

Bringing To You ... The Mediterranean Alexandria



proposal for the development of the eastern harbour



painting by M.Said

a new perspective



garden party at Antoniadis 1920s

Le dialogue des cultures



the abduction of Europa by M. Abdel Aziz

Alexandria and the Mediterranean

A Space for Dialogue and Exchange

THE PLACE: ALEXANDRIA
THE TIME: 331 BCE

"There is an island called Pharos in the rolling seas off the mouth of the Nile, a day's sail out for a well-found vessel with a roaring wind astern"

This was the coast, described by Homer in the *Odyssey*, that Alexander the Great chose for his new city. After seeking the oracle's approval of his choice of site, he paid personal attention to the city's planning: the layout of the streets, the location of important buildings and the network of cisterns. Legend has it that the seers prophesied that Alexandria would be a city of pluralism and abundance. The historical fact is that the Mediterranean Alexandria remains the one city still famous for having been founded by Alexander the Great, and that has maintained a mesmerizing hold over people's imagination. It was the first manifestation of internationalism in the world. Alexander was no ordinary conqueror: his vision was to Hellenize the world by uniting its civilizations under a common culture, for the good



Demetrius of Phalerum

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of humanity. During the three hundred years of Ptolemaic rule, Alexandria shone as the capital of antiquity and its center of learning and research, and its lighthouse the Pharos – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – endures as the eternal symbol of enlightenment.

THE INSTITUTIONS Demetrius of Phalerum, an Athenian statesman, organized the establishment of a great research center in Alexandria. Ptolemy Soter I started implementing the vision in 290 BCE, and Ptolemy II Philadelphus completed the construction. One institution was the research center, the Mouseion (Temple to the Muses), and the other was the Library attached to it. This Library became the first public library to be owned by the state and the only truly universal library in the ancient world, with holdings estimated at 700,000 scrolls. Eventually a daughter library was linked to the Serapeum, to the south of the city. For hundreds of years learning and research in all fields of knowledge were practiced in Alexandria. It was there that Aristarchus proclaimed that the earth revolves round the sun, that Hipparchus measured the solar year with six and a half minutes accuracy, that Eratosthenes measured the circumference of the earth. Mathematicians such as Archimedes, Euclid, Theon and Hypatia, grammarians and poets like Callimachus and Theocritus – to name but a few – produced their great works in Alexandria.

The translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, the Alexandria School of Thought, and the debate over the nature of Christ were all part of the spiritual, intellectual and philosophical activities in the city. Alexandrian scholarship acquired a legendary status that survives in human memory.

THE PLACE: ALEXANDRIA
THE TIME: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

"We shall ... strive to make it a meeting place for cultures and a forum for enlightened dialogue between civilizations, in order to promote peace, tolerance, respect for differences, and the appreciation and protection of cultural diversity within our globalizing world."

Suzanne Mubarak





Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Mrs. Laura Bush, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, Dr. Mohamed Awad



Photo by M. Nassef

THE INSTITUTION: Alexandria University called for the revival of the ancient library. The idea, adopted by the First Lady, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, and by UNESCO and other international organizations, became a reality. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina – or the new Library of Alexandria – is situated very close to the site of the old library in the Brucheion (the Ancient Royal Quarter), overlooking the Silsileh Peninsula - the ancient Cape Lochias - and the Mediterranean. It aims to be:

1. The world's window on Egypt
2. Egypt's window on the world
3. A library for the new digital age
4. A center of learning and dialogue

The new Library is not just a store room for books. It has a congress center that seats up to 2,000 people, a library for the visually challenged, a library for children, a young people's library, an internet archive, a planetarium, an exploratorium, three museums, two permanent exhibitions and seven specialized centers. In the spirit of the ancient library, the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina has become a cultural center that hosts conferences and exhibitions, encourages research and promotes exchange.

"To be a space of freedom, where dialogue with the other can take place."

Ismail Serageldin

THE TIME: THE TWENTYFIRST CENTURY

THE CENTER: The Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center (Alex-Med) was established as part of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in April 2003 to be Egypt's link with the Mediterranean, and to be a center for conducting comprehensive research related to the past, present and future of Alexandria.

"The Great Library of Alexandria is reborn. And now the Mediterranean must regain its unity."

Romano Prodi

Alexandria's historical role has been to promote a healthy spirit of diversity, pluralism, and tolerance. Its interaction across the ages with other civilizations of the Mediterranean contributed to cultural exchange throughout the whole area. Today, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Alex-Med are committed to reviving that role once more. By placing itself in the Mediterranean, the Center seeks to encourage dialogue and mutual understanding, and to counter cultural stereotyping. Relations between the northern and southern Mediterranean, and with the European community, are fostered in order to reinforce the Mediterranean's role today as the meeting point of civilizations.

By **Mohamed Awad**

Director of The Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center



Photo by M. Nassef

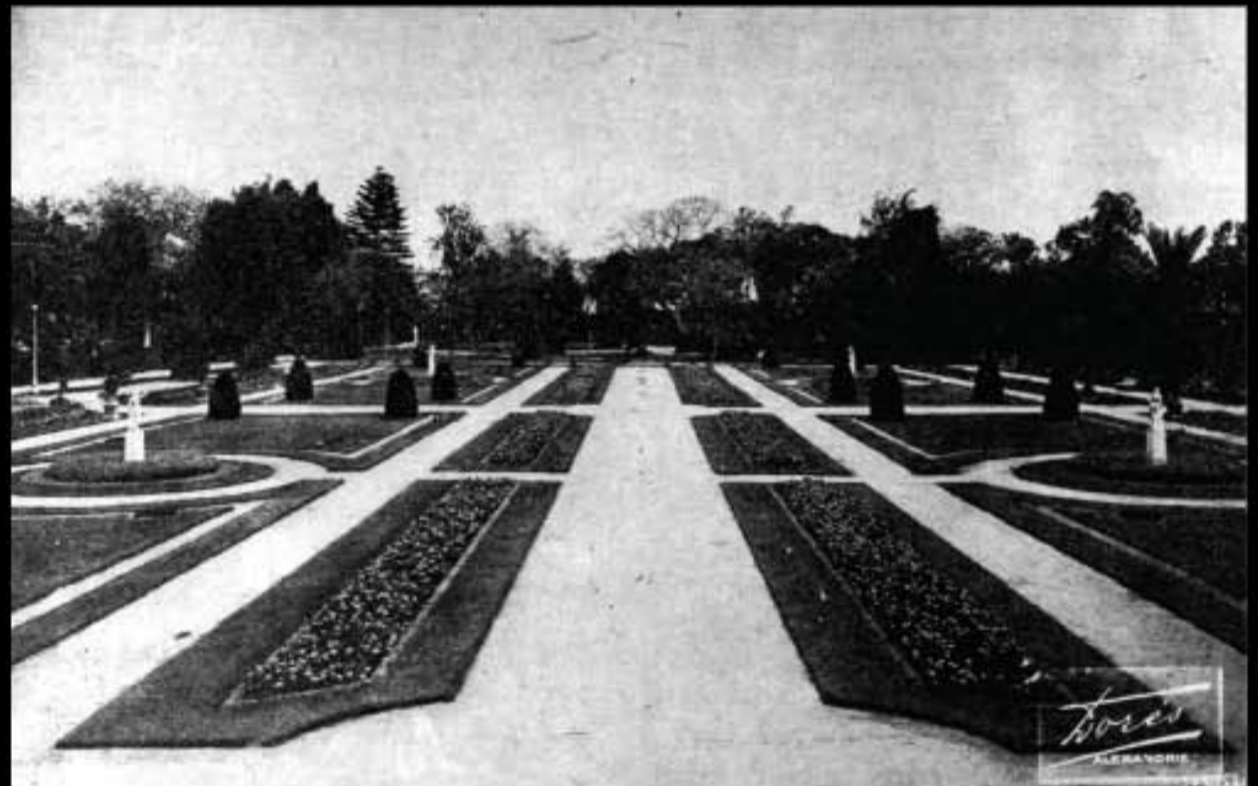
The Antoniadis villa and Gardens

Sir John Antoniadis is the perfect example of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism and diversity. A British subject who hailed from the Greek island of Lemnos, Antoniadis was an Alexandrian and a generous patron of the city and its Greek community. In the mid-nineteenth century, he developed a garden estate which was to become the most famous in Alexandria. Many parties were held in these gardens, among them one in honor of Khedive Ismail, which was attended by the young Prince Tewfik (the Khedive's son and the heir to the throne of Egypt) as well as the elite society of Alexandria.



garden party at Antoniadis 1920s

courtesy of Josiane Bouleac-Ayoub



When the Antoniadis Villa and Gardens were donated to the Municipality of Alexandria by their last owner Antony Antoniadis, they were used as a guest house to host Egypt's visiting dignitaries, including the kings of Belgium, Greece and Italy, the Shah of Iran and his Egyptian wife, Princess Fawzia. The Villa witnessed significant historical events, such as the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 and the founding of the Arab League in 1946. Events of a lighter nature were also conducted there: throughout the thirties and forties, garden parties were thrown and flower shows were held annually.

