve years. Anyway, Neit-Iqerty managed through her plans and intelligence to rule Egypt and the end of rule sealed the Sixth Dynasty, who ended one of the most flourishing eras of ancient Egypt—the Old Kingdom from the Third Dynasty to the Sixth Dynasty (2707-2216 BC).

Queen ‘Neferusobek’

It is also sometimes written Sobekneferu. She is the daughter of Amenemhat III and the sister of Amenemhat IV. She succeeded Amen-



emhat IV on the throne after he died without a male heir; consequently, Amenemhat III's daughter, **Neferusobek**, assumed the throne as the heir of her father. According to the Turin King Lists, she ruled for three years, ten months, and twenty four days, approximately between 1785 and 1781 BC. **Neferusobek** was noted for a number of royal titles, such as the 'Great Royal Wife' after she married to Amenemhat IV and the 'Great Female Heir' as the heir of king Amenemhat III.

Her monumental works consistently associate her with her father Amenemhat III. Obviously, she was keen to associate her name with him. Thus, she completed several monuments that he started, such the Funerary Complex of Amenemhat III at Hawara, El-Fayyum. She also had the title of 'The Mistress of All Women.' During the last three years of the rule of Amenemhat III, Amenemhat IV had a co-regency with his father Amenemhat III and following the father's death,



he ruled independently as the regnant king for nine years.

It was during these years that he got married to his sister Neferusobek, but she had not given birth to a royal male heir. As such, she easily succeeded her husband on the throne, as she became the exclusive legitimate heir of the throne. Neferusobek was most likely looking forward to getting independent powers and authority. Then she got the opportune moment without rivals or partners and made the best use of it, founding her powerful government and ruling independently. She had a stable political position and faced no rebellions against her rule. She was the first Egyptian queen to win the five royal titles, as the regnant queen of Egypt's throne.

Neferusobek left behind a small collection of monuments, given her short period in office. However, the remnants she left speak of her activities in rule. For example, a Nilotic inscription



dated the third year of her rule on the Second (Great) Cataract close to the Fort of Kumma in Nubia to measure the Nile water levels. It is indicative of the queen's concern for Nilometers, for the State's agricultural policies depended on the water levels. All agricultural activities, projects, irrigation projects, land restoration are among the most important projects done by the kings of the twelfth dynasty.

The twelfth dynasty came to an end by the death of 'Neferusobek', ending one of the most brilliant pages of the ancient history of Egypt—Middle Kingdom of Egypt. It was noted for its economic booms and welfare. Egypt then started a new era; namely, the second transitional era infamous for weakness, which encouraged the Hyksos to occupy Egypt.

Queen Hatshepsut

A very powerful, smart, and ambitious woman, noted for her self-trust, status, and powers. Her time gifted her with favorable conditions,



which she perfectly employed to empower herself. Hatshepsut was the greatest lady of her time.

Hatshepsut was the daughter of Thutmose I from his primary wife, Ahmose. She then married Thutmose II, the son of Thutmose I, and earned the title of ‘The Great Royal Wife.’ After he died, she became the regent queen, since the son of Thutmose II—Thutmose III, was only nine years old at that time. She served as a coregent from 1479 to 1457 BC. Her time was noted for peace, economic booms, powerful armed forces, security of borders, and defense of the nation. She also strengthened the diplomatic and commercial relations with the neighboring countries.

After Thutmose I died, he only left Hatshepsut and her half-brother Thutmose II, who had to marry her to guarantee the legitimacy for his rule. Hatshepsut bore him only one daughter, princess Neferure. However, Thutmose II had his only son ‘Thutmose III’ from another secondary wife,



whose name is 'Iset.' When Thutmose II died, his son 'Thutmose III' was only nine years old. Since he was too young to rule, his stepmother and aunt Hatshepsut—the regent queen—governed the state.

Ineni, the Architect, wrote in the inscription on his tomb, “King Thutmose II had gone forth to heaven and there he united with gods. His son Thutmose III then stood in his place as King of the Two Lands, having become ruler upon the throne of the one who begat him. While his sister (actually his aunt by marriage) the Divine Wife-Hatshepsut was conducting the affairs of the Two Lands by reasons of her plans. Egypt was made to work for her, the excellent seed of the god (Thutmose I), which came forth from him. She is the prow-rope of Upper Egypt, the mooring post of the Southerners; the excellent stern-rope of Lower Egypt. She is the Mistress of Command, excellent in her counsels, and the one who pleases the two banks when she delivers speeches”



Such description expresses exactly the conditions of the royal palace when Thutmose II died. Hatshepsut was a super ambitious woman, who wanted to rule. The fact that Thutmose III was still a child granted her opportune conditions to rule independently and by the second year of her rule as regent queen, she **change** her status to serve as a coregent with Thutmose III. Actually, she was the de facto ruler of the country and Thutmose III's position was only nominal. He just appeared with her in some religious rites without actual powers. Hatshepsut had to empower her leadership by assuming all the five royal titles following the inherited Egyptian traditions.

Such titles remained in the masculine form in accordance with the royal traditions. It is for this reason that 'Hatshepsut' represented herself in the various Egyptian arts, be it sculpture, inscription, or portraits, with the royal male ceremonial attires, as the legitimate king of the country.



Hatshepsut also resorted to the clergy with the help of the High Priests of «Amun Ra»; she created a legend about her birth as engraved on the walls of her Mortuary Temple at al-Deir el-Bahari i.e. a complex of mortuary temples and tombs located on the west bank of the Nile, opposite to the city of Luxor. In this myth, 'Amun Ra' appears to Ahmose in the form of Thutmose I and awakens her with pleasant odors. At this point, Amun places the ankh, a symbol of life, to Ahmose's nose, and so Hatshepsut is conceived by Ahmose. Consequently, Hatshepsut is declared the direct daughter of Amun Ra and so she had full legitimacy to sit on the throne for her divine origins apart from her human origins. The portraits of Hatshepsut's holy birth are the most important records carved on walls with inscriptions and figures for a religious political propaganda made in human history.

Hatshepsut chose some sincere statesmen, who did their best to establish her authority



and secure her absolute powers on the throne. In return, she raised them to high positions in the state. One of the most important men of her time is ‘Senmut’, who was the Overseer of the House of Amun. He was an ambitious man, who knew how to conduct the affairs for his queen and for himself. He said, ‘I was in this land always at the service of Hatshepsut since the first moment when her predecessor Thutmose II died. I wasted no time **to win** her trust, for she was holding by mighty hands the affairs and plans of the country.’

Since the outset of Hatshepsut’s ascension to the throne, Senmut started to win fame and his name became associated with many works and duties he did for Hatshepsut. He became the steward and tutor of the royal daughter Neferura. Senmut was also the keeper of the Great House of Hatshepsut’s properties and of Neferura’s properties, and the overseer of the works of Amun, the overseer of the King’s work in the



Temple of Amun, and the Architect of the Deir al-Bahari Temple.

All these jobs helped him become empowered and a decision-maker in the country. He even took decisions independently without consulting with the queen. He used to take pride in his position with the Queen Hatshepsut and that he had access to the private rooms of the royal palace. Perhaps this was the direct reason behind his sudden disappearance at the end of Hatshepsut's rule. Seemingly, she did not accept this violation from one of her civil servants, regardless of the position she granted to him, especially after doing the role with which she entrusted him.

Hatshepsut had to face challenges, resist the enemies, protect the public order, and ensure the protection of Maat, which she explained in her statement, 'I am Maatkare i.e. the truth beloved by Amun Ra, for I know that He lives by it. It is my bread and I drink from its dew.' This royal respon-



sibility imposed on her an exceptionally delicate understanding of the powers and authority conferred on her from her father Amun Ra to execute the laws and establish Maat—the symbol of right, justice, and order on the earth and among people as well as in her relation with gods as a royal duty as per the Egyptian code of laws.

Egypt had lived one of its great eras during the rule of Queen Hatshepsut. Over twenty two years in office, she was greatly royal and glorious. Egypt enjoyed progress, stability, and strong international relations, carving the name of Hatshepsut among the greatest world leaders of all times. Her time was also noted for its many constructions and monuments. However, the most important monuments of Hatshepsut is her Mortuary Temple at al-Deir el-Bahari, which still has some lasting creative designs and wonderful inscriptions and carvings.

However, Hatshepsut died in ambiguous conditions and Thutmose III succeeded her as



the greatest pharaoh of ancient Egypt and the greatest king worldwide. He had earned a strict military education and training for governance during the time of Hatshepsut, who established a strong state with abundant resources, great welfare, strong sovereignty, and stable government.

Queen Nefertiti

No other queen got the fame that Nefertiti won for her incomparable beauty. Her name Nefertiti means ‘the beautiful lady has come.’ She is noted as one of the influential women, who played a significant role in history of ancient Egypt. She began her life as the royal wife and queen of Pharaoh Akhenaten of the Eighteenth Dynasty of ancient Egypt (1350-1334 BC). Akhenaten married to Nefertiti at an early age, may be immediately after his ascension to the throne. They started rule together in Thebes and jointly erected the temples of Karnak as a common tradition among the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Akhenaten built



a temple for Atun on the eastern bank of Karnak; it was both a temple and a royal residence as well as a special room for his beloved wife ‘Nefertiti.’

During the fifth year of Akhenaten’s rule, the couple moved with their new faith to Amarna in Middle Egypt. Nefertiti bore six daughters to Akhenaten but they had no son. Nefertiti had several titles, including the Hereditary Princess, Great of Praises, Lady of Grace, Sweet of Love, Lady of The Two Lands, Main King’s Wife, and His Beloved One, Lady of All Women, and Mistress of Upper & Lower Egypt.

Nefertiti, as a young beautiful woman and smartly ambitious queen, loved her husband and family and enjoyed the love of her husband. With admirable acuity she had known the way to employ this love for her ambitions and authoritative powers. She enrooted her love deeply in heart of Akhenaten and in returns he grants her power-over the land and showered her with love, passion, and kindness.



Nefertiti had not descended from a royal family; her father **is** not king. She had no attribution to Amenhotep III. Her family origins are really uncertain until today. It is believed that she **is** a daughter of the Priest Ay, who ascended to the throne after the death of Tutankhamun, especially as his wife had the title of the 'Nurse of the Great Queen Nefertiti.'

Nefertiti supported her husband in his mission for the new religious call, which formed a religious and social rise. She was always behind him in his decision to move the capital to the new location, which was named 'Akhetaten' i.e. 'Horizon of the Aten', currently in Tell El-Amarna village, Minya Governorate. Standing by her husband, she played an essential role in spreading the new religion he called for. She accompanied him in all religious and formal ceremonies as seen in the carvings and reliefs gathering them together along with their daughters on the walls of the Temples of Aten and the Tombs of the Nobles. She



also appears in some paintings while fighting the enemies like the kings, which stresses her strong and matchless authority beside Akhenaten.

Nefertiti was noted for her unique personality in the history of Egypt, but many questions are still debatable about her life, rule, political powers and authority beside her husband. To what extent she was empowered? When had she died? Had she ruled after the death of her husband? Where is her grave? Is she and Smenkhkare one person as some Egyptologists maintained?

Recently, some remnants prove that Nefertiti lived until the year 16th of the rule of Akhenaten. As such, she continued to exercise authority with him until his last days. She might have lived and ruled independently after him with her new title 'Neferneferuaten' or changed her name into 'Smenkhkare' following the death of Akhenaten as believed by some researchers.



Nefertiti played an important role in both religious and political sides beside Akhenaten. She got much powers and an authoritative position beside her husband. She had most likely lived after Akhenaten and ascended to the throne of Egypt for a short time. Some modern studies draw connections between ‘Nefertiti’ and ‘Smenkhkare’ as two names of one person; the first is ‘Nefertiti’ for the queen co-ruling with her husband and the second ‘Smenkhkare’ for the independent queen, who ruled after her husband’s death.

