



QUEENSHIP AND POWER

ROYAL WOMEN AND DYNASTIC LOYALTY

Edited by
Caroline Dunn and
Elizabeth Carney



Queenship and Power

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Royal Women and Dynastic Loyalty

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*For our colleagues and students in the history department
at Clemson University*

PREFACE

The starting point for this collection of articles was an international conference on the theme of “Dynastic Loyalties” hosted by the departments of history and political science of Clemson University, held in Greenville, South Carolina, April 8–9, 2016. The conference, the fifth in the Royal Studies Network’s annual “Kings and Queens” conference series, was the first held outside of Europe (thanks are due to Ellie Woodacre for initiating the Royal Studies Network and allowing us to host the conference). The conference offered 57 papers on topics spanning monarchies from the Ancient World of Greece and Rome to Twentieth-Century England, and ranged from North America to Nepal.

Since this collection appears as part of the series “Queenship and Power,” unlike the original conference, it concentrates on the role of royal women in issues of dynastic loyalty and disloyalty. The twelve papers in the collection range in time from the Hellenistic period to the nineteenth century CE. Most, but not all, deal with European dynasties.

“Kings and Queens 5: Dynastic Loyalties” was supported by the Clemson College of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities, Clemson University’s Office of the Vice-President for Research, and the Clemson Humanities Advancement Board, as well as by the departments of history and political science. It would not have been possible without the assistance of the members of those departments, history Masters students Katrina Moore and Lauren Martiere, and the undergraduate students enrolled in Caroline Dunn’s creative inquiry course: Alex Beaver, Jennifer Iacono, Cameron

Weekley, Polly Goss, Haskell Ezell, and Sarah Marshall. The history department staff, Sheri Marcus Long and Jeannette Carter, were invaluable in assisting with the conference, as were the members of the history department faculty.

Clemson, SC

Caroline Dunn
Elizabeth Carney

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Royal Women and Dynastic Loyalty

Caroline Dunn and Elizabeth Carney

Royal women—ancient, medieval, and early modern—played much more influential and diverse roles than merely marrying the king and producing the heir. As reigning queens, consorts, dowager queens, or sisters, daughters, or mistresses of kings, women in regal courts sometimes wielded official authority and often influenced politics, culture, and religion through informal channels. Recent scholarship has questioned the public/private and formal/informal dichotomies that largely gender public authority male and informal influence female. Yet we see examples in this volume of royal women governing as well as influencing royal actions through more discrete channels.¹ Even seemingly passive and private activities traditionally associated with women (bearing heirs, getting dressed by selected female courtiers) had official components that could generate loyalty to the dynasty.

Before the late 1970s, the role of women in monarchy (apart, perhaps, from that of regnant women) was often ignored, trivialized, or sensationalized. Biography was virtually the only way in which royal women appeared in political historiography. The development of women's history

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and later gender history began to change this situation, though many who studied women's history were uneasy about attention to female members of elites and, apart from that, the discovery or retrieval aspect of women's history initially dominated the field (i.e. the rediscovery of "lost" female figures).² Gradually greater comfort with combining political history and women's history, including theoretical analysis, and recognizing the complex nature of gender construction led to more multilayered analysis of royal women and their social and institutional contexts. Acknowledgment of the importance of female patronage in sustaining a dynasty has played a significant role in our understanding of the role of women in monarchy.³ The growing importance of court studies and the willingness of historians to employ additional methodologies or evidence (for instance, kinship or dynastic studies or arguments based on material culture) have also contributed to a new framework that begins with the fundamental assumption that royal women (and other members of a ruling dynasty) were part of monarchy rather than simply decorative accessories to it.⁴

The existence of the very series in which this volume appears—"Queenship and Power"—speaks to how widespread recognition of the importance of royal women has become and yet examination of the tables of contents of the volumes in the series reveals that most of the articles in these collections relate to medieval or early modern history; only a smattering of articles on ancient or modern monarchies, or on non-western monarchies, appear. This chronological/cultural distribution of the series reflects the general pattern of publication on royal women, particularly in Anglophone scholarship, at least until recently.

This is certainly not to claim that no monographs or collections looking at women and monarchy exist for other periods and cultures.⁵ Examinations in English of the role of women in individual Middle Eastern and Asian monarchies have appeared.⁶ For the ancient world, monographs or collections relating to women and monarchy, as in other fields, focused on the biographical until the beginning of this century.⁷ Remarkably, though four works have now been published that examine the broader role of Roman imperial women, none of these was written in English and no collection in any language examines the role of women in multiple ancient monarchies.⁸ Similarly, no general study of the part women played in either pharaonic or Ptolemaic Egyptian monarchy exists.⁹ In addition, comparatively little book-length scholarship has been devoted to the study of royal women from the second half of the nineteenth century to the current day.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that serious analysis of the role of women and monarchy began, or at least acquired momentum, with the study of women in medieval monarchy and early modern monarchy, very soon after the “invention” of women’s history. Pauline Stafford’s 1983 book-length study of early medieval queens is a very early example because she looked at royal women in an institutional and non-biographical way. Her treatment of the consequences of royal polygamy was particularly important.¹⁰ In the early 1990s, two critical collections examining the role of medieval and/or early modern royal women appeared.¹¹ After the beginning of the new century, a whole host of collections related to the relationship between women and monarchy began to appear.¹² Works with a biographical aspect began to pay more attention to the cultural and institutional context of the women on whom they focused.¹³ And a recent textbook introduces students to theories and practices of queenship across medieval Europe.¹⁴

