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Gravure par Sébastien Bourdon d'après le tableau de Fragonard d'Auguste Octave visitant la tombe d'Alexandre

The Book Launch of Cocktails and Camels

Sabrina Ghorayeb

The novelist and illustrator Jacqueline Carol's (née Klat) first book, *Cocktails and Camels*, was originally published in New York in 1960. The humorous portrait of a family of Lebanese origins living in the heyday of cosmopolitan Alexandria during the 1930s and 1940s, *Cocktails and Camels* evokes the lifestyle of a bygone era. With the kind permission of its author, the Alexandria and Mediterranean Center decided to republish it as part of its ongoing mission to preserve the heritage of Alexandria. And so it was that on 19 March 2009, the book launch of the newly edited *Cocktails and Camels* was organized jointly at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina by Alex Med and the EGC Association. The event thus became a double celebration: the book launch of *Cocktails and Camels* on the one hand, and a reunion of old EGCians of all generations on the other. The author, Jacqueline Carol, was herself a student at EGC (English Girls' College) during the 1940s and her novel includes a whole chapter describing life at the school at that time.

A considerable number of ex-pupils and teachers of EGC attended the event. Bonnie Atef, the President of the EGC Alumni and her deputy, Saadat Marzouk, were among the numerous EGC graduates present. Representing the teachers were Enaam Defrawi, who became headmistress of the EGC after Ann Khalafallah, Helen Marzouk, the art teacher, Afraa Aboul Seoud, the Arabic teacher, and many others.

Dr. Mohamed Awad began the evening by welcoming the audience, saying, "It gives me great pleasure to host this event, as a VC boy!" He then joked about how the VC (Victoria College) boys were always banned from attending most of the events at the EGC, since the headmistress, Mrs. Khalafallah, always made sure that they never had "easy access" and because some times "naughty boys" would sabotage some of those events. He also mentioned the fact that there had always been a very strong affinity between the EGC girls and the VC boys, though the boys said that EGC stood for "English Gorilla Club", while the girls said VC stood for "Vipers' College" or "Vacuum Cleaners"!

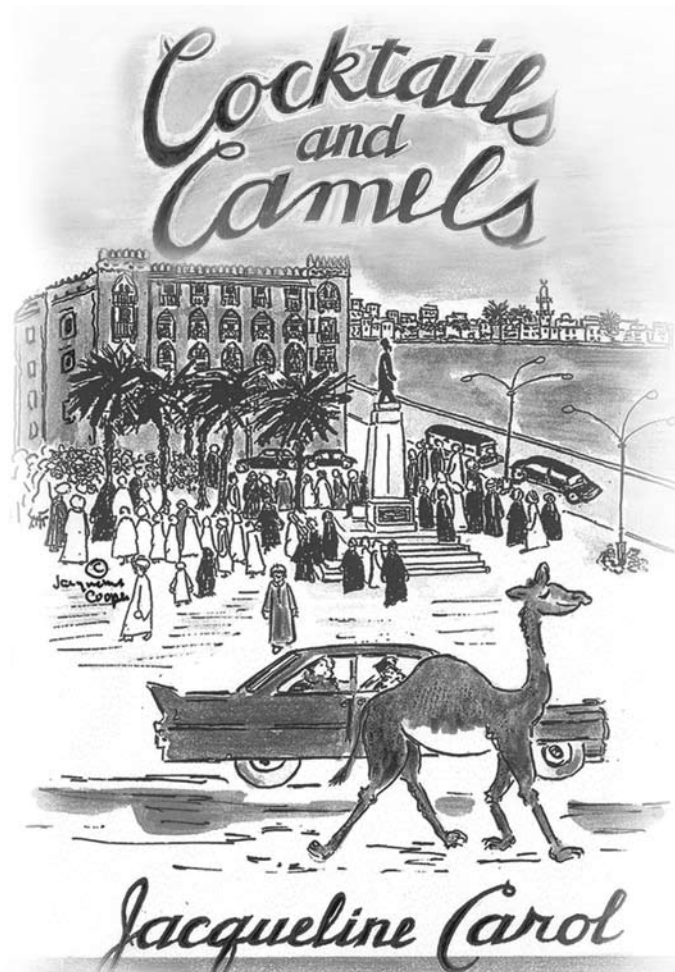
Following these opening remarks, Sahar Hamouda, herself an old EGCian, spoke about Jacqueline's life in Alexandria and described how "she wrote it here in her garden in Rushdy, under the mimosa tree, in pencil". Dr Hamouda also explained that *Cocktail and Camels* was "the first of a genre which is sometimes referred to as literature of nostalgia that became particular to Alexandria". She read a number of evocative and humorous passages from the novel, including some describing the school, much to the amusement of all gathered:

"... those parents who thought it was fashionable to move with the times and give their daughters a British education were in for a few surprises where the new girls' college was concerned. [...] the summer uniform came as the first shock, for it consisted of not one, but half a dozen of the brightest colors I have ever seen in my life. Bare legs and open sandals not only were tolerated, but encouraged. I do not know who was responsible for the color scheme, but it may have had something to do with the headmistress, a charming and most unconventional Englishwoman. [...]"

At the tea party which she gave for the bewildered parents, she explained that she had in mind that the girls should all look like flowers.

"Daffodils and bluebells and marigold," she said enthusiastically. "So gay, so gay, don't you think?" she added, addressing herself to Sima's and Rose's mother, who hadn't understood a word and was wondering, not without reason, how her daughters would look in duck-egg blue, Venetian red, and the kind of yellow which would suit dusters, but not her daughters..."

As Dr. Hamouda continued to read aloud, old photographs were projected on the back screen, showing Jacqueline Klat with her classmates and events from the



school's past, reviving old memories for many who were present. When the photo of Ann Khalafallah appeared, the audience broke into applause, expressing their lasting affection for their past headmistress.

Dr. Hamouda then asked Samira Khairallah, who had been a pupil in the same class as Jacqueline Klat, to say a few words about her own experiences at the school. Next, Ann Khalafallah's daughter, Nawal Khalafallah, was invited to speak to the gathering about her mother. She described the early days, from the time when her mother was a maths teacher at EGC, until she became its headmistress, and her quest to preserve the school's spirit as it had been in the 1940s.

Following this, the president of the EGC Association, Bonnie Atef, gave a talk on the history of the school. She then presented the author with a shield on behalf of the Association, which was collected by her cousin, Lucette de Saab.

The evening's grand finale, much awaited by pupils and teachers alike, was the singing of the school song "Pioneers", accompanied on the piano by Mrs. Gelato, EGC's former music teacher. Such was the enthusiasm felt by all that the whole song was sung through a second time!

This event was one of a kind, marking the first, but most probably not the last, collaboration between Alex Med and the EGC Alumni.

Cocktails and Camels can be purchased online at the following site:

<http://www.egyptmemory.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?catalogId=10051&storeId=10001&productId=30119&langId=-1>



The president of the EGC Association, Bonnie Atef, presented a shield to Jacqueline Klat, which was collected on her behalf by her cousin, Lucette de Saab.



Italy in Alexandria

Influences on the Built Environment



On 20 February 2009 Alex Med organized the Alexandrian book launch of Dr. Mohamed Awad's book, *Italy in Alexandria: Influences on the Built Environment*. To a large audience filling the Bibliotheca's West Auditorium, and which included the Italian Consul General and many members of the Italian Community of Alexandria, Dr. Awad gave a talk on Alexandria's built environment, focusing on the various architectural styles and trends which were introduced or adopted by Italian architects over the centuries. The fruit of 25 years' research, this book retraces the role played by Italian architects in the city, from the Classical era, through the different epochs and right up to the present day.



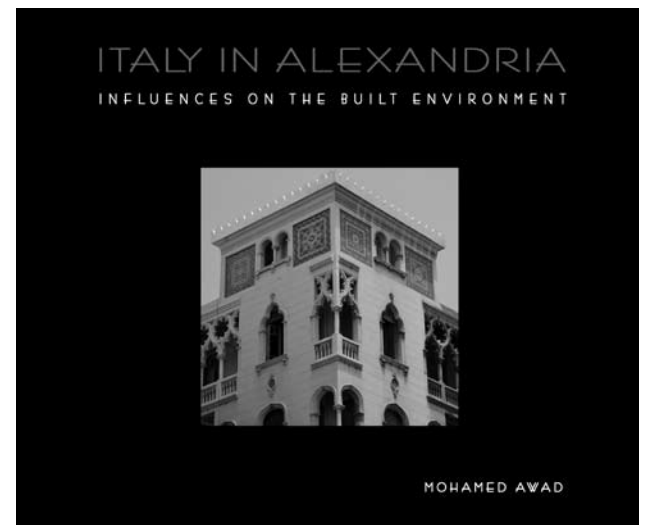
Daguerreotype of Ras El Tin Palace, taken by F. Fesquet on November 1839

As he retraced the development of architectural trends or styles, Dr Awad placed them in the wider context of the socio-economic, political and environmental influences that brought about changes in Alexandrian society. This context also took into consideration processes such as a cultural interaction, modes of production (for example the transfer of new skills and technology) and new habits of consumption (such as the demand for new types of housing).



The Italian Littorie Schools

Highlights included the essential role played by Italians in the rebuilding of the Place des Consuls and surrounding area after the 1882 bombardment of Alexandria. At that time, despite increasing competition from other nationalities, the Italians dominated the building professions and trade. It was also an Italian, Antonio Lasciac, who designed the new Ramleh Railway Station in 1887. Others of the city's public projects designed or built by Italians included the Corniche, Ras El Tin Palace, Montaza Palace, the Police Headquarters of Bab Sharky, and the Fire Brigade Station in Kom El Dikka among others. In the commercial and banking sector, notable examples included the Banco di Roma designed by Gorra Bey in 1905. In the private sector, Italians also designed many of the exclusive villas for Alexandria's wealthy elite: prominent examples being the villas Karam and Bindernagel/Cordahi.



Dr. Awad went on to describe the considerable contribution made by Italians during the modern era. He noted however, that when many foreigners including Italians left in the 1960s during the period of nationalizations, a considerable amount of the building stock was transformed into government offices and public institutions, such as schools and hospitals. One notable example would be the Italian Littorie Schools in Chatby built by Clement Busiri Vici in the early 1930s, which today houses part of the Faculty of Agriculture of Alexandria University. He added that the government's policy of the period of "freezing" rents had led to a general lack of maintenance and the ensuing degradation of many of these buildings.



The author, Dr Mohamed Awad, explained some of the important contributions by Italian architects to Alexandria's built environment to a packed audience in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina's auditorium.

The Book Launch of Alex Med's Fourth Monograph

From Camp Caesar to Cleopatra's Pool: A Swiss Childhood in Alexandria 1934–1950



Esther Zimmerli Hardman reading extracts from her memoirs

On 24 February 2009, Alex Med launched the fourth publication in its Monograph Series: *From Camp Caesar to Cleopatra's Pool: A Swiss Childhood in Alexandria 1934–1950* by Esther Zimmerli Hardman. This monograph, an English translation of Esther Zimmerli Hardman's memoirs, recounts the author's childhood in Alexandria and the lifestyle of her family and of the Swiss community with its traditions and customs, living alongside the other foreign communities of cosmopolitan Alexandria as well as Egyptians.

