A Key Figure among Egypt’s Contemporary Artists

The Diffusion of Alexandrian Cults in the Mediterranean and Europe

Egypt and Sea Power

L’École philosophique d’Alexandrie

Jack Debney’s Alexandria

and Other Characters

Kebben R.

إيراتوسفينيس الفويني
A former dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Alexandria University, Hamed Eweis has influenced numerous contemporary Egyptian artists, many of whom were also his students. Today, he is considered a pioneer of the socialist movement in Egyptian painting: by placing simple Egyptian peasants and workers in the foreground of his paintings, Eweis has always strived to portray the heart and soul of the Egyptian people both in their daily lives and faced by historical events.

Hamed Eweis was born in a small village near the capital of Bani Souef Governorate. His education began in the village kuttab, or Koranic school, and then he went to primary school in Bani Souef, 12 kilometers away. As a child in his native village, Eweis would often make clay models of animals using the Nile mud, then, at school he learnt to draw. As a youngster he would often visit the workshop of a local naqash, or plasterer, with whom he soon became friends. This decided the young Eweis to go to a technical school to learn such skills.

This dream however, was quickly crushed by the artist’s father who wanted his son to become a police officer. As the oldest child and an only son, with three younger sisters, Eweis was able to put pressure on his family and so his father finally agreed to enter his son in a technical college at Bani Souef. On the first day, he was requested to draw an animal; he immediately withdrew from the school and his father sent him to secondary school instead. It was there that he met one of his first mentors, a teacher whom he greatly admired and who was graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts. It was through his influence that the young Eweis began to nurture the dream of also studying fine arts, an ambition he dared not tell his family who were proud planning for their son to become a police officer.

When he graduated from secondary school, his father entered him for the Police Academy in Abbaseya district in Cairo. During the week while his application papers for the Police Academy were being processed, Hamed Eweis was staying with his uncle in Boulaq district. Not far from there were Zamalek and Guezira Island, where the Faculty of Fine Arts was located. Each day, the young Eweis would wander over to this faculty and admire the beautiful villa with sculptures in its garden. So, when his application to the Police Academy was turned down, due to lack of contacts, he immediately retrieved his papers and submitted them to the Faculty of Fine Arts instead. He had just one week to prepare for the entrance exam. When the professor who coached him for the exam gave him a piece of charcoal for the first time, the charcoal crumbled in his hands! On the day of the actual exam, there were 200 candidates, many of whom seemed strange to Eweis, the young man from a Bani Souef village. They even spoke strange words which he did not understand. The exam lasted three days. On the first day, the candidates were asked to draw something with charcoal, on the second with colors, and on the third they had to make something from clay. This final task, Eweis completed very successfully by making a camel as he used to do in his village. On the first day, he was requested to draw an abajoura (a table lamp), but he did not even know what the word meant. Seeing his predicament, someone nearby told him to “draw an oil lamp with a hat”. Finally Hamed Eweis did pass the entrance exam: he was one of only 14 candidates who succeeded out of the 200.

After completing the foundation year at the Fine Arts Faculty, he entered the Painting Department where there were 5 students. His professors included Ahmed Sabry, Hossam Bikar and Youssef Kamel. In the beginning, he would copy the style of his professors. In an interview, Eweis has explained how as a young student he had no general knowledge. As the Faculty of Fine Arts demanded little theoretical study, he began to read avidly on his own, reading 3-4 hours each day, conscious that as an artist he needed to be cultured. His student days began in 1939–1940 during the outbreak of the Second World War. The streets of Cairo were full of soldiers from the Allied Forces. With a fellow student, Eweis opened a small studio to make portraits of the officers. After graduating, he decided to stay in the capital and entered the Mahad el Terbiya el Aali (the Institute for Higher Education) to learn how to become an art teacher. During the two years he spent at that institute, he and a group of fellow artists began to think of creating a society of artists so that they could exhibit their own work. At that time, there was a society specifically for art teachers, Gam’iyat Atžābidhat al-Rasm. So Eweis and his friends founded the Gam’išat Sawt al-Fanān, the Society for the Voice of the Artist. With the revenue from membership fees, they hoped to hire premises in which to exhibit their works. However, when they held their first exhibition at the end of the year, they discovered that it had been a mistake not to ask for entry requirements for membership. As a result the society now became the išhad Kharegeen el-Fanūn al-Gamila: the Union of Fine Arts Graduates. In time however, it became...
evident that not all graduates from the Fine Arts Faculty were necessarily artists, and so then the society became the Garrat al-Fari al-Hadith, the Society for Modern Artists, accepting both art graduates and practicing artists. The society’s ten founding members included Gamal El Seguiny, Zein Hamouda, Gazbia Sirry and Zeinab-Abdel Hamid among others…. Their main objective was to produce art which expressed their philosophical ideals, and this new society began to hold exhibitions in both Cairo and Alexandria.

Later, Eweis moved to Alexandria, his wife’s native city. At first he began teaching at a secondary school there, but when the Faculty of Fine Arts of Alexandria University opened, he began to work there, and was to become one of its most eminent professors, and finally the dean of the faculty.

Eweis has often stated that his countryside origins are at his core and that for him, the fellah is the basis of Egyptian society. Thus, the main character or hero in his paintings is the Egyptian fellah or the Egyptian laborer. He has depicted them at their daily work and activities. However, in addition to subject matter, Eweis’ pictorial technique soon developed and he began to experiment with the use of color especially. At times, he would even use the paint tube directly on the canvas to apply color, rather than the paintbrush. He wanted to use the “language of color”. For example in 1951, he painted a group of bowabs sitting reading the newspaper together. One was wearing a green gallabeyah, another a purple one and so on. These colors gave the painting a slightly fantastical quality. The following year, in 1952, Eweid traveled to Italy where he participated in the Venice Biennale along with 50 other Egyptian artists such as Seif Wanly and Adham Wany. There, he remembers being impressed by the Italian artists in particular, by their use of color and technique to portray simple people, as he had tried to do himself. Upon his return to Egypt, Eweis began to limit himself to 3 or 4 colors: brown, yellow, blue and black. His paintings thus became much darker and more dramatic during this period.

However, when the great Egyptian artist Mahmoud Said visited Eweis and saw his new technique, the master advised him to return to his previous style. That was when Eweis decided to strike a balance between technique and subject matter in his paintings, so that neither should dominate the other. He began to look at the works of European artists such as Picasso and Braque and observe how they drew shapes especially. Always however, Eweis focused on the life of the average Egyptian or of the human being in general. He would portray people in one of two situations: either working or learning.

Then in 1957, events were to provoke another turning point: the 1967 War was felt as a disaster for the Arabs and changed their lives. At that time, Hamed Eweis began to introduce symbolism in his works, because he was no longer able to express what he wanted to say openly and directly in his paintings. Several of his symbolic paintings during that period represented Palestine and the situation in Egypt.

In, his first painting completed after the 1967 defeat, Hamed Eweis portrays the deception and disappointed hopes of the Egyptian people. The message of the painting is to urge the Egyptians to defend themselves. The strength of the people is shown through the main character, the simple fellah with a sad face. He is carrying an old rifle with which he is protecting the people. Below, in the foreground is a multitude of figures, each one representing an Egyptian: children playing, simple peasants (fellaheen), young children going to school, a man with his wife and children, a bride and bridegroom, lovers, students and so on…. Behind the huge figure of the fellah holding his rifle, is a town in the background on the right of the painting. The fellah is protecting this town also, with its white houses and factories. And in the background on the left of the painting is the Aswan High Dam, still under construction.

