

Writings for Acquisition

Hellenizing Alexandria, Egypt

By

Philippe Charles Saad

Bachelor of Architecture, June 2000

American University of Beirut,

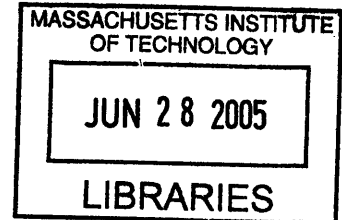
Beirut, Lebanon

Submitted to the Department of Architecture
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Architecture Studies

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Writings for Acquisition

Hellenizing Alexandria, Egypt.

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May 2005

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Philippe Charles Saad

Submitted to the Department of Architecture

On May 16, 1005 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
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Abstract

This research work started with the exploration of E.M. Forster's major publication on Alexandria published in 1922, *Alexandria a History and a Guide*, considered until now 'the Classical Guide for Alexandria,' or ironically 'the guide for Classical Alexandria?' In fact, Forster's version of history recounted a Classical heritage all the while effectively attenuating the importance of eleven centuries of Islamic rule and commercial prosperity. As for contemporary name places, they are merely reference points useful to the modern visitor as a means for imagining the missing ancient city. In so doing, Forster relied on a historical tradition without which his book could neither have been written nor have enjoyed such enormous popularity. My thesis investigates the historiography of Alexandria's literary history from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, with a particular focus on this last century which gave birth to the tradition of looking at Alexandria with Classical eyes.

Having pointed at the tradition of looking at Alexandria through Classical eyes, I explore primary European sources (maps and travelers' descriptions and commercial treaties) describing Alexandria from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries to identify the key moment when the western interest for Hellenistic Alexandria emerged and neglected its Christian and Islamic heritage. I first examine in the literature of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the prevalence of Alexandria as a major Ottoman port-city actively involved in the trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Second, I reveal that the Christian history of the city was of high value to the European travelers who dealt tangentially with its Hellenistic and Roman remains. I therefore affirm that the abandonment of the walled city of Alexandria after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, was neither the result of an economic decline nor the consequence of Ottoman misrule, as it appeared to the European visitors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

With this already acquired knowledge, I argue that the European obsession in Hellenistic Alexandria had its causes outside the geographic boundaries of the city. Indeed, this hinge-period coincides with the rise of a new humanism in Europe in the end of the seventeenth century. It was mirrored in Alexandria through the writings of several travelers and envoys such as Corneille le Brun, Benoit de Maillet, Frederick Lewis Norden and Comte de Volney who from one side, resurrected Hellenistic Alexandria in their writings while from the other, dejected the Arab or Islamic civilization occupying and disfiguring this land of antiquity. However, despite their concern for historical accuracy (achieved through travel and archeology), my analysis points out contradictions that betrayed their attempt to reconstruct solely the Hellenistic and Roman city and assign a decline paradigm for the Ottoman town. Engravings as well as paragraphs in the literature they provide reveal the flourishing commerce Alexandria was exerting with Mediterranean cities of the Ottoman Empire, Europe and North Africa. To further support this argument, I examine two mosque patronages that put Alexandria not only on the trade map, but also on the pilgrimage route to Mecca.

Studying the eighteenth-century European scholarship on Alexandria, my thesis concludes that this period of unconsolidated knowledge and messy discourse in Europe paved the way to the linear vision of Alexandrian history adopted unanimously after colonialism and the rise of European empires. My thesis brings to a close that Forster's acclaimed book has not been the product of a single individual of the twentieth century, but rather the culminations of a cultural and political tradition whose roots lie beyond the geographic boundaries of Alexandria.

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Title: Associate Professor Aga Khan Professor of the History of Islamic Architecture, MIT

Biography Note

Philippe graduated valedictorian with a Bachelor of Architecture from the American University of Beirut in 2000. Upon graduation, Philippe worked for three years in a leading architectural firm in Lebanon where he was a coordinator for several design project teams and supervisor for construction sites.

Interested in architectural and urban history, Philippe conducted, with A.U.B. faculty members, research on the city of Tripoli and the Mamluk architecture of Lebanon; he also explored traditional architectural elements in contemporary building in Beirut. He is currently a founding member of the “Association pour la Preservation du Patrimoine Religieux au Liban”. Philippe’s research interests are broad and include: Colonial cities of the Eastern Mediterranean; problems of housing in historic cities; nineteenth and twentieth century pictorial and literary representation of cities; and French travel writing on the Middle East.

In memory of Jeddo

*who initiated me to the sensitivity of history
who taught me the pleasure of endless wandering
who led me off the main tracks to appreciate the small pathways of life
who made me discover the splendor of solitude
who showed me beauty in silence*

my first and only route companion

Writings for Acquisition

Hellenizing Alexandria, Egypt

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The genealogy of this research goes back to the first year of my education in architecture at the American University of Beirut. It is then, in the “History of Architecture” course that I found myself passionately interested in the study of Classical architecture. To that was added a design-seminar studio studying the old city of Aleppo, which left indelible marks in my career. For that matter, I am starting these long acknowledgements by citing Marwan Ghandour, my professor in these two formative experiences, mentor and great friend who had, and still has, tremendous influence on my approach to history, architecture and life values. I am greatly thankful to Marwan for appreciating the person that I am in all its facets. However, it was during a summer research of Zawiyat ibn Arraq, the last Mamluk monument remaining in Beirut, as well as a study and survey of Ottoman Tripoli, Lebanon conducted for professor Howayda al-Harithy at A.U.B that my interest in the architectural history of the Islamic world was defined. Working enthusiastically with a leading historian of Islamic architecture, I acquired immense research skills and sufficient knowledge to earn my two-year stay at MIT. Recognition can never be enough expressed to Howayda for she believed in my research and critical abilities --essential for the production of this thesis-- and propelled me in the field of architecture history.

My greatest debt is to my thesis advisor, Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor at MIT, who directed me wisely in my interests and researches. It is his teaching of Orientalism that channeled my interest towards travel literature, cities’ engravings and early photography in the Islamic World. Professor Rabbat has followed my interest from the time when it was a paper in class on nineteenth century travelers to Beirut and their contribution in shaping part of the city’s identity. He also endured my innumerable, universe-wide and ambitious interests. It is his wise advice that rested my interest on Alexandria, a historically turbulent city of the Eastern Mediterranean, rather than my dearest Beirut. “You will be stuck to

work on Beirut later in your life; you need to acquire knowledge of some other similar place.” His rich input and criticism has accompanied my study all through, and his erudite knowledge combined with patience has shaped many unfocussed thoughts. I would like to express recognition to my first reader, Professor Erika Nagisnki, for her total support and enthusiasm for the thesis that kept me going ardently. Her acuteness to detail and perfection as well as her sharp knowledge of Enlightenment Europe shuffled for the better the broad scope I was naively dreaming to cover. She also ensured that each section of the work was clearly and elegantly expressed. Similarly, I am expressing my recognition for my second reader, Professor Susan Gilson Miller at the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, who accepted delightedly to assist the development and writing of my thesis. Professor Miller’s continuous encouragements and assiduous feedbacks by emails brought tremendous clarity to my argument.

Research would have not been possible without the immense help and harsh critical feedback of Doctor Mohammad Awad, the ultimate authority on Alexandria’s history, as well as Doctor Cristina Pallini who was instrumental in the taking off of this research. I am grateful for sharing her deep knowledge on the city, at MIT or by emails, since the early days when this research stemmed in my head. I am also expressing my many thanks to the staff of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the Rotch Library at MIT, the Houghton Library at Harvard and especially Jeff Spurr at Harvard Fine Arts Library.

Many other people have also contributed in great measure in this work, and without whose help this project could have never been undertaken. Such persons are my Uncle Henri and Tante Lili who made me discover Alexandria of the Alexandrians. It is their warm welcoming, their full support and guidance in the city that made my two visits memorably enchanting; my cousin Carla, who carried the cross for my architectural whims and vagaries. It is with her that I discovered Alexandria at night and the extravagant Agami nightlife; similarly, Raouf for his moral support and Jean Pierre Tawil for sharing his souvenirs on Alexandria and the unforgettable Lada tour of Down Town Alexandria at 4 a.m.

There are other people in my life journey who, though not directly linked with this research, were of great support. I use this opportunity to thank Brien, Michael, Philippe, Amin, Osky and above all Carma who relentlessly provided moral support, advice and endless encouragements for major steps and decisions in my life. I thank Lieza for the numerous editing works

on the first drafts as well as ArchNet staff and researchers, my family at MIT. I am extremely fortunate to have had Hiba and Saheem by my side during my two years of education at MIT, with whom I could share my thoughts, worries, concerns and laughs. My dear friend Nelida, whose broad knowledge and exposure familiarized me with Boston. She also brought a breadth of fresh air to my heavy and gloomy winter days. My immeasurable and profound gratitude goes to Anil for continuously, day after day, calming my exponentially growing stress, managing to take me away from my writings, and making Boston my second Home.

I have been shaped by my own family and country. Each member of my family has nurtured me in ways impossible to evaluate. I can never find appropriate words to express fully my debt to my parents Charles and Henriette who engrained in me the noblest social values, and held primordial my education. I thank them for the unconditional moral and financial assistance when my budget failed; my sister Nadine and brother Jean-Pierre who continuously provided support no matter what were the obstacles on the road; and finally my grand-mother Evelyne and my aunt Marcia without whom I could have never been fully who I am now.

To the loving people of Alexandria who went out of their way to make me discover the confined places of their eternal city.

*Philippe Charles Saad,
Boston, May 7, 2005*

“And now let the visitor (if the effort is not beyond him) elevate himself 400 feet higher into the air. Let him replace the Ras-el-Tin lighthouse to a temple to Poseidon; let him delete the mosques and the ground they stand on, and imagine in their place an expanse of water crossed by a Dyke; let him add to “Pompey’s Pillar” the Temple of Serapis and Isis and the vast buttressed walls of the library; let him turn Kom-al-Dik into a gorgeous and fantastic park, with the Tomb of Alexander at its feet; and the Eastern suburbs into gardens; and finally let him suppose that it is not Silsileh that stretches towards him but the peak of the Ptolemaic Palace, sheltering to its right the ships of the royal fleet and flanked on the landward side by the tiers of the theatre and the groves of the Mouseion. –Then he may have some conception of what Ancient Alexandria looked like from the summit of the Pharos –what she looked like when the Arabs entered in the autumn of 641.”

E.M Forster, *Alexandria: a History and a Guide*, 1922.

I

E.M. Forster's *Alexandria a History and a Guide: the Classical Guide for Alexandria and the Guide for Classical Alexandria*

E.M. Forster's "Alexandria Historical Map" published in *Alexandria a History and a Guide* in 1922, juxtaposes two historical moments: the Alexandria of 1920, and the Classical city, including the Christian period, up until the Arab conquest in 642 AD (Figure 1). It indicates in capital letters ancient sites (such as Pompey's Pillar, Cleopatra's needles, Pharos and the Church of St Theonas). It also indicates, by the use of parentheses, those modern sites that were erected on Hellenistic vestiges (such as the Rue de Rosette, Silsileh and Kom el Chogafa previously called the Canopic way, Cape Lochias or the Catacombs respectively). Only two modern sites, Place Mohammad Ali and Chatby neighborhood -that do not have Hellenistic origins considered of lesser importance for Forster- are marked between parentheses. This map, in sum, limits the city's history to Hellenistic and Christian pasts, and contemporary name places -in particular the only two with no Hellenistic origins- are merely reference points useful to the modern visitor as a means for imagining the missing Hellenistic city.

Forster was not the first to convey to his reader a Hellenistic version of Alexandria. But he was the first to dedicate an entire book to the city -and hence the book itself functions as both a history (Part I since its foundation by Alexander the great in 332 BC until the British occupation of 1882) and a guide to major monuments (Part II). Forster explains the structure of his book in the preface of the first edition, where he warns the reader of the unconventional method he proposes for touring Alexandria by the way of historical imagination. "The 'sights' of Alexandria, he writes, are in themselves not interesting, but they fascinate when we approach them through the past, and this is what I have tried to do by the double

arrangement of history and guide.”¹ For the visitor he targeted, the contemporary city was portrayed of lesser importance when compared to its Hellenistic ancestor; he didn’t overtly criticize modern Alexandria but assumed that the historical/archaeological sights are the only significant ones worth visiting.²



Figure 1. Forster’s “Historical Map”

In the 1920s, at the peak of Alexandria’s economic development, Forster’s publication gained prominence, not only because it met the aspiration of the Alexandrian merchant class striving to craft

¹ E.M Forster. *Alexandria: a History and a Guide*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), Preface xx.

² Forster’s fondness of Hellenistic Alexandria is obvious in the structure of the history he provides. The Greco-Egyptian period, like he calls it, is developed on 47 pages while the Christian period on 9, the Arab conquest on 5, the Arab period on 6 and modern Alexandria on 14 pages. While describing the contemporary city, he always links the discussion to Ptolemaic Alexandria, attempting to reconstruct its Classical layer. Each site is counted in accordance with its Hellenistic layer. Muhammad Ali square, or place des consuls, for example, ‘the square’ he says “in Ptolemaic times the ground here was under the sea.” The role of the new city seems only as a reference point to which the Ptolemaic city could be traced. Ibid, 109.

a cosmopolitan modern city “à l’Européenne,”³ but also because it was the only work to take Alexandria as its exclusive subject -and it remains so today. Given its unique focus, Forster's book continues to exercise considerable influence on the modern European imagining and possession of ostensive exotic locale. It is therefore more than a little striking that Forster's version of history would have recounted a Classical heritage all the while effectively attenuating the importance of eleven centuries of Islamic rule and commercial prosperity. In so doing, Forster relied on a historical tradition without which his book could neither have been written nor have enjoyed such enormous popularity. The roots of that tradition, which looked at Alexandria through Hellenistic eyes, emerged in the late seventeenth century and paved the way for Forster's version of things not only in the 1920s but also throughout the twentieth century. As Edward Said puts it in *Reflections on Exile*, “E.M. Forster's guidebook is nevertheless useful for its description of old Alexandria.”⁴

Having identified a long tradition of looking at Alexandria through Classical eyes, my thesis retraces the scholarly roots that led to Forster's unilateral publication. For that matter, I explore primary European sources (maps and original texts) describing Alexandria from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and identify the key moment when the interest for Christian and Islamic heritage of Alexandria has shifted to become solely focused on the city's Hellenistic history and vestiges. It is hence more than conspicuous that this hinge-period coincides with the rise of a new humanism in Europe in the end of the seventeenth century. Alexandria abounded with prominent Egyptian, Hellenistic and Roman histories, and hence was seen by late seventeenth and eighteenth-century travelers as matching the European search for a single origin for civilization (theory developed by Comte de Caylus, carried by Jules David Le Roy and contested by Giovanni Battista Piranesi). Consequently, studying the rise of new methods for writing history, the emergence of antiquarianism as well as the application of the scientific method of archeology developed in Europe, my thesis disputes that Alexandria in the eighteenth century was approached by the European scholars, travelers and royal envoys as solely Hellenistic. My study argues that this historical time-slot it was

³ In fact, the creation of a merchant class and a cosmopolitan social structure in Alexandria happened after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, and the granting by the khedive (Mohammad Ali's dynasty was given the title of khedive by the Ottoman Sultan in 1867) of special privileges to European migrants. This new merchant class was mainly constituted by European immigrants who led a life “à l’Européenne” that referred to as “cosmopolitan.” The city was compared to the European metropolis of Paris and London, a piece of Europe on Egyptian land, and considered as the direct inheritor of the Hellenistic city with little account of twelve centuries of Islamic rule.

⁴ Said's ambivalence here -suggested by the “nevertheless-” refers to the Alexandria of his childhood he is unable to recognize anymore, rather than to his detection of the one-sidedness (read colonialist) of Forster's image of the city. In fact, preceding the note on Forster's work, Said expresses his deception writing: “I spent my days there hunting for the Alexandria of the past... I found next to nothing of it. The city has been abandoned, it would seem, by the middle class... The great hotels are either empty, like the San Stefano, or, like the downtown Cecil, shabbily uninviting.” The description of “old Alexandria” in Forster's book that Said is finding still useful, is the one of Alexandria of 1920 extending between Muhammad Ali Square and the Raml Station. Forster's book, truthful to the cosmopolitan sections of Alexandria of the beginning of the twentieth century, has functioned -and still does- as a mnemonic object to the Bourgeois exiles to which Said belongs. Edward Said. “Cairo and Alexandria” in *Reflections on Exile*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 342.

assigned, was highly driven by their growing quest for defining a European identity by appropriating Classicism as their own heritage. Through the pen of those travelers, Alexandria would be subject to numerous essays trying to mesh between the different Classical narratives on the city's Hellenistic history, and the scarce archeology it provided on the ground. I will further show how this single-sided approach to history overshadowed Alexandria's prominent Christian and Islamic heritage.

To identify the shift of interest, from Islam and Christianity to Hellenism, as mentioned above, my thesis studies the prevalence of Alexandria in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as a major Ottoman port-city actively involved in the trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. It reveals the imposition of a decline paradigm by European scholars on the eighteenth-century Ottoman city and investigates the tools they used to resuscitate solely its Hellenistic counterpart and proclaim Europe as the only inheritor of antiquity. Myriad descriptions that came to be known show the disappointment of those authors regarding the actual transformation of Alexandria as well as confirm their dejection for the Arab or Islamic civilization occupying and disfiguring this land of antiquity. Indeed, the Ottoman city that developed outside the Hellenistic and early Islamic walls was ignored, considered unimportant for the reader; whereas the Hellenistic city was re-crafted from Classical texts to gain prominence in the European imagination. However, despite the scholar's concern for historical accuracy (achieved through travel and archeology), my thesis points out at contradictions that betrayed their appreciation for the Hellenistic and Roman city and the decline they were advocating for the Ottoman town. In short, engravings as well as some paragraphs in the literature they provide, reveals the flourishing commerce Alexandria was exerting with Mediterranean cities of the Ottoman Empire, Europe and North Africa. To further support this argument, I will examine two mosque patronages that put Alexandria not only on the trade map but also as on the pilgrimage route to Mecca.

Studying the Eighteenth-century European scholarship on Alexandria, my thesis concludes that this period of unconsolidated knowledge and messy discourse in Europe paved the way to the linear vision of Alexandrian history adopted unanimously after colonialism and the rise of European empires. It brings to a close that Forster's acclaimed book has not been the product of a single individual of the twentieth century, but rather the culminations of a cultural and political tradition whose roots lie beyond the geographic boundaries of Alexandria.

II

The Hellenizing Roots beyond the Boundaries of Alexandria

The contemporary tourist in Alexandria, who refers to E.M. Forster's book to discover the city, needs to use his imagination and look for reference points to tie the city imagined by Forster to the one surrounding him. Similarly, the eighteenth-century traveler who was familiar with previous descriptions of Alexandria made by Europeans, was engaging in a mental exercise to reconstruct the glorious city he fantasized to see. However, in this recurring process of searching for a mental image, the eighteenth-century traveler omitted eleven centuries of Muslim history counted by Arab authors. It is only at the end of the eighteenth century, and precisely in 1789, that the first Arab authors would be made accessible to the European reader through translations by Sylvestre de Sacy.¹ Before exploring the literary and pictorial works of those travelers and scholars who selected Hellenism as the only significant architectural and intellectual period in the history of Alexandria, this chapter identifies the causes of this historical selectivity and argues that they lie beyond the geographical boundaries of Alexandria, and reflect the nascent European scholarship of the eighteenth century.

¹ For a detailed study of Sacy's contribution to the study of Islamic culture and history refer to: Edward Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage, 1994).

