

CHAPTER I

*Introduction**Dorothy J. Thompson and Kostas Buraselis*

Alexandria, founded by Alexander of Macedon on 7 April 331 BC, was to become one of the great cities of the ancient world. This new city on the sea, with its fine double harbour, provided a Mediterranean focus for the country more directly than ever before.¹ As with all sea-ports, Alexandria faced two ways. Like Shanghai or New Orleans later, it also connected the sea to a great river.² With canal access developed through to the Nile, Alexandria formed a junction between the main artery of Egypt to the south and the Mediterranean to the north. So when, after Alexander's death, his general Ptolemy son of Lagos took over the country, establishing the rule of the Ptolemies, Egypt depended for its development and success more fundamentally than did any other Hellenistic power on its control of the routes by river and sea. Waterborne traffic was the norm, both at home and abroad, and earlier experience acquired primarily on the Nile was of relevance as the Ptolemies expanded their influence overseas. The city of Alexandria, with its guiding lighthouse, the Pharos, was the centre where many different aspects of this waterborne power may be traced and brought together. In what follows, discussion of the main themes and questions raised in the contributions to this volume comes filtered through an Alexandrian lens.³

First the waters themselves, the aquatic dimension – as it were – to the Ptolemaic state.⁴ Throughout its recorded history, the fate of Egypt has

¹ On the lay-out of Alexandria's harbours, see Goddio 2011: 129–35.

² Cf. Braudel 1972: I, 317–18, double frontage as a feature of important ports. Strabo 17.1.7 (C 793), natural position of Alexandria with double water frontage and harbours, on the coast and on Lake Mareia/Mareotis; 17.1.13 (C 798), Alexandria the best port of the inhabited world. Naucratis, in contrast, which had earlier served as the access port for Mediterranean goods, was a river port only.

³ For Alexandria's foundation, see Bagnall 1979; Krasilnikoff 2009: 24–30; Buraselis 2010: 265–7. On the city more generally, Fraser 1972 remains invaluable. See also A. Bernand 1995; Empereur 1998; Grimm 1998; Hirst and Silk 2004; Harris and Ruffini 2004; McKenzie 2007, on architecture.

⁴ The terminology here is difficult; cf. Horden 2005: 179, on 'fluid communications'; Horden and Purcell 2005: 348. *Liquid Continents* is announced as the title for their as yet unpublished sequel to *The Corrupting Sea* (2000).

been inseparable from that of the Nile, which, flowing for 6,825 km, is one of the longest rivers in the world. For 1,200 km of this length, this river runs through Egypt towards the sea. Making its way down through the long central valley of Upper and Middle Egypt, near Heliopolis (now Cairo) the Nile spreads out into several streams and flows through the Delta area towards the Mediterranean. Its course has shifted somewhat over time, but historically the pattern of the river remained much the same until the construction of the first Aswan dam, completed in 1902.⁵ With this its annual flood was tamed and, as a result, the rich agricultural produce of Egypt no longer depended on the annual inundation of the land by the silt-rich waters of the Nile. Throughout antiquity, the river formed the main artery along which travelled all manner of people and produce – merchants and military men, officials and travellers, explorers and pirates, the king and his court, and many more, who depended on the river for their way of life. It provided a thoroughfare through the main valley of Egypt, and a series of ports set along its course marked the end of caravan routes reaching out across the western desert to the oases, eastwards to the ports of the Red Sea coast, and to the quarries and mines of the desert to the south. Seas lay both to the north and the east of the country, but the river Nile remained the defining and unifying feature of Egypt.

The foundation of a new urban settlement inevitably affects its environs, both the immediately surrounding area and, as it develops, places further afield. And when, as in the case of Alexandria, that city becomes a capital, the centre of royal and administrative power, then large-scale change in the local ecology, in the political geography and in the economic development of the land is to be expected, with effects on both internal and external relations. With Alexandria as the new capital, the direction and balance of power in Egypt were transformed. The greatest change of all, however, was the involvement – incorporation even – of Egypt in the world of the Mediterranean.⁶ With Macedonian kings in control, Egypt now looked out to the north, and for the early Ptolemies the development of naval power became a pressing need.