There are archeological remains in the garden, including a gnostic tomb and a cistern. There is also a tropical greenhouse, as well as French and Italian gardens.

The Villa has now become part of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and will eventually house Alex Med. The rich cultural background of this magnificent location is an added inspiration for the diversity, pluralism and interaction that the Mediterranean represents. However, the Villa needs to be renovated, and a campaign is being launched to raise the necessary funds.



Evoking the Spirit

Recreating the city

By Malak Rafla

One of the missions of Alex-Med is to revive the role of Alexandria, both ancient and modern, as a model of cosmopolitanism, tolerance and pluralism. For this reason, Alex-Med is initiating a series of round-table discussions in which leading experts on Alexandria will gather to discuss the phenomenon known as "Alexandrianism", and attempt to define the term through an examination of the political, social, religious, geographical, historical, urban, linguistic and literary aspects of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism. The first round-table discussion was held 28-30th April 2004. Over a period of three days, scholars from all around the world addressed issues of cosmopolitanism, identity, language, institutions, literature, and the relations between the foreign communities and the government and their own countries.

Speakers came from Europe, the United States, Cairo and Alexandria, and included renowned scholars, novelists, and artists, most of whom were originally Alexandrians. Among them were Robert Bauvall, Mostafa el Abbadi, Jean-Yves Empereur, Bojana Mojsov, Farouk Abaza, Edwar el Kharrat, Ibrahim Abdel Meguid, Michael Haag, John Rodenbeck, Joseph Boulad, Mona el Seguini, Paul Balta, Habib Tawa, Harry Tzalas, Kenneth Brown, Robert Solé, Ilios Yananakis, Mohamed Awad, Sahar Hamouda, Josiane Boulad-Ayoub, Chewikar Abdel Aziz, Hala Halim, Sandro Manzoni, Efthimos Soloyanis, and Alexandra Charitatu.

All agreed that the particular cosmopolitanism of the 19th and early 20th century had ended forever, yet the values of the open city, of tolerance, respect for the other and diversity, could be revived to recreate the city.

While the conference was intense in terms of its scholarly debates and presentations, it also hosted some stars who gave an artistic dimension to the gathering of Alexandrians celebrating their city.



K. Brown, M. Awad, H. Tzalas, G. Moustaki

On 29 April, Alexandrian born singer Georges Moustaki spoke to the audience about his experience as a child growing up in cosmopolitan Alexandria. Afterwards, the participants went to the city center where he and the Director of Alex-Med, Mohamed Awad, unveiled a commemorative plaque in the entrance of the house he had lived in. On the following day, Alexandrian born film director, Youssef Chahine, came from Cairo to speak to the audience about his new film *Alexandria-New York*. Mohamed Awad announced that Mr. Chahine had promised him that he would donate his belongings to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The news was received with a great deal of applause, since one of the missions of Alex-Med is to acquire collections of eminent Alexandrians to make the Library the greatest repository of all material related to the city.

While the legacy of cosmopolitan Alexandria was one of the focal points of the discussion, on the final day of the round table, the distinguished scholars also related the phenomena of "Alexandrianism" and "cosmopolitanism" to contemporary Alexandria and its future. In so doing, they suggested ways in which Alex-Med could promote its mission in the areas of both research and development, and thus contribute actively to the city's development.

Symbolically, the closing ceremony on 30 April was a concert given at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina by Georges Moustaki, who was celebrating his 70th birthday in his home town, Alexandria. The concert was organized jointly by the French Cultural Center of Alexandria and the Arts Center and Alex-Med of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Finally, all the speakers of the conference were invited to a ball celebrating the singer's birthday, held at the Greek Consul's residence. The festivities accompanying the round table on Alexandrianism indicated the joy with which Alexandrians celebrated their city and the optimism with which they held its future.



Youssef Chahine & Mohamed Awad



E. Kharrat, S. Hamouda, I. Abdel Meguid



M. Awad, S. Hamouda, J. Rodenbeck, I. Iansakakis



A. Charitatu, S. Manzoni, H.E.C. Athanasiadou, E. Soulyannis

Omar Toussoun

Prince of Alexandria

By Laura Khandjian

People come and go, but once in a while a figure makes a great impact on a day, a life, or a nation. Omar Toussoun, Prince of Alexandria, was one such figure who improved the lives of many of his fellow countrymen and contributed much to the progress of the nation, his beloved Egypt.

On 17th February 2005, the Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center (Alex-Med) at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina celebrated the generous donation of all Prince Omar Toussoun's own publications, by his grandson, Prince Hussein Toussoun and his wife Princess Mounira and two daughters, the Princesses Karima and Yasmina.

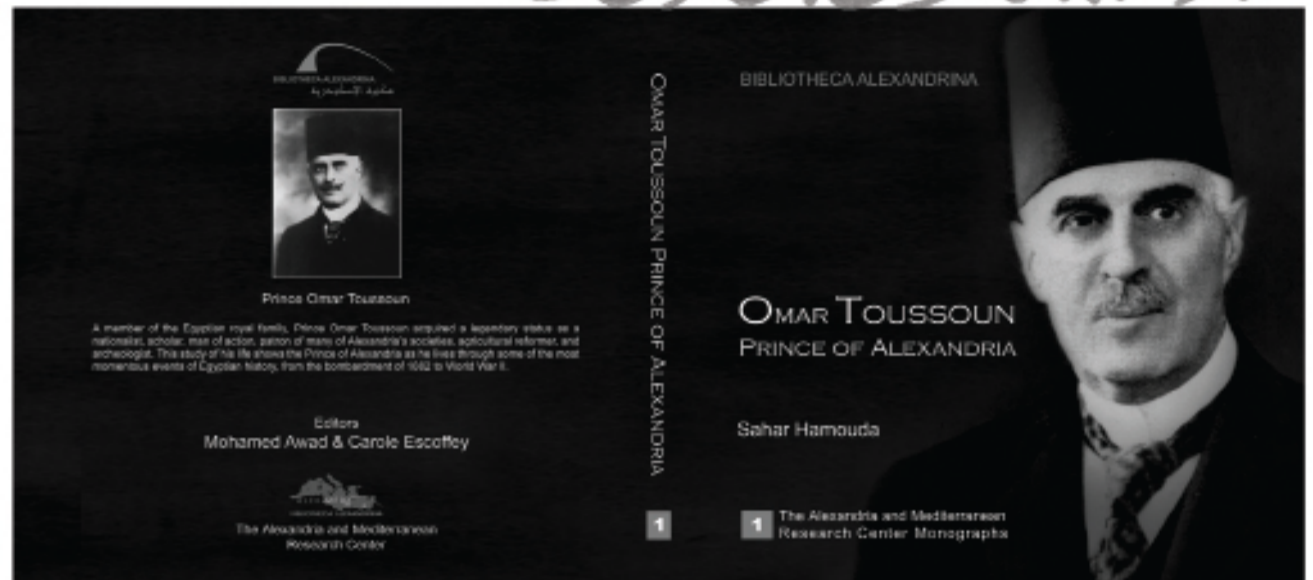


These not only added to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina's valuable collections, but also shed light on the legacy and devotion of a great man's patriotism. The gift included a collection of rare books about the monasteries of Wadi el-Natroun, in addition to books on antiquities, especially the sunken antiquities in Abu Qir to the east of Alexandria.

One of the main factors that contributed to the Prince's popularity during his lifetime, was his ambition to improve many aspects of the nation ranging from political and moral life to agriculture and economy. The Prince owned vast areas of farmland on which he established model villages.



Prince Hussein Toussoun, General Abdel Salam El Mehgoub, Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Princess Karima Toussoun, Princess Mounira Toussoun, Dr. Mohamed Awad



In so doing, he strove not only to increase productivity, but more specifically to improve the living standards of these farming communities. It was this kind of attitude that led the peasants to call him affectionately Abul-Fellah, or, father of the peasant.

Toussoun was also well-loved for his nationalism. It was he who first thought of sending a Wafd, or delegation, to Versailles to ask for Egypt's independence in 1919. Throughout his life he spent much time, energy and money to promote the welfare of Egypt and the Muslim and Arab world. He was president and active member of over 80 charity, academic and sports organizations in Egypt.

