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The Alexandria Effect City Foundation in Ptolemaic Culture and the Egyptian Histories of Manetho and Diodorus

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CIVILISATIONS DE L'ORIENT, DE LA GRÈCE ET DE ROME ANTIQUES

Grecs et non-Grecs de l'empire perse au monde hellénistique

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The Alexandria Effect City Foundation in Ptolemaic Culture and the Egyptian Histories of Manetho and Diodorus

ABSTRACT–. This article explores the Ptolemaic discourse of city foundation through the stories of ancient Egyptian city foundation in Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca* and Diodorus Siculus’ *Library of History* Book 1. It traces how Greek and Egyptian modes of narrating urban foundations were modified to fit the Ptolemaic situation and argues that the example of Alexandria’s meteoric rise to prominence and the various reactions it inspired influenced the narratives that were composed for three ancient Egyptian cities: Thebes, Memphis, and Avaris.

KEYWORDS–. city foundation, Hellenistic historiography, Ptolemaic literature, Alexandria

RÉSUMÉ–. Cet article examine le discours ptolémaïque sur les fondations de cités à travers les récits de fondation de cités égyptiennes anciennes tels qu’on les trouve dans les *Aigyptiaca* de Manéthon et dans le premier livre de la *Bibliothèque historique* de Diodore de Sicile. Il montre comment les manières grecques et égyptiennes de raconter les fondations de cités ont été modifiées pour s’adapter au contexte ptolémaïque. Il soutient que l’ascension fulgurante d’Alexandrie et les différentes réactions qu’elle suscita influencèrent les récits composés pour trois villes égyptiennes antérieures: Thèbes, Memphis et Avaris.

MOTS-CLÉS–. fondation urbaine, historiographie hellénistique, littérature ptolémaïque, Alexandrie

Greek and Egyptian literature had very different traditions about how to narrate and commemorate the foundation of cities, just as both societies were organized around their own concepts of urban centers. In Greece, the political *polis* with its diverse physical instantiations defines the culture of the Classical period, while Egypt was articulated by palace and temple centers and *nome* capitals. Greek myth and history had a rich and diverse set of narrative patterns and metaphors for talking about city foundation and colonization within the *polis* context, but the creation of new settlements was not a primary topic in the Egyptian tradition. Alexander the Great represented a turning point in both Greek and Egyptian thinking about city foundation, by founding many cities throughout the regions he traversed as a new world conqueror. Yet, as heirs to Alexander, the Ptolemies infamously founded only one Greek-style *polis* within Egypt (Ptolemais Hermiou), although they created *poleis* in their non-Egyptian territories and settled many people in numerous villages with names derived from their dynasty in Egypt itself.¹ Foundation and

(1) For a survey of Ptolemaic foundation practices, see MUELLER 2006 and FISCHER-BOVET 2021. The term *polis* in Ptolemaic Egypt was also generalized to mean “city” without implying the organs of government associated with a Classical period Greek *polis*, see HEINEN 2000, p. 128-129. FISCHER-BOVET 2021 usefully distinguishes between *polis* and political

settlement happened frequently in Ptolemaic Egypt, and fragments give us hints about how Egyptian and Greek traditions were combined, discarded, or adapted in official and more popular discourse about contemporary settlements. But it may be possible to amplify our knowledge of Ptolemaic foundation discourses by looking at how the origins of pharaonic cities were reimagined after the foundation of Alexandria. In this paper I explore whether the complicated and evolving discourse of city foundation in the Hellenistic period influenced the narratives of the foundation of Memphis and Thebes in two Hellenistic historians who wrote about the pharaonic period: Manetho and Diodorus. I argue that the example of Alexandria was particularly resonant and shaped how Greek and Egyptian traditions of city foundation were used or discarded, even when recounting a time well before there were any Greeks in Egypt.

Both texts present different challenges resulting from the lacunose transmission of Hellenistic historiography. Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* is preserved in extensive quotations within Josephus' first century CE *Contra Apionem* and in epitomes by Christian chronographers working in the third and fourth centuries CE which were further mediated by later scholars and translators.² Josephus cited Manetho with contradictory polemical aims which affect the reliability of his quotations, and various interpolations have been identified in the fragments, most prominently synchronisms with Jewish and Greek traditions in the epitomes and parts of the story of Moses and the lepers in Josephus' Manetho.³ Since the only city that is founded in Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* is Avaris, the capital of the Hyksos whom Josephus identifies as Judean ancestors, a key passage for my argument is riddled with source critical challenges, but I believe that with careful attention to the issues we can draw cautious conclusions about how Manetho himself narrated this event. When we turn to Diodorus' account of the Egyptian past, an older position represented prominently by Jacoby (*FGrHist* 264 F 25) and Murray sees extensive sections of *Bibliotheca* Book 1 as an epitome of Hecataeus of Abdera's early Ptolemaic *Aegyptiaca*, though this view has been cogently challenged by scholars, such as Muntz, who evaluate Diodorus as an independent-minded historian of the first century BCE.⁴ I follow the position that we cannot read Diodorus as Hecataeus, and it is becoming increasingly clear that Diodorus records many traditions about the Egyptian past, both Greek and Egyptian, that circulated in Ptolemaic Egypt.⁵ In this article I read Diodorus' account of Egypt as a compilation of many traditions that were circulating throughout the Hellenistic period.

In addition to the complexities of working with the sources that we have, we also are missing many important texts on Greco-Egyptian cities, such as Apollonius of Rhodes' poem on the foundation of Alexandria and Istrus the Callimachean's poem on the foundation of Ptolemais Hermiou.⁶ Nevertheless, scholars have made some progress in understanding how Greek and Egyptian texts did or did not blend myths and traditions when discussing Ptolemaic foundation. For example, the Pithom Stela (CGC 22183), erected in Tjekou (Tell el-Maskhuta) and commemorating events of Ptolemy Philadelphus' reign from the perspective of local priests, accommodates elements of Greek foundation traditions in a hieroglyphic text to recount the settlement of Arsinoe and Ptolemais Theron on the Red Sea, while Apollonius of Rhodes may have

polis, and points out that *nome* capitals could be called *metropoleis*, while CLANCIER and GORRE 2021 make an interesting argument for why *poleis* were not needed in Ptolemaic Egypt.

(2) For a recent overview of the state of the fragments, see MOYER 2011, p. 91-96.

(3) For Josephus' use of Manetho, see BARCLAY 2007, p. 48-66, 125-152, and 335-337; for synchronisms, see MOYER 2011, p. 108-114, and DILLERY 2016 who argues for the Manethonian authenticity of many.

(4) MURRAY 1970, p. 144-150, largely followed by LANG 2012. MUNTZ 2011 building on work such as SACKS 1990. BURTON 1972, p. 1-34 already questions the Hecataeus hypothesis in detail. For extensive bibliography on the debate, see CANEVA 2019, p. 189-191.

(5) E.g. the Eastern campaigns of Osiris in Diodorus and Demotic narratives, on which see QUACK 2019, p. 113-124.

(6) For these fragments and the difficulty of tracing Greco-Egyptian fusion, see BERTI 2009 and BARBANTANI 2014.

mobilized the Greek claim that Colchis was founded by Egyptians to give Alexandria a background in Greek myth in his *Argonautica*.⁷ In this paper I contribute to these ongoing conversations about foundation discourse within Ptolemaic literature by exploring how Alexandria introduced a significant rupture in both Greek and Egyptian traditions of city foundation. For the Greek world, it was the first major Greek city to be founded by a Macedonian conqueror king, which challenged the *polis*-centric foundation tradition that derived its authority from Greek myths and institutions. Unlike an *oikist* who devoted his attention to one colony in a “new” land,⁸ Alexander founded many cities in his name in the territories he conquered, without ever staying to see a foundation through.⁹ In this way, he developed the mythical model of traveling culture heroes like Heracles and inaugurated the Hellenistic paradigm of conqueror-founder king. For Egypt, Alexandria was the first capital city in recent memory that was built by foreign invaders and that came to be positioned as “by Egypt” not “in Egypt.” Even if Assyrians, Nubians, and Persians had conquered Egypt before the Greeks, they did not build a city in Egypt to challenge Memphis, Sais, and Thebes. While Egyptian culture was very comfortable with kings directing the landscape, a capital city was ideally founded by the Egyptian gods for eternity, and each city could take on the role of the world’s origin in texts.¹⁰ As so often in Egyptian culture the pharaoh was the partner of the gods, for, as Ragazzoli puts it, “the god founds a city and the pharaoh constructs it.”¹¹ Pharaohs enhanced cities through temple building, and fortresses could be established to protect the country, but there was no need for a vibrant discourse of city foundation in Egypt.

While this is not the place to discuss Alexandria’s multiple and complex foundation stories, it is crucial for my argument that the creation of the new Ptolemaic capital inspired reflections on urban impermanence that could destabilize both Greek and Egyptian traditions for conceptualizing cities. If a city could be founded by men, not gods, it could be destroyed by men and gods. The speedy rise of Alexandria to world prominence also provided a contemporary and striking perspective on the life of cities as people could see a city rise from nothing in a matter of years. Such rapid creation of a capital was of course not unprecedented in Egypt. We might think of examples like Amarna or the more recent relocations of the dynastic seat to Sais and Sebennytyos. Yet, in addition to recalling the memory of these new capitals, Alexandria was different in being founded by non-Egyptian rulers according to Greek traditions. In these ways it was most similar to the Hyksos capital Avaris, a parallel that I suggest may have struck Manetho. To provide a sense of how literature could respond to the miraculous birth of the Greco-Egyptian capital, I survey several striking examples.

Several scholars have explored how the reaction of some Egyptian-language speakers to the foundation of Alexandria was to remove Alexander from its name and stress the city’s contingency by calling it Rhakotis, literally “the building site.”¹² As Chauveau points out, the city under

(7) For the Pithom stela, see MUELLER 2006b, THIERS 2007, QUACK 2008, p. 280-283, and SCHÄFER 2011, p. 205-238. FISCHER-BOVET 2021, p. 73, suggests the Pithom stela narrated the foundations of Red Sea towns since residents of Heroonpolis (Tjekou) went to settle there, but even if its interests are local, it assumes a royal perspective. For Apollonius, see STEPHENS 2011.