Earlier Egyptian contacts in the Mediterranean had been of a more limited nature, with the exchange of goods and men rather than strategic concerns as the driving force. The traditional sphere of Egyptian trade lay

⁵ Willcocks 1904 remains a helpful study. On changes in the course of the Nile, see Jeffreys 2008; Lutley and Bunbury 2008.

⁶ Somewhat surprisingly, apart from some discussion of its system of irrigation or its grain, Hellenistic (like Roman) Egypt generally lies outside the bounds of the Mediterranean which forms the subject of Horden and Purcell 2000; see Bagnall 2005: 339–41.

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within the eastern Mediterranean, where Cyprus to the north and Phoenicia to the east formed the most regular points of contact and the source of crucial imports (see Map 4.1). Some contacts were more distant. Under Psammetichus I (664–610 BC), for instance, mercenaries had reached Egypt from as far afield as Ionia and Caria. When the sixth-century BC pharaoh Amasis invited Greeks to be founder members for his new international port of trade at Naucratis they too came from the coast of Asia Minor and the islands.⁷ Similarly, from the period of Persian control in 475 BC, the Aramaic customs record that survives beneath the Ahqar Romance details ships reaching Egypt from Ionia and Phoenicia over a period of ten months. The variety of their incoming cargoes of various metals, oil, wine, empty jars, clay, wool, planks of wood, oars and other items is hardly matched by what went out; natron was the only item that left this unnamed port.⁸ Such was the limited nature of Egypt's Mediterranean traffic before the Ptolemies, and, with the need to import wood, wine and metals, it was her closer contacts to the east and the west which remained the strongest. With the foundation of Alexandria all this was changed. Egypt now also looked north.

It was not, however, just into the Mediterranean that Egypt's connections now stretched but through the Sea of Marmara into the Black Sea too. The story Tacitus recounts of the statue of Sarapis brought from Pontic Sinope may owe its origin to conflation with a district known as Sinopion at Memphis.⁹ Nevertheless, there were now connections with the Pontus. Sometime under Ptolemy IV a group of young men described as Mares, from the far south-eastern corner of the Black Sea, are recorded in a list of expenditure on a voyage from Memphis to Alexandria.¹⁰ Their presence there is unexplained but is interesting for the light that it sheds on Pontic connections at this time. The most striking of all such traces is the Egyptian trireme named Isis found drawn on the walls of a shrine to Aphrodite and Apollo at Nymphaeum in the Crimea and dating from the second quarter of the third century BC.¹¹ There can be no better illustration of Egypt's entry to the world centred on the Mediterranean but not confined to its

⁷ Hdt. 2.152, mercenaries; 2.178–9, Naucratis, with Ionians from Chios, Teos, Phocaea and Clazomenae, Dorians from Rhodes, Cnidus, Halicarnassus and Phaselis, Aeolians from Mytilene. Separate sanctuaries were established by Miletus, Samos and – exceptionally, from further west – Aegina. On immigrants, see further Vittmann 2003: chaps. 3 (Phoenicians), 6 (Carians), 8 (Greeks).

⁸ Porten and Yardeni 1993: C3.7, with Briant 2002: 385. Briant suggests Memphis as the port involved, but the Delta location of sources of natron (see Lucas 1932) and the sea-going ships detailed in the account seem to imply a coastal port.

⁹ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; J. Gwyn Griffiths 1970: 395–6. ¹⁰ *UPZ* I 149.4, with editor's note.

¹¹ Grač 1984; *SEG* 34.756 and 45.997. See Marquaille 2008: 50–1, with n. 52, for further bibliography.

shores. Within a century, therefore, of Alexandria's foundation, Egypt's overseas political, cultural and economic interests grew to range widely, west to Sicily, throughout the Aegean and through to the Black Sea region; for Egypt, gift of the Nile, under the early Ptolemies had now become a maritime power.