Alexandria on the isthmus

Investigating Alexandria's urban history, we are highly tempted to ascribe the roots of the Hellenistic tainted vision to a sudden change in the city's geographical position. As the writings of several travelers in the second half of the sixteenth century report, the Hellenistic walled city of the Ptolemies, inhabited by the Arabs after the Islamic conquest by Amr ibn al-As in 642, was deserted during the first few decades of Ottoman rule. A "New Alexandria," "Modern Alexandria" or "Turkish Town" as it would be called by European writers, was built to the north, outside the Hellenistic and Arab walls, between the eastern and western harbors (Figure 1). Even though the reason of this urban move is still unexplained historically, it cannot be attributed to an economic or a population decline due neither to the Ottoman misrule, nor to the discovery of Cape of Good Hope in 1498, which is believed to have destroyed forever the Alexandrian commerce between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.²

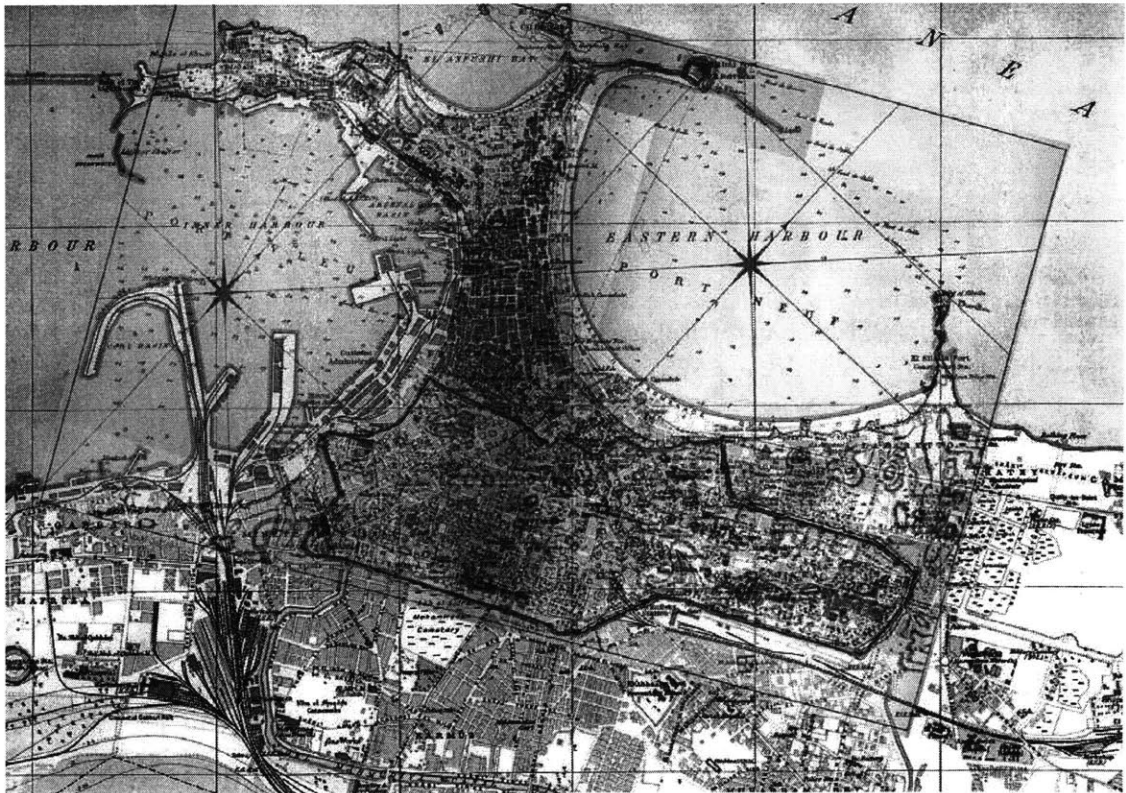


Figure 2. *Overlay of the Description de l'Egypte's map of Alexandria 1798 and "General Map of Alexandria 1924," showing the juxtaposition of Alexandria intra-muros (inside the outline) and the city of the isthmus (between the two ports.)*

² Michael J. Reimer. *Colonial Bridgehead, Government and Society in Alexandria, 1807-1882*. (Colorado: West View Press, 1997), 31.

The discovery of Cape of Good Hope by Vasco de Gamma in 1498 provided for the European merchants, who were trading in Egypt under the Mamluk oppressive rule and the tyranny of tax collectors, an alternative route to the Indian Ocean. Indeed, as explored by Michael Reimer in *Colonial Bridgehead* published in 1997, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and precisely in 1502, “the caravels of Alvarez closed Arab access to the Red Sea, causing eastern spices to disappear entirely from the markets of Alexandria.” This European blockade shattered the Alexandrian commerce. When Ibn Iyas the early sixteenth century historian of the Mamluk Sultans, visited Alexandria with Sultan Ghouri in 1515, he found it in ruins, abandoned by Muslims and European merchants who stopped trading in the city due to the exorbitant tax charges imposed on their merchandises by the governor.³ Consequently, the city suffered from a decreasing commerce that led to a drop in the number of its inhabitants until the Ottomans took power over Egypt. It is the trade treaty between Istanbul and Venice in 1517, followed by France and Catalonia, which bestowed to Alexandria the commerce between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. European merchants were then exempted from poll and property taxes and consuls became the only authority upon their nationals.⁴

Having elucidated that the first decades of Ottoman rule on Alexandria revived the city’s commerce, we can no more attribute the cause of the new geographic location of the city on the isthmus and the abandonment of its Hellenistic boundaries to an Ottoman neglect. More evidence on this change of location can be extracted by interpreting the travel literature of the sixteenth century that situates the move to have happened between 1550 and 1580. Pierre Belon du Mans, and André Thévet, two French travelers who visited Alexandria respectively in 1547 and 1550, do not cite in their writings any new construction on the isthmus between the two ports.⁵ They rather describe the commercial activities within the walled city. It is Jean Palerne Forésien, the secretary of the Dukes of Anjou who visited Alexandria in 1581 on his way to the Holy Land, who mentions the first the presence of a new agglomeration of houses built on the isthmus close to the port.⁶ Deceptively, he gives no descriptive architectural detail.

The three decades separating Belon du Mans from Forésien’s travels, during which the change in the geographical location had happened, do not provide enough time for an economic decline, a

³ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl. *Tārikh Madīnat al-Iskandariyah*. (Alexandria: Dār al-Maārif, 1967), 153.

⁴ Jean Yves Empeur. *Alexandria, Past, Present and Future*. (London : Thames and Hudson, 2002), 78-79.

⁵ Pierre Belon du Mans (1517-1564), was a pharmacist, physician and naturalist, he visited Alexandria in 1547; Pierre Belons du Mans. *Voyage en Egypte de Pierre Belon du Mans 1547*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1972), 92a ; André Thevet was the cosmographer of the French King Henry II. He visited Egypt in 1550. André Thevet. *Voyage en Egypte, 1549-1552*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire), 1972, 108-118. Pierre Belons du Mans. *Voyage en Egypte de Pierre Belon du Mans 1547*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1972), 92a .

⁶ Jean Palerne Forésien. *Voyage en Egypte*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1972), 27-28.

desertion of intra-muros Alexandria and the building of a new city on the isthmus. In fact, the city as described and pictured in the travel of Belon du Mans in 1547 does not seem to have been in decline (Figure 2). He mentions Alexandria's rich markets selling veal, sheep, beef, gazelles and chicken as

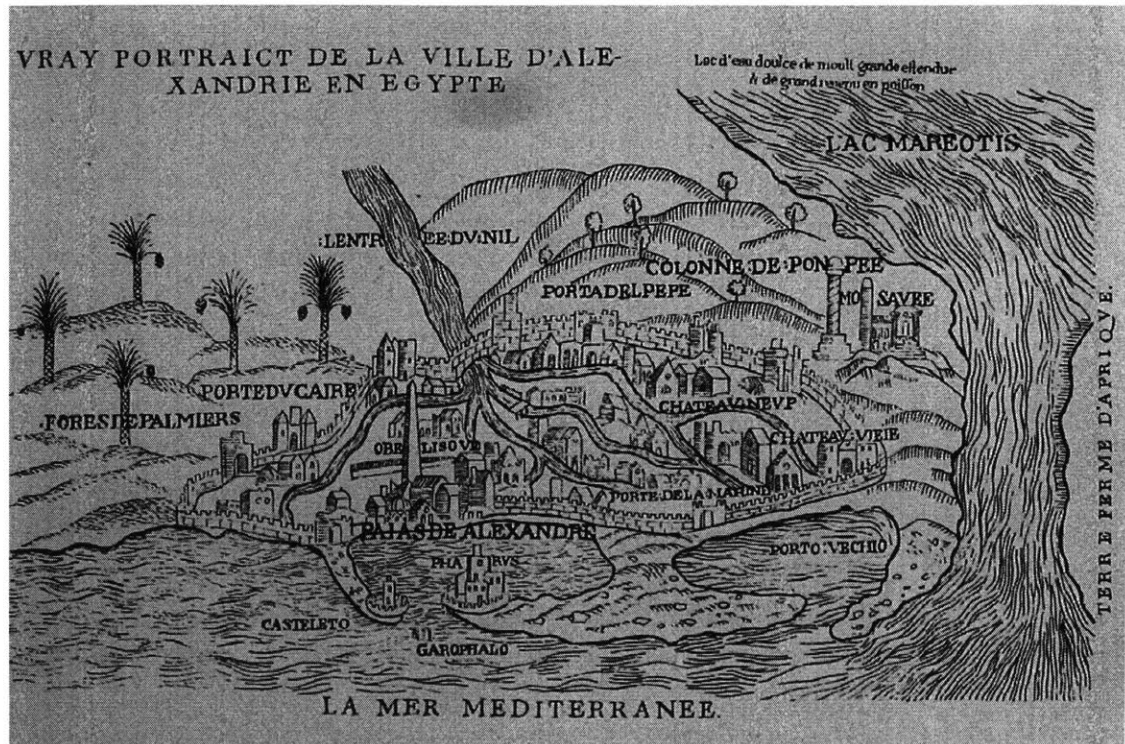


Figure 3. *Map of Pierre Belon du Mans*

well as wine from Cyprus, fruits, vegetables and grains from the surrounding regions.⁷ Furthermore, plague, the most common disease in port cities of the Mediterranean, if believed to have been the cause of this geographical change, can only confirm that the city had busy port activities and consequently as stated above attest of its prosperous economy at the time of the move; and in addition, as explained by the French scholar Daniel Panzac, plague slows down but does not stop urban growth.⁸ In that same perspective, to discredit further the belief that an Ottoman misrule caused the move of Alexandria, recently published court documents, specify that Alexandria's trade rebounded in the course of the sixteenth century because of a group of "resident Maghrebi merchants, especially those from the island of Jerba (off the coast of southern Tunisia), [who] were engaged in large-scale commercial activities in the 1560s and 70s."⁹

⁷ Belons du Mans. *Voyage en Egypte de Pierre Belon du Mans 1547*, 92a.

⁸ Daniel Panzac. "Alexandrie Peste et Croissance Urbaine" in *Alexandrie entre Deux Mondes* ed. Ilbert, Robert. (Aix-en-Provence : Edisud, 1988), 87.

⁹ Reimer. *Colonial Bridgehead*, 27.

However, the reason causing this urban move remains unanswered. Two speculations appeal to me. The first regards the shrine of a Muslim Saint of Algerian origin, Sidi Abul Abbas al-Morsi, situated in Bab al-Bahr cemetery on the isthmus. This religious shrine, to which a mosque was added on top in 1307 by Zein al-Din al-Qattan, might have driven the powerful Maghrebi merchants of Alexandria in the sixteenth century, to settle around the shrine of their Saint and consequently move the commercial and residential center of Alexandria from the intra-muros boundaries to the isthmus. In fact, the mosque seems to be a major religious node in Alexandria, for it was rebuilt in 1596 by Abu al-Abbas al-Sanafi al-Khazraji, judged ruinous.¹⁰ The second speculation concerns urban Ottoman politics. Comparing Alexandria with Aleppo, an Ottoman province of Syria where it has been affirmed that the Ottoman center was purposely shifted away from the Mamluk one, it becomes possible to extrapolate the Aleppinian example and apply it to Alexandria. However, this exercise remains dangerous because it lacks supporting documents and ground evidence. Differently than Aleppo, which abounded with new commercial and political complexes along the new “Ottoman Corridor,” Alexandria presents none to attest that in the second half of the sixteenth century, commercial activities were transferred away from the Mamluk center within the Arab walls.¹¹

It is outside the scope of this thesis to find reasons for the abandonment of intra-muros Alexandria and the emergence of a new city on the isthmus. But it can be confirmed, according to the previous analysis that the “New Alexandria” was neither the result of an economic decline in the end of the sixteenth century nor the consequence of Ottoman misrule. And therefore, the badly and new constructed houses on the isthmus, first described by Samuel Kiechel in 1588,¹² do not provide us with enough incentives to stipulate that the “New Alexandria,” as it appeared to the European visitors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, resulted from an actual economic decline during the Ottoman rule. The reason for the absence of New Alexandria from the travelers’ descriptions, as well as the high prizing for the Hellenistic ruins and sites, need to be explored outside the geographic boundaries of Alexandria.

The rise of antiquarianism, scholarly travels and archeology

The change and development of European scholarship in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appears to be tied to the rise of interest in Hellenistic Alexandria, and the neglect for its eleven centuries of Islamic past and present. In fact, following the Renaissance in Europe, a new humanism emerged that shuffled the approach to knowledge. As explained by Arnaldo Momigliano, in his essay on “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” a new “historical method” was developed by

¹⁰ al-Shayyāl. *A'lām al-Iskandariyah fī al-Asr al-Islāmi*, 212.

¹¹ For more details about the ottomanization of Aleppo see Heghnar Watenpaugh. *The Image of an Ottoman City, Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th centuries*. (Leiden: Brill), 2004.

¹² Samuel Kiechel was a citizen from Brisgau, Germany. He visited Alexandria in 1588 and describes the houses on the isthmus as “mauvaises maisons basses.” Samuel Kiechel. *Voyages en Egypte pendant les années 1587-1588*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1972), 32.

antiquarians who were interested in archeology as the only reliable physical evidence for the study of history. This new method rivaled with the canonical one which relied on Classical or Medieval literature as the absolute evidence for the writing of history. Consequently, this traditional method, until then unquestionably adopted by historians, was rendered skeptical -read obsolete.¹³ In fact, the obsession with truth and the abundance of archaeological evidence provided in Rome, southern Italy and Greece after the discovery of Paestum, Pompeii and later Athens, armed antiquarians with enough skepticism and evidence to challenge the canon.¹⁴ For them, the background of Classical writers such as Diodorus Siculus, Pliny the Elder, Strabo, Plutarch, Antipater of Sidon, Cornelius Tacitus and others, for long-time not questioned, needed to be clarified before being used as historical facts. The Egyptian, Greek and Roman worlds were not only discovered through Classical texts re-printed during the Renaissance, but also through archeological objects recorded and gathered during scholarly travels and royal missions, which informed the new writings of history.

The growing number of scholarly travels to mainland Greece, southern Italy and Egypt, exposed European scholars to Classical and Egyptian art and architecture outside Rome. However, this was not their first encounter with the art of Egypt and Greece. Before the publications of illustrated travelogues such as Corneille le Brun's *Voyage au Levant* (1700), Benoit de Maillet's *Description de l'Égypte* (1735), Frederick Lewis Norden's *Voyage d'Égypte et de Nubie* (1755), or LeRoy's *Les Ruines de Plus Beaux Monuments de la Grèce* (1758), Renaissance scholars converged to Rome where they first came across with Roman remains showing Greek and Egyptian art and architecture, copied or transported to Rome during the high days of the Empire. Greek art was known through the Roman copies of Greek sculptures, as well as the architectural orders theorized upon extensively by Leon Battista Alberti in *Ten Books on Architecture*, published in 1452; whereas Egyptian art was restricted to the two figures of Hadrian's Canope, the motifs on the bath of Caracalla, the pyramid of Cestius and the obelisks brought by the several Roman emperors.¹⁵ Indeed until the nineteenth century, many Europeans took the steep (ca. seventy-five degree) pyramid of Caius Cestius in Rome rather than the less accessible pyramids of Giza (fifty-two degrees) as the archetypal pyramid. Ironically, despite the fact that George Sandys, an English poet (1578-1664) who traveled to Egypt in 1611 and published *Relation of a Journey* in 1615, had seen the Giza pyramids with his own eyes, his sketch showed them

¹³ Arnaldo Momigliano. "Ancient History and the Antiquarian" in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol 13. (London: The Warburg Institute, 1950).

¹⁴ The roads to Sicily and mainland Greece were secured from corsairs and bandit attacks after the mid-eighteenth century. The tensions with the Ottoman Empire were settled and the growing interest in the "East" opened a new window for classicism found in Classical Greek culture and pre-Roman/Etruscan civilizations. Scholars made themselves familiar with Greek architecture through drawings of the Parthenon and the ones of Greek temples in Paestum and Syracuse in Sicily.

¹⁵ The Egyptian culture was well immersed in the Roman one for divinities such as Isis "was considered the daughter of Chronos or Hermes or Prometheus and identified with Ceres or the many breasted Diana of Ephesus or indeed more generally with nature" in Nikolaus Pevsner. "The Egyptian Revival" in *Studies in Art Architecture and Design*, Vol 1: From Mannerism to Romanticism. *London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 217.

rising at far too steep angles.¹⁶ The Renaissance scholars, studying Classicism in Rome, considered those Egyptian sculptures and decorative patterns as part of their interest. Consequently, egyptianized motifs, called “egyptiana” by Pevsner, entered the Renaissance production of art and architecture. Representations of pyramids are found on Ghiberti’s panels of Florence baptistery door, pseudo-hieroglyphs decorate several Italian monuments erected in the second half of the fifteenth century, and two sphinxes adorn the tomb of Diane de Poitiers in France whose name might have been associated with Isis, the Egyptian Goddess.¹⁷

With later travelers who illustrated the Pharaonic monuments of Egypt, “Egypt [became] associated with mystery and the cult of the dead, with ‘immense grandeur’ and ‘magnitude,’ the ‘colossal,’ the ‘uniform,’ the ‘awful’ and majestic.”¹⁸ To the Renaissance scholar who idealized Rome as the fountainhead of civilizations, true Egyptian style was seen as barbarous and “true Egyptian sculpture went of course against all the principles and aspirations of Renaissance art, and ... presented great difficulties to any Renaissance artist who wanted to get anything of the Egyptian style over.”¹⁹ Indeed George Sandys, saw the pyramids as “the barbarous monuments of prodigality and vain glory.”²⁰ It is only after the mid-eighteenth century and the deep exploration of the Egyptian territory, followed by the several attempts to decipher the hieroglyphs, that Egyptian art would be denuded from its mystical and fantastical attributes. It was consequently accepted in the European scientific milieu of the eighteenth century as a “style” with a defined logic and specific rules, rather than an element of exotism and “fun.”²¹ Studied together with the Classical sources, the antiquities helped verify the validity of the literature until then widely accepted as canonical, and allowed a more scientific approach to the writing of history. “True Egyptian art,” as labeled by Pevsner, became accepted as “true” and more historically and artistically valid than what was learnt from Rome. Egyptian art and architecture was not anymore located in the realm of the mystical and the unknown (an area dejected by the eighteenth century antiquarians) but elevated to the status of archeological evidence.

The search for the Origin

Following the numerous scholarly travels, the rise of antiquarianism and the discovery of Etruscan, Egyptian and Greek art in their respective homelands, a struggle to establish a single historical origin of civilization emerged among European scholars of different national and ideological affiliations. Rome, the springhead of Classicism, as established by fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century scholars like Giambattista Vico and Leon Battista Alberti, was rivaled by the Greek, Egyptian and Etruscan antiquities discovered in the eighteenth century. Overwhelmed by those archeological

¹⁶ Donald Malcolm Reid. *Whose Pharaoh? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I*. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2002, 24-25.

¹⁷ Pevsner, “The Egyptian Revival,” 224.

¹⁸ Ibid, 223.

¹⁹ Ibid, 222.

²⁰ Ibid, 227.

²¹ Ibid, 215.

discoveries found in Pompeii, Paestum, Athens, and Thebes, scholars were forced to establish a hierarchy that would classify those great civilizations in an order of architectural grandeur, artistic development, maturity and perfection as well as age supremacy. This discourse was argued by the use of verified literary sources and site surveys of archeological grounds. Consequently, antiquarians became in control of a new version of the world's history, custom-tailored to locate eighteenth-century Europe at the cross-roads of antiquity.

French scholars, such as Jules David Le Roy advocating a pan-Grecian theory, asserted that it was the Greeks who invented architecture and the Romans those who brought it to decline. The first published oeuvre to illustrate Greek archeology in Athens, *Les Ruines des Plus Beaux Monuments de la Grèce* published by LeRoy in 1758, formulates his vision: "it was from the Greeks that architecture has received that regularity, that order, that entireness which are able to charm our eyes... We owe to them, in a word, all the beauties of which the art of building is capable. In this sense we may say that the Greeks have invented architecture."²² A different interpretation of the Greek supremacy was expressed by Comte de Caylus who located the Greeks at the highest point of the evolution of an architectural tradition. In the *Recueil d'antiquités Egyptiennes, Etrusques, Grecques, Romaines et Gauloises* published between 1752 and 1767, he established the "historical theory of the succession of world empires" that would put the Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman antique civilizations in a linear evolutionary sequence, and he postulated "that the arts have been carried from one empire to the next, but also changed their basic character in the process."²³ For him, those great architectural traditions followed a linear evolutionary pattern starting with Egypt and culminating in Greece before declining in the Roman period. Egyptian architecture was associated with bareness and grandeur, to which was added the details by the Etruscans. Furthermore, for Caylus, because this artistic evolution was based on Egyptian and Etruscan traditions, Greek architecture was able to attain perfection; and Rome, with its frenzy in copying Greek art and architecture, buried itself in the debris of the Empire.²⁴ In his hierarchical categorization of the Classical civilizations, Caylus didn't idealize Greece in a historical vacuum like Le Roy, but his theory of historical evolution of world empires reflected the Enlightenment thoughts prevailing in the second half of the eighteenth century. Caylus gives weight to Egyptian civilization, considered to have participated in the rise of Classical Greece. He acknowledges the breaking away from the Renaissance canons of appreciation discussed earlier, and gratifies "true" Egyptian art. For him "this change of judgment was not due to any denial of the primitive character, but to a growing respect for primitivity. "Here, the understanding of Egyptian and of Greek Doric runs parallel. The Egyptians are now *ce peuple sage et éclairé*, and their buildings are

²² Le Roy quoted in Rudolf Wittkower. "Piranesi's Architectural Creed" in *Studies in the Italian Baroque*. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1975), 236.

²³ Rupinder Singh. *Piranesi Campo Marzio Plan*. SMArchS Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996, 69.