On the occasion of the book launch, Esther Zimmerli Hardman came especially from Switzerland to read extracts from her memoirs to the gathered audience. She also recounted additional recollections from her childhood and even recited to a delighted audience a number of Arabic expressions which she still remembered from over 60 years ago! Mrs Zimmerli Hardman evoked the multilingual environment of the cosmopolitan city in which she grew up. She described how during the course of a single day

one could speak Arabic to one's domestic staff, Greek to one's hairdresser, Italian in the shops, English in the afternoons or over a game of bridge, and French in the evenings or with one's friends. In her memoirs, she described not only the everyday events of that era, like going to market, to the beach or attending school, but also the conditions during World War II with the Italian air raids, the mandatory general blackouts, and presence of the Allied armed forces in Alexandria. The author also evoked how the social life of her family and the Swiss Community in general often revolved around the Swiss Club in Rue Ambroise Ralli (today renamed Port Saïd Street). The club's varied program of activities included conferences, films, plays, shooting contests, charity bazaars, an annual ball, to name but a few. However, perhaps the most typical were the regular skittle competitions at the club, in which His Majesty King Farouk himself often competed: the author herself recalled having met him there as a young child.

During the book launch, a talk was also given by the monograph's translator, Carole Escoffey, based on her historical introduction to the memoirs. She described the history of the Swiss presence in Egypt and Alexandria, from the foundation and of the Swiss Community of Alexandria in 1858, its heyday when it numbered over 1200 members and had established several clubs and institutions in the city, including the Swiss Club (1917) and Swiss School (1921) both in Chatby, the Swiss Boat Club (1911) near Ras El Tin and the Swiss Shooting Club (1944) in Mamoura to which King Farouk was also a frequent guest.

The book launch ended with questions and comments from the audience, some of whom were members of the present-day Swiss community, which had recently celebrated its 150th anniversary in November 2008. The President of the Swiss Association of Alexandria, Mrs



Nadia Khalifa and her deputy, Dr Ahmed Abdou, were both present and invited members of the audience to visit or join the Swiss Association at its headquarters, now located in Lauren district. The launch ended with the customary book signing by the author.

From Camp Caesar to Cleopatra's Pool: A Swiss Childhood in Alexandria 1934–1950 by Esther Zimmerli Hardman can be purchased online at the following site:
<http://www.egyptmemory.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?catalogId=10051&storeId=10001&productId=30111&langId=-1>



Book signing

The History of the Swiss Community in Alexandria

Carole Escoffey

The Swiss presence in Egypt, like that of other Europeans, has been largely influenced by historical events and circumstances. The first known account by a Swiss traveler, is that of a certain Hans Jacob Ammann (1586–1658) from Zurich, who left his native Switzerland to travel across the Balkans, Constantinople, and the Near East for ten years. In 1613, he described Cairo as “a very industrious city, with many foreigners and envoys from France, England and Venice, as well as beautiful gardens”. However, upon visiting the city of Alexandria a few weeks later, he wrote “It is surrounded by thick city walls strengthened by towers, however these are partly in ruins like most of the town itself of which barely one third is inhabited.”¹

It was nearly two centuries later, in the wake of Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign of 1798–1801, that larger numbers of Europeans, including Swiss nationals, came to Egypt. Although the Egyptian Campaign was first and foremost a military one, the French army was accompanied by over one hundred and fifty scholars, scientists and artists, whose monumental collaborative work, the *Description de l'Égypte*, was to contribute profoundly to the growing European fascination for Egypt and the Orient. It was this growing fascination that drew a number of early Swiss explorers and scholars to the Land of the Pharaohs. Probably the most renowned of these is the Swiss explorer and Orientalist, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1784–1817)². Born in Lausanne, Burckhardt studied Arabic at Cambridge University in England and in 1809 began extensive travels through Lebanon, Syria where he discovered the forgotten city of Petra in 1812, Arabia, Nubia and finally Egypt. Fluent in Arabic, Burckhardt dressed as a Muslim on his travels, calling himself Sheikh Ibrahim Ibn Abdallah. Enduring many hardships, in 1816 he described conditions in Egypt in the following words: “The outbreak of plague which occurred during my brief stay in Alexandria has now reached Cairo, and all the Europeans have already locked themselves up in their houses. As I cannot bear to be shut in and do not wish to remain in the vicinity of this disease, I have decided to stay with the desert Bedouin until the epidemic is over...”³ Returning to Cairo later that year, Burckhardt's health deteriorated until his death in



A picnic of the Swiss Community of Alexandria in Nouzha Gardens, 1900

December 1817. He was buried in the Muslim cemetery of Bab El Nasr, his tomb bearing the Arabic inscription, “Ibrahim El Mahdi, son of Abdallah, Burckhardt, native of Lausanne”. His works, published posthumously by the African Association, include *Travels in Nubia* (1819), *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land* (1822), *Travels in Arabia* (1829), *Arabic Proverbs, or the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1830), and *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* (1831).

Burckhardt was to have a lasting influence on a number of Orientalists who followed in his wake. The Swiss Egyptologists Edouard-Henry Naville (1844–1926) and Gustave Jéquier (1868–1946) both undertook important archeological excavations. The Swiss Hellenic scholar Jules Nicole (1842–1921) was an avid collector of Greek Egyptian papyri, later bequeathing his important collection to the University of Geneva. Jean-Jacques Hess (1866–1949) is renowned for his study of Bedouins, whilst Max van Berchem's (1863–1921) collection of Arabic inscriptions from all over the Islamic world including Cairo, made him the founder of Arabic epigraphy.

In addition to these scholars, another Swiss traveler to Egypt who left his mark, was the linguist and explorer Werner Munzinger (1832–1875). Munzinger combined a fascination for the Orient with an active role in the politics of the time: landing in Egypt in 1852, he pursued trade, exploration, journalism and diplomacy. By 1872, he had been made pasha, and was appointed Egyptian Governor of Eastern Sudan, commanding the Egyptian troops during their invasion of northern Abyssinia in 1875. However Egypt did not only attract scholars and explorers. In 1842, the Swiss painter and engraver Karl Girardet (1813–1871), court painter to King Louis-Philippe of France, spent five months in Egypt with his brother Edouard visiting Alexandria, Cairo and reaching as far south as Minieh. Many of the numerous sketches and paintings he made on his travels were to be the inspiration for works later commissioned at the Palace of Versailles, notably the famous *Bataille d'Héliopolis* (1843). His scenes of Alexandria included *L'Hôpital des Grecs*, *La Porte de Rosette*, *Les Laboureurs égyptiens près du lac Maréotis* and *L'Ancien couvent des franciscains à Alexandrie*.

In time however, the individual Swiss scholars and explorers would give way to compatriots who came to

Egypt for very different reasons. During the nineteenth century, Mohamed Ali's policy of modernization and development would create new opportunities. Swiss companies investing in Egypt would recruit their employees from the homeland. As these brought their families with them, veritable Swiss communities began to form in both Cairo and Alexandria.



An invitation to the celebrations in Nouzha Gardens marking the Swiss Confederation's 600th anniversary in 1891

The Swiss Community of Alexandria

The development of Alexandria, including its port, was a key part of Mohamed Ali's vast modernization program. In 1817, he ordered the digging of the new Mahmoudieh Canal whereas the construction of the Cairo-Alexandria railway in 1856, further improved communications. The city's rapid growth attracted numerous foreigners from all over the Mediterranean, as well as Switzerland. By 1856, a dozen or so Swiss veterans of the Crimean war, jocularly referred to as “les criminels” would meet regularly in a café of the Rue de l'Église Copte in Alexandria. A couple of years later, on 26 December 1856, a group of 32 Swiss nationals met at the Palais Abro on the Place de Consuls and founded the Cercle Suisse d'Alexandrie⁴ which they named Helvetia. Interestingly, the Swiss Community in Cairo founded its own society later, in 1866.



The Swiss Orientalist John Louis Burckhardt (1784–1817)

As the numbers of Swiss in Alexandria grew, their society became very active, organizing picnics, excursions, bazaars, masked balls, as well as activities for the children of the community. In 1891, huge celebrations were held in Nouzha Gardens to mark the 600th anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederation. In addition to members of the Swiss communities of Alexandria and Cairo, the 1200 guests invited included many foreign diplomats and nobility.

In the early days, Helvetia rented premises where its activities included billiards, card tables, singing and music. One of these premises was the *wekala* 5 Elhami Pasha rented for the sum of 300 gold Napoleons in 1865. In 1916, however, the society was at last able to purchase a plot of land in Chatby-les-Bains district for the sum of 2003 Egyptian pounds, on which to build its own club. All those involved in the project were Swiss, from the architect Jauslin, the contractor Lepori, down to the suppliers of building materials. The Swiss Club was inaugurated on July 1917, complete with library, a large reception hall, skittles and tennis courts.⁶



The Swiss Community held many events at its Club in Chatby-les-Bains

Other Swiss institutions were also founded in Alexandria, among them the Club Nautique Suisse, or Swiss Boat Club, founded in 1911. The club soon acquired two canoes, five skiffs, a larger boat, and a cutter, the *Mutz*, and its activities included swimming competitions, regattas and water polo. During World War One, when the port of Alexandria became off-limits to civilians, the Swiss Boat Club moved its activities to the Mahmoudieh Canal. Later in 1936, it



The annual masked ball of the Swiss Club of Alexandria 1936

acquired the boathouse of the Club Nautique Hellénique located near to Ras El Tin Palace. Other important leisure activities for the descendants of William Tell were shooting tournaments, which were held in various desert locations outside Alexandria and Cairo. In 1944, the Swiss Association of Alexandria obtained a plot of land in Mamoura, to the east of Alexandria, from no less than His Majesty King Farouk himself, on which it erected a shooting range.

As the Swiss community grew in numbers, a need was soon felt for a school to cater for the specific needs of its children. A first Swiss school was opened in the 1870s by Auguste Jacot, a Swiss school teacher who had begun teaching in the German school in 1872. However the building was completely destroyed during the 1882 uprising. It did reopen some years later, but it was not until 1920 that a plot of land adjacent to the Swiss Club in Chatby was donated by Mrs. Alfred Reinhart, wife of the then president of the Swiss Society of Alexandria. The newly built school opened in November 1921 with 31 pupils, all of Swiss nationality.



The celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the Club Nautique Suisse in 1936



The Swiss butcher in Alexandria

It is impossible to evoke the Swiss community in Alexandria, with its various institutions, without referring to what brought them to the city in the first place: the many new opportunities for trade, commerce and enterprise. In the early days, it was the cotton trade especially which attracted them: the first Swiss companies for cotton export came as early as 1853. Prominent Swiss families involved in cotton included the Planta, Reinhart, Kupper and Bless families. The Reinhart Company for example, dating back to 1788, had been importing cotton yarn to Switzerland from both Egypt and the United States since the mid nineteenth century: Reinhart & Cie. was founded in Alexandria in 1907 and prospered until it was nationalized in 1963. In addition to Swiss companies, individuals also played a prominent role, such as Linus Gasche who came from Switzerland in the early 1900s and occupied a key position in the Filiature Nationale d'Égypte, the cotton spinning mills of Alexandria founded by a group of German entrepreneurs. When the Germans were obliged to leave during World War One, it was Gasche who took over the running of the company.