Queen Tawosret

Tawosret means the powerful lady. She was exceptionally unique in her rule. She started her life as a wife of the king beside her husband **Seti II**. She had the titles of ‘Great Royal Wife.’ After the death of Seti II, she became the regent queen with his son Siptah before she ruled independently after his death until king Setnakhte took over the throne and established the Twentieth Dynasty of ancient Egypt.



Tawosret was born during the last period of the rule of Ramses II. For some Egyptologists, she might have been his granddaughter from his son Merenptah. She might have been among the last children of Ramses II, not a granddaughter. The Egyptian monuments show no explicit proof for any of these two probabilities. However, the names of Tawosret, her husband Seti II, and Ramses II are identified on many golden objects found in tomb KV56 in the Valley of the Kings “wadi al-muluk”. However, the owner of the tomb is unknown and the objects found just connect the three names of Twosret and Seti II and Ramses II, who may be the father of Twosret.

Following the death of Merenptah, the last powerful king in the Nineteenth Dynasty, the country suffered hard times of chaos and conspiracies for powers, before his son Amonose succeeded him on the throne. He ruled for almost four years. Seti II then was able to sit on the throne and marry Tawosret, who got the title of



the 'Great Royal Wife.' However, Seti II died after a short period, no more than three years, and his son Siptah—from his wife 'Takhat' or from a Canaanite concubine as some believed—succeeded him.

Tawosret was well able to act as the regent over the throne of Siptah, who suffered poliomyelitis as evinced in his mummies. Actually, he was unable to rule effectively and Tawosret continued to bear the title of the 'Great Royal Wife' and served as coregent with Siptah on the throne and was the real ruler of the country. Tawosret was not the only power behind the throne. There was a very strong officer called 'Bay, who ascended from Canaanite origins. Bay may have been a relative of the mother of Siptah. This relationship may have enabled him to reach such high ranking position in the government as some believed. His title was the 'Chancellor of the Entire Land.' He acted like the de facto ruler of the country during the time of Siptah. Many reliefs show him with



Siptah and Twosret. Bay even publicly boasts that he was instrumental in installing Siptah on the throne in several inscriptions. A key graffito depicts Bay standing in a pose of adoration directly behind Siptah, who is making an offering with the following inscription that reads, “the spirit of the Great Superintendent of the Seal of the entire land, who established the King in the place of his father; beloved of his lord, Bay.” It is unusual for a high official like Bay to issue that statement.

The relationship between Bay and Tawosret was based on the exchange of interests. Bay had many jurisdictions and powers since the time of Seti II until he became the powerful man in the royal palace. As such, Tawosret decided to rely on him to strengthen the powers of Siptah and her position as the regent over the throne. As Bay would guarantee the quiet ascension of Siptah, a weak and young boy, with Twosret as regent, Bay can exercise tremendous authority through her, which might have fed his ambitions for powers.



Tawosret was deeply concerned with this issue and persuaded Siptah to issue a royal decree sentencing Bayto death during the fifth year of his rule as a traitor of the Pharaoh.

Traces of proofs show that the planner of this judgment to get rid of the wicked Bay was Tawosret—the most powerful and influential lady in the court. She had great and uncontrolled ambitions to rule independently. When her interests came into conflicts with Bay, she had to get rid of this strong rival. Both Bay and Tawosret worked hard for powers in hope of taking control over the sick boy and assuming complete authority.

As usually happens, the conditions support the closer in legitimacy and family, which might have helped Tawosret to overcome Bay. She planned to kill him through the law, so she enticed the king to issue a royal decree to that effect. At last, Bay was executed in the fifth year of Siptah's reign, on orders of the king himselfwith



claims of being guilty **of treason** to the Pharaoh and the State.

Now all powers are settled in the hand of Tawosret and even the sick boy Siptah died after a few months following the killing of Bay before the end of the six year of his rule. Tawosret now concentrated all powers in her hand and sat alone on the throne. Actually, she had played an influential role since she was the 'Great Royal Wife' of Seti II. She had been able to exert a direct influence in the administration of all public affairs. Later, when she served as a coregent with Siptah, she skillfully maximized her role in the policy-making inside and outside the country, assuming the most influential role in conducting the public affairs. Later, she had ruled independently for more than two years.

Like a strong pharaoh, Tawosret tried to take control of all the government affairs. As such, she developed the policy of building temples, follow-



ing the **patters** of strong male pharaohs in using a combination of female and male elements in her titles, such as 'the Strong Bull.' This title is **expressiveof** the great powers and royal originality and potency, even if it lacks propriety. However, Tawosret kept her female appearance in sculptures and painting. Unfortunately, the rule of Tawosret lacked peace, as chaos soon erupted due to economic decline and followed by a public turmoil and civil war. We are not certain whether she was dethroned by Setnakhte, the founder of the twentieth dynasty or she just died in peace.



Figure (5) A Bust of Statue of Queen Neferusobek



Figure (6) A unique headless statue for the middle part of Queen Neferusobek with male-female features.



Figure (7): Sphinx of the Queen Hatshepsut made of the colored limestone.



Figure (8): Seated Statue of Hatshepsut Enthroned



Figure (9): Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple at **Al-DeirEl-Bahari**



Figure (10): Limestone Head Statue of Nefertiti

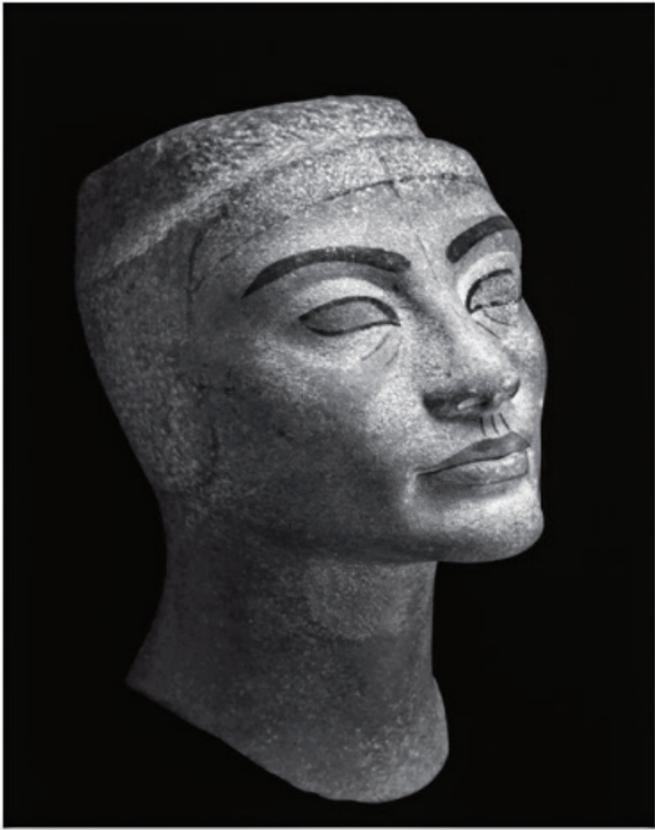


Figure (11): Sandstone Unfinished Head Statue of Nefertiti



Figure (12): Akhenaten and Nefertiti equally depicted.



Figure (13): Limestone Relief of Akhenaten and Nefertiti playing with their daughters

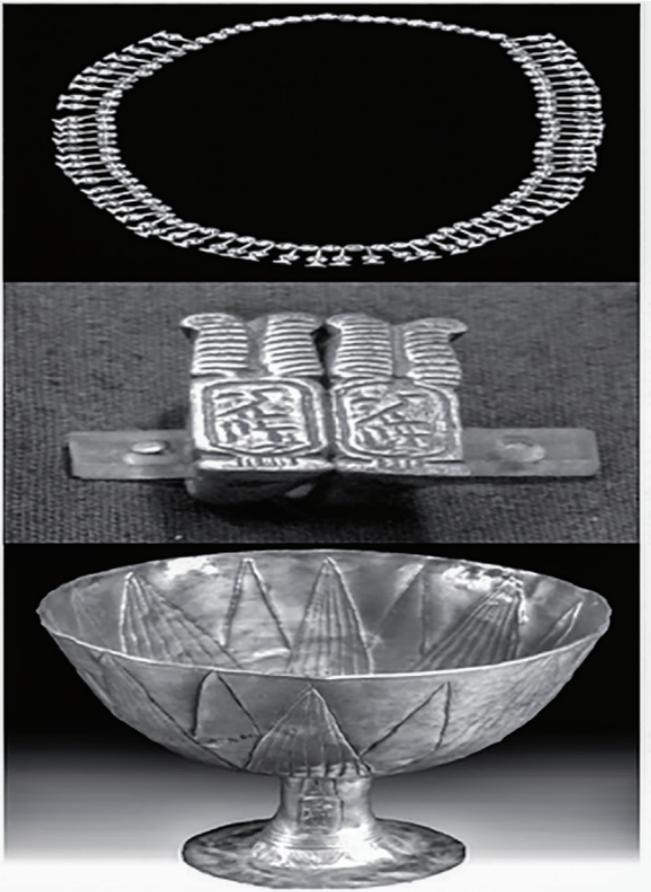


Figure (14): A group of Golden Jewelry for Queen Twosret



Divine Adoratrices

Divine Adoratrice is a title that some Egyptian ladies had as they played a religious and political role in the rule of the third transitional time and the late times of ancient Egypt. It is an ecclesiastical title expressing a functional religious and political indication. The Divine Adoratrices had ruled in Thebes in parallel to the governing king. However, they were sometimes forced to rule. In other words, they were not queens ambitious for government and sovereignty.

Likewise, they did not work for empowerment or establishing their rule by personal efforts. Rather, they were royal daughters admitted to these religious positions upon the recommendation and support of their fathers. Their fathers directed them to the religious life to indirectly support their own rule and restrict the authority



of Amun priests in Thebes. Simply, the authoritative High Priests of Amun could have ruled Upper Egypt entirely if anyone of them would declare himself a king of the Upper Egypt.

The religious position of 'Divine Adoratrice' helped to weaken the influences of the priests of Amun and then the Divine Adoratrice had become a co-ruler with the official king. She would rule through him in a state of exchanging powers and support.

The Divine Adoratrices had three titles the «Divine Wife», the «the Divine Godly Woman», and «the Hand of God». The oldest of these titles was the Divine Wife and it was associated with Amun as «the Divine Wife of Amun». Ahmose-Nefertari, who was the sister and wife of Ahmose (c. 1550 – 1525 BC) was the first lady to earn this honorary title, only given to the ladies of the royal families all over the times of the **New Kingdom** of Egypt (1550 – 1070 BC), specially ladies noted for their roles in religious rites.



In the wake of the political changes taking place by the end of the New Kingdom of Egypt, the role of the Divine Adoratrice had vigorously developed to summon increasing religious and political powers since the time of Ramses VI (1142 – 1134 BC), who made the honorary title «The Divine Wife of Amun» an ecclesiastical role in the temple of Amun. He also associated it with a considerable political role in the rule in Thebes. It was through this that the king was able to restrict—for some degree—the powers of the High Priests of Amun. The title of the Divine Adoratrice appeared side by side with the title of the Divine Wife in a clear indication to the religious role. As such, the Divine Adoratrices had succeeded in taking effective control over the priests of Amun and assumed absolute authority in Thebes and other neighboring areas.

The religious and political role of the Divine Adoratrices of Amun continued to grow incessantly and they got more religious responsi-



bilities similar to those of the king. Their names were written down on two royal cartouches. As such, Thebes witnessed the beginning of a new religious dynasty exercising a political role beside the political role of the Ruling King in North of Egypt.

In a nutshell, Egypt had somewhat two de facto rulers; one in the North, who was a male king and official sovereign of the country following the Egyptian tradition and the Divine Adoratrice in the South of Egypt. However, this did not preclude the appearance of the king in the reliefs of religious rites of Thebes' Temples.