²⁴ Wittkower. "Piranesi's Architectural Creed", 237.

so solid and bare and massive that to an Egyptian Greek temple and other buildings 'devoient paroître des châteaux de carte chargés de colifichets.'"²⁵

In response to those pro-Grecian French scholars, Giovanni Battista Piranesi and the Italian school, attempted to argue for the supremacy of the Roman art seen as the inheritor of its Etruscan ancestor. In his fight against Greek artistic supremacy and perfection advocated by Le Roy and Caylus, Piranesi (trained in Roman archeology) valued the monumentality and grandeur of Etruscan and Egyptian architecture over the prettiness of the Greeks.²⁶ He acquiesced of Greek art and architecture being inspired by the ones of Egypt and Etruria, but argued that it had been mutilated by the ornate layers of decorations. It is only with the Romans, that this prettiness would be corrected to give back grandeur to this great artistic tradition. In a later change of position, Piranesi rejects the strict architectural rules and harmony in Greek designs as promulgated by the pro-Grecian movement, and elevates excessive ornamentation and innovation to be "key elements in architecture."²⁷ However, besides their diverging opinions, Le Roy and Piranesi, as scholars of the Enlightenment and supporters of the scientific method, "both ... believed in objective laws, both fought for reason, necessity, truth and simplicity in architecture."²⁸

In sum, the general concern for defining a nascent European consciousness brought together these several diverging and versatile interpretive opinions regarding a single and absolute architecture or artistic origin. Scholars worked in unison to link Europe to the Classical antique civilizations to which a point of origin was being debated. The whirling search for an Origin attributed to one of those antique civilizations as well as the classico-centric notion of grandeur in history, has been expressed ironically by Joseph Rykwert writing that "Antique greatness and Holy Writ were [the golden past] two guarantors, and with their help all significant remains from the past –such as Stonehenge– must be interpreted."²⁹ Indeed, the grandness attributed exclusively to those four civilizations, channeled and narrowed the eighteenth century view of the world. Eighteenth-century Europe, seen as the contemporary inheritor of antiquity, had to be bound to a point of origin defined only within the Classical world. As a matter of fact, and as it will be developed later in the thesis through the case of Alexandria, the obsession with Classical heritage resulted in the overshadowing of other major historical periods, such as the Islamic and Christian ones, rendering the new scientific approach to archeology inconsistent.

²⁵ Pevsner, "The Egyptian Revival," 230, quoting Comte de Caylus in *Recueil d'antiquités Egyptiennes, Etrusques, Grecques, Romaines et Gauloises* between 1759 and 1767. The French quote translates the following: Any Egyptian Greek temple compared to the massive and bare Egyptian structures would appear like flimsy constructions adorned with knick-knack.

²⁶ Wittkower, "Piranesi's Architectural Creed," 237.

²⁷ Singh, *Piranesi Campo Marzio Plan*, 15.

²⁸ Wittkower, "Piranesi's Architectural Creed," 238.

²⁹ Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century*. (The MIT Press, 1983), 19.

III

Alexandria Before the Hellenizing Trend (15th, 16th, and 17th centuries)

The rise of antiquarianism in Europe that valued archaeology and encouraged scholarly travels, as well as the emergence of struggles that attempted to bound eighteenth-century European culture to a single historic and artistic origin, were not only restricted to the geographic boundaries of Western Europe, but their impact reached the Middle East and Asia, long time before the colonial expansion did. In short, these coming chapters aim to argue that the eighteenth-century historical and intellectual discourses, elaborated previously, were mirrored in the historiography of Alexandria. This city, founded by Alexander the Great, a Greek Macedonian ruler, governed by the Ptolemies, a Pharaonised Macedonian dynasty, and annexed to Rome by Julius Cesar in 31BC, after the battle of Actium, abounded with histories and vestiges of three major Classical civilizations: Egypt, Greece and Rome.

As early as the last decades of the seventeenth-century, travelers, official envoys and scientific scholars who visited Alexandria, reflected in their writings and illustrations their Classico-centric view of history. The literature they produced corroborated a rising interest in the city's Hellenistic past to the expense of its Islamic and Christian ones. Those writings attenuated, or sometimes ignored completely the prominence of Alexandria in the early Christian centuries after the fall of Rome, its important strategic position as a stronghold in Mamluk Egypt, and its active commercial port during the Ottoman rule (Alexandria's harbor was the only Egyptian port trading goods with the Mediterranean cities at large). It is only a little surprising that starting the eighteenth century, as imagined or recounted in Europe, Alexandria declines economically, ceases to be seen as

an important commercial node in the Ottoman Empire linking the Indian Ocean to Istanbul and Europe, and its Christian vestiges ignored or rendered minor compared to the Classical archeological finds. This phenomenon of historiography is explored by comparing pre and post-eighteenth century writings and maps of European travelers.

Prosperity of the intra-muros Alexandria and the one on the isthmus

Eighteenth century descriptions of Alexandria ignore the New Alexandria built on the isthmus between the two ports, and dwell upon the ruinous intra-muros city, with a specific emphasis on the Hellenistic remains. However, earlier travelers of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, despite their low esteem for the Islamic city intra-muros or the new Ottoman city on the isthmus, described their respective streets, poor architectures, commercial activities, populations as well as consular houses.

Emmanuel Piloti of Crete who conducted commerce with Egypt between 1396 and 1438 (during the Mamluk rule preceding the Ottoman occupation of 1517), reported in his treaty on the intense trade relationships between Egypt, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean and stressed on the privileged location of Alexandria as the mouth of Cairo on the Mediterranean Sea.¹ Indeed, these tight commercial and vital relationships with Cairo would be testified by the Geniza documents found in Cairo in 1942.² As the unique port city of Egypt on the Mediterranean, Alexandria was given a special attention by the Mamluk Sultans. They provided the city with several mosques, madrasas (Islamic theological schools), bathhouses and cisterns necessary for the water supply to the city.³

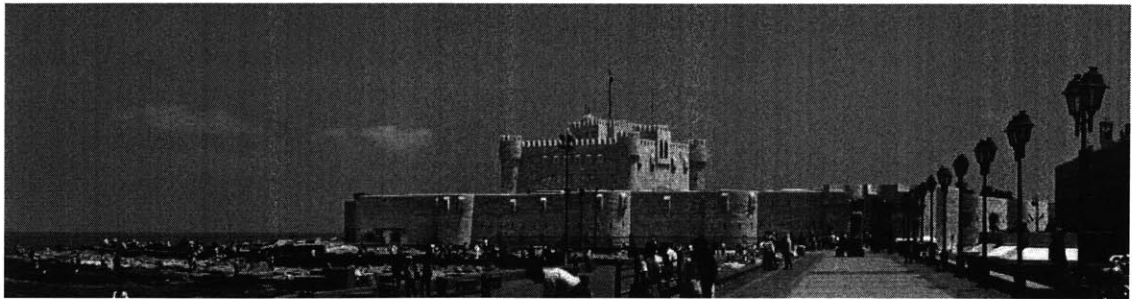


Figure 4. *Fort Qaitbay.*

¹ Piloti of Crete was a Venetian merchant born in Crete in 1371. He dwelled in Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria) between 1396 and 1438 where he was directing commerce with numerous cities of the Mediterranean such as Salonica, Famagusta, Damascus, Patras and Venice. Emmanuel Piloti of Crete. *L’Egypte au Commencement du Quinzième Siècle d’Après le Traité d’Emmanuel Piloti de Crète (Incipit 1420)*. (Cairo : University Fouad I, 1950).

² For more details about the Geniza documents and the commerce in Alexandria in the 11th and 12th century, see Abraham Udovitch. “L’enigme d’Alexandrie: Sa Position au Moyen Age d’Après les Documents de la Geniza du Caire” In *Alexandrie entre Deux Mondes* ed. Ilbert, Robert. (Aix-en-Provence : Edisud, 1988), 71-79.

³ Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 23.

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Furthermore, in order to defend the sultanate from pirate attacks and Christian invasions from the Mediterranean Sea, Sultan al-Ashraf Qaitbay built a military fort between 1477 and 1480, situated at the eastern end of the Pharos peninsula, on the site of the antique lighthouse which collapsed in 1303 due to a tidal wave (Figure 1).

The prosperous Mamluk city at the end of the fifteenth century is recorded in Hugo Comminelli's map, the first visual representation of Alexandria (Figure 2).⁴ It was engraved between 1469 and 1477 to appear in the first re-publication of the *Geographia* of Ptolemy I in 1477.⁵ Comminelli, who



Figure 5. Hugo Comminelli Map (1477)

⁴ Henri Thuile. *Commentaires sur l'Atlas Historique d'Alexandrie*. Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archeologie Orientale, 1922, 7-9 and Harry Tzalas. *The two ports of Alexandria as shown on plans and maps from the 14th century to the time of Muhammad Ali*. Hellenic Electronic Center and Harry E. Tzalas, 1998. <http://www.greece.org/alexandria/ports/ports3.htm> (May 2005)

⁵ The *Geographia*, inspired by the *Geographia di Tolomeo* was first published in 1477 and Comminelli is said to have drawn three maps for this edition two of them are dated 1469 and 1472. "Storia della cartografia antica" retrieved May 2005 <http://digilander.libero.it/diogenes99/Cartografia/Cartografia01.htm> (May 2005)

never visited Alexandria, based his map on the little evidence available to him: literary descriptions, medieval clerical texts and common beliefs about historically unverified events (such as the foundation of the city, the location of Alexander's tomb, or the burning of the library).⁶ Using a bird's eye view from the north (a characteristic of Medieval maps, and the viewpoint from which Alexandria was first seen by travelers coming by boat), he depicts Alexandria inside its fortifications and shows, by its numerous constructions of mosques, mausoleums and churches, the city's wealth and its importance as a commercial port in the Mamluk Sultanate as described in Piloti de Crete's treaty.

Under the ottoman rule starting 1517, Alexandria, called the "southern pivot of Ottoman commerce" by Michael Reimer, remained one of the major ports of the Empire despite the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco de Gamma in 1498 (as developed in chapter 2). It is true that Egypt was not longer the exclusive maritime trading route from Europe to the Indian Ocean but it remained the easier and faster one. For that matter, historians should not be lured to assert a definitive decline of Alexandria from the sixteenth century onward. The French traveler Samuel Kiechel and his Prussian homologue Reinhold Lubenau, who separately visited Alexandria in 1588 when the city was already developing on the isthmus beyond its walls, witness the city's active markets and commercial ties with Europe.⁷ In the three manuscripts recounting his travels, Kiechel gives a detailed description of Alexandria in 1588, both intra-muros and extra-muros. He describes the ruinous condition of the city within the walls. He is aware of the city's wealth and its prosperity under the Mamluks, for he mentions the intricately detailed marble tiling patterns in some of the houses now inhabited by poor Muslims.⁸ However, as noticed by both Kiechel and Lubenau in 1588, the larger number of the city's population of Turkish or Jewish origin, dwells in the new city outside the walls, in badly constructed houses.⁹ Additionally, they both extensively detail the city's commercial activities along the port and the variety of goods in its markets, from several provenances, such as glassware and porcelain from China or India as well as goods from Ormuz and Mecca.¹⁰ They also describe the funduqs of each nation situated on the shore of the eastern port,

⁶ His name is not mentioned in the "Inventaire des Archives de la Collection «*Voyageurs Occidentaux en Egypte*»" Cairo: IFAO, 2004. <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/doc/Archives/Invent05.htm> (May 2005)

⁷ Reinhold Lubenau, of Prussian origin, visited Alexandria in 1588 out of a curiosity to discover the world. Reinhold Lubenau *Voyages en Egypte pendant les années 1587-1588*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire), 1972.

⁸ "Ainsi a l'intérieur de la ville, dans beaucoup de vieille maison, les carrelages et les sols sont en beau marbre de couleur, fait d'incrustations en forme d'étoile ou de traits et garnis artistiquement et avec élégance; et cela, bien que dans beaucoup de maisons habitent maintenant de Mores et de Arabes pauvres gens qui sont les derniers a construire ou a réparer." Kiechel, *Voyages en Egypte*, 35.

⁹ "Le prince et le sandjak, comme d'ailleurs les turcs et les Juifs, habitent tous en dehors de la ville, au bord de la mer, ou ils ont de mauvaises maisons basses; et beaucoup plus de gens vivent a l'extérieur de la ville qu'a l'intérieur." Ibid, 31-32. "La plupart des gens construisent leurs habitations près du grand château sur la place du phare" Lubenau, *Voyages en Egypte*, 217.

¹⁰ "A Alexandrie toutes sortes d'animaux sont a vendre...de la vaisselle en porcelaine, coupes plats et aiguières, de la vaisselle a boire venant de Chine et des Indes par la mer rouge, des œufs d'autruches... beaucoup de

... serving as hostels and consular houses, as well as the several religious and ethnic communities living there such as Jews, Christians, Turks, Persians, Arabs, Tartars, Moors, Abyssinians, Greeks, English, Dutch, Italians, French Copts and Jacobites.¹¹ “Alexandria, writes Kiechel in 1588, is now the principal port of the kingdom of Egypt (which was at that time an Ottoman province dependant of Cairo)... it is a free transit zone... where boats from Ragusa, Sicily, Naples, Livorno, Genoa and other Christian cities of the sea, come here with boats from France, Venice and England. All wander free, under the only condition to pay the due tribute to their respective consulates, who secure their stay in the city.”¹²

The highly active commerce in Alexandria is not only described in literature by Kiechel and Lubenau but also represented in maps of the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries. They are bird’s eye views from the North similarly to Comminelli’s. They do not acknowledge the city on the isthmus but provide enough visual evidence to testify that Alexandria – a city as a whole, regardless of its location-- was inhabited during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and enjoyed a prosperous commerce. The first, illustrated Pierre Belon du Man’s written travelogue, and shows Alexandria in 1547 as a conventionalized medieval European town set inside a crenellated wall marked by a series of stocky towers and defined with buildings whose pitched roofs belong to a Western conception of architecture (Figure 3). However, the numerous structures are captioned to differentiate houses from Mosques, Churches and Classical monuments. The area inside the walls is traversed by water canals linked to a single branch of the Nile, necessary for alimenting the city’s underground cisterns. In sum, the multiple constructions --residential or religious-- crowding the intra-muros boundary of Alexandria, as well as its alimentation in water, denote the city’s prosperity. The second, bird’s eye view, is Braun-Hogenburg’s map of Alexandria engraved in 1573 and published in the *Atlas de Jansson* in 1619 (Figure 3); and the third, which used Braun-Hogenburg’s as a template, illustrates the documentation of Egypt in 1636 by the Dutch Doctor Olivier Dapper (Figure 4). Those two bird’s eye views reveal in the same manner than Belon du Man’s, the prosperity of Alexandria during the Ottoman rule by picturing not only a city with numerous Western looking building inside the fortifications alimented by water canals but also a port crowded with vessels. Even though geographically inaccurate (omitting the two ports and the pharos island), they bring to light the knowledge on Alexandria in Europe during the seventeenth century (not aware of the city on the isthmus) reputed for its active maritime port.

marchandise sont encore apportées d’Ormuz, de la Mecque et de Indes par la Mer Rouge, et ensuite par le Nil” Lubenau, *Voyages en Egypte*, 229 and 231.

¹¹ Arabic name for caravanserais or khan: these funduqs served as consular houses and lodging places housing the foreign merchants and travelers of each nationality (Venetian, French, Ragusan and Genovese). They are rectangular in plan having a gallery around a central courtyard similar to the cloisters. They are composed of shops on the first floor used as a storage space for goods and herds whereas the second floor is divided into small rooms serving as a hostel. Kiechel, *Voyages en Egypte*, 32-33 and Lubenau, *Voyages en Egypte*, 230-231. See also the travels of Christophe Harrant published in *Voyage en Egypte de Christophe Harrant de Polzic et Bezdruzic, 1598*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1972).

¹² Kiechel, *Voyages en Egypte*, 32.

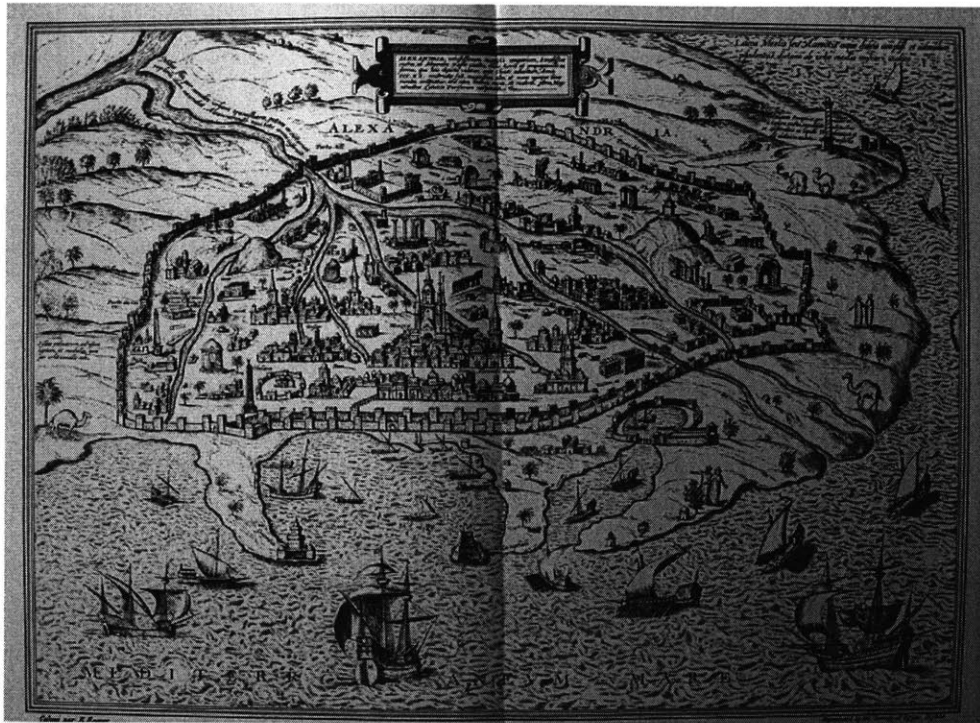


Figure 6. Braun-Hogenburg's map (1573)

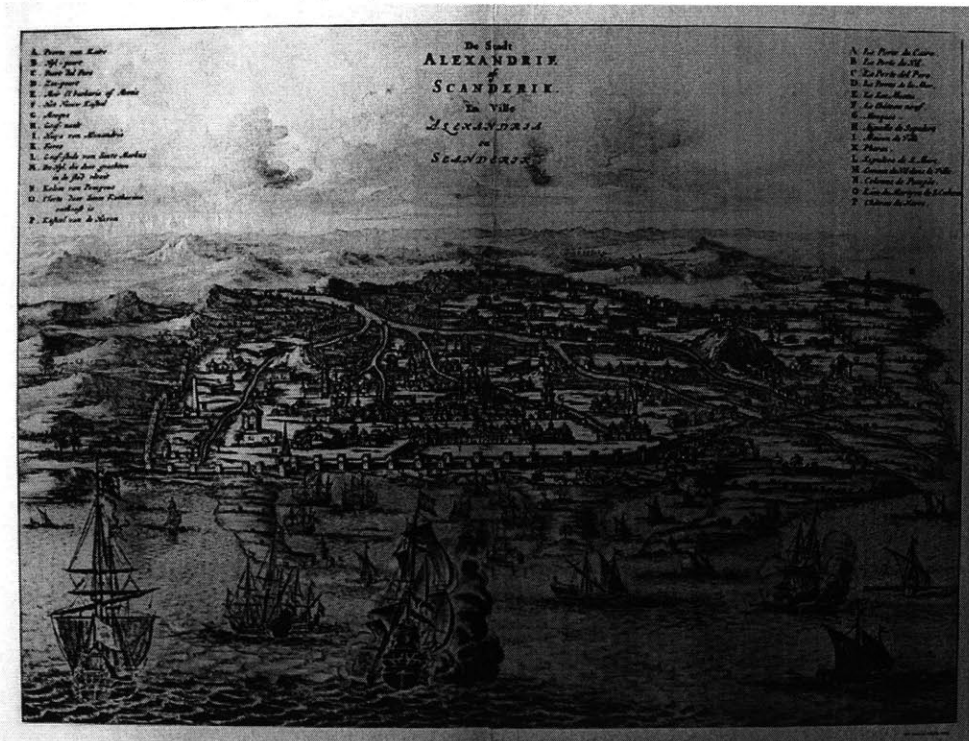


Figure 7. Olivier Dapper's map (1636)

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As described in the literary sources mentioned above, such as Emmanuel Piloti of Crete's (1396-1438), Pierre Belon du Mans's (1547), André Thevet's (1550) Jean Palerne Forésien's (1581), Samuel Kiechel's and Reinhold Lubenau's (1588), Alexandria during the sixteenth century, under both the Mamluk and Ottoman rule, was considered reported by Europeans to be a lively and prosperous commercial port city crowded with cosmopolitan merchants. Contrary to what later travelers of the eighteenth century believed, Alexandria did not collapse into ruins after the Ottoman occupation in 1517 but rather witnessed a flourishing commerce with the Mediterranean.

European interest in Christian vestiges

The European travelers up until the early seventeenth century were interested in the Islamic intramuros city or the Ottoman one on the isthmus, as investigated in the literature and maps above. These same sources, further explored, reveal also a major interest in the Christian vestiges of Alexandria as opposed to the later eighteenth century visitors who focused exclusively on the Hellenistic history of the city.