Although some research has been conducted on the Prince, to further commemorate the occasion, Alex-Med published the monograph, *Omar Toussoun: Prince of Alexandria* by Dr. Sahar Hamouda. Complementing existing research, the monograph throws light on the controversial period of Egyptian history during which Omar Toussoun lived. Comprised of four chapters, it paints the portrait of a man who commanded the love and respect of the Egyptian nation, and who contributed much to the country's progress.

The celebration of Prince Omar Toussoun's life and work on 17 February 2005 attracted not only his family and friends, but many Alexandrians, including prominent figures such as the Governor of Alexandria, H. E. General Abdel Salam el Mahgoub, and guests from Cairo. The celebration included speeches by a number of personalities and specialists such as Dr. Ismail Serageldin, the Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Dr. Mohamed Awad, the Director of Alex-Med,



Sahar Hamouda, Mohamed Awad, Ismail Serageldin, Mahmoud Abaza, Mustafa el Abadi

Dr. Sahar Hamouda the author of the monograph and Deputy Director of Alex-Med, Dr. Mostafa El Abbadi, an eminent historian at Alexandria University and President of the Archeological Society, Mr. Ahmed Abdel Fattah, former Director of the Greco-Roman Museum, Dr. Mahmoud Abaza the prominent historian, and Mr. Ahmed Abdel-Moneim, who recounted many touching memories of his childhood on the Prince's daira in Taftesh-el-Khazzan.

Man's yearning for progress and knowledge has echoed throughout history. Through their pursuit, individuals have contributed to the evolution of mankind. By his valuable work in many fields, Prince Omar Toussoun played an important role in his country's progress. In celebrating his life and work, Alex-Med hopes that his example may inspire future generations of his countrymen and women.



Elite إيليت

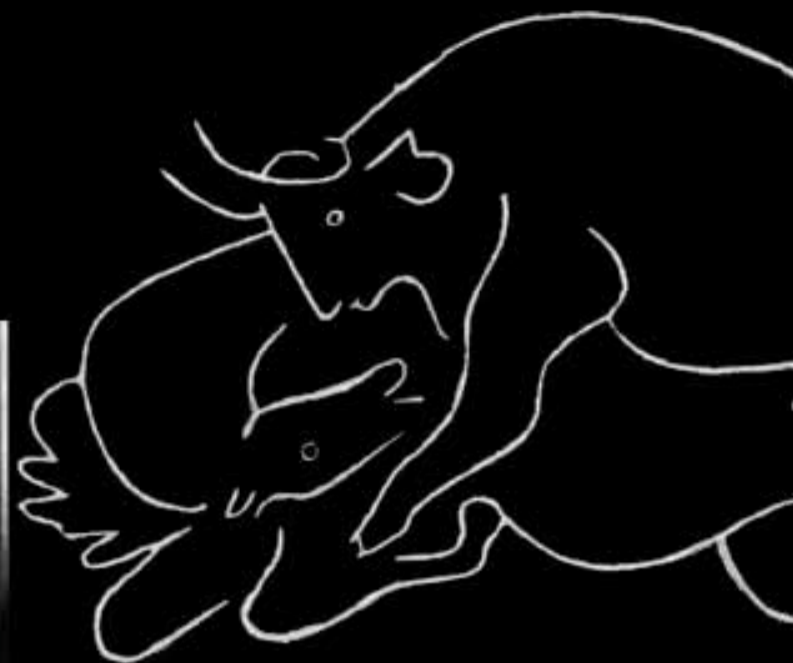
By Keith Miller

Sitting in the glassed-in prow of the Elite Restaurant on Sharia Safia Zaghloul, one has the surreal impression of voyaging in a strange boat, plowing the currents of the evening crowds. So it is satisfying to learn that when the open-air terrace of the original restaurant was first covered over, timber from a shipwreck was used in the construction. Madame Christina Constantinou, who passed away on 13 May 2005, took over the restaurant from its French and Greek owners in 1953, and became one of the fixtures of the city. The restaurant is now run by her son, Alkis Matheos.

Madame Christina first transformed the restaurant into a nightclub specializing in Greek dance music. This was very successful, but the late hours and high taxes forced her to abandon that part of the establishment.



Christina Constantinou



Mr. Matheos says the restaurant is better than ever, and in December 2005 will be opening an art gallery, called The Red Gallery, next door to the Elite. The gallery will be a showcase for young Egyptian artists. "Egypt is not only a country of antiquities, but has also excellent modern artists," says Mr. Matheos. "We need to remember the past, but also focus on the future."

Our sincere condolences to Mr. Matheos and family for the sad loss of Madame Christina Constantinou who passed away shortly after this article was originally written.



She then set about creating a restaurant with an atmosphere welcoming to artists and businessmen, aristocrats and the hoi polloi. The walls contain murals by Greek painter Michael Vafiadis and Alexandrian Ahmed Mustafa (don't miss his brilliant, if somewhat soiled, "Zodiac" on the ceiling of the inner part of the restaurant), as well as a superb collection of posters and paintings. There are also two framed photocopies of Cavafy manuscripts (the originals are in Mr. Matheos' house in Paris). Though Madame Christina acquired the restaurant after Cavafy's death, she remembered, as a young girl, seeing him wandering through the streets. Upon meeting a friend, she once said, he would inquire where the acquaintance was going, and then sadly affirm that he was heading in the opposite direction.

The eclectic decoration, the superb location – ideal for people-watching – and the Greek and continental menu attracted the likes of Edith Piaf, Um Kalthoum, Dalida, Queen Farida and Queen Nariman, and Jihan el-Sadat. Today, through the strains of French pop or Latin jazz, half a dozen languages may be heard at the diner-like tables, as the remnants of the city's once-numerous Greek population and local French and British residents sip Stellas and dip tahina along with foreign tourists and young Egyptian couples seeking a quiet place for a chat.



The Mediterranean Speaks

Mediterranean Voices: Oral History and Cultural Practices in the Mediterranean

By Malak Rafla

Mediterranean Voices is a major ethnographic study and partnership initiative between London Metropolitan University and a variety of institutions in the Mediterranean, and is funded by the European Union. The broad scope of the project is to document the oral histories and memories of the inhabitants of several Mediterranean cities such as Alexandria, Ancona, Beirut, Bethlehem, Chania, Ciutat de Mallorca, Granada, Istanbul, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Marseille, Nicosia North, Nicosia South, and Valletta. As the inhabitants record their testimonies of family histories, important national and international events, rituals, customs, worship, and folklore, a rich mosaic of Mediterranean life



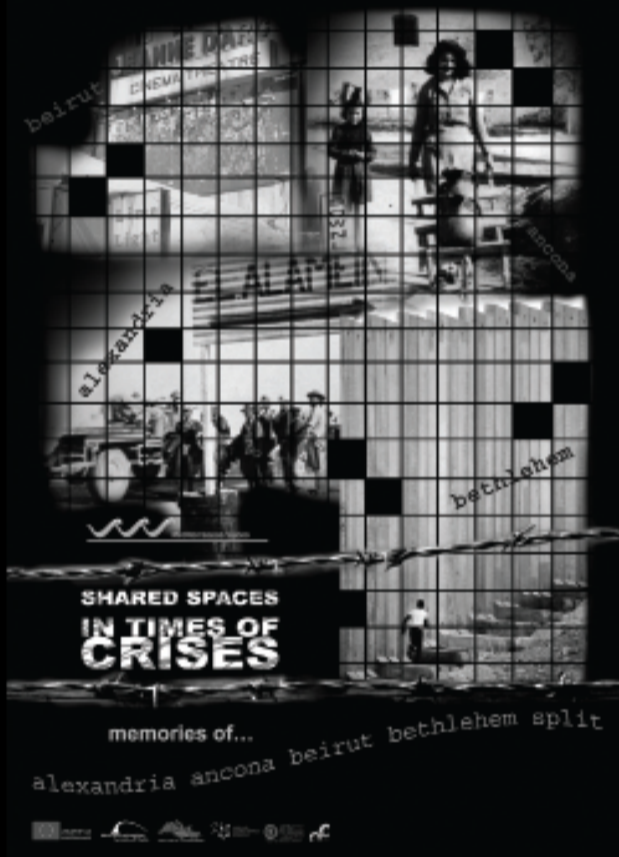
Randa Ahmad, Flora Cavours, Yasser Aref, Christianne Nasser, Sahar Hamouda, Tom Selwyn, Mohamed Awad, Esem Barakat, Mohamed el Eklaby

They tell their stories that color the kaleidoscope of the city of "five races, five languages and a dozen creeds", as Lawrence Durrell described it, recollecting fragments of personal history that reach back to their schooldays and even further in time to the circumstances that led to their ancestors' immigration to Alexandria and how the city became a safe haven in different ways to each person. This is portrayed against a backdrop of local Alexandrian social life and Egyptian history of the late nineteenth to the twentieth century including nationalist movements, anti-British demonstrations, the 1952 revolution, the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the Triple Aggression of 1956, the nationalizations and land laws of the 1960s, and the mass exodus of foreigners from Alexandria, which was countered by internal immigration from Upper Egypt, Nubia and the countryside. This sketch of national history is depicted on a broader background of international events such as the massacre of the Armenians and their escape to Cyprus and Egypt, the Russian revolution, the Second World War and the Palestinian crisis.