The inauguration of the Swiss Shooting Range in 1944 was attended by King Farouk



The first Swiss Consulate of Alexandria, 1935

Although cotton dominated industrial and economic ties between Egypt and Switzerland at that time, a wide variety of other products formed part of trade relations. In 1928, Switzerland was the seventh importer of Egyptian goods directly after the major world powers⁷. Swiss exports to Egypt included foodstuffs such as chocolate, condensed milk and cheese, textiles, articles from metallurgical and mechanical industries such as watches, jewelry, electrical appliances, hydraulic and combustion engines and pumps, and chemical products such as dyes and medicines. When King Fouad I visited Switzerland in 1929, he toured a number of factories including Sulzer which exported Diesel engines and pumps to Egypt and Oerlikon which produced generators and turbines, including the turbo-generators of Alexandria's central power station.

Hotel management was another area where the Swiss presence was felt in Egypt: in Alexandria the Beau Rivage Hotel was owned and run by a Swiss, L. Bolens. Health and welfare was another field where the Swiss were active. The German Deaconess Hospital, founded in Alexandria during the nineteenth century,

became the Anglo-Swiss Hospital during World War One, with mainly British and Swiss doctors. Today it is the Narimane Hospital. One name especially, stands out above the others: Johannes Schiess Pasha (1837–1910) who came to Egypt in 1869 to attend the inauguration of the Suez Canal, later settling in Alexandria where he founded the government Miri Hospital, becoming its director. Dr Schiess also became Vice-President of the Alexandrian Municipality and took part in early archeological excavations. Another compatriot, Dr Erich Zimmerli, arrived in Egypt in 1929 to direct the King Fouad Sanatorium in Cairo along the Swiss model. A pioneer in pulmonary medicine, Dr. Zimmerli also later settled in Alexandria, treating patients both at his private practice and at the then Anglo-Swiss Hospital.

A final word however, must be said concerning diplomatic ties: for at a time when consular protection was assured to many foreign nationals in Egypt by the system of Capitulations, the Swiss were an exception. Capitulations were a series of bilateral treaties between different countries of the Ottoman Empire, such as Egypt, and individual European powers. During that era, Switzerland did not have a diplomatic mission in Turkey and therefore could not open consulates in the countries of the Ottoman Empire. The Swiss Community in Alexandria thus sought protection from other diplomatic missions, such as the French in particular. Finally, a Swiss Consulate opened in 1935 on the Rue Sultan Hussein. Later, when many foreigners left Egypt during the period of nationalizations which occurred after the 1952 revolution, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Reinhart donated their villa in Saba Pasha district to serve as a consulate for the Swiss community. To this day, although the number of Swiss nationals in Alexandria has dwindled, and the Swiss Club and School in Chatby were bought and demolished by local property developers, the community still celebrates its national day in the gardens of the Consulate in Saba Pasha and in the more recently acquired Swiss Association premises in Lauren district.

- 1 Cited in Étienne Combe, "Hans Jacob Ammann (1586–1658)" in the *Bulletin Hebdomadaire de la Colonie Suisse d'Alexandrie*, Égypte. Alexandria: 17 and 24 March 1926.
- 2 He is also sometimes known as John Lewis (or Louis) Burckhardt.
- 3 Cited in Étienne Combe, "Jean-Louis Burckhardt" in the *Bulletin Hebdomadaire de la Colonie Suisse d'Alexandrie*, Égypte. Alexandria: 27 January 1926.
- 4 See Gaston Zananiri, "Suisse-Égypte", in *La Visite des journalistes suisses en Égypte*, published by the *Journal Suisse d'Égypte et du Proche Orient*. Alexandria: February–March 1949, p.64.
- 5 A *wekala* is a building used for commercial purposes on the ground floor, but accommodation on the upper floors. By extension, the term can be used for a market with warehouses.
- 6 Henri Lamon, *La société Suisse d'Alexandrie et ses émanations*, p.111.
- 7 See Albert Masnata, "Les relations commerciales entre l'Égypte et la Suisse", published in *La Suisse: édité à l'occasion du Voyage de sa Majesté le roi d'Égypte Fouad 1er*. Geneva, 1929, p.53.

The editors wish to thank the Swiss Association of Alexandria for permission to publish the photos, and J.J. Lang for the photos of the Swiss butcher and the Swiss School of Alexandria.



The Swiss School of Alexandria

A Taste of Alexandria : A Cosmopolitan Flavor

Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda (Editors)

Carole Escoffey

A Taste of Alexandria takes the reader on a colorful journey through space and time, tasting along the way a vast array of specialties which make up the cosmopolitan cuisine of Alexandria. Published with the help of a grant from the European Commission in Cairo, this book was part of the Gastronomy in Alexandria: A Cosmopolitan Flavor in the Mediterranean project, which included a two-day International Food Fair held in May 2008 in the gardens of the Villa Antoniadis and a website <http://www.bibalex.org/food/>.

A Taste of Alexandria
Mohamed Ahmed
(Benjamin)

If Tamarica and Cleopatra changed their identity when they changed names, Benjamin rose to greater heights when it became Mohamed Ahmed. One of the most famous shops in Egypt, Mohamed Ahmed really began in two cities. This is how it happened.

The owner Mohamed Ahmed opened his business in 1918. His first shop was in Maroutah in Midan Street, which is now El Nagh Street. It was a full and bustling shop which continued to function there until 1952.

Benjamin opened as a full shop in 1952 on 127 Victoria Street off Ramleh Station. The shop was situated in its present location near the Jewish synagogue. Benjamin was a tailor and it was convenient for him to be near his family.

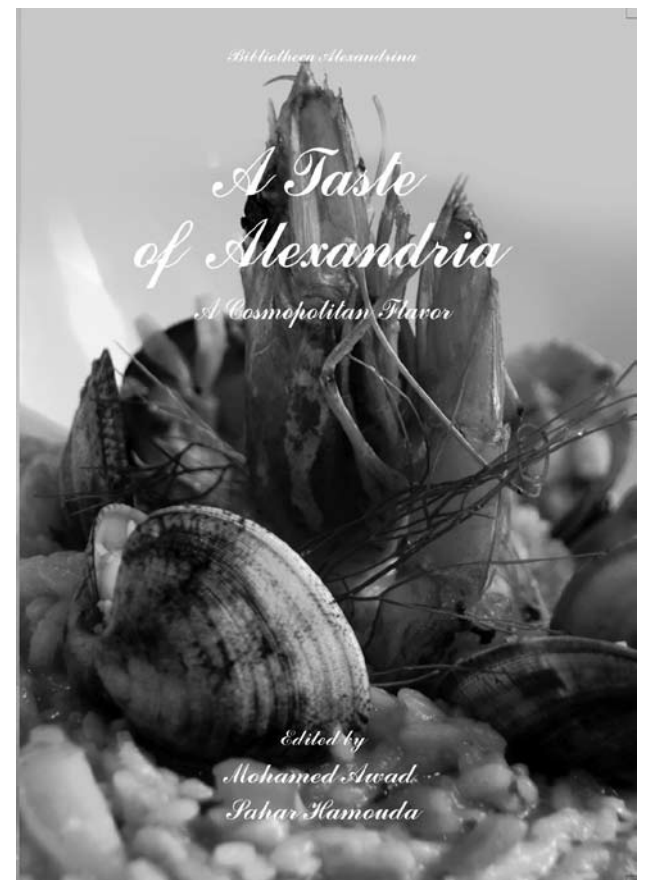
When he left Alexandria in 1957, he asked the two sons of Mohamed Ahmed if they wanted to buy him out. They bought his shop and still own it. The shop is still famous for its full and bustling. However, new items have been added to the menu: fried cheese, soft soup and eggs.

Its clientele are from all walks of life. Tourists and visitors to Alexandria make it a point to go and eat there. It is the Mecca of full and bustling in Alexandria. Famous characters such as Queen Sophia of Spain, Prince Heinrich of Denmark, Naguib el-Khalil and the Egyptian Nobel Laureate, Gamal el-Rasheed the Alexandrian/Greek singer, Fouad el-Mohandes the comedian, Said Hany the actress, Mustafa and al-Amin el-Jomayli, Ahmed Towan el-Egyptian Nobel Laureate, and the children of Gamal Abdel Nasser have all patronized Mohamed Ahmed.

When visitors enter walked one day into Mohamed Ahmed, nobody recognized him. He ate his meal and left. Two days later he wrote an article in the daily paper *Al-Ahram* in his column "Hawar" all about his experience in the center. He said that eating at his shop was like eating history. He pointed out that



gave interviews, recipes, menus from the past, old advertisements and photographs, thus helping to create this rich volume full of Mediterranean flavor.



foreigners from all over the Mediterranean. Gradually communities formed, bringing with them their many traditions, customs and their cuisine. Culinary expertise and know-how was handed down from one generation to the next, the communities mingled and integrated, and so was created the rich culinary mosaic which this book documents and illustrates in fascinating detail: *"Though Alexandrian cuisine was not to rise to the heights it had enjoyed in Cleopatra's time, Alexandria was once again as abundant as the priests had prophesied, and its citizens entertained on a grand scale"* (p.xv).



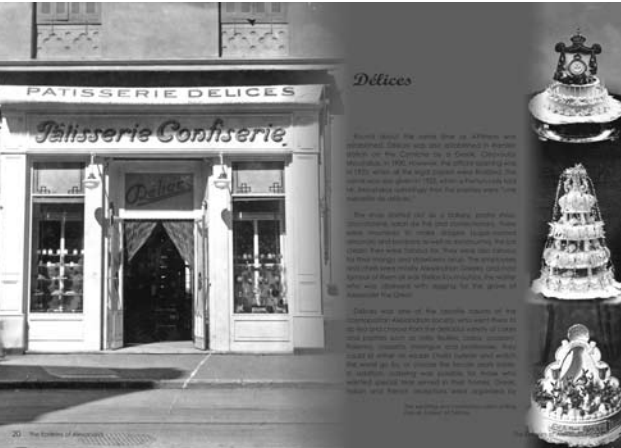
Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of *A Taste of Alexandria* however, lies not only in the wealth and variety of tempting dishes and foods described accompanied by sumptuous photography, but also in the attention to anecdote and historical detail evoking the changing lifestyles of Alexandrians. For, each individual restaurant, bar, salon de thé and pastry shop described evokes an era and a lifestyle. The reader discovers with relish the likes of Délices, Athineos and Trianon, all three located near Ramleh Station in the old city center, and founded by Greeks. Photographs of past and present times conjure the atmosphere of these favorite haunts of cosmopolitan Alexandrian society. Documenting changing culinary tastes and eating habits, the book also recounts the history of each establishment, how it was founded, when it changed hands, and how it evolved with the times to cater for new demands. For, those which did not evolve simply did not survive: among them



As the editors, Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda, are keen to point out, the book's true authors are the citizens of Alexandria: the many establishments and individuals who generously



Baudrot founded by a Frenchman, Auguste Baudrot, in 1906. We learn for example that, once patronized by royalty and presidents, the salon de thé, Délices, used to organize Greek, Italian and French receptions, and then, last year, it suddenly began to put up a Ramadan tent in keeping with a custom that has sprung up in Alexandria over the last fifteen years.



A whole section is devoted to Alexandrian specialties such as “*kebda Iskandarani*”, “*koshary*”, “*mashawi*”, grilled meat or chicken and seafood, accompanied by mouthwatering photographs. In addition to describing the restaurants, vendors and markets where such specialties can be found, the book again supplies a wealth of fascinating anecdotes. Thus, the reader learns that Anfoushi fish market offers “*tersa*” or the blood from freshly slaughtered turtles, which, according to local tradition, when drunk first thing in the morning, strengthens the body! Especially prized for fertility, it is drunk particularly by young women hoping to become pregnant. Ice cream, which comes under many names in Alexandria—“*galleta*”, “*galata*”, “*clo clo*”, “*cassata*”...—is also a local specialty. From the more sophisticated ice creams once consumed by the elegant clientele of Baudrot or Pastroudis, to the first industrially-produced ice cream manufactured by Groppi, to the nameless brands sold by ambulant street vendors, it is clear that ice cream in its many forms soon became a favorite with Alexandrians. The book documents the many varieties, right up to the Baskin Robbins of the 1990s, which, we are told, was an instant success, but given the prices, this was a short-lived success....