(8) Of course, even if Greek stories emphasized the open status of colonial territories, this did not mean the “new” lands had not previously been claimed by others.

(9) STEPHENS 2012, p. 140, notes several ways the normative Greek pattern was rendered “foreign” in the case of Alexandria.

(10) RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 176-180.

(11) RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 177.

(12) CHAUVEAU, 1999, DEPAUW 2000. While BAINES 2003 followed by MUELLER 2006, p. 15-22, have lodged objections to this interpretation on the grounds that Rhakote should have a definite article and that the name likely precedes the Hellenistic period, the translation into Greek in the *Oracle of the Potter* strongly suggests that some interpreted the toponym in the sense of “construction site” with a derogatory connotation, no matter how old it was.

construction could then be neatly opposed to Memphis, which means “established in perfection.”¹³ Such an opposition is violently expanded in the *Oracle of the Potter*.¹⁴ This prophetic tradition, which likely had a Hellenistic origin, wishes for the reestablishment of Memphis as first city of Egypt and the destruction of Alexandria, here pointedly called κτιζομένη πόλις, “the city being founded.”¹⁵ The surprising use of the adjective θεοτόκος for Memphis in one version of the Oracle could in fact further oppose divinely-born Memphis to Alexandria founded by man.¹⁶ In addition Dillery has identified a further instance of this opposition in a passage included in several versions of *The Alexander Romance* where the Memphite high priest (or the voice of the ancient pharaoh Sesonchosis) rejects the burial of Alexander in Memphis and reroutes it to Alexandria because the body will cause its host city disruption and war.¹⁷ As Dillery rightly stresses, the placement of Alexander’s body figures in the discussion of his legitimacy as pharaoh; at the same time, the story also subverts the traditional Greek idea that a founder’s tomb protects the city he founded.¹⁸ Finally, Von Reden and Strootman, relying on work by de Polignac, have recently highlighted a less aggressive side to this competitive discourse between Alexandria and Memphis in their study of how imperial *metropoleis* including Rome and Seleucia jockeyed for preeminence.¹⁹ Particularly striking is de Polignac’s observation that Aristotle’s discussion of the necessary balance between a city’s size and its stability in the *Politics* was invoked in *The Alexander Romance*’s encomiastic account of the founding of Alexandria and formed a metric for comparing Alexandria with Rome.²⁰

Questions about Alexandria’s potential instability thus found homes in a variety of Greek and Egyptian discourses about the city and its place in the hierarchy of world capitals. Likewise, the discourse surrounding Alexandria stimulated debates about imperial control of Egypt and the life of cities. Before I turn to how this influenced Ptolemaic histories of pharaonic capitals, I provide a (necessarily) concise overview of Egyptian and Greek literature of city foundation and examples of how these traditions were mediated in other Ptolemaic contexts.

EGYPTIAN AND GREEK FOUNDATION NARRATIVE PATTERNS

Pharaonic Egypt contained many highly developed cities and a strong sense of the Egyptian state, but as far as we know, Egyptian literature did not produce the sort of myths celebrating

(13) CHAUVEAU, 1999, p. 9.

(14) For this complex tradition that is only preserved in Greek papyri, see KOENEN 2002 and, recently, BAZZANA 2018 with further bibliography.

(15) CHAUVEAU 1999, p. 8-10, and DILLERY 2004, who aptly calls this the “unfounding” of Alexandria. BAZZANA 2018, p. 220-221, raises the important question of why these texts were read in Roman Egypt.

(16) KOENEN 2002, p. 161, sees θεοτόκος as a translation of the Egyptian epithet *msḥnt nṯr nb* “birthplace of every god,” which suits the text’s emphasis on the return of Memphite gods (P. Oxy. XXII 2332, l.50-52 ὁ ἀγαθὸς δαίμων καταλείπει τὴν κτιζομένην πόλιν καὶ ἀπελευθεύεται εἰς τὴν θεοτόκον Μέμφειν, “the Agathos Daimon will leave the city being founded and arrive at god-born Memphis”). Both meanings may have resonated for different audiences, and the fact that κτιζομένην and θεοτόκον are juxtaposed here suggests they may have opposite meanings (cf. CHAUVEAU, 1999, p. 9, who uses this passage to stress the opposition of κτιζομένην vs. *mn-nfr* “established in perfection” and origin of the gods). As BAZZANA 2018, p. 220 summarizes, θεοτόκος is very unusual in non-Christian Greek, where it is an attribute of the Virgin Mary as mother of God.

(17) DILLERY 2004. The passage in question is 3.34 β recension (Memphite priest speaking) and Chapter 283 in the Armenian recension (voice of Sesonchosis).

(18) Of course, Alexander’s body was also used to celebrate and legitimize the city, on which see ERSKINE 2002.

(19) VON REDEN, STROOTMAN 2021. At p. 27-29, they stress how *The Alexander Romance* figures Alexandria as a benefaction welcomed by the Memphites as part of the text’s presentation of Alexander as Greco-Egyptian.

(20) DE POLIGNAC 2005, followed by VON REDEN, STROOTMAN 2021, p. 25-27.

the origins of a new urban foundation that developed in ancient Greek culture.²¹ Yet, this does not mean foundation was never mentioned. In the Egyptian tradition the king and the gods were responsible for foundation of cities, yet, as Mueller argues, city foundation was viewed not as a historical event but rather as one aspect of the ritually continuous creation of Egypt that was often subordinated to the foundation of temples.²² In rare cases, the foundation of cities could be incorporated into discussions of the proper defense of Egypt or the proper functioning of Egyptian society.²³ Thus, *The Instruction for King Merikare* from the Middle Kingdom exhorts a good king “to construct buildings in the Delta, for a man’s name will not be demeaned by what he has accomplished, and a securely founded town will not be destroyed,” while the Israel Stela of Merenptah celebrates peace in Egypt with details including “towns are once more founded.”²⁴ The *Prophecy of Neferti* culminates with the foundation of “Inbu-Heqa” by the savior king Ameny “so that never will Asiatics be permitted to come down to Egypt.”²⁵ Neferty predicts that in the bad times “foreign birds will breed in the Delta marshes having made their nests beside the people” and that desert beasts will rest on the Nile’s shore, which is perhaps a metaphorical allusion to foreign settlement.²⁶ A more concrete sign of foreign presence is indicated by Neferty when he says, “We have no (border) fortress, for foreigners now hold it.” After the infamous Amenhotep IV Akhenaton founded Akhet-Aton at Amarna, boundary stelai recorded how the pharaoh was inspired by Aton and founded the new city.²⁷ A similar narrative appears in the foundation inscription of Sethos I at Wadi Mia,²⁸ and it is possible that further examples of urban foundations that do not relate to the defense of the Delta have simply not survived.

In addition, there is an Egyptian literary genre that scholars call the “Praises of the City,” closely tied to the “Longing for the City,” which flourished in the Ramesside period and seems to have been linked to a contemporary vogue for love poetry.²⁹ The texts mostly feature the new foundation of Pi-Ramesses in the eastern Delta, but they also celebrate the renewal and general urban splendor of Memphis and Thebes. Like many Egyptian texts these tales of the city often focus on the pharaoh as much as the place itself and can bleed into royal encomium.³⁰ While the Egyptian poems praise the city as a place of cult, they view the “origin of the settlement” as fundamentally uninteresting; instead, the trope of a journey is used to inspire wonder at a new place or nostalgia for an old one.³¹ Mueller argues that the Praise of the Delta Residence/Ode to Piramesse (P. Anastasi II, 1-2, 5, Ragazzoli no. 12) is a unique case in which the pharaoh’s role as founder is understood in a similar way to the Greek *ktistes*, but that the text has a different objective from a Greek foundation narrative.³² The magnificence of the act of foundation is conveyed by the present magnificence of the place, which is described in great detail. Yet, in her overview of these texts, Lichtheim writes that

(21) BAINES 1996, p. 361. The comparative absence of myths in Egyptian culture, especially in the early dynastic periods, has been explained in various ways, on which see BAINES 1991 and BAINES 1996, p. 363-365.

(22) MUELLER 2003, p. 186-188.

(23) MUELLER 2003, p. 185.

(24) Translation of *Merikare* from TOBIN 2003a, p. 162; translation of Merenptah from MUELLER 2003, p. 185.

(25) Translations of “Neferty” from TOBIN 2003b.

(26) We might compare The Carnarvon Tablet on Khamose’s war against the Hyksos which claims that Pepi had made the town of Neferusy a “nest for the Asiatics.”

(27) MUELLER 2003, p. 185.

(28) MUELLER 2003, p. 185-186.

(29) LICHTHEIM 1980, RAGAZZOLI 2008, MOERS 2010, p. 694-695.

(30) LICHTHEIM 1980, p. 15-16, MOERS 2010, p. 695. RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 139-141 and p. 157-160. At p. 115 Ragazzoli points out that the addressee of these texts is (usually) “the founder, mythic or real, god or pharaoh,” and at p. 148-151 she describes how Thebes was personified so as to verge on being a goddess.

(31) MUELLER 2003, p. 193. RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 129.

(32) MUELLER 2003, p. 187. The text is introduced as the beginning of an account of pharaoh’s accomplishments.

