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ALEXANDRIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN EXPERIENCE

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS**

**PROFESSOR ROSELLI
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APRIL 20, 2012

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Introduction

When I first set out to write this thesis, my focus was in a nearly entirely different direction. I knew from the beginning that Ptolemaic Egypt was going to be my topic of study, but the actual research, once that was decided, led me in many different directions. From royal sculpture to Egyptian and Greek religious practices, I had dozens of ideas, all of them too broad to approach for something like a thesis. However, after some time, my professor and I noticed that all of those ideas had a common factor – Alexandria. Not only the city, but the question of what *happened* in the city was an important concept for me, and was something interesting to think about. With that in mind approaching the topic went smoothly. In this thesis, my goal is to paint a picture of the urban experience of Alexandria from its foundation through the earlier years of its existence under the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

The first chapter of this thesis discusses the foundation of the city of Alexandria. By placing the city in a Greek context through the process of foundation and its connection to Greek traditions of city foundation, we can begin to contextualize the city as Greek. Using the paradigm of Greek city foundation as it is presented in the work of Carol Dougherty, I take apart the various primary accounts that exist for the foundation of Alexandria and attempt to identify the pieces of the narratives that can be observed in conjunction with Greek tradition. Once that tradition has been shown to be present in the foundation narratives of Alexandria, I begin an examination of traditions in Greek city planning in the fourth century, and place the archaeological evidence from the city

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in that context. By observing other examples of Greek city planning in the Mediterranean, I hope to draw parallels between their city plans and other aspects of the city with similar archaeological evidence from Alexandria.

The second chapter of this thesis discusses the result of the city's foundation. Having established the way in which the city was meant to be founded through the literary and archaeological evidence, I then look at the actual urban experience in the earlier years of the Ptolemaic dynasty. This chapter is split into a few different subsections, as I examine first the context of the city itself in the landscape of Egypt. This is the one instance in the second chapter in which I use primary sources from long after the earlier years of the city. Strabo's *Geography* is employed minimally to provide information on the actual topography of the Egyptian landscape in which Alexandria exists. Next, I examine the evidence we have for the urban experience of Alexandria, focusing on primary sources from the city. These include the poems of Theocritus and Herodas, as well as an archaeological examination of the Serapeum in the center of the city. Additionally, I examine the role of Greek space in the city, as well as how that Greek space contributes to the Greek and Egyptian cultural presences in the city.

My discussion then moves to the countryside, where papyrological evidence from the Fayuum is used to examine the cultural division between Greeks and Egyptians outside the urban center of Alexandria. This section serves to provide a contrast between the urban nature of life in Alexandria and what it meant to be Greek or Egyptian in these different social spheres.

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This examination is far from exhaustive. There are many other primary sources from Ptolemaic Egypt before Rome that I have chosen not to include in this discussion, simply due to the rather focused nature of this thesis. Due to the lengthy span of the Ptolemaic dynasty, many primary sources we have are from later periods than I am examining in this paper. Due to my focus on the earlier years of the Ptolemies, I have used no primary sources dealing with the urban experience of Alexandria and the surrounding area that are dated after 200 BCE.

Alexandria and the Construction of Urban Experience

Alexander's foundation of Alexandria was the first true city founding of his career, and perhaps the greatest. The city remained an integral part of Mediterranean life throughout the Hellenistic period, the height of Roman power and beyond. What about this city was so astounding, that it could remain while others crumbled and fell in the wake of the shifting balances of power? Things went well for the city right from the beginning, at its foundation. The process of the city's foundation follows in a cultural tradition that was well accepted by the Greek population at the time. By examining first the ancient sources that detail the foundation of the city, and then looking at what architectural evidence remains from the original city itself, I hope to fit Alexandria into a continuum of Greek city foundation which gave the city a solid and culturally acceptable base upon which it could grow into the city that it did under the control of the Ptolemies after Alexander's death.

I. Literary Alexandria

The Paradigm of Foundation

Before analyzing the available literary sources, we must first have a way in which to examine them. In her book, *The Poetics of Colonization*, Carol Dougherty argues that Greek foundation stories follow a particular structure, which can be broken down into specific and identifiable narrative pieces.¹ The pieces she identifies are the crisis, the

1 Dougherty, 16

consultation of the oracle, the foundation of the colony or city, and the resolution of the original crisis. Much of this argument is made simply by examining what primary texts exist and looking for patterns.

The crisis can come from various sources. It can be political, economical and environmental, and is sometimes characterized through metaphor and personalization of a larger problem. Dougherty cites the cases of Dorieus and Cleomenes in the writings of Bacchylides, along with the story of the settlement of Ionia from Pausanias and the city of Tiryns in Herodotus.² In this final case, the squabbling of two brothers in power is a representation of the city's current political stagnation. In addition, a personal issue of the founder can be the impetus to visit the oracle, such as in the case of Battus with his stutter and the foundation of Cyrene, a story also found in Herodotus. This part of the paradigm causes some trouble in its application to the foundation of Alexandria, and I will address that problem in detail after laying out the paradigm as a whole.

The second step of the narrative is simple. The future city founder – the *oikist* – goes to consult Delphic Apollo. This does not have to be with the intention of city founding, it only has to be with the intention of stopping the crisis. In addition, the oracular solution to the crisis does not have to be the founding of a new city. Dougherty cites Herodotus' story of Dorieus again, and his emphasis on the importance of consulting the oracle before founding a city by using the story as a kind of cautionary

² Dougherty, 16-17

tale.³ The purpose of this step seems to be obtaining divine permission from the god. At this point in the narrative, the oracle tells the oikist that it is a good thing for him to found this new colony, and sometimes even gives a specific location for the colonists to settle. In some of these cases, the animal guides are designated for the colonists, so that they may follow them to the future city site.⁴

The third step is after the oracle gives permission - and possibly a location - for the new city. With this, the city founders not only have permission to go found a city - a massive undertaking - they also have the divine right to the land which the god described, rendering all native inhabitants' claims to the land forfeit. Dougherty notes here that the narrative often stops at the arrival to the future city location, but does sometimes give descriptions of the location, which emphasize the land's desirable qualities. These desirable qualities include being uninhabited and self-sufficient, which is stated by Plato in *Laws* and by Homer.

The oikist then divides the land up to distribute among the expedition members, and marks out locations for the temples and precincts of the city. Homer also describes this process in the *Odyssey* Book 6.⁵ Finally, the oikist names the city - often the name of the man himself or an aspect of the oracle.

The final piece of the narrative is the symbolic conclusion of the crisis that necessitated the founding of the new city. This would mean an end to the seven year

3 Dougherty, 19

4 Dougherty, 20

5 Homer, *Odyssey* 6.7

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drought in Thera, and the resolution of the political tensions in Tiryn's mother city. This step is the final one for the foundation of the city, but the paradigm does not stop there. The true end of the narrative is after the death of the founder and the establishment of the founder-cult in the city. Dougherty argues that this death represents another turning-point of the city narrative, with the city changing from colony to city-state with the founder's passing. The founder represents a civic identity specific to that city and their origins. At this point, the story of the city's founding can be told in the narrative form, as the propagator of the narrative's story has ended and he has been venerated.

The Foundation of Alexandria

Having established this paradigm, I would now like to take it and attempt to apply it to the sources we have for the Alexandria foundation narrative. As Dougherty lays out, this is a cultural institution in Greece, drawing on cultural traditions from long before these stories existed and adapting them to current, real-life situations. As Alexander was not writing about himself, but would have been aware of these traditions, I feel that it is necessary to not only look at his actual actions in the text, but what the authors do by tying back into these narrative patterns. Each of the sources I examine has these narrative pieces, though due to the placement of these stories in a larger narrative, some are harder to locate than others.

There are five key literary sources that deal with the founding of Alexandria. These are the works of Arrian, Plutarch, Quintus Curtius Rufus, pseudo-Callisthenes and

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Diodorus. All of these texts contain the story of Alexander's foundation of Alexandria and the events surrounding it, but they go about telling the same story in different ways, despite a considerable amount of overlap in the events. All of these authors, Diodorus excluded, were writing under the Roman Empire from the first to second centuries CE. Diodorus was a Greek in the Hellenistic world during the Roman Republic. Plutarch was a Greek historian writing in the second century CE. His *Life of Alexander* was meant to be read in parallel with his *Life of Julius Caesar*, which says something for what he was trying to do. Both figures are glorified by their association with the other. Wardman argues that Plutarch is attempting to create an image of a real person in his *Life*, which includes Alexander showing both positive and negative responses to situations, not simply being correct at every opportunity.⁶ However, this holds true for the work as a whole, but for the specific section relevant to this discussion it does not seem to be particularly important.

