

Archaeological Society of Alexandria



Newsletter

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Message to the Members

On a recent occasion, I happened to be walking with some colleagues along Talat Harb Street in Cairo. We passed in front of a grand new building which bears the name "Ever Green" with an Arabic transliteration **ايثرجرين**. Although the building is fairly modern and houses the "State Information Organization", yet signs of neglect and shabbiness are already creeping in and are conspicuous in the Arabized version of the building's name. One dot had disappeared from the second and one from the third letters of the first word so that it now reads as **أبقر**(Abqar)! I asked my companions to try to make sense of the surviving deformed Arabized spelling. Naturally, they could not, except after looking at the English version.

However, the deformed spelling Abqar, reminded me of an ancient story reported by Procopius concerning an Arab 'king' or head of a powerful tribe in the upper Euphrates in the time of Emperor Augustus. [History of the Wars, II. 12, 7-20] His name, in the Greek form used by Procopius is, Augarus, for the Arabic Al-Abqar.

According to the Roman policy of pacifying tribes in distant regions, Al-Abqar was declared a friend of Rome and recognized as the governor of Edessa (Al- Ruha). According to Procopius' account "this Augarus was the most clever of all men of his time, and as a result of this he became a special friend of the Emperor Augustus". It so happened that desiring to make a treaty with the Romans, Augarus went to Rome. Procopius relates, that when he conversed with Augustus (probably in Greek) he so astonished him by the abundance of his wisdom that Augustus wished never more to give up his company; for the greatly admired his conversation.

Thus the Emperor kept Augarus in Rome for a long time which made him suspect that he was being purposefully detained from returning to his home land. Thus being unable to persuade Augustus to let him go, he devised the following plan. At the approach of spring, it was customary for the nobility to go out hunting wild animals alive, in the hilly country around Rome and Augarus was particularly versed

and experienced in this sport. When out hunting, he covered a large tract of country and was able to capture many animals of that region, alive. He had also ordered his retainers to collect a small amount of earth from the place from which each animal was captured and he took both animals and earth back to Rome.

On the appointed day for the display of the animals, Augustus went in person to the hippodrome and took his seat, as was his wont, to watch the show. When Augarus' turn came, he ordered his attendants to place the various amounts of soil, each in a different part of the hippodrome and to gather all the animals in one place. He then announced in front of the Emperor, that at a given signal the animals would be released and each one would go instinctively in different directions to the various spots in which the portion of earth from which it had been taken, was placed. The attendants did as directed and to the surprise of all, the animals, separated from each other and each directed itself to the spot Augarus had specified.

Augustus looked upon the performance carefully for a long time, and expressed his wonder that nature untaught makes animals feel the pull of their native land. At that moment, Augarus addressing himself to the Emperor said (as reported by Procopius): "As for me, O Master, what thoughts dost thou think I have, who have a wife and children and a kingdom, small indeed, but in the land of my father's?" The Emperor, overcome and compelled by the truth of his saying, granted, not at all willingly, that he was free to depart, and bade him ask besides, for whatever he wished. Once Augarus had secured his release, he begged Augustus to build him a hippodrome in the city of Edessa. The Emperor granted him his request.

When I first read this touching story many years ago I was reminded of the equally expressive verse by our poet Ahmed Shawki during his exile in Spain, 1915-1920 which runs as follows:

Every home is worthy of its people

Except under rule, that is vicious and outrageous.

Archaeological News

Important Discovery at the Heart of Ancient Alexandria

While digging for foundations inside the premises of the Central Security Forces of Alexandria in Ismail Fahmy Street at Kom El-Dikka, to the south of Foad street and west of Kom El-Dikka Archaeological Area, drills were stuck with ancient foundation walls. An expedition from the Supreme Council of Antiquities headed by Dr. Mohamed Abd El-Maksoud soon moved to the site in order to conduct systematic excavation there. The current excavation yielded the discovery of a substantial and huge building which extends more than 60 m. long and 15m. wide. Hundreds of figurines of Bastet, the Egyptian goddess, were found. Other artifacts such as some earthen ware, limestone statues of women and children, bronze and faience statues of different Egyptian deities, terracotta statuettes of Harpocrates and Ptah, a number of water wells, stone water channels and a Roman water cistern were discovered. Most important a granite statue of a high official with an inscribed base commemorating the famous Raphia battle (217 BC.).