Another subject with appeared in his art during this period is the United States of America. In 1970, Eweis created a symbolic painting in which a giant robotic horse represents America, the power behind the 1967 War. On the left of the painting, the Statue of Liberty and the grass and flowers, are meant to indicate the happy American lifestyle. Whereas in the background on the right, remnants of ancient columns are meant to show that such ancient civilizations are of no importance to America.

Hamed Eweis also painted several works inspired by the nationalization of the Suez Canal. One in particular shows about 80 characters, representing the Egyptian people, all gazing joyfully at the main character in the painting, General Nasser.

Hamed’s attitude to his art can perhaps be summed up by his insistence to paint only characters which strive and contribute to society in some way. He refuses to paint beggars for example, or nudes which merely represent the inactive human body without achieving anything. Eweis’s characters are all creatures of action, contributing to society.

In addition to participating in numerous exhibitions, in 1997 Hamed Eweis was awarded a prize at the Alexandria Biennale. In 2000 he was awarded the State Prize and in 2005, the Mubarak Prize for the Arts. But perhaps his greatest recognition is from the generation of young Egyptian artists for whom he is a role model and inspiration.

Endnotes
1 The information concerning Hamed Eweis’s childhood and education is based on an interview made with the painter by the Alexandrian artist Guirguis Lofty for Alex Med in August 2004. In it, Ewis also explains the meaning of some of his paintings.
2 Translated from an interview given by Hamed Eweis for Alex Med in August 2004. (See previous endnote).
Since the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, several Egyptian deities such as Isis, Osiris and Horus interacted with representatives of the Greek religious pantheon both in terms of content and form, resulting in what we can describe as Alexandrian cults, essentially Sarapis, Isis (the Hellenized), Harpocrates and Hermanubis. These gods were intended to fulfill the religious needs of the multicultural society of the Egyptian capital as well as to express the ideology of the Alexandrian authorities.

Yet, what is striking is that the ongoing popularity of these cults from the Hellenistic period onwards was not confined to Egypt, but spread to the Mediterranean and Europe. There are multiple reasons for this phenomenon, but all of them are linked to the role of Alexandria in the ancient world. Alexandria was the main port of Egypt and one of the major ports of the “known world”. Through Alexandria, the products of the Land of the Nile spread to different areas of the Mediterranean. Yet, it was not only the agricultural products but also culture that followed that route. Alexandrian cults, which represented important values and benign capacities such as motherhood, life-giving, salvation, protection and healing, originally deriving from the Egyptian world, acquired a universal image that could be received not only in Egypt, as occurred before Alexander the Great, but also in the rest of the world. In view of this, it would be interesting to discuss the reasons for the diffusion of the cult of Isis and Sarapis in hundreds of places, from Greece to London. Why was Sarapis accompanied by the name Memphites in Thessaloniki? Why were the Romans so keen to promote Alexandrian cults all over their empire? Are there still unanswered questions, and consequently, should we reconsider the contribution of Alexandria to the development of world culture?

The Alexandrian Cults: The Ambassadors of the Ptolemies in the Hellenistic World

Since the third century CE, Alexandrian cults were already gradually being introduced in several areas of Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean, which were either under Ptolemaic protection or sphere of influence, such as Macedonia, Thessaly, Attica, the Aegean, Thrace, Asia Minor and North Africa. The spread of these cults continued during the decline of the Ptolemaic Empire, indicating that it was not exclusively an issue of political propaganda. Isis, Sarapis, but also Harpocrates and Anubis greatly appealed in those places by being linked to and interacting with local gods.

Hundreds of shrines, statues and inscriptions have been found in Greece: among others in Rhodes (where a Greek-style Sarapeion was recently discovered with statuary of the Ptolemies in the Egyptian style, similar to those found offshore near the site of the Pharos in Alexandria), in Amorgos, Samos, Kos, Sparta, Argos, Maroneia, Thessaloniki, Dion, Athens, Veria and Ambracia1. One of the most interesting cases is the cult of Isis in Dion, the sacred city of Macedonians. Situated at the foot of Mount Olympus, the city hosted some of the most important cults in Macedonia, such as Zeus, Demeter, Artemis and Aphrodite. At the same time, Dion was a city of great political importance. It was in this city that Alexander the Great announced to his army his expedition to Asia, followed by a great

The Diffusion of Alexandrian Cults in the Mediterranean and Europe

Kyriakos Savvopoulos

In 185 BCE, in Delos, the sacred island in the heart of the Cyclades, Athenians dedicated a small Doric temple to Isis, Sarapis and Anubis (FIG.4). Yet, no dedication to the Ptolemies was found on the site indicating that this temple was for the devotion of Athenians to Alexandrian cults rather than Ptolemaic propaganda. Indeed Athenians had been familiar with Isis since the fourth century BCE when the first sanctuary of the goddess was established in the port of Piraeus. Moreover during the Hellenistic period, Athens obtained one of the earliest Sarapeia outside Egypt.

The cult statue of Isis-Tyche and several inscriptions discovered on the site (FIG.2). The cult of Isis in Dion survived until the fourth century CE2.

It seems clear from this example that the Egyptian Isis, after having undergone a process of “Alexandrianisation”, acquired a universal image which allowed the spread of her cult outside Egypt by resembling the identities and acquiring the capacities of local gods. Yet, Alexandrian gods were always considered as Egyptians (in origin), a fact which is indicated by the epithet “Egyptian”, found in several inscriptions, while Sarapis in Thessaloniki is identified as Μεμφίτης (from Memphis) (FIG.3).

celebration. Thus, the possible establishment of an Isis cult in this area during the Hellenistic period can be explained for several reasons. The role of a Ptolemaic representative such as Isis could indicate the vital role that the Ptolemies desired to play in the Hellenistic world ruled by Macedonian kings. Of course it is not a coincidence that Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, was a popular cult in Dion, at least since the sixth century CE. Hence, in one of the wall reliefs that possibly date from the Hellenistic period, Isis is depicted as protector of agriculture and provider of fertility while preserving her Egyptian identity. The latter is clear by the solar disk on Isis’ head behind her agricultural hat and the Egyptian scepter (FIG.1). Furthermore, Isis obtained the epithet Lochias (protector of motherhood), replacing the goddess Artemis, who was venerated in such a role in Dion before the establishment of the Isis cult. Finally, in the second century CE sanctuary, Isis was identified with Tyche (fortune), as indicated by the

FIG.1

FIG.2

FIG.3

FIG.4

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The ongoing popularity of Alexandrian cults was not affected by the demise of the Hellenistic world, but generally increased during the Roman era. This is the case of another distinguished example from the Greek world, the so-called “sanctuary of the Egyptian deities” in Gortyna, Crete. This site was excavated by the Italian archeologist Olivier Gasparo, who discovered an impressive sanctuary with three statues of Sarapis, Isis and Hermanubis, all dating from the second century CE (FIG.5). Yet the earliest evidence for Alexandrian cults in Gortyna dates from the second century BCE, implying a continuation from the Hellenistic period.

Isis Pelagia, the protector of sailors and ships, known also as Isis Pharia, was another popular manifestation of the Alexandrian goddess. The image of Isis Pharia often figures Roman coinage from Alexandria, while hundreds of terracotta lamps in the shape of Pharos were used by Isis’ initiates during their rituals (FIG.6). Yet the image of Isis Pelagia remains quite rare, especially on monumental sculpture. Recent excavations in Messene, Peloponnese, have revealed some very interesting finds. In the Roman theater of the city, two statues of Isis were found: one in the form of Isis Pelagia (FIG.7), almost identical to the images of Isis Pharia on Alexandrian coinage, and a second one in the form of Isis Lactans (suckling Harpocrates) (FIG.8). The latter was related to the role of goddess as protector and manifestation of motherhood and provider of fertility, known in Egypt since the Pharaonic period. Yet, it was the Hellenized image acquired in Alexandria during the Hellenistic period, which allowed Isis Lactans to spread outside Egypt.