Curtius Rufus was a Roman writer, possibly writing under Vespasian or even earlier, under Nero⁷ or Claudius, which given the recent or current Nero insanity or the difficulties under Caligula, may have colored his opinions towards rulers who he saw as having too much power. In particular, in the Alexandria narrative, Rufus makes references to Alexander's need to be flattered, and his seemingly inappropriate self-aggrandizement.

Arrian was writing in the second century CE, as an ethnic Greek living in the

6 A.E. Wardman, "Plutarch and Alexander", 107

7 J. R. Hamilton, "The Date of Quintus Curtius Rufus", 456

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Roman Empire. His sources included histories written by Alexander's officers, including Ptolemy, which may account for his more detailed descriptions of Alexander's actions in Egypt, due to the fact that not only would these people have been primary sources for events, but also because Ptolemy then made Alexandria his own after Alexander's death.

Diodorus is the earliest of the writers, with most of his work being created between 60-30 BCE. He was a Greek living in the Hellenistic world during the rise of Roman power. His source for information on Alexander was Cleitarchus of Alexandria, who was writing in the beginning of the Ptolemaic kingdom, and would later go on to write for the Ptolemies themselves. Like Arrian, this Ptolemaic connection would very possibly have colored his work on the subject due to his close proximity with Alexander's successor in Egypt. Diodorus was also writing during or soon before the time of Vitruvius, a Roman writer and engineer, whose work *De Architectura* discusses some of the things that Diodorus says Alexander took into account during his foundation of Alexandria, specifically the importance of wind movement in cities.⁸

Pseudo-Callisthenes and the Greek Alexander Romance are harder to get a grasp on, simply because of the uncertain nature surrounding the history's author and date. There seems to have been no written extant version of the text before the third century CE, and the whole thing is a single version of a story that was told into the Middle Ages.⁹ Because of this, it is difficult to postulate the author's goals for the text within a specific historical context.

⁸ Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, 1.4.5-6

⁹ Jeremy McInerney, "Arrian and the Greek Alexander Romance", 424

In Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, Books 26 and 27 deal with the founding of Alexandria and the trip to the shrine of Zeus Ammon at the Siwah Oasis. In Plutarch's telling of the tale, Alexander, after the siege of Tyre, has a dream in which a "grey-haired man of venerable appearance" appears to him and quotes the *Odyssey* IV.354, which refers to the island of Pharos in Egypt.¹⁰ Though Alexander had apparently already scouted another area for his future city (which Alexander plans to make great and well-populated while bearing his name), he immediately finds the island, and chooses the spot on the mainland directly across from it as the new location for his city. He states that Homer "besides his other admirable qualities, was also a very far-seeing architect", and planned the city to conform with the natural elements of the location based on its innate strategic advantages.¹¹ At this point, Plutarch describes the omens surrounding the actual planning of the city. According to his text, Alexander, having no other means of marking out the plans of the city, used barley meal to designate walls and streets. As he did this, flocks of birds descended on the plans, devouring them completely. Alexander was worried by this, but the seers at the site deemed that this was a good omen, and that it meant that the city would "not only have abundant resources of its own but would be the nurse of men of innumerable nations".¹²

It is only then that Plutarch says Alexander went to the temple of Zeus Ammon. It is described as a long and arduous journey, due to a lack of water and the possibility of

10 Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 26.5

11 Plutarch, 26.7

12 Plutarch, 26.9

sandstorms. However, these dangers are averted by divine power, as there was an abundance of rain which provided water and firmer footing in the sand. In addition, any who did become lost on the journey are said to have been guided back to the party by ravens.¹³

In Quintus Curtius Rufus' recounting, Alexander visited the shrine of Zeus Ammon before even setting foot at the future location of Alexandria. Rufus also seems to take a more critical view of Alexander, playing up his vanity and apparent need to be more than mortal. He describes the priests at the temple to be particularly inclined to flatter Alexander, who tends to overstep his bounds in the narrative, at least according to Rufus' standards.

After this episode, the founding of the city itself follows Plutarch's well, with the marking out of the city perimeter using barley meal, and the birds descending upon it. Alexander also seems to have planned less in this interpretation, only marking out the boundaries of the city - as was customary, according to Rufus, and leaving the details of the construction from those he left behind. This, however, may simply be a more cursory explanation of the proceedings, or Plutarch's may be overgenerous. This is the last moment of the foundation narrative; from this point the history moves forward.

Arrian follows Plutarch's narrative pattern, placing the trip to Siwah after the foundation of the city. However, in contrast to both Plutarch and Rufus, Arrian gives Alexander a much greater role in the planning of the city itself. While in the other

13 Plutarch, 27.2-4

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sources, Alexander had, at most, divided the city into sectors, and at least marked out the city perimeter, Arrian has Alexander not only marking out the city boundaries, but also the location of the agora, the placement of the temples, how many temples there were to be, and to which gods they would be dedicated.¹⁴ From this point, the narrative is in accordance with the others, though Arrian also cites Ptolemy I's lost history, which apparently states that it was snakes, not ravens, which escorted Alexander and his party to the oracle and back. He does not afford credence to one over the other.

The Greek Alexander Romance places the trip to the temple of Zeus Ammon before the founding of the city, as Curtius Rufus does. In this recounting, the reader of the text is given a much more explicit description of the goings on at the shrine, and the text even provides the prophecy that Alexander was given there. "O King, thus Phoebus of the ram's horns says to you:/If you wish to bloom for ever in incorruptible youth,/Found the city rich in fame opposite the isle of Proteus,/Where Aion Ploutonios himself is enthroned as king,/ He who from his five-peaked mountain rolls round the endless/world."¹⁵ Alexander then sets out to find this location, and upon doing so, immediately begins to plan his city. Initially, it is deemed too large by his advisors, who state that "small cities are harmonious in debate and take counsel together to their mutual advantage" and that a city as large as the one Alexander sketched would inevitably fall to internal squabbles. Alexander deferred to their advice and had the city plan sized down. In addition, he apparently took the advice of another man,

14 Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri*, 3.1

15 Greek Alexander Romance, 1.30

Hyponomos, who suggested a stone foundation for the city, with water channels running to the ocean.¹⁶

Diodorus' account follows in much the same pattern as Curtius Rufus and the Greek Alexander Romance. The trip to the oracle occurs before the foundation of the city, and Alexander and his party are, once again, led by crows through the desert to the site. Alexandria is founded upon his return. Interestingly, like Arrian, Alexander founds the city very specifically, apparently angling the streets just so, so as to exploit the ocean breezes to cool the city naturally and keep the residents healthy. Diodorus also has Alexander laying out the walls to be large and strong, and comments on the strategic advantages the location already has.¹⁷

All of these texts have the same essential narrative pieces, though they may not be in the same order. All the sources have Alexander visiting the Siwah oasis to consult with the oracle there, though some have it before and some after. In each one, Alexander visits the oracle at some point in the foundation process, and is legitimized by the priests of the god. When I discuss the application of the paradigm to the narratives, I will go into greater detail about the issues surrounding the chronological order of the city foundation and the oracle visit.

The point at which the texts vary the most in actual context is when Alexander is planning the city. If one were to simply read Curtius Rufus, one would think that Alexander had simply thrown some meal on the ground in a circle and walked away. But

16 Greek Alexander Romance, 1.31

17 Diodorus Siculus, Book XVII.52

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if one only read Arrian, they would find an Alexander invested in the make-up of this great city that would bear his name. In Curtius Rufus' case, his narrative seems a little more critical of Alexander overall, making references to his need to be flattered and his mistakes in Egypt¹⁸, while Arrian imbues Alexander with zeal, seized by an ardent desire to both found the city and visit the temple of Zeus Ammon.¹⁹ In any case, Alexander is given much more of a role as city-planner in Arrian and Diodorus descriptions of the scene. They not only mark out the boundaries of the city, but also the streets, temples, agora and drainage systems.

