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Alexandria as an Observatory of the Difficulties of Ancient Urban History

Marie-Dominique Nenna

Marie-Dominique Nenna (marie-dominique.nenna@cncrs.fr) is a Senior Researcher at Aix Marseille University, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Centre Camille Jullian.

Abstract

Alexandria's urban planning, like that of Athens, Constantinople, and Rome, has been researched and mapped since the eighteenth century. The excavation operation carried out between 1864 and 1866, revolutionary in the history of archaeology both for its date and for the Egyptian nationality of its author, Mahmud el-Falaki, also revolutionized thinking on the city's urban history. But its denigration by British archaeologists, led by David G. Hogarth, and by the first two Italian directors of the Graeco-Roman Museum, Giuseppe Botti and Evaristo Breccia, led to a backlash. Their successor, Achille Adriani, adopted a new topographical approach aimed at precisely locating data from earlier excavations and attempted to extract chronological information from them.

Keywords

Alexandria; urban planning; Italian archaeologists; Scuola archeologica italiana di Atene.

Research into the urban history of Alexandria and its conditions after the First World War can only be understood by going back to its origins. Alexandria's urban planning, like that of Athens, Constantinople, and Rome, has been researched and mapped since the eighteenth century. In the second half of the nineteenth century, under the impetus of the German school, these studies, benefiting from technical advances in topography, materialized in the form of maps depicting the appearance of these cities in antiquity, which took their place in atlases of antiquity.

The many ancient remains of Athens, Constantinople, and Rome still in existence partly guided the creation of these maps. In Alexandria, it was textual sources, and above all Strabo's description, that were used and continue to be used today. The excavation operation carried out between 1864 and 1866, revolutionary in the history of archaeology both for its date and for the Egyptian nationality of its author, Mahmud el-Falaki, also revolutionized thinking on the city's urban history. Its denigration, however, by British archaeologists, led by David G. Hogarth, and by the first two Italian directors of the Graeco-Roman Museum, Giuseppe Botti and Evaristo Breccia, led to a backlash. Their successor, Achille Adriani, who had trained academically at the University of Rome and in the field in Italy and Greece, renewed the approach by reintegrating Falaki's findings upon his arrival in Alexandria in 1932. He adopted a topographical approach aimed at precisely locating data from earlier excavations and attempted to extract chronological information from them. In the Italian archaeological enclave that was Alexandria between 1892 and 1952, in an Egypt that was both colonized and independent, he brought the techniques and methods that had been applied in Italy, particularly in Rome, since the great works carried out in Rome, capital after unification, by Rodolfo Lanciani, and developed by Giuseppe Lugli as part of the Chair of Ancient Topography at the University of Rome.

Among Western Philologists, the Exception of an Egyptian ‘Archaeologist-Engineer’ (1730–1892)

Cabinet Plans Based on Literary Sources

The study of ancient Alexandria’s town planning and its figuration in the form of plans or maps dates back to the early 1730s. Pierre Nicolas Bonamy (1694–1770), member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, in three lectures between April 1731 and April 1732, starting with a ‘Dissertation historique sur la Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie’ (3 April 1731), came to a ‘Description de la ville d’Alexandrie, telle qu’elle estoit au tems de Strabo’ (31 August 1731), then to a ‘Explication topographique de la Guerre de César dans l’Alexandrie, après la défaite de Pompée’ (22 April 1732) (Shaalán 2025, 32 and fig. 10). Although he was a cabinet scholar, he was original in that he combined the study of textual sources with a graphic representation of the city (Fig. 14.1) (Bonamy 1741, after 644). To do this, he relied on a contemporary nautical chart.¹ He borrowed from it the layout of the seacoasts, with the representation of reefs and shallow areas, as well as that of the Lake Maryout coasts (‘Huc usque hodie lacus’). However, unlike nautical charts, which depict Alexandria at the time as seen from the sea, with the north-west at the bottom of the representation, he orientates the plan with the north-west at the top of the representation, thus rotating it to make it easier to read. The city wall, canals, and two main roads are shown, with the north–south road axis to the west of the city. Major monuments, buildings, and strongholds are represented by polygons and named.

[JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_1](#)

Figure 14.1. Pierre Nicolas Bonamy. *Alexandria antiqua*, 1741. © CEAlex Archives, Fonds J.-Y. Empereur, inv. no. GRA-167. For view online

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10103998p.r=Alexandria%20Antiqua%2C%20Pierre%20Nicolas%20Bonamy?rk=42918;4> [accessed 15 January 2025].

Thirty-five years later, Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville (1697–1782) added a *Plan of Alexandria* to the section on Alexandria, accompanied by an inset rendering of *Ancient Alexandria* (D’Anville 1766, after 52; Shaalán 2025, 28. See also Jondet 1921, pl. XV). The reason for this insertion is as follows:

Il n’est donc pas étonnant qu’on trouve dans les écrits des anciens un assez grand détail de circonstances concernant le local d’Alexandrie, & que la curiosité soit excitée à la connaître. C’est ce qui peut rendre intéressant un plan plus exact que ceux qui ont été publiés. Dans un voyage anglais fort enrichi de figures,^[2] on croit voir le local d’Alexandrie figuré comme il paraîtrait au coup d’œil

¹ ‘On m’a communiqué au Bureau de la Marine un Plan de la Ville & des Ports d’Alexandrie, tels qu’ils sont aujourd’huy : c’est en suivant ce Plan que j’examineray ce qu’en disent Strabon & les autres Auteurs’ (I have received from the Bureau de la Marine a Plan of the City & Ports of Alexandria, as they are today: it is by following this Plan that I will examine what Strabo & the other Authors say about it), Bonamy 1741, 645.

² The plan of the ‘voyage anglais’ probably refers to the one provided by Richard Pococke (1704–1765) in his work published in 1743, after his trip to Egypt between 1737 and 1741 (Pococke 1743, pl. II, after 2, see also Jondet 1921, pl. XIV). The latter probably also used a nautical chart, given the numerical indications of depths in the harbour.

de dessus une éminence, comprimé en avant du sud au nord, allongé sur les côtés, ce qui altère étrangement la vraie figure de l'enceinte de la ville & de ses ports. Un plan moins imparfait en général dans M. Norden, manque de précision dans les détails, comme il manque d'échelle.^[3] J'ai donc cru devoir insérer ici la réduction d'un plan levé géométriquement par un Français,^[4] dont je citerois volontiers le nom s'il m'était connu : & je suis persuadé qu'il suffira de la comparer aux précédens, pour reconnaître tout l'avantage qu'il prend sur eux. (D'Anville 1766, 52–53)

(It is not surprising, therefore, that the writings of the Ancients contain a fairly wide range of circumstances concerning Alexandria, and that curiosity is aroused to learn more about it. This is what may make a more accurate plan than those that have been published interesting. In an English voyage^[2] enriched with figures, the site of Alexandria is shown as it would appear at a glance from above an eminence, compressed forward from south to north, elongated on the sides, which strangely alters the true figure of the city walls & its harbours. A less imperfect plan in general in M. Norden,^[3] lacks precision in detail, as it lacks scale. I therefore thought it necessary to insert here the reduction of a plan geometrically surveyed by a Frenchman,^[4] whose name I would gladly mention if it were known to me: & I am persuaded that it will suffice to compare it with the preceding ones, to recognize all the advantage it takes over them.)

Based on ancient sources, D'Anville gave a broad outline of ancient Alexandria (Fig. 14.2), highlighting the changes in its configuration since antiquity, and in particular the Heptastadium, along which the isthmus bearing the Ottoman city was formed. The dimensions of the latter led him to discuss in detail the extent of ancient Alexandria, and to confront the problems arising from the variable measurements of the city and city walls provided by ancient and Arab authors.

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_2

Figure 14.2. Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville. *Alexandria*, 1766. After d'Anville 1766, before 53. For full view online <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k55524225/f74.item>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

The works of Bonamy and D'Anville and their plans were known to the scholars of the Expédition d'Égypte (Shalan 2025, 28 n. 83). However, although they produced memoirs describing the city on the one hand (Saint-Genis 1818; Le Père 1822), and two maps showing the city in detail on the other (Nenna 2025a, 15–16), they did not venture to reconstruct the urban layout of the ancient city, their mission being, above all, to document the existing remains. Nevertheless, the *Carte générale des côtes, rades, ports, ville et environs d'Alexandrie* (A. v, pl. 31) shows the presumed layout of the city wall, the two main road axes with the positioning of the main north–south street, as proposed by Bonamy and D'Anville, and the names of certain ancient buildings and

Using Roman (Old Alexandria) and Italic (New Alexandria) fonts, he located existing ancient monuments, indicated the supposed location of other ancient buildings (Caesaron, Neptunion...), as well as the site of modern buildings.