With Alexandria as their new capital, the location of both their palace district and administrative headquarters, the vista of the new Greek pharaohs northwards, to the world from which they came, became broader than ever before (Map 1.1). It is the view from Alexandria that this chapter seeks to delineate with the aim of introducing and contextualising the studies that follow. For in the history of Mediterranean powers – and this we should recognise is 'history *in*' rather than 'history *of*' that sea¹² – the arrival on the scene of the kings of Egypt was a new phenomenon, marking something of a rupture with the past.¹³

First comes the development of Ptolemaic naval power, based on the newly protected harbours of Alexandria. Already in his early years, as he sought to establish control, Ptolemy son of Lagus looked seawards. If, taking his cue from Alexander before and concerned to protect his borders, Ptolemy's first foray out of Egypt in 322/321 BC was westwards overland to Cyrene,¹⁴ it was not long afterwards, in 319 BC, that he invaded Syria-Phoenicia, a key source of timber throughout Egypt's history and a territory with important coastal harbours.¹⁵ Cyprus too came within his early sphere of vision, and treaties with four Cypriot dynasts significantly increased his naval power.¹⁶ Overseas involvement in key areas of later Ptolemaic interest was, therefore, under way at the same time as Ptolemy was putting all his military and administrative acumen to work to secure his position at home. With access to timber resources and the support of good allies, especially in the form of kings and local dynasts (like Philocles of Sidon), Egyptian naval strength was growing, and, despite setbacks and reversals of fortune, in this early period Ptolemy I was successful in establishing a Ptolemaic presence in the Mediterranean. Already in 314 BC, at a time when Antigonus was working in Phoenicia to put together a naval force, Ptolemy was reported as enjoying control of the sea. At the same time, in the same area, 100 ships from Egypt under Seleucus' command displayed their strength unimpeded

¹² For this distinction, see Horden and Purcell 2000: 2; 2005: 357; cf. Harris 2005: 5.

¹³ For 'historical rupture and continuity' involved in the establishment of the Ptolemaic dynasty, see Moyer 2011: 135.

¹⁴ Caroli 2007: 71–83, Cyrene under Ptolemy I.

¹⁵ Hölbl (2001): 14–20; Huß 2001: 97–191; Caroli 2007: 50–70.

¹⁶ Arr. *FGrH* 156 F10.6, Nicocreon of Salamis, Stasicrates of Soli (see *SEG* 36, 331), Nicocles of Paphos and Androcles of Amathus; Ptolemy thereby acquired nearly 200 ships.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-43666-3 — The Ptolemies, the Sea and the Nile
Edited by Kostas Buraselis, Mary Stefanou, Dorothy J. Thompson
Excerpt
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Map 1.1 Greece and the Ptolemaic Aegean

before Antigonid eyes.¹⁷ When later, in 306 BC, Ptolemy sailed up to Cypriot Salamis, soon to be defeated at the hands of Antigonos' son Demetrius, 'his fleet, with the transport ships following, on account of its size appeared from afar an impressive sight to behold'.¹⁸ Some 200 to 210 Ptolemaic fighting ships may have been involved.¹⁹ By no means all his warships will have come from Ptolemy's allies; a massive shipbuilding programme was necessary in these early decades, with Alexandria most probably at its centre.²⁰ And so, a fine floor mosaic from the Delta city of Thmuis, signed by one Sophilus, portrays Alexandria wearing a naval headdress, a ship's prow on her brow; either side of the portrait flow out long waving ribbons with black and white stripes, tied around her head as though from a diadem. It is hard to imagine a clearer portrayal of Ptolemaic naval and royal power than that combined in this maritime image.²¹

The struggle with the Antigonids for control of Phoenicia and the eastern Mediterranean, in which the navy was involved, continued over many decades. Here its relevance is as a prerequisite for Ptolemaic control of their later League of Islanders (otherwise known as the Nesiotic League). This, Meadows argues in Chapter 2 below, was a league brought into being under Ptolemaic guidance in the very early years of Ptolemy II. With the help of this League and through a mix of Ptolemaic garrisons of occupation and more straightforward alliances, under the first three Ptolemies Egypt pursued her interests over a wide area. Polybius would later sum up the external interests of the early Ptolemies:²²

ruling over Coele Syria and Cyprus, they loomed over the dynasts of Asia and the [Aegean] islands likewise; under their control were the major cities, strong places and harbours all along the coast from Pamphylia to the Hellespont and in the neighbourhood of Lysimachea. Controlling Aenus, Maronea and other cities even further away, they presided over affairs in Thrace and in Macedonia.