Now, having both Dougherty's model of colonial foundation and the ancient source narratives, we can attempt to apply the model to these narratives. However, given Dougherty's model, a singular piece is missing right from the beginning. The texts describe no crisis specifically. However, though there is no singular crisis to be found, there is a crisis - a rather obvious one. Alexander, at the time of this city founding, had just conquered Egypt - a nation with long, ingrained traditions of its own, both politically and socially. These narratives all take place soon after Alexander conquered the area. Given the oft political nature of the narrative crisis, I do not believe that it is too outlandish to argue that this unspoken shift in political power and the takeover of a different culture could be the necessary crisis for the foundation narrative, though they are understood, rather than explicitly stated. The uncertainty inherent in the transfer of power in Egypt could cause the political instability that can be found in earlier

18 Curtius Rufus, 4.7.26, 4.7.30-31

19 Arrian, 3.1, 3.3

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foundation stories cited by Dougherty, with the foundation of Alexandria being cast as the resolution to that instability. Additionally, Dougherty cites the possibility for the foundation of a city when the *oikist* is already on the road, such as cities founded on the road home from the Trojan War. Here, she makes note of the story of the foundation of Amphilocian Argos as it is told by Thucydides. In this case, the city founder, Amphilochus, returned home from the Trojan War and, being dissatisfied with the state of affairs there, decided to found a city of his own - Amphilocian Argos.²⁰ Thus, even the case of an *oikist* who is already on the move, there is that sense of political dissonance which I believe to be the implicit impetus for the foundation of the city in the case of Alexandria.

As stated before, the ancient sources have some chronological differences when it comes to the oracle trip and the marking out of the city. Arrian and Plutarch place the foundation of the city before the trip to the oracle of Zeus Ammon. This obviously differs from the established paradigm. However, in these stories, and in all of them, at the foundation of the city, signs of divine favor are given to Alexander and the city, regardless of whether he has been to the oracle or not. When Alexander is marking out the boundaries of the city using barley or meal, due to a lack of typical materials, a flock of birds swoops down and eats it all. This is interpreted by the seers in his party to be a sign that the city will be bountiful and feed many people. Additionally, when Alexander and his companions are traveling to the Siwah Oasis to see the oracle, they are helped

²⁰ Thucydides, 2.68

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by divine power. There are periods of heavy rain, which keeps them from dying of thirst, and when members of the group would stray from the rest, they would be guided back by birds or snakes, which would then continue to guide them all to the Oasis. In all cases, these are understood as signs of divine favor and blessing. Therefore, though the trip to the Oracle does not always happen first, the aspects of divine blessing that the Oracle provides are present before and at the time of the city foundation.

Interestingly, the Greek Alexander Romance seems to be actively trying the hardest to fit into the formula that Dougherty proposes. Alexander, in this case, fits the profile of *oikist* almost perfectly. He goes to the oracle with the intent to found a city that will endure forever, and is answered in true oracular fashion, as laid out in Dougherty's argument. The oracle gives him a specific location to seek out, and when he arrives at the proper location, he begins the process for the foundation of the city by marking its borders. None of the other texts have this exact pattern, though they have all the elements with which it is formed. In Arrian and Plutarch, the trip to the oracle comes after the foundation of the city, or at least after picking the site. In any case, Alexander, and thus his foundation of the city, is legitimized by the god in all the stories regardless of when the trip to the oracle takes place in the story, and this would, in my opinion, fulfill the need for divine permission in the foundation narrative.

The final piece of the narrative, like the initial crisis, goes unstated due to the fact that Alexander is not dead at this point in the story. The cycle of foundation laid out by Dougherty has the death of the city founder as the end of the foundation narrative, but

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given the nature of these histories, that conclusion cannot be reached at this point.

However, given the contexts of many of these writers, the truth is again implicit. All of these authors are writing after Egypt, with Alexandria as its most renowned city, became a powerful force in the Mediterranean under the Ptolemies. Though unstated,

Alexander's connection to Egypt through the founder-cult established by Ptolemy Soter and the knowledge of Egypt's subsequent wealth and power under him would be well known and would be the lasting legacy that Dougherty's argument would call for.

Though the Ptolemies and the rise of Egypt are not the focus of this paper, more examination will be given to their actions in Egypt and Alexandria in the second half of my argument.

II. Archaeological Alexandria

Having established Alexandria as a Greek city in the literary traditions of the time, I will now attempt to do the same with the archaeological evidence. In order to accomplish this, I will first establish what aspects of a Greek city were key in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. This will involve a brief examination of Hippodamus and his role in city planning, along with what markers his city plans had in common. I will then look at these key parts of the city in the context of two cities credited to Hippodamus - Piraeus and Rhodes, before examining the archaeological remains of Alexandria itself. By laying everything out in the fashion, I hope to establish the context of the city's foundation before attempting to place Alexandria in it.

Greek City Planning

Greek city planning had evolved greatly by the fifth century BCE. In fact, the Athenian model of planning does not seem to have been a model at all. Rather, it involved the gathering of small, separate groups around a particular strategic military position, with these groups eventually coming together and forming a society that identified together.²¹ This is the way that Athens grew, as settlements around the acropolis eventually grew together. This was probably more due to the defensive nature of the position than anything else.

The Hippodameian method, developed in the fifth century by Hippodamus of Miletus, is somewhat the antithesis of this type of growth. We have knowledge of Hippodamus from authors like Aristotle, who, in his *Politics*, describes Hippodamus and his accomplishments, which include the development of the grid plan and the division of space in the city.

The idea of practical city planning grew out of a need to place cities intentionally, rather than allowing them to grow slowly and in pieces.²² Burns argues that Hippodamus, contrary to a certain camp of historical scholarship, did not invent the geometric planning of cities, but that he developed a way of thinking about the “over-all functional plan of the city” and that he was the first to really think on the communication between political, social and judicial forces in a city and how the

21 Owens, 15-17

22 Owens, 50

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construction of that city could facilitate the work of all groups.²³ This is supported by Owen's analysis of city planning. Zoning for public, private and sacred spaces allowed for the development of each of area independently.²⁴ This furthers the practicality of the design. The heart of the Greek city was the agora, which provided the center for the public areas of a Greek colony.²⁵ Not only this, but it was a public place in every sense of the word - not only a meeting place for the people, but also a market and civic center for the city.²⁶

Evidence of clear spatial delineations in Piraeus provides the basis for this argument, and because Piraeus was a city whose plan was notably credited to Hippodamus, it stands to reason that these delineations were part of his plan for the city.²⁷ Buildings were grouped in a functional relationship to each other "as is suggested by the relationship between the harbor and the agora at Piraeus and the stadium, gymnasium and odeion at Rhodes. Moreover, the public buildings were clearly defined and fully incorporated into the street system."²⁸ This incorporation is key, because while the different zones of the city in Greek city planning were meant to develop in a given space, that in no way meant that those zones were to operate independently of each other. There is evidence in Hippodameian cities of an attempt at total cohesion in the city between the various delineated spaces. Aristophanes makes reference to

23 Burns, 417

24 Owens, 56

25 Wycherley, 50

26 Wycherley, 65

27 Burns, 417-18

28 Owens, 61

Hippodamus as the man who ‘pulled Piraeus together’, which backs up this assertion in a socially recognizable sphere.²⁹

Additionally, Hippodameian building plans had extensive water drainage systems.³⁰ Rhodes is the best example of this, as will be explored later. The coastal nature of the city added to the necessity for this aspect of the city, and the results are clear for years to come.

A final part of the Hippodameian city plan that I will not be delving into is the idea of monumentality. The city of Alexandria was founded in the middle of a massive conquest of the east, and what we have left of the original city is not, in my mind, enough to comment on the monumental nature of the city in its first iteration. Undoubtedly the city became a monument through its later development, but for the purposes of this discussion of city foundation, I will not be addressing it. However, this aspect of the city comes into much greater play in the Ptolemaic period, and the continuing development of the city under the Ptolemies gives rise to the monumental nature of the city. Therefore, this aspect of the Hippodameian city will be addressed in greater detail in the second chapter of this thesis.

Comparable cities in the Near East bear little resemblance to cities in Greece at this time. Persian and Phoenician cities were characterized by tightly packed buildings and twisting streets or streets laid out in a semi-celestial pattern.³¹ This distinction

29 Aristophanes, *Knights* 328

30 Owens, 47, 61

31 Owens 49-50

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serves to further differentiate between the two kinds of city planning that would have been available to Alexander at the time of Alexandria's foundation. His travels would have taken him through the eastern section of the Near East en route to Egypt, but he founded Alexandria as a Greek city, not in the tradition of his soon-to-be-conquered empire.

Cities in the Fourth Century

There is some uncertainty surrounding the question of who actually planned the Piraeus. Though the location was settled for quite some time before the incarnation of the city in the fourth century BCE, Hippodamus was most likely responsible for the area's reconstruction in the popular style for Greek cities at the time.³² The city was rebuilt in the mid-fifth century BCE under Pericles. Like Alexandria, the Piraeus is coastally located, though its function was as the port-city of Athens, rather than an autonomous city like Alexandria was.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14189/14189-h/images/fig2.jpg>

The streets of the city are laid out in typical Hippodameian fashion, with regular patterns. One thing that does distinguish the construction of this area from others, however, is the topography of the land. The location of Piraeus is quite hilly, and this makes construction of regular streets difficult. However, there is evidence that the regular rectangular scheme of the city was adjusted in different areas to adapt to the

³² Gill, *Hippodamus and the Piraeus*, 14-15

more rugged terrain.³³ The fact that the rectangular shape was maintained despite the terrain, while more winding streets may have been easier to manage speaks to the popularity of and reliance on the Hippodameian model of city planning. Additionally, the city is bisected twice by axes. These two streets were wider than the rest of the streets in the grid plan, and run from northwest to southeast, from the west harbor to the east harbor, and from southwest to northeast, from the southern harbor to the northern road to Athens.