The Alexandrian Cults: The “Conquerors” of Rome

But what of Rome? Why did the Romans become such keen promoters of Alexandrian cults?

It seems that the contact between Alexandria and Rome had already begun in the third century BCE. According to ancient sources, in 270 BCE Ptolemy II initiated the exchange of formal envoys with Rome. He had to preserve good relations with Rome, the major power in the Mediterranean, while the Romans were in need of the Egyptian granaries. The first sanctuary of Sarapis must have been in Ostia, the port of Rome, which received the Egyptian agricultural products from the port of Alexandria. Thus, already since the third and second centuries BCE Romans venerated Alexandrian divinities for offering those products as well as for their safe transport from Alexandria to their capital. The continuous contact with Egypt through Alexandria resulted in an actual Roman Egyptomania. By the establishment of the Roman Empire, Alexandrian religion had such a strong influence on Roman society that no political pressure could prevent it.

In 58 BCE, altars of Isis on the Capitol were destroyed, while in 26 BCE, Augustus refused to allow Egyptian shrines within the sacred precinct of Rome, known as the Poerium. But this policy was soon to change. Caligula first gave state recognition to Isis, and then built a palace dedicated to her, known as Aula Iasiaca. Otho is recorded to have taken part openly in rites of Isis fifty years after the death of Augustus. Vespasian visited Alexandria and the Sarapeion, where the god performed miracles. His son Tito also visited the Alexandrian Sarapeion and the temple of Ptah in Memphis. The stoic philosopher Chaeremon, who was librarian at the Alexandrian Sarapeion, became the tutor of Nero, while his pupil, Dionysius, became the tutor of Trajan, often discussing Alexandrian religion with his pupil. The triumphal arch of Trajan, dedicated to his victory against the Parthians, shows the emperor in front Isis and Harpocrates. His successor, Hadrian further supported the expansion of the Alexandrian religion. He built a temple to Isis in the holy Mount of Samaria in Palestine and another one in Petra. His Villa Hadriana was decorated with copies of many famous places, including Canopus, where Isis and Sarapis were held in great honor, and with statues of Egyptian gods, whether in Egyptian, Egyptianized or Hellenized style (FIG.9).

In addition, several Egyptian monuments, notably obelisks, were transferred from Egypt to Rome and other Italian cities to decorate public structures or temples. One such was the Isis in Beneventum, where, during the renovation of the temple by Domitian in 88 CE, an obelisk of Ramses II was transferred and re-erected (FIG.10). Commodus was so attached to Iasiaca that he shaved his head, carried an Anubis dummy in a procession and stopped at specific points to sing Isis’ praises. Finally, Septimius Severus, iconographically assimilated to Sarapis, is said to have visited the Sarapeion in...
Alexandria as well as Memphis, and to have sought to gain whatever hidden knowledge books and temples in Egypt afforded5.

Numerous shrines and temples were built all over the Italian peninsula. As during the Hellenistic period, the most common way for Isis and Sarapis to penetrate in a new place was to be associated with local gods. Hence in Italy, Isis was identified with Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture, and then with Venus (Aphrodite), Diana (Artemis), until she became the “Goddess of a Thousand Names”6. Among the several temples of Isis in Italy we should mention two cases: the Iseum of Rome and Pompei. The case of the Iseum of Rome clearly indicates that Isis and Sarapis acquired state recognition and support by the Roman emperors. In a relief found in the ruins of the temple, figures of Sarapis and Isis stand on the wings of an eagle, the symbol of the Roman Empire, while Juno, the Roman goddess-protector of the Roman state and wife of Jupiter, is presented next to the Alexandrian couple (FIG.11).

Even more impressive is the case of the Iseum in Pompei, which was covered by the ash of Vesuvius in 74 CE (FIG.12). The temple was decorated with Isis’ statues, colorful paintings and wall reliefs, which are preserved to this day, presenting Isis as a powerful goddess with multiple characteristics, while her initiates are performing the Isiaca (FIG.13).

Nevertheless, the greatest surprise was the discovery of actual meals, composed of grain, eggs and other products related to the cult of Isis, discovered under the ash, as they were left by Isiastai (FIG.14).

Romans Emperors were further responsible for the diffusion of Alexandrian cults in Europe, in areas where hardly any Egyptian or Greek cult existed before. Thus, France, Germany (FIG.15), Spain, and even England (FIG.16) obtained shrines dedicated to Sarapis, Isis and Harpocrates. Yet we should always remember that these cults were Alexandrian in a universal manner, combining the ancient knowledge of Egypt with the Greek cultural mentality and flexibility. The great popularity of Alexandrian cults all over the known world is the ultimate proof that Alexandria was a successful micro-model for the Romans, since it had become what was culturally desirable for the whole Roman Empire: a multiethnic and multicultural assemblage, where different people shared common values.

Endnotes

6 Concerning the spread of Alexandrian cults in Italy, see ibid, “To the shores of Italy” and “The one whose names cannot be numbered”: (chapters VI and IX respectively).
Egypt and Sea Power

Admiral Ashraf Refaat

Egypt, with its extensive coastline on the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Suez, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea, has always maintained an interest in sea power. The history of Egyptian sea power can be traced back as far as the Pharaonic era. Recent excavations have revealed the existence of the post of “Commander of the Fleet” in ancient Egyptian times, over four thousand years ago. A glance through Egypt’s long history shows that Mahani’s theory of the influence of naval power on history is valid. Egypt’s influence as an important Middle Eastern country has always been closely connected to sea power, and whenever Egypt had a powerful fleet her prestige grew and her presence was felt. For example during the reign of Mohammed Ali (1805–1848), the Viceroy achieved Egyptian supremacy in the Red Sea, thus projecting the country’s influence into Arabia, Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, constituting a threat to Turkish influence.

On 20 October 1827, the European Powers of the time tried to put an end to Egyptian sea power in the Battle of Navarino. An Egyptian Ottoman naval formation anchored in Navarino Bay was attacked by an Allied Naval Squadron made up of British, French and Russian battleships under the command of British Admiral Sir Edward Cardigan who had previously served under Admiral Nelson. The allied fleet consisted of nine battleships, while the Egyptian Ottoman formation had only three. In the ensuing battle, the Egyptians fought bravely against uneven odds. The Egyptian ships were at anchor, unable to maneuver whereas the allied battleships were successfully engaged and nearly all severely damaged. Many Egyptian escort units were destroyed. It is interesting to note that the Egyptian naval units were under the command of Moharrem Bey, after whom a district in Alexandria was named.

Later during the reign of the Khedive Ismail, an attempt was made to modernize and rebuild the Egyptian navy. However the occupation of Egypt by British forces in 1882 resulted in the break up of the Egyptian army and the disbanding of the navy. There followed a period of stagnation, which continued until 1946, following the rise of Arab nationalism and the beginning of the Palestinian problem.

On 30 June 1946, a royal decree proclaiming the formation of a new Egyptian navy was issued. Naval and technical missions were sent to Great Britain for training. At the same time contacts were made with Great Britain for the procurement of a small number of naval vessels of various types from readily available war surplus. This was the start of the new Egyptian navy.