A Taste of Alexandria

— Meringue —
(Specialty of Mona Awad)

Pinch of salt, 5 – 6 eggs
(weigh eggs with shells first)
Caster sugar
(same weight as eggs)
4 tbsp caster sugar for
whipping cream
500 ml whipping cream
Strawberries
Butter, Flour

• Separate eggs carefully making
sure yolks do not get into egg
whites
• Beat egg whites and a pinch of
salt to hard peak then add sugar
in 3 inclusions beating well after
each addition.
• Brush an oven tray with butter
then dust with flour.
• Scoop meringue onto oven tray
and insert in a very low oven.
• Bake until meringue is crisp.
• Whip cream with sugar to soft
peak to make crème chantilly.
Barrish with strawberries

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Such a book would not be complete without a section devoted to that most traditional of establishments, the “*ahwa baladi*” or Egyptian coffee house. However, the reader learns surprisingly that coffee-drinking, which was introduced to Egypt in 905H by Abu Bakr Ibn Abdallah, was once a controversial matter! In an era when coffee was banned in Mecca, where coffee sacks were once burned, it took time for this new drink to gain acceptance. Whereas, tobacco, also banned in the early days, arrived much later in the eleventh century Hegira and was initially smoked with the water-pipe or “*shisha*”. Centuries later, in 1882, we learn that it was the British who introduced tea to Egypt. By the late nineteenth century, these three—coffee, tea and the water-pipe—had replaced hibiscus and fenugreek as the basics served in the traditional coffee houses, or “*ahwa baladi*”.



The social and cultural role of the Alexandrian coffee houses provides fascinating reading. Each coffee house had its particular clientele depending on its location. Those located in the financial heart of the city were frequented by merchants, brokers and financiers for example, gleaning the latest news from the Bourse (Stock Exchange) or making deals and conducting business. One of these, the Toussoun Bourse, is where, in 1896, the first screening of a Lumière brothers' film took place in Egypt. In addition to coffee houses frequented by the business community, or others near the law courts,

patronized by lawyers, the book also evokes those where intellectuals would gather, such as the Café de la Paix located along the seafront, a favorite meeting place of Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz: “*The Corniche cafés gave directly onto the sea, and each had its own special shisha. Smoking the shisha in Alexandria is especially enjoyable. The humid weather has the advantage of keeping the tobacco moist.*” (p.18). Nowadays, if the “*ahwa baladi*” continues to survive alongside its modern counterparts such as Starbucks and Beano's, it has, like the restaurants and salons de thé mentioned above, had to adapt to the times. Thus, some now provide television and Wi-Fi, next to the traditional entertainments of back gammon and dominoes....

Needless to say, the vast array of Alexandrian street vendors occupies a special place in this publication. Although some have disappeared, many still roam the streets offering a variety of traditional drinks and juices—tamarind, carob, liquorice, sugar cane juice and “*sobia*” among them—while others tempt the passersby with grilled corn on the cob, sweet potatoes, nuts and seeds, prickly pears, and “*termess*” or lupine beans to name but a few. Whilst along the beaches stretching from Abu Kir to the east of Alexandria all the way to Mersa Matrouh in the west, “*fresca*” vendors can be seen selling their caramelized sesame, peanuts and pistachios wedged between wafers. The chapter devoted to food for special occasions, on the other hand, covers everything from weddings, births and funerals, to the religious feasts and fasting of the different communities, thus reflecting the truly cosmopolitan nature of the city. The pages of this chapter, as elsewhere in the book, include beautiful and evocative paintings by Alexandrian artists Mahmoud Saïd and Guirgis Lofti.

In addition to the contributions of the different communities, the book also acknowledges the varied origins of many foods and practices—from those which have endured since ancient Egyptian times, to those, such as citrus fruits, mangoes and bananas, introduced by the Arabs in the Middle Ages, to the Ottoman influence and later, the French. For although the French occupation of Egypt was very short-lived compared to six centuries of Ottoman rule, French culture and language soon became a mark of refinement, so that “*all westernized homes served French food, especially when there were guests ... [and] French names for foods entered the everyday language and became Egyptian words.*” (pp. 251–2). And whereas many of these foods are indeed eaten all over Egypt, in Alexandria they are often prepared in specific ways where for example, “*cumin seems to be the ingredient differentiates Alexandrian from Cairene food*” (p.243).

A Taste of Alexandria shows how Alexandrians of all classes and communities have collectively created a rich culinary heritage, and how this heritage has in turn been part of their daily lives.



Italian Architecture in Alexandria



Don Bosco Church



Saint Catherine's Cathedral



Abou El Abbas El Morsi Mosque



Qaid Ibrahim Mosque



Pinto Apartment Building



Banco di Roma



Heikal Apartment Building



Okalle Monferato



Mahmod Saleh Building



Italian Consulate Building

Le tombeau d'Alexandre entre récits de voyage et histoire

Yasmine Ali Hussein

« Puis vers la mer houleuse, il existe un îlot. En avant de l'Égypte ; on l'appelle Pharos. »¹

C'est à la suite de cette phrase d'Homère entendue pendant un rêve, selon Plutarque², qu'Alexandre le Grand aurait nourri le projet de bâtir une nouvelle cité, en 331 av. J.-C. Alexandrie serait donc née du songe d'un homme dont plusieurs civilisations se sont approprié l'héritage, mais aussi d'un mythe fondateur de la culture hellénistique.

À la mort d'Alexandre en 322 av. J.-C., son corps devint l'enjeu d'un conflit entre ses généraux. Perdikkas voulut l'envoyer en Macédoine pour l'enterrer là où reposent ses ancêtres. Le corps fut placé dans un premier sarcophage en or, enfermé à son tour dans un deuxième cercueil doré, un drap pourpre recouvrant le tout. Un défilé escortant le catafalque partit de Babylone et des milliers de gens se rassemblèrent tout le long du parcours pour voir le corps pour la dernière fois. Lorsque le cortège funèbre atteignit la Syrie, Ptolémée, qui fut alors satrape d'Égypte, attaqua la procession funéraire pour capturer le sarcophage, le ramener en Égypte et l'exposer à la dévotion à Memphis, cela afin d'accomplir la prophétie d'Aristandre, le devin favori d'Alexandre qui avait prédit « *que le pays dans lequel son corps serait enterré deviendrait le plus prospère du monde* ».

Ensuite, son fils, Ptolémée II, transporta le corps du conquérant à Alexandrie dans une tombe attachée au palais royal. Enfin, Ptolémée IV Philopator fit construire le Soma³ dans lequel il exposa le corps d'Alexandre ainsi que ceux de ses ancêtres, les rois lagides, au centre de la ville d'Alexandrie. En 88/9 av. J.-C. Ptolémée IX ou Ptolémée Alexandre I, tenté par l'avidité, viola la sépulture de ses ancêtres et s'empara du cercueil en or d'Alexandre. En rapportant ce fait, Strabon ajoute que « le corps existait encore de son temps, mais dans un cercueil en verre »⁴.

À la fin du 4^e siècle, Alexandrie devint un centre du christianisme naissant; l'empereur Théodose (379-395) donna le coup de grâce au paganisme en adoptant officiellement la religion chrétienne. Il confia au patriarche Théophile (385-412) la charge d'abolir le paganisme à Alexandrie. Celui-ci dirigea la transformation des établissements païens vers des églises afin d'accélérer la conversion de la ville en une métropole entièrement chrétienne. Ce fait donnera lieu à une hypothèse selon laquelle les forces antipaïennes avaient démolé le tombeau d'Alexandre



La Mort d'Alexandre le Grand d'après le tableau de Karl von Piloty

ou du moins avaient transformé son site en une église en vue d'effacer sa mémoire. Les catastrophes naturelles contribuèrent également à la dévastation de la ville antique, comme les tremblements de terre du 4^e siècle, ce qui expliquerait aussi la disparition du tombeau. Après la fin du 4^e siècle, nous ne disposons pas d'informations fiables sur le Soma.

Or cette ville, qui fut une référence économique, culturelle et religieuse durant l'antiquité, a alimenté nombre de fantasmes; par conséquent beaucoup de voyageurs, illustres ou inconnus, et de tous temps, l'ont visitée afin d'en percer les mystères. À côté des multiples précisions d'ordre topologique, la question de l'emplacement de la tombe d'Alexandre revient dans de nombreux récits de voyages. Des descriptions du tombeau nous sont parvenues, mais l'Histoire ne les a jamais validées.

Fruit des fantasmes d'un peuple voulant perpétuer cette filiation du conquérant, ou de voyageurs, d'aventuriers, et de scientifiques étrangers animés par ce dessin insolite, la réalité et la localisation du tombeau gardent encore de nos jours leur mystère. Ces voyageurs dont nous ferons une synthèse se sont rendus à Alexandrie dans des périodes et des contextes différents, ainsi que pour des buts, eux aussi, très divergents.

Durant la période antique, Alexandrie rayonne au sein du monde méditerranéen. Capitale des Ptolémées jusqu'à la conquête romaine, elle deviendra plus tard un des centres de la vie culturelle et religieuse. Modèle d'urbanisme, elle abrite la Grande Bibliothèque ainsi que le légendaire Pharos. Plusieurs auteurs classiques dont les ouvrages sont des sources pour la reconstruction de l'Histoire antique s'y sont rendus. Ainsi, Diodore de Sicile venu en Égypte en 59 avant J.C., a laissé de précieuses descriptions de la ville dans son « *Bibliothèque historique* » : l'île de Pharos, les ports de l'Heptastade, la bourgade de Rhacotis, le Musée, le port d'Eunostos, et le tombeau d'Alexandre. L'historien et chroniqueur grec mentionne la décision de ne pas enterrer le corps dans le temple d'Amon, à l'oasis de Siwa, mais dans la plus grande ville du monde, Alexandrie. Le corps aurait alors été

déposé après de grands honneurs, des sacrifices et des jeux. Plutarque (46-125 apr. J.-C.), l'une des sources anciennes les plus fiables qui s'est rendu à Alexandrie, ajoute :

« Après la mort d'Alexandre, Python et Séleucos furent envoyés au Serapeum demander à l'oracle si le corps devait être envoyé à Alexandrie. Le dieu répondit qu'il devait être transporté là-bas. ».

