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Women in Power:
From Goddesses to Mortals in the
Ancient Mediterranean

The case of Ptolemaic Egypt and Hasmonean Judea

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A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts in Fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Mediterranean Studies

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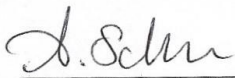I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Dissertation and that it is my original work.

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Abstract

Women in Power: From Goddesses to Mortals in the Ancient Mediterranean seeks to uncover and explore the relationship between the female figures presented as goddesses in myth and cult, and mortal women, in terms of powerful positions and leading roles. This research starts from the analysis of the representation of the female in Egyptian and Greek mythology and early Hebrew texts and moves on to investigate the power and leadership positions women could access in their context. The main protagonists of this research are the queens as their position puts them at a crossroads between sacred influence and political power. The exploration of the role of women in cult and state matters shall be conducted through two kingdoms in the Mediterranean – the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Hasmoneans in Judea during the period of the 3rd to the 1st century BCE. Case studies of particular queens from each monarchy will reveal if there is a correlation between the female powers and abilities in the divine realm and the real access to political leadership and authority women had in these particular areas of the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean approach acknowledges that the two regions were somehow influenced by the Greco-Roman culture but still bore their specific and local aspects in cultic and religious matters, and in the social distribution and position of women in their communities.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to find any parallels between the representation of women in the sacred and mythological realm and mortal women with regards to the theme of power. This study will look at female deities or divine characteristics in relation to queens in the Eastern Mediterranean region with a focus on Ptolemaic Egypt and Judea in the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

The role of women in ancient history has been presented in various contradictory stances. The feminine is represented in putative sacred contexts, such as the female figurines in prehistoric temples, the goddesses of the Classical era, and the royal cult. However, there are other representations of women which are not as positive, such as the figure of Pandora, the impudent woman presented to man after his discord with Zeus; the dangerous and untrustworthy women presented by Hesiod in his myths; the prostitutes and concubines; the slaves; and the witches. Hesiod's writings reveal two different kinds of women; on one hand is the positive and good Aphrodite and on the other is the vile mortal Pandora.[1] Between the divine and the human female there seems to be a profound difference.

Such attitude towards the feminine gives the impression that the relationship between the divine and the profane is rather complex. This work seeks to uncover the

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[1] Patricia A. Marquardt, "Hesiod's Ambiguous View of Woman", *Classical Philology* 77 (1982): 283-291, (285).

correlation between the feminine figure in the divine realm and the queen in the kingdoms of Egypt under the Ptolemies and Judea during the Hasmonean period. Was there a distinction between the powers bestowed on the feminine in the religious sphere and the queen? This research will try to find out more about these parallels to uncover how the divine and the profane worlds interacted with each other in the ancient Eastern Mediterranean to create a complex social structure which at times can be oversimplified. This cross-cultural study will demonstrate the complexities of social structures in the Mediterranean in a way that it may question the concept of the "Mediterranean" as one socio-cultural entity by revealing different social clusters which can share similar practices but different characteristics.

In this research the goddesses of the myths and the female represented in sacred or historical texts are analysed against the background of evidence relating to queens and leaders of regions and empires. Archaeological evidence, including inscriptions, coins, and artistic reliefs can be essential in trying to bridge the gap between the imagery of the females in myths and sacred texts and the queens and royal women in the chosen areas of study.

1.2 The rise of feminism in the history of antiquity

The late 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of a new branch of historical scholarship, probably the result of another bigger movement at the time: second-wave feminism

and the various branches of feminist thought.[2] Ancient history started to be revisited through the female experience and a more complete picture of antiquity could therefore be composed as it included a focus on both genders.

Sarah B. Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*[3] paved the way for a new approach to the study of women in antiquity. She treated the women of antiquity not as secondary subjects but rather as key protagonists who were present in all aspects of life, starting from the divine realm and down to the slave industry. She was also the first to present the idea of power and women's access to it by discussing the divine powers attributed to goddesses. Pomeroy provided a well-balanced account for the Greek and Roman societies by acknowledging the fact that information about women is scarce for various reasons, but at the same time it does not mean that women were not important. Pomeroy expanded her work on women's history by exploring the role of women in Hellenistic

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[2] The 1970s and 1980s saw a development in the feminist ideologies. The post-war feminism of the 1960s changed to identity feminism in the 1970s and 1980s thus bringing on a second phase of the second-wave feminism. The identity feminism focused on bridging the gap between both genders on issues of work pay, sexuality and reproductive rights. Feminists sought to gain a strong voice on gender, race and class matters as they believed that all that was personal was also political . Key works that pushed the feminist ideals of the second-wave were by: Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (US: Little Brown and Company, 1977).
The third-wave starting in the 1990s moved away from the patriarchal society and sexist attitudes to a liberal and global feminist approach mainly through the internet and later social media. Historical scholarship was influenced by such social changes and the new perspectives on women could be felt in ancient women studies too. Third-wave feminist writings included: Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004); Shelly Budgeon, *Third-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[3] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).

Egypt. In *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra*,[4] she gathered wide-ranging data from inscriptions, papyri, visual arts, and archaeology to present a new woman in antiquity who was free to conduct her business and make her own wills thus presenting a degree of independence on financial matters.

Many of the works that followed Pomeroy investigated and studied the life of women in the two most prominent cultural centres of the ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome. Works by Sue Blundell,[5] Jane F. Gardner,[6] Mary Lefkowitz,[7] and Jane Rowlandson[8] tried to provide an overall view of women's life in antiquity by describing various social institutions, such as religion, marriage, law, and economy, and the extent to which women contributed to them. They were on a quest to unearth women's presence in all sectors of life and acknowledge that women were part of these activities, even if it meant being silent or marginalised. These works sought to give a voice to the women who contributed to the building of societies even if they might never have had a leading role. Nonetheless, many of the mentioned works tended to present the evidence within a stereotypical framework, focusing on topics such as marriage, divorce, childbearing, housekeeping, and prostitution, without exploring the notion of power.

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[4] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra* (Detroit: Schocken Books, 1984), Kindle.
[5] Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Harvard University Press, 1995).
[6] Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Routledge, 1987).
[7] Mary Lefkowitz, M.B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
[8] Jane Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Contributors in compiled histories and companions gave a description of women in relation to different spheres of life such as "women and law",[9] "women and religion",[10] "women and education",[11] "women and legal status"[12] and so on. Such treatment of women does not mean that women are the subject of the research; rather they are often merely an object which participates in the subject of discussion. Sue Blundell's *Women in Ancient Greece*[13] goes into this direction as the author presents women's role in society and their incapability in comparison to their masculine counterparts. Women are many times presented at the margins of a male-dominated society and women's active/inactive role is measured according to men's prominence. Scholars such as John Scheid[14] and Yan Thomas[15] put forward the dominant male contributions in society and presented women's side with discourse of exclusion.

The female push in the study of antiquity shows that there were also successful women who participated in the public and economic life. Pomeroy presents cases, mainly revolving around the Ptolemaic courts in Alexandria,[16] which reveal a very

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[9] Barbara Levick, "Women and Law", in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World,* ed. Sharon L. James, Sheila Dillon, (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 96-106.

[10] Eva Stehle, "Women and Religion in Greece"; Lora L. Holland "Women and Roman Religion", in *A Companion To Women In The Ancient World,* 191-214; John Scheid, "The Religious Roles of Roman Women", in *A History of Women in the West: I. From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints,* ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 377-408.

[11] Marguerite Deslauriers, "Women, Education, and Philosophy", in *A Companion To Women In The Ancient World,* 343-353.

[12] Aline Rouselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome", in *A History of Women in the West: I. From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, 296-336.

[13] Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[14] Scheid 377-408.

[15] Yan Thomas, "The Division of the Sexes in Roman Law", *A History of Women in the West: I. From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, 83-137.

[16] Pomeroy, 1984.

modern women who could act many times on their own account. Pomeroy links the queen's cult of Hellenised Egypt to the active participation of aristocratic and middle class women in society.[17]

The Jewish context presented a different reality cut off from the myths of gods and goddesses of the Hellenistic world. The monotheistic tradition did not include the female figure in power on a sacred level, thus the assumption that women were marginalised and not considered as candidates for positions of power. However, scholars such as Bernadette Brooten and Tal Ilan give evidence that Jewish women were active in their social and religious context and did have influential roles too. Jewish writings such as rabbinic literature, are usually interpreted as being misogynistic or very androcentric, but the contributions of Brooten, and mostly Ilan shed light on the opportunities given to and availed by women in the region of Palestine.

Tal Ilan's work is a progression of research in the area of Jewish women and demonstrates that there is a lot about women which needs to be uncovered and studied. Ilan starts from the broad view of *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*[18] touching on various topics related to womanhood such as: marriage; daughters; the physical body; and divorce. By the end she also discusses women's role in the public domain and how the legal system treated women. In her first book she starts her

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[17] Pomeroy, 1975, 125.
[18] Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

investigation from the Jewish literary sources including Josephus, rabbinic literature and scrolls from the Dead Sea and the Judean Desert and how they portrayed the feminine and treated women. Ilan's investigation of texts is expanded in her second contribution on the study of Jewish women where she provides a rereading of rabbinic literature to go against the established androcentric view of these texts and provides new insights on women.[19] Ilan's latest study gives a more factual aspect of women's history, because it identifies real women and delineates their involvement in the social and religious contexts.[20] The author aims at providing real life examples of women who were directly involved in religious, social, legal and economic affairs. Examples include queens such as Salome Alexandra, Helene of Adiabene, Berenice and the princess Julia Crispina, and also women's documents such as those attributed to Babatha and Salome Komaise.

Ilan's last work brings together the presentation of women in texts and real women, and the same methodology is used in the edition compiled by Amy-Jill Levine.[21] The articles edited by Levine present the imaginary woman of the texts and the real woman in the Greco-Roman world in order to narrow the gap between the two spheres and give a more accurate and holistic view of society.

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[19] Tal Ilan, *Mine and Yours are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden, New York, Koln: Brill, 1997).

[20] Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001).

[21] Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press 2008).

Most of the works which seek to provide new insights on women in antiquity do not give much prominence to the idea of women in power. The studies set off to find out how women were involved in society but tend to keep to stereotypical roles and views on females. The subject of power and leadership is many times explored from a male point of view, and women are rarely considered as part of the ancient political history.

1.3 Rationale

This work seeks to continue building upon the history of women as touched upon by Pomeroy and Ilan who present an active woman in the political and public sphere. The subject is given a new dimension through the parallelism presented by the female in myth and cult as opposed to the queen while relating it to the concept of the Mediterranean. The case studies of Ptolemaic Egypt and Hasmonean Judea are selected from the period between the 3rd and 1st century BCE and material culture, inscriptions, and literary texts from this period will be expected to contribute to the process of analysis of women in power as presented in myth and cult and in politics.

The main research questions will try to uncover any differences between the powerful attributes held by the female divinities in mythical narratives, and the mortal queen who could or could not have access to powerful roles and leadership. This work will explore the way myth and cult treat women and the power given to them in the divine sphere in relation to political power. The material evidence will be analysed

and compared to the sacred texts or mythical narratives which mention women and their roles in order to find any similarities or parallels which can bring the sacred and profane in a closer encounter. This work intends to explore this question by bringing together case studies from two different historical kingdoms - Egypt under the Ptolemies and the region of Judea governed by the Hasmoneans. These two cases could provide a more balanced historical account where both men and women contributed to political administration.

The research will seek to indulge in the local character of each case study whilst considering its operations on a bigger scale: the Mediterranean region. The choice of locations in the Eastern Mediterranean is a conceptual one based on the idea of social clusters modelled on the notion of microregions. This latter concept is not applied in the same way as proposed by Horden and Purcell to present an economic model based on ecology,[22] but it will look at the microregions from a social and cultural point of view. The social clusters with their identity can be treated as human microregions. These microregions are not defined as environmental areas but are looked at as social and cultural spaces. The locations can provide a good example for the model of social groupings strengthening their own identities through the safekeeping of their heritage and at the same time assimilating foreign influences through the connections typical of the whole Mediterranean region. Thus, the parallels between the divine and mortal women will be presented both in their own context of origin and in relation to the

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[22] Peregrine Horden, Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 79-80.

other locations chosen, in that way creating a network between human microregions based on the theme of women in power.

This research should provide a new way how to present ancient women by bridging the gap between the mortal and the immortal. The concept of emancipation will be tested in the ancient past and will try to identify examples of powerful queens. The image of woman leader shall move away from myth and cult with case studies about real individuals who contributed to the wellbeing and development of their societies.

This study will discuss the concept of the Mediterranean from various points of views presented by modern scholars and use them to seek the unity, uniformity, and diversities in Ptolemaic Egypt and Hasmonean Judea. This study shall present different theories regarding the idea of the Mediterranean and how these contributed to the debate about the definition of the Mediterranean. Such perspectives, will help in understanding better the separate identities of the Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans, and the way they interacted with eachother and with other societies of the time in the context of the Mediterranean. However, the case studies themselves should also be able to contribute to the Mediterranean idea in terms of cultural, political, social, and economic networks. The exploration of royal women in power could be an innovative way how to engage with the idea of the Mediterranean, as it provides real female historical characters who contributed to the construction of a region, which by time evolved into a concept. Thus, the real protagonists in the study, the queens of

Ptolemaic Egypt and Hasmonean Judea, will be instrumental, not only in revealing the female potential in queenship, but also in the development of the Mediterranean notion.

Chapter 2- The Ptolemies: Goddesses and Queens

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse how the Ptolemies engaged with the notion of women in power through the role of queen. Emphasis is solely on royal women who were closer to achieving some form of power because power was derived from familial ties.[23] The Ptolemies promoted their queens both as part of the royal couple and as individuals. Material evidence, such as coins, show conjoined leadership with the kings. This scenario could be interpreted as an avant-garde move by the rulers of Ptolemaic Egypt but, there are various factors to consider when offering an interpretation of women and power in Egypt. The representation of queens can be very insightful into the philosophy of the Ptolemies, not only in relation to females but also to their ideology of power in general. Women's access to powerful positions or to deified status was part of a more intricate network of administration policies and governance by a foreign rule in a land inhabited by various ethnic groups.

The theme of women and power as presented in the reign of the Ptolemies is not simply a history of women's emancipation, but a more comprehensive look into the Ptolemaic mindset of the ruling class. The power of Ptolemaic queens might be a way to better understand the notion of power, more than just a title or degree conferred upon the queen but more of a productive and effective position.[24]

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[23] Margaret Stacey, Marion Price, "Women and Power", *Feminist Review*, No.5, (1980):33-52, (33).
[24] Mary Beard, "Women in Power" in *Women and Power: a manifesto* (London: Liveright Publishing, 2017), 87.

The Ptolemies ruled Egypt for three centuries starting with Ptolemy I Soter in 306 BCE and ending with Cleopatra VII's son, Ptolemy XV Caesarion in 30 CE. After the death of Alexander the Great, the Hellenistic empire was divided and Ptolemy I took over one of the most important lands in the empire. Egypt was a wealthy land having gold and abundance of wheat, a reason which could have attracted Ptolemy.[25] However, there was also the Alexandria element which could have been another reason for Ptolemy's claim of Egypt. Ptolemy I wanted to keep hold on the city founded by Alexander and invested it with a big library and Museum to house the arts. Alexandria was the continuation of Athens as a philosophical and academic hub despite the decline of Athens on a political level.[26] The era started by Ptolemy in Egypt held many good prospects and by time it grew into a powerful kingdom and political and cultural force in the Mediterranean. Egypt held an important position in the Greek mindset, being the exotic and wise land[27] and thus establishing a power and economic centre in Egypt was an attractive venture.

The Ptolemies combined their Greco-Macedonian heritage with the local ancient myths to present themselves as the natural rulers of Egypt after the great legacy of the Pharaohs.[28] This strategy resulted in a hybrid culture which would have appealed to the mixed population of Egypt at the time.

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[25] Jean Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt: Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 19.

[26] Bingen, 26-27.

[27] Bingen, 28.

[28] The Ptolemies regarded the ancient ties between civilisations as a strength to their political claim over Egypt. The myths of their ancestors had ties to Egypt as this land was part of the Greek mythical

2.2 Mythology as part of the Ptolemaic notion of queenship

The power given to, or accessed by royal women of the Ptolemaic kingdom forms part of a greater structure of power, control and authority set by the monarchy. The Ptolemies acted in a complicated network of cultural, social and political schemes that had to be dealt with carefully so as to ensure stability and continuity. The Ptolemies did not follow the democratic model of the Greek tradition and established a monarchic rule.[29] The idea of "citizenship" was alien to Egyptians and other various populations in Egypt at the time, thus the top down model of authority was beneficial to both the rulers and the ruled.[30]

The most remarkable aspect of the Ptolemies remains their dual identity and how they manipulated both Greek heritage and Egyptian culture to their advantage. Rather than creating a battle ground for conflict between cultures, the Ptolemies constructed a space where cultures interacted and interpreted each other.[31] Austin describes the

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imagination, where gods took the virgins after they abducted them. Thus the Ptolemies claim for power in Egypt was justified. See Anatole Mori, "Names and Places: myth in Alexandria," in *A Companion to Greek Mythology*, ed. Ken Dowden, Niall Livingstone, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 229-230.

[29] N.a, *The Ptolemaic Kingdom of Ancient Egypt: The History and Legacy of the Ptolemy Dynasty and the End of the Egyptian Empire,* Charles Rivers, ed., (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), Kindle, Loc. 431.

[30] J.G Manning, *The Last Pharaohs: Egypt Under the Ptolemies* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 75.
The top down model can be somehow not an exact description of the Ptolemaic state, because Manning raises the issue of local institutions and household economies which could have been stronger than the state and centralized system. Such a scenario could suggest a bottom up model instead. However, the way the *persona* of the Ptolemaic king was presented in sculpture and coins and the titles the kings adopted such as 'Soter' meaning 'Saviour' or 'Euergetes' meaning 'Benefactor' show a strong powerful figure at the head of a state saved from enemies and benefitting from its monarchy.

[31] Manning, 72.