Until now, there is not any official announcement of the discovery, a matter that causes the rise of many contradicted views. But some [commentators](#):

<http://www.sphere.com>; <http://news.discovery.com>;

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news>;
<http://heritage-quey.com/blogs/ann/>



One of the statues of Bastet discovered in the site

[queen-berenikes-bastet-temple-discovered-alexandria](#);
<http://www.drhawass.com/blog/press-release-new-discovery-kom-el-dikka>;
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science>)

Relate the building to Queen Berenice II wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222BC.). The huge quantity of Bastet statues leads

to the interpretation of the site as a temple for the goddess to which a sculpture workshop was attached (A. Abd El-Fattah).

Bastet (diminutive form of the original name **Bast**) was originally worshipped by the Egyptians as a solar war goddess and was considered as the protectress of Lower Egypt. She was represented as a woman with the head of a lion or a wild cat. During the Middle Kingdom, Bastet was changed into a cat-headed woman or simply a domestic cat, and was considered as a *good mother*. In the time of the 22nd Dynasty, she became the local deity of Bubastis. Bastet had the epithet of *Mistress of the sistrum* which meant her association with Hathor and later with Isis. For the Greeks, Bastet was the sister of Horus whom they identified as Apollo, hence her identification with Artemis, Apollo's twin sister. They called her Ailuros (Ἄλυρος meaning cat). Through her association with Artemis, the Greek moon goddess, Bastet turned to be a lunar deity in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. She became a symbol of feminism, protectress of pregnant women and a goddess of fertility.

Stratigraphy in the site shows that the temple was not established on the bed rock but some other foundations preceded it. Prof. Pascale Ballet, an expert ceramologist, noticed the existence of some pre-Alexander's pot sherds in the site. Accordingly, there may have been an earlier temple from Pharaonic times in the site which Berenice II resolved to rebuild.



A Girl named Bastet discovered in the site

However, this discovery is the first of its kind, especially that none of the ancient sources mentioned a word about the existence of a temple for Bastet in ancient Alexandria. It will open new horizons for the studies of the topography of the early Ptolemaic city. It may also shed some light about what had once been existing in the site when Alexander the Great came and ordered to build his new city.

Mona Haggag

Book Review

McKenzie, Judith. *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 BC to AD 700*. Yale University, 2008.

This work is not an ordinary monograph, but a result of a very big project which the author conducted since 1980s when she was working at Petra, where she found a relationship between Petra buildings (which were inspired by the architecture of Ptolemaic Alexandria) and the wall-paintings of the Pompeian houses. She introduces here an excellent study of the history of the monumental architecture of ancient Alexandria as well as the rest of Egypt from the city's foundation in 331 B.C. till the beginnings of the Islamic period 700 A.D. This large book (460 pages) is richly illustrated: contains fascinating illustrations, reconstructions, architectural drawings which play an important role in clarifying how the city was big and important, as well as maps and plans for the city in different periods. These maps and plans are unprecedented. Illustrations and photographs are made by the author. A work of this complexity and breadth would not have been possible without the help of many colleagues and institutions who assisted her in studying and editing in order to introduce this large and important work. At the end of her book McKenzie acknowledged all those who helped her. Undoubtedly, McKenzie made much effort reflecting her great interest and strong enthusiasm in studying ancient Alexandria.

The aim of this book as explained by McKenzie herself is to show how the distinctive architecture of Ptolemaic Alexandria had a continuing tradition into the Late Antique or Byzantine and early Islamic periods, this distinctive style of architecture is a result of the interaction between the imported Greek and native Egyptian traditions. This book consists of fourteen chapters divided into four principal parts.