The complex seems to be in line with Hippodameian city structures as well. The agora, public squares and the Hippodameia were arranged along the spine of the peninsula for ease of access.³⁴ Additionally, it is true that not everything close to each other was for the same purpose. Unlike Athens, the religious buildings of the town were spread out, not concentrated in a central location like the Acropolis.³⁵ There is evidence of integration between older harbor fortifications and the more recently designated public and private districts.

Rhodes is another of the cities that sits well with Hippodameian styles of city planning. It has a well-documented gridded street plan in addition to visible definitions between public and private space. The city also has extensive water drainage systems which are comparable to those at Alexandria and provide another connection to the popular mode of building at this time.

33 Gill, ; Owens, 56

34 Gill, 146

35 Gill, 146

The drainage system is one of the more interesting features of the city. Archaeological surveys have found three complete systems, with one of them dating back to the original foundation of the city. Though this became a key part of city planning for Greece, the original drainage system at Rhodes, if it was indeed built with the first iteration of the city, would be one of the earliest in the ancient world.³⁶

Alexandria

<http://www.michaellivingston.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/alexandria.JPG>

Alexandria's original city plan is rather inaccessible. Because of the massive importance of the city well into later antiquity, the appearance and structure of the city was constantly being built upon by the Ptolemies and later Roman rulers. Some of the most recognizable landmarks come from much later, chronologically, and sifting through these different levels of evidence provides a certain level of difficulty.

The city, from what we can tell, seems to follow a grid pattern. This is keeping in line with the Hippodamian methods that became popular in the time leading up to the city foundation, as we have seen in examining the other two cities. Unfortunately, that assumption is based on what few archaeological findings are available, as many of the streets were built upon under the Ptolemies. Still, there is evidence for the grid. In 1866, an Arab surveyor by the name of Mahmoud-Bey visited Alexandria. He created a map of

36 Owens, 59

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ancient Alexandria which was based on the parts of the city that were visible to him.³⁷

This included evidence for the street grid, city walls and water system. This map has guided excavators in their search for ancient Alexandria, and the results of those excavations is what provides the basis for this discussion.

There is evidence along the streets of the Mahmoud-Bey city plan for pre-Ptolemaic streets. Fragmentary pieces of road can be found along the lines of streets R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R8, R9, L1, L2, and L4. There were two axes running perpendicularly to each other in the city (R1, L1). Evidence for the Ptolemaic origins of these streets is the orientation of key buildings in the city. Buildings and other landmarks have more definitely known dates of origin, and their alignment with the grid plan indicates that they were constructed around roughly the same time. Examples of these landmarks include the Serapeum and the Hepstadium.³⁸ Along these axes, there is evidence for a series of columns that follow the line of the streets. Additionally, the key buildings, which can be seen along these axes, represent a key aspect of the Hippodamean method of city planning by keeping the city organized on the grid plan. The major buildings are incorporated into that plan, and are representative of public space.

Despite the lack of complete evidence for the streets, there are considerable remains for what was under them. The Alexandrian water drainage systems were extensive and complex - a network of cisterns running below the city and out to sea. The complex system is, in some cases, attributed to Alexander, and calls to mind the system

37 McKenzie, 19

38 McKenzie, 20

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at Rhodes, which became such an integral part of the city's makeup in the Classical Period and beyond. Though I will not be discussing it in this paper, I believe that the examination of this water drainage system as a proxy for a street plan could be an interesting direction for further study.

Given what little we know of the original city and what we do know its later growth, I feel that it would be prudent to lay out what we can tell of the city's original boundaries. It seems to be a bit of a circular argument, in these circumstances, but given the fact that other aspects of the city indicate its Greek nature, I think it is a safe argument to make, as do Grimm and Coulson, that the walls of the city were located inside of the Necropolis, which most likely remained in use until the middle of the third century BCE.³⁹

III. Conclusions

Having now examined both of these versions of the foundation of Alexandria, I believe that it is safe to claim that Alexandria was founded as a distinctly Greek city, both literarily and archaeologically. In the case of the literary sources, the foundation of the city is portrayed in the style of traditional Greek city founding, and follows along with the paradigm of narrative foundation that is found in Dougherty's text. The pieces do not line up perfectly, but there seems to be a distinct effort to follow in the pattern laid out in other Greek foundation narratives. With the archaeological evidence, we can also

39 Coulson, William D.E., *Chatby Reconsidered*, 234-236

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see a strong connection to Greek cities in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Alexandria had a gridded street plan with axes bisecting the city from north to south and east to west. These axes appear to have been lined with key buildings in the city. Additionally, there was a complex water drainage system under the city which is sometimes attributed directly to Alexander. All of these pieces, when looked at at the same time for the same city, cast this location in a very Greek light. Alexandria is founded in the Greek tradition, but in a foreign location and during the time of Alexander's great conquest. Thus, Alexandria becomes a Greek symbol in a newly conquered Egypt, and a representation of the man himself. Under the Ptolemies, this connection will be expanded on with the establishment of the founder-cult in the city center and Ptolemy I's further development of the city in the fourth and third centuries BCE.

Chapter Two: The Urban Experience in the Early Ptolemaic Dynasty

With the first chapter of this thesis, I have set the stage for Alexandria as a Greek city. By looking at the paradigm of Greek foundation narratives as compared to those of Alexandria, as well as the physical evidence that remains for the earliest incarnation of the city's plan, one can fit Alexandria into a Greek cultural continuum of city establishment at the moment of its foundation. With this next chapter, I will be looking at the city as it grows under the Ptolemaic dynasty in its early stages. First, I will attempt to paint a picture of the region, both in the city of Alexandria and in the countryside surrounding it before moving into a discussion of the urban experience in the city itself. This section will deal with the tensions between Greeks and Egyptians, along with the interaction between the people, the city and the royal family.

The City of Alexandria

Alexandria occupied a unique position in Hellenistic geography. When looking at the lay of the lands in which Alexandria exists, there is much to be found in Strabo's *Geography*, particularly when describing at the actual landscape of the city's location. I will use Strabo's description of the city itself rather sparingly, simply because of when Strabo was writing. Strabo was compiling the *Geography* long after the time period which is dealt with in this examination. Because of this, I am wary of basing any arguments or contextual establishment on his descriptions of the more changeable features of the city. However, for the purposes of examining the geography and

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topography of the landscape, I believe that Strabo is a particularly useful resource, given the extent of his descriptions and the more constant nature of the landscape as opposed to the city.

The city was bordered on the south by Lake Mareotis, and rested on a limestone ridge on the coast of the Mediterranean. The island of Pharos lay just off the coast, and provided the city with two highly defensible harbors.⁴⁰ The area also boasted canals running from the Nile, which provided excellent avenues for imports to and exports from the city. The close proximity to the Nile is also credited by Strabo as the source of Alexandria's near-constantly pleasant weather; in the hot summers, cities near lakes would suffer heavy and humid air. Alexandria was spared this, according to Strabo, because of the Nile's annual floods, which cleared away the stagnant water which caused the unpleasant air.⁴¹ These features come together in the city to create a picturesque and comfortable location. The city had pleasant weather, a favorable and defensible location and easy access to trade with the rest of the Mediterranean.

Alexandria occupied a similarly unique position in the Egyptian cultural topography. The city was not called Alexandria-in-Egypt, but Alexandria-by-Egypt, *Alexandria ad Aegyptum*. It was a Greek city in a non-Greek region.⁴² It maintained a role separate from the native Egyptian cities that existed at the time of its founding, but with its location and control by the Ptolemies, declared a similar separation from the other

⁴⁰ Strabo *Geography*, 17.7

⁴¹ Strabo, 17.7

⁴² Shipley, Hansen, 65

Hellenistic kingdoms and an alignment with Egypt. These cultural distinctions and oddities can be found in both the structure of the city and in the ethnic strata of the city's population. In the first section, I will lay out the structure of the city as the evidence suggests, before moving on to a discussion of the countryside.