Such, stretching out from Alexandria, was the power of the Ptolemies overseas.

¹⁷ Diod. Sic. 19.58, probably from Hieronymus. ¹⁸ Diod. Sic. 20.49.6.

¹⁹ Hauben 1976: 1, plus 200 transport ships carrying infantry; cf. Casson 1991: 136, where the number of 150 Ptolemaic ships does not include the 60 ships from Salamis itself.

²⁰ On the Ptolemaic navy, see Van 't Dack and Hauben 1978: 69–75; for shipbuilding in Alexandria later, Ath. 5.203e–204d.

²¹ Signed by Sophilus and now in the Alexandria Museum. cf. Pollitt 1986: 222, with fig. 235. This portrait, one of two, has also been identified as Berenice II, cf. Empereur 1995: 5, with fig. 3 and inside back cover; Guimiers-Sorbet 2004: 69. In either case, she clearly represents Ptolemaic control of the seas.

²² Polyb. 5.34.6–9, cf. Marquaille 2008: 39–40.

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As in other naval empires, a combination of concerns may be traced on the part of this ruling power. In the area of Ptolemaic control and artistic influence, in later centuries Venice was to establish her maritime empire, in which again strategic and trade considerations reinforced one another in the fashion that A. T. Mahan was to analyse in his classic work *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890). A set of defensive outposts against the westward expansion of the Ottoman empire served also as a gate for the import into Europe of commercial products from the east. Probably the greatest of all such maritime empires was the British, on which in the nineteenth century 'the sun never set'. Queen Victoria too might well have worn a crown of prows. The naval empire of the Ptolemies may be viewed from a broader perspective.

The Ptolemaic navy has been the subject of study before.²³ Here, in Chapter 3, in his discussion of two key individuals under Ptolemy II – Callicrates of Samos and Patroclus of Macedon – Hauben examines the human aspect of Ptolemaic naval policy, which was crucial to the development of the Ptolemaic empire. The extent and nature of the imperial rule of the Ptolemies were carefully delineated in Roger S. Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions outside Egypt* (1976). Subsequent epigraphic discoveries, some of them spectacular, have on the whole served to fill in this picture, although not without some surprises and inevitable debates as to their significance.²⁴ Whereas, however, the emphasis of Bagnall's work was on structures of government, monetary practice and the administrative officers employed by the Ptolemies in their overseas possessions, the emphasis has more recently moved also to cultural and cultic matters. A related theme of recent work has been the organisation and definition of the imperial space of the Ptolemaic empire, and the role of the king and his family in its cohesion.²⁵ Thus in the present volume, the importance of Ptolemaic royal cult, which joined the Egyptian gods as a means of binding Ptolemaic allies, is more than once identified as playing an important role.²⁶

²³ Van 't Dack and Hauben 1978; Casson 1991: 129–42.

²⁴ For new inscriptions, see, for example, Wörle 1977, 1978, 1991; Shear 1978; Robert and Robert 1983; Bousquet 1988; Jones and Habicht 1989 (republishing Opelt and Kirsten 1989); Blümel 1992; Gauthier 2003; Wallensten and Pakkanen 2009. For further discussions, see, for example, Gauthier 1979; Chaniotis 1993; Ma, Derow and Meadows 1995; Meadows 2006, 2008, 2012.

²⁵ The study of royal settlements overseas has been an important element in this. See, for example, Cherry and Davis 1991; Mee and Forbes 1997; Mueller 2006; Gill 2007; Winter 2010.

²⁶ Abulafia 2005: 91–2 urges consideration of the relationship between trade and cultural or religious influences in a comparative framework (with reference to Japan).