The Revival of Egyptian Sea Power

In more recent times following the 1952 revolution, President Nasser was able to form a considerable navy and hence the influence of Egypt became paramount in the Arab world. One of the main aims of the 1952 revolution was the creation of a strong national army capable of wiping out the stigma of the 1948 defeat in Palestine. Sea power would enable him to extend his strategic grasp from the Atlantic to the Arabian Gulf, a fact which he often stressed in his speeches with the saying, “From the ocean to the gulf...”

This new policy of Arab nationalism resulted in a new relationship with the Soviet Union which included the signing of arms deals, the dispatch of various military missions, and the accompanying flow of Soviet experts. Rebuilding the Egyptian navy proceeded according to set programs greatly increasing the combat power of the Egyptian navy. It is true however, that while Nasser had in mind the creation of a strong navy to support his plans for Arab nationalism, the Soviet Union had other objectives mainly envisaging the creation of a defensive naval force to assist the Soviet Mediterranean fleet when necessary.

Becoming a Substantial Sea Power

Certain factors are needed to make a country a substantial sea power.

Firstly, the geographical situation is a key factor. Egypt lies on the Mediterranean: with the Gulf of Suez to the east and the Red Sea stretching south, the country has an extensive coastline with numerous ports. The Suez Canal runs through Egyptian territory joining the Mediterranean to the Red Sea thus creating one of the most vital waterways in the world. One must also note Egypt’s controlling position over the entrances to both the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba.

Egypt’s population is another major factor: with nearly eighty million inhabitants it has by far the largest population in the Arab world with quite a large proportion living in coastal towns, with a natural leaning towards the sea and maritime activities. At the same time, the number of graduates from universities, higher education institutes and technical colleges is increasing rapidly ensuring the constant flow of graduates in all fields, thus providing the skilled manpower that would be required for building a naval force and a maritime industry.

Egypt’s shipbuilding facilities are another important issue: Egypt has a substantial commercial shipbuilding potential with well defined capabilities in Alexandria, Port Said, Suez and even on the Nile. Only limited attempts have been made to build naval warships, but the resources and capabilities are there and can be expanded quite easily. So far the only attempts at building warships have been confined to light forces such as seaward defense patrol boats. Another example is the October Class light missile boat built in Alexandria, based on the Soviet Komar design, which was developed in cooperation with Vosper and Marconi of the UK. In preparation for the 1973 October War, a number of torpedo boats of Soviet design have been modernized.
fifty years, not to mention a period of violent hostilities four times between Egypt and Israel during the last of the State of Israel in 1948. War has broken out predominant in the Middle East has been the creation a number of factors. Firstly, one of the major factors large fishing fleet.

strategic position, its political weight in the Arab world, besides its maritime interests and offshore assets, besides its electronic equipment and light aircraft.

in cooperation with international firms. It must also be noted that Egypt has a well founded military industry already producing and selling military equipment such as guns of various calibers, armored personnel carriers and tanks, besides various electronic equipment and light aircraft.

The Need for Sea Power

It is evident the every maritime country requires sea power. In the case of Egypt this requirement is pronounced taking into consideration the country’s strategic position, its political weight in the Arab world, its maritime interests and offshore assets, besides its dependence on maritime transport and a need for a large fishing fleet.

Egypt’s need for sea power is greatly affected by a number of factors. Firstly, one of the major factors predominant in the Middle East has been the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. War has broken out four times between Egypt and Israel during the last fifty years, not to mention a period of violent hostilities following the 1967 debacle of the Egyptian army. Arab nationalism is another factor. The forces drawing together Arab countries are immense. They are drawn together by religion, language, common borders, and a closely related culture. In the 1950s and 1960s, during the period of President Nasser, the Egyptian Navy played a considerable role in maintaining a strong inter-Arab relationship. Frequent naval visits to the Syrian port of Latakia were a prelude to unity between Egypt and Syria. Assistance to Algeria in its struggle against France for independence (1954–1962) and also during its troubles with Morocco are another example. In 1962, when the revolt against the Imam of Yemen started, Egyptian destroyers were quickly on the scene in Hodeida to support the new republic.

Egypt also plays a substantial part in African affairs and has very close historical relations with many African countries, especially those through which the Nile flows. To safeguard her interests, Egypt needs to achieve an effective naval presence in the Red Sea, a strategic advantage which was demonstrated in the October War. It is an advantage which enabled Egypt to exercise full control over the Bab El Mandab Straits, and thus together with the mining of the entrance to the gulf of Suez, managed to deprive Israel of all oil supplies.

Naval procurements

The size and composition of a country’s naval forces are decisive factors in determining its sea power. In the case of Egypt, this depended on naval procurements which underwent three main stages:

The initial stage was when armaments were controlled and provided by the United Kingdom. Thus procurements were restricted to Britain and ex Royal Navy units, and proceeded from small minesweepers, torpedo boats, fleet mine sweepers, frigates and destroyers.

The next stage included the period during which President Nasser made an arms deal with the Soviet Union, after which the Egyptian Navy was reinforced and increased its combat capability impressively, having obtained Skori class destroyers, submarines, landing ships, mine sweepers, subchasers and, most importantly, missile boats. The growing power and superiority of the Egyptian Navy was amply demonstrated on 21 October 1967 when Egyptian missile boats of the Kumar class sank the Israeli destroyer Elat off Port Said. This was the first combat employment of surface to surface guided missiles, an incident which started a whole new trend in naval warfare.

Lastly, following the 1973 October War, which eventually led to a total withdrawal of Israeli troops from Sinai, and consequently the signing of a peace treaty, the situation changed sharply, with more recognition of the importance of sea power. Relations between Egypt and the United States improved steadily, leading to mutual cooperation and understanding, a relationship which resulted in the United States becoming the main armament supplier for Egypt. During the last decade, the Egyptian Navy was able to diversify its sources of naval units and weapons, and had corvettes from Spain, frigates from China, various units from the old Soviet fleet, missile boats from the United Kingdom, and more recently obtained Knox and Perry class U.S. destroyers and other units. Helicopter carrying vessels were introduced, a much needed improvement, and modern submarines are likely to follow.
Combat Experience

Combat experience is a very important factor in assessing the fighting capacity of any naval force. In the case of Egypt, a state of tension or of war has existed for nearly fifty years and this has reflected positively on the high level of combat efficiency now present. In the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956, the newly formed navy had to face overwhelming forces from both the United Kingdom and France. In spite of heavy odds, the Egyptian Navy managed to achieve a number of heroic deeds that showed an outstanding dedication to duty and marked bravery. Notably the action between the frigate Domiat and the HMS cruiser New Foundland, and in the way the destroyer El Nasser managed to beat off repeated carrier-borne air attacks. Also to be recalled is the Galal Desouky engagement of a torpedo boat against a French naval attachment.

In the 1967 June war, while most of the Egyptian armed forces suffered massive destruction, the Egyptian Navy managed to preserve its integrity, and actually suffered no losses, but there was only limited offensive initiative. In the war of attrition which followed, the Egyptian Navy managed to achieve several successes, including the bombardment of Israel’s logistic concentrations in Romana and Balouza, east of Port Said, as well as the repeated frogmen attacks on the Israeli port of Elat in the Gulf of Aqaba which yielded results with the sinking of the Israeli landing ship Bet-Sheva. In the 1973 October War, the Egyptian Navy achieved spectacular results in spite of the fact that it had lost its superiority over the Israeli Navy and was using obsolete surface to surface missiles, besides the lack of sufficient air support. In fact, this was the first time that proper operational planning was practiced in Naval Head Quarters and that the Egyptian Armed Forces took the offensive. Mines previously not employed were used extensively in this conflict, successfully blocking the entrance to the Gulf of Suez, and preventing Israel from carrying out any distracting landing operations on the Western side of the gulf, at the same time, cutting off vital oil supplies from Egyptian wells captured in the Gulf of Suez and Sinai following the 1967 War. Egyptian submarines were employed extensively in the Mediterranean and Red Sea, and for the first time, the theater of operations was extended over a thousand miles southwards in the Red Sea and westwards in the Mediterranean. In the Mediterranean traffic to Israeli ports was reduced to 25% of its normal level.