Ptolemies as a "double faced" monarchy, with a local face influenced by the pharaonic heritage and a Greek-faced king intended for international relations.[32] The Ptolemies kept the distinction between the two cultures and promoted themselves in accordance with the audience targeted.[33] The model of separate identities, as favoured by Austin, might have truth in it but the situation was not as clear cut. In fact, material evidence shows interaction between cultures, and the Ptolemies not only accepted the local traditions and cults but also interacted with them and associated themselves with the native gods and goddesses. This was a political strategy to ensure stability. The way the Ptolemies set out to refurbish temples and aid local priests was a good way of interacting, but they also wanted to keep control of the priestly class which was very powerful and had control of temple lands which amounted to a substantial number.[34] The support of the Ptolemies could be seen in the art and sculpture found at these temples which included the representation of kings and queens with Egyptian deities. The legitimacy of the Ptolemaic rule rested on the association with the pharaoh and the infusion of the Greek culture, thus a new "state-mythology" was created to ensure stability.[35]

The new mythology sought to provide stability and continuity, thus the royal family found its counterparts in the ancient myths to continue the longstanding

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[32] M. M Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest*: *A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 444.
[33] Austin, 444.
[34] Rivers, eds., "Ptolemaic-Egyptian Culture", loc. 449.
[35] Manning, 74.

tradition of kingship in Egypt. There was a place for both the king and the queen in the myths reused and adapted for the benefit of the Ptolemies. These myths provide the first step to a recognition of women's role in Ptolemaic Egypt as they uncover the duties associated with females and how royal women could contribute to state affairs. The newly adapted myths provided a space to put women and power together in a bid to fully validate the kingship of the Ptolemies in Egypt.

One of the first elements to be assimilated in the "state-mythology" was the matriarchal myth, which ultimately granted power to men. The women in myths always lost the battle with the opposite sex for the acquisition of power. According to ancient Egyptian mythology, the primary force of the cosmos was the female deity Neith. Similar to Greek Ouranos, who raped his mother, a male force overpowered Neith, and she gave birth to other divinities, which in turn started copulating and created a whole pantheon of gods and goddesses.[36] The myth of matriarchy is present in both cultures and shows that women were in control sometime in the past, but they could not hold on to their positions of power and were overthrown by men. The matriarchal myth gives power to men and puts women in a subordinate position. Such ideologies legitimise male domination. In a world were women's primary role is of mothers or "creators", men are ultimately in control. Egyptian and Greek mythologies both have the myth of matriarchy as their starting point, and both put women in a

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[36] Bella Vivante, *Daughters of Gaia: Women in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 7.

disadvantaged position when they lose power to their own sons who abuse them. Whilst the Greek myths led to the omnipotent and patriarchal Zeus, the Egyptian myths reached a climax in the story of Isis and Osiris, with the female Isis gaining strength in the tragedy of her brother-husband Osiris. The Egyptian myth presenting a powerful couple, gave rise to a new custom by the Ptolemies: the divine royals.

Isis temporarily resurrected her husband after he was killed and dismembered by his brother and later gave birth to their son Horus.[37] Isis was the wife and queen consort of Osiris, the god and supreme ruler of mythological Egypt. It is through her intervention that the lineage of kings could continue, and she was the mentor of her son Horus. During the various dynasties, Osiris was the symbol of the dead pharaoh, and Horus the symbol of the living king, who is always a male in charge of the country. The role of Isis turns into that of the protector of the pharaoh as shown in the hieroglyphs referring to the throne. She is the constant body in the transmission of kingship.[38] Isis, together with her sister Nephthys, are the guardians of the dead, and their images adorned the coffins of the deceased to ensure a safe passage in the afterlife.[39] The role of Isis as protector and nurturer of the pharaoh (because of the maternal association), and defender of the dead in the underworld is shared by other Egyptian female deities.[40] Isis became the counterpart of Greek Aphrodite through a

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[37] Vivante, 7.

[38] George Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 80.

[39] Vivante, 10.

[40] These deities are portrayed as anthropomorphic figures sharing animal characteristics carrying various symbolic meanings such as the goddess Sekhmet with the lion head which is a symbol of

process of religious syncretism. Her cult grew strong because of the support of the Ptolemies, especially the Ptolemaic queens who had a very strong presence in society. Influential women such as Arsinoe II and Cleopatra VII considered themselves the incarnation of the goddess Isis.[41]

This iconography of female deities continues to sustain the notion of women as caregivers and not participants in leadership roles.[42] The woman is the means to safeguard and protect the family, whilst the man leads and defends the state in a tangible manner. This feminine aspect in Egyptian mythology with closeness to kingship is significant to the way royal women were treated in the Ptolemaic era. Kingship and administration were the domain of male heirs, whilst women were engaged in the protection and safeguarding of the throne, an inferior role which was presented in a divine manner. The role of women as protectors of the throne was achieved by the Ptolemies through the custom of incestuous marriage. The supremacy of the Ptolemies had to be ensured by the reproduction of true Ptolemaic heirs, and this meant that women were many times married to their own brothers, who were kings.

The Ptolemies acted on the mythological setting they found in Egypt and through the assimilation of Greek ideas, created a sense of continuity and stability in

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power and strength. Jane Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48.

[41] Pomeroy,1975, 225.

[42] Stacey, Price, 34.

their conquered land. Such continuity should not be interpreted as sameness with the past rulers but rather as a new way forward. The local mythology served the monarchy in their claim over Egypt as they presented themselves on two levels: close to the native tradition and loyal to their heritage. The deification of the monarchy was not new to Egypt and by adopting and adapting some of the pharaohs' ways the foreign power established itself. This political strategy was also reliant on the participation of royal women in the royal cult.

2.3 Representation of royal women: goddesses and queens

The dual role of the Ptolemaic royal women is best attested in the representations of the ruling family. Temple reliefs, statues, material culture such as vases and libation jugs, and coins are a good source to study the representation of the rulers and how their portrayal was dictated by an agenda. There is a relationship between the way kings and queens are represented and the socio-political environment of the time.[43] The representations of the Ptolemies had one specific motive, namely to increase propaganda[44] and be accepted as rulers of Egypt. The Ptolemies worked on two levels to infiltrate Egyptian society: the political and public scene, and the cult and worship sector. The iconography of public statues is different from the temple ones

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[43] Paul Edmund Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002), 4.

[44] Stanwick, 4.

because the royals are representing a different role. This difference in representation is in line with the Ptolemies' dual identity of political rulers and divine royals.

The Ptolemies infiltrated the local priesthood in a very subtle and diplomatic manner.[45] The Rosetta Stone shows how the rulers discussed with priests, the way their imagery should be represented in temples.[46] The priests kept some form of control, whilst the Ptolemies made sure to be visible to the public and thus generate support because they were regarded as benefactors to local cults. There were two main portraitures of the Ptolemies: the ones for public spaces and cities and the ones for temples. Various decrees reveal the dialectic used for the imagery found in temple reliefs and public statues. The decrees written by Egyptian priests give a lot of detail about the image or statue including the setting, material and pose of the image, the ideology of the kingship portrayed and details on the creator and design of the image.[47] Two texts found on the Sias stele and the Mendes stele give details of Ptolemy II's wife cult images. Her image was to be present in all temples and next to other divine images of gods and goddesses thus entailing worship and honour from all entering the temple.[48] The public figures, usually showing a victorious king receiving a sword from a god, wanted to convey the message of power and strength

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[45] Gaining the support of the priests meant also the approval from the people working the lands of the priests, the helpers in the temples, the artisans and all of those involved in the temple sector. The Ptolemies knew their way to their subjects. Walker Susan, Peter Higgs, ed. *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth* (London: British Museum Press), 129.

[46] Stanwick, 6.

[47] Stanwick, 9.

[48] Stanwick, 7.

of the ruler. Usually the king was accompanied by his wife and in an act of victory over the enemy. The iconography of the victorious king is mainly found on stone reliefs rather than statues and placed in very prominent places. On the other hand, statues were used to present the royals as gods. Texts from Memphis reveal that these images were portable and made of wood.[49] They were kept in the innermost part of the temple and used for public processions. The Canopus decree gives details of the statue of Princess Berenice, including the title of 'mistress of maidens' given to her after her death and the crown adorned with semiprecious stones.[50]

With such iconography, the Ptolemies projected themselves as intermediaries between humans and gods, thus their lifestyle was exceptional. The custom of incestuous marriage was also part of a scheme to ensure power through excessive manners.[51] The first female divine royal was Arsione II, given the sacred title by her husband-brother Ptolemy II. The beginning of divine status started with a royal woman in an incestuous marriage, thus the two exclusive elements of Ptolemaic rule went hand in hand and could not be separated as they were an integral part of the philosophy of excess.[52] The fact that the divine title was bestowed on the queen by her husband shows that she could not act on her own behalf, especially when dealing with matters of public imagery.

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[49] Stanwick, 8-9.

[50] Stanwick, 8.

[51] Sheila L. Ager, "The Power of Excess: Royal Incest and the Ptolemaic Dynasty", *Anthropologica*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2006), 165-186.

[52] Ager, 178.

2.3.1 Arsinoe II as goddess

The marriage of Arsinoe II with Ptolemy II initiated the process of royal divinisation. The couple came to be known as *Theoi Adelphoi*, the Divine Siblings. Arsinoe was older than her brother, and was married before and some scholars suggest that she was in control of the throne much more than her husband.[53] The coins portraying Arsinoe II present her both as queen and a deity. Ptolemy II issued the coin which presented him and his wife as deities and descendants of gods. On the coin portraying himself and his wife together, the profile of the deceased parents is represented on the other side (fig.1).

Figure 1: Gold octodrachm, obverse Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II; reverse Ptolemy I and Berenice I.

Stanwick, 221.

The parents, Ptolemy I and Berenice I are presented with the title *Theoi*, whilst on the obverse, the depiction of the siblings carries the title *Adelphoi*. Ptolemy II put *Theoi* above his deceased parents and not on his and his sister's. In this way, the individual

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[53] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra* (United States of America: Schocken Books, 1984), "Ptolemaic Queens", loc.420

handling the coin could have easily referred to it as *Theoi Adelphoi* and combined the two titles referring to different couples. This could have been an indirect way of proclaiming divine right, as Ptolemy II is presenting himself and his sister as the 'sons of gods'.[54]

The portrayal of the king and queen as gods was common practice in the Ptolemaic kingdom, but in the case of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, it was still gaining ground. Ptolemy II was challenging the Greek perception. The Greek culture did not equate men with gods, but the Ptolemies wanted to create a new ideology of kingship. The period of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II was a transitional phase leading to the royal cult of later monarchs. During this initial period, the presentation of the king as god could be interpreted as being the god of men, similar to the idea of Zeus being god of the gods. Later this ideology was expanded to present the royals as gods, on the same level as other deities as documented in decrees and demonstrated by the imagery in temples treating royals as gods during their reign. Ptolemy II is at the beginning of this syncretistic process.

Sally-Ann Ashton makes an important observation in the Ptolemaic cult of queens: the association with a goddess against the assimilation to a goddess by queens.[55] Association is the process whereby queens are given qualities and attributes which are shared by goddesses such as Demeter, Aphrodite, Hera, Agathe Tyche,

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[54] Carl G. Johnson, "The Divinization of the Ptolemies and the Gold Octadrachms honouring Ptolemy III", *Phoenix*, Vol. 53, No. 1/2 (1999): 50-56, (53).
[55] Sally-Ann Ashton, 115-117.

Hathor or Isis[56], whilst assimilation is the total recognition of the queen as the embodiment of the goddess herself; a reincarnation of the goddess. Assimilation is the end result of association and shows that the power of the queen, as related to the mythological and cultic sphere, improved and became an established institution alongside the native cult. Many Hellenistic queens, including the Seleucids, had the custom of adding a goddess' name to theirs, such an example could be found on a libation jug inscribed with the title 'Agathe Tyche Arsinoe Philadelphos'. This suggests that Arsinoe was acting on behalf of the Greek goddess Agathe Tyche.[57]

The association of Arsinoe with an established goddess is evident also in the Egyptian cult iconography, where she is paired with Isis. In an Egyptian relief (fig.2) from a temple dedicated to Isis in Philae, Arsinoe and Isis are receiving offerings from Ptolemy II. The queen, standing behind Isis, is dressed in Egyptian attire, similar to the pharaonic style and is wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt, the plumes of the Egyptian goddess, and a small replica of Hathor's crown is surmounted on the red crown.[58] This relief shows that Arsinoe is associated with Isis and the king is placing offerings in their honour. The queen is acting on behalf of the goddess[59] and is accepting the offerings of her husband, the king. Such depiction puts the male king in a position of supplication to two women: the goddess and his sister-wife. The women,

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[56] Branko Fredde van Oppen de Ruiter, "The Religious Identification of Ptolemaic Queens with Aphrodite, Demeter, Hathor, and Isis", (doctoral dissertation, The City University of New York, 2007), SCRIBD, https://www.scribd.com/document/222772009/Aphrodite-Demeter-Hathor-and-Isis.
[57] Ashton, 116.
[58] Rowlandson, 29.
[59] Ashton, 116.

queen and goddess, are in a high sacred position whilst the man, the king, is in a significant role of power on a social and political level.
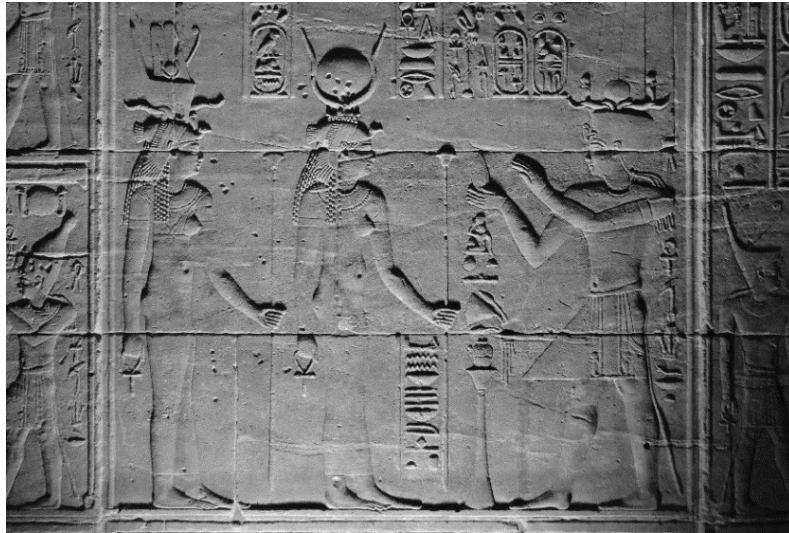
Figure 2: (Detail from) north wall of room VII, temple of Isis, Philae

Rowlandson, 29.

There is a specialised sculpture vocabulary in the images of royal women as queens and deities. The red crown, Hathor horns with sun disk, and cornucopia were the established icons to present the queen as a deity.[60] The new iconography used for Arsinoe II as queen with divine attributes, both of Greek and Egyptian style started a new Ptolemaic trend for the portraiture of queens. The red crown was used to symbolise Lower Egypt, the land of Alexandria, and the white crown represented Upper Egypt. Thus, a double crown on the head of the queen meant rulership over the whole of Egypt. The uraeus, or the snake, is the symbol of power. For kings it is presented in coiled form, whilst the one used for queens is not.[61] Queens bore also the

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[60] Stanwick, 37.
[61] Stanwick, 34-35.

Hathor horns which symbolised protection and procreation.[62] This was accompanied by the cornucopia, a Greek symbol of abundance and fertility.

A statuette of Arsinoe II (fig.3) dating to 150-100BCE, combines the Egyptian and the Greek style in presenting the queen as a deity. The queen's physical pose, especially of the limbs, is Egyptian, but she bears the cornucopia in her hand, typical of Greek goddesses. Even her facial features and corkscrew hairstyle are Greek in style.[63] The top of her head is broken, thus any headdress typical of the queen, and which is seen in other images of her, is missing. The figurine bears an inscription on the back showing that it was done posthumously. The hieroglyphic text 'Arsinoe, the goddess Philadelphos'[64] demonstrates that the cult of the deified royal continued well after the death of the queen. This sculpture presents the queen as a deity and does not give any indications of her power as leader or her involvement in politics, on her own or with her husband.

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[62] Stanwick, 36.

[63] Statuette of Arsinoe II for her posthumous cult, The Metropolitan Museum, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/20.2.21/

[64] Stanwick, 99.
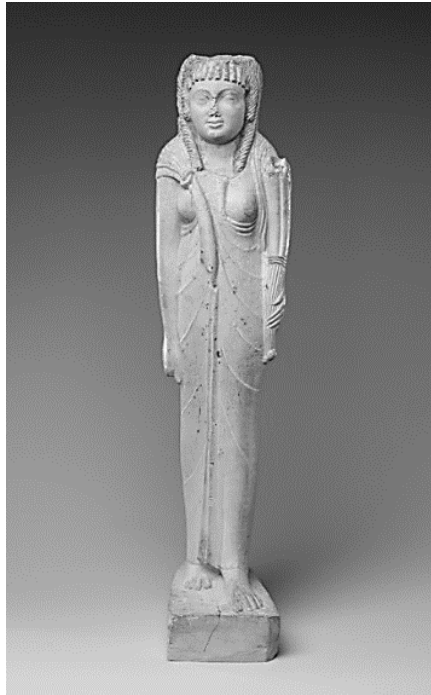
Figure 3: Arsinoe II posthumous cult

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/images/hb/hb_20.2.21.jpg

The representation of Arsinoe II alone on a silver coin presents the queen as a Greek goddess. She is portrayed wearing the diadem and veil, similar to the goddesses Hera or Demeter, on a coin issued by either Ptolemy II or Ptolemy III after her death (fig.4). On the obverse, the representation of the cornucopia as a symbol of the prosperity of Egypt and fertility is accompanied by the phrase 'Of Arsinoe Philadelphos'.[65] Here the queen is presented as a goddess, in Greek iconography, and as an individual and not part of conjoined rulership. The fact that this coin was issued posthumously does not guarantee any political independence on the part of the queen. It is more of an honorific coin to the deified queen.

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[65] Rowlandson, 27.

Figure 4:Silver dekadrachm, Arsinoe II; obverse portrait of Arsinoe II; reverse cornucopia with inscription 'Of Arsinoe Philadelphos'.

Rowlandson, 27.

The association of Arsinoe II with other Greek goddesses is clearly shown in Theocritus' writing, especially Idyll 15 and Idyll 17. In this hymn full of praise, Theocritus compares queen Arsinoe to women from Greek epics bearing heroic and semi-divine status and points out similarities with goddesses including Hera and Aphrodite. The hymn showcases the queen's respect for her subjects, her devotion to her deified parents and veneration to the gods, especially Aphrodite and Adonis. Arsinoe gives all the honours to Adonis, the goddess's consort in return for Aphrodite's divinisation of her mother Berenice I by sponsoring the Adoneia festival.[66] Arsinoe's festival was about the divine ancestors as much as the queen's reverence and respect to Aphrodite and her consort.[67] The Adoneia wanted to showcase the grandeur of Arsinoe's household, which was all of Egypt, in a way to assert the power

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[66] J. Andrew Foster, "Arsinoe II as Epic Queen: Encomiastic Allusion in Theocritus' Idyll 15",
Transactions of the American Philological Association, Vol. 136, no. 1(2006): 133-148, (135).
[67] Foster, 135.

of the new empire and the wealth and luxury of the family.[68] The elaborate feasts and processions in public were means of propaganda and the queen was used to generate sympathy from the public and a means to continue enhancing the image of grandeur of the present royal family and its ancestors who built the new Egypt.