The interviews show how these three levels of personal, national and international history overlap and affect each other and how all those communities co-existed in Alexandria, making it the cosmopolitan city par excellence.

The interviewees – many of whom lived through the golden age of the forties – also give their own opinions of the particular brand of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism and pluralism, and share memories of daily life in different neighborhoods, and of the customs which were passed down through space and time, contributing to the identity of Alexandria. Med Voices has tried to capture and preserve that fading image of cosmopolitan Alexandria. In so doing, however, it has also given voice to local Egyptians who are usually absent from this tale of cosmopolitan Alexandria, and who represent the marginalized neighborhoods, such as Gheit el Enab, Kom el Dikka and Karmouz, that are as much part of Alexandria as is Lawrence Durrell's European town. Nor are the interviews entirely located in the past. The contemporary city is also represented, with its rapidly growing population that is changing the character of these neighborhoods, its urban density and new development schemes that are threatening its rich heritage, and the discovery of the underwater archeology that is rocking the world. In addition, many scenes of contemporary everyday life are captured, reflecting the changing social order and practices that either usher in a new age, or affirm the continuation of the past, adapted to suit the changing times.

In addition to the website, the project has also held several exhibitions, one of which was joint between Alexandria, Ancona, Beirut, Bethlehem and Split. As its title Shared Spaces in Times of Crises indicates, the exhibition aimed to show how the inhabitants of each city co-existed and shared common space during crises. It explored themes such as cosmopolitanism, migration, nostalgia, perceptions of security, identity, ethnicity, citizenship, tradition and modernity, mobility, and perceptions of the other. The exhibition was inaugurated on 16 December 2004 in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and then traveled to Beirut, Fiorli and Bethlehem.



emerges that will be accessed through the web on a multimedia and multilingual database. While the material collected will be ultimately deployed to create a virtual representation of the cosmopolitan urban spaces and everyday cultural practices which define the "uniqueness" of these neighborhoods, the emphasis will also be on the identification and dissemination of a Mediterranean regional cultural heritage constituted and nourished by the historic transnational and diasporic links between the Mediterranean cities chosen as part of this project.

The essential theme of Alexandria's interviews is "Continuity and Discontinuity". The fabled cosmopolitan Alexandria of myth and literature ended in the 1950s and 1960s. But it remains the "capital of memory" that survives in the urban spaces we, the inheritors of this legacy, still move in, and in the memory and oral narratives of those who experienced it, whether they were foreigners or Egyptians – regardless of social class – and whether they left or stayed. Alex-Med has recorded some 110 interviews representing fifteen ethnic groups and three faiths, some of whom continue to live in Alexandria, and others who have left but somehow retain a relationship with their native city.



MedCities

The Mediterranean in Alexandria

By Laura Khandjian

In an era where technological and economical advancement determines a country's future, nations are pausing to reflect on the rich histories and cultures that have propelled them into the 21st century. With a common yearning for future advancement whilst honoring the past, a number of Mediterranean nations came together with the aim of fostering dialogue among themselves and strengthening the partnership between coastal Mediterranean cities. This gave birth to the international event "The Mediterranean City: Dialogue among Cultures".



General A. Mahgoub, H.E. D. Bakoyanni Mayor of Athens & Dr. I. Serageldin

Starting on 21st February 2005 and ending on 14th March 2005, the exhibition was comprised of two sections. The first provided a general retrospective of the Mediterranean city along significant themes such as political influences, trade links, religious, cultural and scientific exchanges. The second section focused on the history, recent achievements and development plans of selected Mediterranean cities.

Following the exhibition's inauguration, speeches were given by prominent figures, all sharing parallel visions of the imperative role that the Mediterranean city plays. The speakers included the Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Dr. Ismail Serageldin; the Governor of Alexandria, H. E. General Abdel Salam el Mahgoub; the Director of the World Bank's department for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti, Mr. Emmanuel Mbi; the Consul General of Italy in Alexandria, H. E. Mr. Gianni Martini, and the Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures, Dr. Traugott Schoefthaler. The opening ceremony concluded with an opera performance by the Italian tenor Vincenzo la Scola.

The event included four panels, where officials, representatives and organizations from the major Mediterranean cities along with selected specialists discussed the policies that affect their cities and their future development.

The host city being Alexandria, MedCities included a Special Alexandria Event where Alex-Med mounted an exhibition of its virtual plan of the development of the city's Eastern Harbor that would resurrect the vitality of an area that had, in ancient times, been a key to Alexandria's fame and prosperity.

This plan consisted of six main development sites, including a design of the urban landscape surrounding the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The public was able to examine drawings, models and a brochure that would enable the audience to envision and capture the sense of how Alexandria can advance into the 21st century whilst honoring its rich history. Complementing the special event was the publication of the book MedCities, presenting the cities' ongoing and future urban development projects as an integral part of cultural, socio-economic, political and environmental development.

Moreover, in order to engage the citizens of Alexandria, especially its young people, in the future and sustainable development of their city, Alex-Med organized in collaboration with the Governorate of Alexandria a competition for the redevelopment of the Eastern Harbor and its waterfront. The competition was open to all Egyptian architects. Of the 32 teams and individuals who participated, three were awarded prizes and five others were granted encouragement prizes in a celebration held in the Library on 28th May 2005.

History was not created in a day, and nor will the future we strive for. However, by promoting dialogue between Alexandria and her Mediterranean sisters through this kind of event, Alex-Med hopes to nurture the building blocks of a future that will provide a better living environment for generations to come.



Dr. Mohamed Awad, Dr. Ismail Serageldin, General Abdel Salam el Mahgoub

When the world was once believed to be flat, the Mediterranean region was considered the centre of the universe. Mirroring the magnitude of its role throughout history, the Mediterranean still remains a vast mosaic of cultures, languages, and heritages. The event thus not only celebrated the history and culture of the Mediterranean city, but also underlined its importance as a pivotal element for the advancement of the region in the 21st century, promoting a better understanding of its shared legacy and contributing to peace, cooperation and common prosperity. The event, held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, was organized jointly by Alex-Med and Studio Bertocchini & Ruggiero. Launched by the World Bank and supported by the Italian Trust Fund for Culture and Sustainable Development, the event shed light upon the Mediterranean culture as a sum of the similarities and differences of its people, and created a channel of communication on an international platform.

The event embraced twelve participating Mediterranean cities: Alexandria, Algiers, Athens, Barcelona, Beirut, Genoa, Istanbul, Marseille, Naples, Rome, Tunis and Venice, each uniquely contributing to the cosmopolitan myth of the Mediterranean city. The opening ceremony on 21 February 2005 started by H.E. Dora Bakoyanni, the Mayor of Athens, inaugurating an international exhibition at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. This exhibition included visual displays by the participating cities on their history, recent achievements and virtual urban development, which further enabled the visualization of the Mediterranean ideals. At a time where globalization has accelerated the merging of cultures, the displays showed how each city has contributed to the myth of the Mediterranean city and how it is planning its future.





BALLAD OF THE WATER OF THE SEA

The sea
 smiles from far off.
 Teeth of foam,
 lips of sky.

What do you sell, oh, turbid maid,
 with your breasts to the wind?

I sell, sir, the water
 of the seas.

What do you carry, oh, black youth,
 mixed with your blood?

I carry, sir, the water
 of the seas.

Federico Garcia Lorca





The Alexandria Quartet

"Clip-clopping down the Grande Corniche I studied the light haze on the horizon and the flat blue expanse of sea with delight. The city glittered in the sunshine like a jewel. Brilliantly rode the little craft in the inner basin, parodied by their shining reflections. The minarets shone loudly."

Lawrence Durrell



Photos by Abdallah Dawestashy

Mémoire des Temps

Exhibition on Alexandria

By Malak Rafla

In the belief that dialogue is successfully achieved through cultural exchange, where there is real equity and where art speaks a universal language that transcends barriers but celebrates difference, Alex Med and the Arts Center of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina embarked on an innovative approach to dialogue through painting.

The Belgian artist, Jocelyne Mottoulle, was invited to come to live in Alexandria and work with Alexandrian painter Jihan Soliman, to produce a joint exhibition of their impressions of the city. Living in Alexandria naturally gave Jocelyne Mottoulle a different perspective from that of the passing tourist. Both artists were naturally affected by the historical dimensions of place and time. That, together with the dialogue between the two women, resulted in a unique exhibition in which they attempted to blend past and present and push the limits of space and time not just on canvas but also on the human level. The exhibition lasted throughout October 2004 and can be viewed on the Bibliotheca Alexandrina database.