Le géographe Strabon (67–23 av. J.-C.) ajoute que le Soma inclut les tombes des rois lagides et celui d'Alexandre. Dans son Livre XVII, il confirme : « *Le lieu appelé Soma fait aussi partie du même palais (des rois lagides), c'est une enceinte qui renferme les tombes des rois et celui d'Alexandre.* »

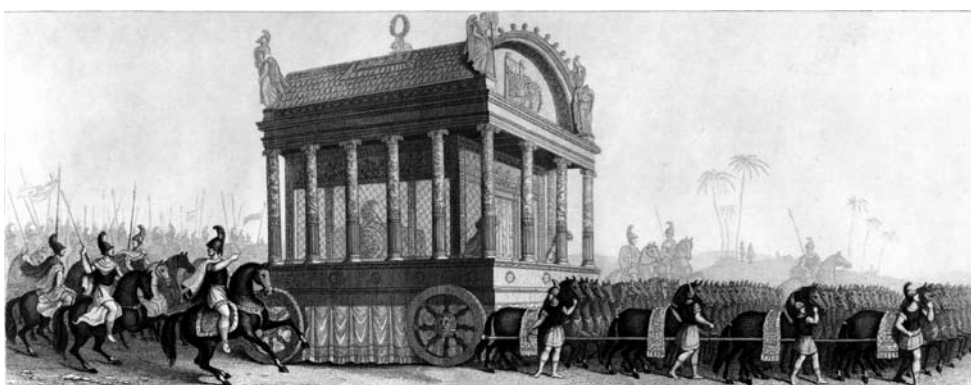
Octave, futur empereur de Rome sous le nom d'Auguste, a visité la ville peu après le suicide de Cléopâtre VII, en 30 av. J.-C. Il a affirmé avoir vu le corps d'Alexandre et aurait déposé des fleurs sur sa tombe et placé un diadème en or sur sa tête momifiée. Selon Jean d'Antioche⁵, la visite de l'empereur Caracalla fut enregistrée comme la dernière au Soma. En 215 apr. J.-C., après avoir mis la ville à sac mais épargné le mausolée, il aurait enlevé sa veste, sa bague, sa ceinture et tous les autres ornements précieux et les aurait déposés sur le cercueil.



H. Showmer, La visite de César (Octave) à la tombe d'Alexandre à Alexandrie

Le poète Lucanus (36-65 apr. J.-C.) livre des détails dans son poème épique « Pharsale » en précisant que le mausolée avait une coupole pyramidale et formait à l'extérieur un tumulus. Enfin, Achille Tatius, écrivain grec (deuxième siècle apr. J.-C.) place le Soma dans le centre de la cité de l'époque. D'autres auteurs classiques entreprirent le voyage à Alexandrie, tels que le géographe grec Pausanias (115-180 apr. J.-C.) ou l'historien Dion Cassius (155-235 apr. J.-C.) qui fut proconsul d'Afrique en 222 apr. J.-C.

À la différence de la période antique où Alexandrie occupait une place très importante dans le monde méditerranéen et où les plus notables s'y rendaient pour des raisons politiques, les voyageurs des époques médiévale et « moderne » (jusqu'à l'expédition française de Bonaparte) étaient beaucoup plus divers. En



Une reconstruction datant du milieu du XIX^e siècle du catafalque d'Alexandre le Grand basée sur la description de Diodore de Sicile

premier lieu, nous pouvons mentionner les voyageurs du monde arabe. Parmi les plus importants, nous citons l'historien Ibn Abd el Hakam, qui fut à Alexandrie en 871, et qui aurait vu le tombeau mais sans pouvoir en préciser l'emplacement exact. Dans son ouvrage Foutouh Masr ou « *Conquête de l'Égypte* » il dit qu'il y avait à Alexandrie cinq mosquées, entre autres une appelée Dzoul Karnein « *située près de la porte de la ville et à sa sortie* ». Or Dzoul Karnein, comme on le sait bien, est Alexandre le Grand, qui sur les monnaies de l'époque hellénistique a été souvent représenté avec les deux cornes de bélier, symbole de son origine divine en tant que fils de Zeus-Ammon. En outre, l'encyclopédiste Al Masudi, né à Bagdad vers 893, s'y serait rendu en 944. Érudite, spécialiste de littérature, de philosophie, de droit, de théologie, de géographie et d'ethnographie, il parle également du mausolée. Il mentionne dans son ouvrage Mourouj El-Zahab ou « *Les Prairies d'or* » une construction modeste appelé « *le tombeau du prophète et du roi Eskender* ». L'auteur fait sans doute référence à la tradition arabe qui se réapproprie le mythe du conquérant, mais le plus intéressant c'est la description qu'il a donné : « *le sarcophage fut élevé sur une assise de pierre et de blocs de marbre blanc et d'autres couleurs, superposés les uns sur les autres. Cette espèce de piédestal de marbre se voit encore aujourd'hui en l'année 332 de l'Hégire (soit 944 apr. J.-C.) sur le territoire d'Alexandrie, en Égypte, ou il est connu sous le nom de « Tombeau d'Alexandre.* »⁶



Gravure par Sébastien Bourdon d'après le tableau de Fragonard d'Auguste Octave visitant la tombe d'Alexandre

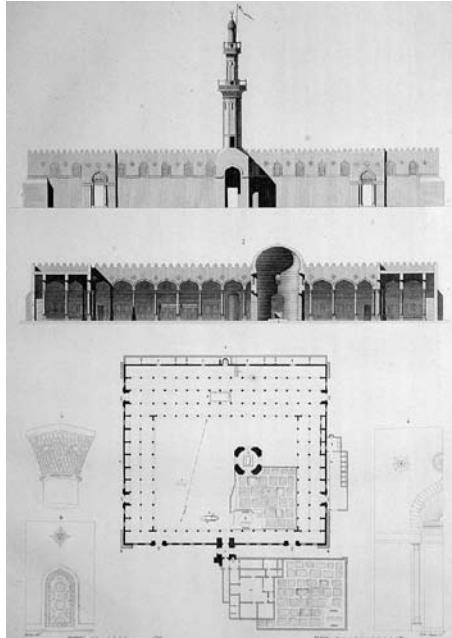
Le voyageur Syrien Abu'l Hassan `Ali B. Abi Bakr Al-Harawi du 12e siècle, ascète et pèlerin, au cours d'une vie de voyages, séjourna à Alexandrie. Il témoigna dans son ouvrage « *Al-Isarat ila ma'rifat al-ziyarat* » ou « *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage* », de son éblouissement en visitant la ville et il évoque également la tombe d'Alexandre : « *À Alexandrie [...] on dit que la tombe d'Alexandre est dans le Phare avec celle d'Aristote, et Dieu seul sait ce qu'il y a de vrai dans cette affirmation.* »⁷



Edward Daniel Clarke, La cour de la Mosquée Attarine, 1798

Au 16e siècle, le diplomate et explorateur Hassan al-Wazzan, dit Léon l'Africain, a cherché les vestiges du tombeau. On lui aurait montré un petit immeuble, vénéré par les musulmans qui y déposaient des offrandes : « *Il ne faut pas omettre de mentionner*

qu'au centre de la ville, au milieu des ruines, il y a une maisonnette basse, comme une sorte de chapelle, dans laquelle se trouve une tombe très vénérée par les Mahométans, où l'on entretient des lumières nuit et jour. On dit que c'est le tombeau d'Alexandre le Grand, qui fut prophète et roi d'après Mahomet dans le Coran. Beaucoup d'étrangers viennent de lointains pays pour voir ce tombeau et y faire leurs dévotions. Ils y laissent des aumônes très considérables. »⁸



La planche d'une ancienne basilique nommée vulgairement la Mosquée de Saint Athanase, La Description de l'Égypte, Antiquités V.

Cette volonté de découvrir le tombeau d'Alexandre va également nourrir les ambitions de voyageurs européens. Un dénommé Marmol, en 1546, parle lui aussi de ce fameux immeuble vénéré par les Égyptiens comme le tombeau d'Alexandre. Il en va de même pour Georges Sandys en 1611, voyageur grec, ainsi que Michael Radzwill Sierotka qui était présents à Alexandrie à la fin du 16e siècle.

En l'an 1731, le voyageur français Bonamy a visité la ville et a fait des dessins de ce qu'il considérait avoir été le Soma, ainsi que d'autres ruines antiques. Il a également dessiné une carte de la ville antique et a essayé d'identifier les ruines, à l'aide des sources antiques et des témoignages locaux. Ces derniers dont le zèle aurait été stimulé par cette arrivée de voyageurs étrangers armés des références des auteurs classiques et demandant à ce qu'on leur indique l'emplacement supposé du tombeau. Pour satisfaire ces requêtes, il semble que deux bâtiments aient remporté la préférence des habitants. Ces choix, guidés par la tradition locale qui, génération après génération, avait conservé un vague souvenir du Soma, sont l'ancienne église Saint Athanase à Attarine, transformée en mosquée suite à la conquête arabe, ainsi que le site de la mosquée Nabi Daniel.

L'expédition de Bonaparte, de 1798 à 1801, marqua un tournant dans la perception de l'Égypte. L'armée qui est partie de Toulon emportait avec elle des soldats mais aussi 167 savants, ingénieurs et artistes, membres de la Commission des Sciences et des. Cette expédition ouvra l'ère des recherches « *modernes* » en Égypte en général, et à Alexandrie en particulier. Ainsi, la recherche du tombeau d'Alexandre n'était plus l'apanage de quelques aventuriers qui s'engageaient individuellement, mais laissaient place à des études plus techniques et planifiées ouvrant la voie à l'archéologie moderne. En premier lieu les Français trouvèrent un sarcophage dans la mosquée Attarine. Celui-ci fut récupéré par les Anglais après la défaite de Bonaparte et envoyé en Grande Bretagne. Placé au British Museum et étudié par Edward Daniel Clarke, il s'avéra qu'il était le sarcophage vide du dernier pharaon d'Égypte, Nectanebo II, dont Ptolémée I a

utilisé le tombeau pour enterrer Alexandre à Memphis. Cela explique comment le sarcophage par la suite a trouvé sa place à Alexandrie et pourquoi la population locale fait la liaison entre Alexandre et le lieu.



Le sarcophage de Nectanebo II découvert dans la cour de la Mosquée Attarine, actuellement au British Museum à Londres

L'archéologue allemand Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), après avoir exhumé Mycènes en Grèce et Troie en Asie Mineure, a projeté à son tour (en 1888), mais sans succès car faute de permis de fouilles, de trouver le Soma. Plus récemment de nombreuses missions archéologiques étrangères mais aussi égyptiennes ont permis d'exhumer nombre de monuments pharaoniques, antiques et chrétiens à Alexandrie. Actuellement, le Centre d'Études Alexandrines, dirigé par Jean-Yves Empereur, mène un travail sur le long terme.

Référence durant l'Antiquité, puis peu à peu tombé en désuétude à partir de l'époque médiévale, Alexandrie a toujours attiré les voyageurs, qui plus est venant d'horizons différents. Des auteurs classiques grecs ou romains aux archéologues de nos jours, la ville a toujours exercé une fascination : capitale hellénistique ; cité abritant des monuments aussi renommés que la Bibliothèque, le Musée ou le Pharos ; centre culturel nourri à la pensée de Plotin, Philon, Ammonius ou Hypatia. La filiation de la ville au conquérant auquel elle doit son nom, ajouté au mystère de son tombeau, le Soma, a fasciné nombre de savants, d'aventuriers, d'érudits. Pour le moment il n'a pas été éludé, en dépit d'une tradition orale, transmise de génération en génération au fil de l'Histoire, qui redonne la dépouille d'Alexandre à la ville fondée peu après avoir reçu l'oracle d'Amon qui lui prédisait un destin exceptionnel.

La question est de savoir où s'arrête la part de romantisme et où commence la documentation historique. La mention du tombeau d'Alexandre dans les récits des voyageurs est-elle le fruit d'un fantasme collectif, perpétué au fil des siècles par ces voyageurs dont le point commun est cette fascination justifiée et partagée au-delà des disparités temporelles, géographiques et culturelles, ou ces témoignages sont-ils vraiment fondés sur des réalités et des faits historiques ? Seule une étude de cas par cas peut aboutir à une réponse scientifique.