The headquarters of the rule of the Divine Adoratrice of Amun was at the Karnak Temple where she lived most of her life without marriage, like nuns of modern times. Abstaining from marriage as the Divine Wife of Amun, the Divine Adoratrice resorted to the tradition of adoption to transfer the powers after death.



Being single a prerequisite for the Divine Adoratrice and adoption formed the means for the transfer of responsibilities from the ruling Adoratrice to adopted female successors. However, she had no choice about the female successor. It was left to the governing king, who could force the Divine Adoratrice to adopt a certain female successor, who was usually the daughter of that king. During the time of the 23rd Dynasty, King Osorkon III (c. 778–740 BC) appointed his daughter Shepenupet I as the Divine Adoratrice of Amun before adding the position of the Highest Senior Priest of Amun to her.

This last position would grant its holder an absolute authority in Thebes as an independent monarch. It is through this way that Osorkon guaranteed both authority and influence to his daughter.

Since the time of Shepenupet I, the Divine Adoratrice of Amun had become the holder of



actual authority in the South, parallel to the King of the North with recognition of the king as the official ruler of the entire country. This tradition continued over 229 years where five Divine Adoratrices had absolute rule over the South of Egypt while recognizing the official sovereignty of the king of the North.

The Divine Adoratrice Shepenupet I

Shepenupet I (754 – 714 BC) was the daughter of Osorkon III and Karoadjet. She belonged to the 23rd Dynasty whose ancestors descending from Libyan origins. She took over the rule in Thebes by the support of her father Osorkon III starting a new era for the Divine Adoratrices as the ruler of Upper Egypt under the official nominal rule of the legitimate king. Shepenupet I earned titles as a co-ruler in government, bearing the royal titles: “The Lady of the Two Lands”, “The Lady Who is One with the Heart of Amun”, “The Daughter of Ra”, and “The Beloved of Mut.” Shepenupet I started a new construction policy



in Karnak and put the cornerstone for the Temple of Osiris—the God of Life and the Temple of Osiris—the Lord of Eternity.

Succeeding Adoratrices then completed these temples after her and made several additions to them. Likewise, Shepenupet I co-ruled with seven kings; four relative kings of her family: her father Osorkon III, her brother Takelot III, and his successor Rudamun, and King Ini, the last king in the 23rd Dynasty.

Furthermore, she co-ruled with three other kings descending from another clan of the dynasty, ruling in Delta. They are: King Badi Bastet II, who ruled from Tanis; and the two kings: Iuput II and Osorkon IV, who took Heliopolis as their capital. She also was a contemporary of the last king of the 22nd Dynasty Shoshenq V, who ruled from his capital in Tell Basta and king Piye, the founder of the 25th Dynasty, who forced her to adopt his sister Amenirdis I to succeed her in rule.



Amenirdis I

Amenirdis I (764–700BC) was a Kushite princess. She was the daughter of Pharaoh Kash-ta and Queen Pebatjma. She had honorary royal titles. King Piye forced Shepenupet I to adopt her in 746 BC and she lived with Shepenupet I in Karnak until she died, so Amenirdis ruled independently.

Obviously, the Egyptian tradition that Piye respected had not allowed the deposition of the existing Divine Adoratrice but she had to pledge obedience to the new ruler. As such, Shepenupet I ruled in Thebes along with her adopted daughter Amenirdis in the Name of King Kush since the time of her brother Piye, who united Egypt with the Kingdom of Kush in Upper Nubia.

Amenirdis participated with Pharaoh Shebitku and Pharaoh Shabaka in completing the Temple of Montu and the Compartment of Osiris, the Lord of Eternity in Karnak. She also co-ruled with



four kings from her family: King Piye and his three successors: Shabaka, Shebitku, and Taharqa. She had to coordinate the political works in Thebes with the Kush ruling Dynasty. She also had to undertake the mission of performing the religious rites in her name and the name of the kushite ruler sharing rule with her. However, she was the first and foremost person responsible for the religious policy in Thebes and neighboring cities of Upper Egypt.

Shepenupet II

Shepenupet II (710 – 650 BC) was also a kushite princess. She was the daughter of Piye but her mother is unknown. She assumed honorary royal titles. She succeeded Amenirdis I following her death in 700 BC and supervised the funerary ceremonies and religious offerings.

Shepenupet II ruled independently following the kushite system of government and completed the construction of religious temples in Thebes.



She built two compartments for Osiris in cooperation with King Taharqa; one compartment in Karnak and another in Medamud. Shepenupet II co-ruled with four kushite kings: her brother Shabaka, Shebitku, and Taharqa as well as the last ruler in the 25th Dynasty Tanutamani (also known as Tanutamun or Tanwetamani) and king Wahibre Psamtik I—the Founder of the 26th Dynasty, who respected the religious tradition and did not depose her. However, he depose her adopted daughter Amenirdis II, the daughter of king Taharqa, as she was not the official Divine Adoratrice of the country. He forced Shepenupet II to adopt his daughter Neit-Iqerty. Shepenupet II had to yield to his command and to continue in rule following the policy of the new ruler and the tradition of the Divine Adoratrices. The Divine Adoratrice should not be involved in political or military conflicts; her religious and political powers should always be in line with the royal dynasty, which had the legitimacy for rule.



Neit-Iqerty

Neit-Iqerty (656 – 586 BC) was the daughter of the 26th Dynasty pharaoh, Psamtik I, by his queen Mehytenweskhet. She succeeded Shepenupet II as the Divine Adoratrice after Shepenupet II adopted her during the ninth year of her father's rule in 656 BC. Neit-Iqerty co-ruled with four kings of her family: Psamtik I, Necho II, and Psamtik II in addition to King WahibreHaaibre and she died during his rule.

In the wake of the crowning of Neit-Iqerty (also known to Greek specialists as Nitocris) as the Divine Adoratrice, the influence of the Divine Adoratrice as a governing ruler reached its culmination. Fortunately, famous inscription is preserved on a limestone stele in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, known as the "Adoption Stele of Nitocris." It shows her huge riches and the several advantages she earned from all regions of Egypt, both Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt.



Thanks to the plans of her father Psamtik I (664 – 610 BC) of the 26th Dynasty, Neit-Iqerty won such earnings. The texts stand as proof for the huge riches the Divine Adoratrice achieved. The inscription of the Adoption stele expresses the words of Psamtik I as follows:

“I have given to him (Amun) my daughter, to be Divine Consort, that she [may invoke protection for the king] more than those who were before her; that he may indeed be satisfied with her prayers, and that he may protect the land of him who gave her to him.”

It came to my knowledge that king Tabarqa, the Good king, gave his daughter Amenirdis II as an Adopted Daughter to his sister, the Divine Adoratrice of Shepenupet II. I am not one to expel an heir from his place, for I am a king who loves justice; my particular abomination is lying... Hence I give my Daughter Neit-Iqerty to her to be her ‘Great Daughter’ as her father (once) conveyed her to (his) sister.”



The inscription then describes the journey of Neit-Iqerty to Thebes as follows:

“In the year 9, first month of the first season (first month), day 28 = 23 February, went forth his eldest daughter from the king’s family apartments, clad in fine linen, and newly adorned with malachite. The attendants conducting her were legion in number and marshals cleared the path, for beginning the goodly way to the harbor, to turn upstream for Thebes. The vessels bearing her were very numerous, the crews were mighty men, and they were deeply laden [to the decks] with every beautiful thing of the king’s-palace. The commander thereof was ‘the Sole Companion’ (a title used for the elites), monarch of Herculopolis, commander in chief of the army, chief of the harbor, Somtous-Tefnakhte.

The Messengers sailed to the South, to make splendid provision before her. Sail was set. . . The great men took their weapons, and every noble-



had taken his provision, supplied with every good thing: bread, beer, oxen meat, geese, dates, vegetables, and all purely good things. . . until she reached Thebes.”

After sixteen days of her departure of her town «Sais», “she arrived at the city of Thebes. As she advanced, she found all Thebes, men and women alike, standing, rejoicing at her approach, surrounding her with great offerings, a multitude in number.”

The text goes on to declare how Shepenupet III moved all her possessions to Neit-Iqerty: “Now, afterward when she came to the Divine Adoratrice, Shepenupet, she saw her, was satisfied with her, and loved her beyond all. She conveyed to her the fortune which her father and her mother had conveyed to her and to her ‘Great Daughter’, Amenirdis, daughter of King. She then said, “We have given to you all our property in field and in town. You shall be upon our throne forever and ever.”



The Adoption Steles goes on to cite a list of all the properties and gifts given to Neit-Iqerty by the Senior Leadings Priests of Amun and by the governor of Thebes, Mentemhet, and his family members. The properties included much of the fruits of farms and products of cities as well as lands with canals in several towns and provinces of the South and North.

Her father Psamtik I also gave her properties in eleven districts in Egypt. This stele indicates the powerful beginning of Neit-Iqerty as she started taking over the position. It also guarantees her recognition in all regions of Egypt through the royal prestigious possessions in all parts of the country.

Ankhesneferibre

Ankhesneferibre (595 – 525 BC) was the daughter of pharaoh Psamtik II and his queen Takhuit. She contributed to the completion of several inscriptions and carvings in Kar-



nak. She co-ruled with four kings: her father Psamtik II and his successors: Wahibre (Apries), Amasis II, and Psamtik III, the last king in the 26th dynasty.

The rule of Psamtik III was ended by the Persian invasion of Egypt when Cambyses conquered Egypt and founded a new governing dynasty, the 27th dynasty with which the time of the Divine Adoratrices ended restoring the former state. However, the influence of the priests of Amun had become too weak and they had to show allegiance to the new Persian rulers.

Ankhnesneferibre followed the religious policy of Neit-Iqerty in the South and held wide influence and authoritative powers like her predecessor. She complemented the works of inscriptions and carvings of the two compartments of Osiris, the governor of afterlife and Osiris the lord of life in Karnak.

By Cambyses' conquest of Egypt and establish-



ing a new dynasty in 525 BC, a new distinguished era of ancient Egypt came to an end. It was the era of the Divine Adoratrices, who ruled the South—Upper Egypt, jointly with the legitimate kings of Egypt for more than two centuries. Actually, their rule was not distinguished for a special policy but was noted for a religious policy standing in support of the governing king.

We have no information when or how Ankhesneferibre died. Had she died normally by the end of her rule when Cambyses took Egypt or after that? She was buried in MedinetHabu.



Figure (15): Alabaster Statue of Amenirdis I



Figure (16): Sphinx of Shepenupet II



Figure (17): A granite sarcophagus of Neit-Iqerty



Figure (18): A Schist Statue of Ankhnesneferibre



Ptolemaic Queens

The Ptolemaic kingdom had a new nature of rule in which the Ptolemaic kings tried their best to approach people kindly and win their support. As such, they respected and preserved the beliefs and customs of the Egyptians. They also had resorted to the priests for help. An exchange of effects then happened; they got affected by the Egyptian traditions and affected them as well as reflected on the rule form in the royal palace.

It is fair to say that by the new Ptolemaic kingdom, women won more powers and authority than the past pharaonic eras given the powers they had and that they co-ruled with some pharaohs, which finally led them to rule independently. Some Ptolemaic queens co-ruled as coregent with their sons, who then had the ecclesiastic title the “TheoiPhilometores i.e. the



Mother-loving God.” Such kings include:

- Ptolemy VI Philometor, the son of Cleopatra I of Egypt.
- Ptolemy IX, the son of Cleopatra II.
- Ptolemy X, the son of Cleopatra III.
- Ptolemy XV Caesar, the son of Cleopatra VII.

They all try to follow the example of Arsinoë II, who was the most powerful Ptolemaic queen, even if she did not earn the honorary royal title ‘huri’.

