

A Candidate For The First Tomb Of Alexander The Great

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Introduction

Alexander's achievements in life are a core feature of the classics curriculum, but there is scattered and fragmentary evidence to suggest that his influence in death over the politics and religion of later antiquity was equally momentous. For example, the Senate is said to have elected him the thirteenth member of the Pantheon.¹ However, much of the tangible evidence for the worship of Alexander has been lost. In particular, the centre of his cult was always associated with his mummified remains in Egypt and we hear of pilgrimages by Caesar, Octavian, Severus and Caracalla.² Yet none of the sites of his several tombs has ever been identified and some have despaired of ever finding them. However, fresh and hitherto unrecognised evidence is now emerging, which suggests that the problem may not be as intractable as it has seemed. The present article focuses upon a new candidate for the site of the first tomb at Memphis.

The Memphite Entombment

Some time around the winter of 322-321BC Ptolemy Soter perpetrated the hijacking of the catafalque of Alexander the Great, whilst it was progressing through Syria bound for Macedon.³ He brought it back to Egypt and promptly arranged for the entombment of the corpse of his former king at Memphis, which was still the capital of the country at that time.⁴ Some modern authorities have sought to argue that Alexander's tomb was transferred to Alexandria within the next few years, mainly in pursuit of an unproven and disputed theory that Alexandria became the capital as early as 320BC.⁵ However, the historical evidence supports the view that the Memphite tomb existed for at least 30 years, for Pausanias states that its transfer was

undertaken by Ptolemy's son Philadelphus.⁶ Furthermore, Pausanias' account is significantly corroborated by the silence of the Parian Marble regarding the relocation.⁷ This ancient chronology from Paros pays special attention to events concerning Ptolemy and Philadelphus, for the latter was the ruler of the island at the time it was sculpted in 263-262BC. In particular, it records the burial of Alexander at Memphis in 321BC and the birth of Philadelphus in 309-308BC, yet it fails to mention the transfer of Alexander's tomb up to its last surviving entries around 300BC. If the tomb had been transferred in the 4th century, then the Parian Marble should have mentioned the fact, else it would have conveyed a misleading impression that the tomb still lay at Memphis. This would have been a remarkable flaw in an inscription, which has otherwise proven highly authoritative. Hence it is reasonable to conclude that Alexander's body remained at Memphis until at least 290BC.⁸ Most probably it was there until shortly after Philadelphus became sole ruler upon Ptolemy's death in 282BC. Having therefore established that Alexander's body probably lay at Memphis for about four decades, it is the purpose of this article to draw together a variety of strands of evidence in order to propose a candidate for its exact location.

The Sarcophagus of Nectanebo II

In the Summer of 1798 Napoleon invaded Egypt. In retrospect this is often regarded as the founding event for Egyptology as a serious science. Not only did the expedition's scholars gather the material for the magnificent and still crucially important *Description de l'Egypte*, but they also discovered the Rosetta Stone and had the wit to recognise its immense importance. What is less well remembered, however, is that at the time the greatest excitement was accorded to the discovery of an empty

pharaonic sarcophagus in a chapel in the courtyard of the Attarine Mosque in Alexandria (Figure 1). This was for the very good reason that the local inhabitants confidently asserted that it had once held the remains of Alexander the Great.⁹

The British defeated the French at the Battle of Alexandria in 1801. Under the terms of the treaty of surrender, the French were required to hand over their collection of Egyptian antiquities, including the Rosetta Stone and the Alexandrian sarcophagus (Figure 2). The latter was tracked to its hiding place in the hold of a French hospital ship by the Cambridge scholar Edward Daniel Clarke, who subsequently arranged for its transport to the British Museum, where it is still exhibited today. Clarke also wrote a treatise entitled, “The Tomb of Alexander”, in which he published his reasons for believing the attribution of the relic to the Macedonian king.¹⁰

Unfortunately, however, Clarke was able to contribute scant additional evidence for the attribution. Even more unfortunately, when Champollion deciphered hieroglyphics in 1822, it was soon realised that the sarcophagus bore the cartouches of a 30th dynasty pharaoh, originally identified as Nectanebo I (Nakhtnebef), but subsequently corrected to Nectanebo II (Nakhthorheb). Clarke’s opponents, already outraged by the suggestion that the greatest of Greek kings had been buried in a mere Egyptian artefact rather than in some masterpiece of classical sculpture, now considered themselves wholly vindicated. An air of complacent scepticism enshrouded the sarcophagus, the legacy of which continues to taint the investigation of its provenance to this day.

A solitary and misconceived attempt to challenge the sceptical orthodoxy was made by Alan Wace in 1948.¹¹ He pointed out that Nectanebo II had fled from Egypt having been ousted by a Persian invasion begun in about 341BC.¹² Alexander in turn ejected the Persians in 332BC. Consequently, Nectanebo's sarcophagus and conceivably an associated tomb should have been available to Ptolemy in a vacant state, when he needed to inter Alexander in 321BC. Secondly, Wace noted that the role of Nectanebo II as Alexander's putative father in the Alexandrian Alexander Romance¹³, might potentially be explained by Ptolemy's use of Nectanebo's sarcophagus for Alexander's tomb. These points were well made, but Wace seems principally to have been motivated by a desire to support his precarious theory that Alexandria had already been the site of a major Egyptian city in the pharaonic period. He therefore proposed that Ptolemy had found the empty sarcophagus in a hypothetical 30th dynasty royal necropolis located at Alexandria. In this way he sought a combined explanation both for its use by Alexander and also for its otherwise surprising presence in Alexandria. However, the various ancient accounts of the foundation of Alexandria by Strabo, the Alexander historians and the Alexander Romance speak of a site comprising open countryside scattered with a few fishing villages, the largest of which was called Rhakotis.¹⁴ If Rhakotis had been such a major town as Wace suggested, then it is very surprising that it left virtually no historical or archaeological trace. Perhaps, though, the greatest problem for Wace's theory lies in the evidence that Alexander's body initially rested at Memphis for at least three decades. Yet therein also lies its salvation, for from this perspective it makes more sense in every respect to assume that Ptolemy found and used the empty Nectanebo II sarcophagus at Memphis in 321BC.

None of the sites of the tombs of the three 30th dynasty pharaohs is currently established, though fragments of the sarcophagus of Nectanebo I have been found reused in the walls of medieval buildings at Cairo¹⁵ and both the sarcophagus and shabtis (statuettes made to act as servants for the dead in the afterlife) of Nectanebo II exist in museums.¹⁶ Tombs of the 26th dynasty and the short-lived 28th dynasty are at Sais, whilst those of the 29th dynasty have recently been proven to lie at Mendes.¹⁷ These locations seem to have been chosen, because they had been the ancestral seats of the founders of the respective dynasties. The founder of the 30th dynasty, Nectanebo I, is known to have hailed from Sebennytos in the Delta, so speculation has favoured this town as the location of his dynasty's royal cemetery, despite the lack of any corroborative archaeological or literary evidence (except, rather tenuously, that the sarcophagus of Udjashu, wife of Tjahapimu and mother of Nectanebo II, was found reused near Mansura in the northern Delta, and has been suggested as from Behbeit el-Hagar,¹⁸ site of a temple of Isis, erected by Nectanebo II five miles north of Sebennytos). However, there are indications that Memphis was the capital under the 30th dynasty, which makes it a credible alternative location for the royal tombs.¹⁹ Conversely, Alexandria/Rhakotis was neither the ancestral seat of the dynasty nor the capital, so it is an innately improbable site.