³ Frederik Norden (1708–1742) also arrived in Alexandria in June 1737, and drew up a *Carte et plan du Port Neuf d'Alexandrie* (Norden 1755, pl. II = Jondet 1921, pl. XII) and a *Carte particulière de la vieille et nouvelle Alexandrie* (Norden 1755, pl. I = Jondet 1921, pl. XIII). These two adjectives refer to ancient and medieval Alexandria and to Ottoman Alexandria, which was built from 1517 on the isthmus created on either side of the Heptastadium. He located the ancient remains, which he also drew on several views of the Eastern port (Port neuf), the only one accessible to Christians (pls III–VI), but also in isolation (Cleopatra's Needles, pls VII–IX; Cistern, pl. X, Pompey's Pillar, pls XI–XII, Underground Temple, pl. XIII).

⁴ This plan has been identified by H. Thuile (1922, 21; see also Shalan 2025, 27–28 and fig. 7), as those, very similar, produced around 1686–1687 by two French officers Étienne Gravier d'Ortières and Razaud, whose mission was to inspect and spy on the Échelles of the Levant. These were the first topographical plans of Alexandria, based on a geometric field survey, with the three-dimensional representation transformed into two dimensions by projection. Moreover, Razaud's plan was the first to bear a graphic scale (see Jondet 1921, pl. VIII).

sites mentioned by Strabo. The two maps, despite their accuracy and precision, have not been used to their full potential. Nevertheless, a *Plan comparatif d’Alexandrie ancienne, moderne et du temps des Arabes* can be found in a translation of Arrian, supplied to the translator by ‘a general officer of the French army in Egypt’ (Chaussard 1802, 79–93, chapter untitled ‘Sur les trois Alexandries’ and pl. VI = Jondet 1921, pl. XXV). Gustav Parthey, in 1838, reused part of the Expédition d’Égypte map (Parthey 1838), and was followed by various scholars (Shaalán 2025, 32). It is only recently, thanks to their georeferencing and the development of computerized superimposition tools (Shaalán 2025, 14 fig. 1 and 61–65), that these maps have been integrated into research on the urban planning of the city (for the street network, see Abdo 2022, figs 77–80), for example, the location of the Heptastadium, the layout of the walls, the configuration of the lake port, or the location of the *Kibotos* (see Nenna 2025b for bibliography).

The First Plan Based on Excavations: The Work of Mahmud el-Falaki

In the 1860s, research into Alexandria’s urban planning emerged from the cabinet of scholars with the gigantic sounding operation carried out by Mahmud el-Falaki on the orders of the Khedive Ismaïl, in response to Napoleon III’s wish to have a map of Alexandria for his history of Caesar’s wars (Nenna 2025a, 29). This mapping was done between 1864 and 1866, in conjunction with a plan of the modern city (Nenna 2025a, fig. 2.7). Falaki, with a team of two hundred workers, carried out 220 soundings, on land and at sea, which enabled him to produce a plan of ancient Alexandria (Fig. 14.3), to be observed with the aid of the accompanying book (El-Falaki 1872). This plan is first and foremost a map of physical geography, showing contour lines, sea and lake coastlines, and the isthmus that formed around the Heptastadium. It extends beyond the ancient city limits, to the west and especially to the east, encompassing the Nikopolis area. Falaki’s thick red line shows the layout of the ancient city walls, accompanied by a series of letters that allow him to indicate in his memoir the portions of the walls that he found during excavations, and those that are assumed. For the street network, he uses double thin red lines, either solid or dashed, the former corresponding to streets observed during excavation, the latter to presumed streets. He uses L street names for east–west streets and R for north–south streets. He was also able to determine the width of the streets, thereby locating the two main axes (14 m wide) differently from his predecessors (further north for the east–west axis, further east for the north–south axis). Falaki placed a series of monuments on the plan in accordance with written tradition, but also justified some of their locations by his excavations (e.g. for the gymnasium, see El-Falaki 1872, 56–57).

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Figure 14.3. Mahmud bey el-Falaki. *Carte de l’antique Alexandrie et de ses faubourgs. Dressée sur les ordres de S. A. le Vice-Roi d’Égypte à l’aide de fouilles, nivellements et autres recherches par Mahmoud-Bey, Astronome de Son Altesse. Fait en 1866, 1/20000.* © CEAlex Archives, Fonds J.-Y. Empereur, inv. no. GRA-51. For full view online <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10101093b?rk=64378;0>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

On his own published map, Falaki does not indicate the location of the test pits he carried out, but we do know that they had been precisely surveyed, thanks to the use made by H. Kiepert, as early as 1872

(Fig. 14.4), of the documentation dated wrongly⁵ to 1863 Falaki had provided him with during a visit to Berlin (Kiepert 1872). Kiepert drew dashed lines perpendicular to the street axis where the old street paving had been excavated ('stellen wo das alte strassenpflaster aufgegraben ist'). He also indicated the numerous columns found along the city's two main axes, which provided material for the Ancients' descriptions of colonnaded streets. (Figs 14.5–14.8). On the map dated to "1863", the names of the street were not indicated, whereas on the map dated to 1866 and published in 1872, they are indicated, but Falaki adopted another system to represent the street network (Arnaud 1997).

JUA_12_SL_8_Nenna_Fig_4

JUA_12_SL_8_Nenna_Figs 5-8

Figure 14.4. Heinrich Kiepert. *Plan der alten Stadt Alexandria nach den im Jahre 1863(sic) ausgeführten Ausgrabungen konstruirt von Mahmud-Beg Astronomen des Vicekönigs von Aegypten*. 1/20 000. After Kiepert 1872, pl. V.

Figure 14.5. Detail of the left (western) part of Mahmud bey el-Falaki, *Carte de l'antique Alexandrie et de ses faubourgs*.

Figure 14.6. Detail of the left (western) part of Heinrich Kiepert, *Plan der alten Stadt Alexandria*.

Figure 14.7. Detail of the centre (Basileia) part of Mahmud bey el-Falaki, *Carte de l'antique Alexandrie et de ses faubourgs*.

Figure 14.8. Detail of the centre (Basileia) part of Heinrich Kiepert, *Plan der alten Stadt Alexandria*.

The Use of Mahmud el-Falaki's Map between 1872 and 1892: Scientific Works and Popularization

In the twenty years following its publication, Falaki's map of ancient Alexandria was the source of a number of scientific and popular works. Among the scientific works, we should mention the maps published by Tassos Neroutsos (1888) and Wilhem Sieglin (c. 1890) (Neroutsos 1888, plate at end of volume; Laube 2012, fig. 4).⁶ Tassos Neroutsos was a medical doctor with a passion for antiquities, and after the Institut égyptien left for Cairo in 1880, he was the only one to continue recording and documenting the archaeological discoveries made in Alexandria, mainly epigraphic (for more information and bibliography on Neroutsos, see Nenna 2025a, 30).

⁵ In the plan cartouche, the date of 1863 is indicated, but this is probably an error, as it seems that the works of Falaki in Alexandria begun in 1864, may be Fall 1864, see Anonymous 1866, 108: 'M. Colucci-Bey invite M. Mahmoud-Bey à raconter à l'Institut le résultat des fouilles dont il a été chargé dernièrement (Mr Colucci-Bey invites Mr Mahmoud-Bey to tell the Institute about the results of the excavations he was recently tasked with conducting)'.
⁶ Sieglin's map does not appear to have been associated with a book, but it must have circulated in scholarly circles, as shown by its reproduction in E. Breccia's guidebook (Breccia 1914, fig. 8; 1922, fig. 25).