The fifteenth, sixteenth and early seventeenth-century visitors to Alexandria had a filtered and unconsolidated knowledge of Classical history and Classical Alexandria as well. The city was known to Medieval and early Renaissance Europe only through the major clerical works of Eusebius (260-340), Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389) or Isidorus of Seville (560-636), copied and edited over and over during the medieval ages to mold a "positive and saint history from the time of the Ptolemies to the Fathers of the Church."¹³ This history recounted the city's foundations by Alexander, the construction of the Pharos, the Library or the Serapeum, which was well documented in the clerical sources because its destruction by the Christians in 391 was a symbol of their taking over the city.¹⁴ Reinhold Lubenau's travelogue is very indicative of this Christian oriented history of Alexandria. He dedicates few sentences to the Ptolemies and immediately manages to link the translation of the Bible from Hebrew to Greek --that occurred in Alexandria in 283BC-- to the life story of Saint Marc the Evangelist, before recounting the Christian history of the city, and wrapping it up with the destruction of the Library.¹⁵

¹³ "Ces réalités modestes n'ont pas favorisé la circulation d'une image prestigieuse et renouvelée, ni le contact avec les créations littéraires et les cristallisations mythologiques qui animent et qui obèrent la littérature de l'islam : ni géants, ni merveilles, mais une mémoire savante purement cléricale et qui recopie, sans imaginer, les jugements et les événements d'une histoire positive et sainte, des lagides à Antoine et aux Pères alexandrins de l'Eglise universelle." Henri Bresc. "Les Cendres et la Rose: L'image de l'Alexandrie Médiévale dans l'Occident latin" in *MEFRM* Tome 96, (1984) Vol 1, 443-444.

¹⁴ The author mentions the selectivity of the European medieval sources showing the lack of communication between the Lagids and the medieval clergymen, who omitted several major events of the city, misattributed the Pharos to Cesar and ignored its architect Dinocrates. Bresc, "Les Cendres et la Rose: L'image de l'Alexandrie Médiévale dans l'Occident latin," 445-6.

¹⁵ Lubenau, *Voyages en Egypte*, 214-217.

In fact, as investigated by Henry Bresc,¹⁶ Classical and Christian Alexandria had been alienated from Christian Europe after the conquest of Egypt by Amr ibn al-As in 642. This cut was even more intensified by the two centuries of crusades that culminated in the sack and burning of Alexandria in 1365 by Pierre I of Lusignan. It is only during the fifteenth century that travelers like Piloti of Crete and Anselme Adorno (on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1470 and 1471), visited Alexandria for commercial and religious purposes respectively. With them, the knowledge of Alexandria made its way back to Europe; however it was partly shaped by their Christian education and exposure to the clerical texts, and partly molded on the accounts of local historian, scholars or travelers and Islamic beliefs. Accordingly, travelers of the fifteenth century brought back to Europe numerous stories about Alexander the Great who was labeled *Dhu al Qarnayn* “the man with the two horns” in the Coran,¹⁷ or the Pharos which was believed to have been built on four giant crabs.¹⁸ Informed by local beliefs, Lubenau does not attribute Alexandria’s foundation to Alexander the Great. He explores the etymology of the city’s Turkish name *Scamandria* and ascribes it to the Arab root *Massar*, the name of the grand son of Noah the Patriarch.¹⁹ Furthermore, these pilgrims and travelers with very little exposure to the Classical history of Alexandria freely interpreted the history of its sites and buildings and associated haphazardly its ruins to some of the illustrious monuments mentioned in the few available biblical sources. For example, Pompey’s pillar which was not mentioned in Christian Medieval clerical sources, fascinated travelers who let flow their imaginations. Anselme Adorno mistook it for Alexander’s tomb and others considered it the refuge of a Christian Saint in the tradition of Saint Simeon the stylite in Northern Aleppo.²⁰

¹⁶ For more detail on the image of Alexandria in Medieval Europe refer to Bresc, “Les Cendres et la Rose: L’image de l’Alexandrie Medievale dans l’Occident latin,” 441-457.

¹⁷ Sourate, XVII, v.82 sq

¹⁸ The pharos in the Islamic tradition was supported by a crab linking it to the Cancer astrological sign linking Earth to the center of the sky. This link was in the shape of axis along the Pharos height that constituted the pivot along which the universe rotated: “Ainsi pour tout homme averti participant a cette vision du monde largement répandu en Orient comme en Occident, le crabe supportant le phare d’Alexandrie renvoyait au signe zénithal du Cancer, dessinant ainsi un axe unissant la terre au milieu du ciel, le long duquel l’aiguille du Phare se dressait comme le pivot de la rotation de l’univers stellaire.” François de Polignac. “Al-Iskandariyya: Oeil du monde et frontière de l’inconnu” in *MEFRM* Tome 96, (1984) Vol 1, 432. Furthermore, this Islamic belief was modified through the writing of European medieval scholars such as Bède and Grégoire of Tours who transmitted the knowledge of four mythical marine animal to become four glass crabs in the writings of Pierre le Mangeur, then four glass domes in the writings of Joos van Ghistele: “Bède et Grégoire de Tours ont transmis le souvenir des quatre animaux marins symboliques, qui deviennent quatre crabes de verre dans Pierre le mangeur, puis quatre dômes de verre chez Joos van Ghisele.” Bresc, “Les Cendres et la Rose: L’image de l’Alexandrie Medievale dans l’Occident latin,” 446.

¹⁹ “La ville (d’Alexandrie) est nommée *Scamandria* par les Turcs, *Bardamassar* par les Arabes, du mot *bar* le pays, et *massar* : le petit fils du patriarche Noé, c’est-à-dire Misraim qui était le petit fils de ham. De ce Misraim le pays a garde le nom arabe jusqu’à nos jours. Ce Misraim aurait été le premier à construire la ville d’Alexandrie, la nommant Noa ou No. Plus tard elle a été agrandie et appelée Racosta, jusqu’à ce qu’Alexandre l’ait construite comme elle est maintenant et appelée de son nom.” Lubenau, *Voyages en Egypte*, 232.

²⁰ Bresc, “Les Cendres et la Rose: L’image de l’Alexandrie Medievale dans l’Occident latin,” 445.

This Christian scholarly penchant remained dominant in the Renaissance despite the nascent interest in Classical authors such as Pliny, Diodorus Siculus or Ammianus Marcellinus.²¹ The prevalent interest in Christian Alexandria was further sharpened by the purpose of travels. Whether aiming at conducting commerce in Alexandria or stopping in the city on the way to Jerusalem, the visitors had no incentive to dig into the Hellenistic history or report about its Classical vestiges. Contrary to the eighteenth-century visitors, they tangentially described the most obvious Classical ruins such as Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needles, and never elaborated on the city's Hellenistic history by extracting historical information from Classical sources. On the other hand, Alexandria offered them the preaching place of Saint Marc, the martyrdom place of Saint Catherine, the church of Saint Theonas, the refuge of Saint Athanasius and much more. Kiechel, groups under "monuments to see" a small monastery of Saint Saba, Saint Catherine's prison, the stone on which she was put to death, a church along the walls of the city, and the tomb of Saint Marc the Evangelist. He compares Cleopatra's needles to the Obelisk in Saint Peter's Square in Rome, and gives a brief description of Pompey's Pillar.²² He makes no reference to the antique lighthouse when he describes the harbor with the Qaitbay "fort, on the left hand side when leaving the port, well fortified, entirely built on a rock and mostly surrounded by water."²³ He does not attempt to imagine the lighthouse standing at the same location than the fort, like E.M. Forster would ultimately do in the preface of the 1961 edition of *Alexandria History and a Guide* where he states: "I would multiply the height of the Fort Qaitbay by four and thus envisage the Pharos which once stood on the same site."²⁴

The Christian tainted vision of Alexandria is nowhere more obvious than in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth-century maps representing the city. Hugo Comminelli's bird's eye view of Alexandria (1477) depicts the city as a conventionalized medieval European town set inside a crenellated wall marked by a series of stocky towers and defined by buildings whose pitched roofs belong to a Western conception of architecture (Figure 5). However once outside the walls, Classical, Christian and Islamic monuments become identifiable by means of captions; these include the tombs of Saint Marc and Saint Catherine as well as three rectangular structures with square bell towers --or would-be minarets-- that, we are told, are "mosques." There are only two references to the city's Hellenistic monuments: first, the word "Pharos," which is meant to designate the ancient lighthouse at the tip of Pharos island; and second, the word "Sepulchro Popei" refers to Pompey's pillar --a Roman column on top of which a building precariously sits-- and to the legend that it had either been inhabited by a Saint or that it marked the site of Alexander's tomb. These, then, are the notable features of the late medieval image of Alexandria.

²¹ Ibid, 441-457 ; and Pevsner, "The Egyptian Revival," 218.

²² Kiechel, *Voyages en Egypte*, 36-37.

²³ "Un des châteaux en particulier, situé a main gauche de la sortie, est bien fortifié, entièrement construit sur un rocher et en grande partie entouré par la mer" Ibid, 41.

²⁴ Forster, *Alexandria a History and a Guide*, Preface XVI

Continuing in this vein is my second example, Braun-Hogenburg's bird's eye view engraved in 1573 and later copied by Olivier Dapper in 1638. Albeit Joos van Ghisele (a Dutch traveler to Egypt in 1482) and Pierre Belons du Mans's detailed descriptions of Alexandria in 1482 and 1547 respectively, those maps still represent the city as a fortified European town (Figures 6-7).²⁵ Similarly to Comminelli's, they acknowledge the Christian vestiges of the city and illustrate mosques in a Western conception of architecture similarly to European cathedrals. Inside the city walls, the habitations are pictured as agglomerations around mosques in the way medieval villages are gathered around their Cathedral. At the center of the city, the highest structure is the Attarine Mosque known to Europeans of the 17th century as the mosque of Saint Athanasius, believed to be built on the site of an old church dedicated to Saint Athanasius. Other buildings labeled "Mosque," are represented like circular Classical monuments scattered all over the city. Furthermore, the intra-muros territory is filled with ruins of churches, Classical temples and monuments such as Cleopatra's needles and Saint Catherine's shrine. These two highly detailed bird's eye views that appeared in prestigious publications of their time, show clearly the heavily Christian oriented tradition in viewing the city, which proliferated in Europe up until the end of the seventeenth century.

²⁵ The *Atlas de Jansson* owned by Jean Blaeu after his father Guillaume, was collecting maps by geographers that were generously paid and therefore provided him with highly detailed maps beautifully drawn. Blaeu didn't have the skills to verify their historical and geographical validity but made his fame through the high definition of the Atlas's publication. Thuile, *Commentaires sur l'Atlas Historique d'Alexandrie*, 12.

IV

From Hellenistic Interest to Hellenizing Obsession

The previous chapters have explored the Christian-oriented literature, scholarly knowledge and modes of representation of Alexandria in the fifteenth, sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They have elaborated on the economic prosperity of both the Islamic intra-muros city and the later Ottoman one on the isthmus, revising the historiography which attempted to ascribe the decline and the consequent urban move of Alexandria to the Ottoman period. With this already acquired knowledge, these coming chapters look at the way European Enlightenment scholars handled Alexandria's history. In fact, maps, literary descriptions and pictorial representations of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Alexandria, inform us on a major shift in the European perception of the city, which coincides with their adoption of new methods for historical studies.¹

The European Enlightenment scholars were fervent antiquarians and believed in archeological evidence and visual experience achieved in travels. They were sent on royal commissions to undertake explorations and report on what they saw in Egypt. Scholars, travelers and royal envoys like Balthasar de Monconys, J. B. Vansleb, Corneille le Brun, Benoit Maillet, Frederick Lewis Norden, Richard Pokocke, and Paul Lucas, were well trained in the Classical literature of Strabo, Theocritus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch and Achilles Tatius, made available through the Renaissance and

¹ See earlier the references to Arnaldo Momigliano "Ancient History and the Antiquarian."

later publications.² Through their travels to Egypt, they simultaneously aimed at verifying the validity of Classical sources and explored the country guided by those antique sources. Among them, Jesuit Father Claude Sicard, commissioned by the Regent Philippe of Orleans to investigate some of Egypt's Pharaonic monuments, was guided by the writings of Diodorus Siculus: "In the Valley of the Kings, he was able to identify ten of the tombs from the total number described in the writings of Diodorus Siculus but perhaps his most important contribution was to identify Karnak and Luxor temples as part of the site of the ancient capital of Thebes."³ In fact, the purpose of the scholars' numerous visits to Alexandria and elsewhere, was not anymore driven by a thirst to discover the unknown, but rather to measure and witness archeological evidence that would validate the accuracy of the Classical sources. In those documentary maps, writings and pictorial representations, the Ottoman city on the isthmus had no part for it presented no Hellenistic or Roman ruins. Its physicality was therefore overlooked and its role as an active port frequently ignored. It was associated with decline and accordingly the Hellenistic city solely glorified.

Roots of Hellenistic Interest

The interest in the Hellenistic history of Alexandria started to be noticed in literature after the second half of the seventeenth century. Accordingly the *Journal des Voyages de Monsieur de Monconys* written in 1647 and published in 1665, as well as the *Memoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux* written in 1658 and published in 1735, show an unprecedented equal interest in the Hellenistic, Roman and Christian intra-muros city as well as the actual seventeenth-century Ottoman city. Balthasar de Monconys's travel, was never tainted with Christian colors even though he accomplished a pilgrimage to

² J. B. Vansleb was a German scholar, sent by Louis XIV in 1657 to visit Egypt, to acquire antiquities for the royal collection and to copy the hieroglyphic inscriptions in Precourt, Bruce. "The Discoverers," part 1 <http://www.uwm.edu/Course/egypt/0100/discoverersA.html> (May 2005); Corneille le Brun visited Egypt between 1678 and 1684. He was a painter interested in illustrating with extreme care and detail what travelers saw during their visit in foreign lands. He published his own travelogue *Voyage au Levant* containing illustrated plates in 1700 in Paris; Benoit de Maillet, was the French consul to Egypt between 1692 and 1708 when he wrote his *Description de l'Egypte Contenant Plusieurs Remarques Curieuses sur la Géographie Ancienne et Moderne de ce Pays, sur les Monuments Anciens, sur les Mœurs, les Coutumes et la Religion des Habitants, sur le Gouvernement et le Commerce, sur les Animaux, les Arbres, le Plantes, &c.* published in 1735. He mentions in his introduction that the description of Alexandria he is presenting comes from his own researches: "c'est de ces recherches que j'ai faites moi même au travers des ruines autrefois si vantées, que j'entreprends de vous entretenir.", 119; Frederick Lewis Norden and Richard Pococke both visited Egypt in 1737, but Norden travelogue will be later studied in detail because of the highly detailed engravings of Alexandria; Frederick Lewis Norden was sent in 1737 by Christian VI king of Denmark to report on Egypt and Nubia. His work *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie* would be published with his own engravings in 1755. Paul Lucas was the official traveler for Louis XIV in 1716. He was instructed to examine antiquities at several sites and to explore a pyramid by excavation, in order to discover its contents. in Precourt, "The Discoverers," part 1 <http://www.uwm.edu/Course/egypt/0100/discoverersA.html> (May 2005);

³ Precourt, "The Discoverers," part 1 (May 2005).

Jerusalem.⁴ His *Journal* mirrors his scientific mind obsessed with the explorations of ancient civilizations, and his curiosity to learn about their histories and technical achievements. In Alexandria, he describes its physicality with no interpretive additions borrowed from literatures or local traditions: he cites columns spread in different locations, the cisterns “built during Alexander’s time,” the ruinous city walls and the canal.⁵ He reports the busy port where cotton and leather trade is conducted by a multi-religious and ethnic population and mentions the city’s funduqs and markets well lit and abundant with goods.⁶ His approach to the Hellenistic ruins is solely technical: he describes the stone composition of Pompey’s Pillar and Cleopatra’s needles and measures their respective heights. As for the city’s Christian holy sites, he recalls the church of Saint Marc and the location where he preached. His curiosity for knowledge seems equally spread between the city’s Hellenistic and Christian histories as well as the contemporary inhabited urban fabric. Monconys’s rational approach to Alexandria is illustrated in the map accompanying his literature (Figure 1). It is the first that represents the city on the isthmus between two semi-circular ports. Identifiable are only Alexandria’s “Fanal,” the city walls, a standing obelisk next to the seashore, the two hillocks he

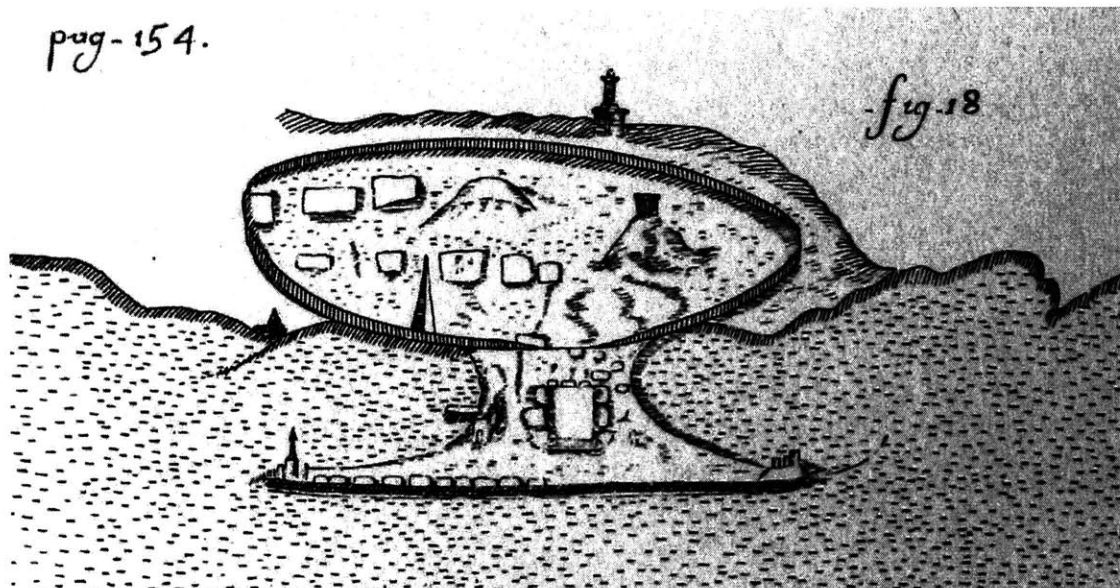


Figure 8. Balthasar de Monconys' map (1667)

⁴ Balthasar de Monconys, state advisor for King Louis XIV, was an erudite and a member of scientific French circles. As a result of his scientific curiosity, he visits the provinces of the Ottoman Empire and reaches Alexandria in January 1647.

⁵ “Nous vismes aussi des cisternes qui sont au dessous par toute la ville, qui est toute en l’air : il y a plusieurs estages soutenues & traversées de colonnes & de poutres de pierre : Alexandre l’avoit ainsi fait bastir et c’est ce qui reste seulement de son temps.” Balthazar de Monconys. *Voyage d’Egypte*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie orientale, 1973), 13.

⁶ “Le port toujours plein d’une infinité de basles de lin et de cuirs sales, qui est le plus grand commerce avec du Natron.” Monconys, *Voyage d’Egypte*, 14.

describes, as well as Pompey's Pillar represented with inaccurate proportions.⁷ The habitations are illustrated as rectangles spread linearly inside the city walls and grouped around an open space on the isthmus.

Laurent d'Arvieux, contrarily to Balthasar de Monconys was not an erudite.⁸ He was led to Alexandria by an interest in establishing commerce with the Levant and a will to perform a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In addition to those factors, his education in humanism guided him to equally value the different phases of Alexandria's history. His all encompassing memoirs reflect his interest in the Ottoman port city, the Christian pilgrimage sites as well as the Hellenistic and Roman ruins which provided him knowledge on the Classical civilizations. Accordingly, he situates accurately the city intra-muros next to the two ports; he describes in detail the funduqs, the prosperous commercial activities and the customs on the port, the canal of Alexandria, its underground cisterns and ruined fortifications, Fort Qaitbay, the Pharos (which is considered to have a different sites than Fort Qaitbay), Saint Catherine Martyrdom, the church of Saint Marc, Pompey's pillar, Cleopatra's needles and her palace, as well as a general report on the city's mosques. In addition, the memoirs reveal d'Arvieux anthropological interest in studying Alexandria's local population for he describes the inhabitants' social habits, their dress codes, some incidents he encountered, the common diseases, and gives recommendations for later travelers.⁹

These two travelers' descriptions appear as transitory between the heavily Christian-oriented writings of Jean Palerne Forésien, Pierre Belon du Mans or Samuel Kiechel and the later ones of Corneille le Brun, Benoit de Maillet or Frederick Lewis Norden that neglected the inhabited portion of city and focused only on Hellenistic Alexandria as it was recounted by Classical texts. Indeed, d'Arvieux and Monconys's approach to Alexandria echo the loss of confidence in the clerical authority in spreading knowledge, and reveal their humanist and rational education, which promoted a growing thirst for knowing the world, in particular the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome.¹⁰ The curiosity of these authors for the antique civilizations, whether by applying the newly developed historical methods or by abiding to the pre-antiquarian method relying on literature, did not yet aim at defining a single historical origin or locating Europe along the "evolution of world empires."

⁷ He cites the presence of a "Fanal" with no reference to the Pharos or Fort Qaitbay. Monconys, *Voyage d'Egypte*, 12.

⁸ Laurent Chevalier D'Arvieux, an envoy by the king of France to Istanbul, Aleppo, Algiers and Tripoli, was interested to establish commerce in the Orient to gain back the status of his family. He was also driven by the pilgrimage to Jerusalem that he visited during this same travel.

⁹ Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires*. (Paris: Charles Jean Baptiste Delespine, 1735), 172-213.

¹⁰ Stephen Toulmin defines the "17th century commitment to 'rationality' that was made possible by economic prosperity and reduced pressure from Church." Stephen Toulmin. "The 17th century counter-Renaissance," in *Cosmopolis*. (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 80.