Outlook

Political events represent one of the major factors that affect the growth and development of a navy. In order to preserve her security and maintain peace and stability, Egypt needs and strong and effective armed forces, capable of securing national interests and maintaining Egypt’s leading role in the Arab World.

1 Former Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Naval Forces and Chief of Naval Operations in the October 1973 War.
Alexandria Corniche

Eastern Harbor

Fishermen’s Marina (Eastern Harbor)

Stanley Beach
ربما لا يعرف الكثيرون صاحب هذا الاسم اليوناني، بل ربما يظنونه أجنبيًا، لكنهم لو ارتحلوا مع كاتبة هذا المقال، فإنهم يعرفون أن هذا الاسم لم يلمع إلا على أرض مصر، فهو ثالث مدير لمكتبة الإسكندرية القديمة وهو معلم ولي عهد الملك بطليموس الثالث يوارجيتيس، وهو أول من قام بالجمع المعلومات المترافقة السابقة عليه وأضاف عليها لوضع أسس العلم الذي نعرفه الآن باسم الجغرافيا وأيضا أسس العلم الذي نعرفه باسم الكارتوغرافيا (علم رسم الخرائط)، وهو أول من كتب تاريخ الإغريق مستندا إلى الترتيب التاريخي للأحداث ومنقحا التاريخ فيما عُرف باسم الكرونولوجيا (مراعاة الترتيب الزمني للأحداث)، وهو أول من رسم خريطة الأرض على كرة وأول من أثبت كرويتها بتجربة عملية لا تحتمل الشك، وهو أول عالم في تاريخ الإنسانية ينجح في قياس محيط الكرة الأرضية عن أحدث القياسات، وهو أحد علماء الفلك المعدودين في تاريخ المكتبة القديمة، كما أنه كان عالماً في الهندسة وفي الرياضيات، فهو صاحب ما يسمى لتعرف على الأرقام الأولية (التي لا تقبل القسمة) إيراتوسثينس وهو صاحب ما يعرف حتى الآن، كما أن له إلا على نفسها وعلى رقم كتابات أدبية ولغوية.

وربما لا يصدق البعض أن يجمع فرد واحد كل هذه العلوم التي تفككت في عصرنا الحالي إلى عشرات الفروع والتخصصات الدقيقة، ولكنها طبيعة العصر الذي كان يعيشه إيراتوسثينس، هذا العصر الذي لم يكن يعرف التخصص لكن كان له في الوقت نفسه القدرة على وضع أسس العلم التجريبي القائم على万象 المنهج العلمي.

ولد إيراتوسثينس بن أجلاوس في قورينة بليبيا حوالي عام 275 ق.م، ومن مسقط رأسه اكتسب لقبه الذي لازمه حتى الآن بعد وفاته بأكثر من ألفي عام، وقد كانت هذه المدينة إحدى المدن الثقافية في العالم القديم وأمامها الابتكارات والابتكارات، فعلى سبيل المثال، إيراتوسثينس في طول حياته الم蜗ية وطريق شارع، ثم عادوا إلى هذا اللقب بتركيا، وهي جملة صوتية للقرآن الكريم وفيها تحدث إلى مدينة أثينا التي تابعت تراثها العلمي، وهو يعتبر أن من علماء العالم اليوناني وهو في الواقع دعت إلى تراثه، هذا إلى جانب الابتكارات والعلوم التي كانت تدور في مكتبة الإسكندرية القديمة.

عمر تميز إلى ميناء قورينة كبوابة إلى ميناء أثينا، وظهر على العملة موجهة للأحرار بلغة اليونانية.

أطلق رفقاء إيراتوسثينس في المكتبة القديمة لقبين عليه تأكيداً غزيراً على نطاق اختصاصات القبلي الأول هو بنتاثلوس وهو لقب له دلالة في مدح شخص متعدد المواهب والتحصيلات، وكان مثلاً في هذا العصر في الأساس على الرياضيين الذين يجيدون ممارسة جميع الرياضيات التي كانت تعرف بها تشريحة أن كتب الرموز الرياضية وتراس في مكتبة الإسكندرية القديمة.

وهو اللقب الأكثر شهرة حيث كانوا يُطلق على الرياضيين الذين يجيدون ممارسة جميع الرياضيات التي كانت معروفة آنذاك مثل رمي الرمح والمصارعة وغيرها. أما اللقب الأول هو بنتاثلوس وهو لقب له دلالة في مدح شخص متعدد المواهب والتحصيلات، وكان مثلاً في هذا العصر في الأساس على الرياضيين الذين يجيدون ممارسة جميع الرياضيات التي كانت تعرف بها تشريحة أن كتب الرموز الرياضية وتراس في مكتبة الإسكندرية القديمة.

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وكان إيراتوسثينيس يعلم لأخر لحظات حياته، وكان بأصل كتبه في الأوراق، وهو في حرف الثمانين من عمره، وترك على إثره تلك مكتبة كبرى الفلكية، وقد تضاربت الآراء حول سبب إ=uأته هذه، فمنها ما يؤكد أن إيراتوسثينيس بمض من عينه، ومنها ما يرجح هذهامعة نتائجه الإجاهج، لكن كل ذلك في الحقيقة خلاف على المتن القبلية إلى βο(ν)μν μετάγγειαν, مما كان ليأخذه إلى النتيجة وتعليمه، فإنه كان يعلم بأثره إيراتوسثينيس في العالم، فأخبره بنفسه عن التأثير والتأثير بالأشياء من جهة، وأعراف العلماء بمكانة العلماء في تاريخ الإنسانية.

وكان العمل الأشهر لإيراتوسثينيس هو قياس محيط الكرة الأرضية، وترجح بعض المصادر التاريخية أن هذا الإنجاز قد تم بناء على كلف من الملك بطليموس الثالث يوارجيتيس، في حين ترجح مصادر أخرى أنه كان نتيجة مباشرة لملاحظة علمية سجلها العالم الكبير. وسواء أن تم الأمر للسبب الأول أو للسبب الثاني فقد أتى الملك بطليموس الثالث يوارجيتيس بتأجيله عن التأثير على العلماء، فأكمل ابنه الملك بطليموس الرابع فيلوباتور وتلميذ إيراتوسثينيس المسيرة وقام بتقديم تمويل كامل من الخزانة الملكية لهذه المهمة التي انتهت بنتائج تاريخية. وكان إيراتوسثينيس قد قرأ في إحدى لفائف يونية (يوم 21 البردي في المكتبة أن الشمس تتعامد في ظهر يوم الانقلاب الصيفي وأطول يوم في العام) على مدينة سيين (أسوان حاليا) لدرجة تجعل من الممكن رؤية أشعة الشمس تخترق أحد البئر في جزيرة إليفانتين لتضيء المياه في الأعماق المظلمة، كما أنه لا يكون للمسلات ظل في هذا التوقيت. وقد لفت هذا الأمر إيراتوسثينيس بهدف، فقرر اختبار الأمر بوضع عصا رأسية في الإسكندرية في التوقيت ذاته، ووجد أنها لها ظلها، وهذا indicates that the sun is perpendicular in the noon of the summer solstice and the longest day of the year, as recorded in a papyrus from the library of Alexandria on a city of Siwn (Aswan now). And this was visible to him because the sun light could pass through a deep well in the island of Elephantine to light the deep waters, and the sunbeams were not visible at this time.