Queen Arsinoë II

Arsinoë II was the first daughter of Pharaoh Ptolemy I, founder of the Ptolemaic State of Egypt from his second wife Berenice I. She was born in 316 BC. Arsinoë II had an exceptional position in the royal family as a queen and goddess, following in the footsteps of Isis. She was affected by the life of some Egyptian queens, especially the queens of the New Kingdom of Egypt, such as



Ahmoose-Nefertari—the first Great Royal Wife and Sister of Ahmoose I. Arsinoë II used the religious passion of Egyptians to strengthen and uphold the Ptolemaic Dynasty through her husband and brother Ptolemy II, who helped the achievement of this goal.

Once she took her first step into the royal palace, the ambition of Arsinoë II for powers knew no limits, and no laws or morals. She convinced Ptolemy II, who knew well the influence and position of the Egyptian religion and priests as well as the significant estimation of Isis-Osiris Worship in hearts and souls of the Egyptian people, to divorce his wife and then she planned to kill Arsinoë I—the first wife of her brother. Arsinoë II then planned to marry her younger brother Ptolemy II, who married her following the Egyptian tradition of preserving the royal divine blood.

Inspiring him with following the ancient traditions of pharaohs, he followed the royal tradition



of pharaohs in satisfying the priests and Egyptians. He married her following the norms of pharaohs and against the Greek norms to bring himself closer to the Egyptians.

Ptolemy II followed the example of pharaohs in New Kingdom of Egypt, especially the worship of Isis and Osiris, raising his queen sister Arsinoë II to the position of Isis. Although, Arsinoë II had no royal governing titles and took no direct rule in government during his life, she had become the most famous and powerful woman in her time. She played a special rule in the policymaking of Ptolemy II, inside and outside.

Arsinoë II was always an ideal example for the succeeding Ptolemaic queens, for the special position she had beside her brother-husband Ptolemy II. He loved her so much and allowed her to have a word in governing the country. He then raised her to the rank of a worshiped goddess in her life and after death. He even built a temple



for her 'The Sanctuary of Arsinoë-Aphrodite' in Alexandria.

Arsinoë II was the first Ptolemaic lady to break the Greek traditions and marry to her brother Ptolemy II, the king of Egypt. This marriage was a matter of oddity in the Greek tradition. A change was then necessary to happen and accept such marriage, making the best use thereof. They argued that as two gods, they can unite in marriage like Isis and Osiris. It is obvious that the desire of rule and governance overcame the heart and soul of Arsinoë II. It was easy for her to take every possible means to achieve her goal. For her, intelligence, plotting, feminized feelings, and love were all legitimate weapons for a woman with great ambition.

As such, Arsinoë II occupied the heart of her brother, who loved her beyond limits and gave her role in government. He even made a coin uniting them together in the same size in addi-



tion to another special coin for her. He also named a big district (currently al-fayyum, Egypt) after her name. Beyond all limits, he even raised her to the ranks of Gods during her life and after her death. Not only Egyptians and Alexandrians worshipped her but Ptolemy himself did.

Though queen Arsinoë II had no royal titles as mentioned above, she had an influential part in governance, executing her policies through her husband, giving a new example and tradition for the succeeding Ptolemaic queens.

Queen Berenice II

Queen Berenice II is the daughter of Magas, the Greek King of Cyrenaica and queen Apama II. Magas was a stepbrother of Ptolemy II but he was the governor representing Ptolemy I in the rule of Cyrenaica. It was within the political framework between the two brothers that they unite politically through marriage



as well. As such, Ptolemy, the crown prince of Ptolemy II should marry Berenice II, the daughter of Magas. However, Magas died in 258 BC and Berenice's mother Apama II refused to honor the marriage agreement with the Ptolemies and invited Demetrius the Fair—stepbrother of the king of Macedonia, to Cyrene to marry Berenice instead.

Upon the arrival of Demetrius to Cyrene, he and Apama became lovers and their love was soon disclosed when Berenice is said to have discovered them in bed together and had them assassinated in 255 BC. Berenice II, a strong and determined princess, was able to take control of Cyrenaica for almost nine years. She then implemented her father's plan to unite with Ptolemaic through marriage and she married Ptolemaic III on the same year he became the king of Egypt in 246 BC.

In the wake of his ascension to the throne, Ptolemy III prepared for war on Syria, known as



the third Syrian war. It almost took him two years in fight apart from his wife Berenice II, who took control of Egypt during his absence and even she coined currencies in her name.

This special position of Berenice II let her appear like a king taking part in rule with her husband after his return from Syria. This could never happen without the good understanding and approval of Ptolemy III. Actually, Berenice's great powers and abilities shown in her rule of Cyrenaica and again in Egypt during her husband's absence demonstrated her unique capacity for rule. She protected the country and stood by her husband after his return through her wise counseling and effective work.

Queen Cleopatra I

Queen Cleopatra I was the daughter of Antiochus III the Great, King of the Seleucid Empire, and his wife Queen Laodice III. Her engagement



to Ptolemy V was the soft means to make peace between the Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid Empire after Antiochus III captured a number of cities in Asia Minor previously under the control of the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt. The engagement took place in 195 BC within a political peace-making agreement between the two countries. The marriage took place next year while Ptolemy V was only 16 years old and his wife Cleopatra was a 10-year-old girl. She was called the Syrian due to her Syrian origins.

Cleopatra came to Egypt and brought her dower of the revenues of those Syrian cities captured by her father, which instigated the conflict with Egypt for long time. As such, Cleopatra—the would-be queen of Egypt, was given the title ‘the Bearer of the Dower.’ At that time, it was the girl who brings the dower, not the man.

Since the time of Ptolemy V and Cleopatra I until the time of Ptolemy XII and the beginning



of the rule of Cleopatra IV, the Ptolemaic rule had no special political, economic or social aspects that show the great position and majesty of Egypt. The names of those rulers only appear in the official documents that mention their names and titles. Although the country witnessed a kind of progress in arts and construction, it could not hide the political weakness of the Ptolemaic rule under which Egypt lost political independence and powers achieved during the first part of Ptolemaic dynasty, and fell under the hegemony of Rome.

Ptolemy V died suddenly in 180 BC. Some alleged he was poisoned by his courtiers, who believed that he intended to seize their property in order to fund his new Syrian war. He left behind two boys and a girl. Ptolemy VI, then a 6 years old, succeeded him in rule under the regency of his mother Cleopatra I, who did her best to protect the kingdom. She allowed no one to take control of the country inside or outside.



Consequently, her position won more powers and esteem as she ruled in the name of her son. Her name as a governing queen appeared in the demotic documents illustrating how she served as a coregent with Ptolemy VI. Her name even preceded him in mention: the Two Pharaohs: Cleopatra I—the Queen Mother, the Triumphant Goddess, and her son Ptolemy VI, the Triumphant God.

Cleopatra had become the first Ptolemaic queen ruling with her husband and co-ruling with her son. She also coined currencies in her name only, leaving no doubt about her official absolute authority. The main concern of Cleopatra when she took control of the country was to protect her children and keep the throne for her son. She did her best to make peace and avoid wars during her life. Her policy was proved intelligent and farsighted.

She took control of the country while young and started her son's rule with showing a friendly



policy towards Syria under the rule of her brother Seleucus IV, ruler of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire. Such policy ended the political tension raised between the two countries before Ptolemy V passed away. She also made an alliance with Rome and pledged allegiance to its government to keep the kingdom of her son.

Cleopatra II and Cleopatra III

This part illustrates a difficult and confusing era of the Ptolemaic history. Since the time of Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II and until the time of Ptolemy X and Cleopatra III, we cannot highlight the role of each ruler independently or discuss any single life alone. There was a kind of partnership and exchange of influence in rule along with conflicts within the royal dynasty. Peacemaking and agreements also found a space in this time. We discuss this era generally as one connected era including seven pharaohs: five kings: Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VII, Ptolemy VIII, Ptolemy IX, Ptol-



emy X; and two queens: 'Cleopatra II and Cleopatra III.'

The two queens were the main policymakers, decision-makers, and controllers of the country. They made many important political decisions and were the queen regent and keepers of the throne in some eras. We cannot understand this long era from 170 to 101 BC without understanding the ambitious role of these two queens and their hard work to protect the kingdom. Both of them proved great powers and effectiveness in rule. Their control and authority were unquestionably apparent in some eras.

Following the death of Cleopatra I in 176 BC, the courtiers of Ptolemy VI convinced him to marry his sister Cleopatra, who was then called Cleopatra II. He declared himself the king and married his younger sister Cleopatra. Both of them claimed the rank of Two Gods nicknamed 'Philometor' i.e. the lovers of their mother.'



The couple thus revived the tradition of pharaohs again in confirmation of their legitimacy in rule following such tradition. The king and his wife soon worked on grounding this legitimacy through completing the construction of Egyptian temples.

The rule had not continued quietly for long. Soon a conflict rose between Ptolemy VI and his brother Ptolemy VIII, who was governing Cyrenaica under the name of the former. Here, the role of the young queen Cleopatra II appeared. She was the wife of Ptolemy VI and the sister of them both. She did her best to make peace and bring about mutual understanding between them.

In 168 BC, they agreed to rule together. In other words, the three siblings formed a triumvirate i.e. a political regime ruled by three powerful individuals known as triumvirs: the two brothers and the sister. Since then, Cleopatra II had a role in governing the country and continued her ef-



fective authority until she passed away in 108 BC. She co-ruled with her two brothers: Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII as well as her two sons: Ptolemy VII and Ptolemy IX. She even ruled the country alone in 132-131 BC.

Reviewing the biography of Cleopatra II unveils how smart and ambitious she was. She was sometimes proved so powerful and authoritative while other times so weak and fragile. After all, she overcame all hard times and kept the throne through difficult situations. She always had an opinion in government and policymaking. She also had the longest term in office among the Ptolemaic rulers.

The personality of Cleopatra II is very controversial. Researchers of her time might express admiration of her and sometimes feel pity for her. One may look at her as the ideal lady for all times and may see her a victim of ambition. But all conclusions would agree that she was a strong lady



overcome by her eastern desire for rule and powers. She was so ambitious and opinionated that she empowered her rule and kept the throne for herself and co-rulers in different situations.

Following the death of Ptolemy VI, his brother Ptolemy VIII seized the opportunity as his older brother died and his heir Ptolemy VII is so young. As such, he contacted his sister Cleopatra II, the widow of the dead brother. They agreed to marry and take care of Ptolemy VIII, the minor king. Following the marriage, Ptolemy VIII disclosed his intentions to restrict her powers and take the throne from the child heir.

Actually, it was not strange from Ptolemy VIII whose personality is noted for oddity and unlimited ambition. He would always find a way to achieve his goals, even at the expenses of the legitimacy of his minor nephew—Ptolemy VII and his sister queen Cleopatra II. He would go beyond all limits even to swords and bloodshed to achieve his plan.



Tragically enough, once he took powers, he killed the minor Ptolemy VII. Cleopatra II was forced to bear the shock and in 144 BC, she gave birth to another son from Ptolemy VIII. However, she feared his father may hurt him. The shameful murder of her older son Ptolemy VII made her lose all trust in her husband, infamously treacherous and dishonest.

Being amid these all horrible events, the mother queen lost her passion and feeling towards her husband—Ptolemy VIII. However, she never lost hope or determination to continue life through delicate compromise and coexistence in hope to keep the throne for her newborn baby Ptolemy IX and so she can maintain her authority.

Actually, Ptolemy VIII had no powers to depose his sister queen and strip her of powers. He then married Cleopatra III—the daughter of his sister-wife Cleopatra II. It was an attempt to remove her authority and grant her position to her



daughter, the new wife. This situation led to the rise of a very strange and unprecedented regime in history of Egypt.

For the first time, the triumvirate form of law in which a man co-rules with two women takes place in Egypt. In this regime, Ptolemy VIII ruled with the sister-wife Queen Cleopatra II and the wife queen Cleopatra III. They thus had two titles: the sister queen and the wife queen.