The first part: describes how ancient Alexandria was destroyed before 1800 explaining the various causes beyond this

destruction, then the destruction throughout the 19th century caused by different reasons (Ch. 1). Chapter 2 is a reconstruction of the ancient city depending on archaeological evidence namely the recent excavations in the 20th century. She discusses the first detailed plan of ancient Alexandria which was made by Mahmoud-Bey el-Falaky in 1866 and demonstrates the development of the city during the Ptolemaic, Roman and Late periods, she displayed the city planning, streets, water system, the city walls, cemeteries and of course the harbour, then she found that the results of these excavations confirm el-Falaky plan.

The second Part: looks at the Ptolemaic period from Alexander the Great to Cleopatra, the last queen of the Ptolemaic dynasty and the Roman conquest. The main phenomenon of the Ptolemaic period is the interaction of the Greek and Egyptian traditions. Chapter 3 represents a successful attempt to introduce a reconstruction of the ancient city based on the archaeological evidence and the written sources: she discusses the development of the city by examining the evidence such as the Lighthouse, the Heptastadium and the harbours, agora, temples and sanctuaries, and the Sema and other tombs in a chronological order. Alexandria was a Greek City in its planning and architecture but some Egyptian influence is also detected in the orientation of the street grid, in the Arsinoeion with an obelisque and also in the Serapeum. Chapter 4 covers the written sources about the city in the time of Cleopatra VII and what they mentioned about its topography and buildings to show that it was standing as a great city beside Rome the then first city of the world. Chapter 5 is concerned with the classical architectural style of Ptolemaic Alexandria and the traditional Egyptian styles which were adopted by the Ptolemaic kings and their influence which forms the origins of the baroque architecture which was developed in Alexandria with the new features especially the broken pediments and curved entablatures. These features were adopted later throughout the Mediterranean in the Roman period as we see in the rock-cut facades, particularly the Khazneh building at Petra which reflects clearly the Egyptian origin, and also can be seen in the mural paintings of Pompeii (the second Pompeian style). Chapter 6 deals, in

details, with the architecture of the Egyptian temples in Upper Egypt and studies the Greek influences which give them their characteristic appearance especially capital styles and their development.

The third part: looks at the Roman period in Alexandria and the other cities and towns of Roman Egypt. The focus of the Roman period is the relationship between the classical architecture of Alexandria and that of the other sites in Egypt and elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Chapter 7 studies the classical architecture in different cities and towns of Roman Egypt by combining the archaeological and papyrological evidences in order to follow the classical architecture of Roman which is almost unknown. The papyri provide a picture of the city's layout and building styles and also give different information about these buildings and their construction. Chapter 8 is devoted to the architecture of Roman Alexandria; its classical buildings had much in common with the cities and towns of the rest of Egypt. Chapter 9 deals with the classical architectural style both in Roman Alexandria and the rest of Egypt. The study reveals two styles occurring during the 1st to 3rd centuries A.D.: one style is a direct continuation of the distinctive classical architecture which had developed in Ptolemaic Alexandria, the other is the same as the styles known elsewhere in the Roman Empire. It is notable that both these styles appeared side-by-side not only in Alexandria but also elsewhere in Egypt. Then there is no difference between the classical architecture of Alexandria and that of the other cities and towns of Egypt during the roman period.

The fourth Part: covers the Byzantine Period and focuses on the influence of Alexandrian elements in Coptic architecture. It examines the influence of Alexandrian art and architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods. Chapter 10 studies the Alexandrian churches through a considerable number of written sources which are mentioned in details. In chapter 11 McKenzie discusses the Coptic churches of Alexandria through the archaeological evidence. She proves that some stylistic features of Ptolemaic architecture in Alexandria occurred later in Coptic architecture. Chapter 12 analyzes the texts