Wilhem Sieglin began his academic career as a historian of antiquity, as evidenced by his thesis and publications; from the mid-1880s, he devoted himself increasingly to historical cartography, becoming professor of historical geography at the University of Leipzig in 1898 (see Hantsche 2010; Laube 2012, 29–31). He was Ernst von Sieglin's brother and, along with Theodor Schreiber, one of the driving forces behind the archaeological expedition financed by his brother, he accompanied him on his travels in Egypt between 1898 and 1902. Neroutsos and Sieglin maintained an ongoing correspondence in 1890 (Archives of the National Library, Athens).

Their maps (Figs 14.9–14.11) are both, in terms of geographical data (relief, coastline) and urban data (city walls, street network), a decal of Falaki's, but we note the positioning of a whole series of monuments and quarters, and the significant and different modifications made in both cases to the lake ports. Sieglin also used Kiepert's 1872 map to indicate street segments and columns uncovered by Falaki, as well as a contemporary plan for certain areas of the city (isthmus, island of Pharos, Necropolis). Another type of production from the German school (Kiepert, from 1876 and Sieglin, from 1892) partly detaches itself from geographical data and favours schematic representations intended for ancient atlases, encyclopedia, or school books. In Sieglin's case, he also introduced the principle of plans by phase (first century BC and third to fourth century AD (Sieglin 1893); or first century BC and AD and third to fifth century, in Brockhaus encyclopedia (Nenna_Figs. 14.12-13) and Baedeker guides (Shaalan 2019-II, 57–61) or first century BC and AD (Nenna_Fig. 14.14) (Sieglin 1917, pl. 4: Aegyptus).

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Figs_9-11

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Figs_12-13

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_14

Figure 14.9. Tassos Néroutsos bey, *Alexandrie ancienne*. 1/20 000. Néroutsos 1888, after 130. © CEAlex Archives, Fonds J.-Y. Empereur, inv. no. GRA-277.

Figure 14.10. Detail of the centre (Basileia) part of Tassos Néroutsos bey, *Alexandrie ancienne*.

Figure 14.11. Wilhem Sieglin, *Karte des alten Alexandrien auf Grund der Mahmoudschen Strassenfunde gezeichnet von Wilhem Sieglin. Als Manuscript Gedruckt*. After Laube 2012, fig. 4.

Figure 14.12. Wilhem Sieglin, *Alexandria im ersten Jahrhundert vor and nach Christus. saeculo*. Sieglin 1892, Collection Cécile Shaalan.

Figure 14.13. Wilhem Sieglin, *Alexandria im 3.-5. Jahrhundert nach Christus*. Sieglin 1892, Collection Cécile Shaalan.

Figure 14.14. Wilhem Sieglin. *Alexandria im 1. Jahrh. vor und nach Christus*. Sieglin 1917, inset in pl. 4. Collection Michael Sabottka.

Falaki's plan was also used by Henri de Vaujany (1848–1893) in his *Alexandrie et la Basse Égypte* (1885). He integrated his data into a comparative plan (Fig. 14.15), following a vogue that developed from the 1870s onwards (Shaalan 2019-I, 156–58 on this innovation introduced in the Murray guide of 1875). Vaujany, who lived in Egypt between 1869 and 1890, was a great connoisseur of the Arabic language and a director of studies at the École des langues in Cairo. His numerous visits to Alexandria undoubtedly led him to write a second work devoted to the

monuments erected on eastern harbour shore, which is both nourished by references to ancient and Arabic authors, and by descriptions of the state of this coast, which he observed between November 1887 and November 1888 (Vaujany 1888). The plan that accompanies this volume, *Plan comparatif du Port Oriental d'Alexandrie sous les Ptolémées et à l'époque actuelle* (Fig. 14.16), surveyed by himself, is on a large scale (1/3000). Based in part on Falaki's plan for the representation of the ancient coastline, the Timonium and the island of Antirrhodos, and the street network, it shows a series of monuments and long walls around the Posideion and the northern part of the northern enclosure wall of the Caesareum, recognized thanks to soundings and observations made at sea. It is the first comparative plan based on field surveys since the plans for the *Description of Egypt*.

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_15

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_16

Figure 14.15. Henri de Vaujany, *Plan comparatif d'Alexandrie ancienne et moderne*, 1885. Vaujany 1885, opening of the book. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, département cartes et plans, GE F CARTE-305. For full view online <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550111606>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

Figure 14.16. Henri de Vaujany, *Plan comparatif du Port Oriental d'Alexandrie sous les Ptolémées et à l'époque actuelle*. 1/3000. After Vaujany 1888, opening of the volume. Collection Cécile Shaalan.

Western interest in Egypt from 1869 onwards, with the inauguration of the Suez Canal and the development of tourism, led, as in the case of other eastern Mediterranean countries, to the development of travel guides from 1875 onwards (Morlier 2011). The most famous publishers, Murray, Joanne, Baedeker, and Meyer, provided, alongside plans of the modern city, plans of ancient Alexandria, laid with or without a modern city map. As Cécile Shaalan (2019) has shown, they most often take their source directly from Falaki's plan (Murray editions 1875–1907 on a modern city background; Joanne, editions 1878 to 1905; Baedeker, editions 1877 to 1885), but may also, in the case of the Baedeker guides, adopt Sieglin's phased renderings (editions 1894 to 1929). Falaki's plan was also adopted in some travel accounts, such as *L'Égypte à petites journées* by Arthur Rhôné, published in 1877, where its adaptation appears on the same plate as a plan of modern Alexandria (Rhôné 1877, 7 and 336 n. 1).

Alexandria and Graeco-Roman Egypt: An Italian Archaeological Enclave (1892–1914)

In Egypt, which had been under a veiled British protectorate since 1882, the Antiquities Department founded in 1858 by Auguste Mariette was run by French Egyptologists. The study of Graeco-Roman Egypt, while not neglected, was not at the centre of interest. Following the lobbying campaign led by a society of scholars, the Atheneum, made up mainly of Italians, and also marked by the action of the British consul Charles Cookson (Reid 2015, 233), and after nearly nine months of discussion on the status of the museum and library between the Municipality of Alexandria and the directors of the Service des antiquités, Eugène Grébaut, then Jacques de Morgan, who did not want to see France's prerogative over Egyptian antiquities slip away (Gady 2005, 505–06), the statutes of the Musée gréco-romain were drawn up and Giuseppe Botti appointed curator on 1

March 1892. This original institution, financed for the most part by the Municipality of Alexandria, but placed under the control of the Department of Antiquities, also had, according to its statutes, the mission of carrying out excavations in the city of Alexandria and its surroundings (Nenna 2025a, 40-44).

Giuseppe Botti, from the First Institutional Excavations to an Idealized Reconstruction of Alexander's Alexandria

Giuseppe Botti (1853–1903), a student at the Faculty of Letters in Bologna, had received a general classical education, with Edoardo Brizio (1846–1907) as his professor for archaeology and numismatics (see Barbanera 1998, 61–62).⁷ According to Marcello Barbanera:

[Brizio] è la figura che più adaguamente rispecchia il processo di trasformazioni dell'archeologia classica italiana: erede della grande tradizione antiquaria, tramite Fabretti,^[8] partecipò alle esperienze più nuove nel settore collaborando con Fiorelli^[9] e recepì le tendenze dell'archeologia tedesca considerate come le più aggiornate. (Barbanera 1998, 61–62)

([Brizio] is the figure who most faithfully reflects the transformation process of classical Italian archaeology: heir to the great antiquarian tradition, through Fabretti,^[8] he participated in the newest experiences in the sector, collaborating with Fiorelli^[9] and acknowledged the trends in German archaeology considered the most up to date.)

In post-unification Italy, classical archaeology was at the crossroads of two major trends: adherence to the German model of classical studies and the demands of the field, linked to the protection of the national archaeological heritage. The recruitment of Adolf Holm and Karl Julius Beloch, respectively to the chairs of ancient history in Palermo (1876) and Rome (1879), and then in 1889 of Emmanuel Löwy to the newly created chair of *archeologia dell'arte* at the University of Rome, clearly illustrates how the need had been recognized 'di andare a scuola dai Tedeschi' (to go to the school of the Germans), as Arnaldo Momigliano put it (Barbanera 1998, 62).