Jocelyne Mottoulle lives and works in Belgium and France. She has been holding exhibitions since 1989 in Belgium, France, Italy, the USA and finally in Alexandria. Jihan Soliman is a lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Alexandria. She has been participating in many exhibitions since 1988, and has had five exhibitions of her own work in Cairo and in Alexandria.



الإسكندرية مدينة ساحرة تأسر عين وقلب كل من يشاهدها بجوها وبحرها وشمسها ونسماتها، التي تحمل لكل زائر عمق الماضي الغني بالتاريخ والحضارة والثقافة. إنها المدينة التي جذبت أكبر الأدباء والفلاسفة والشعراء والفنانين على مر التاريخ، وكانت مصدر إلهام ساحر وأخاذ. وهذا ما أهدف إليه في عمل لوحاتي عن الإسكندرية، فالطبيعة هي النظام، هي القانون الوحيد الثابت في الكون هو الفناء، ثم الفناء، ثم الفناء، وهكذا تدور الدائرة، بين حياة وموت، وبين جذب ورخاء، وبين شد وجذب.

جيهان سليمان

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Alexandrie,

Plus belle que les mots, les formes et les couleurs, ton apparence ne serait donc qu'apparence éternelle, on entend ton marbre et ton granit chanter à chaque instant. On voudrait que tout se dresse, perce les flots et tel un mirage se mette à vivre un instant devant nos yeux amoureux, assoiffés de beautés perdues.

Alexandrie,

Femme millénaire au visage perdu, tu es l'impalpable présence, l'oppressant embrassement, la mer de silence aux couleurs de soleil, laisse nous nous étendre à tes pieds, attendre le déferlement des sensations, voir défilier les signes enfin éclaircis de tes effluves marine et ne plus être rien que désir d'être entre lac et rivage.

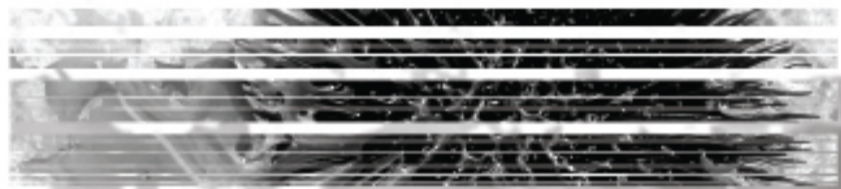
Jocelyne Mottoulle



Young artists of Alexandria

ولد تامر فتحي في الإسكندرية، ويدرس حاليا الأدب الإنجليزي في جامعة الإسكندرية، و يعمل في محل ملابس. كتب أول قصيدة شعر و هو في الثانية عشر من عمره، وواصل كتابة الشعر خلال المرحلة الثانوية. وهناك شخص يدعى محمد إبراهيم كان له الفضل في تكوينه الشعري و دخوله مركز الإسكندرية الثقافي، حيث حضر تامر هناك العديد من ورشات العمل في كتابة الشعر و كانت سبب في تنمية مهاراته الشعرية، و في الثامن عشر من عمره بدأ تامر التوسع في قراءاته و لم يقتصر على الشعر فقط بل بدأ يقرأ القرآن و الإنجيل و أغاني فيروز و أيضا أعمال محمود درويش و أمل دنقل. هذه القراءات متعددة المصادر كانت بمثابة دفعة قوية دفعته لكتابة أشعار جميلة، و توسعت قراءاته حديثا لتشمل أيضا: كفاقي، داريل، لوركا، و الكاتب الكولومبي جابرييل جارسيا ماركيثز و آخرين غيرهم.

نشر ديوان شعره الأول هذا العام "قصّة الملابس" "بألمس فقدت زرا: حكاية الملابس" و كان مستوحى من إحساسه بأن الملابس كانت حية و تشعره بالحزن و السعادة كالإنسان. و يتمنى تامر أن يكون قادرا على أن يكتب مجموعة من الأشعار الموحدة و المتواصلة.



Tamer Fathi

فاترينة

(راتعون هؤلاء الذين بحررون الملابس، هؤلاء الذين يذهبون إلى المتجر للشراء)

رغبة في الخروج

ليسوا بكثير،
هؤلاء الذين يحفظون أغنيات الخروج
و الفرح.
هؤلاء الذين يدركون نشوة الملابس
عندما تغادر المتجر
ثم يرتديها الجسد.

هؤلاء الذين يشاهدون دهشتها
عندما تمشي في الشارع لأول مرة
تتهجى الأسماء،
و تشم الروائح
تحفظ الوجوه
و تسمع الأغنيات
و تلمس ملابس الآخرين

هؤلاء الذين يسمعون شهيقها
عندما تفاجئها بقعة الطعام
أو القهوة
أو الحبر
لأول مرة.
هؤلاء ليسوا بكثير

تامر فتحي

من يدرك حزن الملابس حين تكون وحدها
مصلوبة بالدبابيس،
و هي تدخل مرحلة الكي
و الطي
و المصاييح الملونة
الملابس لا تعشق المانيكاتات
الشماعات
هي تعشق الخروج
و تكره الزجاج
و تحسد الملابس الطليقة
فمنذ كانت في المصنع
و هي تشتفي الهروب

تامر فتحي

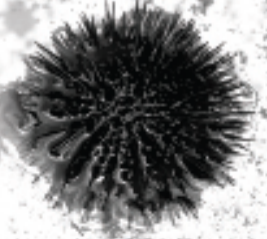
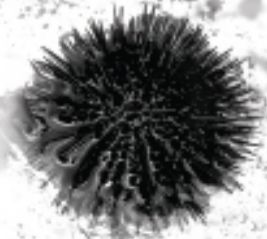
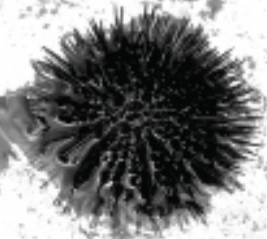
SAMSARA

Days into nights, nights into days do turn,
And suns that wane to moons to stars like dust
Ignite the ashen skies once again and burn,
Caught in the transient surge as all lights must.
A stale and stagnant fate watches and waits
Behind the blind-ended dissipated day,
The flame that burns strangles and suffocates,
Consuming and squirming to delay.
All that shines and fades on the funeral pyre,
Is reborn, baptized in ashes and pain,
Remade and relieved as saviours suspire,
Driving the life cycle around again.
Too many times this thought tried and failed,
To reach out, from its pit of sick despair,
Breathing the same used air it has exhaled,
Chained and demented in time's mortal snare.
Where starting point devours the ending scene,
The faces melt, the bodies mutilate,
And from Eve's navel twisting inbetween,
Slithers the seed of the ripe fruit she ate,
Feeding the future's hungry humanity,
And the children's cries die to dying screams,
Telling the tale of their insanity
Where nothing is, but only seems,
And there's no way, nor hope of breaking free,
Deep in this still and silent slow decay,
No crushing truth to alter what will be,
Nor bring a new salvation from today,
No clean slates, nor different dawns for tomorrow,
No exits from this sick and circling sorrow.

Malak Rafla



ملاك رافلة



Le dialogue des cultures

dans les pays méditerranéens : l'exemple de la France

Louis BLIN

Consul Général de France à Alexandrie

La politique française vis-à-vis des pays arabes est bien connue. Elle est appréciée de tous les peuples arabes, tout simplement car elle les respecte tels qu'ils sont. Cette politique n'est pas une donnée objective et immuable. Chacun connaît les conflits qui ont opposé la France aux Algériens et aux Egyptiens, notamment, avant l'arrivée au pouvoir du Général de Gaulle. Il est de notre responsabilité commune de ne plus jamais permettre de telles oppositions, de telles incompréhensions. Dans cette perspective, le dialogue des cultures est indispensable.

La politique de la France dans le monde arabe est liée à la bonne compréhension de cette région par des hommes, en particulier, ces dernières années, au président de la République, M. Jacques Chirac. Mais si ces hommes comprennent les pays arabes mieux que d'autres, c'est que nous avons en France un passé que la plupart des autres pays occidentaux n'ont pas et un présent ouvert sur ces pays.



