

HUMANITIES

Juba, Cleopatra Selene, and the Roman Empire

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ABSTRACT

Juba and Cleopatra Selene ruled the client kingdom of Mauretania during the reign of Augustus. The couple's rule over the country was different than the way other rulers controlled different client kingdoms. Their rule was bizarre for three main reasons: both of the rulers were children of traitors to the state of Rome, Cleopatra Selene was allowed to follow the role of the Imperial women of Rome, and the couple also followed the example of the Ptolemy's rather than of Juba's dynasty which created largely different rule than the other client kingdoms of the time. Client rulers were not usually allowed to act in this manner.

When Ancient Rome transitioned from a republic to an empire, a lot of new things came out of this transition. We get Augustus as the first citizen of Rome, also known as the first emperor. We get new foundations of family and morals being defined by the government, just to name a few. But we also get the bizarre rule of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene of ancient Mauritania. Juba II and Cleopatra Selene ruled as client kings of Mauritania during the reign of Augustus. Client kings were rulers of a country outside of the Roman Empire that were in the process of transitioning to become part of the empire.¹ Ancient Mauritania covers from modern day Morocco, stretching most of northern Algeria and ending at about the north-western tip of Libya. What makes these two different than a lot of the other client kings of the time was that they were the children of traitors to Rome. Another bizarre part of their past was that the client rulers were raised in Rome in the household of a Julian family member. With this in mind, the reason behind Augustus giving these two children of traitors the kingdom of Mauritania appears to be under the great logic of Augustus. Augustus put Juba and Cleopatra Selene to rule Mauritania to prepare the area for the eventual Romanization of the land. Under their rule, Mauritania became a Romanized area on the frontier of the Roman Empire to help guard the Empire from would-be enemies as well as to transition the people of the kingdom to the Roman style of rule. While they ruled this kingdom, their style of rule was also bizarre. The rule of Juba and Cleopatra Selene was unusual for three reasons: both were children of traitors to Rome, Cleopatra Selene followed the role of the Imperial women of Rome, and the couple also followed the example of the Ptolemy's rather than of Juba's dynasty which created largely different rule than the other client kingdoms of the time.

In order to understand why the rule of Juba and Cleopatra Selene was odd, one must first look at the state of the kingdom they were given. Mauritania was a kingdom where there was a great deal of instability. The area was involved in the Roman civil wars.² The latest one was between Caesar and Pompey, not the civil war between Augustus and Antony.³ During this time, the area was ruled by two kings, who had split the area in half. These kings were Brocchus and Brogudes; after both of their deaths, according to Cassius Dio, an ancient historian, Augustus united their kingdoms into one Roman province; however, Duane Roller, a modern historian, disagrees. Roller believes that Mauritania was not a province at this time because a province by this name is lacking in the list of provinces Augustus, himself, made at Antium.⁴ Antium was the battle between Augustus, who at that time was going by the name Octavian, against Marcus Antony and Cleopatra of Egypt. The status of this area from the death of Brocchus, who passed away last, and the beginning of the reign of Juba still remains unknown. With either of the options given by the sources, the kingdom of Mauritania would have been unstable, likely following as a kingdom without a ruler. If the kingdom was a new province, as Dio claimed, there is no record of there being a governor, other than the one sent by Julius Caesar before the death of the kings.⁵ This does seem unlikely due to Augustus making the area a client kingdom with the rule of Juba

1. Byron R. McCane, "Simply Irresistible: Augustus, Herod, and the Empire", *Journal of Biblical Literature* (2008), 731.

2. Duane W. Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: Royal Scholarship on Rome's African Frontier* (New York, Routledge, 2003), 95.

3. Roller, 95.

4. Roller, 95.

5. Roller 93.

II and Cleopatra Selene. However, the very claim that Augustus was able to choose the rulers of an area outside of a Roman province, especially if the people ruling the land have no ancestral ties to the country, does seem to be different than how the other provinces were governed. To appoint a king and queen of the area rather than a governor, reveals Augustus believed the area a kingdom rather than a province for senators of Rome to rule. If the area was not under Roman rule, then there was no evidence that Brocchus and Brogudes left an heir to either of their parts of the kingdom, leaving the country as a whole on the edge of disaster. This was the kingdom that Juba and Cleopatra Selene were given.