- 1 L'Odyssée, IV, v.355
- 2 Plutarque, *Vie d'Alexandre, Autrement*, Paris, 1993.
- 3 *Soma* signifie « corps » en grecque ancien, et parfois on appelle le tombeau d'Alexandre aussi Sema, qui signifie le « signe » qui marque le lieu du tombeau.
- 4 De Zogheb, A.M, *L'emplacement du Mausolée d'Alexandre le Grand et de la Reine Cléopâtre*, Minytor, Alexandrie, 1957.
- 5 *Histoire d'Adam* à 518 apr.J.-C.
- 6 Al Masudi, *Les prairies d'or*, trad. Par O. Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courteille, t. II, Geuthner, Paris, 1989.
- 7 Al-Harawy, *Al-Isarat ila ma'rifat al-ziyarat (Guide des lieux de pèlerinage)*, par J. Sourdel-Thomine, IFAO, Damas, 1957.
- 8 Jean-Léon L'Africain, *Description de l'Afrique*, trad. de l'italien par Alexis Épaulard, Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris, 1980.

Ann Khalafallah, Memories from the Past

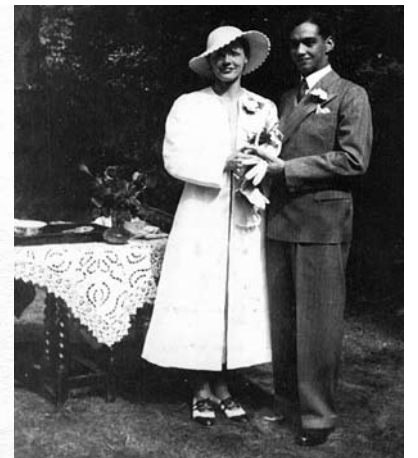
Nawal Khalafallah (NK) and Kamal Kalafala (KK)



Annie Brown's graduation photo. She graduated with a B.Sc. in mathematics from the University of London and the graduation ceremony was held at the Royal Albert Hall on March 1936.



AK, Cairo, 1940



Annie Brown and Mohamed Khalafallah's wedding photo, Blackburn, UK, 3 August 1937

AK beyond the EGC Walls NK

Ann Khalafallah, born Annie Brown in 1913 in Ramsbottom, England, and known to many in Alexandria, Egypt, as AK, was headmistress of the English Girls College (EGC) in Alexandria for over 20 years, from 1959 to 1982. I was fortunate to have her as a mother, as I am sure many feel fortunate to have experienced her as headmistress.

When she died in March 1991, I put together a documentary about her life, which appeared in *Pioneers*, the EGC magazine (issue no 3, November 1991). It was titled "The AK Story" and contained photos and documents spanning over a period of 50 years, to which I added some remarks. As the years went by and the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina* began to show a keen interest in the multi-cultured Alexandria during the twentieth century, it was felt that the story of AK would fit into this theme: a British born, with a university degree in pure mathematics from London University, moving to Alexandria in 1937 with an Egyptian husband, and eventually becoming headmistress of the largest British school for girls in Alexandria.

It was Kamal, my brother, through emails from the United States, who gave momentum to the idea by suggesting focusing on AK's life outside the EGC walls. This article is an attempt by AK's three offspring, Monira, Nawal and Kamal, to shed light on the path trodden by a foreign woman (who is very dear to them) in Alexandria, Egypt, during the years 1937 to 1991.



AK with Monira sailing from Alexandria to Southampton in the summer of 1939

to create a healthy and prosperous environment in partnership with her husband.

Scenes from the Forties: Act One NK

AK joined the EGC as a mathematics teacher in 1945. In the years that followed, during the summer months, AK would sometimes take us to swim in the EGC swimming pool. That was a wonderful treat. At that time, we lived in a villa on Rue Enfance Heureuse and would catch the tram from Sidi Bishr tram station to Camp César, where numerous horse-drawn carriages were waiting. We would take one from the station to transport us all the way up the sloping drive to the front entrance of the EGC. AK would then give us lumps of sugar to feed the horse. Walking through the nearly empty patio and corridors, we would catch sight of the crystal clear water of the swimming pool and enter the dainty changing cubicles. Happy days were those. Once or twice, the headmistress, Miss Bloxham, invited us to lunch in the dining room of the headmistress's house adjacent to the school library, after swimming. That was an awesome experience.



Ann Khalafallah 1952

A Scene from the Thirties (1939) KK

Annie Brown held baby Monira close to her as she sat on the balcony of an old decrepit hotel overlooking Manshieh Square in Alexandria. The time was midnight, and it was going to be a long, long night for the English mother and her first born. Annie and her husband, Mohamed Khalafallah, had been married for one year, and lived in Cairo, where Monira was born. The family had travelled to England to introduce the newborn to its British grandparents. Alexandria was where they had just landed after a long sea trip from England. The year was 1939, World War II had just been declared, which is why the Khalafallah family had to rush their departure from England. It was the first time for each of them in Alexandria, the jewel of the Mediterranean.

None of this was on Annie's mind that night however; her only concern was protecting her baby from the insects that could be seen crawling on the dirty bed sheets. What a reception for the woman who would later make this city her home, and stamp her character on its education system! Others would have fled back to Europe; but not our Annie, she was made of the stuff that saw her through tough times, and made her determined



Mattie, AK's mother at the Sporting Club in Alexandria in the mid fifties

Scenes from the Forties: Act Two KK

Grandpa Jimmy Brown, and his wife, Martha Ann (Mattie to us all), lived in Blackburn, in a two-storey town house. Jimmy was a railway station master, and he was an avid football fan, who rooted for the local team of

Blackburn Rovers. They had only one child, Ann, and she had married an Egyptian scholar, and was living in Egypt. Mattie and Jimmy had visited Egypt to see their daughter and her family. It is rumored that Jimmy taught me how to kick a football before I knew how to walk properly; probably early in 1946. I would like to believe that the Browns returned to England happy and content with their daughter's environment in Egypt, and her new family.



AK with Nawal and Kamal on their doorstep of their villa in Sidi Bishr

The year was 1949, I was standing in the family room by the fire side and was aware that something was wrong. Ann, my mother, was sitting on a chair nearby, holding a piece of paper, and was obviously disturbed. She was crying and being comforted by Nawal, Monira, and Daddy. The piece of paper was an airmail letter, bearing the news that Ann's father, Grandpa Jimmy Brown had died in his bed in Logwood Street, Blackburn, England.

By the early fifties, Daddy had traveled to England, organized Mattie's affairs, and brought her back to live with us in our new flat in Bulkeley district. I shared a bedroom with Mattie for almost 15 years. When I was 23 years old, I got married, and promptly traveled to England with Ivy, my wife, thus retracing the tracks first made by Ann Brown, and then by Mattie. We settled in Manchester, a mere 50 kilometers from Blackburn. It felt like part of me was coming home.



Mattie with AK at one of the EGC speech days

Scenes from the Fifties: Act One (1951) KK

It was around eight o'clock at night, Nawal and I were in our pajamas riding in the back of the Hillman Minx, the famous Khalafallah car, as it drove along Horreya Street on its way to the Faculty of Arts in Chatby. Mummy was driving, as usual. The ritual was always the same, we would park the car in front of the main faculty gate, the guard would approach, and Mummy would ask him to please inform Khalafallah Bey that his ride was waiting. In a few minutes, Abbas, Daddy's long time faithful do-anything assistant, would show up with Daddy's bag full of papers he would still need to review at home. Daddy would then show up, and we would all head home.

That Mummy turned out to be the designated driver for our family was due mainly to Daddy's inability, or unwillingness, to master the art of driving; it was that simple. On his first and only lesson, Daddy drove the car up onto the side walk in front of our villa in Sidi Bishr. Daddy never drove a car again in his life, and it was left to Mummy to organize all the family transportation needs.

Scenes from the Fifties: Act Two KK

In the spring time, the desert would come alive with the bright colors of the poppy flowers. The desert was a favorite destination for a Friday drive for the whole Khalafallah family. Mummy would make cheese and cucumber sandwiches, fill the thermos with coffee, and then she would drive us to the desert via the old Alexandria-Cairo road. We would park the car and then



From left to right: Monira, AK and Nawal during the OBE Celebration

embark on a walk enjoying the sights and smells of the desert. Inevitably, we would attract the attention of the few Bedouins and would be surrounded by kids trying to sell us fresh eggs.

Scenes from the Fifties: Act Three The British, French and Israeli Aggression on Egypt (1956) NK

By 1956, we had settled in a nice large flat in the Nadouri family building on Rue Wingate, in Bulkeley district. Mattie, had joined us after Grandfather Brown died and we were blessed by her presence in our home for twenty years. Mattie died in Alexandria in 1974 at the age of 94.

The scene I remember was the gathering of a group of friends in our flat, mostly Egyptian University staff with their British wives. Schools had closed because of the aggression in the Suez Canal area, hence we children were at home most of the time. The atmosphere during this gathering was tense, and not at all pleasant, contrary to the usual gatherings of this group. I could tell by my father's face. I realized later, he was particularly worried that Mattie might be deported back to England. Forms had to be filled by all foreigners staying in Egypt, and everyone in the group was busy filling out these forms. Thankfully nobody was deported during the following weeks.

The political situation remained an unwelcome guest in our home for some time. We children could feel it, although nothing was said aloud, at least not in front of us. I often wondered as I grew up, what effect on a marriage such a situation can have, where the wife's country by birth is attacking the husband's country! The message I got from observation was that patience,



AK wearing the OBE award

mutual understanding and saying little, are among the marriage-sustainers in these situations.

A Scene from the Seventies: The OBE Award (1978) NK

It all started with a letter arriving from the UK dated 4 October 1978 and sent by the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, requesting the attendance of AK at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday, 8 November. AK was to receive the OBE (Order of the British Empire) for her services in teaching the English language overseas. The letter caused a lot of excitement but also mixed feelings. My father, the dear man he was so sensitive, would have preferred recognition of AK's services by the Egyptian government and did not want a lot of fuss made of the OBE award. The letter explained that only two members of AK's family might accompany her. It was decided that I should travel with AK and that Monira would join us from the United States. Members of the EGC board of trustees in the UK were most helpful with hotel reservation and arranging car transportation in London. A few days later after Monira's arrival, the three of us sailed through Buckingham Palace gates in a long black car and were ushered into a large crowded hall. AK was seated in the first row with other award recipients; we were seated a few rows back. The queen arrived and the ceremony began. AK's name was finally announced and she walked slowly to where the queen was standing on a platform to receive the OBE. As usual on such occasions, I had tears streaming down my face. It struck me how frail our mother, that pillar of strength, had become. Years of hard work, Parkinson's disease and a hip replacement operation a few years back, had all left their mark. Memories of that trip in November 1978 linger on with the years and the photos capture the moment, recalling the autumn scent of London trees.



Mary Gargoura, AK's faithful secretary

Scenes from the Eighties: Act One (1984) KK

The last time I saw our mother alive was in 1984. At the end of her visit to the United States, I had arranged for her to board a direct flight to Cairo from Kennedy Airport in New York City. I had requested that I be allowed to take her up the ramp in a wheelchair, so that I could ask the flight attendant to pay special attention to this elderly passenger. As luck would have it, I bumped into my basketball coach from the Sporting Club of Alexandria, George Chalhoub, who was boarding the same flight, so I made sure that he would check on her from time to time.