“the kings, through frequent changes of residence, had raised a number of towns to eminence,” and her passing comment highlights the fundamental and concrete relationship between the presence of the king and the increase in status and wealth of a city.³³ If a king made his residence somewhere, that place would thrive. But the creation of a new residence did not entail the destruction of the old: in the Praise of the Delta Residence, the new city of Piramesse “resembles On of Upper Egypt (Thebes), its lifetime equals that of Memphis.”³⁴

In the two praises of Piramesse (P. Anastasi II,1-2,5, Ragazzoli no. 12, l. 2 and P. Anastasi II,5, 5-6, Ragazzoli no. 13, l.1) the king is credited with the creation of a residence (*bhn*) and not a city per se.³⁵ As Ragazzoli points out, “the possession of a *bhn*-domaine in a city” was an ideal that is desired by the scribal class and appears in many Egyptian texts, but it is noteworthy that it is this ideal that is used to express the pharaoh’s foundation of a new city instead of emphasizing the creation of the city itself.³⁶ Of course it is hard to know if these texts would have been known to readers and writers in the Hellenistic period. The fact that several appear in miscellanies and on ostraca suggests they were used in schooling,³⁷ which might argue for their continued presence within the scribal tradition that preserved hieratic and early forms of the Egyptian language into the late periods. Yet, translations from earlier stages of Egyptian into Demotic were not widespread, and the currently limited studies of Egyptian education in the Late and Greco-Roman periods suggest that literature was no longer an important part of Demotic educational practice.³⁸ It is thus currently hard to state with certainty how much literature from the Middle and New Kingdom would have been known or used in the Late and Greco-Roman periods more generally, and the lack of evidence has allowed scholars to reach different conclusions based on probability and assumptions.³⁹ While to my knowledge no copies of praise-of-the-city texts exist from the late period, Ockinga has recently explored how Ptolemy I’s Satrap Stela reflects the “royal phraseology” of Middle and New Kingdom texts, particularly the *Tale of Sinuhe*, which is plausibly explained as the result of the study of such texts—which are also not necessarily extant in late period copies—in the scribal tradition.⁴⁰ Ideas and phrases from the praise-of-the-city texts may have been passed down in the same way within the scribal culture and filtered through into the late period, even if the genre they represent had a short creative life.⁴¹ Indeed, the tension that may be seen in the praises-of-the-city genre between the founding of Piramesse as a new center of political power in the north and the continued existence of the religious center Thebes in the south is mirrored by the position of Alexandria vis-à-vis Memphis.⁴² Could this have sparked a renewed interest in praise-of-the-city classics?

(33) LICHTHEIM 1980, p. 17.

(34) Translation from LICHTHEIM 1980, p. 18. RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 130-131, sees this as part of this genre’s thematic focus on eternity, e.g. the wish never to leave one’s preferred city.

(35) In his dictionary of Middle Egyptian, R. O. Faulkner translates this word as “country mansion” while RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 68, glosses it as “domaine agricole.” Piramesse was a refoundation of an existing city (RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 184), but this is not stressed in the texts.

(36) RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 166-167. At p. 193-204 she explores how the agricultural estate is a model for the entire city.

(37) RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 138-139 and p. 210 for some caveats.

(38) TASSIER 1992, JASNOW 1999, QUACK 2009, p. 12-13, PRADA 2018 provides an overview and announces a new comprehensive study.

(39) E.g. TAIT 2003, p. 9-10, argues that the irregular preservation of evidence and the fact that some texts survive in only one copy make arguments from silence particularly hard to maintain. JASNOW 1999, p. 203-204, considers the possibility of a first millennium BCE break in the manuscript tradition of Egyptian classics but is reluctant to believe they completely disappeared.

(40) OCKINGA 2018, p. 187-191. Cf. JASNOW 1999, p. 204-205, for two references to *Sinuhe* in Demotic texts.

(41) The nostalgia and displacement felt by those far from their city or village form a theme of Egyptian literature that is shared by the Praises of the City and Demotic wisdom texts, on which see RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 131-133 and 166-170, AGUT-LABORDÈRE 2013.

(42) RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 187-190; SCHÄFER 2011, p. 98.

Indeed, Derchain has remarked in passing that phrases from the “praises of Thebes” occur in the inscriptions of Ptolemaic Karnak, which suggests that these compositions were kept and reused in local contexts where they were most relevant.⁴³ He further demonstrates how the pharaonic discourse of measuring the land after the Nile flood to reinstitute the contours of a town and its countryside “inspired” an inscription on the second pylon at the Karnak temple under Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II that cast the foundation of the city in the Egyptian sense of emergence from the flood guided by the god Amon instead of turning to the Greek tradition of founder hero.⁴⁴ Thebes in fact appears to have enjoyed a special position among Egyptian cities that lasted into the Ptolemaic period. Personified as a victorious goddess and called “first city,” it was celebrated for its origin as the initial land of Egypt in texts such as the city “monograph” that appeared inscribed in various locations within the Theban temples.⁴⁵ Other Egyptian texts that blend the cult and geography of different regions and different divinities were common (e.g. the *Book of the Fayoum*), and we can see Greek counterparts in texts like the Isis hymns and aretologies. While such a discourse was current in both cultures in Ptolemaic Egypt, it is noteworthy that Alexandria was never incorporated into the cultic geography of Egypt.⁴⁶

In contrast to Egyptian literature, Archaic and Classical Greek texts—from epinician poetry to *polis* inscriptions—present several consistent story patterns that explain the foundations of cities in Greece and overseas as well as the origins of institutions. These patterns appear to have developed over time and in response to changing historical circumstances, as different models were needed for different situations. Narratives of the same foundation could be layered and exist in multiple, sometimes contradictory, versions,⁴⁷ and it can be difficult for historians to sort out when different narrative patterns were created and whether they followed historical developments closely or were created retroactively.⁴⁸ What is important for this study, however, is the fact that Greek audiences would have understood that one place could have more than one foundation myth. In the following paragraphs I present a survey of the general repertoire of foundation narrative patterns that would have been available in the Greek literary tradition by the late fourth century BCE and the cultural meanings that they may have been understood to carry in the Hellenistic period.

First, the existence and names of cities and territories could be explained as the result of an Olympian god raping a local nymph or a kidnaped maiden who gave her name or that of her male descendants to a land or city, and this “marriage” motif was employed in colonization narratives when the time came for city foundation.⁴⁹ Some famous founders, such as Cadmus, only became founders when they failed to recover a maiden who had been kidnapped according to the previous story pattern.⁵⁰ Second, other wandering or questing heroes could also initiate foundations. The travels of Heracles and his descendants and the *nostoi* from the Trojan War were bodies of material that could spin out foundation stories seemingly without limit.⁵¹ Third, narratives about overseas colonization by cities had a basic pattern which has been well studied: a crisis in the city is referred to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, which recommends the foundation of a colony, and the colony’s

(43) DERCHAIN 2006, p. 76.

(44) DERCHAIN 2006.

(45) VON RECKLINGHAUSEN 2007.

(46) MUELLER 2006, p. 18 implies that this was a reason why Alexandria had no standard hieroglyphic name.

(47) For detailed studies of the traditions of individual Greek cities, see DOUGHERTY 1993 and MAC SWEENEY 2013.

(48) MALKIN 1998, p. 1-16; MALKIN 2018, p. 93-94.

(49) DOUGHERTY 1993, p. 61-78. KREVANS 1997, p. 71-75.

(50) KREVANS 1997, p. 74-75.

(51) For Heracles and the Heraclids, see MALKIN 1994. For the *nostoi*, especially Odysseus, see MALKIN 1998.

new mythology begins around the figure of its founder, who is worshiped as a hero after his death.⁵² Malkin has argued that the model of one founder creating multiple cities was acceptable at first but that later a founder was more likely to be connected with one city that itself exercised more control over the choice of founder.⁵³

Themes and metaphors within these narrative patterns allowed political and cultural claims to new land and the creation of a network of Greek communities, often giving low priority to stories of cultural interaction on equal terms or the claims of non-Greek inhabitants to land and citizenship.⁵⁴ The narrative of mother and daughter cities as well as the tales about Olympian gods “marrying” nymphs constructed familial hierarchies that facilitated kinship diplomacy between cities but could also be used to separate ethnicities and swallow up other cultures.⁵⁵ The genealogy embedded in foundation myths could allow different invocations of a “right to return” such as the ideological Greek right to return to a land that had been claimed by Greek heroes according to legend (even if it actually belonged to others) or the mutual political rights of return and citizenship that existed among colonies and mother-cities.⁵⁶

This brief survey reveals that writing about foundation and cities in Egyptian and Greek culture was adapted to very different political and cultural realities. In the former case, foundation occurred within a territory with a (relatively) unified identity and under an overarching government that was not linked exclusively to a particular city or institution;⁵⁷ in the latter new cities were not necessarily tied to their point of origin and needed ways to connect to wider networks and political associations. In both cases, cities could be founded to establish order or protect territory, but in Egypt the discourse of city foundation was often tied to protecting the eastern frontier and preventing invasion and presumably the resultant settlement of non-Egyptians. Since urban foundation discourses did not play a role in the identity formation of Egyptians living in Memphis or Thebes, discussion of cities was couched in the presence of the king and the beauty of the city. For Greeks, foundation myths were an essential means of defining the limits of Greek culture and establishing political and social realities, but also expanding both by moving out into new places sometimes very far from “home.” How did these two traditions merge or clash when Greeks and Macedonians tried to establish their place in Egypt and within the Egyptian monarchy, after Alexander set the stage for innovation by founding Alexandria, a Greek capital in Egypt that would rise to cosmopolitan status so quickly?

PTOLEMAIC APPROACHES TO FOUNDATION

Even if they were constructed near to previous habitation areas, many large settlements founded during the Ptolemaic period were named after members of the royal family, especially Arsinoe,

(52) Classically explored in DOUGHERTY 1993, who also looks to texts of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods to piece traditions together. MALKIN 1998, p. 22-24, critiques this method as abstract and generalizing, while HALL 2008, p. 383-402 uses the stories of foundations in Magna Graecia to caution that literary sources do not consistently follow the patterns scholars have identified. The basic patterns are, however, still useful for understanding these stories.

(53) MALKIN 2018, p. 93-94, who sees Battus, founder of Cyrene, as a turning point.