ونجحت هذه النتائج في التأثير على العلماء، فأكمل ابنه الملك بطليموس الرابع فيلوباتور وتلميذ إيراتوسثينيس المسيرة وقام بتقديم تمويل كامل من الخزانة الملكية لهذه المهمة التي انتهت بنتائج تاريخية. كان إيراتوسثينيس قد قرأ في إحدى لفائف يونية (يوم 21 البردي في المكتبة أن الشمس تتعامد في ظهر يوم الانقلاب الصيفي وأطول يوم في العام) على مدينة سيين (أسوان حاليا) لدرجة تجعل من الممكن رؤية أشعة الشمس تخترق أحد البئر في جزيرة إليفانتين لتضيء المياه في الأعماق المظلمة، كما أنه لا يكون للمسلات ظل في هذا التوقيت. وقد لفت هذا الأمر إيراتوسثينيس بهدف، فقرر اختبار الأمر بوضع عصا رأسية في الإسكندرية في التوقيت ذاته، ووجد أنها لها ظلها، وهذا indi...
L’origine de l’École d’Alexandrie résulte du principe de « conciliation » entre différents courants philosophiques et disciplines scientifiques d’une part, et une influence grandissante de la pensée orientale d’autre part. Dans une perspective conciliante, les différents courants philosophiques, spirituels et religieux furent parvenus à une singularité de cette école de philosophie qui vit le jour à Alexandrie à l’interface entre les mondes grec et oriental.


À l’origine, ce qui devint ensuite la célèbre Bibliothèque n’était qu’une annexe du Musée pour le besoin des érudits et des savants. Les Lagides voulaient que la Bibliothèque contienne tous les savoirs du monde et l’ordre fut donné de rechercher dans tout le monde méditerranéen les ouvrages précieux. Ainsi les Platonéismes demandèrent-ils aux autres souverains de leur envoyer tout ouvrage écrit digne d’intérêt, et tout bateau arrivant à Alexandrie se vit confisquer ses rouleaux et manuscrits qui furent ensuite copiés pour la Bibliothèque.


Les deux anciens élèves d’Aristote, la philosophie venait en complément aussi bien dans les disciplines scientifiques du Musée que dans les études littéraires et humaines de la Bibliothèque. La différence entre ces institutions d’une part, mais surtout les orientations différentes d’autre part, attirèrent de nombreux savants et chercheurs, permettant la création et le développement de l’École d’Alexandrie.

Une deuxième interprétation considère que l’École d’Alexandrie n’aurait été qu’une des nombreuses disciplines telles que les mathématiques, l’astronomie, la linguistique, la musique... Selon cette optique, le statut de la philosophie en tant que discipline serait ainsi resté dans ces proportions jusqu’au IIème siècle apr. J.-C., époque à laquelle Ammônos Saccas lui conféra une place plus essentielle.

Une autre interprétation du terme École d’Alexandrie se fonde sur des critères géographiques. Ce nom aurait été appliqué à l’École philosophique d’Alexandrie, et à la ville elle-même, dont les figures les plus importantes auraient été Philon (~12 av. J.-C.–~54 apr. J.-C.), Clémence (150–220 av. J.-C.), Origène (185–253), Ammônos Saccas (1ère moitié IIIème siècle), Plotin (205–270), Porphyr (234–305?), et Hypatie (370–415). La pensée originale et d’une certaine manière aussi bien dans les disciplines scientifiques, que les mathématiques, l’astronomie, la linguistique, la musique... Selon cette optique, le statut de la philosophie en tant que discipline serait ainsi resté dans ces proportions jusqu’au IIème siècle apr. J.-C., époque à laquelle Ammônos Saccas lui conféra une place plus essentielle.

Les historiens s’accordent sur les interactions entre l’école philosophique d’Alexandrie et la philosophie grecque ainsi que la pensée orientale. Mais il est plus délicat de décrypter les raisons faisant de la ville un centre intellectuel à part entière, avec sa propre inclinaison intellectuelle et distincte des autres écoles de pensée du monde hellénistique.

La pensée philosophique d’Alexandrie a été l’objet de plusieurs interprétations. Les historiens s’accordent sur les interactions entre l’école philosophique d’Alexandrie et la philosophie grecque ainsi que la pensée orientale. Mais il est plus délicat de décrypter les raisons faisant de la ville un centre intellectuel à part entière, avec sa propre inclinaison intellectuelle et distincte des autres écoles de pensée du monde hellénistique.

L’origine et le sens de la désignation même d’École d’Alexandrie a été l’objet de plusieurs interprétations. Les historiens s’accordent sur les interactions entre l’école philosophique d’Alexandrie et la philosophie grecque ainsi que la pensée orientale. Mais il est plus délicat de décrypter les raisons faisant de la ville un centre intellectuel à part entière, avec sa propre inclinaison intellectuelle et distincte des autres écoles de pensée du monde hellénistique.
Les caractéristiques de l’Ecole d’Alexandrie


Or cette inspiration mystique dans l’étude des sciences semble avoir fortement influencé le courant philosophique se développant à Alexandria. Ainsi, on a opéré un rapprochement entre les religions orientales comme le culte d’Isis, de Mithra et la religion grecque, entre le judaïsme ou le christianisme et la philosophie grecque. Par conséquent, ont été adoptés des principes d’équilibre entre l’ancien et le nouveau. D’où l’émergence notamment de la pensée néo-pythagoricienne, mêlant les idées de Pythagore, de Platon, d’Aristote et celles des Stoïciens. Elle a forgé une nouvelle philosophie de respect et de convivialité dans les préceptes anciens avec le principe de droit morale s’inscrivant dans la vie spirituelle de l’époque.

L’hermétsme était le deuxième courant à Alexandrie. Appelé aussi « hermétisme gréco-égyptien » il fut fondé sur les révélations d’Hermès Trismégiste1, ou Hermès Thot, appartenant au panthéon des divinités égyptiennes. Entre 100 et 300 apr. J.-C. de nombreux textes philosophiques dont le très important Corpus Hermeticum sont apparus, écrits en grec et assimilés par la culture hellénistique d’Alexandrie.

Enfin, la philosophie des commentateurs fut le troisième courant. Il s’agit de la tendance purement philosophique que beaucoup d’historiens ont appelée «néo-platonisme». Elle résulte d’une réinterprétation de la pensée d’Aristote et de Platon. Philon d’Alexandrie, au 1er siècle apr. J.-C. peut être considéré comme un précurseur de cette tendance, l'un des plus anciens contenant des œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie.

Manuscrit grec d'Égypte: ce codex est l'un des plus anciens contenant des œuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie.

BNF Paris, France

* * *

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On remarque enfin que l’influence croissante de la mystique orientale a créé un nouveau paradigme intellectuel au sein de l’Ecole d’Alexandrie. Après avoir atteint sa pleine maturité à travers Platon et Aristote, la pensée grecque s’est vue incapable d’innovation. Purement rationnelle et basée sur le raisonnement déductif et mathématique des œuvres d’Aristote et d’Archimède, elle s’est heurtée à la nécessité de recherche d’un nouvel accès au chemin de la connaissance. D’où la tendance nouvelle, au refuge dans la foi religieuse.