The Shift to a Hellenizing Obsession

Twenty years later, the interest in Christian and Islamic Alexandria was entirely eclipsed by a rising concern for the Hellenistic vestiges, as the writings of Corneille le Brun, Benoit de Maillet, and Frederick Lewis Norden confirm. The objective, scientific and rational descriptions of d'Arvieux and Monconys, which acknowledged the wide range of Alexandria's history, was supplanted by a frenzy to validate the abundant information inherited from Classical texts and the obsession to define a single historical origin for civilization. The single sightedness of eighteenth-century European perception of history (despite their claim for using the scientific and archeological methods) saw Classical roots in any great past civilization.¹¹ Indeed, as argued by Momigliano, they were educated in skepticism towards the Classical literary historical traditions and needed to define the validity of those sources before using them as evidence. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the antiquarian circles "it became important to determine the criteria whereby tradition can be shown to be good even if it is not supported by independent evidence such as coins, inscriptions, or charters,"¹² and in "the eighteenth century nobody had yet any precise notion of the sources of Diodorus or Tacitus."¹³ However, even when verified with archeology, those sources didn't provide enough material to reconstruct the Classical history they wanted to see, a history to serve Europe's benefits. Therefore, in the same tradition than Piranesi --"purging"¹⁴ monuments in eighteenth-century Rome that do not match his perception of a glorious Roman city—Le Brun, Maillet and Norden tinted Alexandria's history to become only Hellenistic. They did not only "purge" the modern city regarded as dilapidated and insignificant to the eighteenth-century reader, but also used Classical sources and personal imagination to match their mind-image of Alexandria and fill in the gaps when archeology failed.

Above all, in Alexandria, the little archeology available, failed to provide sufficient evidence to reconstruct a Hellenistic history that would match the European imagination of the place. Indeed, the city presented very little Pharaonic, Hellenistic and Roman archaeologies. Those travelers expected to see the glory of the Classical city instead of its ruins adjoining Islamic structures. Morphologically, Alexandria of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "New Alexandria" or "Modern Alexandria" as they call it, was vastly different from its Hellenistic ancestor. And consequently, Strabo, Theocritus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, Antipater of Sidon and Achilles Tatius's literatures played a significant role in informing those eighteenth century scholars on Hellenistic Alexandria. They were probably the only sources available to reconstruct the Classical city.

¹¹ As already explored, the whirling search for an Origin attributed to one of those antique civilizations as well as the classic-centric notion of grandeur in history has been put ironically by Joseph Rykwert writing that "Antique greatness and Holy Writ were [the golden past] two guarantors, and with their help all significant remains from the past—such as Stonehenge— must be interpreted." Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, 19.

¹² Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," 297.

¹³ Ibid, 298.

¹⁴ Singh, *Piranesi Campo Marzio Plan.*, 29.

Corneille le Brun's *Voyage au Levant*, published in big folio format with several plates and fold-out engravings on Alexandria, describes and illustrates expansively the Hellenistic ruins inside the walls. He recounts the city's history from common beliefs, previous descriptions, personal extrapolations and Classical texts that he avoids mentioning. Unaware, he confuses between Pharos, the pharillon (on Ras Silsileh) and the actual Fort Qaitbay. Not surprisingly, educated in Classicism he refers to ancient sources, and refuses to regard the constructions on the isthmus as belonging to the contemporary city separate from the antique one. He only describes it as an agglomeration of houses besides the ruins and behind the customs on the great harbor.¹⁵ The Alexandria that could only exist for him is the one within the walls that he describes entirely ruined, with very few inhabited houses left, as illustrated in plate ninety six taken from the hillock near Pompey's Pillar (Figure 2).¹⁶ The engraving draws the viewers' attention to a vast field of ruins, occupying the foreground, with Pompey's Pillar and an arched ruined structure to the left. In the middle ground the fallen fortifications walls appear intercepted with dilapidated towers; they encircle earth mounts and palm trees scaled to overwhelm the few minarets and houses built on the isthmus, seen afar.

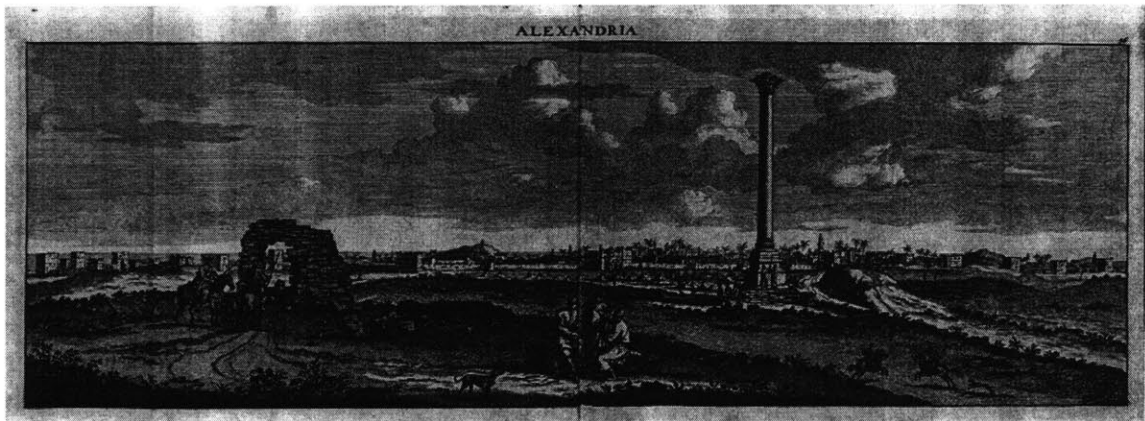


Figure 9. Corneille le Brun plate 96 picturing Alexandria from the south close to Pompey's Pillar

Benoit de Maillet is another traveler who looked at Alexandria with Classical eyes. He was the French consul to Egypt between 1692 and 1708, published his *Description de l'Égypte Contenant Plusieurs Remarques Curieuses sur la Géographie Ancienne et Moderne de ce Pays, sur les Monuments Anciens, sur les Mœurs, les Coutumes et la Religion des Habitants, sur le Gouvernement et le Commerce, sur les Animaux, les Arbres, les Plantes, &c.* in 1735. In the introduction to his *Lettre Quatrième* on Alexandria, he notifies his reader about the discrepancies between the imagined Alexandria he might have had constructed in his mind

¹⁵ "Sur le bord du grand port est la douane, auprès de laquelle il y a encore quelques maisons." Corneille Le Brun, *Voyage au Levant*. Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1714, 244.

¹⁶ "Pour ce qui regarde l'état présent de la ville d'Alexandrie, elle est par dedans presque toute ruinée et sans bâtiments n'ayant que quelques peu de maisons qui sont habitées." Le Brun, *Voyage au Levant*, 243.

through Classical sources and the actual state of the city.¹⁷ However, Maillet attempts to abide by a scientific archeological approach in describing Alexandria. His writings, as he mentions in the first page, are put together according to archeological researches he conducted himself.¹⁸ He starts his *Lettre* by describing the surrounding geography such as the Lake Mareotis and the canal, the number of its inhabitants (only during the Hellenistic period), as well as the climate. Following these geographical descriptions he vastly portrays the Hellenistic city, its ports and islands (now disappeared) without referring to any archeological evidence or literary source. And later he elaborates on the neighboring city of Tanis, and Alexandria's ancient suburbs of Nicopolis, Necropolis and Rakhotis among others.

Maillet's exhaustive twenty-page historical and geographical elaboration on the Hellenistic city that he calls "l'Ancienne Ville d'Alexandrie," as well as his description of Ancient Rakhotis, Nicopolis, Necropolis, Tanis and other towns that surrounded Alexandria at the time of the Ptolemies, could have never been recounted from archeology only, as he claims it on the first page of his *Lettre*.¹⁹ In fact, all through his *Lettre*, Maillet walks his reader through Hellenistic Alexandria drawing information from ancient sources. He situates the actual buildings in reference to the antique monuments, and refers to locations using their Hellenistic appellation, such as *Lochias* instead of Ras Silsileh; he uses the Greek word *Eunostos* to refer to the old port and *Canope* to refer to the city of Rashid. Even though he does not cite the majority of sources informing his extra-archeological knowledge on the Hellenistic city, his Classical education is quite preponderant in his oeuvre. He chose to refer to ancient authors when he mentions the city's population and describes Pharos. Accordingly, Diodorus Siculus and Seneca of Lyon's writings are consulted to inform us on the number of inhabitants in the city, as he states it along the text; however, he goes beyond this numerical information to generalize about the population of Alexandria in the first century and its intellectual and commercial prosperity.²⁰ As for Pharos, "of which only debris remain that we could see when the sea is perfectly calm is so famous that its memory will live forever in the descriptions of historians that came to us."²¹ Maillet not only acknowledges the extensive literary tradition on Pharos but also describes it from his imagination, now that the building no longer exists.

¹⁷ Benoit de Maillet. *Description de l'Égypte Contenant Plusieurs Remarques Curieuses sur la Géographie Ancienne et Moderne de ce Pays, sur les Monuments Anciens, sur les Mœurs, les Coutumes et la Religion des Habitants, sur le Gouvernement et le Commerce, sur les Animaux, les Arbres, les Plantes, &c.* (Paris : L. Genneau et J. Rollin, 1735), 119.

¹⁸ "C'est de ces recherches que j'ai faites moi même au travers des ruines autrefois si vantées que j'entreprends de vous entretenir." Ibid, 119-120.

¹⁹ Even if he does not mention the sources that alimeted his writing of history the details he provides on twenty pages of his *Lettre* cannot have been the result of archeology and personal researches as he claims it: "C'est de ces recherches que j'ai faites moi même au travers des ruines autrefois si vantées que j'entreprends de vous entretenir" Ibid, 119.

²⁰ Ibid, 123.

²¹ "Si fameux, dont il ne reste que quelques débris, qu'on aperçoit encore sous les eaux, lorsque la mer est parfaitement calme, mais dont la mémoire vivra a jamais dans les descriptions magnifiques que les historiens nous ont laissés." Ibid, 131

When physical evidence failed to supply Maillet with adequate evidence to construct his image of Alexandria, basing his description on geography, he borrowed wide-ranging information from Classical texts (even if not mentioned), and filled his description with elements from his imagination.²² He was not the only one to use such techniques. As Rupinder Singh explores in his work on *Piranesi's Campo Marzio Plan*, archeology was not codified and “each scholar was free to build his discipline anew on the basis of his own conceptual framework.”²³ Therefore, despite his claim for using archeological proofs to back up his argument, Maillet, in the same tradition than Piranesi, Montano, Peruzzi, Ligorio and even Palladio, would forgo the concern for objectivity and historical accuracy.

In comparison to his elaborate descriptions on the city's Classical past glories, Maillet dedicates only few sentences to the Christian vestiges where he attempts to locate the palace of St Catherine's father.²⁴ He disregards any vestige of the Islamic ruined city within the walls, except mosques that occupy the site of older churches such as the Attarine mosque, previously the Church of Saint Athanasius. As for the Arab walls, which are too prominent to be disregarded, they are mentioned in order to situate them as inferior to the Greeks and Roman constructions.²⁵ And the modern city on the isthmus figures in his text only to stress on its derelict constructions built from the ruins of the glorious Hellenistic city.²⁶

Reading Maillet, one is solicited to imagine Alexandria like the author, a glorious bygone city that has no significant contemporary traces. He attributes to the Hellenistic city superlatives of beauty, glory, power, commercial prosperity, magnificent architectures and flourishing intellectual life, while the actual city is only acknowledged to justify the ruinous state of the Classical one. In sum, Maillet's Alexandria is only the Classical city, which he recounts using its Hellenistic and Roman history and ruins. The physical seventeenth-century fabric of Alexandria with its commercial port activities and its inhabitant's customs, elaborated by D'Arvieux in his *Memoires* twenty years earlier, are entirely put aside. Only the ruinous walls built by the Arabs and the Hellenistic ruins and Christian sites they encompass, constitute his physical references. His Lettre, aiming at describing “the ancient and

²² On Piranesi's method for drawing the Campo Marzio Plan, Singh writes “Piranesi drew conclusions from one source and found confirmation in another.” Singh, *Piranesi Campo Marzio Plan*, 66.

²³ Ibid, 78.

²⁴ “La Plupart des gens croyent ici, que le Palais du Père de Sainte Catherine étoit autrefois bâti dans l'endroit ou les murs des briques paroissent les plus élevés; mais comme cette tradition n'a rien de certain, et qu'on n'est pas fort scrupuleux ici sur ces sortes de matières, d'autres assurent que c'étoient des bains publics.” Maillet, *Description de l'Égypte*, 141.

²⁵ “Le moindre connoisseur s'aperçoit su premier coup d'oeil qu'elles ne sont dignes de la magnificence ni des Grecs ni des Romains.” Ibid, 139.

²⁶ Ibid, 149-150.

modern city of Alexandria” as stated in its extended title, recounts solely the Classical Alexandria rather than the physical city of the end of the seventeenth century.²⁷

Differently from Corneille le Brun and Benoit de Maillet, Frederick Lewis Norden an envoy to Egypt by Christian VI king of Denmark in 1708, explored the country and gave a less polarized description of Alexandria in his *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie* published in 1755 illustrated by a number of engravings showing the city and its ports. As an Enlightenment scholar familiar with the theory of “evolutions on world empires” and concerned with establishing a single historic origin for civilization, Norden affirms the oldness of the Egyptian civilization in the preface of his book declaring that “the Egyptian boast of being one of the oldest in the universe. Indeed, few are the nations who can dispute this prerogative.”²⁸ Thereby, his writings acclaim Hellenistic Alexandria as a glorious city of antiquity and describe the Turkish town on the isthmus condescendingly. The first chapter, dealing exclusively with “Ancient Alexandria,” recounts the city’s Hellenistic history, and describes its monuments such as Pharos, Pompey’s Pillar, the Baths of Cleopatra, the cisterns as well as its Christian sites such as the Churches of Saint Marc, Saint Catherine and the column on which she has been decapitated. The second chapter, describing “New Alexandria,” does not elaborate on individual monuments there such as the Terbana mosque built in 1684, but rather generalizes that “the most beautiful temples have been converted to simple mosques, the most magnificent palaces turned into badly constructed houses and that the royal palace used as a prison for slaves.”²⁹ In sum, besides Alexandria’s commerce, that he describes elaborately mentioning the role of each of the different religious and ethnic communities, the physical fabric of New Alexandria “does not deserve a formal description” and seems only acknowledged to be brought down to the level of a “Vermin.”

²⁷ The title of the Lettre Quatrième is as follows “Description de la ville d’Alexandrie ancienne et nouvelle, des monuments qu’elle renferme, et en particulier de la Colonne de Pompée.” Maillet, *Description de l’Egypte*, 118.

²⁸ “Les Egyptiens se vantent d’être un des peuples les plus anciens de l’Univers. Peu de nations en effet pourroient leur disputer cette prérogative.” Norden, *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie*, (Copenhague: Maison Royale de Orphelins, 1755), Preface.

²⁹ “Les plus superbes temples sont changés en mosquées assez simples : les plus magnifiques palais, en de maisons d’une mauvaise construction : le siège royal est devenu une prison d’esclaves.” Norden, Frederick Louis. *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie*, 27.

V

Hellenistic Trend and the Imposition of a Decline Paradigm

To reconstruct Hellenistic Alexandria in literature by the way of archeological evidence, Classical sources and personal imagination, Corneille le Brun, Benoit de Maillet and Frederick Lewis Norden had to ignore the Ottoman city and consider it declining, providing no interest to the European reader. Maillet's *Lettre Quatrième* starts by describing Alexandria as a mount of uniform ruins dating from the Hellenistic period. He warns his reader on an inevitable disappointment when visiting the city, no longer echoing its glorious Classical ancestor.¹ It is only after twenty pages that Maillet cites Modern Alexandria and describes it briefly in the last three pages of the *Lettre*, as the only inhabited portion of the city situated outside the walls. He neither describes the urban fabric of Modern Alexandria nor its inhabitants and commercial activities, but only locates it geographically on the isthmus to distinguish it from the ruined Hellenistic city inside the walls. He ends his *Lettre Quatrième* with a deceptive tone, like he started it, by mentioning the bygone glorious Alexandria that is now destroyed by those moors that populate the isthmus and who destroyed the ancient city's palaces and amphitheatres.²

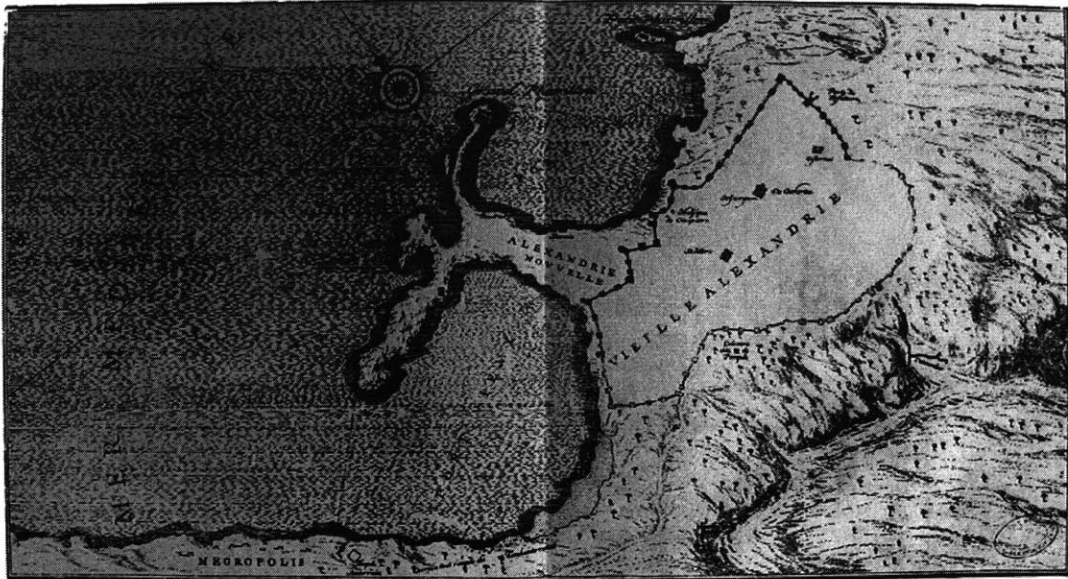
¹ “Non, l’Alexandrie de nos jours n’est plus cette belle, florissante Ville d’Alexandrie...” Maillet, *Description de l’Egypte*, 119.

² Maillet, *Description de l’Egypte*, 150.

Those deceptive and condescending descriptions of contemporary Alexandria, and the deserted and declining images of the intra-muros city, are surprisingly only encountered in the literary descriptions. They contradict the engravings included in their same publication. Indeed, the illustrations do not hide the commercial activities, and show the eastern and western harbors crowded with vessels trading with Istanbul and the western Mediterranean. Thus, they attest on the existence of an inhabited city on the isthmus with a prosperous commerce. With this evidence and discrepancies between image and text, this chapter argues that the city was not declining but rather forcibly made so in order to appropriate its Hellenistic history, judged mishandled by the local Turkish population.

Literary Discrepancy and Pictorial Proofs

Norden's *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie*, reveals the conflicting mentality of eighteenth century scholars concerned simultaneously to apply a scientific method and to construct a history of Classicism to match the European agenda. Le Brun, Norden and Maillet, regarded Alexandria only to be the ruinous city inside the walls, and therefore could not avoid contradiction when describing the city's commerce. Hence, from one side, Norden calls the New Alexandria on the isthmus a "Vermin coming out of the mud or dust that has been infested by the Coran;" while from the other, he describes it as an active port monopolized by a group of foreigners, and a Jewish merchant class originally from Istanbul, Portugal or Livourne, who trade with Cairo, Aleppo, Istanbul, Tunis, Tripoli and other Mediterranean cities of the Levant.³ Besides his lack of appreciation for the new city,



Carte particulière de la Vieille et de la Nouvelle Alexandrie, et des Ports.

Figure 10. Norden's map showing the Old and New Alexandria.

³ Norden, *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie*, 29-30.

he describes it through its geography, architecture, social structure and commercial activities, as an active link in the chain of Mediterranean commerce.⁴ Le Brun, in his turn, cites that between June 18th and 30th, eleven vessels are recorded leaving for England, Istanbul, Marseilles and Spain, attesting the role Alexandria plays in the Mediterranean commerce with Europe and the Ottoman Empire.⁵ As for Benoit de Maillet, his writings similarly contradict the decline he was ascribing to Alexandria in the eighteenth century. He indirectly acknowledges the European commerce with Egypt through Alexandria, by complaining about the miserable state of the eastern harbor where European vessels are restricted to berth.⁶

The maps that complement Norden's description are accurate, for they are based on two other maps commissioned by French King Louis XIV, and drawn by the highly skilled pilots Christian Melchion and Antoine Massy in 1699.⁷ Norden's first map is a minimalist representation of Alexandria specifying only the location of New Alexandria vis-à-vis the old one and the port (Figure 1). Its selectivity is in concordance with his text that only locates the big and small pharillons, Cleopatra's needles, Pompey's Pillar, the Rosetta Gate near an underground cistern, the Churches of Saint Catherine, Saint Georges and Saint Marc, and the customs' building on the isthmus. On the other hand, his second map superposes the circular plan of the eastern harbor with its elevation all along the shore. It is a technical map indicating underwater levels and reference points in the eastern port (Figure 2). This accurately drawn plan reveals Alexandria on the isthmus crowded with houses and mosques in addition to the gunpowder tower and the custom's jetty. It shows clearly the inhabited character of New Alexandria to the right, as compared to the ruinous aspect of the walled city to the left.