(54) MAC SWEENEY 2013, p. 7-16, calls foundation myths essential for “construct[ing] and negotiat[ing] cultural difference,” though her examination of the foundation narratives of Miletus (p. 44-79) shows how some foundation traditions could stress indigenous, non-Greek, origins.

(55) On the potential of genealogy for both ethnic exclusion and inclusion, see MALKIN 1998, p. 61.

(56) For the former, see DOUGHERTY 1991, p. 129-130; for the latter, see MALKIN 2016 and MALKIN 2018.

(57) Even if, as MOERS 2010, p. 695, points out, the Ramesside city texts could be used to explore “regional and cultural difference inside Egypt.”

as well as the epithets that distinguished generations of Ptolemies, e.g. Euergetis.⁵⁸ In the Greek tradition the cult of the founder was an essential element of the new city's physical and cultic landscape. But, as Mueller has argued, in the Ptolemaic context the "functional founder" (often a Ptolemaic official) often went unrecognized, especially in the case of a foundation named after the ruling dynasty.⁵⁹ The cases in which we know anything about the functional founder of a dynastic settlement are rare, and it is unclear how the founding official was recognized and whether this changed over time. In the third century, Satyros founded Philotera and Eumedes founded Ptolemais Theron to facilitate elephant hunting on the Red Sea coast, but while Strabo records their names (*Geography* 16.4.5 and 16.4.7), the hieroglyphic Pithom Stela which was composed by the priests of Atum at Tjekou and recounts only the foundation of Ptolemais Theron, refers cryptically to an anonymous "minister" as founder and celebrates the king Ptolemy II Philadelphus as actor as much as possible.⁶⁰ While the fact that the hieroglyphic text includes a non-royal founder sent as an emissary from the king reflects pharaonic expedition reports, especially those to Punt, it can also accommodate the Greek foundation narrative pattern in that a designated founder is the representative of the founding state.⁶¹ Thiers in fact argues persuasively that the priests of Tjekou made use of the Greek idea of the mother-city to establish a link with Ptolemais Theron that would result in tangible economic benefits to their god from maritime activities in the Red Sea, perhaps further following Greek practice by creating a mirror geography in the colony through the Scorpion Lake.⁶² While the priests may have had a specific reason for taking up these aspects of the Greek pattern, we can see how an even more traditionally Greek version may have existed in Strabo's account, which gives a more dramatic rendition of Eumedes' foundation activities.⁶³ Later in the second century, Boethos, a Ptolemaic official who rose to the rank of royal *συγγενής* and *epistrategos* of the Thebaid, founded three cities with dynastic names.⁶⁴ In an inscription set up in his honor by a subordinate (OGIS I iii = SB V 8878) and in a papyrus allocating space in one of his new foundations (P.U.B. Trier S. 135-1), he was called *ktistes* and may have been honored as such at the local level.⁶⁵ The nature of the surviving sources available for these events makes it impossible to compare like with like, but it seems clear that some functional founders could be recognized in a Greek narrative pattern, but that such texts may not have originated from the royal court.

Indeed, the eponymous dynastic figure often received dynastic cult in the settlement that could double as a "founder cult," thus effectively "eclipsing the founder cult of the more traditional [Greek]

(58) FISCHER-BOVET 2021, p. 66.

(59) MUELLER 2003.

(60) We might compare the first century CE case discussed by FEWSTER 2002, p. 229, in which an individual dedicant to a temple is named in Greek and demotic inscriptions, but the emperor is credited in the hieroglyphic version.

(61) THIERS 2007, p. 129 and 148, pointing in particular to P. Harris I.

(62) THIERS 2007, p. 148-150. He also argues for a specifically Greek dimension to the Pithom Stela's praise of Ptolemy Philadelphus in its emphasis on Ptolemaic naval power (p. 91-92).

(63) MUELLER 2006b also compares these two foundation accounts as the products of different cultural traditions, pointing out that Strabo's focus on walling Ptolemais Theron fits with how Greeks defined the extent of a new settlement in literature. She analyzes the Pithom Stela as partly local annals and partly expedition report, composed from a local, priestly perspective. THIERS 2007, p. 147-148, stresses that the Pithom Stela helps us understand that Ptolemais Theron had an agricultural base like a "real colony" in a way the Greek and Latin texts do not.

(64) MUELLER 2006, p. 159-165.

(65) For the sources see HEINEN 2000. HEINEN 2000, p. 149-150, considers it possible that Boethos received ritual recognition of his status as founder. For the deification of prominent non-royal individuals in the Ptolemaic period, see RYHOLT 2018 on the general Nechtpharaus. MUELLER 2003, p. 192, however, argues that there is no reason to assume Boethos had a founder cult. Unpublished papyri cited by FISCHER-BOVET 2021, p. 75-78, attest that Euergetis had *prytaneis* and thus may have been closer to a political *polis*, a development that may reflect reorganization after the 5th Syrian War and the Great Revolt.

kind” and in fact conforming to the pharaonic practice.⁶⁶ In a monarchy the political realities of a king and a dynastic cult overpowered the cultural traditions associated with the city state. Mueller argues that Ptolemaic kings followed Egyptian models in not including city foundation as an important aspect of good kingship,⁶⁷ but we may invoke the example of Osiris, who founds many cities in Diodorus’ *Bibliotheca* (1.14-21), as an important mythical counterexample for the good pharaoh in the Ptolemaic period, and, as I will discuss below, the circumstances of at least one of these foundations may closely reflect Ptolemaic practice.⁶⁸ Indeed, Ptolemy I Soter was remembered as the founder of the new *polis* of Ptolemais Hermiou in the Thebaid, even if this appears to have been a unique instance of a Ptolemaic king claiming an active role in a dynastic foundation.⁶⁹

With this background, it is all the more striking that the Satrap Stela explains how Ptolemy I (while still satrap) made his residence (*hnw*) in Alexandria, called “the wall of Alexander.”⁷⁰ If we compare this expression to the Praises of Piramesse, this is a “foundation story” in the Egyptian sense where the pharaoh’s creation of a residence (*bhn*) represents the act of city foundation. Others have tried to explain this phrase in other ways, focusing on the fact that Ptolemy did indeed transfer the capital from Memphis to Alexandria. For instance, Chauveau argues that the Satrap Stela is not referring to the foundation of Alexandria but to Ptolemy’s “installation there” and that the Stela’s purpose was to publicize its new name “wall of Alexander.”⁷¹ Baines points out that *hnw* “most commonly signifies capital city in general rather than royal palace” in explaining how the Stela of Psherenptah names Alexandria “the residence of the Aegean kings,” and we may assume that this word was chosen particularly to signal the change of capital.⁷² Yet on the model of the Ramesside texts, the Satrap Stela appears first to employ Egyptian foundation discourse and, second, to suggest that Ptolemy is being given (partial) credit for founding Alexandria.⁷³ Indeed, in many practical senses he did found the city in seeing Alexander’s idea to completion, and we may see here a subtle use of the Egyptian language to credit both Alexander and Ptolemy with founding the new capital. We can only imagine that the early Ptolemies would appreciate this means of simultaneously recognizing the mythical founder they promoted and the real founder of their dynasty.

We may even be able to see further reflections of this discourse in the practice of naming Ptolemaic dynastic settlements. When the Ptolemies began to rule Egypt, Greeks and Egyptians had distinct practices for setting up new settlements. While Greeks were developing and implementing the Hippodamian grid form, Egypt had a model of looser orthogonality based on the main temple and processional way. As Mueller has argued, unlike for the Seleucid empire with its system of tier one and tier two cities, Ptolemaic Egypt had no set plan for foundations inside Egypt, and Greek and Egyptian individual founders likely took the lead in using, adapting, and sometimes even

(66) MUELLER 2003, with quotation at p. 191.

(67) MUELLER 2003, p. 194.

(68) On Diodorus’ Osiris as a model for the Ptolemaic king, see classically MURRAY 1970; Prof. Quack kindly informs me that there is no evidence yet for city foundation in the Demotic narratives about Osiris that have significant links to Diodorus’ account, but this may change as the evidence is processed.

(69) MUELLER 2003, p. 192-194, stresses the Hadrianic date of the copy of the foundation inscription and the epigram of Kelsos at Philae, arguing that the Roman Imperial practice of correlating urban status with historic Greek identity may be the appropriate context in which to read these texts. See further Mueller 2006, p. 166-168.

(70) A recent detailed commentary on the Satrap Stela can be found in SCHÄFER 2011 with discussion of the relevant passage at p. 83-98.

(71) CHAUVEAU 1999, p. 5. BAINES 2003, p. 61-62 notes the archaizing style of this name.

(72) BAINES 2003, p. 62-63. LLOYD 2014, p. 138 surveys pharaonic terms for the capital’s palace, noting that Egyptian authors could choose one “depending on the point of emphasis [they] wished to highlight in a given text,” but all available terms include the sense of “dwelling.” On *hnw*, he notes that it “insists on the centrality of the palace within the kingdom.”

(73) We might compare the tradition of Ptolemy I’s foundation of the Sarapis cult in Tacitus (*Histories* 4.83), which VON REDEN 2021, p. 29-33, views as a story of Alexandria’s “second foundation as a prosperous city under the Ptolemies.”

blending Greek and Egyptian town planning practices.⁷⁴ Yet, the names that were used for dynastic settlements seem to have followed different tracks according to language. From papyrus evidence it is clear that Fayyum towns with names drawn from the Ptolemaic dynasty (e.g. Ἀρσινόη) were usually converted into Demotic with the formula: the residence (p: *˙.wj*) of the dynastic name.⁷⁵ Ἀρσινόη thus literally becomes “the residence of Arsinoe,” a striking echo of the Satrap Stela and the Praises of Piramesse. This may be partly due to basic differences in grammar, since as Mueller points out, Greek personal names can be turned into place names in a way they cannot in Demotic.⁷⁶ She thus translates these toponyms as “the place of.”⁷⁷ In Demotic documents, however, *˙.wj* can refer to houses of priests within a temple structure,⁷⁸ while the term *tmy* was used for village, town, or *nome* capital in Demotic literature.⁷⁹ In these cases, I would suggest that we may also see a memory of, or a reference to, the Egyptian tradition that a settlement is the residence of a king in the Demotic names and the idea that a city is the settlement founded by a king in the Greek names.⁸⁰

Can we see a similar pattern of using, adapting, and sometimes blending Greek and Egyptian foundation narrative patterns as we do for town plans? Or was there a separate narrative convention for each language as for the town names? How did the vibrant Greek tradition of mythologizing the creation of new cities interact with the Egyptian system where, if foundation was discussed at all, it was within types of discourse that have no real parallel in Greek?