Power, of course, is exercised in very many different forms, and in the case of the Ptolemaic empire the distinction made elsewhere between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power may be a helpful one.²⁷ Hard power in this case would be the navy, the garrisons and governors sent around the empire. The ‘softer’ aspects, in contrast, are the less tangible resources of power, such as are to be found, for instance, in the promulgation of cult or culture. This is where festivals, dynastic cult and the varying images of power become relevant.

The establishment, for instance, of the Alexandrian festival of the *Ptolemaieia* marked an important stage in Ptolemy II’s relations with his Aegean allies. Soon after the death of Ptolemy I, his son Ptolemy II formed the plan of instituting a festival in honour of his father, to be celebrated every four years in Alexandria. In honour of Ptolemy Soter and his queen, the Greek states were invited to send their envoys across the seas to Alexandria to take part in an international festival with games, other competitions and much else besides. The invitation to consider this proposal and take part, issued in the joint names of Philocles, king of the Sidonians, and the nesiarch Bacchon, went out to Ptolemy’s island allies, who responded with the expected enthusiasm.²⁸ As nesiarch, Bacchon was in charge of the Islanders and the decree of acceptance from c. 280 BC would, on Meadows’ argument below, form the first certain evidence for the existence of the Nesiotic League, which, he somewhat controversially suggests, had been recently formed. The survival of a copy of the decree from the small island of Nicuria near Amorgos is indicative of the importance of this central initiative; this was an event to be noted and everywhere recorded by the member cities. The Islanders further decided to set up a record of their response on Delos, next to the altar of Ptolemy Soter.²⁹ Cult too was an effective way of cementing political relations, and through the institution of this Ptolemaic festival in Alexandria the extension of the cult of Ptolemy I proved particularly powerful in this respect. Attendance at a festival could serve additional ends. Thus Callias, from the Athenian deme of Sphettus, serving as sacred envoy to the Ptolemaea, succeeded in obtaining a royal gift of ropes for the forthcoming Panathenaea back home. Negotiations of this kind formed a common part of such occasions.³⁰ The case of Eudoxus,

²⁷ Nye 1990: 31–2, for the formulation; cf. 2002: 8–9, on soft power.

²⁸ *SIG*³ 390 = M. M. Austin 2006: 450–2, no. 256; on the festival more generally, see Thompson 2000.

²⁹ *SIG*³ 390.45–9.

³⁰ *SEG* 49.113.55–70 = M. M. Austin 2006: 114–16, no. 55; cf. Buraselis 1993: 255.

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a later sacred envoy, who came to Alexandria with an invitation to a festival in Cyzicus, had a more surprising outcome, which we shall return to later.

In another example of 'soft power', altars and sanctuaries dedicated to the Ptolemies, either singly or together as a family dynasty, entered the sacred landscape of allied cities and islands. These were often the location of the surviving statues or portraits of Ptolemaic kings and queens. Made in Alexandria and exported around the Ptolemaic empire and beyond, such royal statues are studied by Palagia in Chapter 9. She argues for a degree of central direction in the form that these portraits took in much the same way as has been long accepted in the case of Roman imperial portraiture. In sanctuaries dedicated to the dynastic cult, offerings could be made by Ptolemaic officials or by ambitious locals. In this way loyalty to the regime was put on display, and through the dedications the power of the Ptolemies was paraded and reinforced. So, on the island of Thera one Artemidorus, son of Apollonius from Perge, left his mark on the landscape. He may have held some official position within the Ptolemaic army or the administration, but if he did this remains unknown. Sometime in the reign of Ptolemy III, Artemidorus dedicated the small sanctuary to King Ptolemy and his forebears in an important location, on the main route between the agora and the temple of Apollo Karneios.³¹ And Artemidorus was not alone. Many similar dedications were made throughout the Ptolemaic empire.