From the initial foundation of the city, Alexandria's Greek influences continued throughout the city's initial development. William Thalman, in his discussion of Hellenistic spaces, takes an interesting stance on the dialogue between the residents of the city and the city itself, or, more specifically, the spaces of the city. He takes into account many of the aspects of the city that were addressed in the first chapter of this thesis, such as the grid plan of the city and the location of specific, Greek-based city structures like the *agora*. Building on this, he then makes the assertion that these spaces had a profound and fundamental effect on the residents of Alexandria.

The city seems to have been constructed in a very particular way. The palace complex, which included the Museum and Library, took up somewhere between a quarter and a third of the city's area.⁴³ It was located in the northeastern corner of the city, while more residential areas occupied the southwestern corner. In between these spaces were various temples and civic buildings.⁴⁴ The palace district, while it contained the Museum and Library, also housed the tomb of Alexander, and later the tombs of the Ptolemies.

43 Rowlandson, 252

44 Rowlandson, 252

<http://www.michaellivingston.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/alexandria.JPG>

The structure of the city was full of Greek spaces, most notably the library and museum, which were seen as Greek institutions.⁴⁵ Gregory Nagy makes the observation that the royal complex of the Ptolemies is based on an idea of logic and continuity, and that the relationships between the palace, the Mouseion and the Soma represented the full scale of Ptolemaic power and prestige. He takes into account the placement and organization of the palace complex, and comes to the conclusion that that complex contributed to the constant reminders of Greek influence in the city by innately tying the city of Alexandria to the immense palace complex, which incorporated much more than just the palace itself.⁴⁶ This same idea of Ptolemaic "gigantism" can be found in Peter Green's discussion of urban culture in Alexandria.⁴⁷ The harbors and harbor installations such as wharves and warehouses were all linked into the palace complex as well. All of this taken together shows a clear message of economic and political control through the manipulation of space. The location of the palace on the harbor offered it an excellent vantage point over the comings and goings of the city - everyone had to enter and exit from the filter of this palace complex. There was a central sense of spatial logic in the palace complex that would have worked in tandem with the Greek spaces of the *agora*, law courts and the gymnasium to promote this sense of "Greekness" in the very walls of the city's buildings. Indeed, the Mouseion, which housed the library, was located

45 Thalman, 209

46 Nagy 1998

47 For more, see Green, 140-42

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centrally, in a place where people of varying ethnic and social background would have had to pass through. The Library itself was a representation of Hellenism in the city, providing a sense of Greek literary heritage through the texts housed within it.⁴⁸ The monumental nature of this building in the center of the city would have been a constant reminder of fact that this city was founded as Greek, to be controlled by Greek men. Additionally, the Mouseion had parallels in other Greek cities, most notably Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, which furthers its connections to deeper cultural significance for the Greeks in the city.⁴⁹ However, the building can be read in other ways. The building and cultural institution itself might have been following Greek patterns, but the content did not, necessarily. We cannot say that this library housed only Greek works of literature, but rather, most likely, contained texts from numerous cultures, Egyptian included.⁵⁰ If this is the case, the Library can then be seen as a synthesizer of culture, bringing together a myriad of different literary traditions into one space, albeit a Greek one. In some ways, I would call the Library of Alexandria a literary microcosm for the city itself, or at least a microcosm of what the city was meant to be.

An important focal point of culture in the city was the Serapeum, the central building for the cult of Serapis. The foundation of the cult of Serapis is relatively unknown, with various sources crediting it to Ptolemy I, Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III in

48 Thalman, 211

49 Thalman, 211

50 Thalman, 211

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turn.⁵¹ However, the most likely scenario is that the cult itself was founded in the early part of the reign of Ptolemy I, and was likely practiced in the location at which the Serapeum itself was later constructed by Ptolemy II or Ptolemy III. The cult statue of Serapis is well documented through extensive copies. The god was shown as a bearded, draped figure seated on a throne, with a bushel crown on his head and a scepter in his raised left hand. Seated next to him was Cerberus, the three headed guardian of the Underworld.⁵²

http://medias.photodeck.com/0db53852-3d6b-11e0-a804-634c2a795b21/001132_medium.jpg

http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/learning/features_facts/digging/beliefs/images/large_head_of_serapis.jpg

The cult of Serapis was, from what we know, a cult in the Greek style, which some scholars say might have been founded as such to provide colonizing Greeks with a familiar form of religious focus.⁵³ This would hold with the descriptions we have of the cult figure, particularly with the iconography of Cerberus, a decidedly Greek mythological figure. In addition, Egyptian representations of divinity were typically zoomorphic in some way, whereas all descriptions of the cult statue of Serapis describe it as being anthropomorphic. McKenzie argues that given Serapis' development as a dynastic god of the Ptolemies, it is likely that he was introduced early on in the dynastic

51 McKenzie, 81

52 McKenzie, 81

53 Rowlandson, 252

period in order to promote a sense of legitimacy with the local population.⁵⁴ Another theory, found most notably in the work of Fraser, states that the cult of Serapis may very well have had its roots in the Egyptian cult of the Apis bull in another, preexisting Egyptian city, such as Memphis, and was then adopted and adapted by the Ptolemies to be a dynastic cult in Alexandria.⁵⁵ If this theory is true, it involves a deliberate shift from a zoomorphic to an anthropomorphic cult figure. This, taken in conjunction with what physical evidence of culture remains at the site, casts the role of the Serapis cult in a rather interesting light in terms of dialogue between the two dominant cultures of the city. It seems likely that the adoption and adaptation of an existing cult was a way to promote cultural mixing under the Ptolemaic regime - Egyptians would be faced with a cult that they were already familiar with in some way, while the Greek immigrant population would have a more familiar cult figure than any other they were likely to find in Egypt. In the way, the Ptolemies would not have been neither overtly Egyptian nor Greek in their use of Serapis as a dynastic god, and could, in some ways, placate the population of the city.⁵⁶

Serapis' role as dynastic god of the king can be seen in the construction of a massive temple to the god (again, a construction which likely took place during the reign of Ptolemy III) on the city's main east-west street dedicated to Serapis, Isis, Ptolemy IV Philopator and Arsinoe III, for which bilingual foundation plaques were

54 McKenzie, 81
55 Fraser, 252
56 Stephens, 242

found in their apparent original context. The location of the temple can be seen in the previous map of Alexandria.

In excavations of the Serapeum, examples of both Greek and Egyptian statuary have been found, as well as the remains of two obelisks. In addition to the bilingual foundation plaques found at the site of the temple, there is also physical evidence of two red granite sphinxes, made in the Egyptian style, that are dated to the Ptolemaic period.⁵⁷ The presence of these two opposing cultural groups within the Serapeum has been described in various ways, with the native statues occasionally being described simply as Egyptian elements in a Greek setting, but it is a logical conclusion that these pieces of statuary were a part of the temple during the Ptolemaic period, based on the mixed imagery in the temple itself.

While the style of the cult is decidedly Greek, with the cult figure being shown in the typical Greek fashion, rather than with the more common animal imagery found in Egyptian religious practice, the site itself is representative, in some ways, of both cultures. Signs of Egyptian influence are most certainly present, even if that presence does not directly influence the practices of the cult. We cannot know for certain the full measure of the religious processes that took place in the Serapeum, but there are clear signs of cultural blending at this site. If this cult was indeed established as a way to assuage the concerns of an imported Greek populace, what is the purpose of this employment of Egyptian imagery and sculpture? The Serapeum functioned in the same

⁵⁷ McKenzie, 100

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way for Egyptians as it does for Greeks. For Ptolemy to simply appease the Greeks at the expense of the Egyptians would undermine his position in power by alienating a huge part of his kingdom's population. Again, the cultural blending seems to have been employed in order to have recognizable elements of both cultures in a single place, in this case a cult, and to have that thing become a piece of the city to which all involved could relate.