The Memphite Serapeum

It has been known since the very beginning of scientific excavation in Egypt that the 30th dynasty pharaohs were very active in the Memphite necropolis at Saqqara. Among the earliest and greatest archaeological discoveries were those made by Auguste Mariette. In particular, between 1850 and 1853 he relocated and excavated the Serapeum temple complex to the northwest of the step pyramid of Djoser (Figure

3).²⁰ Using Strabo as his guide, he exhumed a mile-long avenue of sphinxes of Nectanebo I, which led from the Nile flood plain to the entrance pylon of the Serapeum. Especially towards the Serapeum end, cut into the banks to either side of the avenue, Mariette found high status tombs dating to the 30th Dynasty and the Graeco-Roman period (Figure 4).²¹ At the point where the avenue entered the complex by sharply deflecting to the south, Mariette discovered the ruins of a substantial temple to the east of the pylon, which contained sculpted reliefs of the pharaoh Nectanebo II in a posture of adoration before Osiris-Apis and Isis. Furthermore, he found a second temple of Nectanebo II at the opposite end of the first enclosure of the Serapeum and yet a third by this pharaoh, dedicated to the mother cows of the Apis bull, has been uncovered at the nearby Sacred Animal Necropolis. Evidently, the 30th dynasty lavished considerable efforts upon the necropolis of North Saqqara and the Serapeum complex was the focus for their attentions.

However, Nectanebo I and II were not alone in their embellishments of the Serapeum in this era. Their successors, the early Ptolemies, seem to have been responsible for the creation of a curious and ostensibly incongruous variety of sculptures in its precinct.²² Most startling of all is the semicircle of eleven life-size Greek poets and sages (Figure 5), who appear placed to guard the main entrance to the temple of Nectanebo II. This is shown most clearly in a plan made by Mariette to detail his discoveries, but which went unregarded among his papers until 1939 (Figure 6).²³

The semicircle has been dated to the reign of the first Ptolemy on the grounds that one of the statues (Figure 7) seems to represent Demetrios of Phaleron.²⁴ He was the leading philosopher at the court of Ptolemy I, but he was exiled to the countryside and

subsequently compelled to commit suicide by Philadelphus, because he had supported a rival son in the struggle for the succession.²⁵ The dating is also supported by a fragment of inscription with an artist's signature, which was found in the sand beneath a statue of Cerberus a little further down the Processional Way (dromos).²⁶ This is securely dated to the early 3rd century BC, so most of the Greek statues at the site are likely to be of that era.²⁷ It would therefore seem likely that the semicircle is contemporary with the Memphite tomb of Alexander. Furthermore, the semicircle is presided over by the central figure of Homer, Alexander's favourite poet.²⁸ It also includes Pindar, whose house and descendants Alexander saved at Thebes,²⁹ and Plato, who was the mentor of Alexander's tutor, Aristotle. In fact, Lauer and Picard have speculated that there is a missing statue of Aristotle, which once stood at the end of the semicircle closest to the entrance to the temple.³⁰

In fact Dorothy Thompson speculated that the semicircle had guarded the site of the Memphite tomb of Alexander in 1988³¹, though she believed the statues to post-date the tomb and she seems not to have been aware of the other connection between Alexander's tomb and Nectanebo II: the sarcophagus found in Alexandria. It is particularly this striking coincidence between two independent strands of evidence that underpins a persuasive case for the authenticity of the sarcophagus and the location of the first tomb.

The Temple of Nectanebo II

According to Mariette's detailed map of his excavations (Figure 6), it is apparent that the semicircle stands specifically beside the entrance to the temple of Nectanebo II. If, therefore, the poets guarded the tomb of Alexander, then we are directed within that

entrance for its site. Apart from the floor of the temple itself, one other chamber is accessed via this entrance. This chamber is built into the southern flank of the temple (marked A in Figure 8) and is reached by a passage, which is prolonged as far as the southern side of the steps into the temple (D) by a dividing wall (C). Mariette's scale demonstrates that this chamber is of such a size (6m x 2.7m) as neatly to accommodate the sarcophagus of Nectanebo II to the east of its doorway as shown by the outline of the sarcophagus drawn to scale within the chamber in Figure 8.

There are other features of the chamber A that are suggestive of a tomb. The long entrance passage with bends seems to have been intended to produce a dark interior, which would have made most alternative uses awkward. The orientation and shape of the chamber implies an East-West orientation of the sarcophagus. Orientation was very important to the Ancient Egyptians. The East signified rebirth while the West signified the empire of the dead, so they saw the dead as departing into the West and an approximate East-West orientation of the burial chamber and/or the sarcophagus was common in royal tombs.

Mariette's plan shows a side entrance to the temple (B), just outside which he discovered a row of four Greek style lions (2). These sculptures appear to guard the side entrance in much the same way as the semicircle guards the main entrance. This is especially interesting, because lion sculptures are a prominent feature of the tombs and monuments of Alexander's Macedonian successors (e.g. the Lion Tombs of Knidos, Amphipolis and Gerdek Kaya and the Lion of Hamadan).³² Furthermore, a pair of golden lions is known to have guarded the entrance to the catafalque on which Alexander's body was borne from Babylon to Egypt (Figure 9).³³

Mariette's account of the temple of Nectanebo II states that he found low relief carvings depicting Nectanebo II in a posture of adoration before a divinity, whom he identifies as Apis or Osiris-Apis.³⁴ However, Lauer notes that the sole fragment from the temple on display at the Louvre shows Nectanebo II adoring Isis, who would originally have been accompanied by Osiris.³⁵ Mariette also notes that where the walls of the temple were no more than 60cm to 70cm thick (light grey in Figure 6, i.e. the façade), they were made of finely dressed blocks of plain limestone. The thicker walls (2.95m and dark grey in Figure 6) were made of a core of large bricks mixed with vegetable matter with a covering of stone. Notably, branches of spiny acacia were embedded within the walls here and there (such logs were commonly used as cross-ties in Egyptian mud-brick architecture). Some of them bore two carefully carved cartouches of Nectanebo II. If the attached chamber was a tomb, then the temple itself should be interpreted as fulfilling the requisite role of the funerary offering chapel. Egyptians believed that they would appear before Osiris to be judged shortly after their demise, so the wall reliefs are not inconsistent with the offering chapel function.

