

Foreigners to Pharaohs:

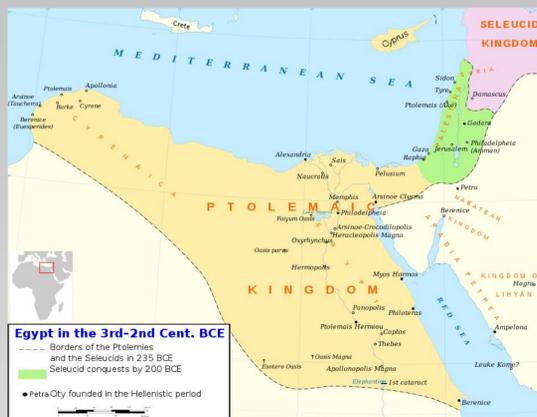
Greek archaeological evidence in Egyptian settlements leading to the Ptolemaic dynasty rulership.

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Abstract

Naukratis has been seen by many as the only Greek colony in Egypt for centuries. However, recent research has shown that Greeks may have lived in other areas. Settlements like Thonis-Heracleion, Thmuis, Daphnae and Antiphrae have archaeological evidence to support this idea. The focus of attention is Greek inhabitants in Egyptian settlements before the arrival of the Ptolemies, demonstrating continued relationship, and how this could have influenced the acceptance of this dynasty into the pharaonic tradition.

This paper will present different settlements with Greek archaeological evidence that dates back to the pre-Hellenistic times, concretely between the VII and III centuries b.C. By doing so, I will try to demonstrate that the Greek presence in Ancient Egypt took place well before the arrival of Alexander the Great and that such presence may have had a positive impact on the later acceptance of the Ptolemaic dynasty into the pharaonic tradition.



Ancient Mediterranean relations and Greek presence in Egypt

Egyptian archaeological remains have been found in Greece as well as those of Greek origin in Egypt that support the hypothesis of commercial relations - whether direct or indirect - between the two Mediterranean countries. Popularly known are the Egyptian scarab found in Crete, the ceramic fragment inscribed with the name of the pharaoh Amenhotep II found at Mycenae, and the wall representations of Ketiu people in different tombs of the , in tomb TT100 of the vizier Rekhmire (18th Dynasty).

The city of Naukratis is the example par excellence of these interactions and commercial relations. It is important to emphasize the importance of the British Museum's *Naukratis Research Project* and its results; Other sites have been found that present archaeological evidence that could demonstrate a Greek presence in Egypt between the 7th and 4th centuries B.C., among which are Thonis-Heracleion and Daphnae.

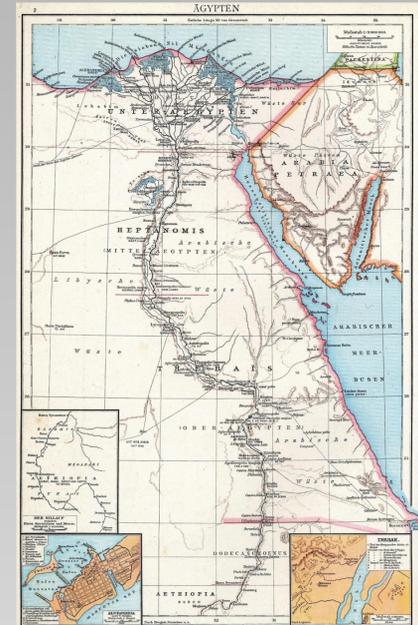
There is also epigraphic and literary evidence to confirm this presence. Greek graffiti in Abu Simbel suggests this presence, which is supported by Herodotus's account of Hellomenphites: "Long afterwards, king Amasis removed them and settled them at Memphis to be his guard against the Egyptians. [4] It is a result of our communication with these settlers in Egypt (the first of foreign speech to settle in that country) that we Greeks have exact knowledge of the history of Egypt from the reign of Psammetichus onwards. [5] There still remained in my day, in the places out of which the Ionians and Carians were turned, the winches for their ships and the ruins of their houses. This is how Psammetichus got Egypt." (Herodotus, 2.154).