2.3.2 The cult of Berenice II

After Arsinoe II, Ptolemy III established the cult of himself and his wife Berenice II, known as *Theoi Euregetai*, 'benefactor gods'.[69] In one inscription from Kanopos, dating 238 BCE, the priests make known a decree that was to increase the worship in the temples honouring Ptolemy and Berenice by linking their cult to that of their ancestors:

> *With good fortune, it has been decided by the priests throughout the land to increase the existing honours in the temples to King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, the benefactor gods, and their forebears, the brother-sister gods, and their grandparents, the saviour gods. The priests in the temples of the land are to be further named priests of the benefactor gods and this title is to be recorded in all official deeds and the additional priesthood of the benefactor gods is to be engraved on the rings which they wear.[70]*

The decree presents the couple and their ancestors as a royal unit, thus women cannot be understood as prevalent in the royal cult. The evidence shows that respects were

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[68] Ager, 143.
[69] Rowlandson, 30-31.
[70] Rowlandson, 31.

to be given to the living couple and their ancestors who were influential in building the Ptolemaic empire too.

There is evidence for the queen's cult during Berenice's reign too and shrines were erected in her honour and linked her to Aphrodite, the same as was done with Arsinoe. A fragment from a letter by a woman to Ptolemy III complaining about a neighbour's wall close to the shrine her husband dedicated to Aphrodite Berenice, shows that the cult was widespread and popular.[71] The iconography which associates the royal woman with the goddess Aphrodite-Isis who protected sailors can be found in a mosaic from Tell Timai.[72] The mosaic shows an amalgamation of Berenice's portrait features with the personification of the goddess representing Alexandria (fig. 5).

Figure 5:Berenice II as personification of Alexandria; Tell Timai, 200 BCE

Ashton, 118.

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[71] Rowlandson, 28-30.

[72] This site was an ancient Greco-Roman city, known as Thmouis, in the Nile Delta. It was an important business and cultural centre during the Ptolemaic era and Roman period in Egypt. http://www.telltimai.org/about-the-site/

The queen's features are recognisable in the mosaic and the symbolism is carried by the headdress she is wearing, including a ship's prow and anchor. The image formed part of an elaborate mosaic floor and stood in a prominent public building.

The association of the queen with Alexandria and the seafaring theme is closely linked to the way Ptolemy III presented himself in connection with Poseidon on his coins.[73] Such an example shows that the divinisation of the Ptolemies was not reserved to women only, although the vast majority of the material culture gives prominence to women in relation to goddesses and divine status. The role of king and military leader surpassed the divine status of royal men.

2.3.3 Representations of later queens

Evidence of later queens is available too but not as plentiful as that for Arsinoe II. Most of the archaeological remains pertaining to Ptolemaic queens are usually in the form of sculptured heads in the Greek fashion. There is a good number of heads attributed to Cleopatra II, Cleopatra III and Cleopatra VII[74] all of whom are presented with the Greek corkscrew coiffure but there are a lot of inconsistencies in the symbolic headwear they carry. Whilst all of them carry the royal diadem, not all of them have the uraeus or the Hathor horns symbolising power. This could be an indication of the

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[73] Ashton, 118.

[74] Stanwick gives detailed descriptions of the sculptures of queens, both identified and not, in his book *Portraits of The Ptolemies*.

purpose of the sculpture, which were either a portrait of the queen or else a representation of the queen as ruler and/or deity. Other queen sculptures are not attributed to specific royal women but are similar in style. Another problem in this observation is the provenance of these sculptures, as the place is essential in analysing the purpose and ideology behind the sculpture. Whilst coins are understood to be handled by many people and thus their circulation gets the message through, sculpture relies a lot on location.

The representation of queens in public spaces, in cult and on coins was probably used for political propaganda because none of the imagery translates directly into factual political power. Although women were given prominence and even an identity as individuals, the inconsistencies in the iconography make it difficult to assert any degree of power to queens. The imagery served more of a propagandistic purpose flaunting the 'ethics, godliness, legitimacy, and 'Greekness'[75] of the Ptolemies and whilst there are various symbols of power, evidence of political queenship is hard to find.

2.4 Royal women and queenship

Most of the scholarly works discussing Ptolemaic queens focus on the presentation of the dynastic cult. Few works deal with the actual queenship and how queens were

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[75] Stanwick, 43.

involved in politics and contributed effectively to public affairs. It was either those women were excluded from administrative and leadership roles, or that history did not do justice with Ptolemaic queens and they were completely excluded from records detailing their participation in leadership and administration. The ways royal women achieved power were many times considered a result of some malfunction in society, a tragedy or a mistake which led women to rule instead of men. Something which women were not entitled to and they achieved in unusual circumstances.[76] The role of Ptolemaic queens is still very unclear as much of the material evidence is interpreted in light of their contribution to the dynastic cult and leaves out their role as queens in the political sense.

Pomeroy links the position of queens in Egyptian society to the conditions of women in Macedon, the ancestors of the Ptolemies. The Macedonian women were not as segregated and excluded from public roles as women in Classical Greece.[77] The Ptolemies may have followed the example of the court of Macedon, especially the time of Philip II who was known to have been surrounded by many women who had access to very high positions at court and in politics. Burial evidence from this period shows that graves belonging to women included warfare objects, and Philip II was also known to have married women from foreign lands and tribes where women were not segregated and could participate in all public activities.[78] The examples of Olympias

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[76] Beard, 57-59.

[77] Pomeroy, 1984, "Macedonian Queens", loc. 255.

[78] Pomeroy, 1984, "Macedonian Queens", loc. 243.

and Eurydice, as queens, leaders, protectors and warriors could have influenced the generation of active and influential royal women in Egypt.

Another important element which could have contributed to the emancipation of royal women in the politics of Egypt was the social structure based on a monarchy and not a democracy. The monarchic rule of the Ptolemies could have been an opportunity in bridging the gap between the sexes as this was not an exclusive democracy. Pomeroy suggests that the Ptolemies offered a new paradigm for Hellenistic women, especially the queens. However, most of the queens who had direct impact on politics came to the throne, not by right as heirs, but as result of misfortunes happening to their husbands or co-regents, or by illicit means. Even if the Ptolemies are projected as holding a much-emancipated view of women, women were not the first choice to the seat of power and leadership. They happened to be there due to unforeseen circumstances.[79]

2.4.1 The question of Arsinoe's participation in leadership

The case of Arsinoe II brings forth a queen who was bestowed with divine status from her husband and having an active role in political matters. Her representation on coins with her husband displays signs of a shared leadership between husband and wife.

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[79] This was the case with Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra VII's father, who left Alexandria because of political unrest and left his eldest daughter Berenice IV on the throne. Cleopatra accompanied her father on his trips to Athens and Rome. Later Cleopatra inherits the throne with her young brother and she manages to rule alone when he is killed, and after she kills her sister, also called Arsinoe. Walker, Higgs, 132.

An inscription regarding a vote taken in Athens for an alliance between the Greek city-states and Ptolemy, puts Arsinoe on the same level as her husband in political matters.[80] The writing mentions '…the policy of his predecessors and his sister…'[81] thus Ptolemy is clearly putting his late parents and his sister on the same level as his as king. Such an example does not necessarily imply that the queen took decisions in her own right. She is not mentioned with her husband only, as a couple, but she is included after the late rulers and could be interpreted as a sign of respect to the deceased who had been influential to the present political scenario. The influence of Arsinoe on the mentioned policy is debatable as this was written posthumously.[82]

Ptolemaic queens enjoyed a degree of independence when it came to financial matters. Arsinoe was a wealthy land owner and from her first marriage to Lysimachus, king of Thrace, she gained a lot of wealth. When she wed her brother, he named various parts of Egypt after her, including the Arsinoite nome.[83] Even if these lands were not directly in her possession, all the revenue from these lands went straight to the queen and her needs, usually related to beauty products and luxury gifts.[84] However, Arsinoe's income was purely for her personal needs and she had no political influence with it. The financial independence was limited to personal matters with no social or political value, thus women were still excluded from important business related to the state. There were other queens who owned land which was

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[80] Rowlandson, 26-27.
[81] Inscription from Athens dated 268-265 BCE. Rowlandson, 26-27.
[82] Pomeroy, 1984, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 442.
[83] Rowlandson, 28.
[84] Pomeroy, 1984, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 375.

used for agricultural purposes and managed the income themselves, such as Berenice III and Cleopatra II.[85] A particular text from Hephaistias, in the Arsinoite nome, shows that Berenice held also a bank account and did all the necessary transactions related to it.[86] Another wealthy queen was Cleopatra II who owned land and Nile barges for the transportation of grain.[87]

2.4.2 Berenice II: an independent woman

Queen Berenice II proved to be a powerful woman due to her various interests and strong will to participate in the public sphere, both politically and culturally. She was the sole heir to Cyrene and her marriage to her cousin Ptolemy III meant the unification of Cyrene with Egypt. She was a very wealthy woman and one of the few who owned racehorses and participated in the Olympic games.[88] The only poem to celebrate the victory of a woman at these games is the one dedicated to Berenice after her victory in Nemea. Callimachus exalted Berenice in both his poems: the one celebrating the victory at the games and the one praising the queen's piety in her dedication of a lock of hair to Arsinoe-Aphrodite in a plea to bring her husband back safely from war.[89] It was likely that the queen took charge of Egypt whilst her husband

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[85] Pomeroy, 1984, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 356.
[86] Rowlandson, 35-36.
[87] Rowlandson, 36-37.
[88] Elaine Fantham, Helene Peet Fooley, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy, and H. Alan Shapiro, *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1994), 144-145.
[89] Fantham et al, 146-148.

was fighting the Third Syrian War. She was influential in keeping control of the throne whilst her husband was away but she was assassinated, which according to the historian Polybius (*Histories* V.34.1, 36.1 and XV.25.1-2) was a plot by her son's adviser, Sosibios.[90] Berenice's tragic fall shows that a woman was not accepted to rule on her own, even if she was given the chance by her husband. Some men at court did not approve and found a way to give headway to her son Ptolemy IV. Berenice is represented on coins as a mature woman (fig.6) and not in an idealised way to cover her middle age years, but rather the age was used as a sign of power and how this woman gained strength and influence through time.[91] The plump and robust woman on the coins and in sculpture was a symbol of her dominance and the prosperity of Egypt during her reign.[92] Although Berenice's power was short lived, it was enough to prove that royal women were prepared and able to lead but men were still preferred to rule.

Figure 6:Silver tetradrachm, queen Berenice II (246-221 BCE) on obverse portrait of the queen; on reverse, cornucopia

Fantham et al, *Women in the Classical World,* 146.

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[90] Ashton, 59.
[91] Fantham et al, 145.
[92] Fantham et al, 145.

2.4.3 Cleopatra VII and her ancestors

The series of queens named Cleopatra brought a tradition of strong women to the Ptolemaic court even though evidence of their queenship is scarce. Many generations of women named Cleopatra could be traced in the Ptolemaic genealogy but there is not much evidence of their rule. Their history is mostly marked with familial and political turmoil. The first Cleopatra was the daughter of the Syrian king Antiochus and married Ptolemy V.[93] After the assassination of her husband, Cleopatra became queen regent with her son who was 6 years old. Demotic papyri from her reign present the queen's name and title of goddess *Epiphanes* before her son's name and title of god *Epiphanes*. Such choice of presentation could indicate that Cleopatra was more than queen regent but the ruling sovereign herself.[94] Cleopatra III, daughter of Cleopatra II succeeded her mother and for a while she was married to her uncle who was also her mother's husband-brother.[95]

Cleopatra VII was the last queen of Ptolemaic Egypt and built quite a reputation for herself during her reign. She is the only queen to have ruled alone, without any male consort and managed to form alliances with the Roman Republic until her defeat and death. Cleopatra ascended the throne together with her younger brother Ptolemy XIII when she was 17 years old and her brother was 7 years younger. Although she was forced to marry her brother according to her father's wish before

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[93] Pomeroy, 1984, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 511.
[94] Pomeroy, 1984, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 500.
[95] Ashton, 63-64.

he died, Cleopatra had already learned a lot about politics and power through her experiences with her father Ptolemy XII and was prepared to lead alone.[96] She adopted the title *Thea Philopatora* (Father-loving Goddess) and continued her father's work to regain the support the Ptolemies had lost in Upper Egypt.[97] Cleopatra managed to build her own reign and a reputation for herself; however, her starting point was her father. She played for support in re-establishing the strength of the Ptolemaic kingdom, not on herself as a new ruler, but by presenting herself as the continuation of her father. Continuity is an essential element to keep stability in a monarchic state and Cleopatra used this strategy together with the close ties she had with the priests, the temple institutions and cult practices.

During the years of co-rule with her brother, Cleopatra managed to have a system of public relations in place where she could manage local affairs and international relations of the empire. The early death of Ptolemy XIII put Cleopatra in an advantageous position to rule and manage the empire better on her own and she formed an alliance with Rome.[98] Whilst being married to another brother, Ptolemy XIV, Cleopatra ruled on her own and her brother was only a figure head.[99] With the help of Caesar, who was also her lover, she regained total control of Egypt. Later on, after the mysterious death of her young husband-brother, she ruled with her son by

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[96] Stanley M. Burstein, *The Reign of Cleopatra* (West Port, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press: 2004), 14-15.
[97] Burstein, 15.
[98] Shannen A. Bowen, "Finding strategic communication & diverse leadership in the ancient world: The case of Queen Cleopatra VII, the last pharaoh of Egypt", *Cogent Arts & Humanities* (2016):1-17, (7).
[99] Burstein, 19.

Julius Caesar, Caesarion. Cleopatra was now free of all the impositions of tradition and could rule without a brother as her husband, thus securing herself as the ultimate ruler. However, she still put her infant son as co-regent, and shared the throne with a male, again. The reasons for this decision could have been various, but most probably this was done as a sign of cooperation with Rome, especially with Caesar. It was more of a political move than a choice to put a male heir on the throne. In this way, she secured the future on Egypt and its allegiance to Rome.

Cleopatra embodies the leadership skills of a great ruler which many times are attributed to kings, thus at times she is presented as a male pharaoh. Powerful women are many times depicted in male attire, as this might be perceived as discourse of power and strength of authority.[100] A votive relief by an Egyptian priest dedicated to the queen, presents Cleopatra as male pharaoh presenting her offering to the goddess Isis[101] A closer look at this stele reveals that the sculptured figure of the pharaoh was intended for Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra's father, and not for his daughter who succeeded him. The stele was re-carved to fit Cleopatra's sole leadership after the death of Ptolemy XII.[102] However, marble heads found in Rome and which are attributed to Cleopatra, present her as a Hellenistic Greek queen, and with all the details of female hairstyles typical of the time.[103]

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[100] Beard, 54.
[101] Rowlandson, 38.
[102] Walker and Higgs, 142, 157.
[103] Walker and Higgs, 143.

The representation of Cleopatra is also dualistic, similar to the identity of the Ptolemies. A black basalt sculpture presents her as an Egyptian queen with the headdress typical of the pharaohs: the tripartite wig and the triple form of the uraeus as symbol of royalty and power (fig. 7). The queen is also carrying the double cornucopia of the Greek goddesses. In a marble statue the queen is represented with the same hair style but wearing a Greek-styled dress and is also holding the cornucopia (fig. 8).

Figure 7: Black basalt statue - Cleopatra VII

https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/06.+Sculpture/86737/?lng=

Figure 8:Marble statue Cleopatra

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/547702

The representation of Cleopatra in fig. 8 bears a resemblance to the one of Arsinoe II. This shows the element of continuity with the ancestors and also that the reigning queen was presented both as a queen and a goddess. The notion that a female leader must bear male characteristics does not hold well here as Cleopatra is many times presented as a beautiful woman and with all the details of female attire. Cleopatra's coins offer a different representation of the queen from that of Arsinoe or Berenice. She is not veiled and wears the headband worn by Hellenistic kings on coins. She also wears a necklace of pearls and a dress adorned with jewels (fig 9).[104] Images on coins

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[104] Rowlandson, 39.

are official, show strength and power, and the leader is to be presented in all the power vested on them especially when coins are issued in their name. Cleopatra is not presented as a goddess on coins, but she is a woman with power, thus the king's headband worn by her shows the rulership of the queen. The representation of Cleopatra on the coin in fig. 9 is a clear indication that she is the ruler and not Mark Antony.

Figure 9: Silver tetradrachm Antioch, 34 BCE; obverse Cleopatra VII; reverse Mark Antony.,
Stanwick, 225.

Pomeroy notes a significant shift in the representation of queens, formerly associated with goddesses but later portrayed as kings.[105] Visual arts reflected the power bestowed on queens. The headdress of the goddess, mainly the crown of Aphrodite or the veil of the deities and common women, is transformed into the crown of the king. This is a significant shift as queens leave behind the mythological representation, and like Cleopatra I and Cleopatra VII they embrace the political

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[105] Pomeroy,1984, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 522.

office, especially when they are co-regents with their young sons. When queens take a leading role, they are shown as political persons and not as divine figures.

Cleopatra VII's leadership, communication and management skills made her an extraordinary queen.[106] She was also a good diplomat and managed to have good relationships with foreign rulers. Cleopatra VII maintained a symmetrical relationship with Herod, the king of Judea, as she leased land previously owned by the Ptolemies in order to safeguard trade routes and economic affairs which were beneficial for both sides.[107] Cleopatra's proficiency in various languages, including Arabic, helped her to establish relationships with both rulers and subjects. She could speak the language of the indigenous people and thus conducted negotiations for political and economic purposes both with the natives and officials and rulers.[108] Although Cleopatra was still associated with the divine realm as being the personification of Isis and Aphrodite, her main influence was in the public domain, as ruler, diplomat, and strategist.[109] Cleopatra was a lone ruler, a regnant queen without any male consort to shadow her and by her knowledge and mastery of strategy and communication she led an empire for over a decade and delayed the collapse of a long standing dynasty.[110]

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[106] Bowen, 4.
[107] Bowen, 8-9.
[108] Bowen, 9.
[109] Bowen, 11.
[110] Bowen, 15.