One particular royal cult was transposed overseas with notable success. This was the cult of Queen Arsinoe II, the sister-wife of Ptolemy II. The initiative may have come from Alexandria, where already during her lifetime the cult of Ptolemy II and his queen as the *Theoi Adelphoi* was added to that of Alexander in 272/271.³² Arsinoe herself became the brother-loving goddess, as found for instance in the name of the new settlement of Philadelphia in the Arsinoite nome in Egypt, known also as 'the village of (the goddess) Philadelphos'.³³ On the coast close to Alexandria, Arsinoe's cult as the goddess Aphrodite Zephyritis or Euploia was established by the admiral Callicrates. Celebrated in the poetry of Posidippus, Arsinoe was a

³¹ *IG* XII.3 464; *IG* XII.3 463/1388 records a further dedication of Artemidorus on behalf of Ptolemy III and his ancestors, probably made to the Egyptian gods Sarapis, Isis and Anubis. Artemidorus is further discussed in the contributions of Meadows and Palagia.

³² See Hauben below: 39 and 46.

³³ *P.Lond.* VII 1954.1; 1955.1 (257 BC), a letter from farmers *ek kômês tês Philadelphou*; cf. Mueller 2006: 209, *s.v.* Philadelphēia. For a dedication to Arsinoe Philadelphos made during her lifetime, see Wallensten and Pakkanen 2009: 155.

goddess well suited to maritime export.³⁴ She was worshipped widely in the overseas empire of the Ptolemies and, on one remarkable occasion, her influence was recorded in a matter of policy.³⁵ The large number of new foundations or refoundations named Arsinoe, both at home and overseas, is a testimony to the popularity of this particular Ptolemaic goddess.³⁶ In its many forms and different ways, cult of members of the Ptolemaic dynasty joined the garrisons and royal officials in serving to support their empire overseas.

A further aspect of Ptolemaic power may be found in their adoption of the eagle as a dynastic image, both at home and overseas. On the island of Thera, for instance, the same Artemidorus of Perge whose dedication of a sanctuary to dynastic cult we have already noted was active elsewhere in the city. In a further rock-cut sanctuary, at much the same elevation but further round the slope to the north,³⁷ Artemidorus, who would seem to have been an influential and well-established resident of the island, set up a rock-cut *temenos* with a series of niches dedicated to a range of gods, and with carvings to accompany his inscribed dedications. Here, carved into the rock-face, along with other images, stood an eagle.³⁸ We know from the adjoining inscription that this was the eagle of Olympian Zeus, but it also closely resembles the Ptolemaic eagle familiar from the image on Ptolemaic coins, for an eagle, with closed wings and standing on a thunderbolt, was the reverse type introduced shortly after 300 BC on all denominations of Ptolemaic gold and silver from the Alexandrian mint.³⁹ As recognised by Svoronos long ago, what had earlier been the eagle of Zeus was now the eagle of Ptolemy too.⁴⁰ That carved in Artemidorus' sanctuary does face in the other direction to the eagle on the coins. Nevertheless, a double reference seems implied. For those who saw just the image in Artemidorus' sanctuary on Thera, this would be Ptolemy's eagle.

So when, in 279/278 BC, the envoys responding to the invitation of Ptolemy II to celebrate his father Soter arrived in Alexandria for the first

³⁴ Posidippus 39, 116, 119 (Austin and Bastianini 2002); cf. Hauben below: 41–2.

³⁵ For Arsinoe cults, see Marquaille 2008: 58–60; Meadows below: 29–31. On the *prohairesis* of Arsinoe in the Chremonidean War, *SIG³* 434/5.15–16, with Huß 2001: 273, n. 150; Hauben below: 141, n. 13. In Egypt too Arsinoe's cult was widespread, Thompson 2012: 118–19, 122–3.

³⁶ Mueller 2006: 35–9, 200–3; cf. Fraser 2009: 342–7; cf. n. 32 above.

³⁷ For a map of Thera, see Hiller von Gærtringen (1904): plan 2.

³⁸ See Palagia 1992: 173, with figs. 48b and 52b, providing a clear description of the lay-out of the *temenos* and a new interpretation of the carvings.

³⁹ Mørkholm 1991: 66, with figs. 97–8; on some Ptolemaic bronze coins the eagle's wings are outspread, see fig. 99 and book cover. Ptolemy's head was the obverse type. See further Panagopoulou 2005–6: 170–1.

⁴⁰ Svoronos 1904: $\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\iota$, $\rho\epsilon\chi\eta\iota$, in turn reporting Furtwängler and Rossbach.