The floor plan of the Nectanebo II temple is almost symmetrical about an East-West axis in the line of the dromos (the processional route to the bull galleries on the western side of the complex). However, it is noteworthy that the brickwork of the southern wall projects slightly beyond the fine masonry of the temple façade. If a southern brick wall be drawn in exactly to mirror the northern wall, such that the external face coincides with the end of the façade (as shown in Figure 8), then it is interesting to observe that its outer face coincides with the inner wall of the chamber A, whilst its interior face runs along the surface of the northern wall of the passage

leading to chamber A. It is possible that this reflects the modus operandi of the architect, who may have drawn a symmetrical temple, then modified the southern flank to accommodate chamber A. However, it also suggests the possibility that chamber A was appended to an originally symmetrical Nectanebo II temple, some time subsequent to its construction. For instance, it would have been logical to construct a new end wall against the old one prior to its removal in order to maintain the support of the roof. The question might also be posed as to whether sufficient dressed stone might have been removed from the side of the steps (D), the doorway of the side entrance (B) and the area of the entrance to the passage to chamber A in order to construct the dividing wall (C) at the time of the hypothetical addition of chamber A? If the chamber A was appended to the temple after its construction, then it is possible that it was added for the specific purpose of providing a tomb for Alexander. If it is original, then it is more likely that it was the intended tomb of Nectanebo II, taken over by Ptolemy to house Alexander's corpse.

Against the latter hypothesis it might be argued that the tomb would have broken with a precise royal tomb format, which had been current since the Tanis Pharaohs (21st Dynasty) and was followed until at least the 29th dynasty. In this scheme a subterranean tomb chamber was excavated beneath the offering chapel. Mariette mentions that he found and excavated tombs in pits beneath the paving of the Nectanebo II temple³⁶, so perhaps a conventional tomb beneath the temple floor had been intended for Nectanebo II

Conversely, chamber A was effectively subterranean. Its floor is a storey below that of the temple proper, which was itself built into a steep bank. This explains Mariette's

cruciform outline indicating a tomb seemingly overlying the walls of the Nectanebo II complex just behind the temple (Figure 6) and why only the temple façade was constructed with dressed masonry. Chamber A might also be regarded as a close parallel to the tomb chambers, which Mariette found dug into the banks of the avenue of sphinxes close by (Figure 4).

There is a sketch by Barbot looking east along the dromos from near the entrance to the bull galleries towards the Nectanebo II temple (Figure 10). The double steps leading up to the entrance of the temple can just be discerned with the semicircle of statues to their right. The walls of the temple itself are drawn at varying heights indicating their ruinous condition at the point of excavation. The huge mound into which the temple was recessed looms behind the remains. In Mariette's plan (Figure 6) there are further walls built deeper into the mound beyond the eastern wall of the temple. There is a gap in these walls (marked E in Figure 8), which is in alignment with the dromos and the temple entrance. Did the eastern wall of the temple once have a gateway leading into the deeper parts of the complex within the mound? All these questions tend to emphasise the case for re-excavation of the area.

The Sarcophagus in Alexandria

Apart from Mariette's discoveries at the Memphite Serapeum there are several further pieces of evidence from Alexandria, which tend to support the authenticity of the sarcophagus. In the first place, it is now possible to show that the sarcophagus found in the Attarine Mosque is identical with the tomb of Alexander reported by several visitors to Alexandria in the 16th and early 17th centuries. Most importantly, Leo Africanus visited the port in around 1517 and subsequently described a "little house in

the form of a chapel” which was honoured as the tomb of Alexander the Great.³⁷ It has been doubted whether this was the chapel in the courtyard of the mosque, mainly because of a mid-19th century hoax that the tomb lay beneath the Nabi Daniel Mosque several hundred metres away at the foot of a hillock called Kom-el-Dikka.³⁸ The Nabi Daniel legend seems to have been stimulated by a preposterous tale told by an amateur tourist guide called Ambrose Schilizzi in about 1850. Probably motivated by a desire to drum up business, he described glimpsing Alexander’s corpse through cracks in a worm-eaten door whilst exploring passages beneath the Nabi Daniel Mosque. He described a corpse with a crown within a glass enclosure and papyrus scrolls strewn about the chamber. All these details are lifted straight from the accounts of ancient writers and were well known in Alexandria in the 19th century.³⁹ The most telling evidence of Schilizzi’s mendacity is his mention of the scrolls, evidently inspired by Dio Cassius’ account, which implies that Septimius Severus locked up some Egyptian books of magic lore in the tomb. However, papyri do not survive in Alexandria, because capillary action raises dampness from its high water table.⁴⁰

It turns out that there is direct evidence in a map of Alexandria by Braun & Hogenberg (Figure 11), which strongly connects Leo’s tomb of Alexander with the Nectanebo II sarcophagus. This map was engraved in around 1573, but its information seems to date from the 1530’s.⁴¹ At its exact centre beside the minaret of a mosque there is marked a small domed building with the legend *Domus Alexandri Magni* or House of Alexander the Great, which should clearly be identified with Leo’s “little house”. Its location is roughly correct for the Attarine Mosque (Figure 12), but it is half way across the city from Kom-el-Dikka, which is the mound in the upper left quarter of the city in Braun & Hogenberg’s plan.

It is therefore apparent that the attribution of the sarcophagus to Alexander goes back at least 5 centuries. In all probability it is far older, for there are Arab accounts which speak of a mosque or tomb of Alexander in his city in the 9th and 10th centuries.⁴²

The Attarine Mosque, in which the sarcophagus was found, is said to have been named for the 4th century Alexandrian Patriarch Athanasius. It is believed that this mosque was originally constructed soon after the Arab conquest (but reconstructed in AD1084) on the site of a late fourth century (AD370) church dedicated to St Athanasius. It was finally destroyed in 1830 (the Attarine mosque in present day Alexandria was built of modern materials on an adjacent site in the later 19th century). Many of the architectural components of the eleventh century mosque, notably its pillars, appear to have had a Late Roman origin.⁴³ This is pertinent, because there is literary evidence, which suggests that AD365, when Athanasius was the reigning Patriarch, is the most likely date for the destruction of Alexander's tomb in Alexandria. In that year, Alexandria was struck by an earthquake and tidal wave, which lifted ships onto roofs and destroyed many great buildings according to Ammianus Marcellinus.⁴⁴ A few years earlier Ammianus had mentioned the "splendid temple of the Genius" of Alexandria and had quoted Georgius, another Patriarch, referring to this building as a sepulchre.⁴⁵ Hogarth thought this a reference to Alexander's tomb and indeed Alexander is the only possible Genius of Alexandria with a tomb in the city.⁴⁶ However, a few decades later St John Chrysostom was able to state in one of his homilies, that Alexander's tomb was by then "unknown to his own people", by which he seems to have meant the coeval pagans of Alexandria.⁴⁷ The calamity of AD365 is therefore the prime suspect for the cause of the destruction

and disappearance of the Alexandrian tomb, so it is interesting that the sarcophagus should have been recovered from the site of a church built shortly afterwards in memory of Athanasius.

It should perhaps be mentioned that there has been speculation by Achille Adriani, mostly published posthumously by Nicola Bonacasa,⁴⁸ that the Alabaster Tomb in the modern Latin Cemeteries lying within the eastern district of ancient Alexandria is part of one of the Alexandrian tombs of Alexander. This appears to be the antechamber of a high status tumulus tomb of the Ptolemaic period, since lesser Ptolemaic tombs have marbling resembling its interior faces painted onto their walls. It was found in pieces by Evaristo Breccia in 1907, but was reconstructed in situ in 1936. However, nothing else at the site seems to be connected with it. Although there is nothing in the research for this article which necessarily contradicts Adriani's theory, it must be noted that there is an absence of evidence specifically connecting the Alabaster Tomb with Alexander and there were many other royal tombs in Ptolemaic Alexandria.