2.5 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter reveals a two-fold involvement of queens in the Ptolemaic kingdom: the sacred and the profane. In antiquity, these two realms interacted and overlapped constantly in everyday life and the role played by the queens went in accordance with such reality. The queens were goddesses and monarchs at the same time. However, this does not make the question of power the less difficult to analyse. The long history of Ptolemaic queens shows that not all queens had the same access to powerful positions, even if they carried the title and symbols of queens and goddesses. Reasons for this are various and cannot be identified as customary procedures, but rather as result of the circumstances in which the queen found herself. Queens were not safeguarded by tradition like kings, thus their opportunities depended on variables they did not control such as the decisions made by fathers, and husband-brothers.

The queens' cult was a tradition that flourished during the Ptolemaic reign. The royal cult was not exclusive to women and its intention was to promote the royal couple and not only the queen. This was one of the various propagandistic strategies which helped the monarchy establish itself in Egypt. Most of the material evidence available presents the queens as goddesses embracing virtues such as generosity, protection and fertility, but this is not indicative of their involvement in politics and leadership. The queens were bridges between the power of the king and the subjects

through public imagery as seen earlier in the chapter with regards to coins, and temple reliefs.

The evidence for Ptolemaic queens in political power is limited due to the fact that women were not generally left on the throne without a male consort. Few cases of sole queens are recorded as usually they were accompanied by a male consort, sometimes even of a very young age. However, this does not mean that there were no queens in ruling positions. In most cases the women served as queen regents, that is, acted on behalf of their male consort. Berenice II was left in charge of the kingdom whilst her husband was away on military duties, and Cleopatra VII was also queen regent with her brothers and later her son. The evidence for queens regnant is very scarce and the most likely to have achieved such a level was Cleopatra VII who only reigned alone, after the demise of her two husband-brothers. Before Cleopatra VII, there was a short period of time when there were two sisters as queens on the throne, Cleopatra VI and Berenice IV. These queens were left as sovereigns on the throne of Egypt by their father Ptolemy XII whilst he was in Rome. Berenice IV ruled for a short while on her own after her sister's death, but the return of her father to the throne meant her ending too. She was assassinated by her father, so he could claim back the throne. Ptolemy XII later chose his other daughter, Cleopatra VII to rule with her husband-brother Ptolemy XIII.[111] These instances in Ptolemaic history reveal that

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[111] Pomeroy, 1984, loc. 523.

women were not a first choice for leadership in Egypt and they were assigned to the throne when the kingdom was in dire need of a figure head.

Ptolemaic queens were always in the shadow of males when it came to political power. Although many examples of queens show that they could be influential as leaders, they were rarely given the opportunity to rule alone. The examples given, such as Berenice II and Cleopatra VII both show that they were very influential when they led on their own; however, the tradition of a dominant male consort was of ultimate importance. Male consorts had control over the queens and decided to what extent the women were to be involved in the public sphere and how they were to participate. Ptolemy II gave a lot of space to his wife Arsinoe II, especially in the royal cult, but she was still under her husband's control and evidence of her participation in the political and leadership roles are non-existent. The Ptolemaic king commissioned the representation of the royal imagery and determined the iconography related to him and to the queen. The representation on the coins is a typical example. The males are always shown as leaders and kings with the appropriate diadem , whilst the queens are many times represented as goddesses only. There was only one political leader, and this was the king. Political power was not a conjoined affair as opposed to the royal cult. The king was mainly associated with power in the temporal world, whilst the queen as a goddess, was a glorified figure but without actual power.

The most powerful queen was Cleopatra VII and she succeeded in her role for various reasons. One of the most important was that she got trained into politics whilst

accompanying her father, Ptolemy XII. Cleopatra was not the typical royal woman and her upbringing left an impact on her future career as leader. Her training helped her to be familiar with the intricate world of politics and the royal court, thus she managed to be a very influential diplomat. Through her father she managed to infiltrate the circles usually reserved for men and also gained their support. Although she reigned alone for many years, her father was essential in the formation of her successful queenship as he served as role model. However, it was not in his plans to leave Cleopatra alone on the throne as he planned the marriage of Cleopatra and her brother. It was Cleopatra herself who managed to find her way to sole leadership.

The cases presented here show that women were not a first choice in positions of authority and power and those who made it to such a high level of influence, got there by chance and continued to exercise authority on their own merits as individuals until fate had otherwise in store. The fact that many queens were promoted on coins and in temples was not intended for the emancipation or independence of the queens as political figures, but rather a strategy in the complex system of propaganda planned by the Ptolemies. Whilst many queens were free to manage their wealth and resources, this independence was not translated into political power. It was more convenient to include women in royal cult and present them as goddesses and make them visible to the public, than having queens as active participants in the leadership of the reign. The case of these queens continues to assert the complexities and the multi-layered ideology of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Chapter 3 - The Hasmoneans: Queens and Administrators

3.1 Introduction

The second case study shall focus on the role of queens in Judea, mainly during the Hasmonean period. This dynasty spanning from the rise of John Hyrcanus as king in 135 BCE to the loss of Judean independence in 63 BCE was contemporary to the later phase of the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt.

The case of the Hasmoneans in Judea presents a different scenario from the Ptolemies in Egypt despite the geographical proximity of the two kingdoms. The kingdoms in question had their distinctive character and history but they had also political and cultural relations, both between them and with other ruling powers in the Mediterranean, such as the Seleucids and later the Romans. The connections provided by the Mediterranean did not mean harmonisation of all populations and kingdoms in the area but provided an added value to the distinct character of each.

The identity of a kingdom and its rulership is subject to various elements such as the social background of subjects and rulers, geographical constraints, traditions, and economy. This case study shall put forward specific points which led to a unique monarchy in Judea and hence a distinct role for women who occupied the position of queen. Whilst the Ptolemies were a foreign rule to Egypt, the Hasmoneans in Judea started in control of their homeland and expanded their territory later. The ancestors of the Hasmoneans, the Maccabees, started as a rebellious group at a time when the

Jews themselves were split 'between separatism and assimilation'[112] with neighbouring Hellenistic territories. This part of history is somewhat complex, and many times presented from the Maccabean side, which was a faction against the Seleucids during the internal strife between Judeans. Erich Gruen's study presents this period as a time of conflict between high profile Judeans for the position of high priest which entitled the chosen one to power and support from the Seleucid king. The disagreements between Judean leaders were intertwined with political ambitions, economic benefits and Hellenistic practices which had already infiltrated Judean society.[113] Whilst Gruen gives a wider perspective of the Jewish opposition faced by Antiochus IV, many scholars present the Maccabean revolt only as a fight against Hellenistic influences because of the persecution and obliteration of cult practices by the Syrian king. The Hasmonean rule in later years proved that it was in favour of Hellenistic practices and like other kingdoms of its time was a Hellenistic monarchy.

An important element to consider in the analysis of queenship in Judea is the interaction between the sacred aspect and the secular element. In ancient times there was no such division, and what we call sacred and secular elements were intricately intertwined. The term "religion" is a modern invention because the demarcation between the two sectors in the lives of the ancient populations was impossible. The

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[112] Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 65-66.

[113] Erich Gruen, "Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews", in *Hellenistic History and Culture,* ed. Peter Green, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 238.

sacred and the profane were fused together in everyday life[114] and many scholars

debate the use of the word "religion" in contexts such as the ancient Mediterranean.[115]

The monotheistic tradition of the Jews did not permit the association of humans with

gods, thus neither men nor women could be regarded as the personification of the

main divinity like the Ptolemies. Whilst the syncretism of Greek gods and Egyptian

deities permitted the creation of the royal cult, the Jewish beliefs kept a clear-cut

distinction between the divine being and the human. Thus, the role of both

Hasmonean king and queen in relation to cult and worship was very different from

the Ptolemaic scenario. The Hasmonean king served as high priest in the Jerusalem

temple and not as the personification of God. This provided for a difficulty when a

woman ascended the throne because the role of high priest was exclusively a male

domain. The ancient Yahwistic tradition also impacted the perception of the female

and in turn the opportunities given to women as leaders and queens. Another

important aspect in the study of queenship in the Hasmonean period is the

relationship between queens and sects, most dominant of which were the Pharisees.

The kings were usually on the side of the Sadducees, but we have evidence of royal

women supporting their rivals, the Pharisaic sect, and going against their husbands'

principles.[116]

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[114] Sarah Iles Johnston, ed., *Ancient Religions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), viii-ix.

[115] Barbette Stanley Spaeth, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

[116] Josephus and Rabbinic writings give proof of specific royal women from the Hasmonean and Herodian court who were actively involved with the Pharisees. Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 15-21. Later on, in this chapter

The evidence for queens of the Hasmonean period is mainly through texts by male writers such as Ben Sira, Josephus, Nicolaus of Damascus and rabbinic sources. Many writings present women in inferior positions to men, or even leave them out completely from texts relating the history of the Jewish people. In books *1* and *2 Maccabees* women do not figure in the same way. In the first book there is no reference to any women, whilst in the second one, specific women feature with prominence. Tal Ilan's analysis on the *Apocrypha* and *Pseudepigrapha* concludes that the writings which feature women prominently are the ones with no historical significance and which are more inclined to fiction writing, whilst texts relating Jewish history feature men only.[117] These sources could easily provide a distorted reality of the role of women in society and the work they did. Sources present a stereotypical woman and do not refer to any actual possibilities of participation in political and public events.[118]

This case study shall proceed on Ilan's attempt to uncover women's participation in social and public life in a period where power was presented as a right of royal men. Whilst Ilan provides a wider picture for Jewish women in various roles, this case study shall focus exclusively on queens, namely the wife of John Hyrcanus, and the longest reigning Hasmonean female, Salome Alexandra. Royal women were the only

the discussion about queen Salome Alexandra will give more details about the dealings between this queen and the Pharisees.

[117] Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 28.

[118] Ilan, 2001, 5.

females who could possibly have access to powerful positions. The queens were considered suitable candidates for the throne when the need arose.

3.2 The notion of the female in Jewish ancient tradition and texts

The position of royal women in the Hasmonean kingdom, must be understood in the context of its ideology to abide by tradition. Despite their later moves towards Hellenistic principles, the Hasmoneans built their ideology on their ancestors' respect to the Torah and regarded it as the constitution of Judea.[119] The ruling family had its roots in the principle of safeguarding ancient beliefs and cult practices that went back to the ancient Yahwistic culture.[120] The long tradition of a male divinity in absolute control, in contrast to the polytheistic worship of other societies in the Mediterranean, provided for a different perception of women and their role in society, including leadership and politics.

The feminist interpretation of the Yahwistic tradition given by Athalya Brenner is very strong but could be understood better in the light of how biblical writers and historians later perceived the role of women and presented it to their contemporary readers. Brenner criticises how females were omitted from the Yahwistic cult, and the paternalistic figure of Yahweh presented as an authoritative, omnipotent father, wise,

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[119] Schwartz, 2001, 69.
[120] The Yahwistic culture goes back to the Iron Age kingdoms of ancient Israel. This ancient cult formed the basis for the later Jewish monotheistic belief and traditions.

and sole creator.[121]   The Yahwistic tradition according to this hard, feminist view is

very misogynistic and uses the female to express the negatives and weakness of

humankind. In the metaphor of God the husband, the Israelites are his 'adulterous,

promiscuous, childish wife'.[122] The imperfect people chosen by God to be his "woman

nation" are in need of rehabilitation for their mistakes. The female aspect, in Brenner's

view, is more related to the metaphorical idea of the "woman nation" rather than a

female consort to God as he is powerful enough and embodies all virtues so he does

not need "female characteristics".[123] Brenner presents an absolute patriarchal mindset

which does not change or evolve. However, Mark S. Smith offers a more balanced

explanation of the characteristics of God. Other deities were condemned and those

who worshipped them were punished, but the attributes of these deities were used in

the personification of Yahweh. In the processes of assimilation, God became the

supreme and exclusive deity, and the embodiment of both paternal and maternal

features such as being a nurturing figure and possessing fertility and healing.[124]

The Yahwistic debate goes further away from the context of the Hasmonean case

but is still important to mention as it provides the starting point for Jewish written

sources which provide ample information about women in later periods. The book of

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[121] Athalya Brenner, "The Hebrew God and His Female Complements", in *The Feminist Companion to Mythology,* ed. Carolyne Larrington, (Indiana: Pandora Press, 1992), 48.
[122] Brenner, 54.
[123] Brenner, 60-61.
[124] Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Harper San Francisco, 1990), 94.

Proverbs[125] gives a different role to women than that presented by Brenner and her interpretation of the Yahwistic tradition. The female imagery in *Proverbs* is presented by the personification of Lady Wisdom and moves away from the patriarchal system. Sidnie White Crawford presents two possibilities for the role of Lady Wisdom: either as an abstract literary character used by writers to convey a message, or the female counterpart of Yahweh.[126] Both suppositions rest on the fact that the noun for wisdom in Hebrew is feminine, thus the female personification, similar to the Greek Sophia. *Proverbs* 1-9 presents Wisdom as a female figure who speaks and acts on her own accord.[127] She has a sense of authority and is the embodiment of the most highly regarded virtues: truth and justice.[128] She is the only one who can lead man to the path of righteousness and is presented as a teacher calling on men to seek and accept her in order to lead a fulfilled life.[129]

> [20] *Wisdom cries aloud in the street,*
> *in the markets she raises her voice;*
> [21] *at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;*
> *at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:*
> [22] *"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?*
> *How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing*
> *and fools hate knowledge? (Proverbs 1:20-22)*

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[125] The book of *Proverbs* spans many years. Most of the works are attributed to the time of Solomon, in the 10th century BCE but the tradition of Wisdom literature was continued by other scribes in the time of Hezekiah. John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louiseville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 4-7.

[126] Sidnie White Crawford, "Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly at Qumran", *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (1998), 355.

[127] Crawford, 355.

[128] Collins, 11.

[129] Collins, 12.

The book of *Proverbs* puts Lady Wisdom in close contact to God and presents her as his companion in the act of creation. She was the first creation of God and then accompanied him in the rest of his work. *Proverbs* 1-9 is written in the style of instruction from father to son, although this could be interpreted as a resource for home instruction, the probability is that it was used in educational institutions and referred to also in the household.[130] Such is the reason why many parts of this text are similar to advice given from father to son in preparation for life and wisdom is key to a life close to God. This representation of Lady Wisdom could be interpreted as an acknowledgement that females have the competence and intelligence to lead, but not on their own merits, as Wisdom is aiding God in his work.[131] In chapter 7 of *Proverbs* there are warnings against the adulteress and the female figure becomes the temptress of all evils. The woman is the epitome of all carnal sins, all of which are linked to her sexuality. She is presented as a prostitute and lures young, innocent men to sin.[132]

> [21] *With much seductive speech she persuades him;*
> *with her smooth talk she compels him.*
> [22] *All at once he follows her,*
> *as an ox goes to the slaughter,*
> *or as a stag is caught fast*
> [23] *till an arrow pierces its liver;*
> *as a bird rushes into a snare;*
> *he does not know that it will cost him his life.*
> *(Proverbs 7:21-23)*

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[130] Collins, 4-5.

[131] Ben Sira follows the same notion of Wisdom being a female figure created by God before all creation, however his representation is different as it links Wisdom with the Torah. Wisdom speaks about herself as a divine being who is seeking an earthly dwelling amongst humans and God chose Israel as a home for Wisdom, thus the gift of God to his people is Wisdom which is found in the Torah. Crawford, 357-358.

[132] Crawford, 356.

The text also mentions a "foreign" or "strange" woman who is not understanding of the Israelite tradition and leads men away from the teachings passed on to them by their ancestors. In these texts the female figure is presented as real threat in everyday life and man must be cautious about his doings. This is different from the metaphorical meaning of Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly, which is found later at the end of Chapter 9. Dame Folly is the opposite of Lady Wisdom and her ways are not to be followed because of her lack of insight and thus she strays away from the good and virtuous life.

> [13] *The woman Folly is loud;*
> *she is seductive and knows nothing (Proverbs 9:13).*

Prominent male writers such as Ben Sira, Philo of Alexandria, and Josephus give various details which can help build a picture of women's roles and how they were treated in Jewish society. These writings offer an essential background for the analysis of the role of queens during the Hasmonean period as they provide an insight into the mindset of Judeans at the time queens ascended the throne. However, the assumptions formed by reading these texts must be measured against evidence of real women, which at times could be very difficult to find, but could yield a different picture from that presented here.

The book of Ben Sira, written around 200 BCE, does not give a positive picture of women and discusses the female sex in light of the values of honour and shame.[133] His writing is very prescriptive about women's attitude and behaviour which can either be honourable and respectable, or brings shame upon her and her family. The writer is more concerned with the effects that women's behaviour can have on men, and tries to make men cautious of their wives' or daughters' imperfections which could lead them to shame as they are manipulative creatures.[134] In fact, he describes women as the enemies of men's will to control themselves[135] and warns them about various types of women who can be dangerous and tarnish their honourable position. Ben Sira has a very rigid and misogynistic perspective of women and gives a prototype of the ideal wife: beautiful, respectable, chaste, and with control on her speech.[136] The dichotomy between the male and female as opposing forces is also a topic for debate in Philo's writings which postdates Ben Sira by two centuries, dating to the 1st century CE. Philo of Alexandria writes in a distinctive manner as he fuses his Jewish heritage with Greek philosophical ideas.[137] Influenced by Aristotelian

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[133] Claudia V. Camp, "Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem Through the Eyes of Ben Sira", in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Amy Jill Levine, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991), 2-3.

[134] Camp, 22-23.

[135] Camp, 5.

[136] Laura S. Lieber, "Jewish Women: Texts and Contexts", in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, Sharon James, Sheila Dillon, eds., (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 330.

[137] Judith Romney Wegner, " Philo's Portrayal of Women – Hebraic or Hellenic?", in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco Roman World*, 50-51.

philosophy he relates mind and rationality with male features, whilst feelings and intuition as female attributes, and asserts the superiority of the mind over feelings.[138]

Philo regards woman as the embodiment of sin and man as her victim. Man initiated repent, whilst woman set motion to sin.[139] The attitudes shown by these two writers supports Brenner's claim of a patriarchal society and puts women in lowly positions. Although these writers were prominent figures and their works studied and quoted by various scholars, one must be cautious not to draw conclusions on women's treatment only from the perspective of these two writers. The scenario drawn by Ben Sira and Philo does not comply with the evidence we have of Ptolemaic and Seleucid queens who were being active at the time and which reveals a good potential to lead and contribute in society. The Hellenistic world was producing more spirited women who took initiative and got involved in society and politics, although there were various limitations. This was also true of the Hasmonean rule as we find queens who participated in leadership and were not subdued.