The rule of the client kingdom of Mauritania begins with the rulers themselves. Juba and Cleopatra Selene were both the children of traitors to the Roman Republic, both having marched in a triumph as children. Juba, as an infant, after the Roman victory in Nubia; Cleopatra Selene at about ten, after the Roman victory over her parents at Antium and the conquering of Egypt.⁶ Both raised in Rome in the household of Augustus' sister Octavia.⁷ Having two children of traitors to Rome being sent to rule one of the client kingdoms as adults is strange for the time frame. The couple had no ancestral rites to the kingdom but natives of the surrounding kingdoms, which was more common of the time. While these two did originate in surrounding kingdoms, citizenship of both of these two would have been first to their native lands, no one would have mistaken them for having Mauritanian citizenship before Augustus gave them titles as such. Both Herod the Great of Judea and Archelaus of Cappadocia followed this example.⁸ They both had ancestral ties to the kingdoms they were given to rule and had actually been living in the country. Whereas for Juba and Cleopatra Selene, it is doubtful that either one of them set foot in the kingdom before the couple was sent to rule the area.⁹ For comparison one should look at the rulers of the other client kingdoms at the time. The client kings for being Herod the Great and Archelaus of Cappadocia because these two Augustus appointed as kings in the same time period. Herod was given his rule in Judea by Antony for his friendship.¹⁰ Archelaus of Cappadocia was a native to the Cappadocia's neighboring land, Pontus. Archelaus' family was not of kings but of priests; another claim was made that the only reason that Antony made Archelaus king was because Antony had an infatuation with Glaphyra, Archelaus' mother.¹¹ Both Herod and Archelaus were confirmed as client kings by Augustus after Antium, despite both of them having sided with Antony.¹² Herod and Archelaus were confirmed to be client kings because they had shown loyalty and leadership skills that Augustus wanted in the outskirts of the empire he was forming. This is where the rulers of Mauritania are different, yet again, Juba and Cleopatra Selene were from neighboring regions, Juba from Numidia and Cleopatra Selene from Egypt;

6. Roller 59, 83.

7. Roller 63, 84.

8. David Jacobson, "Three Client Kings: Herod of Judaea, Archelaus of Cappadocia and Juba of Mauretania", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (2001), 24.

9. Beatrice Chanler, *Cleopatra's Daughter* (New York, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1934)

10. Flavius Josephus, *Book XIV: From the Death of Queen Alexandria to the Death of Antigonus*, "Chapter 13: HOW ANTONY MADE HEROD AND PHASAELUS TETRARCHS, AFTER THEY HAD BEEN ACCUSED TO NO PURPOSE; AND HOW THE PARTHIANS WHEN THEY BROUGHT ANTIGONUS INTO JUDEA TOOK HYRCANUS AND PHASAELUS CAPTIVES. HEROD'S FLIGHT; AND WHAT AFFLICTIONS HYRCANUS AND PHASAELUS ENDURED", 1.

11. Jacobson, 24.

12. Jacobson, 24.

however, both of them were children of traitors to the Roman Republic rather than friends with the wrong side of the civil war. Augustus viewed the leadership skills and the loyalty Herod and Archelaus demonstrated under Antony to keep them in place rather than replacing them. Rather, Juba and Cleopatra Selene held blood ties to traitors of Rome. Blood ties tend to be more memorable than loyalty ties. Another difference of Juba and Cleopatra Selene's appointment to client rulers was that neither one of them had any experiences leading or running a country. Juba had some military experience on campaign with Augustus in Spain before he was appointed client king of Mauritania, giving him some of the experience necessary to help defend the empire from the frontiers of his new kingdom.¹³ Both of them had been born to ruling families but had both been taken from their native lands before either could have been shown how to rule their countries giving them the ancestral class standing to rule the client kingdom.

The rulers did another controversial thing for this time period. The coins of Juba and Cleopatra Selene followed the influences of the imperial women in Rome. Cleopatra Selene was able to mint coins with her profile on them without her husband, whereas elsewhere the client queens of the time were not on their country's coins; other client kingdoms have a clear male dominance in their coins. Cleopatra Selene was having coins minted with her face on them alone, similar to Livia, Augustus' wife.¹⁴ This is odd because she was one of, if not the only, client queens to take this liberty during a time when the only women who had a connection to the Roman Empire that were doing this were the women in Augustus' own family. For example, the coin of Livia has her profile with the name Augusta written on the bottom. Augusta was another name that Livia was known as. Cleopatra Selene grew up in the household with Livia and the other imperial women present, possibly while they minted these coins. For her, this would have seemed a natural development for a ruler's wife. Cleopatra Selene's coins feature her profile on one side of the coin and a crocodile on the other.¹⁵ According to Roller none of Cleopatra Selene's coins are dated and there for make placing them on a time line impossible.¹⁶ The coins themselves tell a story of a women who felt she had the right and the obligation to the people she ruled to make her own coins, similar to that of the imperial women in Rome and her own mother, Cleopatra VII. The crocodile of the Nile is thought to represent her dynasty as well as her coins being in Greek rather than in Latin like the coins of her husband.¹⁷ It seems strange for a woman in the time period to not only be minting her own coins but to have them be visually different than the coins of her husband. Instead of a province, the coins continue the story of rulers who chose to go against the grain of other client kingdoms at the same time they ruled. Provinces were ruled by consuls or proconsuls of Rome. Coins at this period would not have had the wives of governors on them when the imperial family just started the trend of having women on coins recently. Cleopatra Selene may have learned to put women on coins in Rome but to use the concept in her own country became a new development. Juba's dynasty does not have many sources on the women rulers, especially not women who had their profile on the coins instead of the kings'. Cleopatra Selene followed the role of the imperial women in Rome and she was allowed to act differently than the other client rulers in the time period; Augustus knew Cleopatra Selene's