The Alexander Romance

The semi-legendary Graeco-Egyptian account of Alexander's career known as the Alexander Romance has survived in a wide variety of manuscripts in numerous ancient languages, but it seems originally to have been compiled in Alexandria in the third century AD from a medley of earlier tales. The oldest Greek manuscript and also the early, accurate and almost complete Armenian translation seem to preserve many authentic details of the topography of Roman Egypt, including a few hints regarding the location of the Memphite tomb.

The Greek Alexander Romance has:-

They gave Ptolemy the task of transporting the embalmed body to Memphis in a lead coffin. So Ptolemy placed the body on a wagon and began the journey from Babylon to Egypt. When the people of Memphis heard he was coming, they came out to meet the body of Alexander and escorted it to Memphis. But the chief priest of the temple in Memphis said, “Do not bury him here, but in the city he founded in Rhacotis. Wherever his body rests, that city will be constantly troubled and shaken with wars and battles.”⁴⁹

The hint here is that the first tomb might have been associated with a temple.

Although there were numerous temples in Memphis and Saqqara, the Serapeum seems to have been the most significant in the Graeco-Roman period.

In the Armenian Alexander Romance, there is an extra clue:-

And when they reached Pellas [Pelusium?], the Memnians came forth with trumpeters to meet at the altars in their accustomed way. And they took [Alexander’s body] to Memphis near Sesonchousis, the world-conquering demigod.⁵⁰

Sesonchousis was the subject of another Graeco-Egyptian Romance in a similar vein to the Alexander Romance. He is believed to be loosely based on a conflation of the twelfth dynasty pharaohs, Senusret I and Senusret III.⁵¹ Interestingly, the latter built his pyramid complex near Dahshur at the southern end of the Saqqara necropolis, though there is a paucity of evidence as to whether he ever occupied it. Consequently,

the Romance might be correct in suggesting that Alexander's first tomb was "near Sesonchousis". It should also be mentioned that Sesonchousis appears several times in the Alexander Romance, usually in association with manifestations of Serapis.

Notably, the Alexander Romance has an oracle for Alexander from Serapis, "*You, a callow young man, shall subdue all the races of barbarian nations; and then, by dying and yet not dying, you shall come to me. Then the city of Alexandria... is to be your grave.*"⁵² Coming to Serapis reads like a euphemism for dying and indeed Serapis is believed to have derived from Osiris-Apis, a manifestation of Osiris, lord of the afterlife. However, this pretended prophecy of Serapis would have had a double meaning, if, as has been suggested, Alexander's first tomb was located at the Memphite temple of Serapis.

Even in Arrian, the most authoritative ancient history of Alexander, the King is reported to have sacrificed to Apis when he reached Memphis.⁵³ The connection between Alexander and this deity is ultimately historical.

Conclusions

The sarcophagus found in Alexandria by Napoleon's expedition in 1798 is linked in a wide range of mutually independent ways with the tomb of Alexander the Great:-

- a) The citizens of Alexandria declared it to be Alexander's tomb in 1798.
- b) Leo Africanus and Braun & Hogenberg referred to it as Alexander's tomb in the 16th century.

- c) The mosque in which it was found was built on the site of a church dedicated to Athanasius, who was the Patriarch of Alexandria at the most probable time of the disappearance of Alexander's tomb.
- d) The fact that the sarcophagus was made for Nectanebo II has the effect of making it available to Ptolemy in a vacant state when he entombed Alexander at Memphis.
- e) Ptolemy erected a magnificent, life-size semicircle of Greek poets and philosophers to guard the entrance to the temple built by Nectanebo II at the Memphite Serapeum; the central sculpture represents Homer, Alexander's favourite author.
- f) The presence of the sarcophagus in Alexandria is explained by Pausanias' statement that Philadelphus moved Alexander's tomb to Alexandria.
- g) The use of the sarcophagus potentially explains the legendary connections between Nectanebo II and Alexander in the Alexander Romance.
- h) The Alexander Romance provides hints that Alexander's first tomb was at the temple of Serapis at Memphis.

If the attribution of the sarcophagus to Alexander is a forgery, then the perpetrators were either incredibly fortunate in their choice of such a well-connected relic or they effected an astonishingly sophisticated deception and must have known that the sarcophagus had been made for Nectanebo II. For the latter purpose they needed to be able to read hieroglyphs, but this form of writing ceased to be used within a few generations of the disappearance of Alexander's tomb in Alexandria.⁵⁴ It is difficult to conceive of a motive for such an early and elaborate forgery and to understand how it could have succeeded within living memory of the existence of the original. It is still

harder to see how the semicircle of statues guarding the temple of Nectanebo II at Memphis could have been arranged to fit the scheme. Clearly, anyone who seeks to doubt the authenticity of the sarcophagus is forced to argue that many unlikely things happened. Conversely, there is no evidence that contradicts its use for Alexander.

If the sarcophagus was genuinely used by Ptolemy to accommodate Alexander's corpse, then it points to a first tomb of Alexander at the temple of Nectanebo II in the Memphite Serapeum. It has been shown that a chamber appended to this temple is of a suitable size and form to have housed the sarcophagus. This chamber was accessed via the entrance to the Nectanebo II temple as well as through a side entrance, guarded by four Greek sculptures of lions. It is reasonable to conclude that this chamber is a prime (and currently unique) candidate for the first tomb of Alexander the Great.