On the other hand, Josephus's historical writings, give some form of factual details about women and not only ideas and assumptions. The works of Josephus are an essential source in the exploration of Hasmonean queens as they record specific women who took part in historical events. Josephus's writings do not speak of women

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[138] Judith Romney Wegner, "Philo's Portrayal of Women – Hebraic or Hellenic?" in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco Roman World*, 45.
[139] Wegner, 50-51.

as a group but mention the ones who had outstanding parts in political events.[140] Josephus wrote mostly about the women of the Hasmonean and Herodian court basing his information on the works of Nicolaus of Damascus.[141] His attitude towards women in power is sometimes contradictory, even with regards to the same individual; however his works are an invaluable source to observe and analyse women's role as queens.

The texts and imagery considered here should provide some basis upon which to analyse and understand the Hasmonean royal women and their queenship. These women acted out their role in a context determined by a collective psyche that formed throughout Judean history and which was influenced both by local traditions and foreign customs. Their work as individuals and as women must be understood against the social norms and values of their time, which were a by-product of history but nonetheless of current happenings in Judea, the Eastern Mediterranean and other Near Eastern territories.

3.3 Royal women of the Hasmonean Dynasty

The two most prominent women in the history of the Hasmonean dynasty were the wife of John Hyrcanus and queen Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus,

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[140] Ilan, 1995, 30.
[141] Nicolaus of Damascus wrote mostly during the reign of Herod and gave extensive details about women in the royal courts. Josephus used his works covering the periods from Simon the Maccabee to the death of Herod. He was a follower of the Aristotelian Peripatetic school and very close to Herod. Ilan, 1995, 30-31.

known also by her Hebrew name Shelamzion. Historical accounts of the two women, mainly by Josephus, show that these women were not the usual choice for leadership in Judea. Their ascension to the throne brought innovation as much as turmoil in the long tradition of male leaders. Whilst this was a drastic change for the Jewish mentality, as proved by the texts presented earlier, the notion of women as leaders was not unheard of at the time. The Hellenistic monarchs of Egypt and Syria had long established the rule of the queen,[142] although to varying degrees when compared to that of the king.

3.3.1 The wife of John Hyrcanus

The most distinguishable factor in the history of Hasmonean queens is the lack of details about the queens, especially in the case of the wife of John Hyrcanus. We do not have her name recorded anywhere and she is mentioned in historical records because of a decision made by her husband. Historical accounts of the Hasmoneans rarely include women's names and when they are mentioned it is because of some important role they played in the series of political or public events that were worth mentioning. The wives of the Hasmonean rulers are not known and their identity remains hidden.[143]

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[142] Kenneth Atkinson, *A History of the Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 83.
[143] Dabrowa, 123.

Josephus's account of the choice of Hyrcanus's wife as his successor does not focus on the chosen woman, but more on the family drama that ensued and how the eldest son, Aristoboulos, did anything he could to claim power for himself.[144] From the texts by Josephus, we do not gather any information about opposition from the royal court or from the elites with regards to the choice made by John Hyrcanus. It was the eldest son who opposed so harshly to this change in tradition. In both *Judean War* and *Judean Antiquities*, Josephus leaves out the name of Hyrcanus's wife and gives prominence to the violent retribution of Aristoboulos in the event of his omission from power. He imprisoned his mother and his younger siblings, and later starved her to death in order to be able to access the throne.

Dabrowa suggests that Hyrcanus's decision to leave the throne to his wife was in order to ensure stability and continuity. He envisaged his wife holding political power and his eldest son occupying the role of high priest.[145] Hyrcanus's foreign and internal policies led to a stable monarchy, however at the end of his reign opposition groups started to emerge, especially when he abandoned the Pharisees in favour of the Sadducees.[146] His decision to appoint his wife as ruler could be understood as a move towards stability in the kingdom he had managed to expand. Josephus gives a fictitious reason for Hyrcanus's decision in choosing his wife over his eldest son. According to the texts by Josephus, Hyrcanus was a gifted prophet and was advised

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[144] Atkinson, 2016, 81.
[145] Dabrowa, 84.
[146] Dabrowa, 80.

by God about the succession of his throne. In his divine revelation, God indicated the younger son Alexander Jannaeus as his successor and not one of the eldest and more prominent sons. [147]   In a bid to avoid familial conflicts Hyrcanus chose his wife as leader of Judea and his son Aristoboulos as high priest. No matter what the case was, Hyrcanus made a decision which was not accepted by the eldest son. We do not know if this was a sexist matter or a disapproval for not conforming with tradition but Aristoboulos's violent actions surely reveal a great thirst for power.

Hyrcanus's choice of his wife is not preceded by any other action from his side to involve her in politics. The notion of queen was not customary in Judea and her presence was not promoted in any way. In light of the Jewish custom that prohibited any depiction of humans or animals, we have no public imagery of the royalty which could be used as propaganda. The coins minted by kings bore symbols of their power (fig. 10) and did not include the face of the ruler, let alone his wife. The identity of Hyrcanus's wife is not known and her mark on history is not done by her own actions but by the way she was used as a political pawn by her husband and her son.

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[147] Eyal Regev, *The Hasmoneans: Ideology, Archaeology, Identity* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 117.

Figure 10: John Hyrcanus I (135-104 BCE) on obverse palm branch with Paleo-Hebrew inscription denoting his role as high priest; on reverse an image of a lily.

David M. Jacobson, "The Lily and the Rose: a Review of Hasmonean Coins", *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (2013): 16-27

3.3.2 Salina Alexandra before Salome Alexandra

Salome Alexandra's road to queenship started with the perseverance and assertiveness of another female royal but who never ascended the throne herself. Queen Salome Alexandra was preceded by Salina Alexandra, the wife of Judah Aristoboulos, the son of John Hyrcanus. Scholars are not in agreement about the identity of these two women, and some do not make a distinction between one and the other. In fact, certain historians put forward Salome Alexandra as first being the wife of Judah Aristoboulos, and after a plot against him and his brother Antigonus, she put Alexander on the throne and later married him.[148] It was Alexander's decision

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[148] Edward Dabrowa, (*The Hasmoneans and their State),* and Solomon Zeitlin, "Queen Salome and King Jannaeus Alexander: A Chapter in the History of the Second Jewish Commonwealth", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 51, no.1, (1960):1-33. Both writers regard Salome Alexandra as being the wife of Aristoboulos and later of Alexander Jannaeus. Tal Ilan and Kenneth Atkinson argue against this assimilation of the two different women in the Hasmonean court and point out that this amalgamation was a mistake in the names Salina and Salome by the first Christian fathers when they were copying Josephus's works. Ilan continues to emphasize the distinction between the two women based on Josephus's account that he does not mention a marriage between Salina and Jannaeus.

later on which made Salome Alexandra queen in her own right and successor of the throne. Salina's choice of Alexander gave way to Salome as queen of the Judean kingdom.

Although Salina Alexandra is not given much importance in Hasmonean history, her role was a decisive one for the future of queen Salome Alexandra. Salina was never a queen regnant but the circumstances led her to take decisions on her own at a time when there was no one at the helm of the Hasmonean kingdom. She plotted against her husband and his brother, who was second in line for the throne, and managed to eliminate both.[149] After her husband's death she freed Alexander Jannaeus from prison and put him on the throne. Kenneth Atkinson considers this move from the widowed queen as a first for the Hasmonean monarchy[150], but Ilan argues that there was nothing extraordinary in Salina's involvement with the succession as this was the norm with all kings' widows to be involved in the choice of the next king[151] but not being the successors themselves. Josephus's account of the reign of Aristoboulos is dominated by Salina Alexandra and her strong will. In *War*, Josephus does not mention her by name, but in *Antiquities* he gives her Hebrew name, 'Salina' and mentions her at par with Alexander Jannaeus whom she chose as king. Josephus presents both characters as equals and does not use the title queen or king when

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[149] Tal Ilan, "Queen Salamizion Alexandra and Judas Aristoboulos I's widow: Did Jannaeus Contract a Levirate Marriage", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 24, no.2 (1993): 181-190, (181).

[150] Atkinson, *Queen Salome: Jerusalem's Warrior Monarch of the First Century BCE* (Jefferson, North Carolina, London: Mc Farland and Company, 2012) Kindle, " Part 3 : Warrior Queens; 6. A Judean Woman Who Did Not Know Her Place: Salina Alexandra; The End of an Era", loc. 1414.

[151] Ilan, 1993, 190.

referring to them and remains on first name basis.[152] The description of Salina as assertive and powerful by Josephus does not mean that he was in agreement with her and that he supported her decisions. According to the historian, Salina went against the "ties of nature"[153] when she took control of the kingdom by her malicious plot and led to the fall of the first Hasmonean king. As shall be presented later on Salome Alexandra, Josephus gives prominence to women when they are game changers in history, but he still regards them as the "weaker sex" and who have to be cautious not to tread on male domains, especially politics because the results could be disastrous.

3.3.3 Salome Alexandra as real queen

Josephus is the main primary source for queen Salome Alexandra. His two principal works *War* and *Antiquities* mention Salome Alexandra and give information about her nine year reign. The description of the queen is somewhat contradictory as Josephus gives contrasting views about her.[154] Salome is presented from a positive point of view in *War* and emphasis is on her piety; however, a contrasting image is produced in *Antiquities* and Josephus criticises her political strategies which led to the fall of the Judean state.

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[152] Atkinson, 2012,"Part 3: Warrior Queens; 6. A Judean Woman Who Did Not Know Her Place: Salina Alexandra; A troubled queen", loc. 1331

[153] Atkinson, 2012, "Part 3: Warrior Queens ; 6. A Judean Woman Who Did Not Know Her Place: Salina Alexandra; A "Fool" for a Husband?", loc. 1408.

[154] Etka Liebowitz, "Josephus's Ambivalent Attitude towards Women and Power: The case of Queen Alexandra", *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6, (2016): 182-205, (189).

Etka Liebowitz explains this contradictory attitude of Josephus by associating his time of writing about the queen with the socio-cultural context he lived in. Josephus might have been influenced by the ideas of the time and thus his interpretation of history is shaped by the social conditions of the time of writing.[155] Josephus wrote *War* at the end of 70 CE when he had been in Rome for a short period, thus the Jewish-Hellenistic influence was stronger on him. *Antiquities* is dated between 93-95 CE when he had been established in Rome and most probably had assimilated much of the Roman norms and values whilst living there.[156] In the Roman mindset, women were not deemed fit and appropriate to enter politics and leadership positions. Women's role had to be confined to the household and not enter public life or occupy high official posts. This contrasted with the Hellenistic kingdoms which gave women of royal status opportunities to be part of the rulership and contribute to economy and politics. The challenge with the main sources about Salome Alexandra is not only the socio-cultural context of Josephus's works and his personal opinions and views but also his reliance on other sources, and the interpretations offered by modern historians. The search for an objective account of Salome Alexandra's reign and political persona is very difficult, as historical accounts are rarely value free. Archaeological evidence derived from coins and palaces of Salome's reign could have given more insight on the queen as an individual and a woman. However, material

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[155] Liebowitz, 2016, 188.
[156] Liebowitz, 2016, 188.

evidence pertaining to the queen is very limited and does not yield anything to the quest of Salome as queen.

The Hasmoneans' ideology was mainly in line with tradition and they did not differ much from their ancestors' heritage. However, they tended to adopt an integration method, just as the high priest Jason had done with the Seleucid power. The Hasmoneans embraced Greek elements to be able to survive and flourish.[157] The queenship of Salome Alexandra shows that Hellenistic elements, in this case, queenship, had penetrated the Judean state too and were being accepted and integrated. Salome Alexandra reigned for nine years, until her death, without interruptions and managed to keep a very stable and peaceful reign. This shows that her leadership was endorsed by the people, even if somewhat influenced by Hellenistic ideas. Whilst keeping the tradition of a male high priest, Salome Alexandra provided a new way of leadership which followed the signs of the time.

3.3.3.1 Co-rulership: continuity and individuality

Josephus gives evidence of Alexander Jannaeus and his wife Salome as joint rulers in *Antiquities 14* where he writes about the appointment of Antipas as governor of Judea:

> *This Antipater, it seems, was first called Antipas, which was also the name of his father, whom King Alexander and his wife appointed governor of the whole of Idumaea…[158]*

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[157] Schwartz, 69.
[158] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.10.

This section from Josephus indicates that Salome was already active in political authority during her husband's kingship. The text seems to give the impression that the decision to appoint Antipas was agreed by both sides. Josephus does not give details of any political powers bestowed upon Salome before her husband bequeathed her the throne, but this excerpt suggests some kind of conjoined leadership. The reference to Alexander Jannaeus and Salome together is an exclusive example for the Hasmonean dynasty as no other wife of the king is mentioned by sources, or given prominence in official state matters.

The conjoined leadership of Alexander Jannaeus and Salome Alexandra is not supported by other evidence, especially by coins like those minted by the Ptolemies. Hasmonean coins never bore the image of the king but only symbols of his power like the palm branch, wreath and anchor, and inscriptions denoting the king's role as high priest or king.[159] The first coins minted by John Hyrcanus promoted the role of high priest and not that of king. As Hellenistic influences continued to seep into the Jewish society, Alexander Jannaeus minted coins with both high priest and king as titles (fig 11).[160] In such a context, there was no possibility for coins to be minted with reference to queens, or to joint rulership. The emphasis of high priests on coins was an automatic exclusion of women from the imagery and messages on coins. During the reign of

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[159] Regev, 175-223. There is a difference between the use of coins by the Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans. The Ptolemies used their coins mainly as propaganda for their royal cult and their coins had a wider range of distribution. The Hasmonean coins were a local currency without a heavy emphasis on propaganda, especially because they did not bear the real image of the ruler.
[160] Regev, 175.

Salome, the coins minted were still bearing her husband's title and she never minted

coins in her name. Evidence shows an abundance of coins struck in the name of

Alexander Jannaeus, and chronological studies conclude that the coins bearing his

name continued to be issued posthumously even by his sons Aristoboulos II and

Hyrcanus II.[161]

Figure 11: Alexander Jannaeus (103-76BCE) on obverse anchor in circular frame with
inscription King Alexander; on reverse rose with Paleo-Hebrew inscription King Yehonatan.

D. Jacobson, 18.

Alexander Jannaeus broke tradition when he bequeathed the throne to his wife.

Scholars make various assumptions as to why Alexander went against tradition and

did not assume his eldest son as successor. Atkinson points at stability as a

determining factor in Alexander's choice.[162] If Salome accompanied her husband

during previous years, it would have been appropriate for her to continue leading the

kingdom as she would have been trained well in political affairs. She must have been

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[161] Regev, 218.
[162] Atkinson, 2016, 138.

queen regent whilst her husband was away on military campaigns.[163] Alexander's ill health during the last years of his reign, gave Salome enough time to prove herself in leadership, especially by her success in Ragaba,[164] thus the transition was to be a smooth one. Alexander would have been aware that if his wife was to become queen, the role of high priest would have to be separate from that of king. This might have been a planned choice by Alexander in order to revert to the system of separate authorities and a way to keep Salome in control of the political office, whilst his eldest son will be in charge of priestly and temple duties.

An important element in the transition between Alexander and Salome was the issue with the Pharisees. Alexander was a Sadducee like his ancestors, but oral tradition holds that on his deathbed he instructed Salome to become more lenient with the Pharisees and involve them more in state affairs.[165] Salome's relationship with the Pharisees is very debateable and could be interpreted either as obedience to her late husband or else a personal move away from Alexander's preferences. Josephus presents Salome as going in accordance with her husband's wish and forming an alliance with the Pharisees who at the time were an opposition force against the Hasmoneans and thus starting her reign with a good will to unite all Jews. In her discussion about Salome's choice of the Pharisees, Ilan does not accept the fact that Salome obeyed her husband's wish, but opts for the probability that Salome made a

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[163] Atkinson, 2012, "Part 4: Salome Alexandra Ascendant; 10. Queen Triumphant: The Improbable Rise of Salome Alexandra; A Time of Great Uncertainty", loc. 1949.
[164] Atkinson, 2012, loc. 1949, 1956.
[165] Ilan, 2001, 21-22.

personal decision, even more so, because her husband would not accept to form an alliance with his greatest enemies in Judea.[166] Queen Salome made an independent decision which went against her husband's political views and which could be understood perfectly in the context where many woman were attracted to the Pharisaic sect.[167]

3.3.3.2 Salome as queen or administrator?

The ascension of Salome Alexandra to the throne meant that she now carried the title of "queen". However the acquisition of such a title is not as straightforward especially in the context of the Hasmonean kingdom. The title of "king" was used very late in the Hasmonean period as the leaders' first allegiance was to God, thus their spiritual and cultic role as high priest. The title of high priest was not an honorary one but the Hasmonean ruler performed the stipulated rituals in the Temple. The remains of purification baths in Judea and Jericho, the places where the Hasmoneans had their palaces, show that ritual baths became popular during their rule.[168] The coins minted by the Hasmoneans also give prominence to their position as high priest and had the

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[166] Ilan, 2001, 22-23.
[167] Ilan, 1995, 33. The Sadducees were in power after John Hyrcanus fell out with the Pharisees. The latter became the opposing sect in Judea and in a bid to expand their popularity they included even women in their circle of supporters. Wealthy and high profile women found an outlet to voice their opinions and to contribute financially. They did so in a way to assert their independence both financially and politically, and they usually went against their husbands' political views. The women who supported the sects in opposition expected respect and space to speak their mind, not necessarily because they were women but because they had money and status.
[168] Dabrowa, 111.

inscription that showed their sacred role. Josephus describes John Hyrcanus as a good administrator, a pious high priest and an admirable military leader[169] but he never uses the word "king" for Hyrcanus. Aristoboulos I considered himself as a monarch and called himself king. Later Alexander Jannaeus used the term "king" (*basileus)* in official manner and minted it on his coins.[170] Although the original Greek term *basileus* was borrowed from the Hellenistic monarchs of the time, the definition of king in Judea was different from that of other Hellenistic kingdoms especially with the other highly respected role of high priest. However, kings like John Hyrcanus, his son Aristoboulos I and later Alexander Jannaeus, took on territorial expansion just like other Hellenistic kings. By 100 BCE the Hasmonean territory had far exceeded the district of Judea and incorporated various populations who came to be considered as Jews.[171]

Josephus usually refers to the Hasmonean rulers by their name and not with their title but he makes a distinction between the verbs he uses to refer to their actions as monarchs. In his conclusion about Salome's reign in *War*, Josephus uses the Greek term *diokeo* which denotes the control/governing of financial or civil matters. The term chosen by Josephus is linked to the concept of civil administration and not rulership

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[169] Atkinson, 2016, 78.