Egyptian settlements with Greek presence:

Naukratis
Thonis-Heracleion
Tell Defenneh, ancient city of *Daphnai*;
Memphis,
Alexandria
Ptolemais Hermiou
Tell-Timai, ancient city of *Thmuis* and its sister *Mendes*;
Kom Wasit, ancient city of *Metelis* and the younger Kom al-Ahmer;
Schedia, ancient city of *Menelais*;
Marina el-Alamein, identified as *Antiphrae*;
Plinthine, located at current Kom el-Nugus on Lake Mareotis and its younger sister Taposiris Magna
Other settlements with smaller evidence:
- Hermopolis Magna
- Heracleopolis Magna
- Sa el-Hagar, ancient *Sais*
- Tell Nabasha
- Dendara

and the Fayum area in general.



Naukratis

In 1884 Sir William Flinders Petrie identified the ancient emporium of Naukratis with the large mounds in the present-day village of Kom Ge'if. The 26th Dynasty of Egypt saw the establishment of Naukratis, the only Greek colony in Egypt, around the seventh or sixth century BC. The city operated as a trading hub for the Greeks in Egypt since Sais, the capital at that time, was located nearby. Herodotus (II, 178–79) claims that Amasis granted Naukratis to Greek immigrants, while evidence suggests that it was already established during the reign of Psamtek I. A total of nine cities took part in its foundation. Archaeological evidences suggest that there was also an Egyptian area, identified as the Great Temenos. This would be the first - and only - Egyptian settlement with Greek presence.



Thonis-Heracleion

Thonis-Heracleion, from its Egyptian and Greek denominations, was the obligatory port of entry to Egypt for all ships coming from Greece prior to the foundation of Alexandria in 331 BC. The city was founded about the eighth century BC only to suffer numerous natural disasters that eventually led to be completely submerged under the Mediterranean Sea in the eighth century AD.

Herodotus claims that its name origins from when the hero Herakles first set foot in Egypt in the 5th century BC and a magnificent temple was built there. The geographer Strabo also wrote about this location.

The finding of the Stele of Thonis-Heracleion, together with its twin stele of Naukratis, demonstrate the importance of both cities, as stated by pharaoh Nectanebo I (379-361 BC).

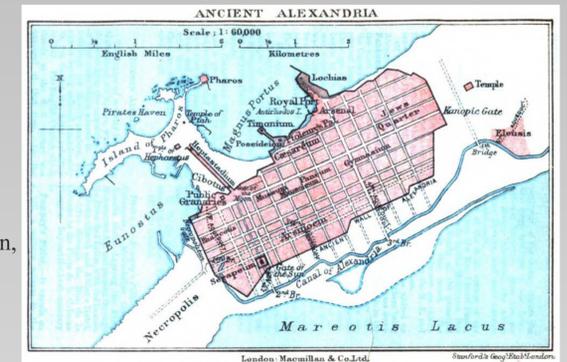


Alexandria and Ptolemais Hermiou

Alexandria is the most famous example of Greek settlement abroad. Founded in 331 BC by Alexander the Great upon his arrival in Egypt, it quickly became one of the most important cities in the ancient Mediterranean. Built upon the village of Rhakotis, he city was purely Greek, and Ptolemy I and his successor Ptolemy II Philadelphus further developed it by adding important cultural buildings, such as the Library, the Museion, and the famous lighthouse of Pharos, among many others.

But this was not the only city built and named after a leader. Not many years later, the Ptolemaic dynasty followed Alexander's example and started founding new cities that bore the kings and queens' names. The first of these examples in Ptolemais Hermiou.

Little is known about the settlement since it is currently covered by the modern village of Minshah. It is assumed that it followed much of Alexandria's plan. Ancient sources include a Hadrianic copy of an early Ptolemaic decree stating its foundation, and Strabo's description: "Then follows Ptolemais, the largest city in the Thebais, not inferior to Memphis, with a form of government after the Grecian mode." Strab. 17.1.42



Conclusions

- Commercial and possibly political relations between Greeks and Egyptians date back to the late Bronze Age;
- Relations resume in the 7th century BC as evidenced by the site of Naukratis;
- The site of Naukratis is the example par excellence;
- The discovery of other sites with archaeological remains indicates that this Hellenistic presence expanded to other regions;
- The lack of Greek buildings may be due to later destruction or to their assimilation with the native culture;
- Importance of this coexistence and cultural assimilation for the establishment of the Ptolemaic dynasty.
- Many of these sites are in the process of research through different archaeological campaigns. Future results will be essential to answer this hypothesis.

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