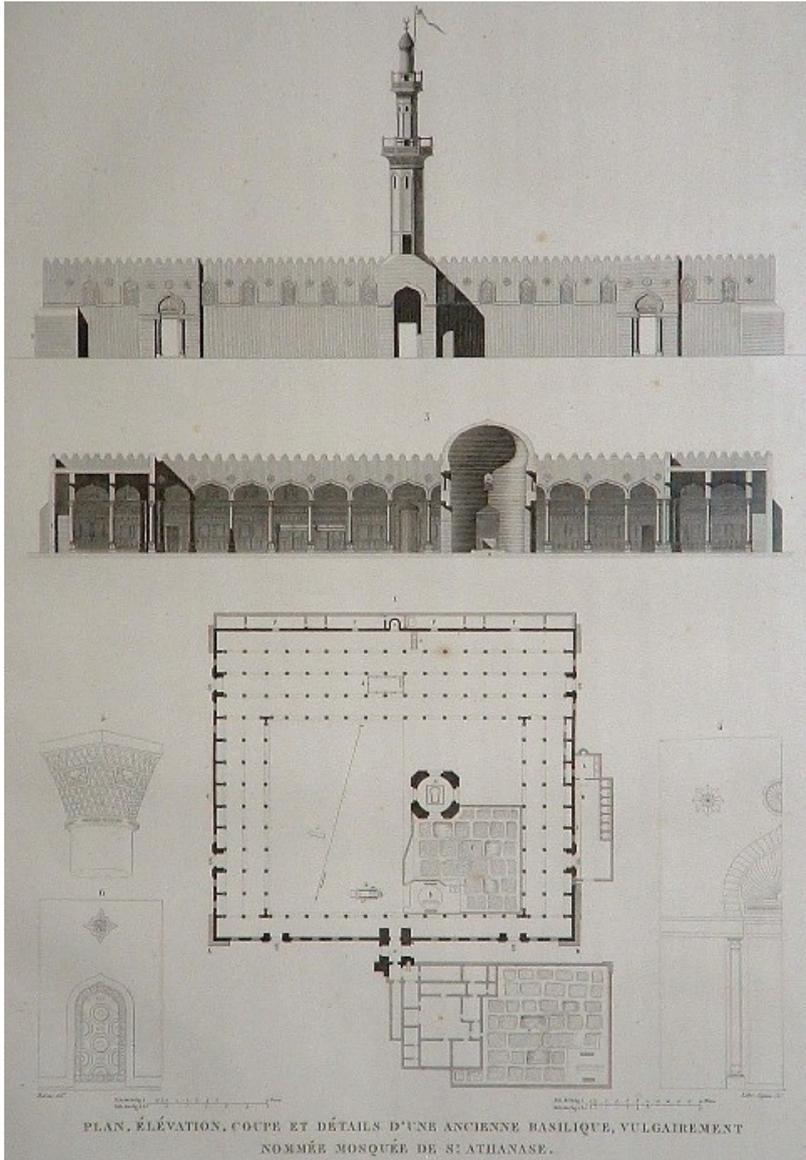


Figure 1. The Attarine Mosque with the sarcophagus in the chapel in the courtyard in Plate 38 of Volume V of *Antiquités in the Description de l’Egypte* (from author’s collection).

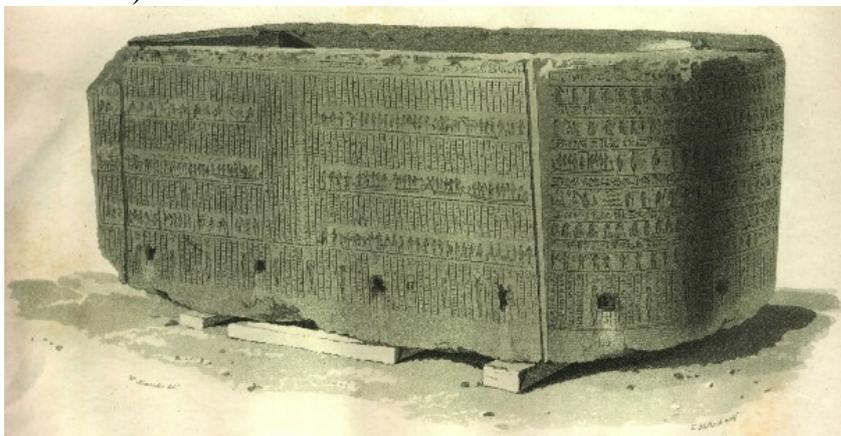


Figure 2. The sarcophagus from the Attarine Mosque in an engraving from *The Tomb of Alexander* by E D Clarke (Cambridge, 1805, from author’s collection)

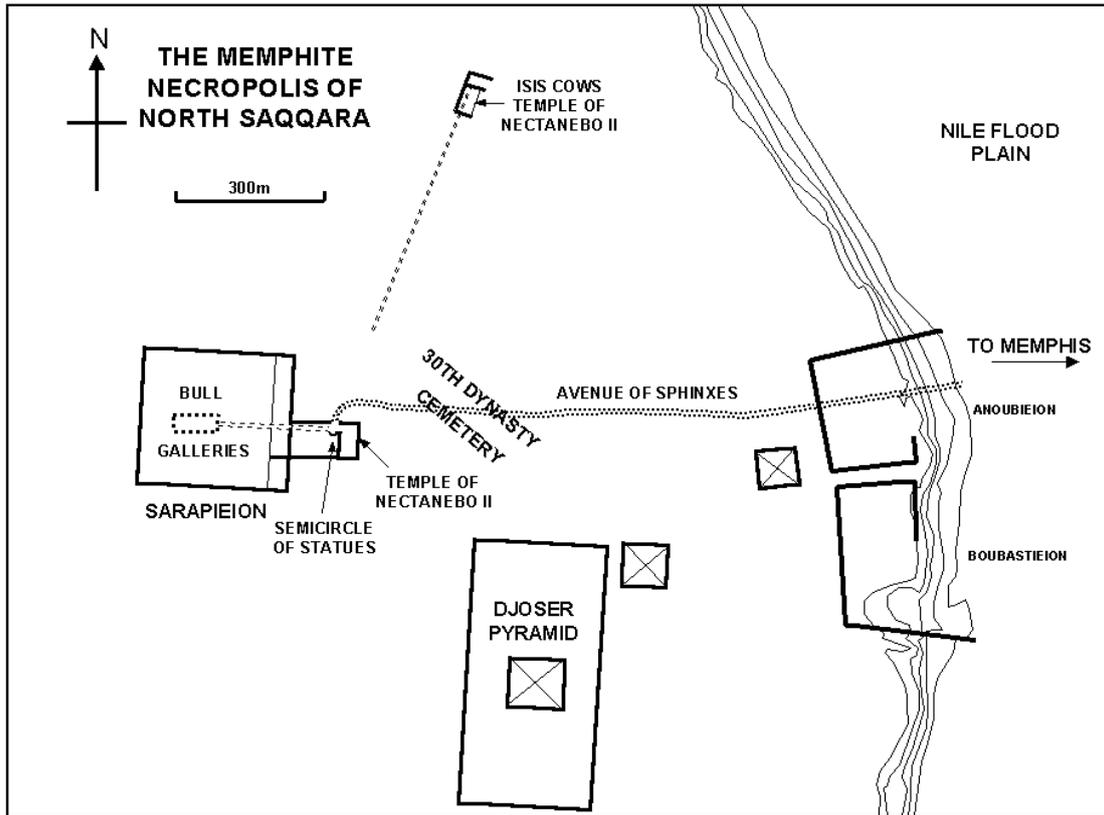


Figure 3. Outline plan of the Memphite necropolis of North Saqqara (drawn by the author).



Figure 4. Mariette's plan of his discoveries at North Saqqara from *Choix des Monuments...* (Paris, 1856, author's collection).