MANETHO

In the extant fragments of Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca*, there is no mention of the foundation of Memphis or Thebes, and the account stops well before the creation of Alexandria. We may wonder how, if at all, Manetho treated the foundation of either city and whether his text reflected the Egyptian idea that cities were created by gods. Ultimately, it is impossible to know. At any rate, the existence of Memphis and Thebes is assumed in the extant list of human kings, which gives us some hint of the relatively diminished role that city foundations play in the *Aegyptiaca*. For instance, when Herodotus begins his Egyptian king list with Min/Menes (2.99), he relates how this first pharaoh created embankments to found the city of Memphis (τοῦτο μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ πόλιν κτίσαι) and built the famous temple of Hephaistos (Ptah). Thus, for Herodotus, knowable history in Egypt begins with the creation of the capital city and its most important temple.⁸¹ But in Manetho no such construction is attributed to Min, although we do hear that his son Athothis built the palace

(74) MUELLER 2006, p. 105-121.

(75) MUELLER 2006, p. 9-39. She surveys other formulas for translating Greek dynastic names into Demotic but points out that the p: *˙.wj* + name formula is the most common.

(76) MUELLER 2006, p. 38.

(77) MUELLER 2006, p. 26. She notes that the Egyptian word generally denotes “habitation” and that it encompasses the meanings “room, house, chamber, chapel, building,” but that in the Ptolemaic administration it can translate Greek τόπος. GALLO 1987 points out that Demotic architectural terms are on the whole imprecise.

(78) GALLO 1987, p. 36. The term is also used for an association, on which see MONSON 2006, p. 222.

(79) FISCHER-BOVET 2021, p. 66, who points out that *nwt* is used for *nome* capital in archaizing hieroglyphic texts.

(80) In *De Thèbes à Syène* 244, dated to 115 BC, we may see a reference to “the god founded city of Elephantine” (1.4 εἰς τὴν θεοκτιστον πόλιν Ἐλεφαντίνην). MUELLER 2006, p. 151, notes the intriguing fact that many Greek toponyms in the Fayoum “correspond to Alexandrian deme names.” How Greek and Egyptian traditions of discussing cities played out in the Ptolemaic empire was clearly complex and deserves further comprehensive study.

(81) Herodotus does not give a foundation account for Thebes, though it is clear from Hecataeus of Miletus’ embarrassing attempt to trace his family to a god in front of an Egyptian priest at Thebes (2.143) that the city is very old.

at Memphis (*FGrHist* 609 F 3a, 3b, 3c; Waddell F 6 and F 7a and b).⁸² Indeed, it is only Greek sources that report Min/Menes' foundation of Memphis.⁸³ The absence of the foundation of the city itself may reflect the Egyptian idea expressed in the Praises of Piramesse that a city was the royal residence and thus urban foundation was the creation of a palace. If this treatment of Memphis and Min reflects the original text, Manetho seems to have dispensed with Greek historiographical modes entirely to convey the foundation of Memphis. This would be a further instance of Moyer's conclusion that Manetho wrote Egyptian history for Greeks in Egyptian narrative modes.⁸⁴

The extant fragments of Manetho do, however, contain one foundation story: that of the Egyptian city Avaris, a place which forms the central node of the troubled episodes of the Hyksos and Osarseph.⁸⁵ The fact that Avaris organizes these episodes of Sethian chaos when first disruptive foreigners and then problematic Egyptians upset the religious order of Egypt suggests that there is something amiss with the city itself, which, I argue, is signaled in its foundation story.⁸⁶ As I will discuss, Alexandria provides a contemporary model for new foundations in the Nile Delta. Yet, despite the importance of this narrative for understanding Manetho's history, it is challenging to know what he actually wrote, as it is told with varying degrees of concision in the epitomes and at greater length in Josephus' quotation in *Against Apion*.⁸⁷ In both source traditions Avaris is called a *polis*, which suggests that this was not a proper Egyptian foundation, if Manetho in fact used the Egyptian narrative pattern of "making a residence," as I suggested in the case of Athothis and Memphis.⁸⁸ Loprieno has argued that the Hyksos period "represents the backbone of the perceptions of Egyptian national history during Hellenistic times" and pointed out several important ways in which the extant fragments of Manetho/Josephus' Hyksos narrative engage with the late Egyptian view of history.⁸⁹ It is particularly striking that in Manetho's account of the end of the Hyksos period, the residents of Avaris who depart Egypt found Jerusalem (*Against Apion* 1.88-90).⁹⁰ The foundation of cities is clearly an important part of this episode about displaced people, and we may thus be justified in scrutinizing the foundation narrative modes Manetho may have employed.

Here I consider Josephus' quotation in detail, assuming it retains some aspects of the Manethonian text (*Against Apion* 1.77-78):⁹¹

(82) Syncellus according to Africanus: ὁ τὰ ἐν Μέμφει βασιλεια οικοδομήσας; Syncellus according to Eusebius: τὰ ἐν Μέμφει βασιλεια ᾠκοδόμησεν. The Armenian translation of Eusebius writes "in the city of the Memphites he built the palace" (i Memp'ats'wots' k'alak'in shineats' ark'unis). DILLERY 2015, p. 178, suggests the Athothis entry could be complete as it resembles the entries in the traditional Egyptian kinglists, e.g. the Palermo Stone.

(83) DERCHAIN 2006, p. 76, n. 27.

(84) MOYER 2011, p. 103-141.

(85) For the Hyksos and Manetho's infamous version of the Exodus story, see recently with further bibliography BARCLAY 2007, p. 341-349, MOYER 2011, p. 118-125, and DILLERY 2015, p. 315-347.

(86) BARCLAY 2007, p. 341-342 and 344-347, surveys how Manetho/Josephus's narratives fit the Egyptian narrative of Typhonian chaos, stressing how Avaris is a lynchpin, but does not cover its foundation specifically.

(87) BARCLAY 2007, p. 54, notes that Josephus' Manetho "defines Avaris in his narrative in five different ways." This is likely at least partly the result of Josephus' filtering.

(88) It is of course possible that Manetho did not use this word with the full sense of "political *polis*" as the term would imply in a traditional Greek foundation story. Reading into this term is in many ways predicated on accepting the absence of a Manethonian narrative of the creation of the city of Memphis as significant.

(89) LOPRIENO 2003, p. 142-150, quotation at p. 145. See Barclay 2007, p. 344, for the high number of Greco-Roman sources that discuss the Exodus story.

(90) BARCLAY 2007, p. 59-60 and 346-347, argues that this was originally in Manetho, suggesting that it may have been inspired by Ptolemy I Soter's capture of Jerusalem and the demonization of these enemies.

(91) Syncellus' quotation of Eusebius' Manetho (Waddell Fr. 48a) writes that after capturing Memphis "the Shepherds also founded a city in the Sethroite nome from which they set out and subdued the Egyptians" (οἱ καὶ ἐν τῷ Σεθροῖτῃ νομῷ πόλιν ἔκτισαν, ἀφ' ἧς ὁρμώμενοι Αἰγυπτίους ἐχειρώσαντο).

καὶ οὗτος ἐν τῇ Μέμφιδι κατεγίνετο, τὴν τε ἄνω καὶ κάτω χώραν δασμολογῶν καὶ φρουρὰν ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδειοτάτοις καταλείπων τόποις. μάλιστα δὲ καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀνατολὴν ἡσφαλίσατο μέρη, προορώμενος, Ἀσσυρίων ποτὲ μείζον ἰσχυόντων, ἐσομένην ἐπιθυμία τῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλείας ἔφοδον. εὐρῶν δὲ ἐν νομῶ τῷ Σαῖτῃ πόλιν ἐπικαιροτάτην, κειμένην μὲν πρὸς ἀνατολὴν τοῦ Βουβαστίτου ποταμοῦ, καλουμένην δ' ἀπὸ τινος ἀρχαίας θεολογίας Ἀῶριν, ταύτην ἔκτισεν τε καὶ τοῖς τείχεσιν ὄχυρωτάτην ἐποίησεν ἐνοικίσας αὐτῇ καὶ πλῆθος ὀπλιτῶν εἰς εἴκοσι καὶ τέσσαρας μυριάδας ἀνδρῶν προφυλακὴν.

And this king (Salitis) dwelled in Memphis, subjecting the land, upper and lower, to tribute and establishing a garrison in the most suitable places. He especially secured the regions near the east, foreseeing that whenever the Assyrians grew much stronger there would be an attack from their desire for his kingdom. Having discovered a most strategic city in the Saite nome, situated on the east of the Boubastite branch, called Avaris from some ancient story about the gods, he founded it, made it most secure with walls, and settled in it as a guard a multitude of soldiers to the number of twenty-four myriads.

This passage presents an account of how invaders governed Egypt. First Salitis dwelled in Memphis, but then decided he needed a new city to protect Egypt from the northeast. Similar decisions to create a Delta base appear in the Egyptian historical record, for example in the foundation of Pi-Ramesses itself as well as the northern drift of the Egyptian capital in the late period, as the Saite and Nectanebid pharaohs based themselves in Sais and Sebennyptos respectively.⁹² As I discussed above, the references to city-foundation that survive from the pharaonic period often involve protecting the eastern frontier, and, ironically, eastern invaders here decide that they too need to protect this area. Manetho may thus have been applying a traditional Egyptian paradigm of city foundation for external defense, and it may thus be too facile to compare the situation of the new Greek rulers in Egypt as they waited in Memphis for Alexandria to be built to Salitis' initial residence in Memphis.