These spaces contribute to the feel of the city. The evidence for the people in Alexandria is thin, though some conclusions can be made from the evidence available. Firstly, it is difficult to make claims about the standing of Greeks versus Egyptians in the city, simply because the evidence is both lacking and sometimes contradictory. In some cases, the evidence points to Egyptian displeasure with the Greeks and the city of Alexandria. Chauveau argues that the term "rhakotis", which is often said to be the pre-Alexandrian name for that region of Egypt, was used as a derogatory term for the Greek city. Rhakotis literally meant "building site", which could have, as an Egyptian name for the city, evoked a perceived cultural transience to the Greek presence in Egypt. However, there is also evidence that Ptolemy I, when he was first laying the groundwork for the administration of the empire, validated and even encouraged native Egyptians to continue the rituals and systems they had practiced before the arrival of Alexander.⁵⁸ There were rules against intermarriage in the city, with only one case known of an

58 Rowlandson, 253

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Alexandrian citizen marrying a native Egyptian. This marriage took place outside the city proper, while the man in question was living in the Fayuum.⁵⁹

Evidence for the City

In order to get a closer look at the urban experience, I will be examining poetry by Theocritus and Herodas. Theocritus was a court poet for the Ptolemaic royal family, while Herodas was a poet from the city. Both were writing in the third century BCE. The work of Theocritus presents a slight problem, though not, I believe, an insurmountable one. Alexandrian court poetry cannot, in my opinion and that of many, be called wholly Greek or Egyptian, nor can it be removed from its context as being written for the most powerful people in the city. And though attempting to apply a cultural point of view to a poet's work in retrospect is a dangerous task, issues with a poet's context must at least be addressed, even if no claims are made based on it. Hunter, in his introduction to Theocritus' "Encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus", is of the same mind, as are many in the scholarship of Hellenistic Egypt.⁶⁰ These poets, while they were writing under the control of a Greek dynasty, would have had, at the very least, awareness of Egyptian traditions. To establish this, Hunter uses analysis of imagery in poems from Callimachus, noting connections between the phrasing and metaphor used in the poems, as well as their connections to both Greek and Egyptian traditions, such as with the language present in the *Ektheosis of Arsinoe*, composed after the death of Arsinoe II, Ptolemy II's

59 Rowlandson, 256

60 For more on this subject, see: Hunter, 46-49

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wife and sister.⁶¹ In this poem, Arsinoe is described as being "snatched away" to join the moon.⁶² The phrasing of this excerpt has parallels to be found in Greek traditions, where heroes can be snatched away to join the ranks of the immortals after death.⁶³ However, it is also the case that the ascent to the stars is a central concept to Egyptian conceptions of the afterlife, and thus would resonate with people from both cultural backgrounds as an appropriate end to a life for a beloved figure.⁶⁴

Additionally, in his analysis of Theocritus' *Idyll 15*, he notes a similar connection between Greek and Egyptian culture that can be found in the language of the poem. His overall claim, which I would agree with, is that these poems are, first and foremost, being constructed against a background of coexisting cultures that are connected by the existence of the Ptolemaic dynasty. These kings operated in two cultural spheres simultaneously, and though these poems are most certainly written from a Greek sociocultural position⁶⁵, these two different audiences must at least be acknowledged when attempting to analyze poetry dealing with the city.

Theocritus' *Idyll 15* is one of the best and earliest literary resources that we have for the city of Alexandria. The poem was likely composed in the early reign of Ptolemy II, soon after his marriage to Arsinoe II.⁶⁶ It is written in *mime*, which is a type of poetry in

61 Hunter 2003: 51-52

62 Hunter 2003: 52

63 Hunter 2003: 52

64 Hunter 2003: 52

65 Hunter 2003: 52

66 Hunter, 14

a wider tradition of "popular" performance.⁶⁷ The poem's subject is the festivities surrounding the Adonis festival, and details the trip that two Greek women of Alexandria take through the streets from their residence to the palace of Ptolemy II for the festival celebration. Along the way, the poem gives the reader examples and evidence for life in the city beyond what remains archaeologically. To begin, we have the excerpt:

Gorgo: Heavens, what a crowd! How we're to get through this awful crush and how long it's going to take us, I can't imagine. Talk of an antheap!

Praxinoa: I must say, you've done us many a good turn, my good Ptolemy, since your father went to heaven. We have no villains sneaking up to murder us in the streets nowadays in the good old Egyptian style. They don't play those awful games now – the thorough-paced rogues, every one of them the same, all queer! (Theocritus 15.44-55)

Hunter takes an extensive look at the content and context of Theocritus' Idylls, and in his analysis ranges from a detailed examination of the specific language used in the poems to an examination of the broader, more far-reaching themes in the poem.

There is a clear and rather blatant claim being made against the character of the Egyptian people in this selection. Though Theocritus does not expound upon this point, its placement in the poem as a simple statement of fact shows an ingrained sense of separation between the Greek population of the city and the native Egyptians. However, at the same time, through extensive civil service, Egyptians could gain "Hellenes" status

67 Hunter, 8

in Alexandria.⁶⁸ Evidence found in census records from Alexandria shows that many residents of the city who could claim "Hellenes" status were of partly or even wholly Egyptian ancestry.⁶⁹ Greek feelings towards Egyptians seem mixed as a result of these different pieces of information about the social construction of the city.

Ptolemaic policy and court poetry under the Ptolemies offer differing perspectives despite their close connections to each other. We can also see in Idyll 15 that there was a somewhat fluid relationship between the elites of the city and the common people. Though the derogatory description of Egyptians is in the previous passage, we also have repeated references to the palace of Ptolemy II and the massive crowd that gathers for the festival of Adonis.⁷⁰ This suggests at least some familiarity with the area by the common people. The elite do not seem completely removed from their subjects, but again, this is an argument made difficult by the perspective of the poem and its subjects. The poem's point of view is a Greek one, and it likely does not speak for the native Egyptian perspective.

The language of the poem is another aspect to consider when examining the greater cultural clues that this text holds. There is a specific reference to the different dialects of the people mixed up in the hustle and bustle of the city.

Second Stranger: Oh dear, oh dear, ladies! do stop that
eternal cooing. They'll weary me to death with their ah-ah-
ah-ing.

Praxinoa: My word! where does that person come from?

68 Rowlandson, 256

69 For more on this, see: D.J. Thompson, 2001, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* 301-22

70 Theocritus, Idyll 15.65-77

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What business is it of yours if we do coo? Buy your slaves
before you order them about, pray. You're giving your
orders to Syracusans. If you must know, we're Corinthians
by extraction, like Bellerophon himself. What we talk's
Peloponnesian. I suppose Dorians may speak Doric, mayn't
they? (Theocritus 15.87-95)

Unfortunately, the dialects referred to in this section are mostly lost to us, if there even was a Syracusan dialect at all.⁷¹ However, what the dialect did or did not sound like is of little consequence to this discussion. Hunter argues that this distinction between regional dialects can have various interpretations. He stresses the idea of 'mimetic realism' in the poem, which is established and emphasized by this use of dialect. In the Greek, Praxinoa and Gorgo's language is different from that of a more conventional poetic style, perhaps in an attempt to remove it from staid poetic tradition and to place it in the more day-to-day setting that the poem attempts to create. At the same time, notes Hunter, the meter that they *do* use does not seem to match up with any known dialects.⁷² Additionally, in linguistic terms, the fake dialect keeps the poem suspended in a constructed sense of reality, belonging to neither the world of the poet nor the real world.

What does this distinction do for the overall thrust of this discussion? On one hand, we have a breaking down of the Greek "whole" that has seemed so prevalent in previous pieces of evidence. Whereas previous evidence dealt more with the city and the spaces within it, in the text of this poem we are privy to the more humanizing

71 For more on dialects, see: Hunter, 1996: 122

72 Hunter 1996: 122

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aspects of city life, however stylized and carefully chosen they might be. In this moment, the audience has now seen Praxinoa and Gorgo at odds with both Egyptian cultural conventions and with the attitudes of fellow Greeks in the city. This adds a certain layer of complexity to the analysis of this poem, if only because it breaks up the false binary that has been built up from previous evidence, breaking the city up in terms of Greek space and non-Greek space. Indeed, despite the apparently overwhelming sense of Greek culture and sensibility that may seem present in the city through its architecture and physical structure, there is a sense of discord to be found in this moment of the poem. The Egyptian population, unlike that of the Greek immigrants, were somewhat culturally unified by location, language and religious tradition, and had been for hundreds of years.⁷³ The same cannot be said for the Greek population of the city, which had been drawn from various *poleis* across the Greek world, and sometimes from places where fractiousness had previously been of some concern. We can see the result of this in the previous excerpt from Idyll 15, where Praxinoa draws a firm distinction between herself and the rest of the Greeks in the city by specifically identifying as a Syracusan, and specifically Corinthian. The sense of being a Greek is overshadowed by one's association with a particular city-state.⁷⁴

Obviously, the city cannot be seen as representation of a simple cultural binary between Greek and Egyptian residents. Indeed, though Theocritus may seem to push forward a picture of Alexandria as being populated by elite Greeks with the rabble being

73 Stephens, 243

74 Stephens, 243

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made up of native Egyptians, this moment in the narrative represents a break between poetic imagery and sociocultural reality. Peter Green goes into this topic extensively, looking at not only Alexandria, but Antioch and Pergamon in modern-day Turkey. In his article "The New Urban Culture: Alexandria, Antioch, Pergamon", he examines the urban contexts of these cities after the influx of Greek influence after Alexander's conquest. In his analysis of the Alexandrian system of governance, he finds a blend of Greek and Egyptian culture in the city, mostly through the Hellenization of existing Egyptian systems of power and government, as well as the re-purposing of the traditionally Greek spaces that can be found in the city. In the governance of this new city, he claims, we can find the underpinnings of the Pharonic system of power in Egypt previous to Alexander's conquest of the region, particularly in the establishment of the office of king as a semi-divine position.