Figure 5. Photo looking towards the entrance to the bull galleries of the Serapeum taken from the mound covering the Nectanebo II temple in 1851. (author's collection)

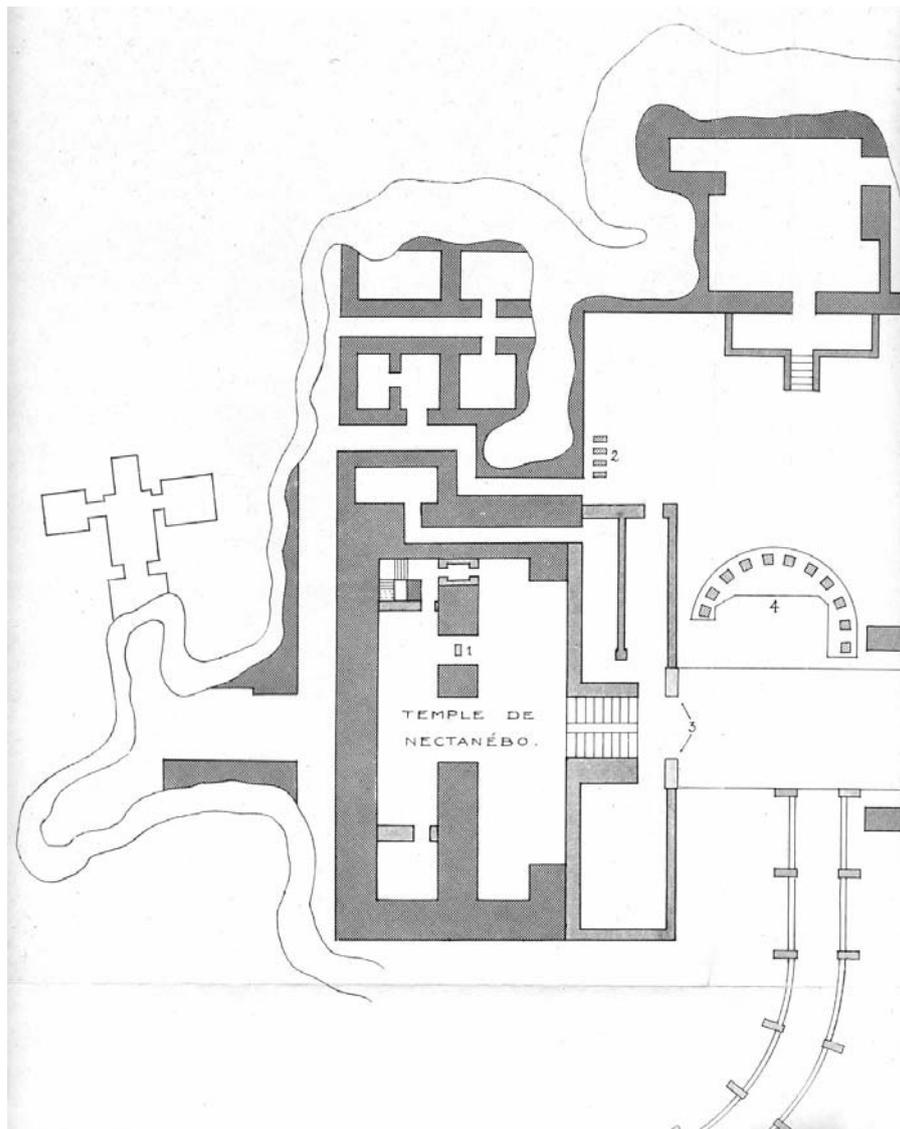


Figure 6. Part of Mariette's detailed plan of his excavations in the vicinity of the dromos of the Serapeum; the semicircle of statues is marked 4 (author's collection).

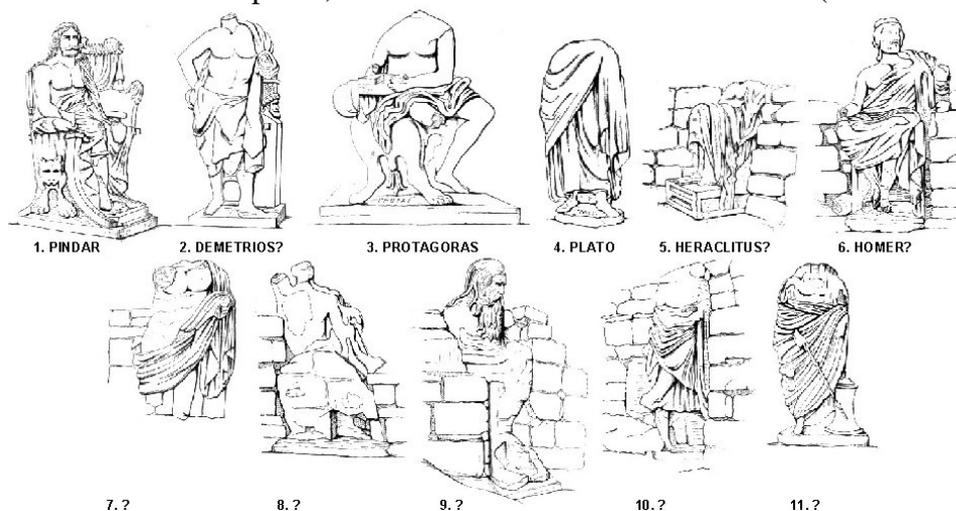


Figure 7. Drawings of the 11 statues of the semicircle by Mariette, published posthumously by Gaston Maspero in the appended Atlas to *Le Sérapéum de Memphis* (Paris, 1882).