Botti's first visit to Egypt took place between 1879 and 1882, during which time he was in contact with the leading Egyptologists of the day and the head of the antiquities department. After working in various secondary schools on the Italian Peninsula, he returned to Egypt at the end of the summer of 1889, as a teacher in the Italian schools in Alexandria (Piacentini 2018). As soon as he was appointed head of the Graeco-Roman Museum, Botti's activities were twofold: on the one hand, he set up the exhibition rooms of the first museum, which opened in November 1892, and on the other, he inspected sites under construction and directed excavations, notably in the necropolis of Kom el Shoqafa, where he unearthed four hypogea surveyed by Egizio Bauer, then draughtsman for the Municipality of Alexandria (Botti 1893).

In December 1893, after presenting the excavations he had carried out with the financial support of the newly founded Société archéologique d'Alexandrie, he drew up a report on the excavations to be carried out in Alexandria, which should enable 'a serious description of Alexandria' (Botti 1894, 7). He rejected part of Falaki's contribution on the grounds that it reflected

⁷ Appointed Professor of Archaeology at the University of Bologna in 1876.

⁸ Ariodante Fabretti (1816–1894), author of the monumental *Corpus inscriptionum Italicarum antiquioris aevi ... et Glossarium Italicum ... ex Umbricis, Sabinis, Volscis, Etruscis aliisque monumentis ...* (Augustae Taurinorum, 1867). See Vercellone 1993.

⁹ Giuseppe Fiorelli (1823–1896), inspector and then director of the Pompeii excavations from 1863, was the initiator of the Scuola archeologica di Pompei, a two-year programme designed to train young scholars of classical antiquity in excavation techniques. Edoardo Brizio was selected for the course in 1868. See Barbanera 1998, 19–25.

the street network of the Roman city,¹⁰ as well as that of Neroutsos.¹¹ He does, however, support his argument with a map of *Alexandrie ancienne et moderne* drawn up by Leopold Dietrich bey, chief engineer of the Municipality of Alexandria, as part of his *Rapport sur l'assainissement de la ville* (Dietrich 1892). On the modern map in red, Dietrich had transferred the data from Falaki's map of ancient Alexandria in black. Botti made Dietrich simplify his map (Fig. 14.17), with drawing only in black lines and annotated it in three ways: by the numbering of the insulae, by the indication of previous excavations in the form of the year in which they took place in brackets and obliquely and, finally, by the layout of the planned excavations using lines made up of crosses that are concentrated in the eastern part of the city (Fig. 14.18) on lands that Botti hoped to be able to dispose of (excavations in an east–west direction to the north of the L2 street and to the south of the L2, north–south excavations along the R1, on the presumed site of the great theatre [government hospital hill], excavations south and south-west of Cape Lochias on the site of the Royal Quarters).

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Figure 14.17. Giuseppe Botti, *Alexandrie, plan de fouilles en 1893*. 1/8000. After Botti 1894, end of the volume.

Figure 14.18. Detail of the centre (Basileia) part of Giuseppe Botti, *Alexandrie, plan de fouilles en 1893*.

Of this vast programme, few excavations were carried out by Botti himself, as he concentrated on the new museum inaugurated in 1895 and on the excavations at the Serapeum and its surroundings. However, there were a few test pits to the north-east and north-west of the hospital hill, supposedly built on the Theatre (1894), others carried out to determine the extension of the Caesareum, at sea by dredging ahead of the site of Cleopatra's Needles (1892), and on land to the south of the Ramleh tramway station (1894). He stated in 1901, in what would appear as a testament to that 'En matière de topographie, les affirmations ne sont valables qu'en tant qu'elles sont confirmées par les fouilles' (In terms of topography, the statements are only valid insofar as they are confirmed by the excavations) and further 'Un service d'informations fut attaché au Musée et une carte archéologique fut entreprise [en 1893]' (A documentation service was attached to the Museum and an archaeological map was undertaken in [in 1893]) (Botti 1901, 437, 439).

Building on his years of experience, in 1898 Botti delivered a 138-page work entitled *Plan de la ville d'Alexandrie à l'époque ptolémaïque: monuments et localités de l'ancienne Alexandrie d'après les écrivains et les fouilles* (Botti 1898a), which was partly reproduced in his two lectures at the Société khédiviale de géographie (Botti 1897a; 1898b) and supplemented with new entries until his death in 1903 (Botti 1898c; 1902; Botti and Simond 1899). This work, accompanied by a *Carte de l'antique Alexandrie* (Fig. 14.19), combines visual observations from excavations, commentaries of ancient and modern authors, and notes on objects and remains unearthed or cited in sources, and offers a series of hypotheses on the urban planning of the Ptolemaic city. These could be described

¹⁰ Botti 1894, 7: 'Mahmoud pacha el Fallaki nous a donné de précises indications sur l'ancienne Alexandrie ; malheureusement elles ne dépassent pas le niveau de pavage de l'époque romaine et elles sont tout à fait insuffisantes au point de vue des édifices qui bordaient les rues' (Mahmud Pacha el Falaki has given us precise indications of ancient Alexandria; unfortunately, they do not go beyond the level of paving in Roman times, and are quite inadequate in terms of the buildings that lined the streets).

¹¹ Botti 1894, 7: 'Néroutzos bey, épigraphiste éminent et bon connaisseur de ses auteurs n'a jamais fait de fouilles' (Néroutzos bey, an eminent epigraphist and good connoisseur of his authors, never excavated).

as fanciful, with all due respect for the work of Botti, who often accompanied his archaeological descriptions with high-quality plans.¹² While retaining Falaki's road network and frequently referring to his work, he ignores the figures based on Falaki's excavations of street widths. For example, he moves the Canopic road southwards on the grounds that the adjective Canopic indicates proximity to the Canopic canal, whereas this adjective was not used in antiquity to designate this axis and was used for the Canopic gate (Botti 1898a, 16; Breccia (1922, 73) has already criticized Botti's interpretation). He inserts four north–south axes into the street network, calling them boulevards and giving them names derived from the canals mentioned in the Pseudo-Callisthenes, Argeus, Aspendia (see Adriani 1966, 207–08), and the location of two sanctuaries, Tycheum and Serapis. For him, these were axes 111 m wide, with a garden at their centre and streets on either side, a type of urban axis unknown in antiquity (Botti 1898a, 33–40). Botti's use of the principles of an ideal city, drawing on *Alexander Romance* rather than on the accounts of ancient geographers or historians, on a reality that is difficult to grasp, is not unique to his work, and can be found even in recent works on Alexandria.

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Figure 14.19. Giuseppe Botti, *Carte de l'antique Alexandrie. 1/20000*. After Botti 1898a, end of the volume. © Ifao (original with ancient streets in red).

The Foreign Archaeological Missions under Botti's Direction and their Contribution

Hogarth's Archaeological Mission in 1894–1895 and its Long Influence on the Academic World

Responding to a request for support from the Société archéologique d'Alexandrie, the British mission, under the joint impetus of the Society for Hellenic Studies and the Egypt Exploration Fund, was of short duration (two months). Its aim was to assess the potential for excavations in Alexandria by foreign missions, and focused on the reconnaissance of the major monuments, known from texts (Hogarth 1895). The plan that Hogarth published was a sketch of the modern city, in which he placed the names of the districts, the railway network, and a few buildings, which served only to indicate the approximate location of the excavations. As we have seen elsewhere (Nenna 2025a, 46–47), Hogarth was discouraged by the results obtained and his very negative opinion on the value of excavating Alexandria led the scientific community, at least the Anglo-Saxon part of it, to focus its efforts on other ancient sites. He was, nevertheless, the first of the archaeologists working in Alexandria to introduce a section drawing to help describe his sounding (Zogheb plot) (Hogarth 1895, 15). Botti, to whom he sometimes referred as 'Dr.' and sometimes as 'Signor' (whether this was a mark of respect or irony is hard to say), was clearly very disappointed by the report published in 1895:

¹² For example, for the excavation of the Serapeum and its surroundings, he appended to his report (Botti 1897b) a *Plan du quartier de Rhakotis à l'époque romaine* (Botti 1897c), again based on Dietrich bey's map of modern Alexandria, on which the Falaki's road network, the hypogea mentioned above, and the results of excavations in the Serapeum enclosure were placed in red.

