THE SYMBOL OF CLEOPATRA SELENE: 
READING CROCODILES ON COINS IN THE LATE REPUBLIC 
AND EARLY PRINCIPATE

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an explanation for the sudden appearance of the image of a crocodile on certain, specific Roman coin issues in the last years of the Republic, and its reappearance in the early years of the Principate. It will suggest that the crocodile was specifically selected for Cleopatra Selene by Cleopatra VII, and that this selection was intended to recall a significant event that occurred at the foundation of the Ptolemaic dynasty, comprising part of a wider strategy of reconstituting the empire of Ptolemy I Soter and Ptolemy II Philadelphos. As a result, the image was subsequently utilised on Octavian’s gold and silver AEGYPTO CAPTA coinage, the bronze Nemausus coinage, and the coinage of Juba II of Mauretania, all of which either alluded to, or directly referred to, Cleopatra Selene.

Introduction

In the period 37-34 BC, two series of coins (one with Latin legends, the other Greek) were issued in Crete and Cyrenaica to mark the Roman triumvir Marcus Antonius’ assignment of these territories to Cleopatra Selene, his daughter by Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt. These coins were stamped with the image of a crocodile, an image that until this point had not featured prominently on either Roman or Egyptian coinage. Was the crocodile intended to symbolise or personify Egypt, and Egyptian dominion over the territories that Antonius had recently bestowed not only upon Cleopatra Selene, but also upon her twin brother Alexander Helios and younger brother Ptolemy Philadelphos? Or was it intended to

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stand for Cleopatra Selene herself, serving as her badge or emblem the way that her father used the lion and club of his divine ancestor Hercules, or Octavian was to use the capricorn of his natal sign? And, if so, why was the crocodile chosen in the first place?

I will argue here that the crocodile was specifically selected for Cleopatra Selene by Cleopatra VII, and that this selection was intended to recall a significant event that occurred at the foundation of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and comprised part of a wider strategy of reconstituting the empire of Ptolemy I Soter and Ptolemy II Philadelphos. I will also argue that, as a result, this selection subsequently influenced the designs of Octavian’s gold and silver AEGVPTO CAPTA coinage, the bronze Nemausus coinage, and the coinage of Juba II of Mauretania.

AEGVPTO CAPTA

After the suicide of Cleopatra VII and the Roman annexation of Egypt in 30 BC, Octavian issued a series of coins commemorating his victory. One of these, a denarius, is thought to have been issued from a mint in Italy (perhaps even in Rome) in 28 BC. It portrayed Octavian facing right with a lituus behind and the legend CAESAR COS VI on the obverse, with a crocodile and the legend AEGVPTO CAPTA on the reverse (see Figure 1).\textsuperscript{1} The source of the other two coin types is entirely uncertain, although an eastern mint (perhaps Pergamum) has been suggested.\textsuperscript{2} The first of these was a denarius issued in 28 BC which portrayed Octavian facing right above a small capricorn with the legend CAESAR DIVI F COS VI on the obverse, with a crocodile and the legend AEGVPTO CAPTA on the reverse.\textsuperscript{3} The second was an aureus issued early in 27 BC which portrayed Octavian, soon to be known as Augustus, facing right above a small capricorn with the legend CAESAR DIVI F COS VII on the obverse, with a crocodile and the legend AEGVPTO CAPTA on the reverse.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} RIC 275a = BMC 650. Although an Italian source for this issue is the theory currently favoured by scholars, this is far from certain. For a tabulation of Octavian’s coin issues during this period, see J.W. Rich & J.H.C. Williams, ‘Leges et Iura P. R. Restitvit: a new aureus of Octavian and the settlement of 28-27 BC’, Num. Chron. 159 (1999) 169-213, at 171.
\textsuperscript{3} RIC 545 = BMC 653.
\textsuperscript{4} RIC 544 = BMC 655. There is a fourth coin (RIC 546), an aureus issued from an uncertain mint and dated to 27 BC, which depicts Octavian facing right with the legend IMP CAESAR DIVI F AVGVST COS VII on the obverse and a hippopotamus with the legend AEGYPTO CAPTA on the reverse. However, according to C.H.V.
The legend AEGVPTO (or AEGVPT) CAPTA distinguished Egypt from the eastern territories that had been under Antonius’ control in his role as Roman triumvir since 42 BC, but were now under Octavian’s – Egypt had been captured, not just recovered. In any case, the purpose of the AEGVPTO CAPTA coins was not simply to inform people that Egypt had been conquered and annexed; even in antiquity, a period of between two and three years was ample time for news of such political, military and economic significance to spread throughout the Roman Empire. At first glance, Octavian’s choice of a crocodile to supplement the legend and decorate the reverse face of his coins is straightforward: the crocodile is intended to symbolise or perhaps even personify Egypt. However, such a simplistic interpretation underplays the novelty of a motif that was almost entirely without precedent in Roman numismatic iconography and begs the question: why such a radical departure?