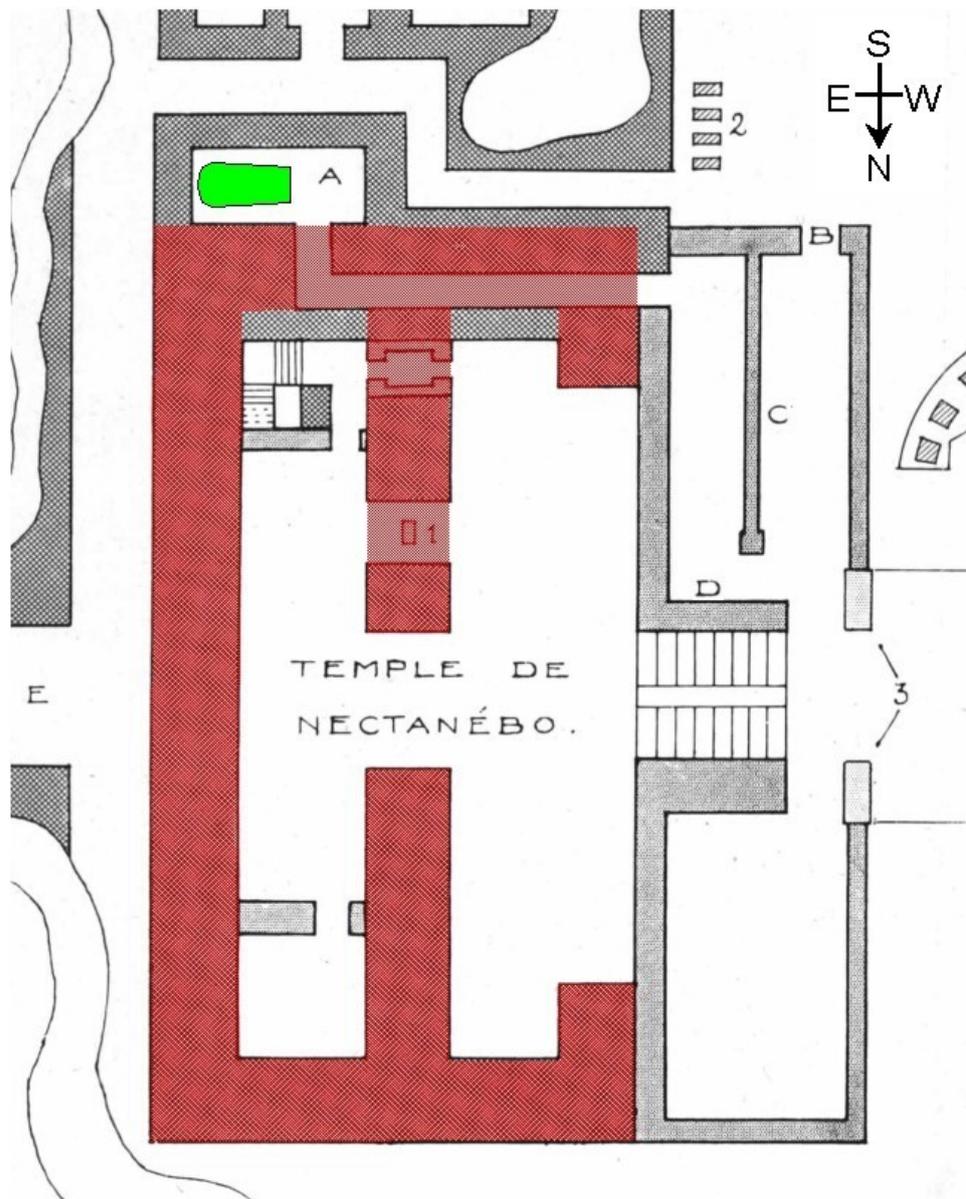


Figure 8. The sarcophagus marked to scale in chamber A and the symmetrical version of the southern end of the Nectanebo II temple. (adapted by the author)

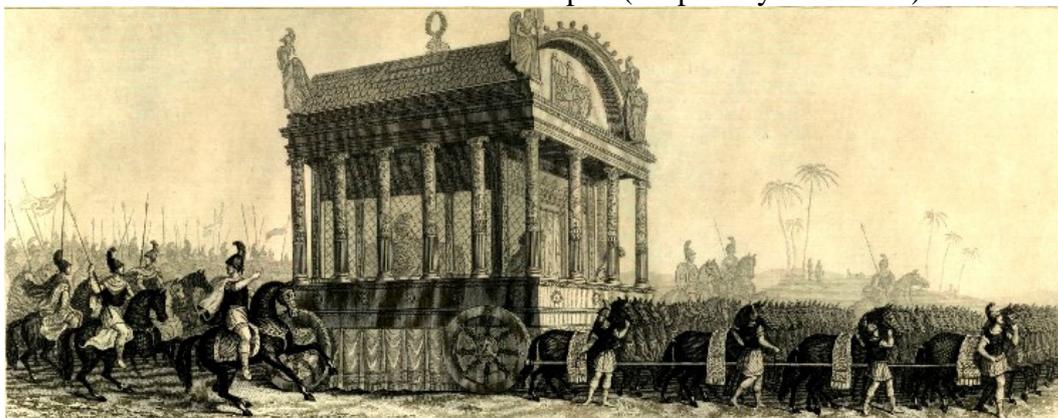


Figure 9. A 19th century reconstruction of Alexander's catafalque according to a description by Hieronymus of Cardia (author's collection).

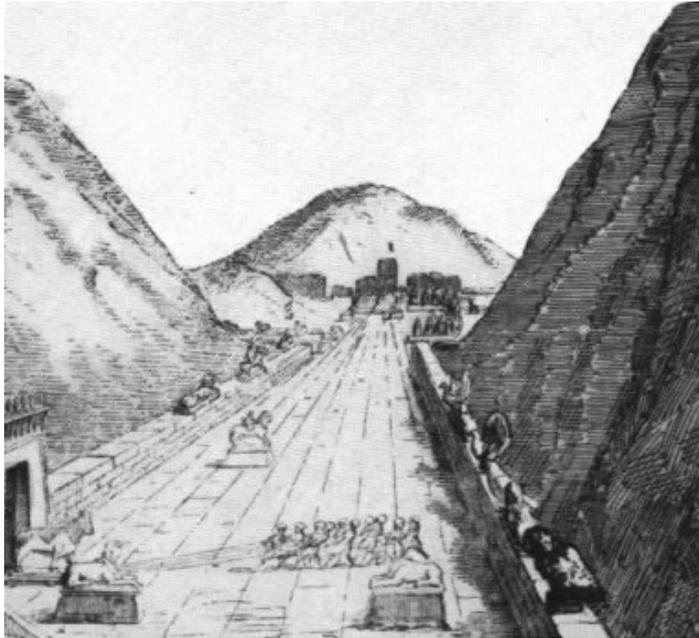


Figure 10. Drawing by Barbot looking east along the dromos to the Nectanebo II temple (author's collection).

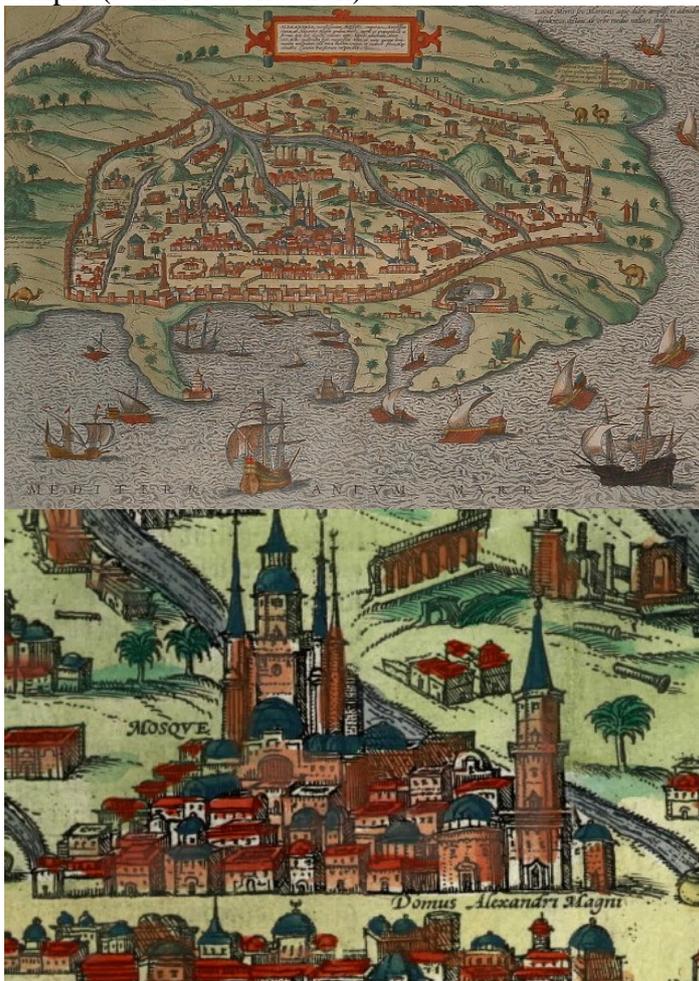


Figure 11. Map of Alexandria and detail by Braun & Hogenberg, published in Civitates Orbis Terrarum, Cologne, 1573 (from author's collection).