C'est alors qu'un savant anglais, qui a fait des fouilles très heureuses en Crète, après quelques tâtonnements à la Colonne, à Kom-el-Dik, à Khadra déclara qu'il n'y avait plus rien à trouver à Alexandrie : cela nous a fait beaucoup de mal. (Botti 1901, 439)

(It was then that an English scholar, who had carried out very successful excavations in Crete, after some trial and error at the Column, at Kom el Dikka, at Hadra, declared that there was nothing more to be found in Alexandria: it caused us a lot of harm).

In addition, for many years Hogarth's lengthy note on the work of Mahmoud bey el-Falaki cast doubt on the reliability of the latter's findings concerning both the city walls and the road network:

The character of my report being what it is, it fortunately does not enter into my province to deal at length with the researches of Mahmud Bey el Falaki, a MS. translation of whose very rare book (*Mémoire sur l'ancienne Alexandrie, &c.*, Copenhagen, 1872), was put most kindly at my disposal by Rear-Admiral Blomfield, R.N. Anyone, however, who attempts to write a topographical memoir on the city will have to appraise, and, I think, condemn in the main, the work of Ismail's Court Astronomer. Mahmud Bey had, it is true, facilities in 1870 which exist no longer in 1895: not only was an autocratic Khedive behind him, but the site was far more open. The new Greek quarter did not exist, and there was hardly a house east of Cherif Pacha Street. Mahmud Bey had had, however, no sort of training for the work he was set to do; not only did he not know any classical language, but I am given to understand that this was his first essay in excavation. 'As for his competence as an archaeologist,' writes Yacoub Artin Pacha in reply to a question of mine, 'I do not think that he had any.' I am glad, therefore, that I can avoid basing any of my own work on his. I feel the greatest uncertainty as to his rectangular map of the city — not for one moment impugning his *bona fides*, but doubting his competence to ascribe dates to the street pavements that he found, or to determine to what streets they pertained. For instance, his Canopic Street (on which all his grille of streets depends) lies at an angle which fits very ill with the direction of the walls found by me to the south of it; and if the pavement which he found in five spots at the extreme east of the site belongs to the Canopic Street (albeit of Byzantine date, not earlier, to judge from the depths recorded by him), that found by him opposite the Attarin mosque must belong, I fancy, to some other street altogether. I believe that Signor Botti has been unable to fit the walls, recorded by Mahmud Bey, to the existing remains near Pompey's Pillar; and I should be very loth to repose much confidence on the Astronomer's delineation of the city walls, or his determination of the transverse streets 'by sinking pits'; and still less on his observations under water in the Great Harbour. To recognize and date ancient constructions underground is only less difficult than to recognize and date them under water: both require a training and experience far in excess of that possessed by Mahmud Bey. It is so hopeless to sift his work now, that I and all who treat of the site scientifically must, I fear, ignore him, and start *de novo* from the authorities and the existing indications. (Hogarth 1895, 17–18 n. 1)

This note and its epistemological consequences have already been commented on by M. Rodziewicz (1987, 42–43), but it is worth dwelling on because it allows us to reconstruct the intellectual and political climate in an Egypt under British political domination, but with Italian- and French-speaking elites. It first shows that Falaki's book was not widely distributed, and that the fact that it was written in French (a language familiar to Falaki following his long period of study in Europe, in Paris and Brussels) made it difficult for the British to read, whether they were high-ranking military officers, such as Rear-Admiral Blomfield,¹³ or intellectuals, such as Hogarth. It bears contempt for Khedive Ismail, who had favoured the French venture to build the Suez Canal and had been ousted from power in 1879 when the public debt increased. This political contempt

¹³ Richard Massie Blomfield (1835–1921) was on board the HMS *Invincible* at the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882. For thirty years, he served in Egypt throughout the Cromer Administration, as 'comptroller of the port of Alexandria'. A founding member of the *Société archéologique d'Alexandrie*, he and his wife Rosamund were keen antiquarians. He offered the museum a plan of the British army, augmented by Falaki's findings (Botti 1899, 23) and wrote a contribution for the *BSAA* on the site of the Arsinoeion (Blomfield 1905).

was combined with Hogarth's own intellectual contempt for those who had no knowledge of ancient languages, the foundation of European culture, and who, according to Hogarth, could not possibly have been in a position to tackle ancient history. Nevertheless, Falaki quotes extensively from ancient sources in his work. Although he refuses to attack Falaki personally, Hogarth shows bad faith in accusing Falaki of not having been trained as an archaeologist, as in the 1860s this profession hardly existed, nor did stratigraphic methods. His reference to the authority of Yacoub Artin Pacha, then at the Ministry of Public Instruction and later President of the Institut égyptien, is a measure of the progress made in the discipline of archaeology between the 1860s and the 1890s. As for the question of dating the ceramics from the excavations, it is true that Falaki was not aware of this possibility, but Hogarth, if he was aware of it, was not familiar with Alexandrian ceramics, and in fact only uncovered levels from the late Roman and early Islamic periods in his Kom el Dikka excavations. It follows that his criticisms of the road network uncovered by Falaki are biased, and those on the city wall near the Serapeum run into a difficulty that remains unresolved to this day.

The Systematism of the von Sieglin Expedition in the Study of the Street Network

The excavations carried out by the von Sieglin Expedition during two campaigns in 1898–1899 and 1900–1901 were ambitious in scope (Laube 2012, 32–38). ‘Hatten zunächst den Zweck, Auskunft über die Bodenbeschaffenheit, über Lage und Zustand etwa noch vorhandener Ruinen, sowie eine deutlichere Vorstellung des von Mahmoud el Falaki festgestellten Strassennetzes zu gewinnen (Noack 1900, 215) (The initial purpose of the mission was to gather information about the soil conditions, the location and state of any remaining ruins, and to get a clearer idea of the road network identified by Mahmud el Falaki). During the first campaign, Ferdinand Noack dedicated himself to the first and third objectives, taking up Botti's 1893 project in its broadest directions, but focusing more strictly on the recognition of ancient streets (Fig. 14.20).

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Figure 14.20. Ferdinand Noack. Plan of the north-eastern part of Alexandria, with Falaki's street network and locations of the soundings. 1:10000. After Noack 1900, pl. IX. For a view online <<https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/am1900/0501/image.info>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

- along Street R1 (Soundings K2 = Adriani 1934, no. 17; N1–5 = Adriani 1934, nos 8–12);
- along Street R2 (L = Adriani 1934, no. 23);
- along Street R3 (Soundings A = Adriani 1934, no. 55; B = Adriani 1934, nos 51–52; G = Adriani 1934, no. 50) and around the Indigenous Hospital complex (C–D Adriani 1934, no. 56; E = Adriani 1934, no. 57; F = Adriani 1934, no. 58);
- along Street L2 (J = Adriani 1934, no. 60; M = Adriani 1934, no. 61) and between the latter and Canopic street (H = Adriani 1934, nos 66–69).

During the second campaign, his work was continued by architect Ernst Fiechter along Street L2 (Soundings O, P, Q),¹⁴ as well as on the coast, near the cistern described by Vaujany (Sondage U) (Laube 2020).

¹⁴ These results are currently unpublished.

The decisive contribution of these excavations, the results of which were published as early as 1900 (Noack 1900) and reinterpreted in the light of recent discoveries (Rodziewicz 1987, see also Arnaud 1997 and 2009), was to show that the street network recognized by Falaki was preceded at least in some places (Streets R2 and R3) by streets of the same outline, while in the Basileia area, south of Cape Lochias, some streets (L'a and L2) had been built on destroyed Ptolemaic remains. Noack (1900, pl. X) is also the first to introduce sections drawings (Fig. 14.21) running on a great length to better understand the location of the remains and the various levels of the natural rock.

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_21

Figure 14.21. Ferdinand Noack. Geological and archaeological sections the north-eastern part of Alexandria. After Noack 1900, pl. IX. <<https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/am1900/0503/image.info>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

Evaristo Breccia, Art Historian and Epigraphist

On Botti's death in 1903, the vacancy was not officially declared, the Municipality of Alexandria even failing to notify the Antiquities Service (Gady 2005, 700–01). Four candidates were selected, according to the minutes of the Museum and Library Committee meeting of 15 February 1904 (Archives of the Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria). Alfred Schiff (1863–1939), who had led the second campaign of the von Sieglin Expedition and published his doctoral thesis on Alexandrian *dipinti* in 1905 (Schiff 1905); Constantinos Kourouniotis (1872–1945), then Ephor of the Archaeological Service of Greece (Petraikos 2011, 122–23); Gustave Leffèvre, a former member of the *École française d'Athènes*, who was sent by this institution in 1901 to take part in papyrus collecting on Egyptian sites, and was supported or encouraged by Gaston Maspero to apply (Gady 2005, 716–17); and Evaristo Breccia. No doubt thanks to the support of the Italian diplomat in Cairo, Giuseppe Salvago-Raggi (Minutoli 2003, 101–02), the position was awarded to the latter by the municipality, confirming 'the museum as an Italian cultural enclave in colonized Egypt', in the words of Donald Reid (2002, 161).