One can only speculate as to why medieval and early modern studies have proved so critical, at least in English-language texts, for analyses of the roles of women and monarchy. Despite variations within this long period and across regions, generally greater relevant evidence is available for medieval/early modern monarchies than for ancient monarchies, although the same cannot be said about modern royalty. It is noticeable that conferences or panels played an important role in the formation of this subfield and meetings specific to these periods were therefore important. Discussions about royal women of the medieval and early modern eras seem consistently more comparative and self-aware than those for ancient or modern periods. It is not by chance that *Medieval Feminist Forum* recently published an entire issue largely devoted to the development and future of the field of women and monarchy.¹⁵

Still, perhaps the most important reason for the medieval/early modern focus of so much scholarship on royal women is that monarchy, especially in British and French history, was always understood as a central institution, whereas in ancient and modern history this has been less true. Ancient historiography tended to treat monarchy as an institution defined by an office, held by a series of individuals, rather than as the rule of one family, a tendency that delayed recognition of the role of dynasty in general, let alone female members of the dynasty. Greek historiography has long treated non-monarchic government as normative, focused more on the classical period, and especially on the relatively androcentric culture of

Athens. Greater attention to the Hellenistic period (one in which monarchy was dominant) and interest in court studies and the influence of other monarchic cultures (particularly the Persian) has finally led to change.¹⁶ The comparative dearth of work on Roman imperial women also relates to a denial of the importance of monarchy and dynasty, though in this case the denial was shared by ancient Roman sources, at least during the period of the Principate, when the pretense of a continued republic continued to be important in public life. The frequency of dynastic change and the prevalence of adoption (if only for a comparatively brief period) also complicates attempts at discussing the role of imperial women in anything other than a biographical way. In modern times, though monarchies persisted in considerable force until World War I and continue to exist today, historiography not infrequently tends to consign monarchy to the periphery of political history, often because the role of ritual and image-making in the politics of power has been ignored.¹⁷

Discussions that employ the specific term “dynastic loyalty” are rare, although biographies and political studies of monarchy often touch on the topic. Formation of dynastic identity and image via court and public ceremony, ritual (family and patriotic), and patronage often involved female members of a ruling dynasty and could generate dynastic loyalty.¹⁸ This collection assembles articles that explore the relationship between royal women and dynastic loyalty (and disloyalty), in diverse times and places. By covering an expansive chronological period (ancient to nineteenth century) and varied cultures and locations, the wider scope allows students and scholars to see the often-neglected roles played by women and to grasp patterns of formal and informal influence often disguised by narrower studies of government structures and officials. At the same time, these articles demonstrate the degree to which royal women’s involvement in issues of dynastic loyalty was shaped by the nature of specific monarchic institutions. This collection represents a selection of the broader conference that was its initial source; many other aspects of the topic could be pursued, though they are not addressed here. For instance, none of the articles in this collection examines the vocabulary of loyalty and disloyalty generated in a variety of cultures and monarchies, a topic that should prove fruitful for further research.

As wives and dowager queens, women could be central to the transmission and continuation of power. Palace women encouraged loyalty from both male and female courtiers and subjects at large, and at times provoked disloyal acts. Such discussions remain relevant today, when we consider

that many governments, even if not monarchies, remain susceptible or even open to informal influence on official governing channels—even (or particularly) by family members or those allied to them. Though “monarchy” literally means one person rule, distinguishing between the authority of the current ruler and that of other family members is difficult and, in practice, not always a distinction that was made or even desired.

In many of their activities, royal women displayed behavior that reflected gendered norms. Hellenistic queens acted as public benefactors, or *emerge-tai*, in a manner that generated loyalty and offers parallels with the traditional gender roles taken up by the mothers of Ottoman sultans who established charitable foundations to help the poor during an era of economic distress (see Chap. 3 by Dolores Mirón and Chap. 11 by Renée Langlois in this volume). Queens and female kin acted as intercessors between rulers and diverse members of the local community, helping to create and maintain ties of loyalty.¹⁹ They acted to reiterate familial and communal ties initially established by their marriages and to mitigate frictions between the families of their birth and of their marriage. When, however, their enemies perceived them not as intercessors but advocates, even if their advocacy was for peace, they were vulnerable to attack and charges of disloyalty.

Royal women also fell victim to the goddess/whore trope, whereby they were either praised for their model behavior or vilified for alleged sexual sins.²⁰ As we see in this collection, the queen’s role as producer of heirs was not her only role, but this remained a central characteristic of her position. To generate loyalty to the dynasty, the queens had literally to generate heirs to the dynasty. Their prolific maternity was important practically, and also for the dynastic image. The Hellenistic queen Apollonis not only produced heirs, but played a significant role in constructing the dynasty’s image as a harmonious, unified family. On the other hand, Roman Empress Julia Domna and Mary Queen of Scots were both accused of sexual impropriety; gender-based conventions in both the ancient and early modern worlds connected sexual dishonor with inability to rule and even with treachery.