One can easily imagine a royal palace with two rivalling queens, who were also jealous co-wives and a mother and daughter as well. Each one had its desires and plans, especially after Cleopatra III gave birth to Ptolemy X. Jealousy, conflict, and competition were so normal between them. Ptolemy VIII, a vehemently strong ruler, did the best to use this conflict. Official documents recorded the triumvirate as follows: Ptolemy VII, Cleopatra II, and then Cleopatra III.



Ptolemy VIII died in 116 BC and left Egypt without regency, giving impetus for conflict to rise inside the royal palace. There were two parties: one with Cleopatra II and her son Ptolemy IX and the other with Cleopatra III and her son Ptolemy X.

Cleopatra II managed to ascend her son Ptolemy IX to the throne, for he is older than Ptolemy X. A group of the courtiers helped her. Also the Jews of Alexandria gave her support. Ptolemy X agreed to marry Cleopatra IV upon the advice of his mother and then married his other sister Cleopatra V. Ptolemy X left Egypt to Cyprus and continued in rule over there waiting along with his mother for an opportunity to sit on the throne of Egypt.

Following the death of Cleopatra II, Cleopatra III managed to rule Egypt and dominated the weak king Ptolemy IX for one year, marking his most difficult year. She undermined his rule and



forced him to follow her will until she took over the throne and attempted to restore her son Ptolemy X from Cyprus to Egypt. Finally, she had him back in 107 BC.

After the ascension of Ptolemy X to the throne by the help of his mother, they co-ruled together but the mother had a great influence inside the royal court. She was the actual ruler of the country. In 104-105 BC, she took a qualitative step to increase the power of her position as a ruling queen. She introduced for the first time in the Ptolemaic Dynasty the position of the Priest of Alexander the Great. Such position was especially for the ruling king since its rise. She planned to raise her position over that of her son Ptolemy X. She then led a war against Syria in 103 BC but the war led to nothing but a truce and peacemaking. Following the end of the war, the conflict rose again between the king and his dominating mother. Finally, he killed her in 101 BC ending the life of the most totalitarian queen in the Ptolemaic Dynasty.



Ptolemy X then married to Bernicia—Cleopatra III, the daughter of Ptolemy IX from his first wife Cleopatra IV.

Queen Bernicia—Cleopatra III

Bernicia—Cleopatra III is the daughter of Ptolemy IX and Cleopatra IV, his first wife. She was born in 120 BC. Ptolemy X Alexander I married her in 101 BC following the murder of his mother Cleopatra III. Bernicia III was just a co-ruler without dominating the throne. She appeared on reliefs with her husband following the traditions of the Ptolemaic Dynasty until Ptolemy X was forced to leave Egypt in 88 BC.

Ten years following their marriage in 91-90 BC, a papyrus states that Bernicia III took the name of Cleopatra as a name for the throne in addition to Bernicia. The archive of official documents recorded her name under her husband's name. She also appeared in a unique relief on the Ptolemaic



temple enclosure wall of Edfu showing Bernicia's offering to Hathor in a large long size as high as the wall of the temple. She appeared as a governing queen, who can stand alone in a relief against another relief for her husband Ptolemy X during the rites of the temple.

Over the second period of King Ptolemy IX's rule from 88 to 81 BC, his daughter Bernicia III co-ruled with him. Later she ruled independently following his death for almost one year until she married Ptolemy XI in 80 BC, who killed her after 19 days of marriage to get absolute control of the throne but the Alexandria people killed him on the same day.

Cleopatra VI Tryphaena and Bernicia IV

The origins of Cleopatra VI form a debatable question of uncertainty for historians. Some say she is the daughter of Ptolemy IX from his wife Cleopatra V Selene. She should then be the sis-



ter of King Ptolemy XII that she also married. For others, she was the daughter of Ptolemy X and Bernicia III. She was a governing queen that married to Ptolemy XII and gave birth to Bernicia IV. By the end of 69 BC, the name of Cleopatra VI disappeared from the Ptolemaic documents. It is most likely because of the conflict between the royal couple. Bernicia IV, the daughter of Cleopatra VI, might have ascended to the throne in that time beside her father. Strabo, however, states that Ptolemy had three daughters, of whom only the eldest (Berenice) was legitimate. In other words, the other two daughters Cleopatra VII and Arsinoë IV were not legitimate daughters.

The conditions went bad in Egypt and the people exploded in Alexandria against Ptolemy XII until he left Egypt and escaped to Rome in 58 BC. As such, Cleopatra Tryphaena restored her position and authority by the help of Alexandrians. She ruled Egypt with her daughter Bernicia IV, who called herself Cleopatra Bernicia as



an hooray royal title for the throne following the tradition of the Ptolemaic Dynasty since Cleopatra I. Official documents recorded their names together since 58 – 57 BC.

Only one year later following their joint rule, the mother queen died in 57 BC. She might have been poisoned by her daughter Bernicia IV, who then ruled independently for a short period. Official archives mentioned her name alone or together with her father's name in some papyrus at the same time.

Ptolemy XII had a good relationship with the members of Senate through bribes and promises of giving more and more until his return to Egypt. Early in 55 BC, Ptolemy XII came back and took over the throne by military force. It was the first time that the Roman military forces enter into Egypt. Ptolemy XII took over Alexandria and executed his daughter Bernicia IV and her followers.



Queen Cleopatra VII

Queen Cleopatra VII is the daughter of Ptolemy XII. Her mother is most likely an Egyptian woman, who was a daughter of the Senior High Priest of Ptah in Memphis. She was born in Alexandria in 69 BC. Many researchers, however, maintain that her mother is Queen Cleopatra VI, even if the first opinion has several weightier proofs to give further support. If so is true, which I also maintain, Cleopatra VII is the first Ptolemaic ruler with Egyptian blood. Cleopatra had noted for her excellent education.

She followed her father's example in love of culture and music, and befriending scholars and philosophers and hosting them in the royal court for discussion and learning. The fact that Cleopatra came from an Egyptian mother was a matter she took pride in as uniting the two honorable origins of the Hellenistic and Egyptian ancestors. She had more pride in the Egyptian origin. This



might have been the reason for her special care for learning and culture, as the granddaughter of the High Priest of Memphis. Plutarch stated that unlike her Ptolemaic ancestors, she fluently spoke the Egyptian language.

Cleopatra was a beloved daughter who won the heart of her father Ptolemy XII. She was most likely in his company during the exile. She traveled with him from Egypt to Athens and then fled to Rome. She also suffered a bitter experience with him in exile and after return to Egypt. That is why he ascended her to the throne beside him in 52 BC, one year only before his death.

Ptolemy XII died in 51. He made a will stipulating that his son Ptolemy XIII and his sister Cleopatra VII should rule Egypt together. To safeguard his interests, he made the people of Rome executors of his will. Ptolemy XIII and his sister Cleopatra VII ruled together since 51 BC.



It was that moment when the most famous and controversial queen in Egypt and worldwide took the throne. She always attracts much debate among historians and specialists. She was uniquely ambitious as never had been. It is fair to say that Cleopatra had the characters of several queens from ancient Egypt including Hatshepsut, Nefertiti, and Arsinoë II.

She was young, beautiful, intelligent, ambitious, lovely, and highly civilized. Finally, she always had a way to get what she wanted. Cleopatra co-ruled with six rulers:

- Her father Ptolemy XII.
- Her two full brothers: Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy IV.
- Her son: Caesarion.
- Her two lovers: Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

She always had the upper hand in rule and only her period with her father may be an excep-



tion. With all others, her opinion and decision had got preference. Her name was associated with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Many legendary stories rose about their romantic life and love that human history never knows the like concerning anyone else.

However, studying the life of Cleopatra VII, we can fairly say that she only loved herself and used the two most powerful weapons of women; uniquely exotic beauty and intelligence to empower her position. Her weapon proved very successful. It was through this method that she enrooted her love in hearts of her lovers and earned powers and rule. She also exceptionally used other lethal weapons of women, such as pride, plotting, art of seduction, and affection. She might have gone to the extreme in rule when necessary and conditions allowed it insomuch that she employed the religious Egyptian tradition to serve her best interest. However, she sometimes ignored them when hindering her ambitions.



For her, the good ends justified all means. She always found a means to implement her plans and achieve her ends motivated by the desire for authority. Over her rule, she governed a vast empire that her father since the founding of Ptolemaic Dynasty Ptolemy I to Ptolemy XII could not rule after many wars and use of powers.

Cleopatra was uniquely noted, unlike other kings and rulers, for her multicultural personality as she learned the Greek, Egyptian, and Roman cultures. Though many discussed the disharmonious personality of Cleopatra, she had earned good learning and got enough culture that made her a pretty attractive and eloquent personality. She would charm her listeners and seize hearts and minds of all those who approach her or come to deal with her.

Given her eye-catching beauty and unusual feminism, old writers presented Cleopatra in various ways. For Cassius Dio(155-235 CE), she



was a woman of so surpassing beauty that her deadly enemies would fall in her love. Greek biographer Plutarch (46-120 CE), about a century after Cleopatra's death, presented a less flattering picture:

“For her beauty was in itself not altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her but she was outstandingly noted for her irresistible charm, sweet voice, persuasiveness, and stimulating presence.”

Given her knowledge and culture, Cleopatra spoke different languages including the Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, and Median languages. She would talk to everyone through his language, which is also indicative of her knowledge of different regional cultures. Although Cleopatra VII was one of the most powerful rulers and had more powers than her co-rulers, her time lacked peace and she lost tranquility.



Cleopatra tried to have all authority in her hands since her first day on the throne beside her brother. Mention of Cleopatra alone without her brother started then. The personality of Cleopatra backed by her expertise, intelligence, ambitions, and motivation for authority and kingdom knew no blood relations or pledges given to her brother to protect the kingdom.

She worked on winning the support of more Egyptians and priests; she kept good relations with them and paid special attention to the construction of great temples, particularly in Upper Egypt. Slowly, the sister-brother conflict was disclosed after the famine took place in 50 BC. Actually, the dangers of famine and turmoil resulting thereof started in Alexandria. For the first time, King Ptolemy XIII appeared in documents before his co-ruler Cleopatra VII. It was then when the regents managed to end the totalitarian rule of Cleopatra and the joint rule began in 49 BC.



By the summer of 49 BC, the chancellors of Ptolemy XIII dethroned Cleopatra and she fled from Alexandria to Thebes, Upper Egypt. She continued to win popularity other there. She moved here and there until she settled in Pelusium (currently al-Farma to the east of Port Said). She did her utmost to restore the throne and Ptolemy XIII had to defend his throne, so he marched with armies to the Egyptian borders close to Pelusium to face the forces of Cleopatra. He went on until he camped with his forces by Pelusium in summer of 48 BC.

It was in this time that the ruler of Rome “Julius Caesar” arrived at Alexandria on July 27, 48 BC. He took over the royal palace where he stayed. He exercised absolute authoritative powers, which turned Alexandrians against him. He then made himself a judge between the conflicting siblings. He wanted to consider the dispute over the Egyptian throne in accordance with the will of Ptolemy XII stipulating that his son



Ptolemy XIII and his sister Cleopatra VII should rule Egypt together under the protection of the Roman People. Julius Caesar with aggressive arrogance called upon the queen and the king to meet in Alexandria for judgment and they had no way but to accept whatever judgment he passed.

Cleopatra considered this call a new opportunity to restore her kingdom. At last, she had a way to win the battle through the intervention of the Roman dictator. Her brother tried all ways to stop her from entering into Alexandria. However, Cleopatra embarked in a little skiff and landed at the royal palace when it was already getting dark; and as it was impossible to escape notice otherwise, she stretched herself at full length inside a bed-sack, while Apollodorus [her servant] tied the bed-sack up with a cord and carried it indoors to Caesar.