Yet, the puzzling circumstance of Salitis both discovering and founding the city of Avaris could reflect the fact that Rhakotis—in some form—existed before Alexandria.⁹³ As Demotic historical narratives are known for layering historical times, it does not seem impossible that Manetho would have added his own time and the model of the most recent major urban foundation in Egypt to his account of the past, especially if he were connected to the Ptolemaic court as Plutarch suggests (*On Isis and Osiris* 28).⁹⁴ Regardless, whether we accept this connection or not, Salitis' greater strategy reflects the Ptolemaic practice of founding a network of cities controlled by a larger city in order to control new territory.⁹⁵ Avaris and Memphis are the nodes which control the garrisons throughout the country and facilitate Hyksos rule.

When Josephus returns to Manetho and the city of Avaris in the story of Osarseph, the place is called Typhonian (*Against Apion* 1. 237 ἡ πόλις κατὰ τὴν θεολογίαν ἄνωθεν Τυφώνιος). In his perceptive discussion of the “apocalyptic orientation” of the story of the lepers, Dillery cites the “foundation or rather refoundation of Avaris, the Typhonic city” as an apocalyptic element because it is predicted by ancient religious knowledge and because the adjective Typhonian is applied to

(92) I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for stressing this point.

(93) DILLERY 2015, p. 320-321, suggests that the re-foundation may reflect “multiple stages of occupation” at Avaris. It is tempting to suggest a further link between the fortified city of Avaris and the early name for Alexandria, “fortress of Alexander,” in the Satrap Stela.

(94) For a recent overview of the sources for Manetho's life and position, see ESCOLANO-POVEDA 2020, p. 92-105.

(95) The designation of the site as ἐπικαιροτάτην may recall the location in the Ptolemaic foundation inscription for Arsinoe in Cilicia (τόπον ἐπικαιρον καταλαβόμενος πόλιν ἔκτισεν, l.21).

Alexandria and its inhabitants in the *Oracle of the Potter* tradition.⁹⁶ I do not necessarily agree that Manetho's two references to θεολογία (1.78 and 1.237) mean that the city's foundation is predicted from ancient stories about the gods, which is, I assume, what Dillery is basing his interpretation on since the prophecy of Amenophis in the leper story does not include Avaris. It is, however, the case that a cult of the Egyptian god of chaos Seth was established in Avaris in the 14th Dynasty, and Manetho may reflect historical cult topography when describing the site.⁹⁷ Despite this potential basis in reality for "Typhonian," I am convinced that the connection with the *Oracle of the Potter's* response to Alexandria is significant. In the *Oracle*, Alexandria is connected with the forces of Typhon, chaos, and foreigners, and it must be eradicated in order to let Memphis revive. This prophetic tradition accordingly sees the foundation of a new city in Egypt as a sign of something very wrong. Although it is hard to know how influence should be apportioned, we see in Manetho the development of a narrative of city foundation that signaled the opposite of the ideal partnership between gods and pharaoh from the Egyptian tradition.

Indeed, it is striking that after Avaris was a Hyksos base for 511 years, the site lasted in its depopulated state to be re-occupied by the "lepers" in Manetho's 18th Dynasty (*Against Apion* 1.237-238). While the pharaoh allowed the lepers to settle, they began their rebellion from the city, and it became the site of disruption and conflict again. The problem with Avaris thus does not seem to be that it didn't always exist. It was a site incorporated within the cultic topography of the land; the problem was literally finding and settling it. In actual fact, Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a) is situated very close to the later site of Pi-Ramesses (Quantir). While the precise location of these cities may not have been known to Manetho—and in fact they have not been known to modern scholars until quite recently—we may have expected him to have referred to the *Praises of Pi-Ramesses* in his narrative of Avaris if he were aware of them.⁹⁸ But it is also possible that this very proximity may have meant that a different narrative pattern was required to mark the difference between the city of a legitimate Egyptian king and the city of invaders. Perhaps Manetho invoked the *polis* model because it conveyed this very difference.

While I hesitate to suggest that Manetho would have made the impolitic move of likening the Ptolemies to the Hyksos, Avaris is similarly a new capital city (re)built by foreigners that was in Egypt but in a sense separate from Egypt.⁹⁹ In the Manethonian epitomes, the Hyksos in fact attack and subdue Egypt from the base they found at Avaris, which, if faithful to the original Manetho, suggests an even more hostile cast to the new city than we read in Josephus. The foundation of Alexandria and the various reactions the new capital provoked may have prompted Manetho to think comparatively about the foundation of Avaris and may perhaps have also suggested new ways in which to recount history, mixing Egyptian and contemporary Greco-Egyptian modes, inspired by a new Greek reality. It is possible that without explicitly sharing the *Oracle of the Potter's* view that Alexandria was an abomination, Manetho may have been aware of such positions and used the powerful discourse of the Typhonian city to intensify his account of Avaris. If readers were aware of this discourse, they would be able to see a historical example of its imagined scenarios in the fate of the Hyksos city. Indeed, the fact that Avaris is settled and depopulated twice in Manetho/Josephus'

(96) DILLERY 1999, p. 107 with note 47. For a comparison of the *Oracle of the Potter* and the Lepers story that includes the foreigners' northern base near the sea, see LADYNIN 2016, p. 166-170 and p. 173-174.

(97) LOPRIENO 2003, p. 144. Cf. MOYER 2011, p. 120 n. 128.

(98) GOZZOLI 2009, p. 206, points out that Manetho locates the capital of the 19th and 20th Dynasties at Thebes instead of Pi-Ramesses.

(99) DILLERY 2015, p. 326 (cf. also p. 328 and 346-347), suggests that in fact Manetho drew a parallel between Hyksos and Ptolemies to provide an "admonition" on the legitimating power of the priests.

narrative plays out the apocalyptic promise twice with the same consequences for Egypt.¹⁰⁰ By displacing the Typhonian city into the past, Manetho could provide an example for the Ptolemies of what not to do and further “teach [them] to read Egyptian history in an Egyptian fashion,” which Moyer has argued is the intent of the whole *Aegyptiaca*.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Moyer has recently made the case that the creation of a Ptolemaic dynastic time based on the new Greek cities of Alexandria and Ptolemais Hermiou influenced Manetho’s organization of Egyptian history into dynasties linked to specific Egyptian cities.¹⁰² Notably, Manetho does not connect the foreign Ethiopian and Persian dynasties to any city, thus dissociating their identity as rulers from Egypt’s divinely created urban fabric. The Hyksos situation was, however, more complex as these foreigners ruled Egypt for centuries in Manetho’s timeline.¹⁰³ Since cities had already helped Manetho innovate in his periodization of Egyptian kings, it is not surprising that he would have deployed responses to Alexandria to conceptualize his narrative of Avaris. As the *Prophecy of Neferty* lamented, in the time of trouble “we have no (border) fortress, for foreigners now hold it.” An old Egyptian narrative pattern of chaos and foreign disruption was thus again and perhaps even more closely tied to the foundation of cities as this pattern had become newly relevant with the foundation of Alexandria.

DIODORUS

While the extant fragments of Manetho have almost nothing to say about the foundation of Egypt’s most ancient cities, Diodorus reports that “the foundation of this city [Thebes] is disputed among both Greek prose writers and Egyptian priests” (1.15.2).¹⁰⁴ Recently, Diodorus’ statement that Greek prose-writers and Egyptian priests told different things about Sesostriis (1.53.1) has been essentially confirmed by the fact that narratives about this king are known from Greek and Demotic papyri from the Roman Imperial period.¹⁰⁵ Here, I suggest that we take Diodorus’ statement about Thebes similarly at face value and cautiously suppose that these different Theban foundation stories reflect traditions in circulation in Ptolemaic Egypt that may derive from Egyptian, Greek, and Greco-Egyptian contexts. In this section I will investigate the variant traditions Diodorus records about Thebes and Memphis through the lens of Ptolemaic foundation. In general, Diodorus’ stories appear to fit more closely with the Greek side of foundation traditions, but we can also see a different side of the influence wielded by discourses on the life of Alexandria from what can be gleaned from Manetho’s story of Avaris. Indeed, Avaris and the Hyksos do not appear in Diodorus’ account of Egyptian history, which suggests that this part of the Egyptian past was not relevant to his sources the way it was to Manetho. Perhaps they were not motivated to provide an example for the Ptolemies of how not to use their new city. While I agree that scholars must give Diodorus credit for crafting his own history, I am hesitant to imagine that he himself decided not to include these events in his account and am more inclined to suggest that his sources did not mention them.

(100) The site is intriguingly described as ἐρημωθεῖσαν πόλιν when the lepers are given it, which recalls the wish in the *Oracle of the Potter* that Alexandria be deserted (P. Oxy. 2332, l. 54-55 ἢ τε τῶν ζωνοφόρων <πόλις> ἐρημωθήσεται).

(101) MOYER 2011, p. 141.

(102) MOYER 2021, p. 146-161, especially p. 154-156. He notes that the Turin King List identifies only the kings of what we call the 12th Dynasty with the residence Itjtawy. Moyer dates Ptolemaic dynastic crystallization to the middle of Ptolemy Philadelphus’ reign.

(103) MOYER 2021, p. 155 n. 101 points out that “the peripheral location of [Avaris] and its non-Egyptian associations” render the Hyksos an “ambiguous” case.

(104) The city may have been symbolically re-founded under Cleopatra VII (on which see FISCHER-BOVET 2021, p. 80-82), but this of course postdated Diodorus’ visit to Egypt in 60-57 BCE.

(105) TRNKA-AMRHEIN 2020, p. 86-88.