**Les caractéristiques de l’Ecole d’Alexandrie**

1. Fort de ce cadre distinctif, l’Ecole d’Alexandrie se compose de trois principaux courants :
   - L’École théologique d’Alexandrie
   - L’hermétsme
   - La philosophie des commentateurs (néo-platonisme)

**Les particularités de l’Ecole d’Alexandrie**

- La philosophie des commentateurs (néo-platonisme)
- L’hermétsme
- La philosophie des commentateurs (néo-platonisme)
mais c’est Ammonios Saccas, à partir de 232, qui en a posé les fondements. Mort vers 241, quoiqu’il fût né dans la pauvreté et qu’il eût été d’abord forcé de faire le métier de portefaix pour vivre (d’où le nom de Saccas), il se livra avec ardeur à l’étude de la philosophie. Ammonios chercha à concilier les doctrines de Platon et d’Aristote, en y mêlant les doctrines orientales, et fut ainsi le fondateur de l’éclectisme-néoplatonicien. Il n’a laissé aucun écrit, mais c’est Ammonios Saccas qu’il ne mettrait jamais sa doctrine par écrit, il rompît sa promesse.


Porphyre a joué un rôle considérable dans l’évolution de la pensée, à la fin de l’Antiquité et pendant tout le Moyen Âge. La manière dont il a systematisé et expliqué la pensée de son maître, Plotin, a donnée naissance à un spiritualisme qu’Augustin7 a diffusé dans tout l’Occident latin.

La dernière de cette ligne philosophique fut Hypatie, dont le père, Théon d’Alexandrie, fut le dernier directeur du Musée, et un éditeur et commentateur de textes mathématiques. La première Ennéade traite de la physique et du monde et montrent la vanité des choses sensibles. La quatrième porte sur l’Un.

La dernière de cette ligne philosophique fut Hypatie, dont le père, Théon d’Alexandrie, fut le dernier directeur du Musée, et un éditeur et commentateur de textes mathématiques. La première Ennéade traite de la physique et du monde et montrent la vanité des choses sensibles. La quatrième porte sur l’Un.

Hypatie, la dernière des philosophes d’Alexandrie

Thot est souvent représenté sous la forme d’un homme à tête d’ibis.

1. C’est-à-dire une promenade.
3. Le terme »Orient« est pris ici au sens large, il désigne des Divers pays tels que l’Egypte, la Mésopotamie, la Perse et l’Inde au temps d’Alexandre.
4. Hypatie, la dernière des philosophes d’Alexandrie
5. Damascios le Diadoque (458–538), est un philosophe perse et l’époque de l’Occident latin.
7. Augustin (Saint), Aurelius Augistinus, le plus grand des Pères de l’église latine (354–430), Saint Augustin se fit remarquer par sa vaste science et par son éloquence autant que par sa piété.

Endnotes

1   C’est-à-dire une promenade.
2   Strabon, XVII, 1, 8.
3   Le terme »Orient« est pris ici au sens large, il désigne des Divers pays tels que l’Egypte, la Mésopotamie, la Perse et l’Inde au temps d’Alexandre.
4   Historien de la philosophie et prêtre jésuite britannique (1907–1994).
5   La première mention du nom »Trismégiste« figure chez Philon de Byzbi et Athénagoras, au IIIème s. C’est un nom qui signifie » Hermès trois fois très grand « en grec, et il était donné par les Grecs au dieu égyptien Thot.
7   Augustin (Saint), Aurelius Augistinus, le plus grand des Pères de l’église latine (354–430), Saint Augustin se fit remarquer par sa vaste science et par son éloquence autant que par sa piété.
8   Damascios le Diadoque (458–538), est un philosophe néoplatonicien. Il fut le dernier diadoque ou scolarque (recteur) de l’Académie d’Athènes, fondée par Platon en 387 av. J.-C.
Jack Debney’s Alexandrian Charlie Chaplin and Other Characters

Inviting a creative writer to join the local teaching staff of the Department of English has its hazards. There is always the risk that the department will, at some point, serve as material for a work of fiction. D.J. Enright’s entertaining novel Academic Year is a classic example of this, where to the amusement of some and the offence of others, the local staff surfaces as the “little brown gods”.

In 1963, Jack Debney, a young Englishman from Yorkshire, was appointed lecturer in English at the University of Alexandria, a post he held till 1967. In the last few years, two collections of his short stories appeared: The Crocodile’s Head and Other Stories in 2002 and The Alexandrian Charlie Chaplin and Other Stories in 2005 published by Redbeck Press. When these two volumes were first brought to my attention I rapidly leafed through their pages with a mixture of curiosity and trepidation in anticipation of detecting a former colleague’s impressions of his Alexandrian experience.

Only less than half of these stories touch on Jack Debney’s years in Alexandria. This experience is presented through the voice of the observant first person narrator openly identified as Skaife, the lecturer in English. The dominant note of the voice is that of the outsider who exists very much on the edge of an alien environment. This is clearly expressed in an anxiety dream narrated after Skaife has set foot in Alexandria. In “Becalmed” he dreams that he is back home passing by all the familiar landmarks of his childhood. He knows he is leaving the following day and he has to see these places one last time to store up in his mind as a “bulwark against Egypt”. His subconscious reveals his doubts, even fears about his journey to Egypt. “It should have been north”, his dream tells him; “to go south to Egypt was wrong. I could see that now”. Overwhelmed by his unfamiliar surroundings, Skaife expresses his feelings of alienation more directly when he says, “I feel so lost here, shut out”.

Skaife finds it difficult to connect with his students. Ill at ease at one of their parties, he finds himself sinking deep into a state of gloom as he listens to what sounds to his ears “the harsh Arabic they spoke”. Even more discordant is the “Arabic-English patois the girls break into”. The only attempt at connecting with a student is when he fantasizes about Zahra, an attractive Lebanese. But even that feeble tie is directly when he says, “I feel so lost here, shut out”.

The years 1963–1967 in which the stories are set are a significant period in the modern history of Alexandria when the face of the city was changing radically. These are the culminating years of nationalization leading up to the disastrous 1967 war with Israel and the mass exodus of the cosmopolitan citizens of Alexandria who realized that there was no longer a future for them in their adopted city. Alexandria was losing its distinctive cosmopolitan feature and rapidly becoming predominantly Egyptian: a “crop of kids on the roof” and there is a local neighbor whom Skafe sees from the balcony unasprisingly breast-feeding her child in public. These are characters well-rooted in the earth, at ease with themselves and with their surroundings and unexposed to the changes overtaking the city. There is a reassuring permanence and authenticity about these two humans: the caretaker commands the respect of the narrator as he observes him prostrating himself at his prayers, and the woman evokes in him good natured, light-hearted humor as he remarks the Alexandrian Madonna in her “cartoon bustiness” yielding to the importunities of her infant demanding to be breast-fed.

Mr. de Basra, in “At Vassilou’s” is one of the formerly rich Jewish businessmen, who has lost his wealth under the new regime. He belongs to a dying community that bemoans its loss and the passing of the good old days. “This is not an easy time for an Englishman in Egypt”, he remarks to Skaife, “but still”, he goes on to say, “It’s easier for you than for me ... my home’s here and they are making it more and more difficult for me to live in it”. Once in the ascendency, but now “hungover” and “spent” he clearly represents the end of an era.