Figure 12. Map of Alexandria in 1798 showing the Attarine Mosque (hollow rectangle between the centrefold and the D of “Enceinte Des Arabes”) in Plate 84 of Volume II of Etat Moderne in the Description de l’Egypte (from author’s collection).

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¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Ch. X: “For these are they who have dared to deify men, describing Alexander of Macedon as the thirteenth god, though ‘Babylon proved him mortal’”; St John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, *Homily XXVI on the second epistle of St Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*: “Thus the Roman senate decreed Alexander to be the thirteenth God, for it possessed the privilege of electing and enrolling Gods”; Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead XIII: Diogenes to Alexander*, “Some even added you to the twelve gods, built you temples, and sacrificed to you as the son of the serpent.”

² Caesar: Lucan, *Pharsalia* 10, lines 14-20; Octavian: Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Augustus* 2.18; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 51.16.5; Severus: Dio Cassius, *Roman History (Epitome)* 76.13; Caracalla: Herodian, 4.8.6 to 4.9.8.

³ Arrian, *History of Events after Alexander*, summarised by Photius, 92; see also Goralski 1989; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 12.64; Pausanias, 1.6.3.

⁴ Pausanias, 1.6.3; Curtius, 10.10.20; Stoneman 1991, 3.34; Diodorus Siculus, 18.28.2-3.

⁵ Fraser 1972, note 79 to ch. 1, has argued for an early transfer to Alexandria on the basis of Curtius’ remark that the transfer took place “after a few years”, but 30 or 40 years are few on a timescale of centuries, so the remark is really too vague to have any evidential value. Fraser cross-references his note 28 to ch. 1, in which he outlines his argument against Welles, that Alexandria became the capital just a few years after Alexander’s death. This would seem to have been an ulterior reason for arguing for an early transfer.

⁶ Pausanias, 1.7.1.

⁷ F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 239, The Parian Marble.

⁸ 290BC seems to be the earliest date for the institution of the Priesthood of Alexander; see Fraser 1972, p. 216 and note 215.

⁹ See also Chugg 2002a and Chugg 2002b.

¹⁰ Clarke 1805.

¹¹ Wace 1948, pp. 1-11.

¹² Diodorus Siculus, 16.51.

¹³ Stoneman 1991, 1.1-14.

¹⁴ The main Alexander historians imply that the site was empty in speaking of the marking of the street plan with barley – Arrian, *Campaigns of Alexander* 3.2; Diodorus, 17.52; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 26; Curtius, 4.8.1-6; the Greek Alexander Romance 1.31 (probably compiled in Alexandria) speaks explicitly of twelve Egyptian villages on the site, stating that Rhakotis was the largest of them; Strabo, 17.1.6, states that Rhakotis had been a κωμη, which is an unwalled village or country town.

¹⁵ Dodson 2000, p.163.

¹⁶ There is a complete shabti of Nectanebo II in Turin and some ten fragments also, but all unprovenanced, see Clayton 1994, pp. 204-5.

¹⁷ Dodson 2000, pp. 160-163.

¹⁸ Edgar and Maspero 1907, pp. 276-81.

¹⁹ Memphis was probably the *administrative* capital throughout the Late Period (see Trigger 1983, pp. 332-333; Thompson 1988, p. 4). However, Sais and Mendes might be regarded as ceremonial capitals during the 26th and 29th dynasties respectively.

²⁰ Mariette 1882.

²¹ Mariette 1882, pp. 10-13; Dodson 2001, pp. 27-38.

²² Wilcken 1917, pp.149-203; Lauer & Picard 1955.

²³ Lauer & Picard 1955, Plate 26.

²⁴ Lauer & Picard 1955, p. 87.

²⁵ Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrios* 5.76; Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Postumo* 23.

²⁶ J-P. Lauer and C. Picard, 1955, 182.

²⁷ Fraser, 1972, vol. 2, 404, note 512.

²⁸ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 8.2.

²⁹ Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri* 1.9.10; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 11.6.

³⁰ J-P. Lauer and C. Picard, 1955, 153.

³¹ Thompson 1988, p.212.

³² Fedak 1990, pp.76-78 & 100.

³³ Diodorus Siculus, 18.27.1.

³⁴ Mariette 1882, pp.18-19.

³⁵ Lauer & Picard 1955, p.10.

³⁶ Mariette 1882, p. 19.

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- ³⁷ Africanus 1550, f. 89^r; Africanus 1896, vol. 3, 8th book.
- ³⁸ Breccia 1922, p. 99; A M de Zogheb 1912, p.170; this theory was first given written form by Mahmoud Bey 1872, pp.49-52.
- ³⁹ Crown left by Augustus, Suetonius, Augustus 18; glass sarcophagus, Strabo, 17.1.8; papyri, Dio Cassius, 76.13.2.
- ⁴⁰ See Chugg 2003, pp. 73-108.
- ⁴¹ Braun and Hogenberg 1572. Constantin van Lyskirchen, a Hanse merchant located in Cologne, supplied views of many towns in Asia and Africa to Braun and Hogenberg including Alexandria. Braun & Hogenberg may have used other sources as well. According to Norwich 1997, page 380: "in the Hanse merchant Constantin van Lyskirchen of Cologne the editors found a willing agent, who supplied views of the towns of India, Asia, Africa, and Persia never portrayed before." According to Norwich, "Lyskirchen obtained these views from the manuscript produced by an unknown Portuguese illustrator." He goes on to say that "apart from these Portuguese views, some of the African illustrations were taken from military plans concerned with the expeditions of the Emperor Charles V in 1535 and 1541 to Tunis and Algeria." Braun's & Hogenberg's plates subsequently passed to Jansson, so the Alexandria map was republished in his famous Atlas of 1619.
- ⁴² Ibn Abdel Hakim recorded a Mosque of Dulkarnein (i.e. Alexander) in the 9th century; Maçoudi 1869, t. II, p.259, mentions a tomb of the prophet and king Eskender in the 10th century.
- ⁴³ Tkaczow 1993, Attarine Mosque, entry 25 in the Catalogue of Sites, pp.78-79.
- ⁴⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 26.10.15-19; Sozomenus, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.2.
- ⁴⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.11.7.
- ⁴⁶ Hogarth 1894-5, note 3 on p. 23.
- ⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Homily XXVI on the second epistle of St Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, circa AD400.
- ⁴⁸ Bonacasa 1991; Adriani 2000.
- ⁴⁹ Stoneman 1991, 3.34.
- ⁵⁰ Wolohojian 1969, 283, p.158.
- ⁵¹ See the excellent editorial notes for *P Oxy 3319*, Addendum to 2466: Sesonchosis Romance (fragment); see also Ian Shaw & Paul Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1995, under "Senusret".

⁵² Wolohojian 1969, 93; Sesonchousis repeats part of the same oracle at Wolohojian 1969, 249.

⁵³ Arrian, Campaigns of Alexander, 3.1.4.

⁵⁴ The last hieroglyphic inscription was made at Philae on August 24th AD394. The closure of the temples by Theodosius at that time was evidently the immediate cause of its rapid and complete disappearance. Even Demotic graffiti does not occur after the middle of the fifth century.