Before explaining that there is no agreement on the foundation of Thebes, Diodorus presents an account of its foundation that seems to mix Egyptian and Ptolemaic practices (1.15.1):

Κτίσαι δὲ φασὶ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ὀσίριν πόλιν ἐν τῇ Θηβαίδι τῇ κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἑκατόμυλον, ἦν ἐκείνους μὲν ἐπώνυμον ποιῆσαι τῆς μητρὸς, τοὺς δὲ μεταγενεστέρους αὐτὴν ὀνομάζειν Διὸς πόλιν, ἐνίους δὲ Θήβας. ἀμφισβητεῖται δ' ἢ κτίσις τῆς πόλεως ταύτης οὐ μόνον παρὰ τοῖς συγγραφεῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἱερεῦσι· πολλοὶ γὰρ ἱστοροῦσιν οὐχ ὑπὸ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ὀσίριν κτισθῆναι τὰς Θήβας, ἀλλὰ πολλοῖς ὕστερον ἔτεσιν ὑπὸ τινος βασιλέως, περὶ οὗ τὰ κατὰ μέρος ἐν τοῖς οἰκείοις χρόνοις ἀναγράφωμεν. ἰδρῦσασθαι δὲ καὶ ἱερὸν τῶν γονέων Διὸς τε καὶ Ἥρας ἀξιόλογον τῷ τε μεγέθει καὶ τῇ λοιπῇ πολυτελείᾳ.

They say that those around Osiris founded the hundred-gated city in Egyptian Thebes, which they named after his mother, but younger people called it the city of Zeus, and some called it Thebes. The foundation of this city is disputed not only among the prose-writers, but also among the priests in Egypt themselves. For many relate that Thebes was founded not by those around Osiris but many years later by a king about whom I will record a proportionate account in its proper time. He also built a temple for his parents Zeus and Hera which is worthy of comment for its size and general lavishness.

The fact that this Egyptian capital is founded during the rule of the gods on earth corresponds to the traditional Egyptian notion that cities were founded by the gods for eternity, but it is not Osiris himself who founds the city but “those around him.” This phrase is striking, since usually in ancient historiography the king makes decisions and retains credit for them even if they were (as often) carried out by his underlings. In light of the material discussed above, I wonder whether the extra phrase refers to the real Ptolemaic practice of officials founding cities that were then named after the Ptolemaic dynasty, as in the case of Eumedes and Ptolemais Theron or Boethos and Euergetis.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, naming the new city after the king’s mother reflects Ptolemaic (or generally Hellenistic) naming practice, as Alexander preferred to name cities after himself.¹⁰⁷ We may thus see here a Ptolemaic version of the foundation of Thebes that overlaps practices of the Hellenistic present onto a basically Egyptian tradition. Indeed, while Diodorus introduces his account of the Egyptian gods as the stories told by Egyptians (1.12.10), he interweaves other sources into his narrative, and it is unclear which people “Egyptians” actually means. Given that Diodorus ends his account of the Egyptian gods with the infamous stories of Egyptian world colonization which are also directly attributed to the “Egyptians” but include such Greek stories as Danaus and the Egyptian colonization of Colchis (1.28-29), it seems that for Diodorus, “Egyptians” means people of Ptolemaic Egypt and not ethnic Egyptians per se. These stories of foreign colonization are essential for understanding Ptolemaic foundation discourse,¹⁰⁸ but there is no room to treat them here. What I do want to draw from this passage is that Diodorus’ version of the foundation of Thebes discussed above could likely be a Ptolemaic story.

As promised, Diodorus takes up the alternate account that Thebes was founded by a later king in 1.45.4-6, and after the discussion of how this king built up the city, we can see hints of the competition between world capitals that was such a part of the discourse of Alexandria. In this respect too, Diodorus seems to interweave older Egyptian and Ptolemaic discourses:

(106) See further MUELLER 2003, 183-184, on Philadelphia in the Fayoum and Arsinoe near Nagidos in Cilicia.

(107) Cf. Letter of Thrasesas to Arsinoe inscription, l. 21-22: [Ἀετός ὁ στρατηγός] πόλιν ἐκτίσεν Ἀρσινόην ἐπώνυμον τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως. BURTON 1972, p. 75-76, cites the theory that since Osiris was called the son of Rhea, who could be equated with Nut, this explanation may have arisen from Egyptians calling Thebes *nīwt* (city), but this seems less convincing to me.

(108) See e.g. MOYER 2011, p. 116-118, on Diodorus’ version of the Exodus narrative in Book 40, which may come from Hecataeus’ *Aegyptiaca*.

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα κατασταθέντος βασιλέως Βουσίριδος καὶ τῶν τούτου πάλιν ἐγγόνων ὀκτώ, τὸν τελευταῖον ὁμώνυμον ὄντα τῷ πρώτῳ φασι κτίσαι τὴν ὑπὸ μὲν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καλουμένην Διὸς πόλιν τὴν μεγάλην, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν Ἑλλήνων Θήβας.

[...]

καὶ καθόλου τὴν πόλιν εὐδαιμονεστάτην οὐ μόνον τῶν κατ' Αἴγυπτον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πασῶν ποιῆσαι. διὰ δὲ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς περὶ αὐτὴν εὐπορίας τε καὶ δυνάμεως εἰς πάντα τόπον τῆς φήμης διαδεδομένης ἐπιμεμῆσθαι καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν αὐτῆς φασιν ἐν οἷς λέγει “οὐδ' ὅσα Θήβας Αἰγυπτίας...”

After these things when Bousiris became king and his eight descendants after him, they say that the final descendant, also named Bousiris, founded the city which is called the great city of Zeus by the Egyptians, but Thebes by the Greeks.

[...]

And in general he made the city the most prosperous not only of the cities in Egypt but also of all the other cities. And because its reputation has spread to every place on account of the superiority of the city's abundance and power, they say the poet also mentioned it in the verses in which he says “nor as many things as Egyptian Thebes...”

The conclusion of Bousiris' foundation is thus that Thebes is “the most prosperous (εὐδαιμονεστάτην) city” in the entire world. This may reflect the general Greek knowledge of Thebes' position within the Egyptian tradition as the “first” city,¹⁰⁹ but Diodorus measures this in Greek terms by registering the city's presence in Homer. While the homonymy of Greek and Egyptian Thebes was an old topic in Greek writing about Egypt, the fact that Diodorus mentions the city's world status is particularly suggestive given his account of Memphis, which I discuss next. Thebes must be a city of world renown so that Memphis may surpass it.

Indeed, everything about Memphis is greater. In Diodorus' presentation of the variant accounts of Memphis' foundation, we see three recognizable narrative patterns, each from their own tradition of foundation narratives: the local nymph story from Greek tradition, a royal founder from Egyptian tradition mediated through Greek historiography, and the placement of Memphis in a succession of cities that recalls the discourse of urban rise and fall inspired by Alexandria. Diodorus begins with the royal founder, Uchoreus, who is agreed to be the equivalent of Min/Menes, Egypt's first pharaoh (1.50.3-4):¹¹⁰

τῶν δὲ τούτου τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπογόνων ὄγδοος ὁ προσαγορευθεὶς Οὐχόρευς ἔκτισε πόλιν Μέμφιν, ἐπιφανεστάτην τῶν κατ' Αἴγυπτον. ἐξελέξατο μὲν γὰρ τόπον ἐπικαιρότατον ἀπάσης τῆς χώρας, ὅπου σχιζόμενος ὁ Νεῖλος εἰς πλείονα μέρη ποιεῖ τὸ καλούμενον ἀπὸ τοῦ σχήματος Δέλτα.

Of this king's successors, the eighth, called Uchoreus, founded the city of Memphis, the most conspicuous of the cities in Egypt. For he picked out the most advantageous place in the whole country, where the Nile, splitting into several parts, creates the area called the Delta from its shape.

The very fact that he attributes the foundation to Menes is Greek, since Egyptian texts do not report this story as discussed above, but the idea that a king creates a new city is at the root of the Praises of the City discourse, even if, as here, he founds a city in the Greek sense and not a residence in the Egyptian. Diodorus then details the infrastructure of the city, which explains why Memphis came to supplant Thebes (1.50.6-7):

οὕτω δὲ καλῶς ὁ κτίσας αὐτὴν ἐστοχάσατο τῆς τῶν τόπων εὐκαιρίας ὥστε τοὺς ἐξῆς βασιλεῖς σχεδὸν ἅπαντας καταλιπόντας τὰς Θήβας τὰ τε βασιλεία καὶ τὴν οἴκησιν ἐν ταύτῃ ποιεῖσθαι. διόπερ ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν χρόνων ἤρξατο ταπεινοῦσθαι μὲν τὰ περὶ τὰς Θήβας, αὐξεσθαι δὲ τὰ περὶ τὴν Μέμφιν, ἕως Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως. τούτου γὰρ ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ τὴν ἐπώνυμον αὐτῷ πόλιν οἰκίσαντος οἱ κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς βασιλεύσαντες τῆς Αἰγύπτου πάντες ἐφιλοτιμήθησαν εἰς τὴν ταύτης αὐξήσιν. οἱ μὲν γὰρ βασιλεῖς μεγαλοπρεπέσιν, οἱ δὲ νεωρίοις καὶ λιμέσιν, οἱ δ' ἑτέροις ἀναθήμασι

(109) VON RECKLINGHAUSEN 2007, p. 145-146 and 152.

(110) BURTON 1972, p. 158. Οὐχόρευς is supposed to be a translation of Menes via the Greek ὄχυρος, “lasting.”

καὶ κατασκευάσασιν ἀξιολόγοις ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἐκόσμησαν αὐτὴν ὥστε παρὰ τοῖς πλείστοις πρώτην ἢ δευτέραν ἀριθμεῖσθαι τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην πόλεων.

The one who founded it calculated the site's suitability so well that nearly all the succeeding kings left Thebes behind and made their palace and home in this city. For this very reason after those times the area around Thebes began to be diminished while the area around Memphis began to grow, until the kingship of Alexander. For when he founded the city named after himself by the sea, all those who ruled Egypt in succession to him vied to grow it. For some adorned it with astounding palaces, others with dockyards and harbors, others with various dedications and remarkable works of art to the point that among many Alexandria is numbered the first or second of the cities in the entire world.