L'histoire

Les liens du passé sont bien connus. Pour ce qui est de l'Egypte, on évoque souvent la conquête de Bonaparte, qui reste controversée, ou bien la construction du Canal de Suez par Ferdinand de Lesseps, mais beaucoup moins le bâtisseur de l'Egypte moderne, Mohamed Ali, qui se plaisait pourtant à répéter durant son long règne (1805-1849) : « Je n'ai d'ami que la France ». On parlera davantage cette année de cette période florissante des relations franco-égyptiennes. En effet, 2005 marque le bicentenaire de son arrivée au pouvoir, et le Centre culturel français d'Alexandrie organisera un colloque sur « Mohamed Ali et la France » avec le Haut Conseil à la Culture et la Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

Des liens puissants existent entre les deux pays durant toute la durée de son règne. Mohamed Ali doit notamment à l'action courageuse de consuls de France en Egypte le pachalik en 1805, puis la vice-royauté à titre héréditaire en 1840, date à laquelle le consul de France lui apporte un soutien sans faille dans la crise qui l'oppose à la Porte.

Mohamed Ali choisit d'anciens soldats de l'armée d'Orient restés en Egypte après le départ de Bonaparte pour former sa garde rapprochée. A la chute de Napoléon, le pacha, perçu comme l'héritier de ses idées en Orient, draine les nostalgiques de l'Empire, tels le colonel Sève (Soliman pacha), Clot bey, Besson bey, Planat et bien d'autres... Ils deviennent des fonctionnaires du nouvel Etat égyptien. Les rois de France envoient ensuite des « coopérants », surtout dans le domaine militaire, tel Lefebvre de Cerisy qui construira l'arsenal d'Alexandrie, mais aussi pour de grands ouvrages civils, tels ceux édifiés par Coste. Les Saint-Simoniens, conduits en Egypte par le père Enfantin à partir de 1832, sont à l'origine de nombreux projets, dont le percement du canal de Suez.

Mohamed Ali choisit également la France pour la formation de ses élites. Durant tout son règne, il y enverra des missions scolaires et militaires. La première mission scolaire comptera le fameux Rifaa al Tahtawi. Il choisit Ferdinand de Lesseps, consul de France à Alexandrie, pour précepteur de son fils Mohamed Saïd qui, devenu khédive, confiera à son ancien professeur la construction du canal de Suez.

La reconnaissance du pacha pour l'appui français à la construction de l'Etat moderne en Egypte s'exprimera en particulier par l'envoi de cadeaux qui contribueront à populariser son image en France, en particulier le fameux obélisque de Louqsor sous Louis-Philippe. Il offrira également une girafe au roi Charles X, cadeau qui marquera la société française : après son arrivée à Paris, une « mode girafe » se développera dans l'ameublement et pour les vêtements.

Toujours dans le domaine artistique, la statue équestre de Mohamed Ali sur la place Tahrir à Alexandrie est l'œuvre d'un sculpteur français. On peut donc évoquer un patrimoine partagé.

Ces bonnes relations sont à la base du développement de l'égyptomanie en France, qui dure jusqu'à nos jours et explique l'attrait des touristes français pour l'Egypte. A l'origine de la francophonie en Egypte, cette histoire féconde reste cependant méconnue, dans ce pays comme en France.

Le présent

La culture française d'aujourd'hui est l'expression d'une société qui a accueilli au fil des ans de nombreux apports extérieurs, en particulier des pays du Maghreb. Depuis plusieurs années, l'immigration en provenance de ces pays est devenue marginale. Par contre, les enfants des immigrés, nés en France donc français, ont créé une culture franco-arabe originale.

Il existe actuellement de nombreux intellectuels et artistes franco-arabes dans tous les domaines, qui sont les meilleurs garants de la poursuite de bonnes relations entre la France et le monde arabe. On ne compte plus les groupes ou chanteurs qui chantent indifféremment en français ou en arabe. Fait marquant, tous les jeunes Français écoutent la musique de ces groupes, beaucoup l'apprécient et commencent ensuite à écouter d'autres artistes, purement arabes cette fois. C'est une évolution marquante, car il y a une vingtaine d'années, la musique arabe était très marginale en France.

Un autre exemple, l'apprentissage de la langue arabe qui tend à se banaliser. Il était exceptionnel jusqu'il y a peu qu'un Français sans lien familial dans le monde arabe se mette à apprendre l'arabe, langue principalement confinée aux Orientalistes. On commençait en général l'arabe à l'université et seuls quelques rares lycées enseignaient cette langue. A présent, l'arabe est enseigné dans de nombreuses écoles et le Département d'études arabes du Caire, qui dépend de l'Ambassade de France, reçoit de nombreuses candidatures.

Autre illustration des nouveaux liens entre la France et le monde arabe : les retraités de la partie nord de la France s'établissent traditionnellement sur la côte d'Azur pour profiter du soleil pendant leur vieillesse. Beaucoup d'entre eux vont, désormais, en Tunisie. Les prix, bien inférieurs, sont la principale raison de cette évolution, mais le fait que beaucoup de Français souvent simples et craintifs – comme nombre de personnes âgées – choisissent un pays arabe pour y passer leurs vieux jours est une preuve de la confiance acquise par les Arabes et les Musulmans au sein du peuple français, bien loin des peurs qu'on peut trouver ailleurs. Cette confiance est l'un des facteurs poussant de nombreux Français à acheter des résidences secondaires à Marrakech depuis quelques années.

Le dialogue des cultures à Alexandrie

« Alexandrie est notre lieu de naissance », écrivait le grand auteur français Michel Foucault. Lawrence Durrell faisait, quant à lui, d'Alexandrie la « capitale de la mémoire ». Alexandrie est notre mémoire : en Occident, en France surtout, l'affaire est entendue. Les Français viennent ici y retrouver leurs racines, même si elles sont quelque peu mythiques. En connaissant mieux leur passé glorieux et multi-culturel, les Alexandrins pourront, s'ils le veulent, accompagner leurs visiteurs dans cette démarche de dialogue, fidèles en cela à la grande tradition d'ouverture et d'accueil du monde arabe.

Telle est la philosophie de l'action du Centre culturel français d'Alexandrie, afin de poursuivre ici même le dialogue euro-méditerranéen, seul moyen de combattre l'ignorance, les préjugés et l'obscurantisme.

Conclusion

Ce n'étaient que quelques exemples concrets des liens humains qui lient la France d'hier et d'aujourd'hui au monde arabe et qui expliquent le caractère particulier de nos relations.

Les peuples des deux rives de la Méditerranée sont liés par l'histoire, la culture et le destin. Dans cette région, rien n'est plus faux que le concept de choc des civilisations, car nous partageons une même civilisation, un patrimoine commun. Cela n'empêche pas les conflits, bien sûr, mais personne n'irait conclure des conflits ayant jalonné l'histoire de l'Europe qu'il existe un choc des civilisations entre la France et l'Allemagne ou l'Angleterre, par exemple ! L'histoire des relations franco-arabes au cours des quarante dernières années montre que dans l'ensemble euro-méditerranéen aussi, le dialogue des cultures peut empêcher la résurgence des conflits. Le partenariat franco-égyptien, soutenu par une entente profonde entre les deux peuples, montre bien que ces conflits n'opposent pas les Arabes à l'Occident en général. Il nous faut travailler ensemble pour que ce partenariat s'étende à tous les peuples de la région.

فردوس الاختلاف

علاء خالد



خلال الحوارات و اللقاءات التي أجريتها مع الناس باختلاف ثقافتهم و أوضاعهم الاجتماعية، اتفقوا جميعاً على أن هناك فترة من الزمن عاشتها الإسكندرية كانت مثل الحلم الذي لا تريد أن تستيقظ منه أبداً.

لماذا نتكلم عن فترة العشرينات و الثلاثينات و الأربعينات بصيغة الحلم، بالرغم من أن الزمن الذي فصلنا عنها لم يتراكم بالقدر الذي يجعل تلك الفترة نقطة بعيدة و شبيهة. ربما السبب أنها كانت فترة استثنائية لا يمكن أن تكون قانوناً عاماً للتاريخ. و كذلك كانت نهاية لمرحلة من الزمن، كانت هناك فرايمس أرضية تكونت في البقاع البعيدة نسيباً عن الحروب الدائرة. الإسكندرية كانت واحدة من تلك البقاع.

هناك فترات أخرى مضيئة، كبزوغ الفلسفة، و دور كنيسة الإسكندرية في تاريخ الفكر المسيحي، و مكتبة الإسكندرية، و حديثاً بدايات السينما في مصر. كلها فترات خاصة في تاريخ المدينة، و الغريب أنها لم تضع سيقافاً، توهج ثم خفوت، ربما كان التوهج غير كافٍ لينقل لمناخ أخرى، أو كان على حساب نشاطات حيوية و اجتماعية تعطلت و لم تساعد في تأكيده. ربما رؤيتنا لهذا الاستثناء الذي يخص المدينة نابع من شيء آخر، و هو الضعف العام الذي نعيشه الآن. فيجعلنا ننشئ جسراً من الحنين مع الماضي من أجل أن نتجاوز عن أخطائه. و ربما أيضاً أصبحنا نستكثر على أنفسنا أننا كنا في لحظة ما ضمن سياق عالمي و كوني نشارك في تأصيله.