He also remarks on the highly commercial nature of Ptolemaic propaganda, particularly through poetry. In Herodas' mimes, the terms in which Alexandria is described are almost exclusively based in consumption and wealth. Herodas, like Theocritus, was writing in the mimetic style, and was likely composing his poems during the third century BCE. Unlike Theocritus, however, Herodas was not a court poet, and thus may be somewhat more removed from the delicate position between cultures that Theocritus occupied. His work, in this example, deals less with the cultural distinctions of the city's population and more with the monumentalizing nature of the Ptolemaic administration.

Ten months have passed since Mandris departed for Egypt and he has not sent you a single line. The house of the Goddess is there; everything, everything there is and which can be, is in Egypt: riches, palæstræ, power, happiness, glory, spectacles, philosophers, young boys, temples of twin gods, an excellent King, a museum, wine, all the good things one could desire, women without number — by the Virgin, Mistress of Hades, the sky is not so glorified by bearing so many stars! (Herodas, 1.25-26)

Here, like in Theocritus, we can see the effect of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. The surplus of wealth in the Ptolemaic empire was focused inwards, on the improvement of Egypt, not out in search of expansion into other areas of the Mediterranean. In this way did Ptolemy III earn the title Euergetes, "Benefactor". His kingdom's wealth went to various causes, including cities outside Alexandria, as well as to members of the priesthood and artists.⁷⁵

Another text of importance when looking at cultural perspectives in Egypt is the Greek Alexander Romance, written by pseudo-Callisthenes. In the first chapter of this thesis, it was employed to comment on the foundation of Alexandria, but it has a different use in this chapter. As stated then, the date of the Romance is a difficult thing to place. It is likely that the story was originally composed in the early Ptolemaic period, though the written version is likely a later iteration of that original story, probably from the 3rd century CE.⁷⁶ The nature of the text, with an Egyptian origin, and its apparent point of view serve as a kind of counterpoint to the highly Greek perspective of

75 Green, 142

76 Gruen, 307 cf. 9

Theocritus' Idylls. Though we cannot know for certain the authorship of the text, its contents point to a different point of view, specifically an Egyptian one.

Erich Gruen argues that the Romance itself is based on Egyptian conceptualizations, notably in its assertion of fatherhood as a divine position, stemming from the myth of Amon-Re as the father of the Pharaoh. The story begins with Alexander's birth being orchestrated by Nectanebos II, the last pharaoh of Egypt. As the story goes, Nectanebos was ousted from power by the Persian invasion of Egypt and was forced to flee the country. After he fled Egypt, a prophecy was given to the people he left behind, stating that their wayward ruler would be returned to them, not as an old man, but as a youth who would punish the enemies of the country.⁷⁷ Nectanebos, meanwhile, spent his time insinuating himself in the court of Philip II, Alexander's father, marketing himself as a seer and astrologer. Eventually, his efforts caught the eye of the queen, Olympias, future mother to Alexander. Through some orchestration, Nectanebos convinced Olympias, according to the text, that the god Ammon would come to her in the guise of the old seer to impregnate her. Of course, this eventually came to pass, with Nectanebos managing to convince even Philip that what he had predicted had, in fact, transpired.⁷⁸ Alexander bore little resemblance to either Philip or Olympias. At this point, history follows its predicted course, and Alexander begins his conquest, leading him eventually to Egypt and the homeland of his father. Due to the prophecy in Egypt, Alexander was named pharaoh by the prophets and priests immediately upon his arrival,

⁷⁷ Alexander Romance, 1.3.4-6

⁷⁸ Alexander Romance, 1.4-12

and claimed Nectanebos as his true father, thus fulfilling the full letter of the prophecy.⁷⁹

What can this text provide for a discussion of the urban experience of Alexandria? While it does not speak directly to the everyday life of the city (or at least something claiming to be everyday life), it does provide an interesting look at the relationship of these two cultural groups, albeit in an abstract way. In this myth, Alexander is tied fundamentally to Egyptian traditions of kingship, as stated before. This provides a direct sense of continuity between Egyptian rule and Greek rule. Alexander can thus, in this text, be claimed as Egyptian by the native people of the region, and so could his accomplishments. As Gruen argues, this application of Egyptian tradition to Alexander's origins and actions is not an undermining of his power, but rather an attempted integration with it.⁸⁰ Nectanebos' actions in the narrative served one purpose only, despite their sometimes convoluted path : the solidification of Alexander's ties to Egypt through birthright. Because of this, the occupation of Egypt by Alexander is not the invasion of a foreign conqueror, but is instead simply the rightful ruler returning to his proper place. Gruen also cites a nearly perfect parallel story in Egypt, found in Herodotus. The story of the Persian conqueror Cambyses follows the same path, where Cambyses was, through a rewriting of his past, made the son of Cyrus and an Egyptian princess, thus bringing the Egyptians that same sense of security that there were not being subjected by a foreign power.⁸¹

79 Alexander Romance, 1.34

80 Gruen, 311

81 Herodotus, 3.1-2

Though the date of the original text cannot be known, Gruen places it, in its first iteration, at the beginning of the Ptolemaic dynasty.⁸² At this point, both the Greeks and Egyptians in the region has a need for this sense of continuity - the Egyptians for reassurance about the beginning of Ptolemaic rule, and the Ptolemies themselves for legitimacy.

These sources all give an observer the sense of being in the city of Alexandria. In many ways, the city seems to have been a rudimentary melting pot, adapting both Greek and Egyptian traditions and piecing them together in a way that was both and neither at the same time. In the case of the Serapeum, we have an example of religious practices being fused together in a way that would have appealed to a wide audience in the city. In the case of the Greek Alexander Romance, we have an example of a Greek figure, Alexander, being given a multicultural history, so that he might be a prominent part of both Greek and Egyptian culture. These things culminate in the city itself, in which Greek spaces are employed to house and cultivate a somewhat bi-cultural perspective, though obviously an imperfect one, based on Theocritus' work. However, it is not simply a schism between Greeks and Egyptians. Instead the Greek population itself is fragmented by identification to specific city states.

⁸² See also cf. 9

The Egyptian Countryside

Having examined the city at length, I will now propose a brief analysis of the areas outside of the city so as to compare the environments. The city of Alexandria was a small part of the larger Egyptian context. Though the urban life of the city is the main subject of this paper, I do feel that a brief contrast with the people and places removed from the city is a valuable thing to make. The situation in the rural areas outside the city was quite different from that of Alexandria. Where the city was seen as a highly Greek area, filled with reminders of Greek architecture, power and history, the countryside and its population were less overtly Hellenic, though Greek influences could still be found.

Firstly, the population of Egypt was not entirely Egyptian before the arrival of Alexander. There were Greek settlements in northern Africa long before his conquest, evidence of which can be found in Herodotus.⁸³ Two cities in the Nile Delta, called the 'Camps', were settlements occupied primarily by Ionian and Karian mercenaries, and the city of Naukratis in the western portion of the Delta was a primarily Milesian settlement that functioned as the primary trading center between Greece and Egypt for in the earlier days of Greek occupation.⁸⁴ However, these colonies lacked the centralizing hub that would have given them cultural heft in the region.

