

Glimpsing Alexandria from archaeological evidence

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with an appendix by John Baines

Media coverage of the underwater discoveries in the harbour of Alexandria has resulted in the impression that much of the ancient city, or at least the so-called Royal Quarter (the area of the palaces), has been lost under water.¹ As this misconception has been accepted by those less acquainted with the archaeological evidence, an indication should be given of what new information about the city as a whole is provided by the recent underwater discoveries. It is also worth considering what can be gleaned from the *in situ* remains on dry land of buildings going back to the Ptolemaic period. The archaeological evidence for the city of the living has received less attention than tombs.² Recent discoveries provide more information about the city's design and architecture than is generally realized.

The purpose of this paper is to consider some instances of what is known about the city from archaeological evidence, not just from underwater discoveries and recent excavations on dry

- 1 Because of limitations of space, only the main references are given in the notes and only some aspects are discussed. More detailed bibliographies and discussion will be found in my book on the monumental architecture of Alexandria and Egypt during the millennium from the city's foundation to soon after the Islamic conquest, based on archaeological evidence and written sources. I started working on Alexandria in 1980 and my work on the book began in earnest in 1990. This project, directed by myself, is concerned with the interpretation of the archaeological evidence and written sources for the city's architecture and topography, in combination with relevant evidence from elsewhere in Egypt.

Frequently cited abbreviations:

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| Adriani, <i>Annuario</i> vol. 1 | A. Adriani, <i>Annuario del Museo greco-romano</i> , vol. 1 (1922-32) |
| Adriani, <i>Repertorio Annuaire</i> | A. Adriani, <i>Repertorio d'arte dell'Egitto greco-romana</i> , ser. C, vols. 1-2 (Palermo 1966)
<i>Annuaire du Musée greco-romain</i> |
| BSAI | <i>Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie d'Alexandrie</i> |
| Daszewski, <i>Mosaics</i> | W. A. Daszewski, <i>Corpus of mosaics from Egypt I</i> (Aegyptiaca Treverensia 3, 1935) |
| Empereur, <i>Alexandrie Égypte</i> | J.-Y. Empereur, <i>Alexandrie redécouverte</i> (Paris 1998)
<i>Études et Travaux</i> |
| Goddio <i>et al.</i> , <i>Alexandria</i> | F. Goddio <i>et al.</i> , <i>Alexandria, the submerged royal quarters</i> (London 1998) |
| Grünau, <i>Alexandria</i> | G. Grünau, <i>Alexandria, die erste Königsstadt der hellenistischen Welt</i> (Mainz 1998) |
| Humphrey, <i>Circuses</i> | J. H. Humphrey, <i>Roman circuses</i> (London 1986) |
| Kolataj, <i>Baths</i> | W. Kolataj, <i>Imperial baths at Kom el-Dikka</i> (Alexandrie VI, Warsaw 1992) |
| Mahmoud-Bey, <i>Mémoires</i> | Mahmoud-Bey, <i>Mémoire sur l'antique Alexandrie</i> (Copenhague 1872) |
| McKenzie, <i>Petra</i> | J. McKenzie, <i>The architecture of Petra</i> (Oxford 1960) |
| PAM | <i>Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean</i> |
| Pensabene, <i>Elementi Aless.</i> | P. Pensabene, <i>Elementi architettonici di Alessandria e di altri siti egiziani</i> (Repertorio d'arte dell'Egitto greco-romano, ser. C, vol. 3, 1993) |
| Rodziewicz, <i>Habitations</i> | M. Rodziewicz, <i>Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie</i> (Alexandrie III, Warsaw 1984) |
| Rowe and Rees | A. Rowe and B. Z. Rees, "A contribution to the archaeology of the Western Desert: IV. The Great Serapeum of Alexandria." <i>Bull/Rylands Lib</i> 39 2 (1957) 485-520 |
| Rowe, <i>Encl. Serapis</i> | A. Rowe, <i>Discovery of the famous Temple and Enclosure of Serapis at Alexandria</i> (Supplément aux Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, cahier no. 2, 1946) |
| Tkaczow, <i>Topography</i> | B. Tkaczow, <i>Topography of ancient Alexandria</i> (Warsaw 1993) |
- 2 Catalogue of tombs: Adriani, *Repertorio*. Chronology of Ptolemaic tombs: McKenzie *Petra* 63-69. Tombs at Gabbari recently discovered beneath expressway: J.-Y. Empereur and M.-D. Nerna (edd.), *Nécropolis I* (Études Alexandrines 5, Cairo 2001). Well-illustrated interpretations of Ptolemaic and Roman tombs: J. Kaplan, *Grabmalerei und Grabreliefs der Römerzeit, Wechselwirkungen zwischen der ägyptischen und griechisch-alexandrinischen Kunst* (Vienna 1999); M. S. Venit, *Monumental tombs of ancient Alexandria* (Cambridge 2002).