حياتها و كلاهما سيضيء الآخر، كل من مرّ بها صنع له سيرة داخل سيرة المدينة.

ربما كان هناك فردوس للأجانب و فردوس أو جحيم آخر للمصريين و ربما كانت كلمة "الأجانب" تحتوي داخلها على تدرجات طبقية أتاحت الامتزاج و التعايش مع المصريين، و ربما ترك الصدام هذا أثراً غائراً في نفوسنا و لكن بعد أن زال الصدام المباشر و أصبح السؤال الإنساني معقداً

للغاية، أصبح لزاماً علينا فحص لحظات الاشتباك و الالتباس التي كونت ثقافتنا الحديثة، من هنا بدأ الإحساس يزداد و يلح تجاه فحص

إنها الحلم الذي تمنينا أن يستمر إلى الأبد، و لكن كان لابد و أن يحدث هذا، أن يتوقف الحلم عند مرحلة. لو لخصنا التاريخ الحديث، أو القديم للمدينة و هو الأكثر إلحاحاً، لوجدناه يتلخص في رغبة التعايش بين جنسيات و ثقافات مختلفة، و كذلك رغبتنا نحن في التعايش مع الآخرين، ربما هو السبب في خلق هذا التشبيه القوي بين غياب الإسكندرية متعددة الأجناس و غياب الفردوس الإنساني. أصبحت المدينة مثل الفردوس المفقود، الفردوس الذي تتجاوز فيه الناس و الثقافات و يتكلم بعدة أسنة، فردوس الاختلاف. لذا فالإسكندرية ترتبط بحس إنساني عميق، بحس أن هناك شيئاً مفقوداً، و هناك رغبة دائمة في استعادته، بالنسبة للإنسان ما يستعاد هو الطفولة، و بالنسبة للمدينة لحظات توهجها أو طفولتها، الطفل هو الذي يمتلك الإحساس الكوني بالحياة و يمتلك أيضاً الأسئلة البديهية، و لهذا تتأكد العلاقة بين سيرة الإنسان و سيرة المدينة.

ميزة الإسكندرية، أو خطورتها، أنها مدينة يمكن تمثيلها أو الإحساس بها على المستوى الشخصي. مدينة لها بداية و نهاية و عمود فقري واضح و شريط جغرافي محدد، مدينة كشرائط سينمائي يمكن أن تتبادل سيرة حياتك مع



هذا الحلم الملتبس الذي عاشته المدينة، ليس حياً أو كرهاً له، و لكن هناك شيئاً وراء كل هذا، أن المدينة أصبحت مدخلا و عتبة لفحص أزمة ثقافية و حضارية نعيشها الآن مع الغرب، و شئ آخر أن المدينة بتاريخها حملت سؤالاً إنسانياً كبيراً حول العدالة و التفاعل و الاتصال بين أناس مختلفين، و حق كل طرف في الحياة. أي أنها مدينة لها مرجعية إنسانية و فلسفية، و سنظل نرجع إليها وقت الأزمات لنطلب الإجابة أو — أو الخلاص أو الحنين، لقد حملت المدينة أسئلة أكبر بكثير من حجمها الجغرافي و ربما تكون صدفة و صدفة أيضاً أن تصبح العقل الباطن لمصر كلها.



Clutché Vêrascope Richard ÉGYPTÉ — UNE RUE D'ALEXANDRIE — MAISONS ANGLAISES

The Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures

The decision to create a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures was taken at the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Valencia. Two years later, the 25 member states of the European Union and their ten Mediterranean partners agreed in Dublin and the Hague on its establishment.

In October 2003, when he was president of the European Commission, Dr Romano Prodi visited the Bibliotheca Alexandrina to inaugurate the MEDA Tempus conference, and announced the intention to establish the Foundation.



H.E. Farouk Hosny, Dr. Traugott Schoeffhaer, Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Dr. Jan Henningsson

Anna Lindh, late Swedish Foreign Minister



Arab Network Coordinators Meeting

The governments of Egypt and Sweden made an offer to host it in tandem in Alexandria. This was a visionary move which signaled a true cooperation between north and south.

It is the first common Euro-Mediterranean institution to be set up in a country south of the Mediterranean, evidence that the Barcelona Process is really being put into effect and that partners from the Arab world, or from the southern shores of the Mediterranean, are actively participating in the process.

Choosing Alexandria, historically a city of cultural interaction, and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, one of whose main missions is to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures, is no coincidence. Both the city and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina are dedicated to promoting the values of tolerance and pluralism.

Each of the 35 countries identified appropriate institutions and organizations that are working at a national level to develop a dialogue between cultures and civilizations within the framework of Euro-Mediterranean societies and selected the institution or organization that should play the role of head of the national network.

Alex Med has been designated as the national coordinator and has identified the NGOs and civil society organizations that it will be coordinating. It will function as the link between the civil society and the Anna Lindh Foundation and will promote Euro Mediterranean projects to further soft peace and cultural interaction among partner countries.

The Foundation was inaugurated on 20 April 2005 at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Over a period of three days, more than 80 members of civil society organizations were brought together from all 35 partner countries, which are part of the national networks currently evolving all over the region. Another 70 representatives of the 35 governments held intensive discussions on the programs and procedures of the Foundation in separate meetings.

In the evening of 20 April the Foundation staged an open air festival of Euro-Mediterranean World Music at Qait Bey Fort. Musicians from all over the region gave a concert, free of charge, to the youth of Alexandria. Uniting youth through music is one of the means of cultural dialogue the Foundation is seeking to encourage.