13. Cassius Dio, Roman History, "Book 53", 7.

14. Livia, 22CE, Collection L, Edgar L. Owen Galleries, Lake Hopatcong, NJ.

15. Roller 246, figure 26c, d.

16. Roller 151.

17. Roller 151, 245 figure 25.

loyalty by her coins.

Not only was Cleopatra Selene minting her own coins along with those of her husband Juba, their rule also followed a different path than the ones of other client rulers in regards to their family and the influence that ancestry had. Juba and Cleopatra Selene followed the influence of her dynasty, the Ptolemy dynasty rather than Juba's own dynasty. The case example for this is that their son was named Ptolemy. Beatrice Chanler put it eloquently when she says, "In defiance of royal diplomacy [Cleopatra Selene] gave him the name of Ptolemy".¹⁸ Even though what Chanler said might be considered comical, it seems unlikely that Juba would have even considered allowing Cleopatra Selene to name their son such if he was not fully agreed upon the name of Ptolemy. In this time frame, children were named after men and the man's family, not after women or the woman's family. Therefore, their son being named Ptolemy shows that the rule of Juba and Cleopatra Selene was full of the influence of the Ptolemies. The scholarship of Juba also took influence from the Ptolemies. Juba claimed to have found the source of the Nile in Mauritania.¹⁹ Although in modern times, this idea may seem a bit absurd, the very notion of Juba wanting to find the Nile shows that Cleopatra Selene and the Ptolemies had a large influence on Juba even in his studies and his explorations. If these examples were not enough to show the strong influence of the Ptolemies, Juba also had a statue of himself made in the gymnasium of Ptolemy in Athens.²⁰ The gymnasium had been built by one of Cleopatra Selene's ancestors.²¹ The statue shows that Juba placed an important emphasis on his wife's family line, not something one did at this time, especially when Juba himself came from a royal family. To have the influence of the queen's dynasty rather than that of the king implies that the client rulers of Mauritania were following a different path than the other client kingdoms of the time. They were following a woman's influence, something that did not happen very often in the client kingdom let alone in Rome. To have such a difference in the influences of the client kingdoms is bizarre, implying that the rulers of Mauretania might of have had a different relationship with Augustus. The rulers of Mauritania were allowed to rule in this fashion, for what Augustus gave he could easily have taken back if he did not approve of the way the couple was ruling their kingdom.

Juba and Cleopatra Selene came to a country that was on the edge of disaster. The status of the kingdom being unknown. During their rule, they were able to stabilize the country enough to be able to lead their country in a new direction before it would become part of the Roman Empire. Having two client monarchs behave this strangely in the Roman empire is not normal for the time period. The children of traitors to the state were not given kingdoms. Women did not go around putting their faces on coins. And men did not allow their children to be named after the wife's family. For Juba and Cleopatra Selene to be able and permitted to behave in this fashion implies that they more than likely had a strong relationship with Augustus. If they did not have a strong relationship with him, then the couple more than likely would not have been following the role of the Imperial women of Rome, they also would not be following the example of the Ptolemy's rather than of Juba's dynasty which resulted in a largely different rule than the other client kingdoms of the time. The impact of their rule was not long lived. Their son, Ptolemy,

18. Chanler 261.

19. D. Braund, "Juba II, Cleopatra Selene and the Course of the Nile", *The Classical Quarterly* (1984) 177.

20. Braund, 178.

21. Braund, 177.

briefly took on the role of co-ruler before his father died.²² Mauritania's role as a client kingdom came to an end with the death of Ptolemy at the hands of Caligula, the third roman emperor.

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- Livia, 22CE, *Collection L*, Edgar L. Owen Galleries, Lake Hopatcong, NJ.

22. Chanler, 315.



Figure 1. Livia's coin.