In addition to Norden's two maps, the engravings illustrating his *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie* as well as those drawn by Louis-Francois Cassas in 1795 and published in 1799 in his illustrated three-volume

⁴ "La vaste étendue de l'ancienne ville est bornée dans la nouvelle, à une petite langue de terre entre les deux ports. Les plus superbes temples sont changés en mosquées assez simples ; les plus magnifiques palais, en des maisons de mauvaise construction ; le siège royal est devenu une prison d'esclaves ; un peuple opulent et nombreux a cédé la place à un petit nombre d'étrangers intéressés, et à une troupe de misérables, qui sont les valets de ceux dont ils dépendent ; une place autrefois si célèbre par l'étendue de son commerce n'est plus qu'un simple lieu d'embarquement ; enfin ce n'est pas un phœnix, qui renaît de ses cendres, c'est tout au plus une vermine, sortie de la boue, ou de la poussière dont l'Alcoran a infecté tout le pays." Norden, *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie*, 27.

⁵ Le Brun *Voyage au Levant*, 245.

⁶ "Alors il faudrait nécessairement que les Turcs permettent à nos bâtiments d'aller mouiller dans le vieux port, ou qu'ils renoncent à notre commerce." Maillet, *Description de l'Egypte*, 133.

⁷ It seems that the French had a particular and continuing interest in the cartography of the ports of Alexandria during the 17th, the 18th and the 19th century. Harry Tzalas. *The two ports of Alexandria as shown on plans and maps from the 14th century to the time of Muhammad Ali*. Hellenic Electronic Center and Harry E. Tzalas, 1998.

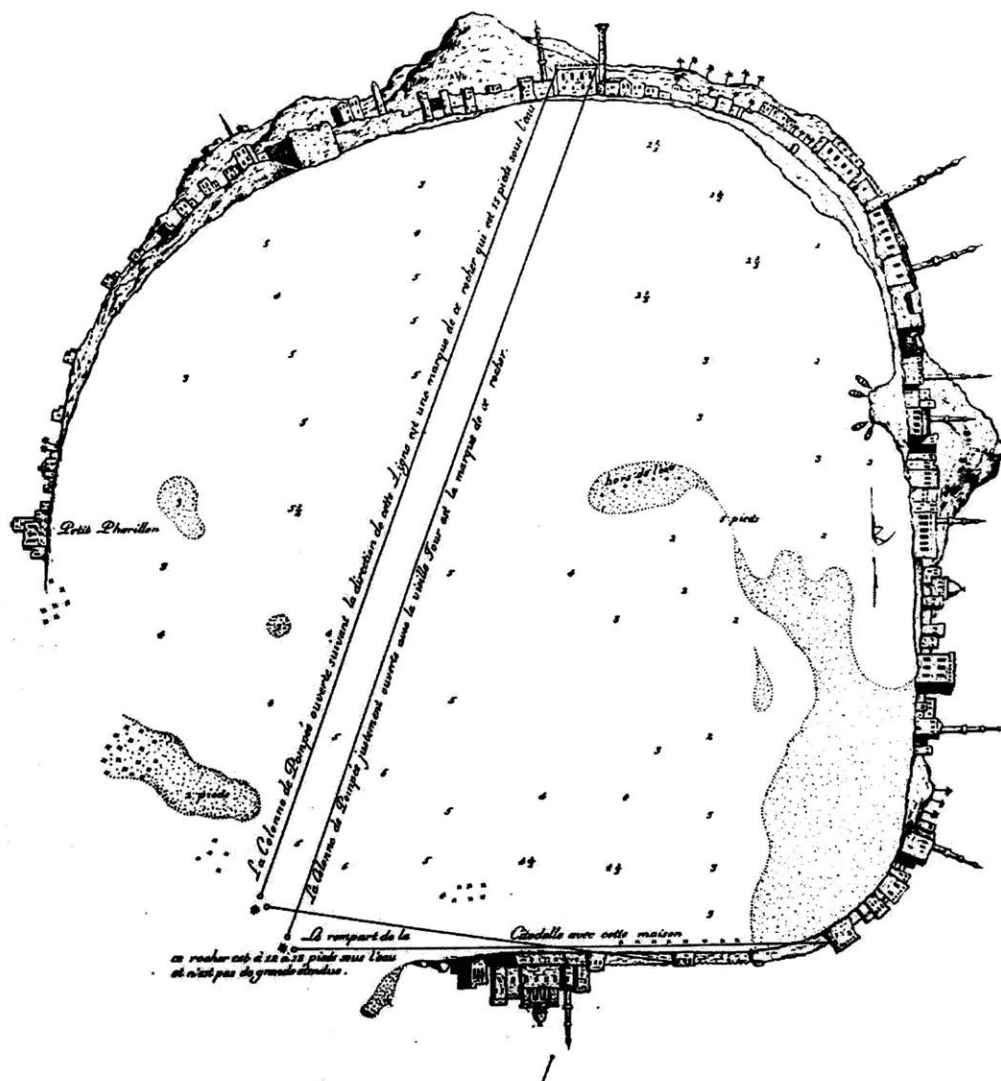
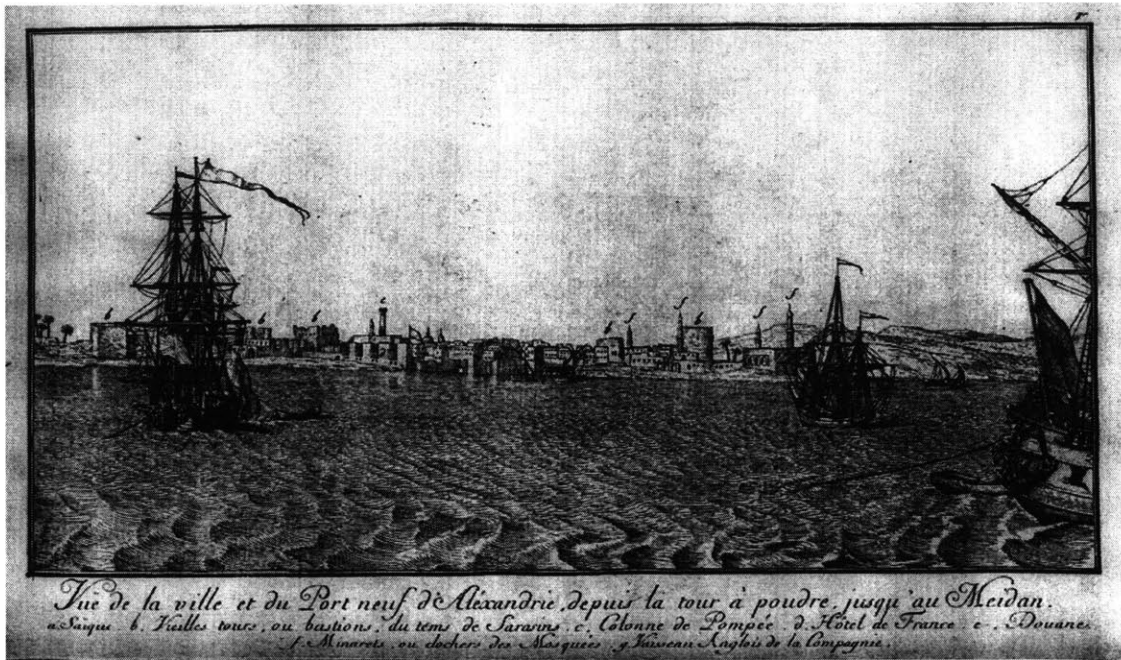
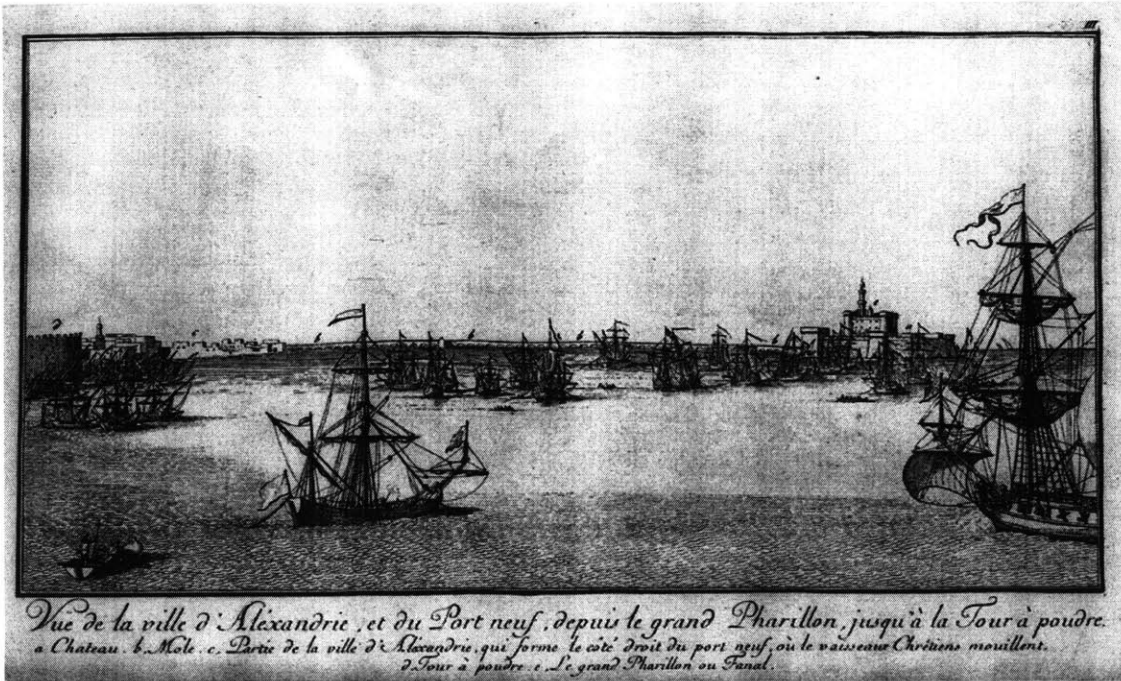
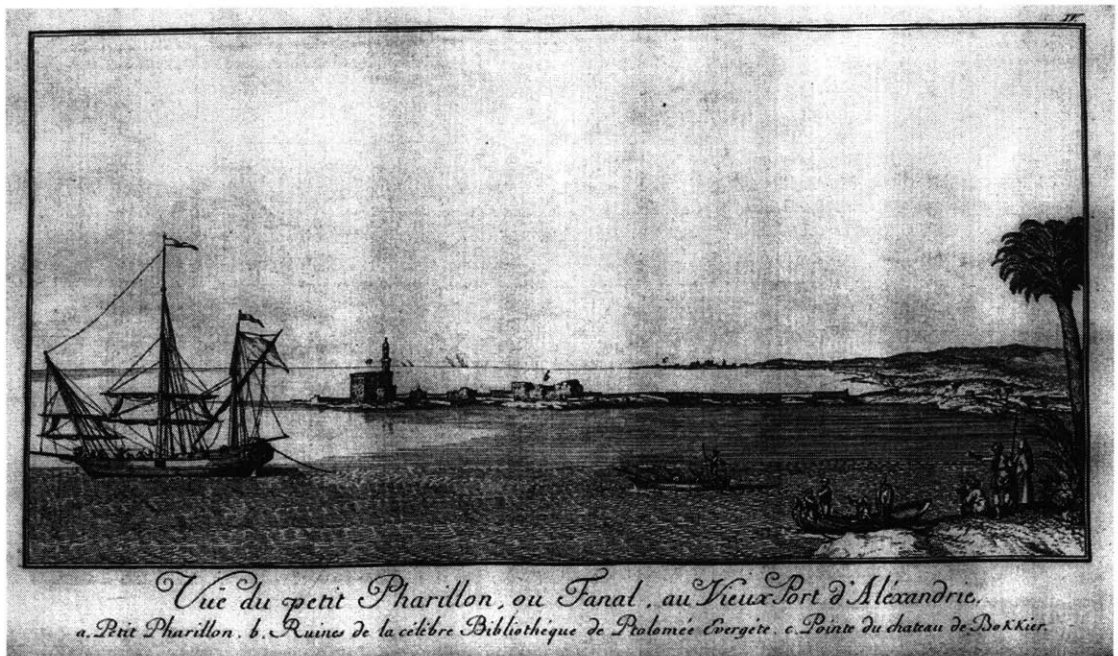
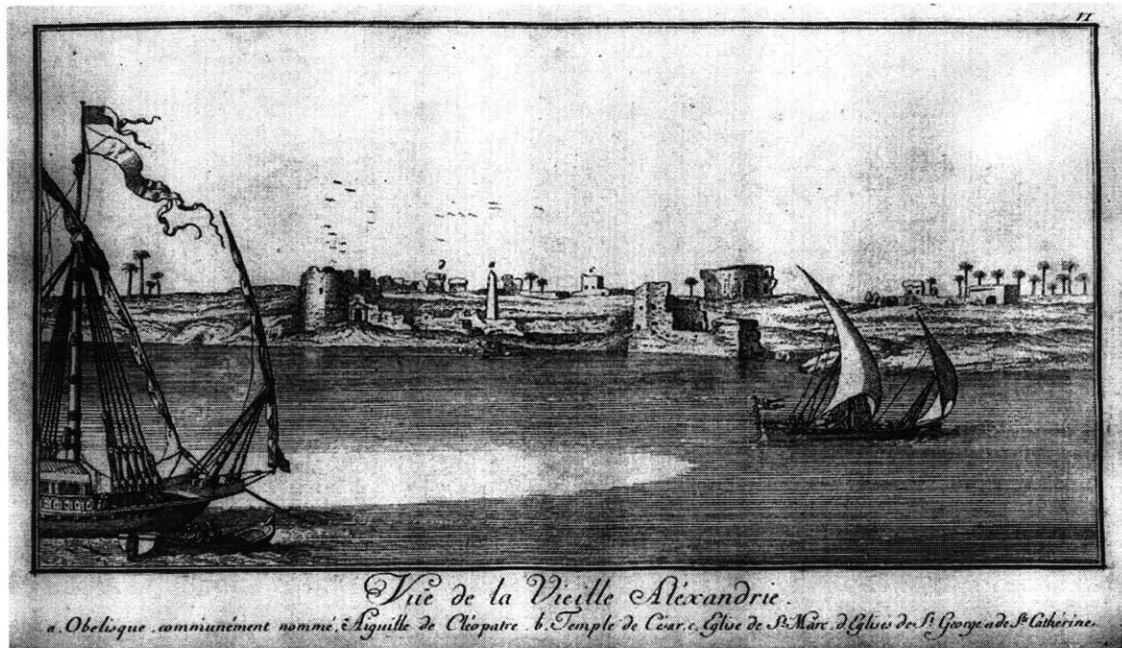


Figure 11. Norden's elevation plan showing a panoramic view of the eastern harbor

Voyage pittoresque de la Syrie, de la Phénicie, de la Palaestine et de la Basse-Égypte, show the eastern harbor in 1708 and 1785 respectively --where Christian vessels are allowed to berth-- filled with European vessels of all sizes and provenances trading with Istanbul and the Mediterranean European cities. Norden's plates III, V, VI and IV (in that specific order) form together a panoramic view of the eastern harbor depicting, from right to left, Fort Qaitbay accessed by an arcaded bridge, the gunpowder tower, the Islamic city on the isthmus with minarets, Pompey's pillar, the French consular house or fundoq, the custom house, Cleopatra's Needle, Caesar's temple, the churches of Saint Marc, Saint Georges and Saint Catherine as well as the ruins of the old library on Ras Silsilch, preceding the small Pharillon (Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6).





Figures 12, 13, 14 and 15. Norden's engravings showing the commercial activities on the eastern harbor.

Similarly, Cassas's drawings, "Vue prise de la Butte de Sainte Catherine a Alexandrie" (Figure 7) and "l'Obélisque de Cleopatre," (Figure 8) represent the ruinous walled city in the foreground, and the

crowded eastern harbor with new Alexandria's constructions in the background. His "Vue d'Alexandrie prise du côté du vieux port" (Figure 9) shows also in the background, behind the isthmus, the European vessels in the eastern harbor in addition to the presence of Ottomans boats in the western harbor attesting of the Ottoman's trade in Alexandria. ⁸

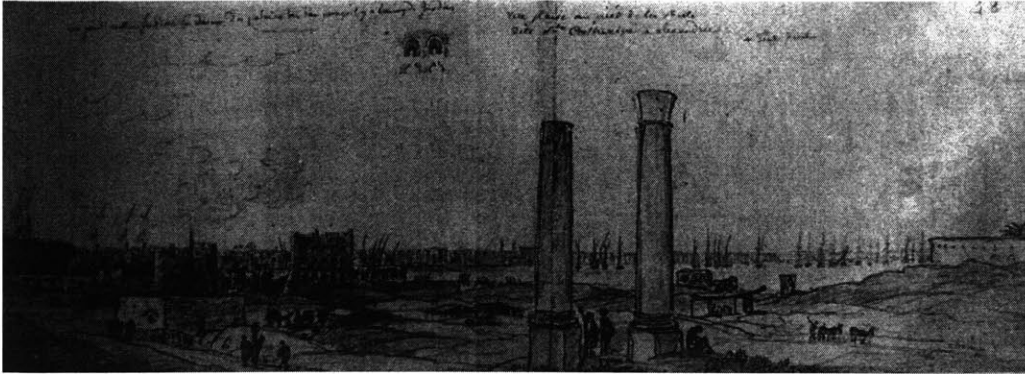


Figure 16. Cassas's *Vue prise de la Butte de Sainte Catherine a Alexandria*

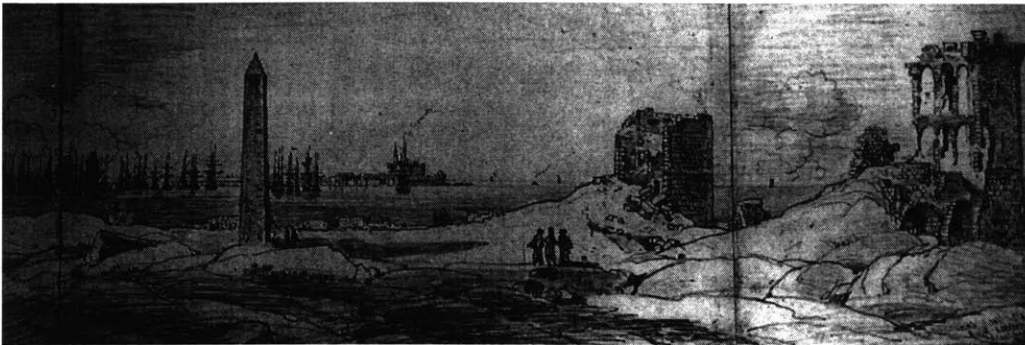


Figure 17. Cassas's *l'Obelisque de Cleopatre*

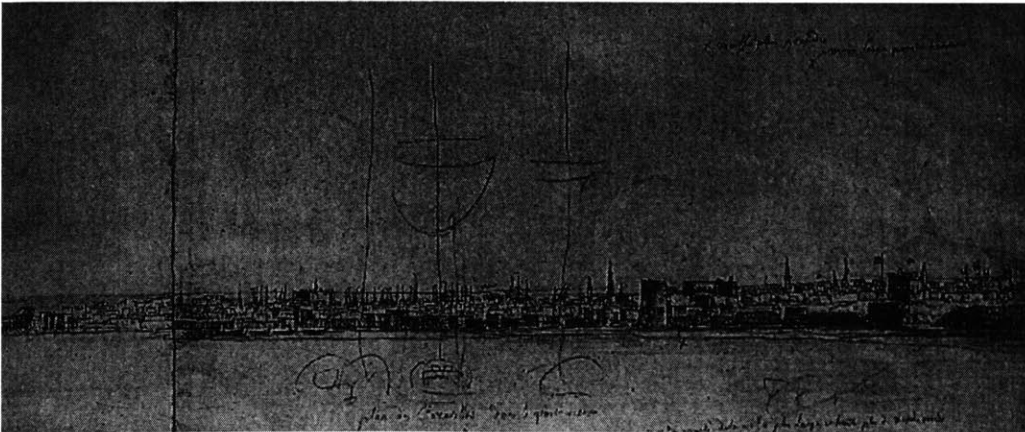


Figure 18. Cassas's *Vue d'Alexandrie prise du côté du vieux port*

⁸ In spite of Cassas's tendency to monumentalize the objects of his drawings, the Islamic city is not overwhelmed by the gigantic ruins in the foreground.

Furthermore, Corneille le Brun's literature which neglected entirely the new city, and described old Alexandria uniquely as a field of ruins, contradicts the city represented in his plate ninety-seven illustrating (Figure 10). Regardless of the large amount of ruins inside the walls pictured in the foreground, prominent to the viewer's eye, and the absence of the city on the isthmus, this engraving shows numerous vessels of different sizes in the eastern port behind, which reflect the Alexandrian commerce.



Figure 19. *Corneille le Brun's plate 87*

A study of Alexandria in the eighteenth century cannot be complete without looking at the reports of Comte de Volney who visited Egypt and Syria in 1782 and 1783 and published *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* in 1787. His description of cities, reputed to be highly rational, scientific and therefore accurate, have been structured along a pre-established questionnaire that divided his study of places into "Etat Physique" and "Etat Politique." Contrary to his forbearers, he borrows no information from ancient sources and relies solely on his research and the facts he saw and recorded. His analysis of Alexandria ignores the common beliefs and imaginations borrowed and elaborated by previous authors to match their own perception of the city. Moreover, his attentive eye recognizes the discrepancies between his predecessor's engravings illustrating monuments and the deceiving reality.⁹ Volney describes the architecture, social and commercial activities of city on the isthmus. The ruins inside and outside the walls are depicted in their physical aspect with no historical attributions and further interpretations. In the "Etat Physique de l'Egypte," he mentions the crowds in Alexandria's ports and markets, its abundance in products and its role as an important commercial port city.¹⁰ It

⁹ "Ces noms ont de la majesté; mais les objets vus en original perdent d'illusion des gravures." Volney, Comte de. *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie*. (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1959), 27.