Visit the Foundation website
www.euromedalex.org

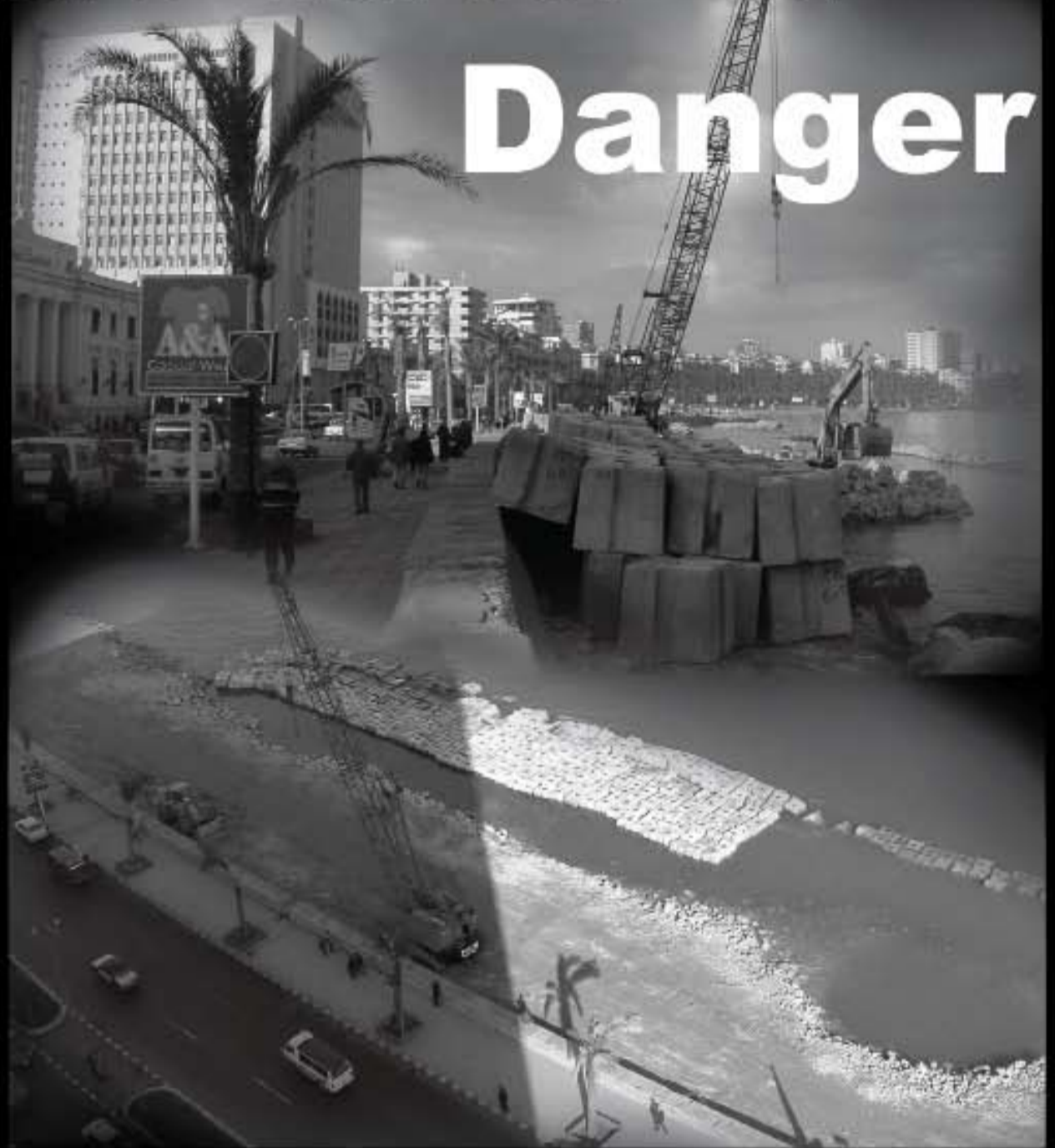


"Fiesta del Mar" at Fort Qait Bey music concert

The Eastern Harbor in Danger

By Yasser Aref

In December 2004, the historic Eastern Harbor came under serious threat. Massive concrete blocks were placed along some parts of the waterfront under the pretext of safeguarding and protecting the retaining walls of the Corniche against waves and sea currents. Intellectuals and NGOs concerned about the city, led by The Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center, organized a campaign against this destruction. Appeals were sent to the Governor of Alexandria, the Minister of Culture, the Director of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and international organizations to stop placing these concrete blocks and to remove what had been already placed. A press campaign was also organized in national and local newspapers.



The local authorities and governor responded to the plea of the civil society and stopped the aggression, but the concrete blocks still remain and it seems that the Eastern Harbor will always be under threat.

The culmination of this campaign was a seminar held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina on 14 February 2005, to which the public and various stakeholders were invited. Those included representatives of the Governorate of Alexandria, the Alexandria Local Council, the contractor of the project, The Friends of the Environment Society, the Agency for Environmental Protection and the Agency for the Protection of Shores and Coasts.

The seminar was conducted by Dr Fathi Abou Ayana, professor of Geography, Dr Mostafa el Abbadi, professor of Archeology, and Dr Mohamed Awad, Director of the Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center. A number of presentations was made by specialists in the fields of urban and city planning, archeology, geological oceanography, and coastal engineering. An open discussion was held and several Alexandrians condemned this aggression. The press also covered this important event, and the recommendations of the seminar were sent to the Governor of Alexandria and the Minister of Culture.





Reburial for Nelson's Comrades

By Edward Cooper

The cemeteries in Chatby provide a resting place for thousands, many of them former Commonwealth citizens. On a spring day in April this year they were joined by the bodies of thirty British soldiers, sailors and their families, some 200 years after they died.

Found by Italian archaeologist Paolo Gallo on Nelson's Island in Abu-Qir, 15 miles to the east of Alexandria, the graves belonged to those involved, in one way or another, in Admiral Lord Nelson's campaign in the Nile. It seems that only one of the thirty was killed in action, but all of the bodies were quickly buried and their graves were threatened by water erosion.

Witnessing their reburial, with full military honors at the Military and War Memorial Cemetery, were members of the Egyptian armed forces, the crew of HMS Chatham, VIPs and members of the Alexandrian community. Archeologists have formally identified only one of the bodies, that belonging to Master and Commander James Russell. While it might seem strange that some of the remains belong to British women and children, it was in fact common on long voyages for crew members to take their wives, who often gave birth thousands of miles from home.



The British sailors, women and children uncovered near Abu Qir were part of Admiral Lord Nelson's Nile campaign.

The Chatby Necropolis



By Keith Miller

The Chatby Necropolis is the oldest archeological site in Alexandria. Dating from the third century BCE, soon after the city was founded, it comprises several tombs, including one large one. The small site is close to the sea, within view of the Chatby Casino that juts over the waves.

The ancient burial site lies just outside the bounds of the ancient city, in a little dell sparkling with wild-flowers. The dell is fringed by various sculptures and fragments of stone dating from all eras, including several plaques of very recent origin. There is one lovely, headless sculpture, but most of the scraps are of little interest. However, the tombs themselves, or what remains of them, are fascinating. They were built in the form of miniature houses, probably modelled after civic buildings, with an entrance formed of tiny Doric and Ionic half-columns, a corridor, court, and outlying rooms. One has the impression of peering into miniature Greek temples, on the sides of which decorations may still be made out. Several surface tombs were also found: pits for funerary urns over which monuments resembling step pyramids were raised.



In the millennia since the tombs were built, the sea has encroached upon the city. A recent sonar survey of the coastal area showed large underwater stone formations that were clearly human-made, and a two-meter pit under the pillars of the Casino turned up ancient artefacts. The subsuming of ancient Alexandria under the sea, and the resulting rise in the water table, has had dire consequences for the necropolis. Though the aged women who take tickets protest that the site is undamaged by seawater, a cursory glance round the tombs shows otherwise. Murky water lies several centimeters deep around the pillars, and crystallized salt has formed a rind around their bases. The carious caves within which the tombs are situated crumble to the touch. A comparison of the tombs as they now stand with photographs from soon after their discovery shows that some pillars and walls have eroded as much as half a meter. The site is badly neglected, and some tombs have been inadequately restored with cement.

Unless swift action is taken, the Chatby Necropolis will soon be little more than a pile of seawater-soaked rubble. Visitors are advised to make a pilgrimage quickly, to catch a last glimpse of the original Alexandria before it crumbles into the sand.

A TRIBUTE TO THE لُقْمَةُ الْقَاضِي Loukomades

By Mona Daoud and Edward Cooper

Amongst the things that Mediterranean peoples quarrel over are the origins of Loukoumades – a pastry similar to the doughnut. It's generally accepted that they are the rightful property of the Greeks, though they have evolved into a traditional Egyptian sweet found readily on the streets of Alexandria. One particularly fine Loukoumades outlet was 'Tournazaki', a shop that could be found in Rue de Poste, downtown Alex.

Long before that, the Jewish community decided to adopt Loukoumades as their own and called them Sufganiyot, which is a jelly doughnut rolled in sugar. It is said that the honey syrup used on the Loukoumades of today is of Turkish origin; therefore the sweet is a molding of East and West cuisine. This is where the Egyptians take over, gracefully transforming Loukoumades into the famous Lokmet el Kady, which can be eaten with powdered sugar, or sugar and honey syrup. A modern Greek preference is to eat them with mastik ice-cream, or with cinnamon.

Many shops in Alex have a side stand where a man stands in front of a pot of oil and amazes bystanders with his quick hand movements as he cuts the dough with a spoon making perfect spheres. This is expert work, so don't expect perfect results if you decide to make Loukoumades for yourself. Regardless of the shape, they make a melt-in-the-mouth, delicious snack.



Make your own:

- 1 1/2 cups luke warm water
- 1 big teaspoon dry yeast
- 2 cups flour
- A dash of salt

How to mix it all up:

In a large bowl, throw the yeast into the water which has to be lukewarm, until it gets all soft and bubbly. Then throw in the flour and the salt and mix everything with a wooden spoon until the dough is quite soft and sticky. Cover the bowl with a clean towel and keep somewhere warm for an hour.



Heat oil in a deep pot, pull up your sleeves, take a small teaspoon and begin tossing the dough with the spoon into the hot oil. Improvise until you get the size of the Loukoumades you want. Remove from the oil when it turns golden.

You could then traditionally add syrup, powder sugar, honey, ice-cream, or more exotically cinnamon.

The Syrup:

Fill a cup of water and put it in a deep saucer. Add two cups of sugar and a teaspoon of lemon juice. Boil all together for ten minutes. Remove from heat and add one flat teaspoon of vanilla; do this before you start making the dough because the syrup has to be cold when you serve it with the Loukoumades.



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. As of next issue, there will be a "Letters to the Editor" section where people can present their views on topics related to Alexandria and the Mediterranean. Regular sections will be the "Young Alexandrian Artists Corner" where young Alexandrian artists can publish their poetry or display their art; a gastronomical page to illustrate the diversity and similarity of the 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 honors the past, respects diversity and rises to the challenges of the 21st century.

Credit for the graphics goes to Flora Cavoura and, unless otherwise stated, to Abdallah Dawestashy for photographs.

Forthcoming events

Med Voices Closing Conference

Organized by Alex-Med 11 - 13 November 2005

Mohamed Ali and the World

Conference and Exhibition 14 - 16 November 2005

Aga Khan Trust for Culture Forum

Conference organized by Alex-Med 20 November 2005

Monograph Launch

The Zoghebs - An Alexandrian Saga, 22 December 2005

Contact us:

If you want to be added to our mailing list, please fill in the form and either mail or email it to us. If you would like to send a letter to the Editor or to contribute to the newsletter (either an article in Arabic, English or French, or a poem) please send it to:

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