Diodorus concludes with a proleptic comment on what in fact came to pass and what the *Oracle of the Potter* so fiercely wished undone, namely that Alexandria would surpass Memphis. But what is particularly remarkable about this passage is that Thebes appears as the first victim of a new royal foundation. The kings after Uchoreus all abandon Thebes and make their residence in Memphis. This paradoxically reiterated action of successive kings “making their palace and residence” (τὰ τε βασιλεια καὶ τὴν οἴκησιν ἐν ταύτῃ ποιεῖσθαι) in Memphis recalls the phrase that was essential for the king's foundation in the Praises of Piramesse and that may be echoed in the Satrap Stela and Manetho's account of Athothis. Of course, in the Ptolemaic period, Thebes was in fact eclipsed by Memphis as the northern city held allegiance to the Macedonian dynasty, but it is remarkable that this contemporary reality is projected back to the moment of Memphis' foundation. It is further noteworthy that Diodorus mentions Alexander's foundation of Alexandria and the Ptolemies' development of the city at this point, since he in fact advises the reader that he will discuss Alexandria in the appropriate chronological place (ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις χρόνοις) and does so at 17.52.¹¹¹

The historical chronology Thebes—Memphis—Alexandria cannot come from Herodotus, who begins his Egyptian kinglist with Menes and the foundation of Memphis as we saw above. We may thus wonder whether Diodorus reports a tradition that included the elements of un-founding that were thought to result upon the foundation of a new capital after the creation of Alexandria. If the *Oracle of the Potter* believed that Alexandria had stolen the gods of Memphis and that all would be well when those gods returned to Memphis and Alexandria was consequently destroyed, the version behind Diodorus may have viewed the life of cities and the changes caused by a new foundation in a more disinterested light. Perhaps after the foundation of Alexandria a new theory of the rise and fall of cities through the long span of Egyptian history could take shape within historiography. Whether Diodorus or his source believed that eventually Alexandria too would be supplanted by a new foundation is an open question.

Finally, Diodorus appends a third version of city foundation to the Uchoreus story when he writes about this king's daughter (1.51.3). This third myth follows a recognizably Greek foundation narrative pattern:

τὴν δὲ προειρημένην πόλιν ὀνομασθῆναι τινές φασιν ἀπὸ τῆς θυγατρὸς τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτὴν βασιλέως. ταύτης δὲ μυθολογοῦσιν ἐρασθῆναι τὸν ποταμὸν Νεῖλον ὁμοιωθέντα ταύρῳ, καὶ γεννησάσθαι τὸν ἐπ' ἀρετῇ θαυμασθέντα παρὰ τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις Αἴγυπτον, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ τὴν σύμπασαν χώραν τυχεῖν τῆς προσηγορίας.

Some say that the aforementioned city was named after the daughter of the king who founded it. They tell the myth that the river Nile, having likened himself to a bull, desired her and that she gave birth to Aegyptus, who was marveled at for his virtue by the native Egyptians, and from whom the whole land happened on its name.

(111) For Strabo *Geography* 17.1.42, Memphis and Ptolemais Hermiou held second place to Alexandria, on which see MUELLER 2006, p. 146-147.

A variant of this story has Memphis, the daughter of the Nile, marry Epaphus who founds the city in her honor.¹¹² This ties into a complex of Argive myths about Io and the Danaids that connected Egypt and Greece in the Greek tradition,¹¹³ and which, as Stephens has shown, were particularly important and useful to the Ptolemies, who claimed a connection to the “Argive” Macedonian kings while ruling Egypt.¹¹⁴ In the variant Diodorus relates, we clearly recognize a Greek foundation narrative pattern in which a river god seduces a local girl who becomes eponymous of the land along with her child.

In this trio of foundation stories for Memphis, we may see not only a layering of narratives facilitated by the Greek tradition that allowed a city to have multiple foundation narratives but also how this layering could allow an Egyptian city to possess simultaneously an Egyptian, Greco-Egyptian, and Greek foundation story. While it is impossible to know how these traditions would have competed in Ptolemaic Egypt from Diodorus’ text, it is significant that he was able to gather them in the first century BCE. We can only assume that each satisfied a different audience in Ptolemaic Egypt.

CONCLUSION

The themes of the succession of empires and of the competition between world capitals such as Alexandria, Rome, Athens, and Babylon are well known in Greek and Roman historiography. I have argued that in the Ptolemaic texts considered here we can trace a more local, Egyptian response to the idea of the succession of cities that was inspired by the creation and meteoric rise of Alexandria. Indeed, in the varied and sometimes violent responses to Alexandria, it is possible to register the disruption this city caused within Greek and Egyptian traditions of city foundation. The *Oracle of the Potter* was aggressively inspired by this discourse to wish for the complete destruction of the new city and Memphis’ return to glory. While Diodorus imagined Memphis as a proto-Alexandria that eclipsed Thebes, Manetho may have applied another, darker strand of the response to Alexandria to reinterpret a troubled time in Egyptian history and its monumental embodiment, Avaris, as a negative example with contemporary relevance.

The discourse of urban instability and competition between Alexandria and Memphis was perhaps wider than scholarship has so far tracked, and a further passage may present an interesting foil to the texts discussed above. The prophecies compiled in the *Sibylline Oracles* (11.232-238) include a short passage where the victory of Alexandria is celebrated to the chagrin of Memphis in a complete reversal of the wishes of the *Oracle of the Potter*:¹¹⁵

ἔσται δ’ Αἴγυπτος νύμφη τότε κοιρανέουσα,
καὶ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη τε Μακεδονίῳ ἀνακτος,
πότνι’ Ἀλεξάνδρεια, κλυτὴ θρέπτειρα πολλῶν
κάλλει τε στίλβουσα, μόνη μητρόπολις ἔσται.
καὶ τότε μεμφέσθω Μέμφις τοῖς κοιρανέουσιν.
εἰρήνη δ’ ἔσται βαθεῖα κατὰ κόσμον ἅπαντα·
γῆ δὲ μελάμβωλος καρποῦς τότε πλείονας ἔξει.

Then Egypt will be a ruling bride, and the great city of the Macedonian leader, lady Alexandria, famous nurse of cities, shining in beauty, will be the only metropolis. And then let Memphis blame

(112) DILLERY 2004, p. 254.

(113) RUTHERFORD 2011, p. 462-463.

(114) E.g. STEPHENS 2012, p. 143-148.

(115) For hostility to Memphis in *Sibylline Oracles* 5 in a Jewish context, see COLLINS 1997, p. 209.

the rulers. But peace will be wide throughout the whole universe. And the earth with black soil will then have many fruits.

In Greek hexameters filled with epic diction, the prophecy returns to the Greek idea of a city as a bride and puns—in Greek—on Memphis' defeat (μεμφέσθω Μέμφις). The perfect city thus becomes the city of blame. While the *Oracle of the Potter* and texts like it prophesied unrest for Alexandria, this prophecy sees the new capital as the source of world peace and agricultural abundance for Egypt. It seems probable that the text preserved in the *Sibylline Oracles* was directly responding to the discourse we can uncover through the *Oracle of the Potter*.

In a different context, the *Oracle of the Lamb* (P. Dem. Wien D 10000) as recently re-edited by Chauveau takes up the idea of competitive foundation in two significant ways. First, Chauveau makes the convincing argument that when the oracle invokes the infamous “one of 55 years” as “the one of the foundation” (*Pa-t-snty.t*), readers should also register this title according to the etymological play—typical in Egyptian texts—as “the one of the two” and that consequently we can read the phrase as a reference to the false capital founder Alexander and the legitimate Egyptian founder-savior to come.¹¹⁶ Second, he reinterprets the text to expand the tragic scene of urban devastation suffered by Sebennytos, the last native Egyptian capital under the Nectanebids, and argues that the previous succession of place names which lament this devastation represents the historical succession of Egyptian capitals: Abydos, Memphis, and Thebes.¹¹⁷ The presence of Alexandria and Sebennytos, two capitals from different periods, reflects the layering of historical contexts that is familiar in Demotic texts, and we may wonder whether “the one of the 55 years” is expected to found the true successor capital to Sebennytos. The colophon of the *Oracle's* papyrus dates it to 4 CE, and many dates in the Ptolemaic period have been proposed for its composition, but the crucial point is that it could have been influenced by the foundation of Alexandria and the new Ptolemaic discourse of city foundation.¹¹⁸

The Ptolemaic period saw a rich and developing foundation discourse that both drew on Greek and Egyptian precedents but also created its own new themes and narrative patterns. In this article, I argue that one strand of this discourse catalyzed around the foundation of Alexandria, which was striking for many and traumatic for some. In addition to shaping debates about the present, these ideas could also be retrospectively used to re-interpret the literary tradition and the historical past, which in turn made that past even more relevant to the Ptolemaic present. While many Ptolemaic texts on city foundation will inevitably remain lost to scholarship, historians of Egypt writing in the Ptolemaic period such as Diodorus and Manetho still have much to offer for understanding Ptolemaic culture and how that culture may have been transmitted to the larger Mediterranean world.¹¹⁹

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(116) CHAUVEAU 2017, p. 52-53.

(117) CHAUVEAU 2017, p. 53-56. His interpretation of the “vine garden” and “thicket of melons and squash” as a metaphorical reference to the human blood and dismembered heads of a massacre at Sebennytos is particularly striking. He interprets this as a real historical event reflected in other Demotic texts, which does not necessarily discount its incorporation into a discourse of successive capitals.

(118) CHAUVEAU 2017, p. 61, recently dates it to the reign of Ptolemy III after the third Syrian war. He believes this was an updating of an earlier prophecy that focused on Psammetichos I as “the one of the 55-years,” since that pharaoh ruled for 55 years.

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