The symbol of Egypt?

Macaulay-Lewis has suggested that ‘a crocodile, known from the Egyptianising Roman art from the mid and late Republic, was a far better, more easily read symbol of Egypt on Augustan coinage than a papyrus

Sutherland, *Coinage in Roman Imperial Policy: 31 BC - AD 68* (London 1951) 28-29; and Rich & Williams (note 1) 172 n. 9, its authenticity is dubious so it will not be considered here.


7 M. Grant, *Cleopatra* (London 1972) 166.
According to West, ‘the crocodile was Egypt’s most distinctive animal, and its use to symbolise that land was standard practice.’ However, this is not strictly true, for, while the crocodile was certainly distinctive and thus easily recognisable, it could be argued that so were any number of species of Egyptian fauna such as the hippopotamus and the ibis or even (contrary to Macaulay-Lewis) flora such as the papyrus plant and the palm tree. In point of fact, when Virgil describes the battle fought between the Roman gods and the Egyptian gods at Actium, he specifically mentions ‘Anubis the barker’, the jackal-headed deity, by name rather than crocodile-headed Sobek. Likewise, in works of Egyptianising Roman art dating from the middle and late Republic the crocodile is generally only one of a range of animals portrayed and it is not until the imperial period that it becomes the most frequently occurring animal depicted in Nilotic landscapes, as well as accompanying personifications of Egypt, Alexandria and the Nile on imperial coinage issued by later emperors such as Hadrian and Caracalla. The earliest Roman examples of using the crocodile for the specific purpose of symbolising or personifying Egypt are contemporaneous with Octavian’s AEGVPTO CAPTA coinage. They also seem to have been utilised by individuals with a personal connection to the province: the bronze coinage issued at Nemausus where the veterans from the Egyptian campaign were

settled (see Figure 2) and a marble frieze probably from a funerary monument set up to honour a veteran who settled at Praeneste.12

*Figure 2: RIC 154-61 = RPC 522-26 obverse depicting Augustus and Agrippa and reverse depicting a crocodile chained to a palm tree, surmounted by a laurel wreath. (Image courtesy of the British Museum, inv. 1901.0503.137)*

Octavian’s AEGVPTO CAPTA coins were not the first Roman coins to feature crocodiles *per se* because there are three examples from the first century BC in which crocodiles were used as a control mark.13 During the same period a range of Egyptian motifs were used as control marks on Roman coins; these motifs included the lotus, the Isis crown, the sistrum, the hippopotamus, the snake, the mongoose, the heron and the pygmy in addition to the crocodile.14 Thus, it seems unlikely that Bursio, Papius and Fabatus intended their crocodiles to be read as anything other than control marks; they are irrelevant to the images and legends on both the obverse and reverse faces that they appear on, as well as being significantly smaller.15 It may be that the moneyers never intended the control marks to be noticed at all. Crocodiles were not exhibited in the *venationes* until the aedileship of Marcus Aemilius Scaurus in 58 BC, so the only opportunity consumers would have had to familiarise themselves with the creatures

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12 RIC 154-61 = RPC 522-26; Musei Vaticani inv. 31680. See also S. Walker & P. Higgs (edd.), *Cleopatra: From History to Myth* (London 2001) 262 n. 311.
14 Meyboom (note 11) 155-56.
15 The tabulation of Meyboom (note 11) 157-58 indicates the relative rarity of Egyptian motifs on contemporary coin issues – Bursio issued three coins with Egyptian motifs out of 180; Papius used four pairs of Egyptian motifs out of 207 pairs; and Fabatus used five pairs of Egyptian motifs out of 237 pairs.
would have been through works of Egyptianising art produced by Egyptian craftsmen such as the Praeneste Nile Mosaic or, as is perhaps less likely, viewing them in their natural habitat during a trip to Egypt.\textsuperscript{16}

So although the crocodile did appear on Roman coin issues during the first century BC before Octavian's \textit{AEGVPTO CAPTA} series, it was not used as the symbol of Egypt, or as the symbol of anything else for that matter. So how to explain Octavian's innovative use of the creature?