Evaristo Breccia (1876–1967) (Barocas 1972), a student of Karl Julius Beloch at the University of Rome, received a solid training in the tradition of 'philological' historiography, combining the study of ancient texts, epigraphy, and papyrology. After graduating, he was selected for the training at the *Scuola di archeologia*, which after a difficult start (1876–1877) had taken off, thanks to the teachings of Emmanuel Löwy and Luigi Pigorini (Barbanera 1998, 64–70, 91–92). He was allowed to spend his third year in Egypt (1903), taking part as an archaeologist specializing in the Graeco-Roman period, in the Italian archaeological mission to Egypt set up that year by Ernesto Schiaparelli. Schiaparelli entrusted him with the direction of the Hermoupolis Magna excavations and papyrus collecting. As soon as he was appointed as director, at the age of twenty-seven, Breccia began the excavation of the Shatbi necropolis in April 1904, which enabled him to reach what would come to be considered the necropolis of the first generations of Alexandrians. The volume published in 1912 is dedicated to his master Beloch and, like the pioneering publication by Edmond Pottier and Salomon Reinach of the necropolis of Myrina (Pottier and Reinach 1887), includes some fifty pages of summary descriptions of the remains and two hundred pages about objects unearthed. This breakdown was to be found throughout his reports on excavations in Alexandria until his departure from the museum in 1931 to take up the Chair of Classical Antiquity at the

University of Pisa. His other work, published before the First World War, is the corpus of Alexandrian inscriptions (Breccia 1911). Both publications were part of the major undertaking to publish a catalogue of Egyptian antiquities, initially entrusted in 1897 to Ludwig Borchardt, then reorganized by Gaston Maspero during his second term as Director of Antiquities (Gady 2005, 579–84, 640–43).

The Aftermath of the First World War

When war was declared in 1914, Egypt became a British protectorate, formalizing the political and military role played by Great Britain in Egypt since 1882. Italy, having declared its neutrality, entered the war on the side of the Triple Entente in 1915. Breccia was called up for military service, and the Swiss director of Alexandria's *Bibliothèque municipale*, Étienne Combe, took over the reins of Alexandrian archaeology until his return after demobilization.

Following the revolt of 1919, and the failure of negotiations between Lord Milner, Saad Zaghloul, and Prime Minister Adli Yakan, Great Britain unilaterally declared Egypt's independence in February 1922. The many European civil servants working for the Egyptian government were to retire in 1927, or receive compensation if they left immediately (Reid 2015, 54). Fouad, proclaimed king in 1922, established himself as the guardian of Egypt's heritage, notably by reviving the *Société de géographie* and creating the University of Cairo in 1925, where the Faculty of Arts was mainly made up of French, Belgian, and Italian professors who taught in French (Reid 2015, 77 fig. 21, 85, 125, 242).

In 1925, the *Société archéologique d'Alexandrie* became the *Société royale archéologique d'Alexandrie*, reflecting Fouad's active patronage. Following his 1927 state visit to Italy, for which a commemorative medal linking the Tiber and the Nile was struck (Reid 2015, 243, fig. 54), his 1928 expedition to the Siwa oasis with Breccia was compared to that of Alexander the Great (Breccia 1929a). However, if the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 had led to 'the transformation of Egyptology into a scholarly profession open to Egyptians' and to 'the growth of pharaonism inside the public' (Reid 2015, 112–13), the studies dedicated to Alexandria and Graeco-Roman Egypt remained lacking in both the training of Egyptians and the taste of the Egyptian public (see Reid 2015, 112–13, table D where only Botti, Breccia, and Adriani are nominated amongst Egyptian and contemporary Western generations of Egyptologists, Islamic archaeologists, Coptologists).

A Step Back or Breccia's Disillusionment

During his almost thirty years at the head of the Graeco-Roman Museum, Breccia carried out few large-scale operations in the city itself, with the exception of research into the location of Alexander's tomb (see below). Instead, he concentrated on exploring the necropoleis that yielded remains from the Ptolemaic period. In his first guide, Breccia (1907) confines himself to a general presentation of the city, followed by the archaeological sites open to the public and the museum. He borrowed the opening map of Alexandria from Blomfield's publication (Blomfield 1905). This is the first archaeological plan to incorporate the major change that affected the city's seascape, with the construction of a sewage collector along the coast from 1897 onwards, and the embankment designed to accommodate the 'Alexandria corniche', the boulevard running alongside the eastern harbour. For the rest, this is a plan that retains some of Falaki's contributions (wall, coastline, east–

west main street), but does not include the entire street network defined by the latter. In *Alexandrea ad Aegyptum*, published in French in 1914 and in English in 1922, Breccia (1914, 49–72; 1922, 59–85) introduces a chapter on the topography of the ancient city, illustrated by the maps, that we have mentioned earlier, Mahmud el-Falaki (1872), Neroutsos (1888), Wilhem Sieglin (c. 1890), and Botti (1898). The map, *Alexandrie, plan de la ville ancienne et moderne* (Figs 14.22–14.23), which accompanies both editions of these guides, shows in red the layout of the city walls and the seacoast from Mahmoud el-Falaki's map, but does not include the latter's street network, as Breccia considered:

The system of streets established by El-Falaki may fairly correspond in its main lines to the *system* of the streets in the ancient town. The plan which he drew up may be accepted as *approximate*, exception being made for the length of the road towards the east, and for the position and direction of the main transversal street. (Breccia 1922, 76)

On the background map of the modern city, shown in beige with details of built plots, the names of ancient quarters, temples, or monuments, sometimes accompanied by rectangles showing their supposed extension, and mentions of necropoleis with their chronology, and in a few cases (Anfouchi, Kom el Shoqafa, Subterranean Monument) accompanied by a plan of the tombs or a representation of their extension (Shatby), all appear in red. This map is primarily a companion piece to the guide, showing the names of the main streets and buildings in the modern city. It is not intended as a research paper on the city's urban planning, as can be seen from the conclusion of the chapter on the city's topography.

I desire to lay stress on the fact that Alexandrian topography presents enormous difficulties and enigmas which are today, and may be even in the future insolvable and in consequence any plan of Alexandria must be considered only as approximate, conjectural and provisional. (Breccia 1922, 64)

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Figure 14.22. M. Bartocci, *Alexandrie, Plan de la ville ancienne et moderne*, 1914. Breccia 1914, end of the volume. © CEAlex Archives, Fonds J.-Y. Empereur, inv. no. GRA-003. For view online <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10101085t/f1>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

Figure 14.23. Detail of the centre (Basileia) of M. Bartocci, *Alexandrie, Plan de la ville ancienne et moderne*, 1914.

‘Etiam periere ruinae’ (Even the Ruins Have Perished)

In 1929, Howard Carter, the discoverer of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, announced to the press that he would be searching for Alexander's tomb in Alexandria. Breccia (1932, 51) reacted immediately in the Egyptian press (*Egyptian Gazette*, 30 November 1929; *Images*, 22 December 1929), but also in the *Corriere della Sera* of 13 December 1929 and six months later in the periodical *La Lettura* by synthesizing ancient sources and tracing previous research on the tomb (Marvulli 2009, 107–14, 251–63; the articles are each time derived from his article published in *Le Musée gréco-romain*, see Breccia 1932, 37–48). He promised more excavations around the site he had long considered to be the tomb of the city's founder, near the mosque of Nabi Daniel. Excavations were already carried out in 1929, and resumed in 1933 by Achille Adriani, revealing four columns associated with a street running north–south (Breccia 1914, 82–86; 1932, 48–53; Adriani 1966, 85–86 nos 46–47). For Breccia, these columns, combined with anterior discoveries of

similar ones in the vicinity, became proof of the existence of the major crossroads of the city connected with Alexander's tomb. Breccia produced in 1929 a schematic, minimal plan for the *Enciclopedia italiana delle scienze, lettere ed arti* (Fig. 14.24), with a new layout of the city limits, particularly to the east, and a sparse street network, but showing the major crossroads, next to the supposed location of Alexander's tomb (Adriani 1966, 63 no. 11, pl. 5, fig. 12). This map was still used in 1978, in the first exhibition dedicated to Alexandria and Graeco-Roman Egypt (Grimm and Wildung 1978, 34).