[170] Atkinson, 2016, 81. The term 'king' is still debatable for the Hasmonean period because at the time it was not accepted by everyone. The Pharisees and other traditionalists did not approve of the dual role of the rulers and had a problem with the usage of the word 'king'. There is evidence of coins minted in Alexander Jannaeus name which had to be overstruck with the phrase 'High priest' over 'King' because of this resistance.

[171] Schwartz, 71-72.

as in the act of a monarch by reigning. When referring to male monarchs, Josephus uses the verb *basileuo*, to reign. In *War* he presents Salome Alexandra as a mere administrator of the kingdom.[172] Josephus's contradictory attitude is observed again in *Antiquities* where he refers to Salome as queen and uses the verb *basileou.* More importantly in this work, Josephus refers to Salome as *basilissa* six times, whilst he mentions her by name twice.[173] According to Grace Macurdy the title *basilissa* is the highest form of title a royal woman could achieve, as it does not refer to her as the "king's wife" but as the "female king".[174] Thus, Josephus is giving Salome the highest of statuses when he refers to her as *basilissa* similar to the title other powerful Hellenistic queens had minted on their coins. Such contrasting treatment of Salome Alexandra by Josephus does not make it easy to judge the historian's perception of female rulers, especially when in the same book, *Antiquities 13* he is very critical of her rulership and blames her for the fall of the Judean state. No matter what his views and feelings about Salome Alexandra were, the fact that he wrote at length about her and her reign in both his books means that her impact on history could not be avoided and somehow was to be exposed.

Salome inherited the throne when the Hasmonean monarchs played a dual role: king and high priest. Salome's case had to revert to the traditional model of two separate offices because of her gender. Alexander knew this before he bequeathed the

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172 Liebowitz, 2016, 192.
173 Liebowitz, 2016, 193.
174 Liebowitz, 2016, 193.

throne to his wife, so it could have been an indirect move to divide the secular from the spiritual authority, similar to what John Hyrcanus had in mind. Salome Alexandra inherited the throne and oversaw political matters, whilst her eldest son, Hyrcanus II was given the role of high priest and the other son Aristoboulos II was a military commander. Such a divide could explain better why Josephus at times describes Salome as an administrator rather than queen because she oversaw political, financial, military and foreign affairs with her sons in high positions who could serve as advisors. The Pharisaic tradition was against theocracy[175] and the queenship of Salome could have been an opportunity to regain the lost custom. Josephus interprets this situation as favourable for the Pharisees to take control because the queen was a good and humble person whom they could easily manipulate and take advantage of.[176] Even though Salome was excluded from spiritual authority, Josephus still makes reference to her pious attitude and how she emphasised religious zeal from those at court.[177] Josephus's image of administrator cannot be interpreted as degrading but more of a type of leadership. The evidence brought here shows that Salome, although officially the queen, did not manage the kingdom alone because she had split offices between the secular and sacred matters. She could be well regarded as an administrator between the different sections, including her sons on one side and the Pharisees on the other.

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[175] Zeitlin, 8.
[176] Ilan, 2001, 102.
[177] Liebowitz, 2016, 191.

3.3.3.3 Salome Alexandra's acceptance as queen

Simone de Beauvoir considers women as victims of their own physiological destiny[178] but in the case of Salome Alexandra physiology contributed to her success. The fact that Salome was past her childbearing age gave her much more freedom in terms of time dedicated for the work as queen. Salome became queen at a mature age, when she was 64 years old[179] and lived to an old age. Although she was a widow, and this usually marginalised women, for Salome it meant more independence and no male protection or guardianship. Queen Salome never remarried and her status as widow, known as *univera*, was considered very respectable. Even Josephus was in favour of such a woman who did not remarry.[180]

Salome Alexandra proved to be very different from the stereotypical idea of the "weaker sex". Josephus in *Antiquities 13* describes her as strong and determined to accomplish all that she plans. Salome gave the utmost importance to rulership and Josephus interprets this as "lust for power" which he considers as not womanly.[181] Josephus still thinks she was the main reason for the loss of independence of Judea to the Roman conquest.[182] Josephus admires a good leader, but he gives much more importance to state affairs than the individual. Salome Alexandra secured the military

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[178] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 1953) Kindle, loc.12904

[179] Atkinson, 2012, "Part 2: Warrior Priests; 4. Seeking Judea's Missing Women: Uncovering Salome Alexandra's Lost Years; The Remembered Queen", loc 930.

[180] Liebowitz, 2016, 184.

[181] Atkinson, 2012, "Part 6: Salome Alexandra's Reign; 14. A Wonderful Administrator; The Effeminate Pharisees and the Masculine Sadducees", loc. 2761, 2767.

[182] Ilan, 2001, 102-103.

force to keep potential invaders away, especially the Nabatean Arabs and the Syrian rule.[183] Salome was also aware of imminent civil conflicts between the Pharisees and the Sadducees who were on the side of Alexander Jannaeus when he killed many Pharisees.[184] These mixed views about women rulers were not exclusive to Josephus and evidence from a letter to Ptolemy in Egypt shows that the elders of Jerusalem did not approve of women as rulers.[185]

Ilan discusses at length how preparation was needed to set the stage for Salome as queen after the failure of John Hyrcanus's wife and this was done through writings: the stories recounting the lives and deeds of three women – Esther, Judith and Susanna. These three heroines served as propaganda for the next queen and while the texts recognise the problem between the male and female sexes, they emphasise the ideal that women could contribute in positive ways to society and thus their inclusion could be beneficial.[186] All the books, although derived from various sources,[187] carry a female name and are set in the post-exilic period of the Jews and form part of an imaginary history. Their authorship is unknown but most probably it was connected to the Hasmonean family.[188] The books did not intend to upset the natural order of the patriarchal society, rather they promoted the strong willed woman who does not give

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[183] Atkinson, 2012, "Part 6: Salome Alexandra's Reign; 14. A Wonderful Administrator", loc. 2731.
[184] Atkinson, 2012, "Part 6: Salome Alexandra's Reign; 14. A Wonderful Administrator", loc. 2731.
[185] Ilan, 2001, 132.
[186] Ilan, 2001, 135.
[187]The book of Esther forms part of the Septuagint, the book of Judith is also included in Septuagint but is considered as an apocryphal work, the story of Susanna is included in the Book of Daniel.
[188] Ilan, 2001, 141-142. The Qumran sect, known as the Essenes, included writings with female protagonists, but they rejected these books on basis of their proximity to the ruling family which they did not approve of.

in to men's sexual desires (Susanna), hailed the beautiful and intelligent woman who manipulated weak men and took control in her own hands (Judith) and admired the obedient yet assertive queen holding power (Esther).[189] Josephus also uses the book of Esther to draw parallels with queen Salome Alexandra especially when he speaks highly of the queen's piety, courage and authority. The book of Esther was instrumental in the acceptance of queen Salome Alexandra in the Hasmonean society as it mentions clearly the role of queen, as consort of her husband the king.[190] Queen Esther is depicted as having two phases: at first she is the obedient, silent and subservient women, but later she becomes assertive, active and also holding political power.[191] In all cases the women intervene in times of crisis and they are accepted as saviours of their people. Women are accepted as leaders when they are needed by the state because there is no other option. Royal women were not considered as first choice leaders, but they were accepted if they served a purpose especially if it was for the common good of the state.

3.3.3.4 The problem with archaeological evidence

Queen Salome's power cannot be evidenced much in archaeology. The remains of the two palaces she built for her sons are part of the palace complex in Jericho and typical

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[189] Ilan, 2001, 149-152.
[190] Etka Liebowitz, "Esther and Alexandra: Paradigms of Queenship in the Septuagint and in Josephus' Writings", *Lectio Difficilior* 1, (2012): 1-15, (9-10).
[191] Ilan, 2001, 151-152.

of the Hasmonean period. The Twin Palaces are almost identical in their internal structure and this was probably done so she could keep balance and a sense of equality between the two rival brothers. The evidence from these palaces does not give any indication of her rulership or her representation as queen, different from males. The other important aspect is coins, or the lack of them, in Salome's name. We find no coins minted in the name of the queen even though her reign was very stable and strong. The fact that no coins were issued with Salome's name rests on the fact that most of the coins of the Hasmonean rule were minted with the title of high priest and later on with the title of king.[192] The Hasmonean rulers presented themselves both as high priests and as kings, but the sacred role was the one which featured most dominantly on coins. The coins bearing the title of high priest were inscribed in Hebrew a sign of national identity, whilst the few examples of coinage presenting the Hasmonean ruler as king were written in Greek, proof of a Hellenistic influence.[193] Such a scenario proved to be a hostile sector for a queen to leave her mark, therefore we have no coins to represent queen Salome and her leadership.

3.4 Conclusion

The Hasmoneans did not have a long tradition of queenship and there are various reasons for it. It was not a misogynistic affair but more of a socio-cultural element

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[192] Regev, 183.
[193] Regev, 185.

which pertained to Judea and its people in a particular way. The choice of a leader was not simply based on sex or individual but it formed part of a whole ideology which included tradition, cult and ancestral heritage. The history of the Hasmoneans' ancestors and their principles left an impact on the running of the Judean state and this in turn effected royal women and power.

The monotheistic cult in Judea was one of the main reasons which could have impacted women's access to power. The Hasmoneans did not have the tradition of the royal cult. Thus, the personification of God through the deification of monarchs was prohibited. The relationship of the Hasmonean monarchs with cult was through their role as high priest at the same time as being kings. Despite this male exclusivity, there were instances when the secular and sacred roles were separated so a woman could access the throne. The Judean context did not support the royal cult, but queens could still be active in religious sects and lead a pious life that served as an example to their subjects. The monotheistic context of the Hasmoneans was a crucial factor in the role played by women as queens, as it gave them the chance to be more directly involved in leadership and politics rather than be used indirectly for political propaganda. The example of queen Salome as administrator and her son Hyrcanus as high priest shows how these roles could be separated and the queen was in a true position of power.

There was limited or no presentation of the monarchs, especially of the wives. The prohibition of human imagery, even on coins, left the royal women side-lined.

Even historians left many women's names out when charting the Hasmonean genealogy.

The primogenital tradition was a hindrance to queenship in Judea. Since the establishment of the Hasmonean monarchy, it was decided that leadership was to be inherited and the first son was to take the throne after his father. However, there were kings who bypassed this tradition by naming their wives as heir to the throne before their death. Both John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus declared their wives successors to the Hasmonean throne. The problem with Hyrcanus might have been the lack of involvement of his wife before his death and thus her lack of expertise and strength in the field were easily overcome by the eldest son. Alexander Jannaeus worked differently with Salome, as the evidence by Josephus shows that she was already active when Alexander was king. Salome Alexandra had both the experience of queen regent when her husband was away on military campaigns and the knowledge of the fate of Hyrcanus's wife. To safeguard his decision, Alexander Jannaeus planned his succession well, with his wife as queen and his eldest son as high priest. Salome's success on the throne was due to good planning and wise tactics, both from her husband and from the literature disseminated during that period. The books of Judith, Esther and Susanna served Salome well in her reign as she gained the support of the public, the elites and the Pharisaic sect.

The historical evidence for the Hasmonean queens is a paradoxical affair. Josephus's account of the influential women in the Hasmonean period is in parallel

with the imagery of Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly as presented in the Book of *Proverbs*. Women in power conveyed a sort of dualism in the Jewish mindset – the positive and admirable part, and the negative and scandalous side. Josephus praises queen Salome's strength in leadership and her pious attitude, but at the same time he emphasises her "lust for power" and how she treads into manly domains and behaves unwomanly when she is in control. The fact that historical evidence is all written by men does not help us gain an objective picture of the situation with women and power, especially when texts contain conflicting attitudes.

Queen Salome Alexandra is the only female regnant monarch during the Hasmonean period. The fact that this dynasty was short lived, did not give much time for women to access power. Before Salome's ascent to the throne only John Hyrcanus's wife and Salina Alexandra had some sort of impact on Hasmonean rulership. These two women served an evolutionary process before Salome took the throne and became queen in her own right without consort. The cases of Salina Alexandra and Salome Alexandra present the Hasmonean royal women as administrators of the highest political office. In her limited time and restrictions, Salina took control of a bad situation and managed to secure the future of the Hasmonean rule. She was not queen in her own right but proved to be a good administrator in time of crisis. Salome was the pioneer in Hasmonean queenship, a leader and an effective administrator.

Salome's legacy might be found in women of the Herodian court, like Mariamne (granddaughter of Salome Alexandra who married Herod), but whose notion of

"power" stands not as rulers or influential political figures, but part of complicated webs of court intrigues, plots and conspiracies against husbands and kings. Salome Alexandra remains the ultimate figure of women in power despite all the adversities of her time.

Chapter 4 - Women and Power in the Mediterranean Dimension

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the Mediterranean concept through the evidence provided in the case studies. The data collected from Egypt and Judea on queenship provides a distinct way to discuss the Mediterranean in broader terms than the geographical, environmental, or economic factors usually presented by many scholars. The Mediterranean presented by these case studies is more of a human space determined by cultural values, traditions, and politics, and not a physical unit making a homogenous entity. Whilst basing on other scholarly works which surveyed the definition of the Mediterranean, this chapter will contribute to the Mediterranean debate by focusing on the role of queens in antiquity.

Specific examples from the case studies shall provide a basis for enquiry about the possible notion of unity and/or diversity in the Mediterranean. The idea of a Mediterranean unity shall be examined by selecting corresponding elements such as the ruling bodies, the cultic sphere and coin imagery. Evidence shall provide for the exploration of any uniform elements both kingdoms embraced and if these were determined by their connections to the Mediterranean or otherwise. The physical proximity of the two kingdoms presented is also essential for the discussion of cultural interactions in the Mediterranean.

4.2 The Mediterranean debate

The Mediterranean is a modern concept in history writing. The Grand Tour of the Mediterranean in the 18th and 19th century was the rediscovery of the ancient foundations of human civilisation and the beginning of a narrative that captured the exotic feel of lands ripe with history. These travels formed part of the European reshaping of the Mediterranean both as a geo-political concept and a cultural space. The expeditions and writings of travellers in the Mediterranean were a popular and Romantic version of how European powers set out to "civilise" the countries around the Mediterranean[194] which were almost absorbed in their own historical past, as if fossilised.[195] The writing of the history of the Mediterranean as a distinct space or region habited by diverse populations apart from Greece and Rome is quite a recent development in scholarly ventures. Apart from the Romantic narratives of the Grand Tour, the *history of* the Mediterranean, different from *history in* the Mediterranean,[196] had a long way to develop. For the Romantic traveller, the Mediterranean represented the exotic: idyllic scenes of natural landscape dotted with ancient remains and caressed by the mythical sea, but for the historian and anthropologist it proved to be a challenging task to define because of various elements at play.

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[194] Miriam Cooke, Erdag Goknar, Grant Parker, eds., "Grand Tours", *Mediterranean Passages: Readings from Dido to Derrida* (USA: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 198-200.
[195] Cooke et al, 199.
[196] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 9.

One of the first challenges for scholarship about the Mediterranean is the question of its truism or invention. Nicholas Purcell discusses the "invention of the Mediterranean" and how this space came into being and so it is understood to have borders and boundaries which define it and select it from other areas in the world. The notion of a unified ancient Mediterranean is challenged by Purcell and he emphasises that whilst the ancient Greeks and Romans had a closeness to the sea; knew the coasts and lands around it; reflected on its role in human history; named it and described it; it was not them who invented the notion of the Mediterranean but the European colonisers.[197] The idea of a "Mediterranean exceptionalism" was used for political reasons and is the product of European colonial thought.[198] The values, culture and history of the Mediterranean contrasted with the northern European region and their presentation in a declining and degenerate manner was in need of emancipation:[199] a role which was to be played by the European colonisers. It is important to clarify here that the European coloniser was not always far up North but was also very close to the Mediterranean as was France who conquered many parts of North Africa. In fact, this is the problem with Albert Camus's lecture titled *The New Mediterranean Culture* where he tries to define the Mediterranean culture and identity as one and unique, but slips into the net of the French colonialist mind-set. He does

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[197] Nicholas Purcell, "The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness? On Defining the Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Historical Review,* Vol.18, No.2, (2003): 9-29, (15-16).
[198] Purcell, 13.
[199] Purcell, 14.

not condemn the French oppression in Algeria, just as he does with the Italian Fascists and their "civilising mission" in Ethiopia.[200]

The beginning of scholarship about the Mediterranean was based on the Romantic metaphor of the 'root', 'stem' and 'branches' which was used to connect peoples, languages, cultures and civilisations in various fields of study.[201] The metaphor based on the concept of land and soil, physical features of the earth, lent itself well to the definition of the Mediterranean as a physical space connected through similarities which passed from one place to another. The geographical and environmental space was needed to set roots to historical facts. This way the Mediterranean was understood as a physical unit serving as backdrop for history in the Mediterranean.

Fernand Braudel starts his canonical work on the Mediterranean from this point of view and gives a detailed account of geographical and climatic factors which distinguish the Mediterranean as a separate region. The climate imposes a sense of uniformity on both landscape and human life, and thus the Mediterranean as presented by Braudel is a homogenous space[202] sharing similar features such as the cultivation of vines and olives. Braudel accentuates the climatic factor and suggests that a similar rhythm is created in the strips of land around the Mediterranean which

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[200] Neil Foxlee, *Albert Camus's 'The New Mediterranean Culture': A Text and its Concepts*, vol. 38 of *Modern French Identities*, ed. Peter Collier (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 58.

[201] Irad Malkin, Christy Constantakopoulou, Katerina Panagopoulou , "Preface: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol.22, No.1, (2007): 1-9, (3).

[202] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip* II, Vol 1 (California: University of California Press, 1995), 231.

is beneficial for the movement of both men and goods.[203] Horden and Purcell present the micro-ecologies model for the Mediterranean,[204] which is also based on environmental factors in the lands around the Mediterranean. Unlike Braudel, the Mediterranean of Horden and Purcell is fragmented into pockets which have their own micro-climate and environmental characteristics and with human intervention these areas produce their unique culture and identity. This Mediterranean is not a homogenous entity, but a divided space where humans interact with the environment they live in to ensure their survival.