written by mathematicians, engineers, and architects who studied and taught in Alexandria. This study reveals that there were sufficient engineering expertise and skills in Alexandria, for this reason Alexandria played a major role in the Byzantine Period. In chapter 13 she dealt with the Alexandrian influence on Byzantine Architecture outside Egypt. In studying Byzantine architectural history, it was believed that it was under Emperor Justinian that the city of Constantinople initiated a revolutionary development in architecture which has been manifested in his church of Hagia Sophia (built in 532-7 AD), in 1960s, the remains of St. Polyuktos church in Constantinople were discovered. Some unusual decorative motives were discovered in this church which proved that Hagia Sophia was not the earliest example to express this development. None of the scholars could prove the origins of the new motives but McKenzie attributed them to the Egyptian influence depending on some similarities she came upon. The stylistic features of Ptolemaic Architecture in Alexandria appeared in Byzantine architecture outside Egypt and covered a wide area of the Mediterranean region. This means that Alexandria has played a major role in the development of Byzantine Architecture wider than what had previously been realized. The last chapter (14) proves that Alexandria remained a centre of architectural innovation and artistic influence throughout Byzantine and Early Islamic periods. The study includes other examples of sculpture, textiles, ivories, wall-paintings, mosaics and manuscript illuminations, in order to follow up the continuity of the Alexandrian pictorial traditions in the East to be compared with manuscripts and wall-mosaics of St. George's in Thessaloniki and the church of Nativity in Bethleh. It survives also in Early Islamic buildings and Mosques as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the wall-mosaics in the Great Mosque of Damascus.

Alexandria played a central role in the continuity and development of classical art in the East. Through Rome and Constantinople the Alexandrian influence was introduced to the East. On the other hand, the city of Alexandria had its direct

influence in other cultures and was a home for architectural and artistic innovation in the Mediterranean world.

Wafaa El-Ghannam

Cultural Program

Thursday 28 Jan. 10	Dr. Elizabeth Rodziewicz Researcher in Archaeology and Ancient Arts, Poland - Sweden	Bone and Ivory Carvings between Alexandria and Fustat: A Comparative Study	English
Thursday 25 February 2010	Prof. Dr. Cornelia Römer Prof. of Greek Papyrology German Archaeological Institute at Cairo	The Fayoum Survey Project: 1999 - 2006	English
Monday 16 Mar. 10	Dr. Sam Osmanagic Researcher in History of Civilization, Bosnia & Hersegovina	The Mayan Civilization: Peaks in Construction, Math, Calendar and Astronomy	English
Sunday 21 Mar. 10	Prof. Dr. Hans- Christoph Noeske Prof. at the Academy of Sciences and Literature, Mainz. University of Frankfurt, Germany	New Coins for the Egyptians: The Introduction of the Alexandrian Coinage by Octavianus/Augustus	English
Date in Mar. 10 to be announced later	Prof. Dr. Marian Bergmann Professor, Berlin University, Germany	Sarapis in the Third Century B.C.	English
Wednesday 28 April 10	Prof. Dr. Mamdouh El- Damaty Dean, Faculty of Arts, Ein Shams University, Egypt	Important Discoveries of Egyptian Antiquities	Arabic
All lectures to be held at the Society premises at 6. p.m. unless mentioned.			

Announcement

Publications of the Society are now sold at a discount of 25%

Excursions Program

Date	Excursion	Fees	
		Members	Friends
Friday 15 Jan. 2010	Ancient Cairo	Fees are to be announced one week before each excursion and two months before the summer trip	
Friday 12 Feb. 2010	Abu Mina and Marea		
Friday 19 Mar. 2010	Rashid & Edfina		
Friday 9 April 2010	Fayoum		
Friday 21 May 2010	Palace of Mohamed Aly		
Friday 18 June 2010	Abdine Palace & Qanater		
Friday 16 July 2010	Alexandria Archaeological Sites including Qaytbay & the National Museum		
Augustus 2010	Cyprus		

Announcement

Special discount will be given for the first 10 students or young archaeologists to subscribe for any of the Society's excursions.

Annual Subscription

Members are kindly reminded that the annual subscription is due in Jan. 2010, and the dead- line for paying is 30 March 2010.