\textbf{Cleopatra VII and the Ptolemaic dynasty}

At the start of Cleopatra's reign in 51 BC, Egypt was in dire political and financial straits and scholars have interpreted her subsequent interactions with Julius Caesar and Antonius to mean that she perceived the kingdom's recovery as depending heavily upon its ability to regain the territories held under Ptolemy I Soter and his successor Ptolemy II Philadelphos.\textsuperscript{17} Having first eliminated her younger siblings and thus ensured there would be no one to rival her own children, she turned her attentions to them and their futures. Her eldest son and consort after the death of her youngest brother was Ptolemy XV Caesar or Caesarion, the son of Julius Caesar. Her other three children were fathered by Antonius; the twins Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, and Ptolemy Philadelphos. The second names in particular, Helios and Selene, not only marked the twins as a pair, but also associated them with contemporary Roman and Egyptian religious and prophetic beliefs regarding the Golden Age.\textsuperscript{18} The youngest child, Ptolemy Philadelphos, was given the names of Ptolemy I Soter's son and heir, Ptolemy II Philadelphos, under whom the Ptolemaic Empire had reached its peak.

Cleopatra began to regain the territories of Ptolemy II Philadelphos in 37 BC, when Antonius awarded her Phoenicia, Coele Syria and Cyprus, as well as parts of Cilicia, Judaea and Arabia Nabataea.\textsuperscript{19} He also presented their children with parts of Arabia, Phoenicia, Palestine, Crete, Cyrene and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Plin. \textit{HN} 8.40.96. See also C. Henderson, 'The career of the younger M. Aemilius Scaurus', \textit{CJ} 53 (1958) 194-206 on Scaurus; and J.G. Milne, 'Greek and Roman tourists in Egypt', \textit{JEA}. 3.2-3 (1916) 76-80 on Roman tourism in Egypt.
\item \textsuperscript{17} E.G. Huzar, \textit{Marcus Antonius} (London 1978) 189. See also Grant (note 7) 135-44; and, most recently, D.W. Roller, \textit{Cleopatra: a Biography} (Oxford 2010) 92-94.
\item \textsuperscript{18} See \textit{Sibylline Oracle} 3.350-80. Discussed in W.W. Tarn, 'Alexander Helios and the Golden Age', \textit{JRS} 22 (1932) 135-60; Grant (note 7) 172-75; Roller (note 17) 78-79; D.W. Roller, \textit{The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: Royal Scholarship on Rome's African Frontier} (London 2003) 170-71.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Plut. \textit{Vit. Ant.} 36.2.
\end{itemize}
Cyprus, although their ages meant that, in reality, it was Cleopatra who was in control of these territories. These grants of territory, while certainly extensive and extravagant, were merely one part of Antonius’ reorganisation of the provinces allotted to him in the East in his capacity as a Roman triumvir. In fact, it has been suggested that Antonius’ primary motivation for bestowing these particular territories upon Cleopatra was to provide her with sufficient timber to construct a fleet for him, not only to police the Mediterranean but also to aid him in his military campaigns. Whatever Antonius’ reasoning, it was at this point that Cleopatra began to use a new system of dating to calculate her (and her co-ruler Ptolemy XV Caesar’s) reign, perhaps to commemorate the point at which she had indeed succeeded in restoring the Ptolemaic Empire as it had been during the reigns of Ptolemy I Soter and Ptolemy II Philadelphos.

A second installment (subsequently known as the Donations of Alexandria) was made two years later, in a lavish ceremony that marked Antonius’ return from Armenia. According to Cassius Dio:

[Antonius] promised to give to his own children by Cleopatra the following districts: to Ptolemy, Syria and all the region west of the Euphrates as far as the Hellespont; to Cleopatra [Selene], the Cyrenaica in Libya; and to their brother Alexander, Armenia and the rest of the countries east of the Euphrates as far as India; for he even bestowed the last-named regions as if they were already in his possession.