The other most important factor in the exploration of the Mediterranean is the perception of the Mediterranean as a human unit. After a long explanation of the physical features of the Mediterranean, Braudel turns his attention to the human element in the region[205] and the aspect of connectivity between societies. For Braudel, the Mediterranean includes both the body of water and the land mass surrounding it so the routes of connection are not exclusively sea-based but also found on the hinterland. The "Mediterranean World" as presented by Braudel is not connected by the sea, but by 'the peoples of the sea'[206] thus the main element of connectivity is not the watery expanse between lands but the populations around it who create networks on land as much as the sea.

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[203] Braudel, 231.
[204] Horden and Purcell, 54.
[205] Braudel, 276.
[206] Braudel, 276.

When discussing the Mediterranean as a human unit, Braudel seems to follow the ecologising approach[207] whereby he gives significant importance to towns and cities on the hinterland. David Abulafia in *The Great Sea* has more of an interactionist approach[208] to the Mediterranean and focuses on the sea as a unifier and divider at the same time. Abulafia's main protagonist is the sea and all the happenings of humans in relation to it, thus the exploration of ancient sea routes, trade, ports and the interaction between peoples for various reasons ranging from merchandise, politics, war, and colonisation. Horden and Purcell present both approaches to study the Mediterranean and combine both sea and land factors to assert their model of micro-regions. The micro-regions, being distinct environmental areas, relied both on land networks and on sea routes to be able to survive. Micro-regions had their own local produce but could not ensure the survival of their inhabitants because of lack of diversification. Resources, some of which could be finite, pushed populations into trade deals and various economic activities with other micro-regions. Some spaces had surplus, while others had demand.[209] Such basic needs gave way to the Mediterranean exchanges which were vital to all micro-regions.[210] The Mediterranean micro-regions united on a bigger scale because of three important factors: diversification of products, storage of goods for long periods and redistribution of commodities. These are the fundamentals for connectivity in the Mediterranean,

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[207] Horden and Purcell, 10.
[208] Horden and Purcell, 10.
[209] W.V Harris, ed. *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17-18.
[210] Horden and Purcell, 172.

which can be done both by land and sea networks. Horden and Purcell also recognise the importance of hubs or centres along these lines of exchange which did not serve an economic purpose only but were channels of cultural interactions too.

Modern scholarship presents the Mediterranean as a bustling hub based mostly on the principle of connectivity. Braudel, Horden and Purcell, and Abulafia all regard this element as essential in the history of the Mediterranean. However, this is not an exclusive element to the Mediterranean when compared to other parts of the world. Abulafia expands the notion of the "Mediterranean" as a global phenomenon and not limited to the area mostly associated with the ancient Greek and Roman basin. There are other "mediterraneans" across the world and these are not necessarily seascapes, but they are spaces between lands, such as deserts, which have the same dynamics as seas.[211] The "mediterranean spaces" are areas of movement where goods, cultures and religions flow and interact. Human contact is key in these open spaces which serve as platform for redistribution of goods and ideas. The Classical Mediterranean is a typical example of networking space, but it is not the only one. Abulafia notes that the greater Mediterranean (the Classical Mediterranean) is made up of sub-mediterraneans, smaller seas which serve as passageways to the greater sea.[212]

The Mediterranean notion in scholarship evolved from a fixed and rooted model to a fluid and interconnected paradigm. While the 1970s and 80s still

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[211] David Abulafia, "Mediterraneans" in *Rethinking the Mediterranean,* 65.
[212] Abulafia, "Mediterraneans", 67.

reproduced the Romantic model of the rootedness of people in their local space, the 90s moved to the concept of connectivity.[213] Braudel had already looked at the Mediterranean as a space of exchange where each port is in conversation with another,[214] but with the rise of globalisation and networking the connectivity model became the new way of thinking about the Mediterranean.

Malkin et al. propose the Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach to investigate networks and relations in the ancient Mediterranean.[215] The network concept took over the fixed model of the 'root' and 'stem' terminology and provided a new way to study geography and human spaces. SNA emphasises the relations between social groups, the patterns involved and the results of such patterns.[216] The shift in study is from separate individuals to social relations which form networks. This new perspective is not only concerned with connectivity but with the structures that generate the networks themselves. This is done through the identification of the initial force which kick starts the networks; understanding the leading influence in the networks and how new networks are produced.[217] Such methodology provides for more flexibility in scholarship about the Mediterranean and fixed social structures become fluid networks that start and end according to arising needs. Through this

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[213] Ian Morris, "Mediterraneanization", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol 18, No.2, (2003): 30-55, (37).
[214] Malkin et al, 1.
[215] Malkin et al, 3-4.
[216] Malkin et al, 3.
[217] Malkin et al, 4.

new approach social groups of individuals are considered to form 'nodes', which then are connected by 'ties'.[218] The networks are both physical and cultural passageways.

The idea of the Mediterranean is a complex one because both the environment and populations around it are not static entities and movement and change are a reality. Scholars, such as W.V Harris and Michael Herzfeld speak of the Mediterranean as a constructed concept which lacks physical and anthropological homogeneity. Harris presents various issues which question the Mediterranean ideal including the notion of unity and identity in antiquity. It is difficult to deduce any sense of Mediterranean identity held by the ancient inhabitants. We know that the Greeks held the sea as a central element in popular culture and literature,[219] and the Romans referred to it as "mare nostrum", but this leaves out all the other populations who came in contact with the Mediterranean. What was their perception of the Mediterranean? Did the concept of Mediterranean identity exist? Even on an anthropological level we have a difficulty to discuss the Mediterranean as a whole. There is no evidence of social-psychological characteristics shared by all the Mediterranean people, most notably the anthropological concept of honour and shame.[220] Seth Schwartz is cautious when it comes to comparing societies by Mediterranean ethnography and basing this exercise on environmental and geological

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[218] Malkin et al, 4.
[219] Harris, 16.
[220] Harris, 26.

factors found around the Mediterranean. The latter elements influence human behaviour but not culture, kinship, social structures and religious beliefs.[221]

Herzfeld's concept of "Mediterraneanism" refers to a Mediterranean stereotypical identity which is used both by inhabitants and foreigners. Mediterraneanism is regarded as "a practical excuse" by Herzfeld to hide certain attitudes, outlooks and lifestyles of the Mediterranean people.[222] His theory carries a paradoxical element because he denies the homogenous identity of the Mediterranean, but at the same time asserts that all populations of the Mediterranean tend to accept and use for themselves the excuse of "Mediterraneanism". Schwartz is critical of the "Mediterraneanism" approach and considers the Mediterranean construct a sensitive matter which has to be used carefully and 'not as a determinist frame into which to force evidence'.[223] Ian Morris makes a distinction between "Mediterraneanism" and "Mediterraneanisation". Whilst, the term coined by Herzfeld refers to a state of being, the "Mediterraneanisation" idea refers to a process, a way of becoming something through connectivity.[224]

An article by Nicholas Purcell ends with the sentence: 'The unity and distinctiveness of the Mediterranean world are not the product of sameness.'[225] Here,

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[221] Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?: Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 25.

[222] Herzfeld, "Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything from Epistemology to Eating", in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, 51.

[223] Schwartz, 24.

[224] Morris, 33.

[225] Purcell, 25.

Purcell presents a paradox which sums up many arguments discussed earlier. There is a degree of unity in the Mediterranean if one considers the various networks criss-crossing the space and the channels of communication between the diverse populations who inhabit the area. However, this unity is not to be considered as uniformity or sameness, it is rather a tool which creates relationships between the physical environment and the peoples inhabiting it, and between populations. The Mediterranean is the sum of these relationships.

4.3 The Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans: unity, uniformity or diversity in the Mediterranean?

The cases of the Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans provide good grounds to test certain arguments from the discussion about the Mediterranean. The Ptolemies based on the shores of North Africa in Egypt, and the Hasmoneans on the Eastern side of the Mediterranean hinterland in Judea were close enough to share certain characteristics but they still retained their individual and local identity. Both kingdoms were an essential part of the Hellenistic world in the period between 2nd century BCE and 1st century BCE, and through their contacts with Greek sources and other influential centres of the time developed a cultural, social and political model of their own, whilst still sharing similar features. The political and cultural nuances of the Hellenistic kingdoms are a typical example of unity and distinctiveness but not sameness as argued earlier by Purcell. There are major differences between the Ptolemies and the

Hasmoneans, especially in the system of beliefs and ritual, but they enjoyed a close connection, especially with the earlier occupation of Judea by the Ptolemies before it became part of the Seleucid kingdom,[226] and with the wars and conflicts that followed between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, Judea found itself in the midst of a political game between two great forces. The decree by Antiochus II granted Judea a form of autonomy and promised to rebuild the city of Jerusalem which had been destroyed in the war of 201 BCE.[227] However, relationships with the Ptolemies were not severed and Jews lived freely in Alexandria.[228] The Ptolemaic interest in Judea continues with Cleopatra VII who took control of certain parts of the Hasmonean territory which she gained through the conquests of Mark Anthony.[229] Section 4.3.2 in this chapter presents more examples of contacts between Judea and Egypt which reveal a complex web of Hellenistic practices shared by both kingdoms.

There was no political or cultural unity which made all kingdoms alike to form a uniform Mediterranean, but there were independent 'nodes' with their own structures, which in turn were connected with 'ties' provided by the Hellenistic world.

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[226] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period, Vol 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 6-7.
[227] Hengel, 9-10.
[228] David Abulafia, *The Great Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153.
[229] Regev, 230.

4.3.1 The ideology of kingdoms

The Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans existed in a period which was dominated by Hellenistic influences. The Ptolemies were of Macedonian stock and brought their Greek heritage to Egypt. Just like the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, descendants of another Diadochus after Alexander, acted as channel of Hellenistic influences in the Near East. The Hasmonean state, geographically located in between these two powers, could not escape the setting up of a Hellenistic monarchy. The ideology of kingship varied between the Ptolemaic and Hasmonean dynasty, even though both are considered as Hellenistic monarchies. The situation presented here is described well by Levine in his book *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* when he defines Hellenisation as a 'a veritable potpourri of cultural forces, a market place of ideas and fashions from which one could choose.'[230] Both kingdoms were presented with a variety of practices from which they chose the best for their kingdom's needs and their political agendas. The ideology of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids was based on power achieved by conquering lands and peoples. The Ptolemies controlled Egypt, whilst the Seleucids had a vast empire composed of diverse lands, cultures, races and languages.[231] The Hasmoneans started as rulers of their homeland and national monarchs but later followed the Hellenistic model of gaining new lands to increase

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[230] Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 27.
[231] Altay Coskun and Alex Mc Auley, ed. 'The Study of Seleukid Royal Women: An Introduction', *Seleukid Royal Women: Creation, Representation and Distortion of Hellenistic Queenship in the Seleukid Empire* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016), 18.

their income from taxation and have access to other resources.[232] They employed mercenaries too. However, scholars do not agree on this Hellenistic side of the Hasmoneans and some present them on a lesser level than other Hellenistic kings by citing their lower tax rates and lesser number of mercenaries. Other scholars present the expansion of territory as a need to address overpopulation in Judea and thus a need for more resources.[233]

The title of king for the Hasmonean monarch differed from that of other Hellenistic kings because their role was different but they imitated the same model. Hellenistic kings such as the Ptolemies and Seleucids, had no emotional ties to the lands, peoples, cultures and beliefs of the lands they conquered. They held an absolute power over territories they won and the military presence continued to reinforce the king's worthiness of the throne.[234] The Hasmonean kingship had nationalistic qualities and some scholars present the expansion of the kingdom as a move to regain the lost lands previously forming part of ancient Israel.[235] Like Hellenistic kingdoms, the Hasmoneans set up a military to occupy the lands they took hold of, mainly Samaria, the coastal region, Galilee and Transjordan.[236] Although the Hasmoneans did not venture out of Israel, the way they conquered lands and established military colonies was typical of Hellenistic monarchs of the time.

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[232] Regev, 271.
[233] Regev, 271.
[234] Regev,132.
[235] Dabrowa, 115.
[236] Martin Hengel, *The Hellenization of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1989), 30.

The Hasmoneans were aware that they could not survive if they did not embrace the Greek influences especially in technology, economics, law, warfare and language.[237] Thus many elements of the Hasmonean kingship resemble those of their neighbouring monarchies. Like the Greeks, the Hasmoneans set holidays to celebrate military victories and had diplomatic relations with Rome.[238] Other similar factors included the hiring of mercenaries and the choice of king over leader when they adopted the title of *basileus*. Another important element in Hasmonean kingship was the choice of names that included both a Greek and Hebrew name such as: John Hyrcanus, Alexander Jannaeus, Salome Alexandra. The Hasmoneans presented themselves both as Hellenistic kings and Hasmonean monarchs when they adopted foreign practices in their national rulership.

Levine argues that the motivation of the revolt against the Seleucids was not against the Hellenistic influences brought by king Antiochus IV but against the persecutions done by the king, sometimes with the support and backing of 'radical Jewish Hellenisers'[239]. Evidence of this period is limited and the account given by the author of *Maccabees* is all out to support the Hasmoneans and legitimise their cause. There are strong views from scholars that certain events were inflated or given much more prominence because they served the Hasmoneans well in gaining control of Judea.[240] The Hasmonean approval and implementation of various Hellenistic

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[237] Hengel, 30.
[238] Levine, 58-59.
[239] Levine, 58.
[240] Dabrowa, 14-15.

practices gives a good basis for such an argument. The idea of gaining independence from the Seleucids was not exclusive to the Hasmoneans in Judea but it was a common feeling between many groups in the Seleucid empire. The Seleucids were in control of various territories and their Persian style of government worked for some time in keeping control of the multicultural and multi-ethnic populations of the empire. The Seleucids started facing resistance from many groups who were not content with the system and intended to fight for autonomy and even independence.[241] The Hasmoneans were one such group who initiated a revolt and grew into a political entity with the aim of managing their own territory and governing in a way that respected their Jewish traditions and beliefs. However, this could not be done without the assimilation of Hellenistic practices.

4.3.2 The relationship between the Ptolemies and the Jews

Despite many cultural differences, the Jewish diaspora thrived in Alexandria during the Ptolemaic era. In a way there was a sense of unity between the two peoples and this was due to the cosmopolitan society the Ptolemies created in Alexandria. Many Jews lived freely in Alexandria and had their synagogues as their centres of prayer and teaching. The Jews of Alexandria integrated well into the Hellenistic lifestyle and contributed in discussions about Greek philosophy and attended the games.[242] They

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[241] Dabrowa, 13.
[242] Abulafia, 2011, 153.

respected the Ptolemaic kings and even praised them publicly but never considered them divine.[243] The translation of the Hebrew Bible in Alexandria commissioned by Ptolemy II demonstrates good relations with the Jews before the Hasmonean rule. The Septuagint was influenced by Hellenistic ideas and was based on a different version of the Masoretic text preserved by the Jews.[244]

The good rapport between the Jews and the Ptolemies is also reflected in the number of mercenaries who joined the Ptolemaic army, some of whom reached high ranks and were regarded with great esteem and trust. In fact, it was one of these generals who averted a potential invasion of Judea by the Ptolemies. Cleopatra III was prepared to take over Judea during a conflict with Syria. Alexander Jannaeus was helpless at this stage and tried to please the queen with gifts in a bid to change her mind.[245] It was the intervention of general Ananias, a Jew, with the queen which prevented the attack. This case is mentioned by various scholars, but its credibility is questioned. It could have been a fictitious case which had the aim to promote the support of the Jewish diaspora in neighbouring kingdoms.[246] Jannaeus's territorial expansion into other cities, such as Ptolemais, created tension between rival Hellenistic forces and this put him in a postion to seek help from other allies. This

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[243] Abulafia, 2011, 153.
[244] Abulafia, 2011, 161-162.
[245] Kenneth Atkninson, *A History of the Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 115-116.
[246] Regev, 123-124.

time, the greater force who could aid the Hasmoneans was the Ptolemies.[247] Whilst on a quest to establish independence from the Seleucids and secure a national identity, the Hasmoneans still worked in and with a Hellenistic world. The allies changed, but the cultural force did not.[248]

The close relations of the Jews with the Ptolemies could have also contributed to the acceptance of women as queens during the Hasmonean period. The tradition of the queens in Egypt and in Syria left an impact on the Jewish perception of queenship. This shows that the kingdoms although separate political and cultural entities, came into close contact for various reasons and ideas flowed from one side to the other. These kingdoms in their distinct manners influenced each other and whilst they fought for their survival and independence, they prospered by the fusion of local traditions and foreign influences.

4.3.3 The Ptolemaic and Hasmonean royal women as Hellenistic queens

The Ptolemaic and Hasmonean royal women, being an integral part of their respective dynasties, are to be considered as Hellenistic queens. Various aspects of their role and queenship are similar to those of other contemporary queens, especially the Seleucids.

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[247] Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenisim: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998), 27-28.
[248] Gruen, 27-28.

There are elements which they shared and others which they adapted or rejected according to their local character. In their introduction to the book *Seleukid Royal Women*, Coskun and McAuley state that the role of the Hellenistic royal woman, be it passive or active, is still very important in the development of the kingdom.[249] The Greek tradition presented the "good queen" only on two special occasions which were instrumental for the kingdom: the wedding and the birth of the heir to the throne.[250] For the rest of the time she was invisible. Kingship in the Hellenistic world did not rely on the presence of a queen because a king did not need a queen to rule.[251] The woman accompanying the ruler, and even given the title of queen, was not automatically in possession of power. Her proximity to the ruler did not guarantee any form of political power.[252] In fact, even the term *basilissa* was used with caution and not given to every king's wife.[253]

Although the role of the queen did not impact on the king's political rule, it was important for his image and that of the dynasty. Harders uses the term 'gate-keeper' for the queen's role as the bridge between him and his subjects.[254] The Hellenistic kings used the queen to their advantage and for an improved image with their subjects. This was the case with the Ptolemies who used the queens in the royal cult, and like their

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[249] Coskun and McAuley, 17.
[250] Coskun and McAuley, 19.
[251] Ann-Cathrin Harders, "The Making of a Queen – Seleucus Nikator and His Wives", in *Seleukid Royal Women*, Coskun and McAuley ed., 26.
[252] Harders, 26.
[253] Coskun and McAuley, 19.
[254] Harders, 27.