I did not realize then, having said my goodbyes after our mother was seated, and having turned my back and headed back towards the main terminal, that I would never see her again. During her stay with us, I had come face to face with the harsh reality that our mother was slowly losing her memory. I had watched her for years as she battled her wars

against Parkinson's disease, a condition resulting in a constant tremor of the hand. She fought it bravely, never showing any signs of being troubled by the condition. So much so, that one would forget that she was on a daily dose of medication which supplemented some missing chemical in the brain and helped to control the tremor. But Alzheimer was a different foe. This disease attacks with no regard to education, status, or health. It is ferocious, robbing its victims of their memory ever so slowly. It is cruel because the victim senses the slow loss of memory and I cannot begin to imagine how AK must have felt, as she went about her life, day after day, noticing that it was getting harder to remember things.



AK with her lifelong partner, Mohamed Khalafallah, in the school-house garden, during the seventies

We were in the car and I was driving on our way to a hair stylist. Our mother had wanted to have her hair all neat and tidy for the trip back to Egypt. On the way to the appointment, AK surprised me by asking that we pass by Nawal first before the stylist. I composed myself enough, and asked her to indicate the way, since I had forgotten it. She thought for a while, looking around her as she sat in the passenger seat of the car, then she looked at me and said "Nawal is not here is she?" I nodded my head, barely containing my tears. Here was our mother stumbling and I could not do anything to cushion her fall.

The Final Act (1982-1991) NK

In the summer of 1982, AK retired as headmistress of the EGC at the age of 69. The board of the National Schools had found a competent person for the post: Mrs Enaam El Dafrawi, ex-EGC pupil and teacher, who ran the school for the next twenty odd years. AK's health had been deteriorating the last few years leading to 1982. Mary Gargoura, her faithful secretary, was a great support, never leaving her side. In spite of her deteriorating health, AK did not choose to retire after reaching 60, although the family pleaded with her to quit. On the one hand the board kept urging her to hang in there till a competent replacement was found, and on the other, the headmistress's house garden was a source of pleasure to my father who, at the age of nearly eighty, spent most of his days reading, meeting friends, or playing croquet with his grandchildren in that garden. AK was reluctant to give that up. The family had moved

into that headmistress's house attached to the school, in 1961. The three of us had married and left home during the sixties. Mattie passed away in 1974, and our parents continued living in that house till 1982.

In September of 1982, AK and my father settled in a rented flat on the sixth floor of a building overlooking Stanley Bay which Soheila Tartoussia had kindly helped them find. They had barely settled in when, on 29 May 1983, my father died suddenly of a heart attack, mercifully in his sleep at the age of 79. Losing her lifelong partner as well the school, her life-long vocation, was just too much for AK and her mind retreated into the past. The present meant nothing. The doctors we consulted diagnosed the condition as possibly Alzheimer's or progressive atherosclerosis of the cerebral blood vessels.

The years 1983 to 1991, AK spent with me and my family in our flat overlooking the Sacred Heart School in Roushdi district. My daughters willingly gave up a room for her. Monira came over from the United States to be with her for some time, and AK traveled there once in 1984 to stay with Monira and Kamal and their families during the summer months, but she could not travel there again afterwards. Faithful Fatma, the school maid, helped us look after her. She came daily and would sleep in whenever we had to be away for a few days. Mrs Enaam El Dafrawi kindly renewed Fatma's leave from school year after year.



AK with (from the left) Randa, Mohamed, Nawal and Rania, celebrating AK's 72nd birthday (1985)

On the night of 11 March 1991, AK went to sleep as usual. For some reason, I woke up before dawn and so did my husband. AK was awake in bed. I asked her if she would like a glass of milk and she nodded. She drank it through a straw as usual. A few minutes later, AK, sitting in bed, lowered her head and was gone. My mind went blank, and my feelings numb. A short while later, our middle daughter, Rania, insisted on re-entering her grandmother's room to bid her farewell and came out with her face congested with silent tears. It was then, and the presence of the empty wheelchair, that my mind registered our loss.

The editors would especially like to thank all the members of Ann Khalafallah's family who contributed to this article, including her daughter Monira Khalafallah and her granddaughter, Rania El Bahtimi.



From Vision to Realization

Carole Escoffey

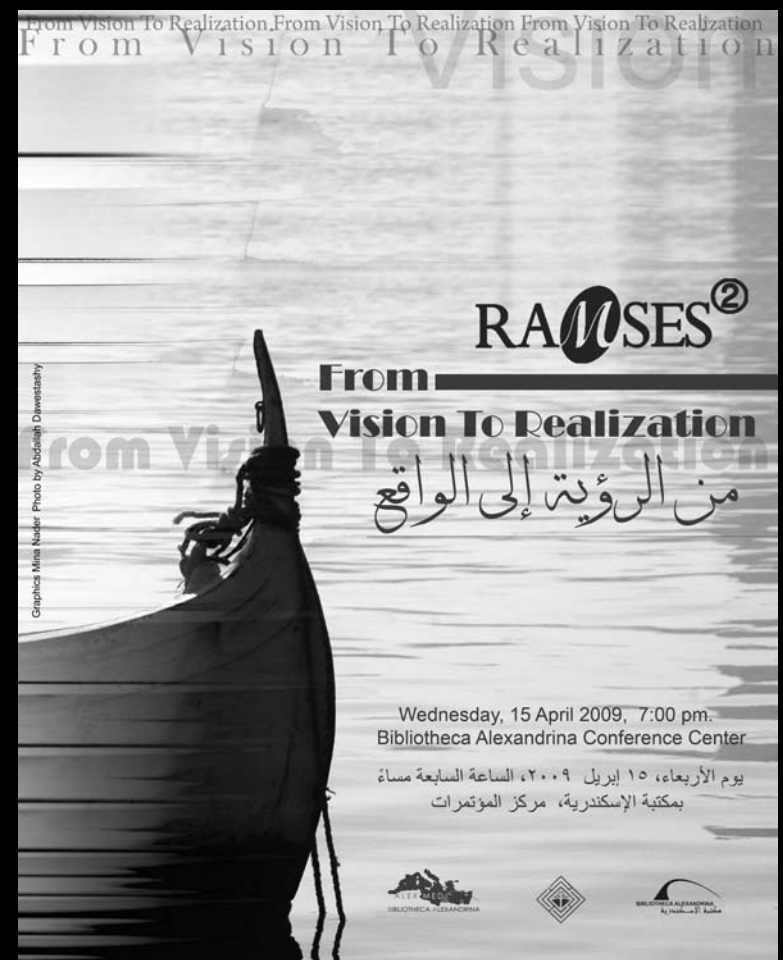
On 15 April 2009, Alex Med held the twelfth in its *Penser la Méditerranée* (Thinking the Mediterranean) cycle of Ramses2 conferences, entitled «From Vision to Realization». The two speakers on this occasion were Henry Roux-Azelais, president of SOME CIN (World Trade Center Marseille, Provence) and Dr Hisham El Sherif an authority in ICT and a business and development leader in Egypt and the Middle East. Both speakers addressed the vision behind the Union for the Mediterranean, and how this multilateral partnership could realize its goals for regional integration and cohesion.

In his talk, Henry Roux-Azelais discussed the role of the Union for the Mediterranean in the development of the Mediterranean region, with specific reference to the present economic crisis. He stated that this union between 43 countries should make use of the vitality and cooperation in the region, but also stressed the need to diversify the production structure of these countries as a way to confront the crisis. Mr Roux-Azelais underlined the need for long term convergence towards a knowledge-based economy. Measures needed to achieve this goal, would involve the development of human capital through efficient education and training, innovation, the empowerment of women, and coordination of migratory policies.

In addition to underlining the measures needed for development, Henry Roux-Azelais stressed the challenges faced by the countries of the south in particular. One key factor is the demographic contrast between the north and south Mediterranean and how this will continue to make economic convergence between north and south increasingly difficult to achieve. On the one hand opening borders, following the example of the European Union, would foster trade, but on the other hand it would create issues of security and demographic pressure.

Hisham El Sherif also discussed the opportunities presented by the Union for the Mediterranean. He qualified it not only as a “dream” and a “vision”, but also as a concrete project with objectives and resources. Dr El Sherif described how the creation of the European Union itself, had once been a dream, but was a concrete reality. On an optimistic note, he suggested that the countries from the south Mediterranean could learn from both the successes and the mistakes made by their northern neighbors. He did feel however, that public opinion in the south was not made sufficiently aware of the Union for the Mediterranean, and that public awareness was key to the effective implementation of the project. He focused especially on the need to involve young people. Like Henry Roux-Azelais, he stressed the importance of education, lamenting the fact that Egypt in particular has been classified in 129th position with regards to its education standards. Dr El Sherif noted that today youth seems to have bypassed the stages of natural development creating a distorted society. Emulating young people’s preference for communicating in s.m.s. language, he summarized the means by which the Union for the Mediterranean could achieve its social and economic goals as a series of “daily activities” including—publicity, education, trade and communication.

The conference ended with a discussion and questions from members of the audience moderated by Hedi Piquart, French Consul General of Alexandria.



From left to right: Henry Roux-Azelais, president of SOME CIN, Hedi Piquart, French Consul General of Alexandria, and Dr Hisham El Sherif, a leader in ICT and business development.

CANINE AND FELINE

Sahar Hamouda

The last dog I had was a tiny hybrid slightly larger than a man's palm. His curly black hair and snub nose won him the name of Othello, but the name was too big for the ridiculously small creature, so it was reduced to Toot. Everybody except me detested poor Toot. He had such a nasty temper that no one knew when he would snap at you or bite your finger off. During my absence from the house he would sleep on my bed, lifeless till I returned. Then he would start asserting himself, yapping at anyone who entered my (his) room, for wasn't he a dog who had to bark and protect his territory? When he went out for a walk with me, he would yap away at big dogs, who would stare in amazement at this creature who sounded like them, but in other respects had nothing else in common with the canine family. His eating habits left a lot to be desired. He would have nothing but chicken breasts, so we had to have a daily diet of chickens — what was left over from him, of course.