JUA_12_SL_8_Nenna_Fig_24

Figure 14.24. E. Breccia, *Plan of Ancient Alexandria, 1929*. After Breccia 1929b, 306.

There is no doubt that Evaristo Breccia was aware of Rodolfo Lanciani's *Forma urbis Romae*, published between 1893 and 1901. In this set, forty-six detailed maps (25 by 36 inches, at a scale of 1/1000) outline ancient features in black, early modern features (based on the Nolli map of 1748)¹⁵ in red, and modern features (as of 1893) in blue. Breccia had undoubtedly followed Lanciani's courses, the latter having been appointed to the Chair of Ancient Topography created for him in 1889 at the University of Rome. However, the discrepancy between the configuration of Rome, with its numerous monuments attested by remains or ancient figurative evidence, and that of Alexandria, lacking both remains and extensive figurative documentation, led him to abandon an undertaking of this kind for Alexandria.¹⁶ His disillusionment with the remains of Ptolemaic Alexandria is reflected in his article 'Etiam periere ruinae' (Breccia 1928: title taken from Lucan's verse in *The Civil War*, IX.969), which invites scholars to turn to the quest for objects in Western and American museums, in order to give pride of place to Alexandrian art.

Nevertheless, the museum's extension, completed by 1907 at the latest, included a room entitled 'Topographie' (Breccia 1907, 141 indicated as hall XX on the plan of the museum, after 63 and hall XXII in the text), which brought together plans and photographs of the ancient city; engravings, plans, and photographs of Alexandria were regularly acquired by the museum during his directorate, as shown in Breccia's annual reports to the Municipality of Alexandria. Before the war, this collection was moved to the entrance of the museum to make way for the Canopus Antiquities Hall, named in honour of Prince Omar Toussoun (Breccia 1914, 145–46; 1922, 122–23). While Breccia's plans for the construction of a new museum, drawn up as early as 1918, called 'for visitors to leave the museum with an approximate, but as organic as possible, idea of Alexandrian history, topography and civilization', the principle behind the layout of the rooms was to 'group objects by category and in chronological order', except in the case of objects from necropoleis (Breccia 1932, 92–97). Outside Alexandria, at Theadelphia, Tebtunis, and Oxyrhynchos, Breccia's excavations were focused on papyrus collecting, on behalf of the Società italiana per la ricerca dei papiri Greci e Latini (Breccia 1932, 60–63; 1933, 36–47); objects other than papyrus were destined to enter the collections of the Graeco-Roman Museum. His successor at Tebtunis, Carlo Anti (1889–1961) (Deotto and Zanovello 2024), who became Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Egypt in 1928, undertook extensive excavations to determine the urban layout of this Fayum village (Zanovello, Deotto, and Magnini 2019). Breccia, maybe because of his age, remained outside this movement which gave pride of place to ancient urban planning, and

¹⁵ See <<https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/nolli/>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

¹⁶ For Lanciani's library and collection of engravings, see <<https://exhibits.stanford.edu/lanciani>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

which is seen at work among archaeologists in charge of Libya's heritage and its sites with well-preserved remains (Munzi 2012).

The Application of a New Method from Italy

The early 1930s saw the end of Breccia's long tenure. Breccia was offered a chair in Classical Antiquities and Epigraphy at the University of Pisa. King Fuad was not in favour of this departure, but eventually accepted, on condition that Breccia continued to play a role in the direction of Alexandrian affairs and ensured the continuity of the service. While 1927 was to see the departure of a number of European officials from positions in the Egyptian administration, there seems to have been no question of placing anyone other than an Italian at the head of the Graeco-Roman Museum. The French Pierre Lacau also remained head of the antiquities department, thanks to King Fuad's support (Reid 2015, 84). Numerous candidates were put forward in Italian political and academic circles (Petricioli 1990, 388–90), including Giacomo Guidi, then soprintendente of Cyrenaica (Munzi 2012, 93–95), as well as Luigi Maria Ugolini, one of the leading figures in Fascist archaeology (Gilkes and Melfi 2025). Carlo Anti supported the candidature of Gilberto Bagnani, his assistant on the excavation of Tebtynis (Begg 2004, 25), and Alessandro della Seta that of Doro Levi (La Rosa 2005). Others mentioned were Pirro Marconi (Privetera 2007), then director of the Palermo Museum, Luciano Laurenzi and Giacomo Caputo (Barbanera 1998, 225, no. 104; Munzi 2012, 95). The latter was to be selected, but Breccia finally chose Adriani, who had been recommended by Roberto Paribeni, then Director General di Antichità e belle arti of the Ministry della Istruzione pubblica, and who was supported by his masters Giulio Quirino Giglioli, Alessandro Della Seta, and Amedeo Maiuri.

A New Generation of Italian Archaeologists

Achille Adriani (1905–1982) belonged to a new generation of archaeologists trained after the First World War. The creation of the Italian Archaeological School in Athens in 1909 had opened up academic studies at the University of Rome to Greece and the eastern Mediterranean (Greco 2012). The latter, whose vocation was:

di fornire agli alunni della R. Scuola archeologica di Roma [...] il mezzo di perfezionarsi negli studi di archeologia in generale e della antichità greche in particolare e di prendere parte all'esplorazione archeologica dell'oriente ellenico con viaggi, ricerche e scavi. (Barbanera 2015, § 5.3, Empl. 2378)

(to provide the students of the R. Scuola archeologica di Roma [...] with the means to improve their studies of archaeology in general and Greek antiquity in particular, and to take part in the archaeological exploration of the Hellenic East through travel, research, and excavations.)

Among the candidates to succeed Breccia, all had been members of the Italian Archaeological School in Athens,¹⁷ as had Giacomo Caputo in the same year as Adriani (1928). A student of Giulio Emanuele Rizzo, professore di 'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte Antica' from 1925 at the University of Rome (Dubbin 2008), Adriani took part in the 1926–1927 excavations at the necropolis of Veii, under the direction of Giulio Quirino Giglioli, then Professor of Topography of Ancient Italy at the

¹⁷ See <<https://www.scuoladiatene.it/saia/storia/gli-allievi.html>> [accessed 15 January 2025].

University of Rome. After graduating in 1927, he was a member of the Italian Archaeological School in Athens for 1928, and again for 1930. Adriani took part in excavations at the site of Hephasteia on the island of Lemnos in 1928 and 1930, directed by Alessandro della Seta, director of the school. Back in Italy, he passed the competitive examination for excavation inspector in 1930 and was assigned to the Naples Soprintendenza under the direction of Amedeo Maiuri. In this capacity, he led excavations at Minturno. Called to Alexandria, he took up his post at the end of summer 1932, at the age of twenty-seven (for Adriani's career, see Parise 1988; Bonacasa 2001, 111–12).

An Attempt at an Archaeological Map of Alexandria

In 1932–1933, Achille Adriani tackled two major excavation projects, each linked to Alexandria's urban history. He took over the excavations carried out by Breccia with a view to uncovering Alexander's tomb (see above) and protected the excavated site. He uncovered the substantial remains of a building in the Basileia district (Alexandre le Grand Street). It was this discovery that led him to propose, in 1934, his *Saggio di una pianta archeologica di Alessandria* which was firmly rooted in historical topographical research: 'Il saggio che segue é l'anticipata pubblicazione – suggerita dalle scoperte di Via Alessandro il Grande – di notizie che sono state raccolte per un più ampio studio di "Topografia Alessandrina"' (Adriani 1934, 55) (The following essay is the anticipated publication — suggested by the discoveries of Alexander the Great Street — of notices that have been collected for a broader study of 'Alexandrian Topography'). In his foreword, Adriani (1934, 55–56) highlights the difficulties he faced in proposing this plan of the Royal Quarters, including the lack of a modern, up-to-date large-scale map and the difficulty of accurately placing the information derived from his predecessors' excavations. The 121 entries are not of the same nature, some are restricted to the site of discovery of a statue or an inscription (mainly issued from Breccia's reports), others are related to soundings commented upon in more detail. Adriani relies on Saint-Genis (5 entries), Vaujany (6), Neroutsos (5), Falaki (10), Hogarth (5), Botti (24), Noack (28), Breccia (28), and himself (3), as well as a few more reports from other individuals.