Cyrenaica was part of the Ptolemaic Empire until it was bequeathed to Rome by Ptolemy Physcon in 155 BC and subsequently passed into Roman hands upon the death of his son Ptolemy Apion in 96 BC. However, it was not until 75 or 74 BC that a quaestor was sent to the province and as

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20 Dio Cass. 49.32.5. See also S. Walker, ‘From Queen of Egypt to Queen of Kings: the portraits of Cleopatra VII’, in N. Bonacasa & A.-M. Donadoni Roveri (edd.), Faraoni come dei, Tolemei come Faraoni (Palermo 2003) 508-17.
21 Grant (note 7) 135; Roller (note 17) 92-94.
22 Grant (note 7) 139.
23 Porph. FGrH 260 F. 2-17. Discussed in Roller (note 17) 95.
late as 67 BC before there is evidence of any provincial administration.\(^{26}\) By granting Cleopatra Selene and through her, her mother, territory that had originally been part of the Ptolemaic Empire, Antonius was effectively reversing its comparatively recent annexation.

Although Roller and Reynolds both argue that no effective control of Cyrenaica by Egypt resulted,\(^{27}\) numismatic evidence offers a different perspective on the situation: a bronze coin issued in 31 BC with the legends ΑΝΤΩ | ΥΠΑ | Γ and ΒΑΣΙ | ΘΕΑ | ΝΕ, indicates that at that time, Cyrenaica was being jointly governed by Rome and Egypt in the name of Antonius and Cleopatra VII rather than their daughter.\(^{28}\) Perhaps their seeming resumption of personal control of the region was a necessary step in the preparations for war against Octavian.

**Crocodile coins from Crete and Cyrenaica**

In the period 37-34 BC, two series of coins, one Latin and one Greek, were issued in Crete and Cyrenaica respectively.\(^{30}\) The Latin series included an aes with a crocodile and no legend on the obverse and the prow of a galley,...
with the legend CRAS on the reverse. The Greek series contained one aes that was struck with the legend ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙ (Ptolemais) and portrayed the turreted head of the personification of that city on the obverse, with a crocodile and the legend ΚΡΑΣ on the reverse. A second portrayed the veiled head of the personification of Libya without a legend on the obverse and a crocodile with the legend ΚΡΑΣ on the reverse. A third portrayed a crocodile without a legend on the obverse and a ship’s prow adorned with a star and the legend ΚΡΑΣ on the reverse.

Presumably, the legends CRAS and ΚΡΑΣ refer to a provincial governor (or some other type of senior government official or representative) appointed by Antonius and/or Cleopatra; this official was evidently an individual with the cognomen Crassus. There are two such individuals known to have been associated with Antonius in this period. The first was Marcus Licinius Crassus, the grandson of the triumvir Marcus Licinius Crassus, who joined Antonius in around 36 BC, but ultimately deserted him and joined Octavian instead. The second was Publius Canidius Crassus, who joined Antonius in 43 BC, held a suffect consulship in 40 BC and then campaigned with Antonius in the East. He subdued the Iberians and Albanians in the Caucasus before joining the Parthian expedition and returned from Armenia in 33 BC. He then commanded the land forces at the Battle of Actium; in the wake of Antonius’ defeat and the Roman invasion of Egypt, he was captured by Octavian and either executed or forced to commit suicide.

Scholars disagree over which Crassus these coins should be attributed to; Svoronos favoured Publius Canidius Crassus while Grant preferred...
Marcus Licinius Crassus. Canidius Crassus was, after all, involved in Antonius’ Parthian and Armenian campaigns from 36 BC until 33 BC, so it seems unlikely that he was simultaneously in charge of Crete and Cyrenaica. Plutarch describes him as being ‘a man of the greatest influence’, initially with Antonius, but his importance was eventually realised by Cleopatra too. This is made clear from a papyrus that was recovered from mummy cartonnage from Abusir el-Melek and found to contain a royal decree dating from February 33 BC, granting him a number of privileges that may even have been signed by Cleopatra herself. This decree supports Plutarch’s account of events immediately before the Battle of Actium, in which he claims that Cleopatra offered Canidius Crassus extensive bribes to remain loyal to her.

Despite the logistical difficulties inherent in issuing coins in Crete and Cyrenaica while on campaign in Armenia, Canidius Crassus would seem to be a better candidate for the issuer of the crocodile coins than Licinius Crassus due to the former’s close working relationship with both Antonius and Cleopatra, and his long-term ties to Egypt as made clear from the information regarding his estate, tenants and business interests found in the Bingen papyrus. In addition, if he was the one responsible for issuing these coins, this ultimately treacherous action could have contributed to Octavian’s apparent refusal to spare his life once he had conquered Egypt, just as Octavian reportedly refused to spare the life of Q. Ovinius for the transgression of managing Cleopatra’s wool and textile industry. After all, as far as Octavian was concerned, he recovered the territory for the Roman Empire after he defeated Antonius and Cleopatra; he even included the putative queen of Crete and Cyrenaica in his triple triumph in 29 BC.