Seleucid counterparts, named cities after their wives. Ptolemy II in Egypt named the

Arisonite nome after his wife, and Seleucus in Syria named many cities after his wife

Apama.[255] Seleucus put his wife's name on the map and like Ptolemy II presented the

wife and queen as an essential element in his kingdom. However, the naming of cities

cannot be taken as proof of political power given to women.[256] This was a propaganda

tool which decreased the gap between the king and his subjects. This custom was not

limited to royal women, in fact Seleucus named other parts of his kingdom after other

family members to increase the popularity and grandeur of the *basileus*.[257]

The Hellenistic tradition of naming parts of the kingdom after a wife was not

customary in Judea. The Hasmonean wives of kings were not promoted. The notion

of a Hasmonean queen, being the wife of a ruling king, did not exist. Whilst a king

was in power, the woman was almost invisible and not even mentioned by name, as

was the case with John Hyrcanus's wife. She was not given the title of queen either.

Hellenistic kingdoms had the custom of praising the queen, mentioning her in

literature,[258] and giving public honours as means of indirect propaganda to the king

and his victorious and omnipotent figure. The queen had a name, a face, and her own

royal cult but this was not the case with the Hasmonean wives of kings. The wives

were not considered as queens and not mentioned by name even in the number one

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[255] Harders, 33.
[256] Harders, 34.
[257] Harders, 34.
[258] Theocritus was the court poet who wrote poems and idylls about the queens, mainly Arsinoe II
and Berenice II and which served as propaganda tools for the monarchy of the Ptolemies.

text for Hasmonean propaganda, *1 Maccabees.* In this pro-Hasmonean text the women of the royal house are not specified and do not feature in any way.[259]

Although the Seleucids, as a Hellenistic empire, served as model for the establishment of the Hasmonean kingdom, there were various differences when it came to the role of women as wives of kings. The Hasmoneans did not permit marital alliances between mixed parties. This was a regular practice between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids in a bid to strengthen and expand their territories and women were used as political pawns. The Hasmoneans permitted only marriages between Jewish couples, thus the royal lineage stayed Jewish.[260]

Another major difference between other Hellenistic queens and the Hasmoneans was the issue of the royal cult. The Ptolemaic queens were represented as goddesses with the attire of deities and symbols such as the cornucopia signifying the abundance of the state generated by the benefactions of the monarchy. These are the majority of the images of queens on coins. The titulature, such as Saviour or Benefactor, used by the Ptolemies reflected their ideology of divine status and emphasised their legitimate rulership over Egypt.[261] The queen carried the title of goddess and was an object of reverence and symbol of divine power too. This role usually came before her political duties, as was the case with Arsinoe II. Cleopatra VII

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[259] Julia Wilker, "A Dynasty without Women? The Hasmoneans between Jewish Tradition and Hellenistic Influence", in *Seleukid Royal Women*, Coskun and McAuley ed., 250.
[260] Wilker, 250.
[261] Jean Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt: Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 64.

carried the title of goddess and was associated with Isis, but her political role surpassed the divine image. This custom was also found in the Seleucid kingdom with queens assimilating the name of goddesses in their title, such as queen Laodice's mention in a decree issued by her husband and herself with the title 'Queen Laodice Aphrodite'.[262] The Hasmonean kingship was not associated with divine personification, except for the king who filled the role of high priest, but not in any way considered a sacred mortal. The Hasmonean queen could not be permitted to fulfil this duty, hence her absence from sacred duties is very noticeable when compared to the Ptolemaic and Seleucid counterpart. Salome Alexandra was renowned for her piety, but she could not access the sacred rituals of the high priest. Her duties were bound to the throne.

Ptolemaic queens became part of the mythology the monarchy recreated to assume power in Egypt. They were fully immersed in the royal cult and the myths surrounding it. The queens were in favour of this tradition and continued to develop the royal cult with festivals and mass celebrations such as the Adoneia festival initiated by Arsinoe II. The Hasmonean queens seem to be much more independent in matters of politics and religion. They were not always in accordance with their husbands' political views and with mainstream Judaism and sometimes were

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[262] Stacy Reda, "Interregnum: Queen Regency in the Seleucid Empire", (masters thesis, University of Waterloo, 2014), 47-48,
https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/bitstream/handle/10012/8762/Reda_Stacy.pdf?sequence=1.

affiliated with sects, mostly the Pharisaic sect. This was the case with Salome Alexandra who sided with the Pharisees and they regained power in the Hasmonean court during her reign.[263] The role of queen in relation to the sacred realm was determined by the type of worship embraced by the monarchy. The fundamental distinction between the two cultures was between the polytheistic cult of the Ptolemies and the monotheistic belief of the Hasmoneans.

This scenario might lead to the perception that Hasmonean queens were always in the shadows of their husbands and they were neither visible and nor in positions of power. However, the most striking difference between the two kingdoms is the role of queen in politics. In the Hellenistic world it was not customary for queens to rule alone.[264] Sole rulership of the queen was not supported, and she was usually appointed as co-ruler with a male, either husband or husband-brother. Those who managed to rule alone, mainly Cleopatra II[265] and Cleopatra VII, did so because they managed to get control of the male heirs to the throne either by internal political tactics or by plotting against them. Others ruled on their own when the husbands were away on military campaigns like Berenice II[266] or as regents for their sons, like Cleopatra

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[263] Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 21.

[264] Wilker, 250.

[265] Between 145-116 BCE Egypt had a tripartite rulership. Ptolemy VIII took a second wife and ruled with both women, Cleopatra II, referred to as the "sister" and Cleopatra III, known as the "wife". There were various disputes between them which resulted in a civil war. When Ptolemy VIII fled to Cyprus with Cleopatra III, Cleopatra II remained on the throne as sole queen. Sally-Ann Ashton, *The Last Queens of Egypt* (Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), 64. Sources do not give much information about the queenship of Cleopatra II.

[266] Ashton, 59.

(Thea) I. Many Ptolemaic queens were designated as queen regents for a short period of time and were also successful in their brief experience however sources and evidence of their queenship are very scarce. The rule of Salome Alexandra as sole Hasmonean queen was accepted, and no male consort was appointed with her. Her son was given the role of high priest as this was a male office, but she was left in control of political affairs of the kingdom until her death. Hasmonean queenship was accepted as long as this was given the approval of the king as was the case with John Hyrcanus who chose his wife over his sons, and Alexander Jannaeus who appointed his wife Salome Alexandra to the throne before his death. Such cases provide for a different attitude towards queens between the Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans.

4.4 Conclusion

The observation of queenship in the Ptolemaic and Hasmonean kingdom reveals various degrees of queenship for women. Whilst the role of king usually followed the model of one male on the throne having absolute power till his death, there were various nuances for the role of queen. As discussed before, the king's wife was not necessarily the queen, as in political terms, and thus not bearing the title *basilissa*, meaning leader. The role of the king's wife varied across kingdoms but it does not mean that it was static and always the same in that particular monarchy too. The

Hellenistic kingdoms of the period in question present various degrees of queenship and power accessed by the women on the throne.

In their long reign, the Ptolemies had various queens in different political positions and whose degree of power varied too. Queens like Berenice I and Arsinoe II were mostly presented as co-rulers with their husbands and their imagery on coins as a royal couple gave the impression of a balance of power between the king and queen. However, evidence of both Berenice I and her daughter Arsinoe II being involved in politics is limited. Their imagery on coins and in temples was related to the royal cult and there are no sources recording any decision-making on their part without the intervention of the husband. Scholars are still debating the power and political influence exerted by Arsinoe II and opinions point to contrasting directions. If arguments are based on psychohistorical theory and evidence from after her death, as suggested by Pomeroy,[267] then we can assume that Arsinoe II was an influential woman in the government of Egypt of her time. Her personal story before marrying her brother Ptolemy II shows a strong character in the face of many plots and conflicts against her first husband Lysimachos of Thrace and his son Agathocles.[268] She managed to become Egypt's queen at a very important time for the Ptolemaic rule and put her husband-brother in a weak position as ruler as he claimed the throne only by inheritance and not by personal achievement. However, evidence from written

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[267] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, (United States of America: Schocken Books, 1975), Kindle Edition, "Ptolemaic Queens", loc. 431.
[268] Ashton, 57.

sources does not give Arsinoe II any credit of political success, whilst Ptolemy II had

been accredited with some victories of his own before marrying Arsinoe.[269]

The queenship of Berenice II shows a different element of the wife's king. This

is the queen regent. Berenice II was described as the female pharaoh in Demotic

texts.[270] She took control of the kingdom when her husband was absent due to military

campaigns, but she was not to continue ruling after his death because she was killed

by her son Ptolemy IV. Evidence of her rulership is limited and usually associated

with the poem by Theocritus *The Lock of Berenice* where the queen prays to the gods

for her husband's safe return. The queen regent filled in the position of ruler for a

temporary period of time, usually until the male heir came of age to ascend the throne.

Cleopatra I was also regent until her son Ptolemy VI acquired the throne as sole ruler.

Before Cleopatra VII who was queen regnant, that is a queen ruling alone, there

were other powerful Cleopatras, but again the sources describing their political

influence are limited. The Ptolemaic dynasty is rife with political intrigues and many

times sources focus on the various moves and tactics of power-hungry individuals,

mostly men.

The Hasmoneans cannot be compared to the Ptolemies in this regard.

Queenship in the Hasmonean kingdom was done in one way only: the queen regnant.

The queen was either visible and fully participating in politics or she was the wife

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[269] Pomeroy, loc. 442.
[270] Pomeroy, loc. 500.

with no name. The sources name those women who had direct impact on the politics of the kingdom such as Salina Alexandra who for a brief period held the destiny of the Hasmonean kingdom, and Salome Alexandra, the only queen regnant for the kingdom.

Such examples provide for a diverse picture of queenship in the Hellenistic period. The Ptolemaic context being much more complex than the Hasmonean case. There is no doubt that both kingdoms have a Hellenistic aspect to them, however their differences show that systems were adapted to the particular context based on culture, tradition and cult. There is a great element of unity between these kingdoms in the Mediterranean because of the Hellenistic influence, but they are still distinct in their character. There is no element of sameness between them and this is evident in the way they apply queenship. The various roles of queens presented here claim for the Social Network Analysis approach in studying the Mediterranean because the understanding of one cultural centre relies on the connections and communications with another centre. The hubs are distinctive in character even if they are well connected through channels of cultural, economic, political, linguistic and technological influences. The queenship cases provide good reasons to look at the Mediterranean as a canvas with various localities in a process of personal enrichment, rather than being washed by a collective wave of influences which creates uniformity.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

The case studies of the Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans presented only a section of women who were close enough to access the seat of power, these were the royal women. Power was a very closed affair in monarchic states and access to it was limited. In many occasions, it was the first-born male who inherited the throne but this cannot be taken as rule as there were many cases of women on the seat of power too. The cases presented in this research focused specifically on the role of queens and how this role was presented to the subjects, narrated by ancient historians and writers, and interpreted by modern scholarship.

5.1 Two levels of power

The theme of power was investigated on two levels: power in the sacred realm, and political power as a human affair.

The case of the Ptolemies presented a situation of syncretism between the Greek goddesses and the Egyptian deities. The sacred heritage of the new rulers was amalgamated with the local tradition, thus figures such as that of Aphrodite and Isis came to share similar powers and virtues. This fusion of cultures was mirrored in the royal cult of the queen. Queens became the embodiment of goddesses and possessed the virtues of both goddesses dominant at the time. The royal cult promoted the mortal figure of the queen to a sacred level.

The case of the Hasmonean tradition and the female figure was very different. The Jewish heritage was not based on the idea of a pantheon but a monotheistic faith,

thus women featured differently in the sacred and philosophical texts. In this case study texts such as the Book of *Proverbs* and writers such as Ben Sira, Philo of Alexandria, and Josephus provided information on the perception of women. Although the sources could be useful in building a picture of the female in the Jewish mindset, these texts must be accessed with caution as the writers might have had their own agenda and bias. Sometimes women are presented in contradictory ways: on one hand there is the personification of Lady Wisdom, and on the other, there is Dame Folly[271] or the dangerous and deceitful stranger.

These case studies present a constant in the role of queen as a powerful political person: mythology and cult had an impact on the role and function of the queen, but not on her possibilities to access the seat of power. The queen's presence on the throne varied and depended on different reasons as stipulated in Chapter 4 of this work: the queen as co-regent; the queen as regent; and the queen regnant. These three different positions were not determined by the representation of the queen in the mythological or cultic sphere but depended mostly on the circumstances and decisions by other parties at the time. Many Ptolemaic queens fit into one of these three models of queenship. There was no uniformity in the political role assigned to the queens, but all the queens were considered as deified mortals. They assimilated the virtues of Greek and Egyptian goddesses as both architecture and numismatics reveal. Stone reliefs in temples, statues, and coins present the Ptolemaic queen in the attire of

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[271] Sidnie White Crawford, "Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly at Qumran", *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (1998): 355-366.

goddesses and she carries the symbolic features usually attributed to goddesses and deities.[272] The assimilation of queens with goddesses did not have any effect on the political role as there were queens who were represented as goddesses but never had political power. The royal cult was a political strategy intended for the kingship in general and not for the individual queen. In Ptolemaic Egypt, politics used mythology and cult to establish the monarchy and increase propaganda. Thus, the two levels of powers, the sacred and the profane, did not parallel each other in terms of queenly matters. The sacred was used by the state as a propaganda tool for the whole monarchic rule and not for the queen as such. The queen's access to and success on the throne did not depend on the popularity of female deities such as Aphrodite or Isis. Whilst the two levels of power were related, the political was not determined by the success of the sacred.

The Hasmonean queens depended less on power on a sacred level; however, it did not mean that their role was not influenced by it. The monotheistic belief of the Jews was mainly run by males. The highest role for a man was that of high priest. Before the Hasmonean rule, there was a long tradition of high priests who served during the Seleucid occupation and before.[273] When the Hasmoneans took over from the Seleucids, they occupied the office of high priest too, together with that of king. As presented in the case study, Hasmonean royal women did not have access to the

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[272] Paul Edmund Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002),
[273] Erich Gruen, "Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews", in *Hellenistic History and Culture,* ed. Peter Green, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 238-242.

role of high priest but this did not impact their possibility of reaching political power. The two levels of power were not related, even though kings occupied both positions at the same time. The queen's role was purely political and did not interfere with cult and sacred matters. Hasmonean queens could access political power if their husbands left them the throne and the sons approved of it. They were in charge of political matters and the roles related to ritual would be given to another male heir, usually the son. In this case, cult determined the role of the queen as purely administrative and fully engaged in politics.

The Ptolemaic tradition of queens is much more complex than that of the Hasmoneans. The number of Ptolemaic queens surpasses that of the Hasmoneans and the roles they played varied according to the political circumstances of the time; however they were always tied to the royal cult and they played their role as goddesses till the rule of Cleopatra VII. The Hasmonean tradition of queens was short lived, but their role in politics was very strong and despite some oppositions, both Salina Alexandra and Salome Alexandra took decisions that paid well in the long run.

5.2 The Mediterranean connection

This research contributed to the Mediterranean scholarship with a focus on a specific sector of women, queens. Many scholarly works focus on women in general or describe women's stereotypical roles such as the domestic aspect, marriage,

childbearing, and prostitution. This research wanted to explore a different role played by women in leadership and politics.

The Mediterranean connection wanted to steer away from generalisations about women in the Mediterranean and the trap of constructing some sort of new "Mediterranean identity" for queens in the selected regions. The case studies proved that there is no such thing as "Mediterranean unity" where uniformity is the rule, even in defining the role and representation of queens. The Mediterranean as a unified region with one identity encompassing all the local characters is not strengthened by this work, but rather it emphasises the idea of fragmented areas with their individual character involved in networks on various levels – economic, social, political and cultural.

The Social Network Analysis approach presented in Chapter 4 could contribute to the Mediterranean discussion in relation to queenships in the Mediterranean. With such analysis one can look at specific examples from a point of view of networks and interactions and not by using the Mediterranean as label and enforcing some degree of homogeneity. The networks have different motors which start them and different agents to distribute the cultural material consumed by interconnected groups.[274] The cases of the Ptolemies and the Hasmoneans show that they were a product of their time as they interacted with Hellenistic influences dominant in the Eastern

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[274] Irad Malkin, Christy Constantakopoulou, Katerina Panagopoulou , "Preface: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol.22, No.1, (2007): 1-9.

Mediterranean of the time, nonetheless, they kept their own character and traditions which prevailed in the way they applied queenship.

5.3 Further research on queenship in the Mediterranean

After the investigation of Ptolemaic and Hasmonean queens, an important step in scholarship about queens in the Mediterranean would be the investigation of the Seleucid queens. Lately, the work by Altay Coskun and Alex McAuley on Seleukid Royal Woman presented a good exploration of royal women in the Seleucid empire. It is one of the first studies which focused solely on queens and their role and representation in a Hellenistic monarchy.[275] It is also good to note that the studies presented by Coskun and McAuley do not isolate the Seleucid queens in their region places them in a wider context. More research should follow this work and provide connections with other royal women in antiquity. This way, even the Hasmonean and later the Herodian royal women could get more exposure.

This research could be followed up by other cases of queens in the Mediterranean, or even more in-depth information about queens which in here did not feature very much because of lack of space, evidence, or information available about them. Whilst the case of the Ptolemies might look like it has been exhausted by scholarship, there

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[275] Altay Coskun and Alex Mc Auley, ed. *Seleukid Royal Women: Creation, Representation and Distortion of Hellenistic Queenship in the Seleukid Empire* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016).

are various queens who had limited exposure in studies about Ptolemaic Egypt such as the Cleopatras before the famous Cleopatra VII. There is a whole legacy of queens named Cleopatra in the Ptolemaic reign and this research tried to give them some prominence but did not do justice with them for reasons mentioned earlier.

5.4 Conclusion

This study presented women in power on two parallel levels – the sacred and the political, which are continuously interacting and impacting on each other. The two different scenarios presented provide substantial evidence for this interaction.

In Ptolemaic Egypt the power of the immortals was manipulated and bestowed upon mortal women. The queens promoted certain virtues and presented themselves in sacred iconography in order to support the ideology of the royal cult. The sacred powers of goddesses bestowed upon the queens formed part of a strategy created by the monarchy to enhance its political power as a homogenous unit and not in a way to improve women leaders as such. The exclusion of women from the role of high priest proved to be beneficial to queens in the Hasmonean kingdom. The queens had an advantage in political and administrative matters, as they did not form part of public cult practices and their duties on the throne were purely political. Their only drawback was the lack of time for the kingdom to develop a tradition of women in power.

The cases presented proved that women in antiquity could be good and effective leaders given the time and space, both for them to develop as individuals, and for the society to accept new forms of leadership. There is a new dimension of power in the ancient Mediterranean which historical scholarship needs to investigate more in order to present a holistic society, and this is the queen as political leader.

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