Cleopatra's determination, courage, and cuteness won the admiration of Julius Caesar. Fur-



thermore, the charm of Cleopatra when the bed-sack was unfolded overcame him. We can easily imagine how she prepared herself for the meeting with determination to influence the most powerful man of the time. She was in her perfect beautification and came out of the bed-sack like Aphrodite—the Goddess of love and beauty coming from the sea.

She seized the heart of Julius Caesar and she won the initiative and first round. Julius Caesar loved the young queen and defended her interests. Cleopatra got the support of Caesar to restore her rights to share the throne of Egypt. He attempts to make reconciliation between them as co-rulers in execution of their father's will. He succeeded in such endeavor to some extent.

However, he also wanted to build a good relationship with Cleopatra, a woman of authority and charm. He might have intended to get money from her in exchange for the authority she got.



It was a relation based on mutual interests. Each party aimed to meet the need of the other and reciprocate interests. There was also the romantic emotions they felt towards each other as a man and a woman. All such plans were not pleasing to the ambition and plans of Ptolemy XIII. He perceived that the situation is turning against his interests.

Soon Cleopatra took over the absolute authority over the throne and became the sole ruler of Egypt backed by Caesar. Ptolemy XIII fled along with his advisors and courtiers. The war broke up in Alexandria, ending with the victory of Caesar while Ptolemy XIII drowned in the River Nile as he tried to escape. Many of his soldiers were killed and finally Alexandria surrendered.

Although Cleopatra was not a direct party in the battle between her brother Ptolemy XIII and Caesar, she got the greatest share of the victory; she got rid of her brother and other enemies.



She had a new relationship with Caesar backed by his powers. Cleopatra had become the strong unrivalled Pharaoh of Egypt. Caesar enhanced the friendship with Cleopatra to guarantee the resources of Egypt for his own personal interest. He planned for Egypt to be affiliated to Rome without being an official Roman Province. This plan can only be achieved through his relationship with Cleopatra, so Caesar had to support her with his powers and protection.

On the other side, Cleopatra worked on improving the status in Alexandria. She declared her marriage to her young brother Ptolemy XIV, who was twelve years old only. He was ten years younger than her. It was a nominal marriage for certain purposes: a) implementing the will of her father to have a brother as co-ruler with her; b) respecting the Egyptian and Ptolemaic traditions that a male king should be on the throne; c) guaranteeing the absolute authority and superiority of Cleopatra. She played the principal role in rule



and was the real ruler in the royal court over the period of their co-rule.

Cleopatra realized that the situation was really opportune and thus decided to invade the heart of Caesar. She planned for a trip with him through the Nile heading to Luxor, leaving the Roman army behind. They got freedom from the military. On her way back from that trip, Cleopatra was pregnant.

By the spring of 47 BC, Caesar had to leave Egypt to complement the necessities of rule and politics in Rome. He had to fight several wars for Rome, in which he won and achieved several victories. As such, he offered Cyprus—a Roman province, to Cleopatra. Such expansion marked her first political gain or restorative since Cyprus was one of the Egyptian provinces until 58 BC.

Following the departure of Caesar from Egypt, Cleopatra gave birth to a son, whom she named



after his father“Caesar.” She was most likely thinking about a future political claim indirectly associated with the name. The Alexandrians ridiculously called the new baby “Caesarion” i.e. the little Caesar, since he was not a child born in legal marriage.

Cleopatra travelled to Rome in 46 BC in response to an invitation from Caesar. She had with her the brother-husband Ptolemy XIV and her son Caesarion. She had a tremendously prestigious procession, impressively touching the souls of Romans. She knew how the prestigious appearance would affect people and fill them with esteem and respect for her. Cleopatra and her courtiers stayed in Caesar’s gardens on the Tiber. Cleopatra had influenced Caesar deeply and led him to adopt many of her ideas. For example, in 46 BC, he adopted the Alexandrian Egyptian Calendar to correct the Roman calendar. He also planned to build a group of public libraries in Rome with great numbers of books on the Greek and Roman literature.



Motivated by Cleopatra, Caesar did his best to win absolute rule and used to dispose of government affairs like a Hellenistic ruler. It had become clear for the members of the Roman Senate that it was a matter of time before Cleopatra would have got absolutely totalitarian powers.

The majesty and luxurious appearance Cleopatra showed in Rome as well as her intimate relationship with Caesar, who ignored the public opinion, left deep effects on people. Those opposing Caesar had seen her a threat to Rome's life and existence. They feared that Caesar may establish a Roman-based Hellenistic political rule. They also feared that he might marry the Ptolemaic queen and establish a new dynasty.

The situation fully stirred up fears, rancor and hate in the Romans. They feared for Rome. Finally, a plot was made and Caesar was murdered. Each of the plotters stabbed him one time to share his blood. The last one to stab him was



Brutus, his close friend. Caesar thus said to him the famous statement, “You Too, Brutus!” In response, Brutus said, “Sorry, but I do love Rome more!” Caesar replied, “Let Caesar die then.” Brutus then declared to the crowds of citizens around the body of Caesar: “Not that I loved Caesar less, but I loved Rome more.”

Coming back to Egypt fully disappointed with her failure to unite the east and west after the murder of Julius Caesar. However, the personality of Cleopatra never gave up. She was resolute to do a new attempt and started plans for it. Shortly after her return, she planned the murder of Ptolemy VIX and ascended her son Caesarion to the throne beside her. She was actually taking a bold step in her planning for the future; Caesarion is the son of Caesar, so she might have rights to claim the inheritance of his father the Caesar.

When Caesarion was ten years old only, he was crowned a pharaoh, which earned him the



five royal titles of legitimate pharaohs to the end of his rule.

Overseas in Rome, the kingdom suffered division following the death of Caesar. Mark Antony and Octavian soon divided up control of Roman territories; Octavian taking Rome and the western part of the empire and Mark Antony taking the eastern territories of the empire. Mark Antony then moved to Tarsus on the southern coast and soon he invited Cleopatra to visit him.

They met in the autumn of 41 BC. Some Roman writers claimed that she used her charm to win Mark Antony. The reason for the invitation was most likely the need of Mark Antony to secure the supply for his campaign on Persia. Obviously, Cleopatra was the most important ruler in the east.

At the beginning Cleopatra was reluctant to respond to the call and was scared to meet Mark



Antony bearing in mind her past relation with Caesar. She started gathering information to envision the personality of Mark Antony. The information confirmed that he was a pleasure-seeker, lover of luxury, and fond of making banquets. Consequently, she decided to meet him taking her two influential weapons; irresistible beauty and incredible intelligence. Plutarch recorded this meeting eloquently, saying:

“The Queen approached Tarsus standing in a magnificent boat with a golden prow, purple sails, and silver oars. As musicians played, Cleopatra reclined under a gold-embroidered canopy dressed as Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love. She was fanned by youths dressed as Eros and waited upon by girls dressed as sea nymphs.”

Antony planned to invite Cleopatra to a banquet but the charming queen was in complete control of events and instead Antony found himself accepting her invitation to a feast she had al-



ready prepared. The queen invaded him and conquered his heart, rather than the reverse. Given her impressive personality, several political reasons were there to encourage their cooperation.

For the second time, Cleopatra conquered the most powerful Roman leader and made him fall in her love. She then used his authority and powers for her political purposes and consolidating her kingdom. She left Tarsus to Alexandria with an invitation to Antony to join her in Egypt, which he rapidly did. She welcomed him in Alexandria where he spend the winter of 41-40 BC.

Cleopatra keenly paid due attention to approach Antony in a pretty fine mood. According to Plutarch, the two lovers feasted one another in costly fashion, making banquets and parties dearly beloved by Antony. In a word, she knew how to overcome his heart and mind. She also bore him a twin brother and sister whom she named “Alexander Helios” and “Cleopatra Selene” before



she bore him their third child “Ptolemy Philadelphus.”

By the 34 BC, Mark Antony defeated the Armenian King Artavasdes II, who was then brought to Alexandria with his family to walk in the prestigious parade of Antony’s victory explicitly announcing Alexandria as the new capital of Antony. It was on that occasion that Antony declared his marriage to Cleopatra and the Donations of Alexandria, which were made by Mark Antony to Cleopatra and her children to rule the east.

It was a plain recognition that Cleopatra and Caesarion were the direct co-rulers of Egypt and Cyprus. Antony further affirmed that Caesarion is the son of Julius Caesar in a hint that he had the right as the legal heir of Caesar. Such plan indirectly intended to weaken the increasing powers of Octavian. Then, Alexander Helios was named king of Armenia, Media and Parthia whereas their young son Ptolemy Philadelphus was named the



king of Syria—to the west of Euphrates and Qalqilya, Phoenicia and Cilicia.

Again, Cleopatra Selene II got Cyrenai-
ca and Libya. It was the climax of Cleopatra's
powers when she was proclaimed the Queen of
Kings and the Queen of Egypt.

On the other side, Octavian was reluctant to
accept the distribution of the Roman territories
and the entire Middle East among the minor chil-
dren of Cleopatra. He also disliked that the entry
of Antony's parade of victory into Alexandria, not
Rome, as the tradition of Romans dictated. It was
not an action to pass in silence, as it implied an
enmity to Rome and Roman interests.

Consequently, the conflict rose between
Antony and Octavian, which finally led to fight in
the Battle of Actium in September 31 BC. It was
the decisive naval battle between the fleet of Oc-
tavian and the fleets of Mark Antony and Cleopa-



tra of Egypt. The fleet of Antony suffered huge losses in Actium, and Cleopatra became sure of the defeat and decided to flee from the battle to Alexandria.

Observing her withdrawal, Antony followed her leaving behind the larger part of his fleet to meet their dooms. Some ancient writers claim that Cleopatra treacherously fled the battle, but most modern studies refuse this view and believe that she may have followed premeditated plans to break from the fighting and regroup. Antony came back to Alexandria disappointed with the results of the war, but soon some fake news, intentionally disseminated by Cleopatra, that Cleopatra committed suicide came to Antony, who unsheathed his sword and impaled himself. Bleeding his last, he knew that she was still alive and waiting for him in her grave. He commanded his followers to take him to her to die in her arms. Some researchers maintained that Cleopatra purposefully led him to death to



make a new compromise with Octavian, even if she would offer him all treasures so as not to walk humbly as a prisoner of war in his parade of victory. However, Octavian was determined to take **her humiliated to Rome in fulfilment of his promise** to the Romans.

Octavian arrested Cleopatra putting her under heavy guard without hurting her for twelve days. He planned to parade her through Rome in chains, but she foiled his humiliating scheme and killed herself. She was heart-broken and suffered badly and mourned deeply after the loss of Antony. She tried hunger strike to avoid Octavian's plan to parade her through Rome but Octavian knew her plans and threatened to kill her children. In response to her request, Octavian finally accepted to meet her. It was their only meeting. Following the record of Plutarch, Cleopatra was badly ill and nervous. She met the new emperor with uncombed hair in a light feminine robe. However, her attempts to soften his heart failed.



She planned to win his kindness but after conversation with Octavian, she was sure she would never win this time. So she would walk in humiliation through Rome in Octavian's parade of victory and she would have no way to keep the kingdoms of her children.

Held in fears of this distressfully humiliating fate, she made her last delusive plan asking Octavian to allow her visiting the grave of Antony for the last time, which he did allowing her visit with lighter security guards. Cleopatra took a good bath and ate a delicious meal, before she sent for a poisonous snake, which was smuggled in a fig basket. The guards did not notice the snake hidden under the figs. It is most likely that Olympus, Cleopatra's personal physician, at the request of Cleopatra prepared this snake for her suicide. After having the food, she allowed the snake to bite her and sent a message to Octavian requesting her burial beside Antony.