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39 Svoronos (note 29) 273; and see also Robinson (note 30) 222. Grant (note 28) 56. Grant (note 7) 165.
40 Roller (note 18) 80 n. 27.
41 Plut. Vit. Ant. 42.4.
43 Plut. Vit. Ant. 56.3-4.
45 Vell. Pat. 2.87.3; Oros. 6.19.20.
46 RG 27.3; Dio Cass. 51.21.8. For discussion of Cleopatra Selene’s role in Octavian’s triple triumph in Rome, see Kleiner & Buxton (note 24) 77-78.
Ptolemaic crocodile coinage in the Roman Empire

If Octavian utilised the crocodile on his AEGYPTO CAPTA coinage for the express purpose of subverting Antonius and Cleopatra's use of the crocodile on the coinage issued in Cleopatra Selene's name at Crete and Cyrenaica, this in turn begs the question: why were Antonius and Cleopatra using the crocodile in the first place? It had not been a feature of Cleopatra's Egyptian coinage prior to this occasion, nor was it utilised on the coinage of earlier Ptolemaic kings and queens; on the contrary, Greek symbols such as the eagle and the cornucopia were preferred. However, one possible answer to this question can be found in an examination of the history of the earliest days of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the period when the Ptolemaic Empire that Cleopatra was so keen to reconstitute was in its infancy.

According to Diodorus Siculus, after Alexander the Great died in 323 BC, Ptolemy Soter was given Egypt under the terms of the Partition of Babylon. On his way to his new domain in 322 BC, he seized the body of Alexander and took it with him to Egypt. Once there, he deposited it temporarily at Memphis while he prepared a permanent tomb to house it in Alexandria. In response, Perdiccas invaded Egypt, led his army towards Memphis, where he believed Ptolemy was based, and attempted to cross the Nile during the night:

> When all were thus forced to cross the stream, those who knew how to swim well and were strongest of body succeeded in swimming across the Nile with great distress, after throwing away a good deal of their equipment; but of the rest, because of their lack of skill some were swallowed by the river, and others were cast up on the shore toward the enemy, but most of them, carried along for some time, were devoured by the animals in the river.

Although Ptolemy succeeded in routing Perdiccas' army at the Fort of Camels, it is questionable whether he would have beaten Perdiccas' much

47 Buttrey (note 28) 31 observed that if these coins were issued at the instigation of Cleopatra VII, then the crocodile was a strange choice of motif, considering that it did not derive from any previous Egyptian coin issue. Even if Cleopatra's mother was an Egyptian woman from the priestly family of Ptah (Roller [note 17] 165-66), the association with the crocodile is not obvious.
48 Diod. Sic. 18.3. This account of the settlement is supported by Dexippus (FGrH 100.8), Arrian (FGrH 156.1.5-8) and Curtius 10.10.1-6.
49 Diod. Sic. 18.28.3.
50 Diod. Sic. 18.34-35.
larger forces at Memphis if it had not been for Perdiccas' difficulties in getting them across the Nile. The fact that so many soldiers had drowned and then had their bodies eaten by crocodiles was not only a military catastrophe for Perdiccas, but it also had a disastrous effect on the morale of the remaining troops, the result of which was his being assassinated by his own generals.  

The Egyptian crocodile god Sobek and his various local manifestations seem to have been particularly favoured by the Ptolemaic dynasty from the reign of Ptolemy I Soter through to the reign of Cleopatra VII. The region of the Fayum, where the Macedonian veterans of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I Soter's military campaigns were settled during the late 4th century BC, was the major centre of Sobek worship in Egypt for centuries, throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. This popularity may have resulted (in part) from the crucial role the crocodiles of the Nile played in Ptolemy's victory over Perdiccas, thus confirming his possession of Egypt. It seems likely that at least some of the veterans settled in the Fayum had been present at Perdiccas' abortive attempt to cross the Nile. This story (no matter how overly embellished or even patently false it might originally have been) was certainly still circulating in Cleopatra's own lifetime, as indicated by its inclusion in the writings of Diodorus Siculus. Considering the speed with which the working relationship between Octavian and Antonius deteriorated after the first set of territorial grants to Cleopatra and her children in 37 BC, it might also have been in Cleopatra's interest to draw attention to the difficulties that hostile forces might face when attempting to invade Egypt.