His map is executed on a scale of 1/4000 (Fig. 14.25). The only modern map on a scale almost as large dates from the years 1911–1916 (1/5000) and is the work of the Survey of Egypt; subsequent editions of the Survey of Egypt are on a smaller scale at 1/30,000 (1912), 1/10,000 (1916), 1/20,000 (1917), 1/15,000 (1924), 1/10,000 (1932–1933). Adriani could also have had access to Nicohosof's map (1/10,000) published in 1930 (for further details, see Shaalan 2025, 335–36, nos 114–15, 120–21, 130, 132–33). One or more of these modern maps were traced (black lines) to scale, translated into Italian, then supplemented by Falaki's results, the road network (red line) with Noack's additions and the marine coastline (black dashed line). A special symbol featured Falaki's soundings, as had been done by Kiepert (1872), and later by Sieglin (c. 1890). In addition, structures that had already disappeared in Adriani's time, but which served as landmarks in the descriptions of his predecessors (Arab wall, Napoleonic fortifications, but also the former Ramleh tram station, lazaretto, municipal stables), were added in black dashed lines. Adriani (1934, 56) refers directly to the model he used: 'Nella compilazione del piano e del testo esplicativo mi é stato di modello il sistema adottato per la carta archeologica d'Italia al 100.000 e quello della Forma Italiae' (In compiling the plan and the explanatory text, I used the system adopted for the 100,000 scale archaeological map of Italy and that of the Forma Italiae as a model).

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_25

Figure 14.25. A. Adriani. Plan accompanying the *Saggio di una pianta archeologica di Alessandria*. After Adriani 1934.

During Adriani's formative years, the only works available for Rome were Lanciani's (1901) book and S. B. Plattner and Th. Ashby's *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, published in 1929, arranged alphabetically according to the ancient names of the monuments and bringing together the textual and epigraphic sources of the monuments. Outside Rome, the *Atlas archéologique de la Tunisie*, published in fascicles between 1892 and 1932, featured maps from the French army's geographic service at 1/50,000 with the ancient names of the sites and the serial numbers of the remains in red, and very short notes, 'légendes archéologiques', in anticipation of a complete scientific description of the country by the Commission du Nord de l'Afrique (Babelon, Cagnat, and Reinach 1892–1913). In 1911, Stéphane Gsell's *Atlas archéologique de l'Algérie* also featured maps produced by the French army's geographic service at a scale of 1/20,000, on which the ancient names and numbers (in bold) designating the remains are shown in red, corresponding to the detailed notices accompanying each map.¹⁸ In the case of major ancient cities, a schematic plan of the modern city is presented, with a new set of numbers (in italics in the text) and detailed notes for discoveries and monuments (for example, see Gsell 1911, sheet 4 for Cherchel and Tipasa). Similar undertakings in the territories conquered by Italy (Libya, Dodecanese) were planned as early as the conquest (Brillante 2019), but only came to fruition in the late 1920s (Munzi 2012).

The *Forma Italiae* project, founded by Giuseppe Lugli in 1923, aimed to draw up an archaeological map of Italy (*catasto archeologico*), under the aegis of the Accademia dei Lincei and the Unione academica nazionale. The Istituto geografico militare's high-quality 1/25,000 maps include developed semiotics and numbering of remains connected to the notices. The first volumes of the eponymous series were published by Lugli (1926–1928); from 1930 onwards, the same Lugli published the three volumes of *I monumenti antichi di Roma e suburbio*, amply illustrated with comparative plans of the various regions of the city (Lugli 1930–1940).

Adriani's work follows in the footsteps of the *Forma Italiae*, with excavation and discovery sites indicated by a red dot circled in black on the map and given a serial number, which is repeated in the order of the notices in the text. Adriani thus reversed the research method, starting from the remains observed and uncovered rather than from textual sources, as his predecessors had done. He also introduced the notion of stratigraphy wherever possible, paving the way for a possible chronological phasing of the remains. As the archaeological map puts archaeological discoveries first, identifying them with monuments known from ancient texts is not the ultimate goal in this phase of work.

Throughout his career, Adriani continued to expand on this first attempt, culminating in 1966 with the publication of two volumes (text and plates), which curiously are untitled. They are part of the collection *Repertorio d'Arte dell'Egitto Greco-romano* (Serie C [Architettura e topografia] vol. I–II), created by the latter. The text volume is divided into three parts: an extended introduction, archaeological notices, and a glossary of Alexandrian topography. The 146 entries are divided into two unequal parts: city (fifty-eight entries) and necropolis (eighty-eight entries), and cover all periods from the city's foundation to the Arab conquest. They are illustrated with figures both in the text and in the volume of plates. Adriani abandons the system he adopted for his *Saggio* of 1934 and presents a comparative plan of modern and ancient Alexandria, in black and white, with the simple superimposition of Falaki's map on a modern city background and few written

¹⁸ Each map has its own text section, paginated from 1, with the remains numbers starting at 1 for each section.

mentions of ancient and medieval monuments (Fig. 14.26). Entries are located by reference to modern buildings and streets. The glossary combines entries for names attested in ancient sources, selected from Calderini's (1935) *Dizionario* and realia (e.g. dwellings, baths). Adriani abandoned the principle of an archaeological map in favour of a 'corpus' of entries and images, scattered across numerous publications. His aim, as he put it, was to respond to the 'disagio, anche se inespresso, per la mancanza di una documentazione adeguata e di un' adeguata elaborazione critica di quella esistente' (unease, even if unexpressed, about the lack of adequate documentation and adequate critical treatment of existing documentation).

JUA_12_SI_8_Nenna_Fig_26

Figure 14.26. A. Adriani, *Pianta comparativa di Alessandria antica e moderna*. After Adriani 1966, pl. 1.

Discussion

Initially based, as elsewhere, on the exploitation of ancient textual sources, research into Alexandria's urban history was soon established on what would later be called urban archaeology. Before the great excavations of the cities and sanctuaries of the Greek world (first were the Olympia excavations in 1875), it was 'the will of the prince' that led to a wide-ranging exploration of the city by Mahmud el-Falaki in the 1860s, at the very moment of its modern expansion. At the time, the Hellenistic period was not given priority in the scientific research carried out in Egypt (or elsewhere) by the Great Powers that shared the exploration of famous ancient sites in the last third of the nineteenth century; the Roman period in the eastern Mediterranean was given even less attention.

Although Italy was the most recent addition to the concert of Great Powers, the Italians had a particularly strong presence in Egypt since the reign of Mohamed Ali, both through trade and experts called in by the latter. This strong Italian presence, combined with Alexandria's special status as 'governed' by notables from foreign communities, induced Giuseppe Botti and his successors to play an almost exclusive role in research on ancient Alexandria for sixty years. Their research into urban history was marked at the outset (Botti) by a disdain for Roman Alexandria and a concentration on the Alexandria of Alexander and his successors, the Ptolemies. The Basileia and Serapeum thus formed the core of Botti's excavations and those of the von Sieglin Expedition, where Mahmud el-Falaki had extended his research over the entire city. Disappointed by the limited potential and difficulties of excavation in a city undergoing constant development, Breccia shifted his focus to the city's necropoleis, which provided a wealth of artefacts and original funerary architecture. He did not, however, abandon his research into the city's urban planning, but directed it towards what he saw as the nodal point of Alexander's tomb. In front of the development of Pharaonism in an independent Egypt, under the reign of King Fuad, the Graeco-Roman world and classical studies could hardly play a role in the construction of a national identity. Graeco-Roman Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, thus remained on the margins, but benefited from the renewed methods that had been put in place in Italy, proud of its ancient past and in charge of an exceptional national heritage. Adriani, one of the generation of Italian archaeologists trained after the First World War, introduced to Alexandria a working method based on remains rather than texts, which opened up a new era in research into the city's urban planning.

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