Octavian read her message and knew that she planned suicide. He sent some guards to save her but it was too late. Cleopatra died and found laid in her royal dress and golden bed with her two handmaidens. Cleopatra willingly committed suicide holding the poisonous snake in her hand and allowing it to bite her in challenge of the desire of Octavian and her love of life. She bravely decided to die overcoming natural feeling of self-kindness adding a new impression of charm to her personality through death. It was unusual end for a unique queen, whose life and powers are always unprecedented and matchless.

Her death awarded her eternity following the ancient norms of Egyptian religion and traditions. Octavian fulfilled the request of Cleopatra—a 39 years old at her death, to have been buried beside Antony in their ready grave. However, he could not keep his promise to the Romans to take her humiliated to his parade of victory. He thus commanded artists to draw a painting of Cleopa-



tra with two snakes and show them through the parade of victory in Rome, 29 BC.

Cleopatra—the legendary and extraordinary queen and the most famous woman worldwide passed away. Undoubtedly, her acuity and charm awarded her victories and losses. She united the east and the west and earned much admiration and blame as well. With her death, the Ptolemaic rule lasting for three hundred years ended and Egypt had become a Roman territory.



Figure (19): King Ptolemy II in ritual offering to Isis and Arsinoë II in the Temple of Isis, Philae.



Figure (20):The Coinage of Queen Bernicia II



Figure (21): Statue of Queen Cleopatra I holding a horn of plenty in her left hand



Figure (22): A marble Statue of Cleopatra II



Figure (23): A relief of King Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III in the rite of religious offering during their triumvirate



Figure (24): A Marble head of Cleopatra III.



Figure (25): Marble Head of Queen Cleopatra VII



Figure (26) A Bronze Coin whose observe shows the face of Queen Cleopatra VII and the reverse shows the vulture symbolic of Royalty.



Figure (27): A map showing the Donations of Alexandria in 34 BC—the territories ruled by Cleopatra and her children.



Queen Shajar al-Durr

Queen Shajarat-Durr is also known as Shajarat **al-Durrbut** I will use the first name «Shajar al-Durr», for it was used by Jamal al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn Saleem Ibn Waṣīl (1208 – 1298 CE) in his book “Mufarrij al-Kurub fi AkhbarBani Ayyub.” It was also her virgin name.

It means the bright and beautiful lady like the trees bearing pearls and gems for her extraordinary beauty. Shajar al-Durr was, as described, a lovely white lady with dark long hair. She was talented in reading, writing, and singing. Furthermore, she had exceptional intelligence with a strictly strong personality distinguished with unusual speech skills, attractive voice, and pioussness and religious integrity.

Shajar al-Durr is one of the most famous Muslim women. She died in 655 AH/1257 CE. She



had a versatile personality with several distinctive characters. **Man** can only admire and respect her. She had several significant stands with which she protected Egypt and the kingdom. She had a unique ambition and acuity, which helped her to lead a Muslim state. Unlike other past queens, who ruled Egypt, she was just a handmaid but finally became the royal wife of the Egyptian Sultan and later the sultana of Egypt. As such, the rule of Shajar al-Durr is worthy of considerable reflection. What is common among all queens is their unusual leadership that overcame the challenge of traditions and customs.

Shajar al-Durr was the only woman, who ruled Egypt, over the Muslim eras. She was also the first Mamluk rulers. Her origin is a matter of question. Some said she was from Khwarazm, others said she was from Armenia, but she most like, as al-Maqrizi maintained, came from Turkish origins.

The first mention in resources shows a beloved female slave of Sultan al-Ṣaliḥ Najm al-Dīn



Ayyub. No exact date is suggested for the time he possessed her, but records mentioned her early in his possession during the life of his father al-Malek al-Kamel. **Al-ṢaliḥNajm** al-Dīn Ayyub loved Shajar al-Durr so much that she was always in his company. She had a uniquely erotic beauty and irresistible charm shining with acuity and intelligence, sweet speech and lovely manners. Sultan **al-ṢaliḥNajm** al-Dīn Ayyub kept her in his company and relied on her. At times of crises, he would counsel her and resort to her advices and opinions. She was his lovely companion, sincere supporter, and refuge for fun and relief.

Sultan **al-ṢaliḥNajm** al-Dīn was the Crown Prince of his father, who deposed him for some false accusations, appointing him a deputy of the sultan in the eastern territories. **Al-ṢaliḥNajm** al-Dīn was sent away from Egypt, which awarded his half-brother an opportunity to exclude him and take over the throne. Many events took place, which can be summarized as follows to keep focus on the biography of Shajar al-Durr:



Al-ṢaliḥNajm al-Dīn Ayyub decided to restore the royal legacy of his father and set off a campaign against his brother Al-ʿAdel, but he suffered the treachery of some military leaders and his cousin al-Naṣir Dawud, the governor **ofAl-Karak** (also known as Kerak i.e. is a city in Jordan) with some other Mamluk leaders. They arrested him and led him to the Kerak in 636 AH/1239 CE. Only emir Rukn **al-DīnBaibars** and his pregnant slave Shajar al-Durr stood by him. He was imprisoned inside the palace and some courtiers were in a charge of serving him; he was not humiliated as a prisoner but got a proper treatment as an emir, but he was under arrest and could not leave the palace.

The imprisonment of Shajar al-Durr with **ṢaliḥNajm** al-Dīn Ayyub got an exceptional significance in their future political life. It is fair to say that the change in their future started with falling captives and being together in prison. It was through this hard situation that she enrooted



herself deeply in the heart of her master to the end of his life. She kept her loyalty to him forever in life and after death.

The emotional support she gave to him while under arrest made him **love her** beyond limits and earned her an exceptional position. She bore him their son “Khalīl” during their captivation. The son lived only three months but under the Sharia law, she had become a mother of child “um walad” i.e. no longer a slave and cannot be sold, and so it was enough legal grounds for her freedom. **Al-Ṣaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn set her free and then declared their marriage after his coming to Cairo and sitting on the throne of the sultanate. Since then she was respectfully nicknamed by her son “**um Khalīlī**, e. Mother of Khalīl.”

In the wake of his release of prison, **Ṣaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub headed to Cairo as the Mamluk emirs dethroned his brother and imprisoned him. **Al-Ṣaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub had been



able to control Egypt and had himself crowned as the sultan of Egypt after getting the approval of the Abbasid caliph **al-Mustanşir Billah** in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, Shajar al-Durr worked on getting more powers and authority during the time of her husband **al-Şaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub. She acted as the **regentsultan** in his absence, which she did several times during his travels for battles against the crusaders and rebel Ayyubid emirs, or for affairs of governance in the Levant. She assumed almost full powers in her hand and had been close to her husband's administration of government and his way in dealing with the emirs and **Mamelukes**. Consequently, she took control of the greater part of the military.

She played a significant role in the sultanate and her husband was aware of her influence and worked on enhancing her authority and saving her any expected problems. As such, instead of



declaring her as official regent in his absence and to avoid appointing a woman as a regent, he decides to make his dead son “Khalīl” his nominal regent. It was his plan for Shajar al-Durr to exercise authority through him as being his de facto regent, so she ruled in the name of **um khalīl**.

This influential position established the powers of Shajar al-Durr for the future political life, which enabled her to take control of the government when **al-Ṣaliḥ Najm al-Dīn** suffered serious illness in 1249 CE. She assumed the powers of the regent in perfect coordination with her husband but the news of the seventh crusades led by Louis IX soon came to the **al-Ṣaliḥ Najm al-Dīn** Ayyub.

As a sincere leader assured of his duties to his people, al-Ṣaliḥ had to lead the armies despite his serious illness. He headed to Damietta in April 1249 CE but Damietta fell to the hands of the crusaders in June of the same year where they made strong fortifications. Withdrawing his soldiers to



al-Mansoura, al-ṢaliḥNajm al-Dīn Ayyub encamped with the army and made announcement for general mobilization around Egypt. People swiftly responded and came to al-Mansourah to take part in jihad against the invaders. The crusaders were besieged in Damietta for long. Meanwhile, al-ṢaliḥNajm al-Dīn Ayyub died on Monday Sha'ban 15th, 647 AH/November 22 1249 CE. He was only 44 years old. His wife concealed his death lest the enemies may take notice of the news. She moved her body secretly from al-Mansourah to al-Rawdah Castle where his burial took place. No one knew about the news of his death. For a long concealment of his death, Shajar al-Durr declared that the sultan is seriously sick and only his personal physicians can visit him. She used original blank royal decrees signed by the sultan himself before his death, as said.

While the military crisis was in process, she sent to Turanshah—the last son of Sultan al-ṢaliḥNajm al-Dīn Ayyub to come to Egypt and



succeed his father in rule. She then summoned the leaders and emirs and told them that the sultan issued a royal decree that they must swear their pledges of allegiance to him and his son al-Malek al-Mu‘azzam **Ghiyath** al-Dīn **Turanshah**, the governor of Hasankeyf to succeed him as the sultan of Egypt—and to Fakhr al-Dīn **Yousuf** Ibn Shaykh al-Shuyoukh to lead the military, Atabeks, and the state’s affairs.

All military leaders and Mamluk emirs responded positively under thought that the sultan is still alive and gave their pledges of allegiance. The queen then sent a message to emir Hosam al-Dīn, the governor of Cairo, telling him about the pledge of allegiance sworn to Turanshah. As such, he had to make the leading authoritative leaders of Cairo take the same pledge of allegiance. Prayers in the name of Turanshah had been announced following the father’s name in Friday religious public speeches.



Shajar al-Durr then sent a royal command to Fares al-Dīn **Aktai** to bring Turanshah from Hasankeyf to Cairo, which he swiftly did and Turanshah entered Cairo on February 19, 1250 CE. He was then proclaimed the new sultan and soon headed to al-Mansourah to lead the army against Louis IX of France and the Seventh Crusade.

Over a period of three months between the death of **al-ṢaliḥNajm** al-Dīn Ayyub and the arrival of his son, Shajar al-Durr was in full control of the government and the battle against the crusades backed by Fakhr al-DīnYousuf, who died in one of his recurrent attacks on the crusades on February 9, 1250 CE before the arrival of Turanshah.

As such, Shajar al-Durr assumed the responsibility of the commander-in-chief of the army in addition to other jurisdictions and powers to stand as the absolute ruler of the country and the army. As such, she appointed ‘Izz al-Dīn**Aybak** al-



Turkmani to partly share the responsibility of conducting the public affairs and Rukn al-Dīn **Baibars** al-Bunduqdari as the commander-in-chief of the army.

She saved the country from an impending danger of turning Egypt into a crusader state. The news of the sultan's death leaked into the crusades at the same time when new supplies of armies and ammunition arrived them with Alphonse, Count of Poitiers—the brother of Louis IX. The crusaders got further motivation by the news and decided to leave Damietta heading to Cairo across the Nile at Bahr Ashmum currently known as al-Bahr al-Ṣaghīr.

They suddenly attacked the Muslim camp in Judaila three kilometers from al-Mansourah where emir Fakhr al-Dīn was killed and the soldiers fled following the sudden attack.

Emir Rukn al-Dīn **Baibars** discussed a new counterattack plan with Shajar al-Durr to out-



maneuver thebrash crusaders and entrap them. The queen approved of the plan and Rukn al-Dīn **Baibars** started organizing the withdrawing forces from Judaila to al-Mansourah. He asked soldiers and people of the city to keep quiet until the attacking crusaders think that the city is empty. The crusaders were entrapped as they rushed into the city heading to the royal palace to occupy it. All of a sudden, the Mamluks attacked them from all sides shooting and killing with swords and arrows.

The people of al-Mansourah and volunteers wishing for victory or martyrdom blocked all streets and avenues besieging the crusaders from all sides. They had no way to escape ending with a huge number of thecrusaders killed and the rest facing a severe defeat in the streets of al-Mansourah.