Cleopatra and Antonius aimed to incorporate simultaneously elements of tradition and innovation into their coin issues. They looked back to the early days of the Ptolemaic Empire by following the example of Arsinoe II, the sister and wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphos, who was particularly associated with symbols such as the double cornucopia and deities such as the goddess Isis. However, they also looked to the future and the new Ptolemaic Empire that they were in the process of creating by utilising either familiar symbols in a new way, or entirely new symbols in a familiar way; one example of this is found in the series of silver denarii and tetradrachms issued after the Donations of Alexandria which bear.

51 Diod. Sic. 18.36.1-5.  
53 See for example SEG 8.498; OGI 176; SEG 8.536, 537 and 577. See also Draycott (note 52) 213-15 on the popularity of the sacred crocodiles of Sobek as a tourist attraction during the Roman period.
Cleopatra and the legend REGINAE REGVM FILIORVM REGVM CLEOPATRAE on the obverse and Antonius and the legend ANTONI ARMENIA DEVICTA on the reverse.54

Cleopatra had herself assimilated symbols previously favoured by Arsinoe II such as the double cornucopia, in addition to following Arsinoe II in particularly associating herself with Isis.55 Thus it is not surprising that she might extend such a practice to her daughter, utilising the crocodile as the personal emblem of Cleopatra Selene, much as Antonius used the lion of his purported ancestor Hercules or Octavian the capricorn of his natal sign. The fact that the crocodile only appeared on coins issued in Crete and Cyrenaica, the territory granted to Cleopatra Selene, and would later reappear on coins issued in Mauretania during Cleopatra Selene’s reign as queen of that kingdom, indicates that the motif is linked specifically with her.56 By issuing coins depicting a crocodile relatively soon after Octavian had used the crocodile to symbolise Egypt on his AEGVPTO CAPTA coinage, Cleopatra Selene may have been attempting to reclaim ownership of it; on Cleopatra Selene’s coinage, the legend ΚΛΕΟΠΑΤΡΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑ is arranged around the image of the crocodile in exactly the same way as the legend AEGVPTO CAPTA is arranged around the image of a crocodile on Octavian’s coinage (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Silver denarius IGCH 2307, obverse depicting Juba II, reverse depicting a crocodile (Image courtesy of British Museum, inv. 1908.0404.54)

55 E.g. during the ceremony of the Donations of Alexandria (Plut. Vit. Ant. 54.3-6; Dio Cass. 50.5.3). Virgil also depicts Cleopatra as summoning her troops to the Battle of Actium with a sistrum, Aen. 8.696.
Conclusion

It is clear that the traditional explanation for Octavian's decision to use a crocodile to symbolise Egypt on his AEGVPTO CAPTA coinage (that the crocodile was the symbol of Egypt) is untenable; there is no literary or artistic evidence to support such an assertion as having been the case during either the Hellenistic period in Egypt or the Late Republic in Rome. Rather, it was Octavian's use of the crocodile to symbolise Egypt that resulted in the crocodile subsequently being adopted as such in the Principate and Imperial period.

In this respect, at least, Octavian was not an innovator: he subverted iconography that Cleopatra VII and Antonius had selected specifically to represent their daughter, Cleopatra Selene, in her newly allocated territories of Crete and Cyrenaica. The choice of the crocodile for this coinage issued in the name of Cleopatra Selene in Crete and the Cyrenaica could have been an attempt to reference the role of crocodiles at the very inception of the Ptolemaic Empire. If Ptolemy I Soter was seen as owing his possession of Egypt at least in part to the crocodiles of the Nile, then the crocodile would have been an entirely suitable symbol for his descendant Cleopatra Selene to wield in her newly acquired territories, first as queen of Crete and the Cyrenaica, and then later as queen of Mauretania. Drawing upon the deeds of Ptolemy I Soter was one part of a much larger strategy that saw Cleopatra name one of her sons after Alexander the Great and the other after Ptolemy II Philadelphos, align herself and her daughter with a range of prominent female ancestors including Arsinoe II, Cleopatra Selene and Cleopatra Thea, and ultimately reconstitute and refound the Ptolemaic Empire. This selection was at once traditional in that it followed the precedent established by Arsinoe II of assigning a specific emblem to a member of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and innovative in that the crocodile had not been utilised as a personal badge or emblem before. Once Cleopatra Selene married Juba II of Mauretania, she continued to use the crocodile, and seemingly reclaimed ownership of the symbol Octavian had chosen to represent his victory over her parents, herself and her brothers, and subjugation of her ancestral lands.

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