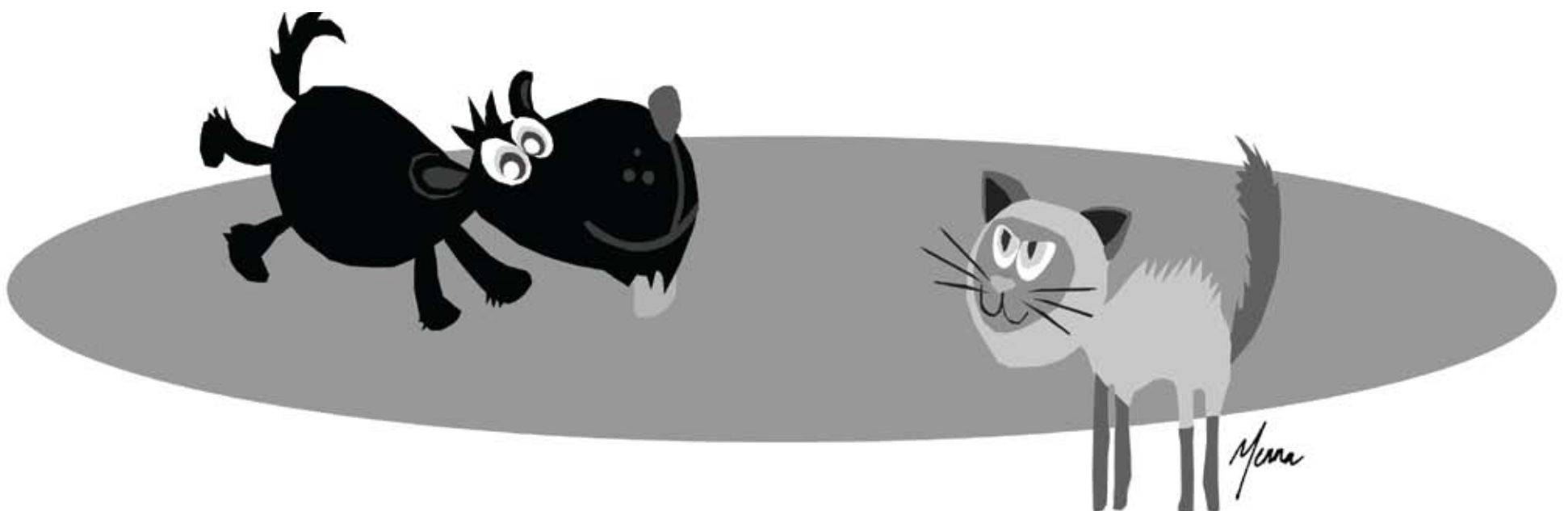
One day a new member was introduced to our household: a Siamese kitten who cowered under the bed in fear of this monster Toot. The kitten, with its angelic colouring, was an adorable cuddly ball of fur. Sweet as it was, we all fell in love with it and defended it against the tyrant. But, by instinct aware of the law of the jungle, the kitten soon learned how to defend itself. It gathered that nothing was to be gained by force, and resorted to wile. Soon, it had become so adept at cheating and thieving — while maintaining a charming exterior — that its name became Antonino, symbolic of those Italians who would charm the kohl out of your eye. Toot and Nino became best buddies, chasing each other all over the house, wrestling on the floor — hardly ever on chairs, since Toot was too small to jump that high — biting each other's ears and tails. But there was never knowing when Toot would lose his temper and turn the fun into a real quarrel, and Nino would rush up the curtain for safety, and then finding himself stranded near the ceiling, he would wait pathetically till somebody brought him down. Mealtimes were when Nino had to exercise his greatest diplomacy and self control. He ate everything from flour to chop bones, so waiting for his turn was certainly a trial. There we would all be round the table, making those eating noises, with Toot lying on my lap. His food was on the floor, untouched, but Nino knew that if he came near it, it would be at his peril. Nino perched patiently on some high spot, eyes closed, ears like antennae twitching around to hear Toot's slightest movement. Once he was sure that Toot had hurried off to his room, Nino would stretch, yawn, and walk languidly over to Toot's plate to devour the chicken breast left uneaten in it.

When he grew to be around a year old, Nino developed an insatiable desire to be on the streets. He would stand patiently near the door, eyes closed, ears like antennae twitching for any sound of anybody going out or coming in. The minute the door was opened he would rush out, and disappear for the rest of the day and night. We never knew where he went, what garbage cans he scavenged, what terrible fights he got in to. But every morning, as my father made the coffee at 6 a.m., he would hear Nino meowing at the door. My father would let him in, and Nino would wait patiently, eyes closed, while my father prepared his breakfast of fish for him. Nino would devour it, then, without so much as washing his mouth (an unheard of thing in a cat!) he would curl up in some remote corner and fall asleep. When he awoke he had another meal, then washed his fur very very circumspectly and nursed his bitten ear. He devoted over an hour to his toilette, then, feeling ready for his daily jaunt, he would wait patiently, with eyes closed, next to the door. Every now and then

he would fail to show up for his breakfast at 6 a.m., which meant I had to scour the streets and buildings and deliver him from whatever scrape or impossible corner or height he would be in.

Nino ceased to be a pet. He was out of the house most of the day, and when he came home, he did so only to eat and sleep. The one who missed him the most was his old buddy, the irritable Toot. He would poke Nino, hoping to recapture some of the fun they had in the past, longing for their vanished camaraderie. But Nino had grown thrice the size of Toot and too adult for these antics. All he wanted was to preserve his energy for his encounters on the streets.

One day he did not return at all. Who knows how he met his death. My poor Toot died of a common cold around twenty years ago. I still miss the little fellow, and have not had the heart yet to get another dog.



Palestinian Maqlouba or Ma'louba

Upside-Down Rice and Eggplant Casserole



This Palestinian recipe for maqlouba or ma'louba (meaning “upside-down”) is a rice and eggplant casserole made with richly succulent braised lamb and tomatoes. Baharat is an all-purpose spice mix used in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, and found in many prepared savory dishes. It can be bought in local groceries and markets but is also quite easy to make fresh at home. There are many different variations, all based on the basic ingredients of black pepper and allspice. Some mixes might include paprika, coriander seeds, cinnamon, sumac, nutmeg, cumin and cardamom.

Ingredients

2 medium eggplants, sliced
 Oil for frying the eggplants
 5 tbsp virgin olive oil
 1 large onion, chopped
 1 kg lamb shoulder, deboned and cut into pieces
 1 tbsp *baharat*
 2 tsp salt
 1 tsp black pepper
 1 tsp allspice berries
 Pinch of cinnamon
 Pinch of grated nutmeg
 Water, enough to cover the lamb
 1 tbsp olive oil
 3 large tomatoes, sliced
 1–1¼ cups long grain rice
 ½ cup pine nuts, toasted
 Yoghurt



- 1 Arrange the eggplant slices on paper towels, sprinkle with salt and let them stand for about 30 minutes to allow their juices to drain out. Pat them dry with paper towels.
- 2 In a skillet, heat the olive oil over high heat and then add the onion and stir until golden.
- 3 Add the lamb pieces, baharat, 1 tsp salt, ½ quantity of black pepper, allspice berries, cinnamon and nutmeg, stirring well to distribute evenly.
- 4 Allow the meat to brown on all sides.
- 5 Add water and lower the heat to simmer for about 2 ½ to 3 hours until the lamb is very tender, adding more water if needed.
- 6 Remove the lamb and onions from the skillet using a slotted spoon.
- 7 Deep fry the eggplant slices in very hot oil until they are golden brown. Drain them on paper towels.
- 8 Lightly oil the bottom of a 4–6 quart casserole with the remaining olive oil and arrange the tomato slices to cover the bottom of the pan in an overlapping or double-layered fashion.
- 9 Sprinkle a handful of rice over the tomatoes. Spoon the lamb in a layer over the rice and then arrange the eggplants over the lamb, pressing down with a spatula or the back of your hand.
- 10 Spoon the remaining rice over the eggplants spreading it evenly and pressing down again.
- 11 Add the remaining salt and pepper then add boiling water and cover with a tight-fitting lid and place over a low heat until the rice is fully cooked. The liquid should not be boiling vigorously, so reduce the heat if necessary.
- 12 When done, place a round, flat serving dish on top of the casserole. Invert it in one quick motion, holding both sides firmly.
- 13 Garnish with pine nuts and serve with yoghurt.

ALEX-MED NEWSLETTER

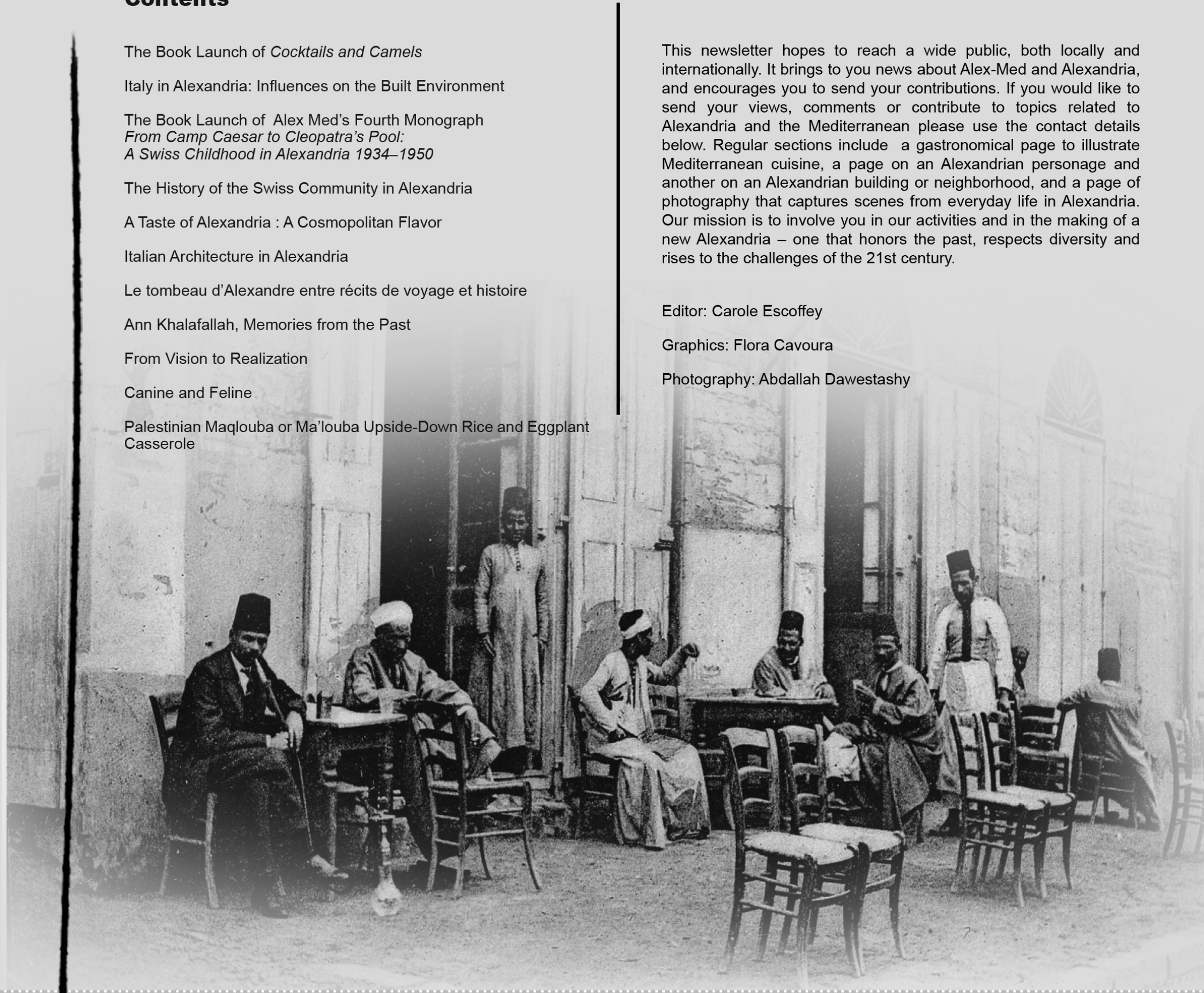
Bringing the Mediterranean Together

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This newsletter hopes to reach a wide public, both locally and internationally. It brings to you news about Alex-Med and Alexandria, and encourages you to send your contributions. If you would like to send your views, comments or contribute to topics related to Alexandria and the Mediterranean please use the contact details below. Regular sections include a gastronomical page to illustrate Mediterranean cuisine, a page on an Alexandrian personage and another on an Alexandrian building or neighborhood, and a page of photography that captures scenes from everyday life in Alexandria. Our mission is to involve you in our activities and in the making of a new Alexandria – one that honors the past, respects diversity and rises to the challenges of the 21st century.

Editor: Carole Escoffey
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