In the same category of rootless Alexandrians, who belong to a dying species, are the two British expatriates, Mrs. Waghu and Mabel Fitzwilliam’s. The former is seen riding next to her husband, driving regally through the streets of Alexandria in their Rolls Royce, “Prince Abbass’s ambiguous gift”, with “the urchins gathering round the car peering and giggling, one even having the tenacity to stroke the bonnet”. This character, who looks back with longing to her past, is a comic anomaly of those days. Light ridicule turns to a more critical note as Mabel Fitzwilliam’s is exposed in her snobbish attitude to the local Alexandrians. These are both character types of the period as well as easily identifiable individuals in contemporary Alexandrian circles, just as the Waghu Rolls Royce was a familiar sight in the streets of Alexandria in those days. The story in which they appear is appropriately given the title, “I Remember Them, I Remember Them All”.

Brief as are the references to the underprivileged local Alexandrians, there are, nevertheless, two such, who are briefly mentioned with slightly warmer and more positive feelings. Skaife detects something genuine and worthy of respect, even of admiration, about the ordinary Alexandrians he sees every day in his comings and goings. There is the seventy-year-old caretaker of his building with a second young wife bringing up a large second new family, “a crop of kids on the roof” and there is a local neighbor whom Skafe sees from the balcony unasprisingly breast-feeding her child in public.

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Jack Debney with Professor Mahmoud Manzaloui and Dr Len Knight, 1965.

Nur Sherif
The most memorable fully portrayed character in Debney’s stories, however, is his Alexandrian Charlie Chaplin. This delightful mimic of the great comic mime of the silver screen dominates the scene of the story that gives its name to the recent volume of short stories. He is the child of the city who makes his appearance at a typical Alexandrian taverna where late show cinema goes flock to spend the remaining hours of the night and early hours of the morning before turning in. Debney presents the elements that make for a miniature theatre setting belittling the master of comedy and mime. There is the audience: the customers on the balcony, as well as those on the ground floor, and there is the crowd of spectators outside who “press against the windows and doorways to see him”. As the scene is set, the character is brought into the spotlight focusing on the details of his appearance revealing him as a mimic of the famous comedian. Debney captures to perfection the Chaplinesque facial expressions, gestures and bodily movements, all of which take us back to the indelible image we retain of the great comic performer who engaged a universal audience with laughter at his antics.

This character is presented in a number of typical Chaplinesque short acts. The opening act is with the proprietor of the taverna offering him a glass of retsina which he first refuses with a lordly gesture implying he is beyond temptation. He then gazes longingly at the glass as the proprietor tries to persuade him to accept it. Gradually, he begins to give in to temptation, fluttering his eyelashes, grinning coyly and wriggling with embarrassment as his resistance breaks down and in one quick gulp, as though he feels it will be snatched away from him, he drinks the retsina. The scene ends up with a gesture of mock refinement, as he pats his mouth genteelly and mimes his thanks to the proprietor who stands behind the counter laughing.

Of all the gallery of Alexandrian portraits and sketches this is the one for whom Debney shows affection by referring to him in the term of endearment as “our Charlie Chaplin”, and about whose private life he shows a certain curiosity and sufficient interest for him to try to get to the real life behind the comic role he plays. Was he Greek, Egyptian or even Armenian? He wonders. The character had never spoken and no one could ever tell.

Debney imagines two different lives for his Charlie Chaplin: one for each of the two large photographs hanging on the taverna wall behind the counter. One of President Nasser “smiling slightly”, the other of the Greek proprietor’s dead father staring ahead of him “posing stiffly”; each looking “magisterial” and “dignified” in his own way. Chaplin is placed between these two who define the temporal setting of the story. Debney imagines his character possibly as an Egyptian with the flower in his buttonhole and receiving his reward in return from her escort, the difference being that the former is the genuine specimen whereas the latter is nothing but of Alexandria as well. Alas, they would have spoken volumes, not only of his family and Greek background to become a performing artist, but of Alexandria as well. What way, if at all, they may be applied to Debney’s Alexandrian experience, characters and stories as a whole. Whatever the implication may be, and even where there is a lighter note to the stories when the narrator successfully reaches out to a character, there is nevertheless an uncomfortable nagging sense of detachment and disengagement on his part.

This might have been slightly alleviated had Debney come across one Alexandrian character whose familiar figure would have been worth noting. This is the disheveled, long-bearded gentleman of the road with saint-like features, dressed in tatters and with the manners of a true gentleman. He was the son of a wealthy Alexandrian, most likely Greek, family who chose to give up the whole of his fortune and live a peninsile vagrant depending on the charity of the underprivileged, and living in damp basements and dark stairwells. He was often seen of an evening, standing alone at the entrance of some restaurant where he would occasionally politely greet an elegantly dressed woman customer, as she was leaving, bow respectfully and offer her a beautiful rose. This is the counterpart of the taverna scene with the Alexandrian Charlie Chaplin acting the gallant gentleman gracefully presenting a lady customer with the flower in his buttonhole and receiving his reward in return from her escort, the difference being that the former is the genuine specimen whereas the latter is merely putting on an act.

One wonders if their paths had crossed, how Jack Debney would have “remembered” the authentic gentle human individual, how he would have empathized and engaged with him as with no other character in his stories, for this was no “replica” or “forgery”, only the “real” thing. A full portrait of him would have spoken volumes, not only of his family and himself, but of Alexandria as well. Alas, they never did meet and he is now sadly forgotten.
Kebbeh (or kibbeh) is a typical Levantine dish made of bulgur and minced meat (lamb or beef). The best known version is the torpedo-shaped croquettes, which are fried until brown. In another popular version, the kebbeh ingredients are mixed and pressed down flat into a baking pan and then scored with a knife into diamond-shaped wedges, topped with pine nuts or almonds and baked in the oven. This traditional dish is eaten in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt (where it is called koubeiba) but has also spread as far as South America for example due to Lebanese immigrants.

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup bulgur
- 1 cup water for soaking
- ½ kilo minced meat (lamb or beef)
- 2 onions (one finely chopped, one coarsely chopped)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ tsp. allspice
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- Pinch of cumin (optional)
- ¼ cup toasted pine nuts (optional)
- Vegetable oil for frying

**Instructions**

1. Soak the bulgur in the water for about 30 minutes. Drain excess water.

2. In a bowl add half of the minced meat to the soaked bulgur, coarsely chopped onion, salt and pepper. Combine well and blend in a food processor so that it forms a dough consistency. This dough will be used to form the outer shell of the kebbeh.

3. To prepare the stuffing, fry the finely chopped onion in a pan with the oil. Add the pine nuts if using them. Add the remaining minced meat, the allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon, cumin, salt and pepper. Mix well with a wooden spoon or spatula and stir until light brown. Cook for 10 minutes and remove from the heat. This will be used for the stuffing of the kebbeh.

4. To make the kebbeh, take an egg-sized amount of the shell mixture and form into a ball. With your finger poke a hole in the ball to make a space for the stuffing mixture. Add some stuffing and seal to make a ball. Shape the ball with pointed ends into the characteristic “torpedo” shape, or if preferred the kebbeh can be left as they are. Repeat the process until all the ingredients are used up.

5. When all the kebbeh are ready, deep fry them in oil for about 10 minutes or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels.
ALEX-MED NEWSLETTER

Bringing the Mediterranean Together

This newsletter hopes to reach a wide public, both locally and internationally. It brings to you news about Alex-Med and Alexandria, and encourages you to send your contributions. If you would like to send your views, comments or contribute to topics related to Alexandría and the Mediterranean please use the contact details below. Regular sections include a gastronomical page to illustrate Mediterranean cuisine, a page on an Alexandrian personage and another on an Alexandrian building or neighborhood, and a page of photography that captures scenes from everyday life in Alexandria. Our mission is to involve you in our activities and in the making of a new Alexandria — one that honours the past, respects diversity and rises to the challenges of the 21st century.

Editor: Carole Escoffey
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