¹⁰ His report on Egypt and Syria was divided in two sections related to two different questionnaires: the first tackles the "état physique du pays" dealing with geography, nature of soil, climate, and natural resources; while

is, he says, the door of all goods leaving Egypt to the Mediterranean except the rice from Damietta. He adds that Europeans have trading posts and always see vessels from Marseille, Livourne, Venice, Ragusa and the states of the Grand Lord [the Ottoman Sultan].¹¹ Indeed, the commerce of Alexandria developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the rising demand on coffee from Yemen and the increasing consumption of tobacco. These new trades, in addition to the usual commerce of silk, cotton, pepper, ginger, spice, Arabic gum, leather and perfume crowded the exchange activities between Alexandria and the Mediterranean cities to the extent that Ottoman ships were no more sufficient, and therefore assisted by European ships. Jean Yves Empereur reports that 1172 ships have berthed in the harbor of Alexandria in 1782 coming from Salonica, Istanbul, Tunis, Izmir and other European cities.¹²

The ruinous image of the walled city was prevalent in the eighteenth century publications, willfully monumentalized and hence, crushing the inhabited Ottoman town marginal to the European interest. In fact, the travelers and royal envoys mentioned earlier, regardless of their methods to elevate and reconstruct Hellenistic Alexandria, needed to regard the new or modern Alexandria as a declining city in an attempt to repatriate its vestiges and appropriate its Hellenistic and Roman history. As has been developed and explained earlier, the Enlightenment scholars in Europe were debating the methods to appropriate the history and heritage of the great Classical civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome, claiming to be their legitimate inheritors. In this frenzy, inherited by Maillet Norden, le Brun, or Volney, through their upbringing, they were attempting to recuperate the history of Hellenistic Alexandria to an already established claim. They could not see in the Arabs or Ottomans potential heirs of Classicism, but a fallen civilization that destroyed the glorious heritage of Classicism. Indeed, Maillet describes Modern Alexandria as a fallen city built by the Arabs and blames the Arab conquest and its occupation in 642 AD for destroying the city of Alexander.¹³ For him, those Arabs have no appreciation and respect for Classical vestiges such as Cleopatra's needles and Pompey's pillar which should therefore be transported to Europe.¹⁴

the second tackles the "état politique du pays" dealing with issues like population, agriculture in relation to geography, industry, commerce, government and administration.

¹¹ "Dans son état moderne, Alexandrie est l'entrepôt d'un commerce assez considérable. Elle est la porte de toutes les denrées qui sortent de l'Égypte vers la méditerranée, les riz de Damiat exceptés. Les Européens y ont des comptoirs, ou des facteurs traitent de nos marchandises par échange. On y trouve toujours des vaisseaux de Marseille, de Livourne, de Venise, de Raguse et des états du Grand Seigneur ; mais l'hivernage y est dangereux." Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie*, 27.

¹² Empereur. *Alexandria*, 79.

¹³ "Elle ne commence à déchoir de son premier éclat, que lorsque les Arabes s'emparèrent de ce beau Royaume... les palais et les anciens monuments, dont toute l'Égypte était remplie, non seulement ils négligèrent de les entretenir ; ils les détruisirent pour employer les matériaux à élever des mosquées et à bâtir de mauvaises maison, ou plutôt de misérables cabanes qu'il préféreraient à ces magnifiques palais." Maillet, *Description de l'Égypte*, 138.

¹⁴ "Après l'idée que je viens de donner de ce monument, peut-on s'empêcher d'avouer, que c'est le plus grand dommage du monde, qu'il soit entre les mains de gens qui ne connoissent si peu le mérite?" Ibid, 147.

Architecture prosperity

Besides the literary and pictorial evidence revealing the commercial activities of Alexandria in the eighteenth century, architectural evidence testify on its prosperity during the Ottoman rule. The decline attributed to Alexandria during the eighteenth century by the European scholars mentioned above is conflicting with the erection of numerous funduqs and major religious architectural patronages in the city along the eastern harbor. The funduqs functioned as consular houses and lodging places for the foreign merchants and travelers of each nationality and confirm the commercial activities with the different European nations. They are cited neither by Maillet in his *Lettre Quatrième* who was interested in recreating the Hellenistic city, nor by Norden even though he details the city's social and economic system. But, the French funduq is mentioned by Laurent d'Arvieux and by Gabriel Bremond who visited Alexandria in 1643 and who writes about four funduqs: two for the French, one for the Venetians and one for the Genovese.¹⁵



Figure 20. *Terbana Mosque seen from Faransa Street*

Major mosques and commercial urban complexes built on the isthmus at the end of the seventeenth and along the eighteenth century, further confirm the commercial prosperity of the city, its growing number of inhabitants and its role as a major stop on the pilgrimage route from North Africa to Mecca. Terbana mosque was built in 1684 by the Maghrebi merchant Ibrahim Terbana to serve as a

¹⁵ D'Arvieux, *Memoires*, 181 ; Gabriel de Bremond. *Voyage en Egypte de 1643-1645*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d'Archéologie orientale, 1974), 26.

resting place for the Maghrebi pilgrims on their way to Mecca (Figure 11).¹⁶ The mosque occupies an entire city block along Faransa Street previously called Ras al-Tin Street. The structure comprises an elevated prayer hall, ground floor shops and a public water fountain located along the commercial Faransa Street. The prayer hall is situated on the second floor above the series of commercial shops which are destined to support the mosque with the revenues and rent they generate. The prayer hall is accessed from Faransa Street by an external staircase preceded by a high portal (Figure 12). It is

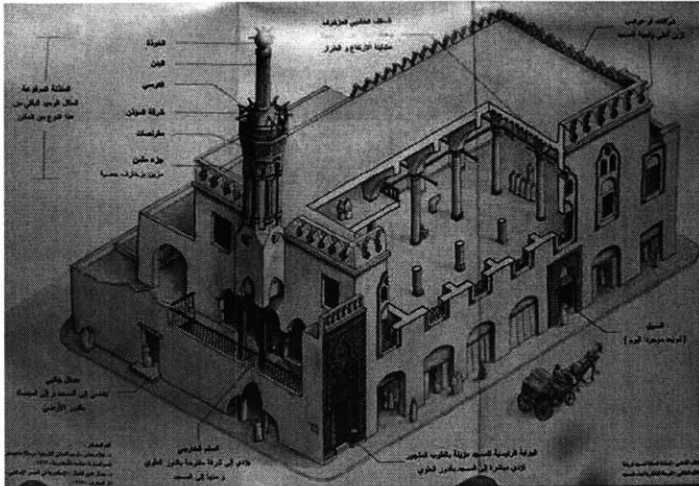


Figure 21. Axonometric view of Terbana Mosque.

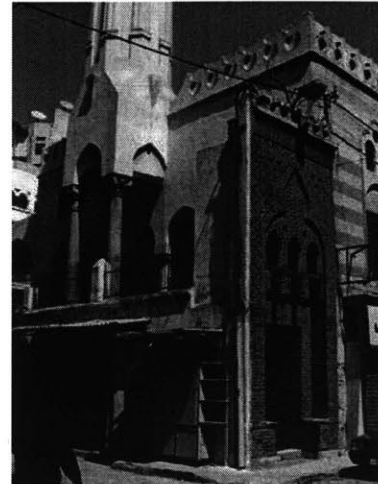


Figure 22. Portal and Minaret

decorated with a lobed arch built in bricks painted in black and red, in the Ottoman delta style mosques (Figure 13).¹⁷ The prayer hall measures three hundred and fifty square meters and has two rows of columns running parallel along the axis linking the entrance to the mihrab. They support four rows of arches carrying wooden beams (Figure 14). The mihrab wall and the main entrance of the prayer hall are decorated with colored Kishani glazed tiles displaying geometric and floral motifs (Figures 15, 16). The minaret is situated above the entrance staircase forming a projecting porch before the mosque formal entry porch. This elevated minaret is supported on two free standing columns from one side, and the porch archway from the other. In short, the significant size of the mosque, its special layout on two floors accommodating ground floor shops, and its elaborate decorations attest of the numerous pilgrims and Muslim inhabitants in Alexandria, the wealth of its patron, and the prosperous commerce in the city at the time of its erection.

¹⁶ Shayyal, *Al-Iskandariyya fi 'Asr al-Islami*, 1997.

¹⁷ In the brochure "Terbana mosque" it is mentioned that this architectural appellation refers to the different mosques in similar architectural languages built during the Ottoman period that could be found in the cities of the Egyptian delta. This style bears resemblance with some North African patterns probably brought by the merchants that settled in Alexandria, Rosetta and Damietta. "Terbana Mosque" published by (Muntada al-Hifaz 'Ala al-Turath,) 2004.



Figure 23. *Terbana Mosque entrance decoration.*



Figure 24. *Terbana Mosque, Mihrab*

Terbana mosque is not the only major construction within the Ottoman city to testify of its prosperity and trading economy. Abdel Kader al-Shorbaghi mosque built in 1757 follows the same typology. Through its spacious prayer hall, elaborate decoration and ground floor commercial shops, it reveals the city's prosperity during the second half of the eighteenth century, when Norden, Cassas and Volney visited Alexandria. The mosque is located one block away from Terbana Mosque, along al-Nokrashi Street previously called al-Gumruk Street (the Custom's street), another commercial artery of the city, unchanged from the eighteenth century, running parallel to Faransa Street. The mosque is accessed from the street though a lobed arched doorway preceding the open air staircase which leads to the prayer hall situated on the second floor above commercial shops (Figure 17). Similarly to Terbana mosque, the prayer hall has a long rectangular plan with two rows of columns

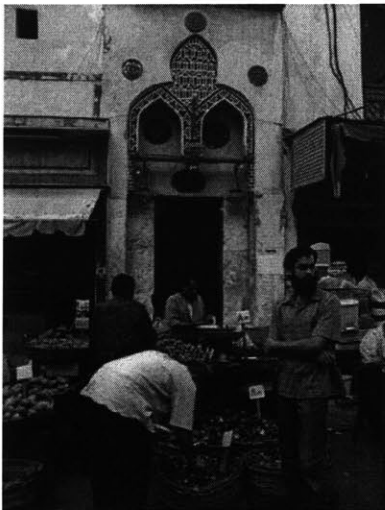


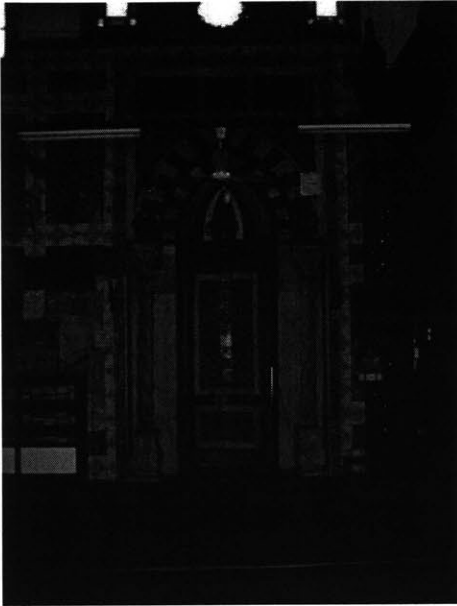
Figure 25. *Portal of al-Shorbaghi Mosque,*



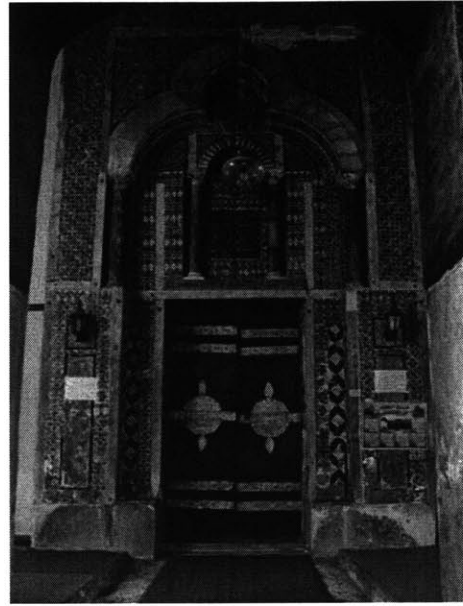
Figure 26. *Prayer hall of al-Shorbaghi Mosque looking towards mihrab*

supporting transversal arches, the mihrab and the entrance walls are covered with Kishani decorative tiles (Figures 26, 18, 19, 29). The prayer hall gives onto the street below through an arched gallery spanning the entire street façade (Figure 30). In addition to the elevated prayer hall and ground floor

shops, a caravanserail, named Wakalat al-Shorbaghi, adjacent to the mosque, supports it financially. Indeed, behind the mosque to the east, is a square structure composed of a central courtyard surrounded by rooms on two floors serving as shops, storage spaces and sleeping rooms for merchants and pilgrims (Figures 201, 21). Hence, the erection of Al-Shorbaghi wakala and mosque in the eighteenth century confirms the city's prosperous commerce and its religious importance.



Figures 27 Tiled decoration on the Mibrab



Figures 27 Tiled decoration on the porch facades

In addition to Terbana and Shorbaghi mosques whose complexes combine religious and commercial functions, a third mosque dedicated to the Algerian Saint Sidi Abu al-Abbas al-Morsi and built also on the isthmus, attest of the city's growing population and its role as a stop on the route to Mecca. In fact, the existing fifteenth century enclosure was enlarged in 1775 by Sheikh Abu al-Hasan Ali ben Abdallah al-Maghrebi to accommodate the growing number of believers --merchants or pilgrims-- at the end of the eighteenth century. The patron's name indicates his North African origin and alludes for a wealthy Algerian community in the city as well as a lively connection between Alexandria and the Maghrebi pilgrims. In addition to al-Morsi mosque, Abdel Latif mosque built in the Ottoman city during the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century adds to the evidence on the city's prosperous commerce, numerous religious endowments and growing Muslim inhabitants and visitors.¹⁸

¹⁸ Empeur, *Alexandria*, 76.



Figure 29. *al-Shorbaghi mosque façade detail*

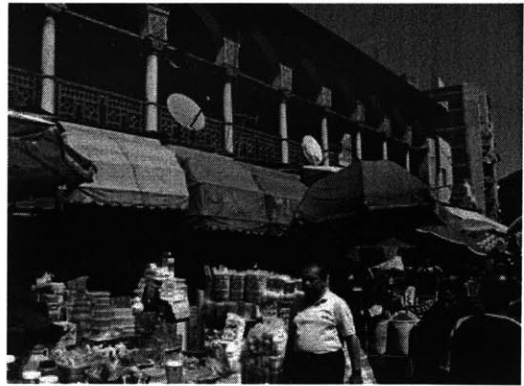


Figure 30. *Arcaded façade of al-Shorbaghi mosque*

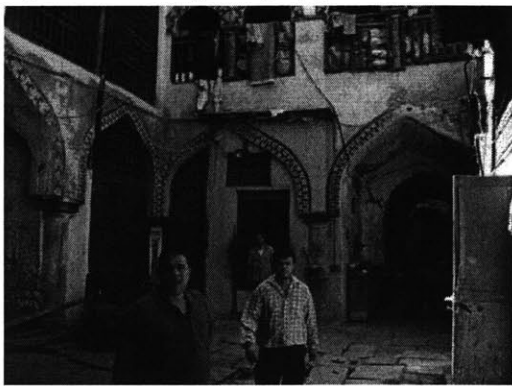


Figure 31. *Wakalat al-Shorbaghi.*



Figure 32. *Wakalat al-Shorbaghi*

These mosques have never been described or illustrated by European scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, these Islamic constructions triggered the fury of Enlightenment scholars such as Benoit de Maillet, Frederick Lewis Norden and Comte de Volney, for they were built with recuperated stones, columns and capitals from the ruins of the Hellenistic intra-muros city. The courtyard of Wakalat al-Shorbaghi has several granite Classical columns supporting the second floor, and Terbana mosque's prayer hall and minaret are supported by granite and marble ones topped by capitals recuperated from inside the city walls (Figure 22). However, the construction detail that must have provoked their highest fury was the column supporting the porch entrance where the shaft stands inversely on the capital itself (Figure 23). Reacting to the Islamic constructions they saw, Maillet, Norden and Volney had all reasons to blame the destruction of Hellenistic Alexandria on the Arabs and Muslims and to ignore those mosques, considered sacrilege. They saw the Arabs as peasants and Bedouins who have no respect for urban values and who neglected or destroyed the great palaces of Hellenistic Alexandria to recuperate construction materials for the erection of mosques, bad houses and miserable "cabanas," which they value over.¹⁹

¹⁹ "Comme ces peuples accoutumés a vivre sous des tentes a la campagne n'avaient aucun goût pour les villes, qu'il méprisoient et regardoient comme des prisons, pour les palais et les anciens monuments dont l'Egypte étoit remplie, non seulement ils négligèrent de les entretenir; ils les détruisirent même pour en employer les matériaux a élever des Mosquées, et a bâtir de mauvaises maisons, ou plutôt de misérable cabanes qu'ils



Figure 33. *al-Shorbaghi mosque, capital detail.*



Figure 34. *al-Shorbaghi mosque, column detail*

However, some of those mosques such as al-Shorbaghi and Abdel Latif mosques, were documented later by Pascal Coste, a French architect interested in the Islamic heritage of Egypt, who resided there between 1817 and 1827 (Figure 35, 36). Their representation on plate sixty six in Coste's highly detailed and valuable survey of Egypt's Islamic monuments entitled *Architectures Arabes ou Monuments du Kaire* published in 1835, informs us of their importance as Islamic monuments at the time. It is only lately, during the last decade (1990) that Alexandria would be recognized as an important port in the Ottoman Empire. Jean Yves Empereur, referring to Islamic sources and local historians, attests the commercial prosperity of Alexandria in the Ottoman period. He writes: "Ottoman Alexandria was a diminished city yet relatively wealthy city. There was competition from Rosetta and Damietta, but no other Egyptian port could deal with as many ships as Alexandria."²⁰

préfèrent a ces magnifiques palais." Maillet, *Description de l'Egypte*, 138 ; "La vaste étendue de l'ancienne ville est bornée dans la nouvelle, à une petite langue de terre entre les deux ports. Les plus superbes temples sont changés en mosquées assez simples: les plus magnifiques palais, en des maisons de mauvaise construction ; le siège royal est devenu une prison d'esclaves." Norden, *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie*, 27 ; "L'esprit turc est de ruiner les travaux du passé et l'espoir de l'avenir." Volney, *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie*, 28..

²⁰ Empereur, *Alexandria*, 79.

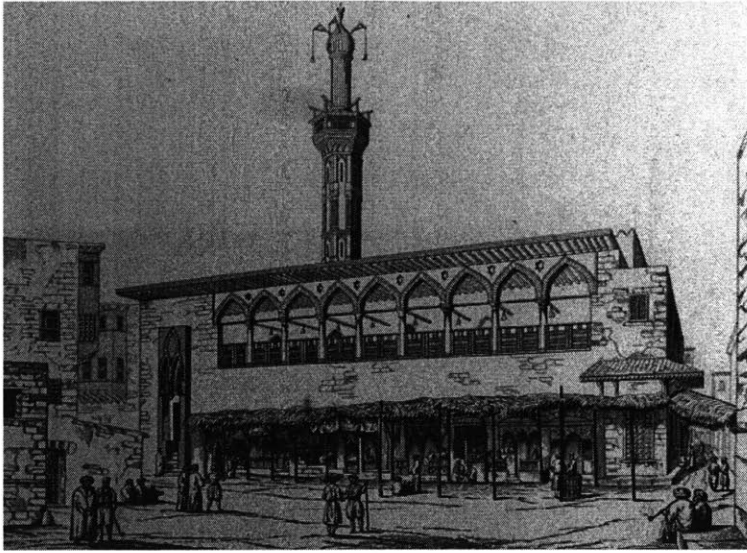


Figure 35. *al-Shorbaghi Mosque* illustrated by *Pascal Coste*

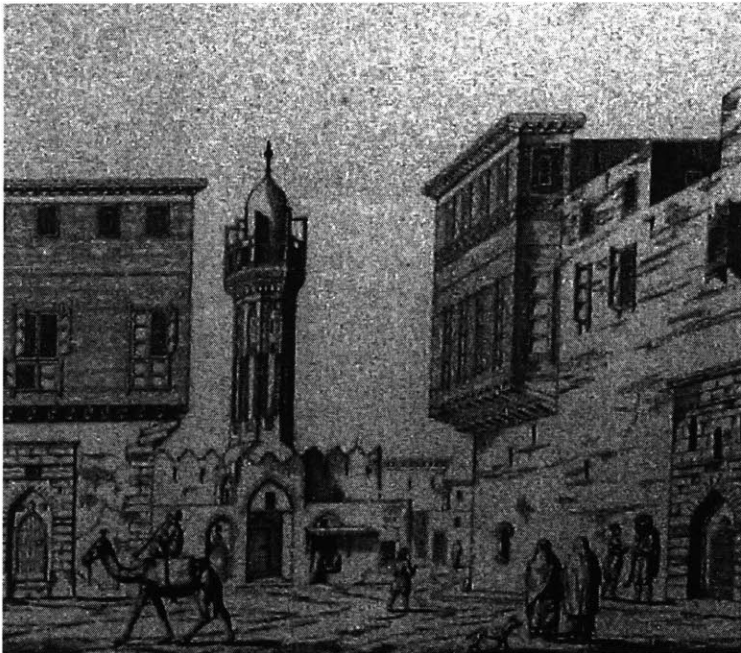


Figure 36 *Abdel Latif Mosque* illustrated by *Pascal Coste*

VI

Hellenizing Alexandria

One hundred and fifty years of travel writing, from Balthasar de Monconys to Comte de Volney, strived to Hellenize Alexandria. Those travelers, educated in Classicism, did not operate in a historical and geographical vacuum. They explored Alexandria and recuperated its history to an already established claim. They saw in Alexandria a perfect candidate to support the historical theory of the succession of world empires, for its past embraced the three ancient Classical civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome. In this process, they overlooked eleven centuries of Islamic history and looked down upon the Ottoman city built outside the Hellenistic walls. In their writings, they simultaneously glorified Alexandria's Classical heritage and made decline its eighteenth century commercial port. In fact, mirroring Europe's incessant quest for a Classical origin, they attempted to repatriate the Islamic Alexandria and position its history and civilization closer to the occident.