Such was the first victory of the **Bahriyya** Mamluks inside Egypt as vehemently powerful horse-



men and warriors given sincerely and wholly to the mission of defending Egypt. They had undertaken a decisively significant role in support of Shajar al-Durr at this critical moment in the history of Egypt and the region. Shajar al-Durr luckily had a date with glory, as she protected Egypt and the sultanate. She also gave rise to a number of outstanding leaders who made history and affected the world history through the coming eras, such as ‘Izz al-Dīn **Aybak** al-Türkmani, Rukn al-Dīn **Baibars**, Saif al-Dīn **Qutaz**, and Qalawun al-Alfi among others.

The battle of al-Mansourah marked a final battle dejecting the bravery of Louis IX and from that moment the crusaders’ situation quickly suffered open deterioration after the shortage in supply and huge losses in warriors. Diseases and infections spread among their army. Meanwhile, al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam Turanshah arrived at al-Mansourah in February 1250 CE and the death of King **Ṣaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub was declared.



Shajar al-Durr surrendered all her powers to him, which had vigorously improved the morale of the Egyptians. The whole situation inspired people with good hopes.

Once Turanshah got the leadership of the war against the crusaders, he started organizing the plans with the Mamluk emirs. The final battle soon took place in April 1250 CE. The invading forces suffered fatal defeat and Louis IX was captured and put under arrest in the House of Judge Ibrahim Ibn Luqman. Other leaders were also captured including the two brothers of Louis IX: Alphonse, Count of Poitiers and Charles of Anjou among several other princes and noblemen. Most of them were imprisoned in the same House of Ibn Luqman with Louis IX.

Following the glorious victory, Turanshah moved to Faraskur and swiftly acted a vicious life marked by immorality and corruption. He even turned against Shajar al-Durr instead of feeling gratitude to her sincerity and wisdom. She con-



celeated the news of his father's death and endured the sorrows in silence and determination, leading the military operations until his arrival and inauguration.

He sent her threatening messages requesting her to hand over the wealth and treasures of his father. In response, she asserted that she spent the money in equipping the forces for war and in other public affairs of the state. Not only had Turanshah disturbed the queen but also started to hurt the Mamluk emirs famously noted for their role in achieving the great victory and defeating the forces of the seventh crusade. He started plots to get rid of them. Shajar al-Durr and the **Ṣaliḥi Mamluks** i.e. armed slaves and freedmen of **Ṣaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub, had no other way but to assassinate Turanshah, which they did on May 2, 1250 CE when Rukn al-Dīn Baibars slayed him.

Following the assassination of Turanshah, another era of the life of Shajar al-Durr started. She aimed to keep the structure and hierarchy of



the government and protect the sultanate from division and any possible turmoil. The Mamluks were apparently ready to take an active step in strengthening their powers and making their new future. They decided to appoint Shajar al-Durr as the female sultana of Egypt.

Allah willed to award Shajar al-Durr the kingdom paving her way and facilitating all means for that purpose. Though the norms and customs of society as well as the surrounding conditions were not opportune for stability, but Allah made her a bridge between two eras; the era of Ayyubid **Dynasty** and the Mamluk rule. Her time in office was so short before the Mamluk era started.

On the same day, Turanshah died, the Mamluk emirs held a meeting and came into agreement to appoint Shajar al-Durr as their Sultana, stipulating that 'Izz al-Dīn **Aybak** al-Turkmani shall be the commander-in-chief of the military. Shajar al-Durr soon started her earnest endeavors to evacuate the crusaders from Egypt and finally



restored Damietta on Friday Safar 3, 648 AH/May 7, 1250 CE.

The sultan's banners and flags were raised high with the sounds of **tahlīl** i.e. la ilaha illa Allah, and **takbīr** i.e. Allah Akbar, enchanted high after eleven months and nine days since the crusaders occupied it. Louis IX left with other captives bearing shameful defeat and curses and marking the total failure of the seventh crusade.

Such moment also witnessed the end of the Ayyubid Dynasty and the birth of the Mamluk kingdom, which constantly kept the flag of jihad and pursued the fight against the enemies of Islam and Muslim.

On Thursday, Ṣafar 2, 684 AH/May 6, 1250 CE, Shajar al-Durr was ascended to the throne and worn the royal sultani dress. Emirs swore pledges of allegiance kissing the ground in her front from behind a curtain. The royal decrees



were then issued with her royal signature briefly “walidatKhalīl i.e. mother of Khalīl.”

Friday speakers of Cairo and other territories prayed for her “O Allah! Safeguard permanently the highly prestigious sultan and most powerful protection the queen of Muslims, walidatKhalīl” or “O Allah, Safeguard the Ṣaliḥi^{side}, the queen of Muslims, the protection of life and religion, um Khalīl.” Her name was engraved on coins as follows “The Ṣaliḥi Queen of Muslims, mother of the triumphant king Khalīl, commander of the believers.”

The ascension of Shajar al-Durr to the throne was not free from obstacles. Taking the constitutional oath, for example, was not like other former sultans in front of emirs, sheikhs, and judges. Rather the emirs who were proved loyal to her husband and her along with their courtiers attended and gave their pledges of allegiance in full absence of people. Instead of walking through



the streets of Cairo for people to know the new sultan, all such procedures were left to avoid instigating any offensive response against the sultana.

Shajar al-Durr had given generous gifts to the Bahriyya Mamluks, who formed the central powers of her kingdom. She was keen to win their approval by all means and she did her utmost to win the support of people. She was the first female ruler in the Muslim ages, a change that the Abbasid caliph al-Musta'sim Billahi Abu Ja'far, senior sheikhs and scholars condemned.

Sheikh 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn 'Ab al-Salam said, "When Shajar al-Durr took control of the Egyptian land, I wrote a prosodic article on the afflictions divinely sent on Muslims by bring their leadership to a woman" (*Bada'i' al-Zuhur fi waqa'i' al-Duhur*. 1: 286).

Likewise, al-Maqrizi (*al-Suluk fi Ma'rifat Duwal al-Muluk*, 1/2/368) said, "Once the news came to



Baghdad, the caliph al-Musta‘sim Billahi sent a letter from Baghdad to Egypt denying her ascension and saying, “If you have no man, let us know to send you a man.”

Shams al-Dīn al-Jazri also confirmed this message from Baghdad to Cairo with further reference to a prophetic statement, “Have you not heard the prophetic statement, ‘A nation with a female leader may not get success!’ expressing a decisive disapproval of this ascension.”

Once the news of these messages came to Shajar al-Durr, she assembled the emirs and judges and stepped down willingly. Her time in office was only eighty days. The caliph highly honored Shajar al-Durr as she exceptionally turned the Muslim defeat into open victory while the Ayyubid rule was almost gone. She maintained the honor and dignity for all Muslims and Arabs.

However, the Muslim social tradition was irresistible and no one would dare to accept a woman



as the absolute monarch of a Muslim state, given the caliph's approval of her influential role in government beside her husband and after his death.

Conditions went against Shajar al-Durr regardless of her talented governance, decisive determination, and generous gifts to people and emirs. As the caliph and senior sheikhs denied her ascension, a strong opposition and protest erupted inside and outside the country, condemning the enthroning of a woman. Meanwhile, the Ayyubids opposed her for the murder of Turanshah and moving the kingdom from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks.

Shajar al-Durr had no way but to step down. The judges suggested that she may marry a Mamluk emir “Izz al-Dīn **Aybak** al-Turkmani”—the commander-in-chief of the military, in July 1250 CE, which she did and abdicated in his favor after eighty days in office. She started her political life a wife of a king—**Ṣalīḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub,



and ended it a wife of a king—“al-Mu‘izz ‘Izz al-DīnAybak.

Shajar al-Durr was forced to step down, appointing a Mamluk sultan, but this step did not end the Syrian Ayyubid opposition to the new Mamluk rulers in Egypt. Both parties were keen to keep the interests secured. As such, the Mamluks just brought a ten-year-old Ayyubid grandson of the Ayyubid King al-Kamel and declared him a sultan, giving him the title “al-Malek al-Ashraf Muzaḥḥar al-Dīn Musa i.e. The Honorable triumphant king Muzaḥḥar al-DīnMusa.” ‘Izz al-DīnAybak also declared that he is only a regent of the Abbasid caliph as Egypt is a territory of the Abbasid caliphate but Aybakwas the de factosultan of Mamluks.

Meanwhile, the dangers of Moguls exacerbated in the eastern wing of Muslim lands. ‘Izz al-DīnAybak had to take the necessary measures in preparation for wars against the Moguls. He thus dethroned the child al-Ashraf Musa to be the last Ayyubid ruler for him prayers declared in Egypt.



Instead of appointing Shajar al-Durr as his regent, as she was with al-Ṣaliḥ Ayyub, he appointed Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz as his regent. He wished to have a powerful military leader behind him, but Shajar al-Durr thought he tried to exclude her from rule.

Contextual proofs show that Shajar al-Durr never stopped her exercise of powers, even after stepping down officially and giving the leadership to her husband. She could not retreat to the soft suite of women in palace. Things went worse when instigated by women's jealousy, as Shajar al-Durr loved her husband and felt jealous for the other wife. Driven by this blind emotion, she forced Aybak to forsake his freedwoman and mother of his child 'Ali. She strictly stopped him from visiting her and her child insomuch that Ibn TaghriBardi said, "She was in full control of Aybak that he had no word with her."

Shajar al-Durr, who practiced rule with her first husband al-Ṣaliḥ Ayyub, could not retire and resort to the normal domestic life of harem in



palaces. Frequent interventions of Shajar al-Durr with the affairs of government finally bestirred Aybak against her. He started establishing his powers and getting rid of rival emirs inside and rival Ayyubids outside.

After getting some experience in rule, he decided to marry the daughter of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'—the governor of Mosul. The news soon came to Shajar al-Durr, who got mad at him and plotted to do away with him. She sent to him in appeal for peace and asking his forgiveness. He was easily deceived by her cunning plan and, in response, visited her in the Castle where he was assassinated on Rabī' al-Awwal 23, 655 AH/April 10, 1257 CE.

Shajar al-Durr then disseminated rumors that Aybak died suddenly at night, but his Mamluk-followers did not believe her and besieged the Castle. They got her out and carried her to the other wife of 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak, who commanded her maidens to kill her a few days later. They hit



her with clogs on head and hurled her over the Castle walls. She was left for days without burial until she was carried to her comb and buried.

Such was the tragic end of an exceptionally ambitious lady noted for her insightful vision, wisdom, and talented governance that earned her the praise and respect of all. Ibn TaghriBardi, a contemporary historian of the Mamluk rule, said,

“She was given to charitable endeavors and adherence to religion with binding impression on souls and her exploits and charitable endowments are well known.”

Shajar al-Durr was not just an authoritative queen in Cairo or a female slave, who succeeded to establish the kingdom of slaves, known as the Mamluk era, but she had several shining sides. She is noted for her due care for construction and arts; she built two lasting graves in Cairo;



one for **al-Ṣaliḥ Najm** al-Dīn Ayyub, known as the Ṣaliḥi Dome of Nahhasīn district, and the other grave is for herself in al-Khaktīfahst. opposing to Al-Sayyida **Ruqayyah** Grave.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that even if Shajar al-Durr was not the only legitimate and official ruler at any time, she did great changes in the administrative system of government and took part actively in conducting the affairs of the state and exercising authority for almost ten years.

Whether she officially or unofficially took control of the country, she brought about drastic historic changes in Egypt and was closely associated with the transmission of powers from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks.

Had the traditions and norms of society not stopped Shajar al-Durr's rule, she would have done great achievements in arts and literature, enriching the political and social life, and might



have been among the greatest Egyptian rulers and the most inspiring sources of national pride for all Egyptians.



Figure (28): Oil famous portrait of Sultana Shajar al-Durr by William Clarke Wontner (1920)



Figure (29): A golden dinar coined in the name of Shajar al-Durr



Figure (30): The Grave of Shajar al-Durr



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