Some articles in this volume pursue the theme of dynastic loyalty by focusing on individual royal women, several examine patterns within dynasties, and others consider what factors generate loyalty and/or disloyalty to a dynasty or individual ruler. Many royal women were born into one dynasty and married into another. Several authors thus explore the conflicts between the two dynasties and the ways in which divided loyalties

could benefit or disadvantage royal women. We see how female members of the dynasty, usually through marriage, transmitted power and generated loyalties. Although queens, especially medieval ones, were often praised as peace-weavers, marriage alliances could engender disloyalty as well as loyalty. Highlighting two key themes in contemporary higher education, “globalization” and “cross-cultural awareness,” the articles in this collection highlight how queens were among the earliest of historical immigrants who had to negotiate divided families and cultural differences (and sometimes renegotiate them).

Some royal women also bridged religious loyalty divides, at times having to choose between their loyalty to their dynasty and their loyalty to their god. Several papers demonstrate how royal women navigated religious tensions in Reformation-era Europe, while others document how queens and empresses in the ancient world garnered community loyalty through their promotion and protection of religious cults. Royal women’s devotion to their religious customs or, in the case of Renée de France, the new Protestant faith, were not solely motivated by mere opportunism, but helped generate loyalty to their rule or to their dynasty. On the other hand, religious values could provoke disloyal actions, or actions perceived as disloyal too, as in the cases of Mary Queen of Scots and Julia Domna.

In addition to religion, royal women fashioned loyalty through their patronage. The daughters and wives of kings played crucial roles in constructing the dynastic image and ensuring dynastic continuity through ritual propaganda. They demonstrated the legitimacy of the dynasty actively, through their patronage or in their active promotion of candidates during succession disputes, but also passively: at times the simple fact of their ancestry enhanced the prestige and legitimacy of the dynasty they married into. Royal women whose ethnic and cultural background differed from that of their husband’s dynasty were vulnerable to criticism as foreign or alien, but could also both promote and embody the unification of two cultures.

Most of the papers in this collection focus on queens, but even in that context there is thematic complexity to be recognized. Some queens, like Apollonis and Anna of Denmark, were consorts. Berenice II of Cyrene and Mary Queen of Scots were regnant queens in their own right, while in the Ottoman Empire Turhan served as regent (*validé Sultan*) for her son Mehmet IV. This book widens the focus beyond queens by including royal daughters, royal sisters, and royal aunts who never served as queens but who nevertheless wielded influence and generated loyalty for their dynasties.

After an initial comparative chapter by Waldemar Heckel (Chap. 2), the articles in this book proceed chronologically. Heckel examines “legitimacy” in royal families and the rules governing succession, particularly the role of the royal female as a conduit of power and legitimacy. He presents comparative material primarily from Hellenistic monarchies, medieval Norman and Angevin kingdoms, and Mexico. The practice of conferring legitimacy through levirate marriage (marriage to royal widows) documents how a woman might be excluded from official authority, but nevertheless remain important to the dynasty, once her husband “possessed” her family’s lineage.

The next three articles, dealing with Hellenistic and Roman monarchies, offer examples of more active promotion of loyalty by royal women. Dolores Mirón’s Chap. 3 explores the agency of Queen Apollonis, wife of Attalus I of Pergamon (a Hellenistic kingdom in western Turkey), in the construction of the dynastic image as a harmonious loyal family and in the establishment of bonds of loyalty between the monarchy and the cities it ruled. Apollonis was able to play this role in part because she was not of royal blood, but a citizen of Cyzicus. Cults dedicated to her in various cities after her death continued to venerate her as a good mother and the priesthoods and festivals established in her name bound the citizens to her financially and emotionally. Her own rebuilding of a sanctuary to Demeter, a mother goddess, also connected her to marriage and motherhood.

Chapter 4 by Walter Penrose explores conflict between mothers (as reigning queens, consorts, and dowager queens) and sons, demonstrating the causes and effects of unprecedented power obtained by women in the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties and warning us that no loyalties—even the bond between mother and child—are guaranteed. In such dynastic power struggles, women often played an equal part to men.

Riccardo Bertolazzi’s Chap. 5 demonstrates how Julia Domna, wife of the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, retained loyalty to the elites and religious traditions of her native Mesopotamian region, both those inside the Roman Empire or those outside it. Her loyalty to the place and culture of her origin set her up for accusations of treachery and adultery made by her imperial rival, the praetorian prefect Plautianus, although she, her sons, and her family won this conflict in the end and eliminated him.

Dynastic leaders used family ties and marriage alliances to gain and maintain power through loyalty. Chapter 6 from Karl Alvestad is an analysis of the actions of two royal sisters, Astrid and Ingeborg Tryggvasdaughter, in eleventh-century Norway. It demonstrates that such loyalty might only