Having studied the eighteenth-century European scholarship on Alexandria, the thesis will finally argue that this period of unconsolidated knowledge on archeology and messy discourse that was going on in Europe and reflected in Alexandria, was supplanted abruptly by a linear vision of history unanimously accepted with the start of colonialism and the rise of European empires. In fact, this change would first emerge in Egypt after its conquest by Napoleon in 1798 and the unprecedented publication of *Description de L'Egypte* by Napoleon savants in the beginning of the nineteenth century. "The *Description* belongs to the Enlightenment" attests Nasser Rabbat; however it had a political agenda that differentiates it from

the publications that preceded it. It marks a shift of knowledge, scholarship and politics, for it associates knowledge to power, (as explored by Edward Said in *Orientalism* published in 1979) and launches colonialism. This new political dimension added to the Enlightenment scholarship, is clearly stated in the dedication note to Napoleon written by the French scholar Vivant Denon in his *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte*. The dedication summarizes the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thoughts and carries the political agenda of the Napoleonic Invasion and its *Description de l’Egypte*. It concisely ties the Napoleon’s Empire to the illustrious Classical ones of Egypt, and Rome and positions Napoleon as a reviver of “Sesostris” and “Mendès.” The dedication reads: “To join the glow of your name to the splendor of Egypt’s monuments, is to tie the sumptuous glories of our era to the fabulous historical epochs; is to warm up the remains of the Sesostris and Mendes, who were conquerors like you, benefactors like you.”¹

The image of Napoleon as conqueror and benefactor is clearly illustrated in the front piece of the *Description de l’Egypte* entitled “Perspective de l’Egypte, d’Alexandrie a Philae” (Figure 37). It is highly symbolic and reveals the imperial political aspirations of Napoleon coupled with the Enlightenment European attempt to appropriate the Classical civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome, and situate them in one single evolutionary direction. The plate is composed of a frame containing a perspective view of the ancient world at large. The frame is decorated with a frieze running around the view and depicts on the upper side, Napoleon like Alexander, a Greek warrior in his chariot; he is shown preceded by the Roman Eagle and repressing an Arab army adjacent to a lying man symbolizing “Father Nile.”² Napoleon is followed by a series of women, drawn in a high Classical style similar to the Athenian maidens; behind the maidens stands Pompey’s Pillar. The lower side of the frieze illustrates Napoleon’s seal in the Roman tradition, flanked by a procession of kings of the East: Indian, Persian, Arabian, and Abyssinian, converging on Napoleon’s throne and lowering their weapons in submission. The sides of the frieze represent a superposition of banners of six Roman legions on each side, over a heap of weapons of vanquished armies. The frame is topped by an egyptianized cornice decorated with lotus flower patterns, and carved with Isis wings flanking the sun disk of Amon-Ra. The perspective view displays the Pharaonic, Greek and Roman archaeology of Egypt, all situated along a single road vanishing in the horizon. The front piece bluntly reveals Napoleon’s aspirations to equal not only the Roman emperors but also the Egyptian kings and Alexander the Great. Napoleon is pictured as the conqueror and the unifier of East and West. He is represented as a Greek warrior ruling the eastern civilizations and, similarly to Alexander, adopting their traditions and beliefs for his figure on the chariot is put under the sun disk and protected by

¹ “Joindre l’éclat de votre nom a la splendeur des monuments d’Egypte, c’est rattacher les fastes glorieux de notre siècle aux temps fabuleux de l’histoire; c’est réchauffer les cendres des *Sesostris* et des *Mendès*, comme vous conquérants, comme vous bienfaiteurs.” Denon, Dominique Vivant. *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte*. (Paris: Le Promueur editions Gallimard), 1998, 27.

² The lying man is very close to the Roman sculpture of “Father Nile” now in the Vatican Museum.

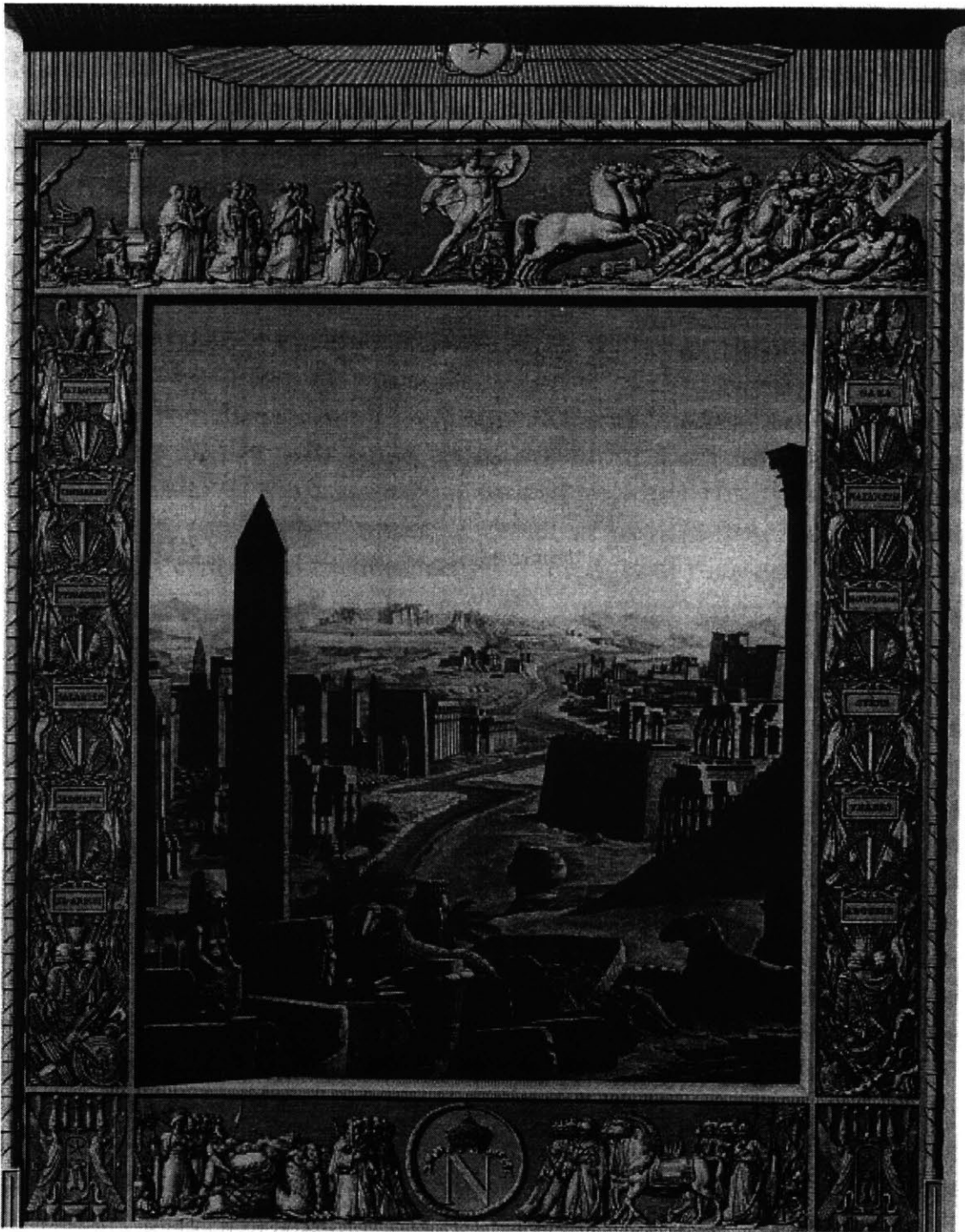


Figure 37. *Front piece of Description de l'Egypte*

Isis's wings. The *Description's* front piece message is clear. Space, time and civilizations are all compressed to constitute a single world civilization governed by a universal man: Napoleon.

Therefore, the *Description de l'Égypte* is neither an experimental vision of history, similar to Le Brun, Maillet, Nodren's, nor a discovery travel report, but a political message of domination through knowledge and power. Because of the extensive amount of information it provided, its imperial sponsorship, quality of production and political authority (produced by the Empire's savants who were on an official mission to Egypt), the *Description*, not only set in stone the knowledge on Modern and Ancient Egypt, but also terminated the messy Enlightenment terrain striving to set a single origin for European civilization. In fact, it consolidated the knowledge and congregated the contradictory interpretations of history to a unique linear vision of a Classical European past imposed by the might of colonialism. Ultimately Alexandria became even more uniquely Hellenistic and the contemporary Ottoman city "a fishing village" or a sleepy little town. As explored above in the writings of Volney and illustrations of Louis-Francois Cassas that immediately preceded the Napoleonic Invasion, the city was far from being a fishing village; but it was described so by the French savants in order to be resurrected by Napoleon to attach its heritage to the one of Europe. How better could Napoleon and his savants elevate their mission and mirror themselves to Alexander other than by walking on his steps? Plutarch tells us that when Alexander arrived to the site of Alexandria, he found a small fishing village, a sleepy little town called Rhakotis, next to which he built his city. Therefore, immersed in the Classical literature that recounted the foundation of the city, the scholars accompanying Napoleon, such as Vivant Denon, brought down the commercial port to become an insignificant town, similar to Rhakotis its predecessor. By transition, Napoleon, who conquered the city in 1798, was made the founder of the new Alexandria seen as the inheritor of its Hellenistic prosperous predecessor.³

Indeed, the *Description de l'Égypte* and Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte*, describe Alexandria as a sleepy little town almost empty of its inhabitants with no one on the docks. However, having explored in detail the works of previous travelers where the Ottoman city of Alexandria was simultaneously denigrated and seen as an active commercial port, we are aware that Denon's descriptions are not historically accurate. In fact, his writing describes Alexandria prior and after the French military disembarking. The deserted city taken over by dogs that he portrays reflects the fear of the population in face of the French invading troops, rather than the commercial and social status and activities of the town. Not surprisingly, this desolated vision of Alexandria at the time of Napoleon's conquest would become a reference for later authors when describing the pre-Napoleon city.

³ "Si Alexandrie devient lentement un "terrain neutre". Ce n'est pas a cause de l'absence de structures préexistantes, c'est a cause des pressions contradictoires exercées par les puissances et le Khedive" elle est "instrument d'une politique méditerranéenne" Robert Ilbert. *Alexandrie 1830-1930, Histoire d'une Communauté Citadine*. (Le Caire : Institut Français d'Archéologie Oriental, 1996), 157.

Undeniably, early nineteenth century travelers following the Napoleonic invasion, such as the French poet René de Chateaubriand who visited Alexandria in 1806, preceded the modern Alexandria of Mohammed Ali, and saw there –impregnated by the *Descriptions*'s images and text-- a decaying small city.⁴ Chateaubriand makes sure to note the fall of Alexandria's ancient civilization. He notices among the ruins dogs eating cadavers as well as jackals wandering outside the boundaries of the city that unsurprisingly do not figure in his description.⁵ He had brought to light –in the words of Michael Herzfeld elaborating on the imperfection of the modern Greek language influenced by Arabic and Turkish (by extrapolation, this argument can be applied to the contemporary Alexandria dirtied by eleven centuries of Islamic rule)-- that “the pure Hellenistic morality... had given way to feuding, vengeance, animal theft and political pettiness, thereby guaranteeing further and infinite reproduction of the essential fall from grace.”⁶ Few decades later, deep into the European colonial enterprise, and despite the constructions carried out in the 1830s by Muhammad Ali who modernized Alexandria, a French Orientalist writer, Gérard de Nerval when visiting Alexandria in 1839, informs his reader of his will to “spare [him] the details of a big and very European square made up of palaces of the consuls and the houses of the bankers, the Byzantine churches in ruins, and the modern structures built by the Pasha of Egypt, with garden resembling hothouses.” He adds, “I would have preferred some memorials of Greek antiquity, but all that is destroyed, razed to the ground, unrecognizable.”⁷

Conclusion:

The thesis investigated Alexandria's urban history from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century and demonstrated with the use of literary descriptions, official reports, commercial treaties, engravings and maps that it was, all through the Ottoman rule, –contrarily to what eighteenth century scholars reported-- an active port city trading goods between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The change of the city's location between 1550 and 1580 was neither caused by an Ottoman misrule, nor signifies a decline in Alexandria's economy, because first, according to fifteenth and sixteenth century travelers, it abounded with multi-national merchants as well as markets goods; and second, court documents attest of a renewal in the city's commercial ties with the Mediterranean. However, those travelers' approach to Alexandria differed from later ones who strove to impose a declining image upon the contemporary town on the isthmus, while lamenting the loss of the glorious Hellenistic city. For such matter the thesis argued that this historically inaccurate claim was only advocated by late seventeenth and eighteenth century scholars, and had its causes beyond the

⁴ Mohammad Ali, originally from Albania, was a high officer in the Ottoman Empire. He came in 1798 to Egypt to fight the French invasion of Bonaparte. He settled in Egypt and was appointed governor in 1806.

⁵ René de Chateaubriand. *Itinéraire de Paris a Jerusalem*. (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), 390.

⁶ Michael Herzfeld. *Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass*. (New York: Cambridge University press, 1987), 35-36.

⁷ Gerard de Nerval. *Voyage en Orient*. (Paris : Folio Classiques), 1998, 144.

geographical boundaries of Alexandria. It was linked to the rise in Europe of new methods for writing history, as well as a need to root European civilization in the linear evolution of world empires. Therefore, analyzing fifteenth to eighteenth century literature on Alexandria, the thesis located in time when the scholarly interest shifted from a focus on Christian heritage and a fair description of the actual urban fabric, to an obsession in seeing Alexandria exclusively with Hellenistic eyes. In fact, as elaborated previously, scholars before the mid-seventeenth century rarely showed interest in Alexandria's Hellenistic ruins which history was not yet totally uncovered. They envisioned the city according to the medieval clerical historiography and extracted some information from the scant Classical texts available to them. Alexandria for them was a prosperous port city of the Ottoman Empire that abounded with Christian sites to visit on the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem. They had no incentive to approach it with historical selectivity that would purge the Islamic past and the contemporary city on the isthmus. Accordingly, they described the monuments they saw on the ground, whether Hellenistic, Roman, Christian or Islamic, and recounted their specific history with no attempt to imagine or reconstruct the entire city in any one of its phases.

This said and explored, the thesis examined closely the eighteenth century publications illustrated with detailed engravings and maps on Alexandria which claimed objectivity to the fullest, and pointed at contradictory information on the city that echoed the unconsolidated knowledge of history and the unstructured scientific and archeological approaches en rigueur during the Enlightenment. Travelers and royal envoys such as Corneille le Brun Benoit de Maillet, and Frederick Lewis Norden, conveyed an incoherent image of the city, for they simultaneously ascribed a decline paradigm to contemporary Alexandria and pictured its port crowded with trade vessels. Furthermore, the condescending image they gave did not correspond to the scientific descriptions of Comte de Volney and could not be in concordance with the religious and commercial architecture patronages built in the eighteenth century. The thesis therefore considered several mosques and a commercial complex, or *wakala*, built on the isthmus to attest of the city's commercial prosperity, growing inhabitants as well as of its role as a major stop on the pilgrimage route between North Africa and Mecca.

The thesis explored European scholarship on Alexandria before the *Description de l'Egypte* and therefore, brings to close that the turbulent quest for knowledge in the eighteenth century and the fluctuating scholarship on the city was replaced, after Napoleon's Conquest, by a unilateral vision of history that categorized the colonized civilizations as inferior and decadent, and set Europe as the sole inheritor of Classicism. In that colonial order, the eleven centuries of Islamic rule on Alexandria was historically repressed and Hellenistic Alexandria revived, made closer to Europe. This approach didn't disappear with time but rather served as a reference for later nineteenth and twentieth century writers. The constructions on the isthmus were considered irrelevant and referred to as the "fishing village" after Napoleon's savants who were familiar with Plutarch's text recounting the city's foundation. They continuously described the city on the isthmus as architecturally inferior to the Hellenistic remains.

Hellenizing Alexandria

This Hellenistic vision of Alexandria that stemmed in the eighteenth century needed to be canonized during the Colonial period in order to pave the road for Forster's *Alexandria a History and a Guide*. This major publication on Alexandria cannot be regarded as emerging from the writings and beliefs of a single British novelist of the early twentieth century, but rather as encompassing two centuries of European scholarship and colonial politics. It is therefore more than a little striking that Forster's "Plan of Alexandria" depicting the city of 1920, walks on the footsteps of his predecessors, situating no relevant site on the isthmus worth visiting, and indicating to the south of the modern site of Kom-es-Chogafa along the Mahmoudiyya Canal, the location of the "fishing village" of Rakhotis to be immortalized in Alexandria of the twentieth century.

APPENDIX: 1

CHRONOLOGY OF TRAVELERS TO ALEXANDRIA STUDIES IN THE THESIS.

Emmanuel Piloti of Crete	1396-1438
Anselmo Adorno	1470
Joos van Ghisele	1482
Ibn Iyas	1515
Pierre Belon du Mans	1547
André Thévet	1550
Jean Palerne Forésien	1580
Samuel Kiechel	1588
Reinhold Lubenau	1588
George Sandys	1611
Olivier Dapper	1636
Gabriel de Bremond	1643
Balthasar de Monconys	1647
J. B. Vansleb	1657
Laurent Chevalier d'Arvieux	1665
Corneille le Brun	1678-1684
Benoît de Maillet	1692-1708
Paul Lucas	1716
Frederick Lewis Norden	1737
Richard Pokocke	1737
Comte de Volney	1782
Louis-Francois Cassas	1795
Dominique Vivant Denon	1798-1801
Napoleon	1798-1801
Pascal Coste	1817-1827

APPENDIX: 2
IMAGE CREDITS

- Figure 1 Forster, E.M. *Alexandria: a History and a Guide*. New York: Anchor Books, 1961, 106-107.
- Figure 2 France, Commission des sciences et arts d’Égypte. *Description de l’Égypte, ou, Recueil de observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l’expédition de l’armée française, publié par les ordres de Sa Majesté l’empereur Napoléon le Grand*. Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1809-28 superposed with « General Map of Alexandria » 1924.
- Figure 3 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 2.
- Figure 4 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 5 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 1.
- Figure 6 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 5
- Figure 7 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 7.
- Figure 8 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 6.
- Figure 9 Le Brun, Corneille. *Voyage au Levant*. Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1714, Plate 96.
- Figure 10 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 13.
- Figure 11 Jondet, Gaston. *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie*. Le Caire : Institut Français d’Archéologie du Caire, 1921, Plate 12.
- Figure 12 Norden, Frederick Louis. *Voyage d’Égypte et de Nubie*. Copenhague: Maison Royale de Orphelins, 1755, Plate III. Typ 740.55.615 PF, Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.

- Figure 13 Norden, Frederick Louis. *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie*. Copenhagen: Maison Royale de Orphelins, 1755, Plate V. Typ 740.55.615 PF, Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.
- Figure 14 Norden, Frederick Louis. *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie*. Copenhagen: Maison Royale de Orphelins, 1755, Plate VI. Typ 740.55.615 PF, Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.
- Figure 15 Norden, Frederick Louis. *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie*. Copenhagen: Maison Royale de Orphelins, 1755, Plate IV. Typ 740.55.615 PF, Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.
- Figure 16 Gilet, Anne ed. *Louis-François Cassas, 1756-1827, dessinateur, voyageur im Banne der Sphinx : ein französischer Zeichner reist nach Italien und in den Orient*. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1994, 199.
- Figure 17 Gilet, Anne ed. *Louis-François Cassas, 1756-1827, dessinateur, voyageur im Banne der Sphinx : ein französischer Zeichner reist nach Italien und in den Orient*. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1994, 200.
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- Figure 19 Le Brun, Corneille. *Voyage au Levant*. Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1714, Plate 97.
- Figure 20 Touristic Brochure in Arabic : “Terbana Mosque” published by Muntada al-Hifaz ‘Ala al-Turath, 2004.
- Figure 21 Touristic Brochure in Arabic : “Terbana Mosque” published by Muntada al-Hifaz ‘Ala al-Turath, 2004.
- Figure 22 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 23 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 24 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 25 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 26 Philippe Saad, 2004.

- Figure 27 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 28 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 29 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 31 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 32 Philippe Saad, 2004.
- Figure 33 Touristic Brochure in Arabic : “Terbana Mosque” published by Muntada al-Hifaz ‘Ala al-Turath, 2004.
- Figure 34 Touristic Brochure in Arabic : “Terbana Mosque” published by Muntada al-Hifaz ‘Ala al-Turath, 2004.
- Figure 35 Coste, Pascal. *Architecture Arabe ou Monuments du Caire*. Paris : Firmin Didot, 1832, Plate 66.
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- Figure 37 France, Commission des sciences et arts d’Égypte. *Description de l’Égypte, ou, Recueil de observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l’expédition de l’armée française, publié par les ordres de Sa Majesté l’empereur Napoléon le Grand*. Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1809-28.

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