The population of the countryside was changed drastically with Alexander's arrival. The soldiers who were settled in Egypt were given parcels of land in existing Egyptian communities outside the city, most commonly in the area surrounding Fayum

83 Rowlandson, 250

84 Herodotus 2.154, 2.178

Oasis⁸⁵, and thus these Greek people were inserted directly into the heart of Egyptian rural life.⁸⁶ However, this was not the only change. The construction of the new capital also caused an expansion of populated agricultural land, which brought in more Egyptians from the more southern parts of the region.⁸⁷ By the second half of the 3rd century, based on information from Ptolemaic census records, it is possible that up to sixteen percent of the population in the Fayum region was Greek, a proportion that does not seem particularly high when compared to the population proportions in Alexandria.⁸⁸ In some cases, the population in towns of the Fayum was fifty percent Greek and fifty percent Egyptian. Soldiers who were settled in this area, despite living in close proximity to their Egyptian neighbors, were usually wealthier than the native population. Additionally, rural areas were not subject to rules against intermarriage between Greeks and Egyptians.⁸⁹

Further evidence of the Hellenization of the outer areas of Egypt can be seen in cities other than Alexandria, as well as in smaller towns dotting the region. The foundation of the cities Philadelphia and Ptolemais took place under the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and were structured in much the same way as Alexandria. Additionally, they share a key connection with the city of Alexandria – all three cities are tied to the ruling dynasty through their names. Many of the settlements founded under

85 Thompson, 108
86 Rowlandson, 251
87 Rowlandson, 256
88 Rowlandson, 256
89 Rowlandson, 256

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the reign of the Ptolemies had names related to the dynasty, and under the reign of Ptolemy II, the Fayum was titled the Arsinoite, after Ptolemy's sister and wife.⁹⁰

The city and the chora had different social makeups. In the city, there were varying levels of social position, with the king at the top of the metaphorical pyramid. High-ranking members in the Alexandrian social structure were Greek and Macedonian, while some minor and less important civic positions could be held by Egyptians. In contrast, the social stratum outside the city was much less distinct, with populations of both Egyptians and Greeks living together. This is not to say that Greeks and Egyptians lived equally, however. We can see from the physical layout of buildings in the city of Alexandria that the "Greekness" of the city was something that was highly emphasized, particularly through the construction of the Mouseion at the heart of the city. Additionally, Greek dominance can be found in the countryside through the names of settlements that tie back into dynastic rule. The Ptolemies had control of Egypt, and that control could be found by various means.

Because of the more arid conditions in the areas of Egypt more removed from the damp, fertile lands close to the Nile, there are quite a few papyrus fragments remaining from smaller villages in the Fayuum. While the scope of these papyri are rather narrow, they do offer us an interesting glimpse into the workings of communities outside of the urban center of the region.

90 Rowlandson, 151

One of the larger repositories of papyri comes from the accounts of the *strategos* Diophanes. *Strategos*, in the Hellenistic context, was a term to denote the governor of a certain region. *Strategos*, in Greek, is the term for a general, but after Alexander's conquest, he replaced existing Persian governors throughout his conquered territories with trusted military commanders, thus conflating the two terms.⁹¹ Diophanes was the *strategos* for the Arsinoite nome, which consisted of the area south of Memphis and around Lake Moeris.⁹²

The majority of the papyri from Diophanes' accounts are records of complaints, both criminal and not, seeking the recovery of property, or simply lodging a grievance against another person. When looking at the available documents, there is a clear pattern - one which seems to pit Egyptians against Greeks and vice versa.⁹³ Twenty-five complaints follow in this vein, with the majority (eighteen of the twenty-five) of the complainants being Greeks and other seven Egyptians. These complaints range in subject from complaints about property damage, arguments over housing, failure to deliver goods paid-for, failure to repay loans and assault.

In cases where the complaint is assault - there are ten instances of this - seven of the complainants are Greeks accusing Egyptians. The other three cases involve a Greek accusing a Greek, an Egyptian accusing an Egyptian, and an Egyptian accusing a Greek.⁹⁴ These cases show a distinct and measurable sense of hostility between these two groups

91 Lewis, 56

92 Lewis, 56, 176

93 Lewis, 60

94 Lewis, 60

in a way that one does not see in the context of the huge urban center of Alexandria. In these cases, the hostility between Greeks and Egyptians is acted upon. In the city, the evidence points to a quieter cultural distinction, as is seen in Theocritus' poetry.

We see another dynamic emerge when looking at cases of property-based complaints. In these filings, the complaints, when brought by Greeks, are usually brought against other Greeks, and the same holds true for Egyptians.⁹⁵ This separation between the ethnic groups seems to indicate a more day-to-day pattern, in which the two groups stayed as removed from each other as possible. There are some cases in which a Greek brings a complaint against an Egyptian, or vice versa, but the vast majority are ethnically removed from the other.⁹⁶

Whereas in Alexandria there is some sense of peaceful cultural co-habitation, or at least a lack of evidence pertaining to cultural conflict, that is certainly not the case here. The cases of violence brought against people are not just examples of physical conflict, but humiliation, particularly in the case in which an Egyptian woman accuses a Greek man of violence against her. The woman apparently had a pending case for another reason against the man, and he, in retaliation, rounded up a gang to come and abuse her and her witnesses.⁹⁷ There is no sense of cultural cohesion, here, nor does there seem to be an attempt at it. Or rather, it is possible that the cultural situation that can be found in this evidence is more representative of the "true" social makeup of the

95 Lewis, 61

96 For more on this, see Lewis 63-67

97 Lewis, 61

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region. Broader social tension could have been the norm for the majority of the country, with Alexandria being the exception to the rule. It seems as though proximity to the urban center of Alexandria could have been a mediating factor in the prevalent social tensions, with the active attempts at cultural mixing counteracting the inherent disparity between the native Egyptian population and the Greeks.

With this evidence, we have some ideas as to the structure of Alexandria and the surrounding area. Alexandria itself was, at least in theory, a location of cultural mixing. This is evident in the examination and discussion of the Serapeum, particularly due to the elements of bi-cultural intentions from its very foundation. This can be seen in the bilingual dedication plaques and the Greek and Egyptian iconography that is a part of the building itself as well as the cult structure. At the same time, there is a sense, in some ways, of cultural unease. Evidence of this can be found in Theocritus, though that unease exists not only between Greeks and Egyptians, but between Greeks and other Greeks. All of this contrasts with the evidence we have for the areas outside of Alexandria, in the more rural spaces. In these locations, there is much stronger evidence for unchecked tension between these cultural groups, sometimes culminating in violence, which we can see in the papyrus fragments from Diophanes.

The central focus of the city was the Mouseion, the home of two of the most Greek institutions to be found in Egypt, the Library and Museum of Alexandria. These buildings represented and housed the scope of Mediterranean history and literature in a way that was in line with established Greek practice. At the same time, this installation

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in the city provided the native Egyptian population access to that same continuum.

Outside the city, we see a large amount of population blending, due in large part to the policy for the placement of Greek colonists and military personnel, but there remains that distinction between Egyptian and Greek, particularly in the names of towns and cities established during the early reigns of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Additionally, tensions between the two groups seem to be more present, or at the very least, more overt, perhaps because of their distance from the king and his mediating policies in the urban core of the country. It seems likely to me that the social tensions seen in the countryside were the norm and the "natural" state of being for the two groups when they were forced to live in close proximity. If that is so, then the cultural cooperation in Alexandria, as seen through the provided evidence, would have been a direct result of Ptolemaic policy in the city, rather than simple cooperation.

Conclusions

As has been shown in these two chapters, the urban experience in Alexandria is an interesting and complex one. From the foundation and through the early years of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the planned experience and the actual experience lend themselves differently to different people. The city, when it was founded by Alexander, was founded as Greek. Its foundation narratives are constructed in the Greek style, with familiar pieces and symbolism that would have been recognized by a Greek audience.

Additionally, the use of Greek city planning techniques further contextualizes the city as a Greek one. The city plan, with its regularly ordered streets and grid structure, was a distinctly Greek construct, influenced and adapted for Egypt in the style of Hippodamus. At this moment of time, at the very instant of foundation, Alexandria was entirely Greek.

However, as time passes, we can see that this pure Greek context does not hold for long. In the early years of the Ptolemies, we see a shift from the idea of “Greekness” to a distinctly bi-cultural urban experience. However, even naming it as bi-cultural simplifies the image of the city too far. From Theocritus’ *Idyll 15*, we have evidence of some disparity between Greeks and Egyptians, but also between Greeks and other Greeks, shown with the identification of the characters in the poem with a specific ancestral city-state. At the same time, the bi-lingual dedication inscription on the Serapeum indicates at least some sense of cultural recognition in the city, which is further seen in the duality of the cult of Serapis itself through the structure of the cult and the mixture of Greek and Egyptian archaeological evidence found at the site.

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Outside of the city, there is not this sense of attempted cultural cohesion. Instead, we see evidence of distinct separation of cultural groups for much of the time through papyrial evidence of land allotment and farm disputes, and when these groups do come in contact with each other, it can be through violence, as seen in the accusations of assault in the Arsinoite nome.

The Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt lasted until the battle of Actium in 31 BCE. This discussion of the urban experience ends over a century before the end of the dynasty, and given the amount of cultural change that can be seen between the founding of the city and the reign of Ptolemy III, it is my belief that this examination of city life in Egypt could be and should be expanded to look at the remainder of dynastic rule in the region, and that tracking the changes in cultural interactions, ethnic identification and the role of the king in the life of the city could give Classical scholarship a glimpse into the lives and motivations of various social groups in ancient Alexandria and Egypt, as well as providing a useful way to examine cultural interactions throughout the Mediterranean as a comparative tool.

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